

SOCIALIST ACTION



No.1 SEPTEMBER 6, 1985

Registered by Aust Post — publication no. VBFC523

South Africa



So much for "peaceful reform!"

SO MUCH for Reagan's "constructive engagement".
So much for Hayden's "positive communication".

The Western leaders were all attention on August 15, when South Africa's president Botha spoke, desperately hoping that he would provide some sop which would excuse them from taking real action against apartheid.

He did not. Botha's speech admitted nothing, gave nothing and promised nothing. The Western leaders were "disappointed".

For the struggle against apartheid, Botha's speech was a good thing. Because it means that the fighters in South Africa do not have to spend the next 12 months convincing simpering Western liberal opinion that yet another round of cosmetic "changes" means absolutely nothing.

The Pretoria regime is in a deep crisis. The South African ruling class is clearly split on how to respond to the wave of demonstrations, riots and strikes against white domination. In the days leading up to Botha's speech, the South African foreign minister and the ambassador to the US both gave assurances to the Reagan administration that reforms would be forthcoming. If that was the plan, it was over-ruled by the regime's hardliners.

shaky

The economy, once the power-house of the African continent, is looking distinctly shaky. With the value of the rand plummeting, and a 16.4% inflation rate, it is not surprising that significant sections of South African business are calling for "real change" and "visibly effective dialogue".

Business can feel the rising black working class breathing down its neck. The increasingly powerful black trade unions have established their right to



• WHIP-SWINGING police disperse marchers

fight for black workers, and are now moving into action against the regime.

The 230,000-strong National Union of Miners (NUM) has called a massive strike over its demands for a wage rise. In response to the state of emergency, and Botha's threat to send home migrant workers to neighbouring countries, the NUM has organised a consumer boycott of white-owned businesses.

Consumer boycotts have spread rapidly throughout Cape province and the Transvaal. White and black students have demonstrated together, in their support.

In this situation, speculation was rife that Botha would announce the easing of the pass laws, the elimination of the black "homelands" and the liberation of Nelson Mandela.

Yet, how could he? Apartheid, with its super-exploitation of blacks, is crucial to South African capitalism, and doing any of these things would be tantamount to signing its death warrant. The regime has introduced some "reforms" and raised expectations. It can give no more. It must either hold the line, or go under.

Our logo

READERS familiar with working class history will purr with pleasure when they recognise our logo.

It is the IWW's "sabby cat". The Industrial Workers of the World, better known as the Wobblies, built a revolutionary organisation of thousands in Australia at the time of World War One.

The "sabby cat" represented industrial sabotage — go-slows and other surreptitious action on the job in line with the IWW slogan of "a poor day's work for a poor day's pay".

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DETAILS PAGE 6

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CAT'S EYE

CHINA

Bureaucrats cash in

WHEN the Chinese government officially endorsed get-rich-quick schemes — otherwise known as the Four Modernisations — the first, and most persistent people in for their chop were the ruling class.

Recognising a quick buck when they see one, many Communist Party officials have grabbed the opportunity with both hands. There are now at least 16,000 private businesses run by Party and government officials — some of them on a grand scale. And officials naturally help the profits along by using their official status.

Good old-fashioned corruption — which the Chinese prefer to call "economic crime" — is the result. In 1984, \$1670 million was lost through "irregularities." In the same year, the (now ex) Auditor General "lost" over \$1 billion.

The problem for the regime is

distinguishing between "economic crime" and the "creative application of market socialism." Is it a crime for *entire localities* to feather their own nests by imposing local import controls, for example? In the latest scandal, involving some 26 provinces and elements of the army, it's a safe bet that no-one will go to trial — there are just too many officials involved.

As *Beijing Review* remarked in 1982: "There is no denying that our Party has its seamy side . . ." But that's the profit motive, really, isn't it?

VISAS

Labour's doublethink

THE scandalous attempt by Australian immigration officials to get visiting SWAPO representative Andimbo Toivo ja Toivo to sign a declaration that he would not "expose or promote" an armed revolution while in Australia, raises some interesting questions. Especially as acting Foreign Minister Gareth Evans

Kim Hughes: no passport worries



substantially backed it.

Are American consular staff, for example, required to sign statements that they will not "expose or promote" the armed revolution that the US celebrates on July 4? Will any US Embassy staff be deported for organising their annual wing-ding July 4 dinner?

On a more serious note, contrast the Toivo affair with the Labour's fetching concern for the "civil liberties of Australian citizens", in not cancelling the passports of Kim Hughes and his scab "rebel cricketers" for South Africa.

A cricketer, we might add, not

shared by the Liberals when they stamped all Australian passports "Not Valid for North Vietnam" for no long ago.

SEXISM

Maxwell million so smart

MILLIONAIRE owner of Britain's *Daily Mirror*, former Labour MP Robert Maxwell, likes to project a "socialist" image. So he recently granted an interview to the magazine "Working Woman" with alacrity. "Fleet Street is made up of male chauvinists," Maxwell announced to the interviewer. "Positive discrimination (for women) — yes, that is what we have here."

Pressing on, the interviewer discovered that precisely three of Maxwell's 600 senior staff were women. Then one of the three happened to ring him.

"How's my favourite political editor?" Maxwell gurgled into the phone. "How's the pussycat today?"

• NICE OF him to tell us . . . The head of Universal Business Directories, one of Australia's biggest publishers of street directories, has admitted that his company deliberately writes errors into its maps.

"It is the only way that we can protect our copyright," he says. "Everyone in the industry does it."

Ah, the fruits of free enterprise and competition.



KEITH Hay — Freudians would be fascinated

• FREUDIAN analysts will be fascinated by the arguments of Moral Majority-style campaigners against New Zealand's proposed Homosexual Law Reform Bill. Says conservative MP Norman Jones, "It's not built for it, the anus, and if you feel that it is love and tender care to go poking your penis into the excrement of some body else's backside . . . to me it's a perversion."

Auckland businessman Keith Hay agrees. "It is really going into the eyes of 'really serious homosexual people'."

• HAY and Jones claim to have collected 800,000 signatures against the Bill. The opponents say that they have collected 100,000 signatures eight times.

• BELATED wedding presents department . . . Thirty years ago, in July 1955, a Mr Glenn Waldron officiated as best man at the wedding of up-and-coming young lawyer John Cain.

A couple of months ago, Judge Glenn Waldron did Premier John Cain of Victoria another small favour by

jailing BLF chief Norm Gallagher for four years. "Cheap Shots" promises 12 months, free membership of the Victorian ALP to any reader who can prove that the phrase "independent judiciary" is not a contradiction in terms.

• COKE's current formula is so corrosive that its lins must be specially lined to prevent them being eaten away. If you work in Coca-Cola's American head office, say good-bye to your teeth — the water coolers don't serve water, only Coke.

• COKE has more advertising signs than any other company on Earth. Over nine million pollute the globe. That is about one for every single urban street in the world.

INTERNATIONAL

How Australian bosses prop up Apartheid

WHEN South Africa describes criticism from other governments as "hypocritical cant", it's probably places like Australia they have in mind.

Not that leading Australian citizens haven't had plenty to say on the apartheid subject. Even Malcolm Fraser, we're told, has "impeccable credentials" on this one.

What has been remarkable over the past, few weeks has been the softening of attitudes towards the regime.

In marked contrast to Fraser's "impeccable credentials", the true voice of Liberalism was heard when the Victorian State Council called for closer ties with South Africa. The Australian Cricket Board, having fixed up the legal niceties with its South African counterpart, now believes that the "rebel" tour is perfectly all right.

Australian exports to South Africa have increased over the last few months. The Federal Labor Government announced, at the beginning of August, that its emphasis would now be on "positive communication and dialogue" with Pretoria.

True, the Australian ambassador was recalled. But only after the US, all the EEC countries, Spain and Portugal had done it first.

There has been another sort of Australian reaction. The wharfies, plumbers and gasfitters, and public service clerical assistants have all taken action against dealings with South Africa. The metalworkers and transport workers have promised similar action. These actions should be continued and extended, especially in the Department of Trade.

hurt

It is in trade that Australia could really hurt the regime.

In terms of the number of companies, Australia's involvement with South Africa ranks sixth highest in the world. From AMI through to Wormald, picking up such business luminaries as Sir Peter Abeles, Rupert Murdoch, Alan Bond, the Liberal Party, John Elliott, the Democrats' John Siddons — the list runs right through

Australian bosses.

Between 1983 and 1984, Australian investment in South Africa was anywhere between \$35 million and \$70 million — the exact figure isn't known, because of Departmental cover-ups. The amount Australian investors receive is "confiden-

tial" and denied under freedom of information. Ever since South Africa started making the headlines, Australian bosses have been falling over themselves to deny any involvement — or at least to plead that they behave themselves.

Weston Foods, for example, had no idea why it was on a South Africa trade list . . . but hang on a minute, they do sell



NELSON Mandela's daughter with her father's photo — the regime feels too insecure to release him

FROM PAGE ONE

South Africa: So much for "peaceful reform"

But it is not under yet. The movement against it has some serious problems, which will become more serious as the struggle intensifies.

To start with, there is the question of how the regime can be overthrown. It has been suggested by a leading member of the United Democratic Front (UDF) that consumer boycotts alone could "bring the Government to its knees without a single stone being picked up" (Ironically, the speaker was arrested a few days later.)

So far, the police have been relatively restrained in their treatment of boycott organisers. The reason is obvious: they're too busy with the daily demonstrations and riots. If these were to stop, if the stones were to be put down, the boycotts could be easily smashed.

A glimpse of the power that could finish off the regime can be seen in the black trade unions, not least the NUM. But for that to happen, the unions would have to extend their demands beyond wages — and even beyond protests at the Emergency — into a generalised political offensive against the white power structure.

In the absence of such an offensive, there is an ever-present danger that the non-white communities will turn against each other, as apparently happened when fighting broke out between Indians and blacks in Natal province last month.

It is the absence of political leadership which allows that sort of incident to occur — which allows unchanneled anger to spend itself on the nearest shop.

The movement needs a leadership which is revolutionary, because the white power structure must be smashed, not reformed. It is leadership which is socialist, because the aspirations of the black working class must be the basis for the reconstruction of southern Africa.

glucose there "from time to time" Monier acquired a South African concrete pipe company by accident, in a take-over. They "had considered" selling it, but property values these days . . . Poor old Gomalo was utterly bewildered at being listed, but they do "from time to time" (this seems to be a stock phrase) import South African bricks.

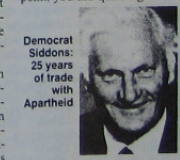
The Confederation of Australian Industry declared, "We reject strenuously any notion that simply because a company is listed . . . it is not conducting itself properly in South Africa."

But can a company conduct itself "properly" there? In a system based upon racial exploitation? The question is not whether this company or that company pays blacks less than whites. Any investment props up the regime, and should be stopped.

Meanwhile, the Labor government is backing away from trade sanctions with the speed of a frightened rabbit.

Instead, it wants to institute a "voluntary code of conduct" for companies in South Africa — negotiated, of course, with the bosses' organisations.

In other words, the Government is going to rely on those profiting from apartheid to voluntarily turn themselves in, in order to voluntarily restrict their profits! If you have some doubts about our Government's firmness and sincerity at this point, you are quite right.



Apartheid will not be brought to heel by governments, or by the Commonwealth (another of Hawke's ideas), or by the United Nations (which has been trying for the past 30 years). It will be destroyed in the first instance by the black workers of southern Africa.

But it can be weakened by workers in other countries doing what some Australian workers have already done: taking action at the office and factory level to end Australia's links with the South African regime.

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 3

• WE KEEP hearing how white sporting bodies in South Africa have cleaned up their act, racially speaking. Alas, a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on South African rugby has let the cat out of the bag.

"A coloured Cape Town club withdrew from a local league in the wake of repeated racial insults," the article reported. "The assault of coloured players by whites got out of hand."

The article cited "racial abuse directed at a senior coloured rugby official and the intimidation of coloured rugby players by white officials."

Whites were not immune, either. "The only white player in the WPL side, Johan Claassen, was referred to as a traitor by some spectators and Vaal Triangle players were urged to 'get him'."

• GIMME that O' Time Religion . . . Born-again Christian and England wicket-keeper Alan Knott writes in his autobiography, "An example of the Lord's guidance came for me with

• HE CAN'T be too careful. US Secretary of State George Schultz held a press conference on his recent flying visit to Australia. His advisors barred pacifist Nuclear Disarmament senator Jo Valentine from attending — "for security reasons".



CHEAP SHOTS

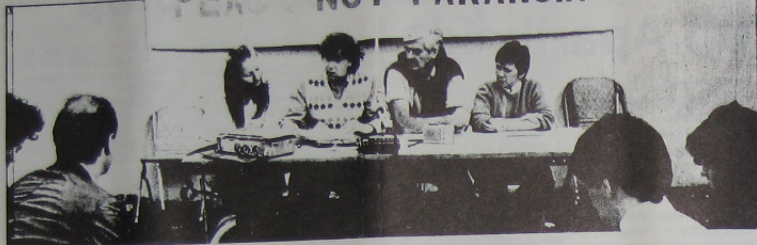
my decision to join Packer's World Series Cricket!

Evidently the Goanna has the Divine seal of approval. Reminds us of the born-again Christians who ran the Concrete Pipe Corporation of the USA a few years back.

They elected Jesus Christ as chairman of the board. Said the company president, "It's a warm, secure feeling having Jesus run things around here."

PEACE NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT PARTY

NOT PARANOIA



Beyond the ballot box

PEACE is still the issue for many people. The rise of the Nuclear Disarmament Party in the run-up to the last federal election, and the massive Palm Sunday peace marches, are but two obvious indicators of that fact.

The task for the peace movement is to translate that large passive support into active participation. The recent by-election for the Victorian Upper House seat of Nunawading, where the NDP stood a candidate, is a good example of the problem.

This was no ordinary by-election. Control of the Upper House was at stake. The Cain government threw everything into the campaign. The ALP even stooped to handing out misleading "Nuclear Disarmament" how-to-vote cards, directing NDP preferences to the Democrats and then itself.

The NDP had decided not to direct preferences, arguing that Labor's record on nuclear disarmament was the same in practice as that of the Liberals.

However, the main reason was the NDP's desire for support from all voters, including Liberals. It was E.P. Thompson's concept of *extermism* (namely, that nuclear weapons threaten all classes, so all classes must unite to stop them) applied to the ballot box.

The flaw in such thinking is plain. Only the working class has the power to halt the arms race. Precisely because such weapons are useful to the ruling classes, they still exist despite twenty years of "disarmament talks". Without an orientation to workers, the ultimate aims of the NDP cannot be achieved.

NDP activists hoped that an election campaign would draw

NDP member John Passant looks at the party's prospects

the party together, giving it new life and attracting new blood. The very fact that this was necessary highlights the weakness of a single-issue electoral party. Morale and enthusiasm flag when no elections are taking place. The party becomes like a drug addict looking for a fix. If that is the case, then the NDP in Victoria will soon be going through cold turkey.

sidelines

A basic problem is the narrow conception many NDP members have of a political party. They imagine that the NDP can grow purely through election campaigns, and that it can achieve its aims through the ballot box. Demonstrations and the like are seen as secondary. And yet, no radical mass party has ever built up by electoral means alone.

The NDP received 2.4 per cent of the vote, a result best described as barely adequate. The same area gave the NDP 7.8 per cent in last December's Senate election. So support dropped over 5 per cent. On the other hand, a major split has weakened the NDP, and it had few resources to conduct the Nunawading campaign.

So the NDP remains on the electoral sidelines. Few new people have been drawn in by the campaign, and many activists must now be tempted to "hibernate" till the next election. Yet there is a way forward for the NDP.

A vacuum exists in the peace

movement. An organisation is needed that will push for militant action around peace. It is a vacuum that the NDP could fill.

The recent Hiroshima Day rally in Melbourne provided a good contrast. Four hundred people, mostly young, blocked traffic in the city centre. The police responded with brutal shoving and horse charges, but the young marchers refused to be intimidated. A dozen were arrested. Here were youth struggling for peace; not for them numbers on a ballot, but action in the streets!

To their credit, NDP activists were prominent in resisting the cops. But they were acting primarily as individuals. Few members have any conception of militant direct action as a basis on which to build the NDP.

Another avenue for struggle exists around the Pine Gap satellite spy base. America's lease is to be renegotiated in October 1986.

The campaign to close Pine Gap has only just started. Already, elements influenced by Socialist Forum, the rightward splinter from the Communist Party, have tried to water down the basic demand of "Close Pine Gap". They wanted to "inter-

nationalise" the base — ie turn it over to Russia and America, under the guise of UN supervision — in order to gain Democratic NDP reps on the Pine Gap Committee argued successfully against such a move.

The Pine Gap campaign will see major rallies in all capital cities in March or April next year. Clearly, the Hawke government is not threatened electorally by the issue. Action on the streets and in the workplaces, not through the ballot box, will decide the campaign.

That is not to suggest that workers are about to strike and take to the streets over Pine Gap. However, unionists have taken vital actions in the past, such as refusing to transport uranium, that have opened up the clear possibility of closing down the nuclear industry.

There is no reason why they should not do so again in future. Our task must be to build a movement in the present period of relative passivity, which can organise militant small-scale demonstrations and the like in addition to the annual Palm Sunday mass turn-outs, in preparation for the time when workers move into action again.



PERSPECTIVES

REVOLUTIONARY socialists in four capital cities have formed a new national organisation called *Socialist Action*.

In this special feature, *Socialist Action*

A perspective for socialists today

THE FIRST task of revolutionaries is to look reality in the face. And undoubtedly, today's reality presents certain difficulties.

The revolutionary left that exists today around the world was largely formed in the years following 1968. The campuses were in rebellion, a vast movement opposed the Vietnam war, and the working class was opening up a great tide of struggle. The French general strike of 1968, the "hot autumn" in Italy in 1969, the defeat of Heath by the British miners, and the Portuguese revolution of 1974-75 were some of the high points. Following closely came the explosive growth of women's liberation.

Despite conflicting ideologies — Maoist, Trotskyist, Libertarian — revolutionaries were able to build organisations of hundreds and thousands, and sometimes millions.

In Australia, the upheavals were sometimes as stormy as overseas. Workers shattered the Penal Powers with a virtual general strike in 1969, prosecuted a powerful wages offensive in the early seventies, and women workers made major strides toward equal pay. The movement over Vietnam transformed the political landscape. And while the revolutionary left was smaller here than in Europe, it consolidated a number of national organisations.

Unfortunately, history does not move in a steadily ascending line.

From about 1974, the class struggle and social movements went into decline. Revolutionaries, who had built their organisations on the expectation of further stormy struggles, found themselves pushed onto the defensive. The social contract in Britain, the consolidation of capitalist rule in Portugal, Fraserism in Australia were typical of an era in which the bourgeoisie regained the offensive.

By the end of the seventies, the revolutionary left in Europe and America was in crisis. Social movements all but faded away, with the exception of a peace movement which could mobilise large demonstrations but whose politics were relatively insipid.

In Australia, the worst features of this downturn did not arrive until the eighties. Revolutionaries were able to build out of continuing mass struggles in Queensland. The movement against uranium mining was able to build impressive working class support. But by 1981 or 1982, the writing was nevertheless on the wall. The campuses had become quiet, and strikes fell off

members explain our view of the times we live in, where we have come from, and our reasons for establishing a new group.



dramatically. With the rise of Labor and the creation of the Accord, the unions fell victim to the class collaboration of their officials.

Days lost in strikes, which totalled 1,273 per thousand employees in 1974, fell to around the 400 mark in the worst years of defeat under Fraser. They then revived to 788 in 1979 and even rose to 800 in 1981 as workers regained confidence during the "resources boom". However, the numbers don't tell the whole story. The strikes of the latter period were less radical in their political implications, and much more clearly dominated by the official bureaucracy. Moreover, they gave way to a new downturn in 1982, with days lost falling to 396, and then to 249 in 1983.

THE DECLINE may now have been botched out, but certainly at a depressingly low level. The Accord has worked. Average weekly earnings have fallen below the level of inflation (once the "Medicare effect" is discounted), while profits have recovered dramatically. The Labor government has managed to contain worker militancy during an economic recovery, something no government has achieved in over two decades.

In politics, there has been a dramatic rightward shift, with the Communist Party first embracing overt reformism, then moving toward its own dissolution. Women's liberation has given way to a sometimes sectarian, more often reformist "feminism". Marxism is on the defensive.

In the seventies, most revolutionaries adopted a fairly interventionist stance, aiming to win workers and other activists in the course of militant struggles.

By the beginning of the eighties, the application of an interventionist Marxism was becoming more difficult and complex.

Propaganda around socialist ideas was becoming more obviously central to winning people to a socialist movement which was unable to involve itself regularly in impressive class conflicts or dynamic social movements. The question of the relationship between intervention and propaganda and the problem of keeping propaganda around general socialist ideas relevant to what struggles do occur, became increasingly important.

The International Socialist experience

IT IS EXACTLY this relationship that the smaller revolutionary groups have often had difficulty establishing. For some, intervention in struggle has occurred without the necessary balance of socialist propaganda. The reverse, an overemphasis on propaganda at the cost of practice, has developed in others. In many, there have been swings from one overemphasis to the other.

The International Socialists, or I.S., have been no exception to this phenomenon. As many Socialist Action members were previously members of I.S., analysing these developments as they affected the I.S. from its founding in 1975 onwards is important to us for two reasons. Firstly, it clarifies where we start from. And secondly, by understanding the past, we can hope to avoid repeating at least some of our mistakes.

The I.S. was very much a product of its times. Its initial members were antiwar and student activists who had adopted an orientation to the working class. While we continued to do student work, we mustered our small resources primarily for modest

(continued page 6)

SOCIALIST ACTION

Public Forum

Sth Africa: Where now?

Includes film on struggle in Soweto

Mon 9 Sept

7.30 pm, YWCA Building Room 10
489 Elizabeth St, Melbourne.

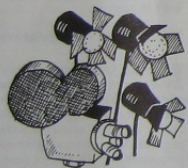


NO AID TO MARCOS!

Rally outside Philippine Airlines

121 William Street, Melbourne
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Lights, cameras ...



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PERSPECTIVES

publications aimed at mobilising rank and file workers in struggle. In keeping with our philosophy of "socialism from below", we argued that it was in the course of struggle that the best revolutionaries are made.

Undoubtedly, we overdid it. Not only did we go off the deep end in 1976, sending our members into factories and trying to publish a fortnightly paper with a membership of 33, but even after we had outgrown these excesses we persisted in an overly agitational orientation.

This was not, however, entirely mistaken. There was some clear basis for our orientation. And it worked so often. Had we not successfully moved a general strike motion to 1500 shop stewards during the Medibank struggles? In demonstrations such as those during the Constitutional Crisis, were we able to turn the militancy into often spectacular ends. Had we not also led defiant street marches in Brisbane, and in the process built an organisation in that city?

We were a product of our times, and victims of our success. When the decline in the class struggle and social movements really began to hit home in the early 1980s, the group found difficulty in adjusting.

The I.S. leadership continued to argue, correctly, that despite the downturn in struggle, there was still a minority which was resisting the rightward trend and could be won to a militant pole of attraction.

This we persisted in militant agitation, which in the climate of declining militancy, increasingly took on the form of small-scale street confrontation. In some cases these actions were quite valuable, as in the struggles around the visit of the nuclear ship Goldsborough. In other cases, however, they became blatantly "substitutionist" — with comrades substituting their own hyper-activism for mobilising broader support. In Brisbane, a dozen I.S. members invaded the U.S consulate entirely on their own. In Melbourne, we and a dozen other people hurled ourselves at the police in an attempt to "deny the streets" to thousands of Right to Life marchers.

AS THE substitutionist nature of this activity became increasingly clear, there were attempts within the I.S. to turn it away from this trend.

Partly as a result of this, the I.S. did swing away from stunts and hyperactivity — only to swing to an opposite extreme, of abstention and abstract calls for socialism.

So, in the peace movement, instead of our active involvement and arguing the way forward, the movement was to become the audience for our stage-managed speeches on the need for socialism.

Even more disturbingly for a group committed to the centrality of the working class in socialist change, this abstention was carried into our activity in trade unions to which we belonged. At first, supported by the perspectives of the organisation for 1984, this activity continued. However, as the leadership's analysis of the downturn in class struggle developed,



SOCIALISTS soapboxing — the balance between propaganda and struggle is a delicate one.

union activity began to be described as pointless at best, or rightward-pulling at worst.

The leadership which could still warn against the dangers of abstract propaganda in 1984, can write in 1985 that "abstract propaganda is at the heart of all attempts to convince people of the need for revolution." (original emphasis).

While the I.S. swung from substitutionism and hyperactivity to abstention, a minority of members developed an alternative analysis and practice. This consisted of arguing for serious long-term work in the movements and trade unions, as well as engaging in activity as real opportunities arose.

As a result, despite the overall trend in the I.S. some members continued trade union and movement work. However, this became increasingly difficult as the leadership clarified their political position and practice, and drew the majority of the organisation around their perspectives.

In August, the I.S. leadership moved to restrict the right of oppositionists to do meaningful work in the SEQEB dispute in Brisbane. In Melbourne and Brisbane, members of the minority increasingly found that people they had come across in the course of their political work were not open to socialist ideas, were not at all attracted to the hothouse atmosphere of the I.S.

As it has become clear to us that this sort of proscription on activity would eventually extend to the other states, a number of I.S. members in Melbourne and Brisbane resigned. They left aiming to build a new national organisation together with a grouping of former I.S. minority members active in Sydney, Canberra and Perth, and a number of people already

attracted to our politics.

While we have not as yet formally ratified our perspectives within our new organisation, we can make a start now by outlining some thoughts on a general orientation for our work.

On Perspectives

THE CREATION of the International Socialists represented the cohering of a small cadre around the politics of revolutionary intervention in struggle. Our task is to preserve and build on what remains of that. What does this mean today?

In *Left Wing Communism*, Lenin wrote: "Inasmuch as it still is a question of winning the proletariat's vanguard over to the side of communism, priority ... goes to propaganda work." (That is, to arguing relatively complicated ideas to a relatively small audience.) Yet in the same pamphlet, writing for the benefit of organisations which in most cases certainly had not yet won over the vanguard, he hammered the importance of activity in the trade unions, and the need to "work wherever the masses are to be found." We see no contradiction here whatsoever.

A small group can only make lasting recruits by convincing them of its ideas. The central effort of the group has to be directed at clarifying these ideas, educating its members in them, and winning other people to them. Partly this is a matter of educational study groups, talks, pamphlets, theoretical journals. Partly, it is a matter of general educational material in newspapers. In a difficult period such as the present, these activities take on a special importance.

But part of clarifying and articulating socialist ideas is also making them relevant to what is happening today, showing how the ideas can help to find a way forward for those who want to fight. Our experience over the past nine months has convinced us that it is possible to establish an audience, and recruit, in this way. But it is not simply a matter of recruitment.

Part of our task in difficult times is to survive, not merely as people capable of reciting a "line" but as people with enough

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CANBERRA

PO Box 17,
Jamison Centre,
ACT 2614.



PEACE marchers — a small audience for socialists

feel for the real world and its inhabitants to be able to intervene in the next upturn in struggle. That is only possible if we maintain a living link to the struggles of today. And despite the difficult times, there are struggles; around defence of the SEQEB workers, for example, and against nuclear weapons. There are still enough industrial disputes in most cities to provide activity for a small socialist group even in the present downturn.

Two important areas of activity will probably be in the unions and in the peace movement. Neither area is inspiring.

Yet to take the example of the peace movement, we have seen a prolonged industrial struggle last year where we were able to have an impact. The peace movement is small in activist terms, and probably in decline, yet it manages to revive periodically in new forms (the Nuclear Disarmament Party, Youth PND, etc.) We have found there is a small audience there for us. In such areas, we have to introduce socialist ideas, make propaganda. But the propaganda has to be concrete, addressed to the question: what is to be done?

The British socialist Chris Harman has written that the issue of "what is to be done" is a question raised by anyone who is new to socialist ideas. This is an overstatement: some people are actually won to socialism on the basis of abstractions. Nevertheless, it contains an important element of truth. In any historical period, the healthiest people among the potential socialists are those who wish to know how to take the struggle forward. For when all is said and done, it is not enough to interpret the world. The point is to change it.

A GROUP our size cannot change the world, except by becoming a much larger organisation. For this reason, we do not blush at the thought of recruiting. But we seek to win people to a socialist organisation by demonstrating that our ideas are relevant to their concerns.

Therefore we put forward practical ideas about how to advance the struggle: how to

(continued page 8)

SOCIALIST ACTION

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Socialism

We fight for socialism: the creation of a classless society in which the economy will be democratically planned, and workers themselves will make the key decisions about economic and social life. Countries like Russia and China are bureaucratic class societies, and have nothing in common with real socialism.

Revolution, not Reformism

We are revolutionaries. The experience of Labor in power has shown the bankruptcy of attempts to tinker with the existing capitalist system. The capitalists will not allow a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. Their state is a weapon of class rule, and must be smashed.

A Mass Workers' Party

Workers need a revolutionary party. The working class cannot make a revolution through spontaneous upheavals. The bosses are organised, and we need to organise too. Today we work to build a stronger revolutionary movement out of the struggles being waged on the job and around social protest issues. Tomorrow we must create a mass workers' party to lead the struggle for socialism.

Internationalism

We are internationalists. The working class exists in all countries, and the struggle for socialism knows no national barriers. A socialist revolution cannot survive within a single country. It must be spread to other countries or it will fail. For these reasons we are for building a world-wide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against others.

Liberation from Oppression

We fight for liberation and against the oppression of women, blacks, migrants and homosexuals. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. The fight against them is an essential part of building a united revolutionary movement. They can only be ended through ending capitalism and building socialism.

Socialist Action

We are for Socialist Action. It's no good just talking about the world: the point is to change it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only meaningful if they are a guide to action. In the unions, social movements and wherever socialists are fighting for a better world, socialists are in the thick of the fight. It's there that we want to be, join us today!

PERSPECTIVES

win a dispute, how to build a demonstration, and the like. In doing so, we have to link these issues to broader questions and to the need for socialism itself. In a time of low levels of struggle and a righting of political climate, this is a difficult challenge, but it is only by facing it squarely that we remain Marxist.

It is sometimes argued that ours is a dangerous orientation: that by getting involved in practical work and making practical arguments in such a conservative political period, we will expose ourselves to rightwing pressures. That we will end up taking on too many practical responsibilities, trying to substitute our own efforts for a non-existent mass movement, and thus burn ourselves out. Certainly these are real dangers.

The rightwing pressures must be resisted. Comrades' work in any area needs to be guided by the group through occasional discussions, special committees ("fractions") or individual advice, so that they are able to cope. We have to make sure that comrades don't take on too many organisational tasks out of a misguided desire to build, for it is a central theme of our politics that only masses of people being active themselves can build a socialist movement. We do our share, no more and no less.

We need a sense of humour about our weakness and isolation, a relaxed style, a recognition that we are not the Vanguard of the Revolution. All this we actually understand fairly well.

Because we understand it, and because we have managed to do a bit of worthwhile work in the outside world, we are confident of our ability to cope in a difficult environment.

In any case, isolating yourself from the world does not really protect you from the dangers of political degeneration. Sets who retreat from the world grow boring, longwinded, irrelevant. Trotsky put it very well:

Solidarity the key in the ABC

STRIKE ACTION looms in the ABC, as Staff Union members fight against Federal Government cuts.

Over three hundred jobs will go, due to a \$20 million funding cut. Staffing has been frozen for three months, all overtime has been stopped, and staff are being forced to work extra hours without pay to get programs to air.

In television, producers and staff in the drama department are sitting around idle because they have no budget to make programs.

QLD. DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS COALITION

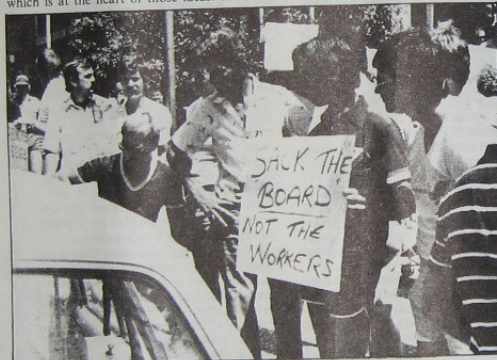
meets Thursday, 7 pm, Student Union, QIT

Support the SEQEB workers!

"If the leaders seek only to preserve themselves, that is what they become: preserves — dried preserves."

WE ARE a small group, but we have no hesitation in calling on those who wish to fight for socialism to join us. We shall set about building a serious revolutionary movement in this country the only way it can be done: by working together with all those who wish to fight, while making an intransigent defence of Marxist ideas. And despite our small numbers, we do represent a grouping of people with years of experience in putting that orientation into practice.

There are grounds for confidence when all is said and done. We place our confidence not in Marxist ideas as abstractions, but in the struggles of that great social class which is at the heart of those ideas: the



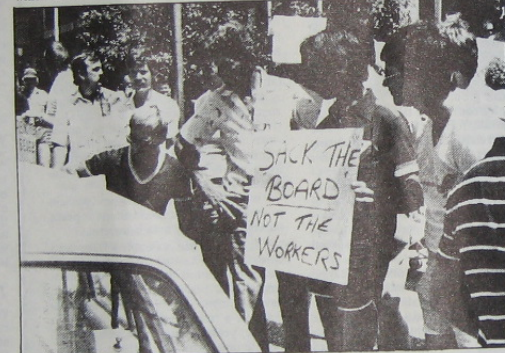
SEQEB picketers — despite difficult times, struggle persists

working class whose struggles have transformed the world time and again.

The present downturn in the class struggle cannot last forever.

Already, there are signs of strain in the Accord, and the apparent prospect for another year or so of economic growth may encourage workers to return to industrial militancy. In a world filled with oppression and threatened with nuclear destruction, new social movements will necessarily arise. The task for socialists today is to begin rebuilding so that the next upturn in the struggle does not pass us by.

Of course, we offer no guarantees of victory. We can only offer a choice of sides in the only battle worth fighting: the struggle to free the world of capitalism, that source of misery, oppression and exploitation, and to replace it with a society fit for human beings to live in: world socialism.



SEQEB picketers — despite difficult times, struggle persists

beleaguered. Journalists as well as the Staff Union are angry.

The ABC has severely restricted the intake of trainees, and both the News and Current Affairs departments are facing staff shortages.

pressure

A House meeting of journalists has threatened industrial action if ABC management doesn't immediately reverse journalist staff cuts, and also stop using journalists from outside organisations to do "spots" on the Sydney breakfast time slot.

So solidarity between the Staff Union and the AJA is more important than ever. If management is faced with united action by the journalists at the same time as the Staff Union is pulling the plug,

they will be under intense pressure to talk to us.

The danger is that we become divided again. The Staff Union should immediately invite the AJA to participate in our stop work meetings, and express its support for the journalists.

Once journalists and the rest of ABC staff are united, we can call on the rest of the trade union movement for support. We can ask the transport workers' union to ban deliveries to the ABC. Telecom employees not to repair land lines that break down, and so on.

We have to rely on our collective strength... not on "Diamond Jim" McClelland and his friends who signed the famous letter to the press.

Support from the community is important, but it is the strength of the workers that will be decisive.

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

WHEN YOU look at the statistics, you could be forgiven for thinking it is the British miners' strike. One thousand sackings, seven hundred workers still out of a job after six months, and over three hundred arrests.

But this isn't the British miners' strike. It is Queensland. And while Joh Bjelke Petersen may have been inspired by Margaret Thatcher, it is South Eastern Queensland Electricity Board linesmen who are in the front line of Australia's most determined struggle against union smashing.

The SEQEB dispute flared up yet again on August 20, capturing national headlines as twelve thousand workers rallied, and over 100 marchers were arrested outside State parliament.

And yet the struggle remains in a parlous state. From the start, union leaders and the state ALP have swept the dispute under the carpet. Only the strike committee of sacked linesmen, and their supporters — wives, academics, civil libertarians and left-wingers mostly — have kept the battle alive, and are increasingly a thorn in the side of the labour bureaucracy.

AT THE bottom of the ASQEUB dispute are the key issues of contract labour and compulsory unionism.

The conflict was epitomized at the end of July, when the SEQEB workers currently scabbing were represented at the Electrical Authorities Industrial Cases Tribunal not by a union rep, but by an industrial advocate chosen by SEQEB. Crowded SEQEB general manager Wayne Gilbert, "The union monopoly on employee representation has been broken."

Employer attempts to introduce contract labour and undermine worker solidarity underlie an increasing number of disputes in Australia today. The Northern Territory meatworkers' dispute is the best known, but ALCAN in Sydney and the tin mines in Tasmania have also seen battles in the last couple of months.

The SEQEB example is catching on in Queensland too. The junior bureaucrats of the Queensland University student union executive recently threatened cleaners with the introduction of contract labour when they demanded better working conditions. Queensland teachers face the prospect of contracts as a



SEQEB: Can the workers beat Bjelke?

result of the government's still-to-be-released "khaki papers". And the Queensland government has foreshadowed the general introduction of collective bargaining over wages and conditions in order to undermine awards.

Yet the Trades and Labour Council in Brisbane had consistently played fireman to the whole SEQEB dispute. Arguing "Don't provoke Petersen or he will go further", it has repeatedly backed off from challenging the state government.

The most disastrous example came right at the start of the dispute, when after a couple of weeks of black-outs and a storm that caused enormous damage and had the government on its knees, the TLC turned the power back on as a show of "good faith".

A SIMILAR attitude prevailed the build-up to the August 20 rally.

TLC Secretary Ray "I've Always Been A Great Supporter Of The Accord" Dempsey said a few days before hand: "It is a powderkeg, but we aren't lighting

any matches."

The day beforehand, Dempsey was even more explicit. "Mass rallies were basically to give the TLC the mandate to control the campaign and to call stoppages as it saw fit. It was important avoid members taking matters into their own hands."

Unfortunately, at the August 20 mass rally at Lang Park, attended by thousands of unionists who had stopped work as state parliament opened, the TLC was fully in control.

Taken action resolutions were passed — action is always promised "next week" — and the TLC raised no proposal to march. Several hundred moved onto the Coalition for Democratic Rights picket of State parliament anyway, and police arrested one hundred.

But the serious militant action needed to win the campaign was missing. A mass march by thousands of workers defying Bjelke Petersen's cops, or sustained strike action — the sort of activity needed to seriously challenge the government — didn't happen, and so August 20 must go down as another missed opportunity.

THE LONGTERM consequences of defeat in the SEQEB dispute will be serious.

Currently, union membership in Australia stands at about 55% of the workforce. In the US, it has dropped since 1980 from 23% to 18%, and many of the contributing factors are also present in Australia.

Since 1983, union membership is no longer necessary to work in the Queensland state public service, and many other jobs now have no preference for unionists. SEQEB will only accelerate this trend, as did the defeat of the PATCO air traffic controllers in the US.

But despite all these problems, the SEQEB workers can still win. The power industry is a crucial area for the employers even when, as in Queensland, much production is capital intensive.

The power workers faced brutal Essential Services legislation during their shorter hours campaign in 1981, but their defiance made it inoperable.

Today, scores of workers and supporters have been fined several hundred dollars a time under the Electrical (Contingency of Supply) Act for "harassing SEQEB workers" at pickets of electricity depots. These pickets, together with the strike committee's flying pickets, have been vital in keeping the dispute visible.

Despite police harassment and the pathetic failure of both union officials and the ALP to fight, the strike committee and groups like the Coalition for Democratic Rights supporting them have kept the struggle alive. So much so, that last month Senator George Georges felt moved to launch one of the most remarkable attacks in years by a Labor MP on the inaction of union leaders and his own party.

AND WHATEVER the failings of the rally on August 20, the fact that it happened at all, after the Brisbane TLC has spent fully six months trying to bury the SEQEB dispute, must be a sign of hope.

It is now clear that for the foreseeable future, the SEQEB workers — like the neanderthal premier who sacked them — simply refuse to fade away.

The question is, can they get around their obstructionist trade union "leaders" to win the sustained solidarity action that is the key to victory?

— Carolle Ferrier

ACTU Congress: So much to do, so little inclined to do it

THE biennial ACTU Congress will move to the centre stage of national politics this month. And with good reason.

The Mudginberri meatworkers dispute and the sackings in the Queensland power industry throw down serious challenges to the very existence of trade unions.

The BLF issue threatens to split the Socialist Left of the Victorian ALP asunder, and open up a membership poaching drive of epic proportions by other building unions in NSW.

And the Prices and Incomes Accord, the media and ACTU Executive keep assuring us, is under possibly terminal strain from Labor's attempts to discount the CPI adjustment for the effects of devaluation.

Anyone expecting decisive action on any of these vital issues from the Congress will be disappointed. The dominant factor in any ACTU Congress is the desire of the ACTU Executive to keep maximum room to manoeuvre for itself on any subject. The 500-odd union bureaucrats in attendance implicitly understand and accept this, since the same consideration dominates their own day-to-day dealings with employers and rank-and-file members.

So the ACTU Congress tends to be more an exercise in passing policies of sentiment, which may then loosely shape the Executive's stand in dealing with Government, or be used by individual unions to try and garner support from others.

Most likely to come away satisfied from the Congress is the meatworkers' union, the AMIEU. The Mudginberri dispute not only threatens the rights of meatworkers; it directly attacks the interests of trade union officials as well. Waterfront unions have already held stoppages in the AMIEU's sup-



CLIFF Dolan — pathetic "last chance" plea

port.

Mudginberri boss Jay Pendarvis has sought to freeze out the AMIEU and break down the industry's established tally system, which offers some protection of hours and conditions by fixing minimum and maximum bills.

Pendarvis has negotiated individual contracts with 35 employees, and claims to have doubled their wages under his new, speeded-up system. The Ford Motor Company did the same for a period, while it purged unionism from its plants in America seventy years ago.

But especially spine-chilling to any union official are the court orders that Pendarvis has gained, freezing the entire AMIEU funds of \$2.5 million. The AMIEU has quite rightly refused to pay a \$44,000 fine for picketing the Mudginberri abattoir, and employer groups have spent \$300,000 backing Pendarvis' legal campaign. The freeze on funds will undoubtedly concentrate the mind of union officials wonderfully, even if only to back a High Court challenge on the original dispute.

Less likely to get anything more than token support are the Queensland power workers, who plan to picket the ACTU Congress. They, too, are fighting against contract labour.

But Brisbane union officials have been undermining their campaign since February (see full report page 10). So they start behind the eight-ball in trying to get any serious ACTU backing.

The beleaguered BLF can expect little from the Congress.

In Victoria, the Hartley-Crawford wing of the ALP Socialist Left, based on unions like the Food Preservers and Plumbers, has been prepared to embarrass Cain over Gallagher's jailing (though not cross the floor in parliament against him).

But the "pragmatic" wing of the SL, including the powerful and influential AMWU led by John Halfpenny, has consistently backed off from any showdown. (This has led to strong rumours of an impending split in the SL.) With even key left unions ducking the issue, the Congress is unlikely to take up Gallagher's cause.

Even on the wider issue of deregistration, assistance to the BLF will be lukewarm at best. The NSW Labour Council positively went to the BLF smashed, with the state's other building unions vying to poach its members.

The best the ACTU Executive has come up with in the BLF's defence has been Cliff Dolan's pathetic, "Give them one more chance to behave" argument. Dolan's medicine against deregistration, if seriously applied, will be just as fatal to BLF members as the disease, turning their union into a belled and collared tatecat.



JOHN Halfpenny — unwilling to embarrass Cain

The Congress comes at a fortuitous time for the ACTU, being just at the start of the wage hearing. So we can expect to hear all sorts of bluster and grand-standing about "threats to the Accord", as the ACTU tries to dissuade Arbitration from discounting.

But bluster is all it will be. And the Government and the Commission know it. The ACTU took partial wage indexation on the chin for years under Malcolin Fraser, at a time when union militancy was much higher than today. The notion that union officials will ditch the Accord, imperiling both their precious Labor government and the plush

seats it has given them on EPAC and other government advisory bodies, just to protect us from a further one or two percent wage cut, is preposterous.

As ever, the end of the ACTU Congress will see us precisely where we were when it started.

And as ever, it will only be our own collective militancy rather than the posturing and policies of our union leaders that can protect us.

WOMEN

Hot air in Nairobi

INTERNATIONAL Women's Decade ended in July with a junket for thousands of women to Nairobi. They came to a United Nations organised conference, which, just like the UN, was a talkshop.

The conference mirrored the divisions and politics of the UN. It even had a set-piece debate between Russian and US delegates (the latter led by Ronald Reagan's daughter Maureen).

Every woman seemed to represent the country which delegated her. Hardly surprising, since most were government employees. Very few represented women's organisations.

The decade 1975-85 started out as a promising one for women's struggle. Instead, it saw the co-optation of much of the women's movement into reformist lobbying of governments. The rest of it fragmented into dead-ends of self-help, separatism, and limp "peace-feminism". A conference at the end of such a decade wouldn't be expected to organise anything. It didn't.

Neither did an alternative gathering, sponsored by non-government affiliates to the UN, which embarrassingly attracted 12,000 women. A sort of alternative UN, its main feature was support for liberation struggles.

Commendable that may be. But in the context of the long flight of the women's movement in the West away from class struggle, it represents just another exercise in self-help. The task of organising working women on the job, where they have real social power, remains unaddressed.

REVIEWS



Whatcha gonna do when ya got those STEEL CITY BLUES

Steel City Blues, by Julianne Schultz (Penguin 1985) \$7.95

BETWEEN 1982 and 1985, Australia's largest company, BHP, sacked over 15,000 workers in Wollongong.

Around the same time, the bubble of the "resources boom" burst. So Australian coal miners and the employment of coal exporters dropped too. The steel and coal industries employed almost half of the Wollongong workforce. Even when the economic recovery started, up to 20 per cent of the city's workers were unemployed.

In *Steel City Blues*, Julianne Schultz looks at why the steel industry was restructured. She considers the workers thrown out of their jobs and the young people who had no chance of getting jobs, and reviews the union struggles in 1983 over the mass sackings.

A former Financial Review journalist, Schultz lucidly shows how international competition and the drive for profits meant that BHP had to make its steel-making operations more efficient if it wanted to stay in the business. After all, what was the point in producing steel if the money spent on new mills, furnaces and ovens would draw a better return invested in another industry?

I'm glad to say that the book doesn't treat the unionists affected by the restructuring of the steel industry as passive victims. Schultz shows that the workers and some of the unemployed fought back.

At the Kemira colliery, workers occupied the mine for sixteen days. In October 1982, miners and supporters smashed in the doors to Parliament House in Canberra. The next month, forty young people marched from Wollongong to Sydney to demand the right to work.

1970s. But she fails to put them together and tell us not what Wollongong, but the entire Australian economy, can expect in the next few years.

She is right about the bleak future for Wollongong. Yet her solutions to Wollongong's problems are of the let's-all-hold-hands kind. Schultz argues that the local community should have more say in industrial developments (and governments should intervene to make sure this happens). There should be more "consultation" with the workforce, on the Swedish model, to achieve a more "humane" approach to restructuring.

These suggestions ignore the decisive role of BHP management, the support it receives from the Hawke Government, and the logic of capitalism. This is not alternative for companies but to seek higher profits. BHP and its workforce do not have anything in common on the decisive questions of redundancies, wages and conditions to "consult" about. Schultz's proposals also assume that the national economy will be able to sustain the current recovery. In the medium term, that is unlikely.

If there are no real prospects that capitalism will return to sustained growth, then the Swedish model merely means an improved cocktail service on the Titanic. Worse, the collaboration with hostile employers and governments that it involves stands in the way of building any militancy and organisation.

And that is what we need if steelworkers and coalminers are to pursue their real interests in the only way they can — at the expense of BHP.

— Rick Kuhn

Black comedy with a twist

SEEING the *Second Coming* still hasn't happened, it has become necessary to invent it. Thank heavens Percy Mwa and Mbonzeni Ngoma were around to do it, in their play *Wozza Albert!*

The scene is South Africa. The time, today. And who should emerge from a jumbo jet at Johannesburg airport but Morena — the Zulu christians' name for the messiah.

The government is beside itself with excitement. Has been cricketer on tour is one thing, but having the messiah is something else entirely. A major propaganda victory is at hand.

Not surprisingly, things don't quite work out like that. Morena's well-known penchant for the low life (remember the tax-collectors and prostitutes last time round?) brings him to Albert Street. This is where Johannesburg's unemployed blacks report to have their passports endorsed, so that they can get on in the city to look for work.

It seems like this give *Wozza Albert!* its real power. Mwa and Ngoma raise another stage in their scathing comic style, flashing their passports to prospective employers and slandering each other as liars, thieves, slanders.

banned

Beneath the force is real politics, and beneath that there is a political point. We are shown, even as we laugh, how it is that the forces of apartheid rule down bouts of shooting people — how they use their control of jobs and wages to promote competition among the oppressed, among those who most desperately need unity.

This idea emerges again when Morena visits a brickyard. By this time, he has gone over to the cause of the blacks and been declared a banned person (*detey*). The ward owner offers one of the black workers a position as foreman in return for him fetching the police.

Morena is arrested. The inevitable trial and execution follow (although crucifixion has given way to the A-bomb, and when Morena goes, Capetown goes with him). Just as inevitable is the resurrection three days later.

But this time Morena brings a few friends back with him — Albert Luthuli, Steve Biko and other South African fighters against racism and oppression. This time, we see, it is not the meek who are going to inherit the earth.

— Graham Willott



NORM Gallagher — little chance of ACTU support

The Wealthiest 200: It's a bit bloody rich!



with Alec Kahn

RARELY read Business Review Weekly. Tales of takeover bids are about as fascinating as watching fluorescent lights flicker.

But once a year, I rush out to get it. For it lists Australia's 200 richest people, how wealthy they are, and how they got there. Unwittingly, it destroys capitalism's most cherished myths about itself.

Let me say at the outset that socialists are not, or shouldn't be, opposed to wealth as such.

On the contrary, we are for making it universal. The one defensible thing that Labor show-pony Pete Steedman said during his brief career as an MP was, when tackled for driving a Jag, that socialists were for Jags being accessible to all.

No, we oppose the iniquitous way that capitalism distributes wealth. Officially, it is supposed to reward hard work and initiative.

Yet not one nurse rushing around wards for sixty hours a week, or coalminer sweating underground, makes it into the Richest 200. By amazing coincidence, every one of the nation's 200 hardest workers happens to own a company, or play the stockmarket, or both.

NOW people have actually argued to me, with grave and furious mien, that this is as it should be. Capitalists, it seems, work incredibly long hours, shoulder incredible responsibilities, and earn every cent of the \$15 million minimum to get on to the Top 200 list.

Let us leave aside the fact that employers have had a standing offer for over a century from the workers' movement to relieve them of these onerous management chores.

Listen instead to Stan Perron on the subject of long hours. Worth \$120 million, Stan is WA's second richest man, controlling Prestige Motors, nine shopping centres, and assorted car parks, office blocks and industrial sites.

"I work a three-day week and leave myself enough time for a bit of golf and my boat," says Stan. "But I still enjoy my work. It's like a hobby."

On a three-day week, it would be. But Arnold Glass, car dealer and property magnate worth \$20 million, appears not to work at all. He lives in a Monte Carlo penthouse, racing cars and boats, flying jets, and hunting big game. "I've got so many things to do," says harried Arnold.

"The world is full of willing people — some willing to work and others willing to let them," says insurance tycoon Lawrence Adler (\$100m), summing it up perfectly. Adler sees himself as the former, of course, and recently claimed to be working a 20-hour day. But, it transpired, this was while he was fighting off a fraud suit in the NSW Supreme Court.

NOT that the entire capitalist class sits around swanning itself, far from it. Making a fortune from the labour of others can take a lot of effort. But whether one can call it "work" in any socially useful sense of the word is debatable.



HOLMES a Court — tops the bosses with \$300 million.

**Gimme!
Gimme!**



PACKER — sacked 120 despite \$200 million

Take Rene Rivkin, stockbroker. Worth \$18 million, he shuffles shares for his clients all day. An insomniac, he then plays the New York and London stock exchanges all night. Socially useful work? I doubt it.

Or 82-year-old Charles Viertel. He claims, "I'm so poor I have to keep working at my age." Before you lend him a shoulder to cry on, by "poor" Viertel means he only has \$50 million. By "working", he means he is Australia's biggest stock market speculator.

But what about the risks that capitalists take, the vision that they show? Don't these deserve reward? (We'll ignore that church-ist interjection that risk-taking and guesswork would be redundant in a socialist planned economy.)

John David, worth \$100 million after seizing control of three wholesale grocery chains in Victoria, admits there was little vision involved. "People don't believe me. They say I'm a long-range thinker. But it really fell into my lap and I had to grab the opportunity and run."

As for risk, the only risk Dallas Dempster faced was to his vocal chords. He lobbied the WA government, and Labor premier Brian Burke let him open Perth's first casino. Dempster is \$25 million richer as a result.

Kerry Packer's GTV9 got into trouble last year. The only risk was to station employees; Packer sacked 120 of them. His Consolidated Press still made \$18 million profit, and Packer now owns \$200 million.

BUT what really boggles the mind is not the hypocrisy of it all. It is the fantastic disproportion between the rewards that the top bosses get for robbing us, and what we get for a reasonably honest day's work.

Robert Holmes a Court, now Australia's richest man, increased his wealth \$135 million last year, or over \$15,000 an hour. He got as much for an average night's sleep as the typical worker will earn in eight years.

Figures compiled by the Ministry of Social Security, based on death duty statistics, indicate that

just 215,000 people have about \$170 billion out of Australia's total private wealth of \$500 billion. So 34 percent of the wealth belongs to just 1.4 percent of the population. So much for Australia, the classless society.

Having said all that, let's not fall for the old Labor chestnut that socialism simply means redistribution of wealth.

True, Lenin's dictum that the highest wage under socialism should be no more than four times the lowest is a good one.

But redistributing the wealth of the top 1.4 percent — those with \$300,000 or more — would merely mean an extra \$11,000 for each of the rest of us, or \$45,000 per family. Useful, but hardly the basis for a society of abundance.

No, the real achievement of socialism will be to re-organise production, so that the wasteful industries like advertising and armaments, the wastefulness of unemployment, the waste of human potential in alienating work, will all go.

This waste, however, is only inflicted on us so that the Richest 200 and their ilk can maintain their positions of privilege.

So depriving the Murdochs, the Holmes a Courts and the Packers of their richly undeserved riches will be one of the more delightful tasks of a socialist revolution.

Then when **Business Review Weekly** puts out a list of Australia's wealthiest, it will have to be the size of the telephone directory.

SOCIALIST ACTION

No. 2 OCTOBER 4, 1985 30 CENTS




**STH AFRICA:
THE ROAD TO
REVOLUTION**



- Equal Pay ... a case of comparable worth?
- Why the bosses hate the BLF (and we defend it)

CAT'S EYE

POLL FRAUD 

Card sharps in trouble

BY THE time you read this, certain young movers-and-shakers in John Cain's Victorian ALP bureaucracy may be facing police charges of electoral malpractices and fraud, arising out of August's Nunawading-by-election.

The cops have been very interested in a fake how-to-vote card, distributed by about 150 ALP supporters, which attempted to trick NDP voters into directing their preferences to Labor.

The card had, in big letters, "Voters for Nuclear Disarmament", employing the two key words of the NDP's name. It went on, "Don't waste your vote, place a number in every square", and then directed preferences to NDP 2 Democrats 3 ALP. The card contained nothing to dissociate it from the NDP, which had decided not to allocate preferences in protest at ALP sell-outs on nuclear policy.

Cat's Eye's sources in the ALP have supplied it with a list of the chief culprits. We understand that the *National Times* and radio motormouth Derryn Hinch also have the list, and that police are already interviewing people. However, as even the rankst Labor opportunists deserve protection from the cops, we refrain from publishing it.

It will surprise no one, though, that names connected with the Socialist Forum group and the moderate wing of the ALP Socialist Left are on the list.

What really staggers us is the stupidity of the play. Suppose Labor had won. The victory would have been narrow, and the Libs would have gone straight to the Court of Disputed Returns and used the fake card to obtain yet another by-election. (The Libs themselves say this.) Tarrred by the scandal of the fake card, Labor would have been certain to lose.

Now, even if the cops don't press charges, they have dirt on up-and-coming Labor figures that they can use to extract future favours.

It all proves two things. One — the people who style themselves as realistic and pragmatic are in fact amazingly stupid. And two — certain elements of the ALP would rather tickle anti-nuclear voters into giving Labor their preferences, than earn votes through fair dinkum anti-nuclear policies.



CAIN — underlings in trouble



HOSPITABLE Hugh Morgan

DEALS 

Libs, Labor to oust left

THE Queensland ALP perennially dreams of unity with the Liberals and is perennially snubbed. The ALP in Sydney local government has had rather more success.

Right-wing ALP aldermen on Sydney City Council had done a deal with the Liberal aldermen. They are combining to remove all left wing ALP and independent aldermen from Committee chair positions. Prominent left independents Jack Munday and Brian McGeah will lose their posts as a result. In return, the right-wing ALPers will get all the jobs.

This highlights the dilemma of ALP members who try to organise on the left. Whenever there is a brawl, the left ultimately votes with the right for the sake of public unity. In Victoria, for example, the Socialist Left did not dare cross the floor to vote against the anti-BLF legislation.

The ALP right has no such principles. They will organise with the Libs whenever it suits their purposes. So why does the Labor left keep grovelling after them?

URANIUM 

Roxby hits rock bottom

THE uranium from Roxby Downs is not selling too well. In fact, Western Mining has had no orders at all.

What a shame for Western Mining boss Hugh Morgan,

that devout Christian who shows such concern for the traditional Aboriginal owners of the Roxby site.

To get some forward sales, Western Mining is lying fifteen government bureaucrats on a junket to the Olympic Dam site to "familiarise" themselves with the operation.

The bureaucrats are perfectly familiar with it already, of course. The junket is just to persuade them to help Morgan flog the stuff to their fellow-bureaucrats in semi-government electricity authorities overseas.

There is even talk in the uranium industry that if Western Mining gets no orders by Christmas, it might abort the whole Roxby project.

What a waste of effort all Bob Hawke's pro-Roxby campaigning at the last ALP Conference will have been then! No wonder Labor is allowing this flagrant piece of "duchessing" and favour-buying by Western Mining to go ahead.

HOT AIR 

Doubletalk from Hawke


AT LAST month's ACTU Congress, Bob Hawke pontificated that violence has no place in the Australian labour movement.

Steve Black, NSW secretary of the BLF, has taken this to heart. He has invited Hawke to deregister the Master Builders' Association for killing six building workers in the past year.

Black is still waiting for Hawke's reply. Perhaps Hawke is too busy blowing hot air over his nuclear whipping boy, President Mitterrand of France.

Hawke is trying to deflect attention from his vigorous defence of the US nuclear war machine, by getting outraged about French tests at Mururoa Atoll. His barb that if testing is so safe, why doesn't Mitterrand do it in France, makes him sound tough.

We have a tough question for Hawke. If American bases in Australia aren't nuclear targets, why doesn't Reagan take them back to Washington?

YOUTH WAGES 

Clip joint does it out

UNDER Western Australia's industrial laws, an employer can make an application to the Industrial Relations Commission for permission to employ someone on less than award wages.

So Mainline Salons, a Perth-based hairdressing chain applied to the Commission to employ 17-year-old Jeanette Terpkos on \$75 a week.

The Mainline chain withdrew its application when it realised that this was less than Jeanette would be entitled to on the dole.

Mr Jack Dames, manager of the chain, said "We had not realised Jeanette could get \$85 on the dole. It looked ridiculous paying her less when the basic wage is so low anyway".

Mainline changed its mind at a preliminary hearing, when the move was opposed by other salon owners and the Hairdressers Employees Union.

The \$90.59 that Jeanette will earn, including penalty rates for Saturday, still looks scandalous to us. But it doesn't end there.

The giant McDonalds hamburger chain and a West Australian paint manufacturer are still waiting for hearing dates before the Commission with similar applications.

Great questions of our time:

WHY TAKE A HAND-OUT WHEN YOU CAN WORK FOR A PITTANCE?



INTERNATIONAL

It's too late for reforms now, "Masta" Botha

MYTHS AND rumours of reform have started to tumble out of besieged white South Africa.

Will there be a referendum to give blacks the vote? Will the whites retreat into their own "Homeland"? Will Botha scrap the pass laws?

The answer to these questions is generally "no", but the fact that they are being raised reflects the seriousness of the regime's crisis. The suggestions of "reform" are so hollow that South African blacks simply will not accept them.

The "white homeland" idea is laughable. It involves fencing off all the best bits of the country (for agriculture, mining and engineering) and allowing the blacks the rest.

The suggestion of changing the pass laws was made by Botha's own Presidential council. But it does not mean abolishing them, and it will not even be discussed by parliament until early next year.

The one reform that might go through is the restoration of citizenship to those deemed to be residents of the homelands. If it does, it will raise the question: what's so great about being a black citizen of South Africa? Your movements are still controlled, your unions are still suppressed, and you still don't have a vote.

STAKES have been raised on both sides in South Africa in the past few weeks. On the one hand, the white state decided to take a hard line against the proposed demonstration at Nelson Mandela's prison.

On the other hand, the black opposition is becoming increasingly convinced of the need to bring down the white power structure. A leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF) coalition stated at the end of August:

"We are tired of apartheid and we are tired of being killed. We are going to fight — We are going to destroy everything in this country. And on the ashes of apartheid we will build a new South Africa."

The rioting continues, despite the fact that the movement has suffered a couple of serious defeats in the last month.

The first was the annihilation of the Mandela demonstration.

Many of those who gathered to demonstrate fought back heroically against the state forces. But given that the UDF advocates non-violence, while the police and troops clearly do not, it would seem that the limits of this sort of protest have been reached.

The black opposition need a far more potent weapon than their bodies to bring down apartheid.

That weapon lies in the organisation of the black working class, a weapon that does not rely on the balance of fire-power, but on the potential stranglehold that black workers have on the economy.

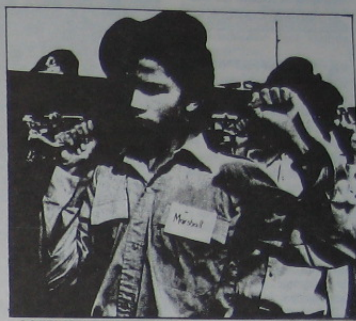
WHICH brings us to the second of the movement's recent defeats. On September 4, the National Union of Mine-workers suspended its strike after two days, and returned to the industrial courtroom.

From the beginning, the strike was weakened by the fact that it was aimed at only three of the mining houses. Had it been total, the pressure on the bosses to cave in, given the state of the rest of the economy, would have been tremendous.

The strikers were driven back to work by intimidation, sackings and threats of deportation to the



MANDELA'S daughter Zini: police bring up a march to his jail



COFFINS and clenched fists: a whole generation is being steeped in struggle

homelands. The only way they could have withstood those threats was by calling for support from other workers.

These defeats reflect the chronic weakness of political leadership within the black opposition. No-one seems to know where to go from here on in. The UDF presents a confused picture — of violence and non-violence, of reform and revolution. Bishop Tutu has suggested a week-long stay-at-home and avoidance of confrontation — a defensive tactic, when the movement desperately needs to go on the offensive.

The mighty power of the black trade unions has yet to be unleashed, because their present leaders do not recognise the need to use their industrial strength for a political goal: the destruction of the white state.

Many blacks look to the exiled African National Congress (ANC) to fill the leadership vacuum. Yet despite its guerrilla operations, the ANC's political network within South Africa, not to speak of political control, remains quite weak. Their actual involvement in the struggle — in the townships, the schools and the factories — seems limited. One of their leaders admitted in August:

"We have got to be frank. We feel that we are lagging behind the general political development of the country. We dare not let our people down."

The ANC received a deal of publicity when in September, it met with white business leaders, including Gavin Kelly, head of the huge Anglo-American corporation, to discuss the future of

South Africa.

The issues discussed were not revealed. But with white business desperately calling for reform in order to stem South Africa's capital outflow, the elements are clearly there for some sort of deal. If an understanding has been reached, black workers can forget about political leadership from the ANC — because it will have been reached with the very white employers that they are fighting.

NEVERTHELESS, all is not gloom. The movement in South Africa has received a couple of setbacks. But it has not been destroyed.

The mineworkers' forces are intact, and the strike may start again if the union fails in court. The rioting continues, as does the struggle to re-open the schools. Tutu's stay-at-home message may escalate into a larger confrontation.

Most importantly, Botha's ability to reform his way out of the crisis is severely limited. Firstly, he would have to create a black elite as a buffer between the white power structure and its enemies. Such a creature would need money, which the ailing economy can ill afford. Secondly, he would have to overcome the resistance of South Africa's 5 million whites, whose lifestyle and privileges are based on the continued suppression of the black majority.

The unlikelihood of either of these prospects means that revolution is still on the agenda in South Africa today.

— David Lockwood

PEACE MOVEMENT

Alec Kahn looks at the issues at Australia's first national disarmament conference

ANY CONFERENCE that Ages beyond mere hot air is a relief. So the first national disarmament conference, held in Melbourne a month ago, was a rare event indeed.

Over 500 peace activists attended. Despite such frizziness as "consensus decision-making" and a workshop on "inner peace", the conference is likely to produce an annual "Maralinga Day" and increased solidarity with liberation struggles in the Philippines, New Caledonia and elsewhere in the Pacific.

But it was the political defeats inflicted on the "compromisers" of the peace movement that made the conference so significant.

The Socialist Forum group led a push to change the movement's aim from closure of US bases to their "internationalisation" under UN control. Supposedly, they could then monitor both Russian and American arms. The public and Labor will find this more "reasonable", Socialist Forum argues.

National Times editor Brian Toohey crushed the technical aspects of Socialist Forum's argument. Even Pine Gap, he argued, our least obviously offensive US base, does not require arms verification (just 0.3% of its activity). It actually helps the US evade monitoring, by detecting holes in Russia's radar cover. And no base here can monitor the US.

So if Socialist Forum's proposal was adopted, the US would not only have to hand over Pine Gap. It would then have to provide the expertise to set up a similar base and satellites to spy on itself! This, Socialist Forum seems to believe, is a more "realistic" demand than closing the base!

The proposal is a political fantasy too. The UN represents the ruling classes of the globe, and is dominated by the US and Russia when it comes to action. At best, it is useless for peace-keeping; at worst, it covers for aggression, as it did for the US in Korea in 1951.

THE CONFERENCE also saw a push for an "even-handed" approach to Russia and the US.

In one sense, the movement already has this. It correctly



Patrick White and Tom Urey at Palm Sunday: moves to drop it

A base compromise bombs out

demands "disarmament east and west". But its immediate demands rightly focus on the US, the superpower our rulers play host to.

ANU Peace Institute head Andrew Mack and Sydney PND heavy Mavis Robertson argued that "even-handedness" would ward off accusations of pro-Russian bias.

In practice, this could only mean aiming our demands and actions at both superpowers jointly. This would cripple the peace movement. There are virtually no Russian "targets" for protest action in Australia. And our inability to shift Russian troops from Eastern Europe or whatever "even-handed" demand we made) would give Bob Hawke a perfect excuse to do nothing about US bases and warships.

No, the best thing we can do to disarm Russia is to disarm the West. That will remove the main threat—the nuclear threat from Washington—that ties Russian bloc workers to their bosses. It will allow more revolutionary upheavals like Hungary in 1956, Prague in 1968, and Poland in 1980, that could really disarm the Kremlin.

However, we must differ with comrades in the Socialist Workers Party, who led the opposition to the "even-handed" line.

The SWP argued that

Russia's nuclear weapons were basically defensive. And true, Russia is weaker. Its GNP is only half America's, and its arms spending is a greater strain. So its arms build-up is more "defensive", its interest in an arms freeze (though not necessarily disarmament) more real.

But what is Russia "defending"? Clearly, an imperialist empire. Its nuclear capacity, with its other military might, helps enforce its rule. A genuine socialist state would defend itself by encouraging Western workers to revolution, not by threatening them with nuclear extinction.



Andrew Mack — "even-handed" push

marches. Understandably, they cannot handle the strain of organising them any more. But the move also had a political basis. Palm Sunday's religious connotations, and the fact that Neville Wran quitted happily leads the Sydney parade, mean that its "protest" value is dubious.

If the proposal was to shift the march to a Friday night or a Saturday morning, when it would be more disruptive, it would be a good one. But to drop it altogether would draw the movement's already blunted teeth entirely.

Melbourne PND has now ditched the proposal, and Palm Sunday will go ahead in Victoria at least, with a wider organisational base.

Yet there is a problem with Palm Sunday. One activist unwittingly encapsulated it. He argued, "We must build the marches bigger and bigger until we win. That's how we did it over Vietnam."

BUT THREE OTHER factors got the troops out of Vietnam as well.

One was America's military defeat. A second was the smaller, more militant marches that accompanied the moratoriums and drew the movement in a more radical direction. Even Labor's Jim Cairns had to publicly contemplate the mass seizure of company offices by marchers.

The third factor was worker involvement. One hundred thousand "stopping work to stop the war" posed far more threat to the bosses than 400,000 quietly parading on a Sunday.

Obviously, the first factor does not apply today. But the other two do.

We already have huge marches. But the movement lacks a militant cutting edge — direct actions that can draw in increasing numbers and pose a real, radicalising threat. That, in turn, can inspire workers to take action on the job, where it really hurts.

None of this is far-fetched. Wharfies in Melbourne, for example, have just voted to strike while any US or French warship visits, and help hold demonstrations.

The peace movement is already committed to a campaign against Pine Gap. Bob Hawke is the target of an anti-nuclear protest early this month. Sydney activists have a sitting-duck target for direct action in the PADX military exhibition next May, an arms bazaar that the ACTU has voted to oppose.

The disarmament conference has, for the moment, stopped the forces of despair and "compromise" in the peace movement.

The challenge now is for activists to move to a strategy of militancy and worker action that can win.

NATIONAL POLITICS

Labor's "new Accord": Second verse, same as the first

THE GOVERNMENT negotiated a "second Accord" with the unions in September. Like the first one, it involves give and take. Workers give up part of their real wages, and bosses take higher profits.

We have to accept discounting of our CPI wage rise in April. In return, we get tax cuts... five months later. Half-yearly wage cases put our CPI rises months behind price increases anyhow.

Delays aside, the tax cuts will still not make good the wage cut. If you earn \$300 now, you'll lose about \$9 out of the Accord deal. Keating's tax reorganisation won't compensate you, either, because inflation will put you into higher tax brackets.

None of this is surprising. The original Accord was a rip-off too.

It continued Fraser's wage freeze, and unions agreed to seek wage rises only through Arbitration. Hawke promised to reduce



Simon Crean boasts of profit leap

unemployment, maintain real wages in the long term, involve the unions in economic decisions, and improve the "social wage" (health, education and welfare). He also promised to make up what we lost in the wage freeze.

Since then, real wages have fallen about 25% a week. The "catch-up" for the freeze has been forgotten. The "social wage" promise has produced Medicare

and little else.

And the Medicare fiddle was used to even break the promise to maintain the level of real wages after the freeze. When Medicare came in, most of the health component of the CPI was removed, even though health care through the tax levy. So for that six months, the CPI, and hence our wage indexation, considerably understated the real cost-of-living rise.

Paul Keating grows about recent economic growth. And true, Hawke's early spending programs, especially in housing, probably helped economic recovery. But the main factor has been the economic upturn in the industrialised world, fueled by US arms expenditure.

The main "achievement" of the Accord — and Keating and Simon Crean openly boast about it — has been to increase the share of profits in national income at the expense of wages.

Union officials are participating in policy-making. But they are making policies that cost us money.

So why the revamped Accord? The decline in unemployment and the growth in profits since early 1983 has put some pressure on the old agreement. Today, more unionists are aware that they can win higher wages through concerted industrial action. The BLF claims to have won widespread over-award increases; up to \$100 a week. The Food Preservers have also done well outside Arbitration.

Reflecting this, there was even a smidgen of opposition to the new deal at the ACTU Congress.

So the 1985 Accord aims to solve a short term problem: getting the unions to accept wage discounting for the effects of the dollar devaluation, and preventing a wage rise in line with



Paul Keating and a personally cut figure

productivity increases (promised in the original Accord). To achieve this, Labor had to dangle tax cuts before our eyes.

The devaluation meant the price of imports rose and the price of exports fell. That helped make Australian industry more internationally competitive.

Keating argues that the benefits which devaluation has brought to employers will suffer if wages go up, because higher labour costs will lead to higher prices for Australian goods once again.

But why should workers pay for the competitiveness of Australian bosses? Keating just wants us to subsidise their already soaring profits.

Meanwhile, the tax cuts are basically a fraud. (See story below.)

In return for our lost productivity rise, Labor promises a national superannuation scheme. But half the workforce are already in super schemes. Employers will still be able to manipulate super funds to their own benefit.

And some government people privately admit that the 3 per cent agreed to simply pre-empted a 4 per cent claim by the Transport Workers which would have set a precedent.

This second Accord only aims to deal with the situation over the next year. It is much more a temporary holding operation than the first Accord. Which is not to say that Canberra's wage-cutting will stop next year.

On the contrary, The current recovery won't last forever. Already, the US economy seems to be faltering.

During the next recession, the government and employers will get much tougher, because sackings will put unionists on the defensive. Workers will think twice about striking over wages and conditions. Bosses will try to shore up declining profits with lay-offs and wage cuts, and a new government strategy will undoubtedly be devised to help them.

Current attacks on the BLF could signal far more generalised union bashing in 1986 or 1987.

Meanwhile, this second Accord will demoralise union militants by throttling industrial action, at a time when the pickings would be relatively easy if we stood up and fought.

— Rick Kuhn

This is a "tax revolution"?

PAUL Keating's tax shuffle offers workers nothing.

Earnings over \$35,000 will be taxed at an 11 per cent lower rate. Those below \$12,000 have their tax rate cut a measly one per cent.

The capital gains tax is a joke. Even in its fifth year, it will raise only \$25 million — if the Libs

don't win office and scrap it first.

And the attacks on fringe benefits prove little. Hawke is merely trying to force capital into more productive areas. High income earners have their tax cuts and tax-free dividend payments to console them. As companies will pay the new tax on fringe

benefits, there is nothing to stop them passing on the cost in higher prices anyway.

Keating points to the paltry tax cuts already promised to workers in return for wage discounting. By the time we get those cuts, most of us will be paying more tax through the usual inflationary spiral. In real

terms, we will be poorer.

Overall, between November 1984 and July 1987, wage earners below \$30,000 will take a cut in real income. Those above \$30,000 will get an increase.

Some tax revolution. If only shows that under capitalism, three things are inevitable: death, taxes, and treachery from the Labor Party.

The Stock Exchange — no more dividend tax

READERS WRITE

Nice cat, but a catch

It's good to see that *Socialist Action* has adopted the IWW cat as its logo, if it is understood to stand for the best of the Wobbly tradition. That is, independent, collective and militant working class action in pursuit of a better life now and the overturn of capitalism soon.

Unfortunately, the explanation of the logo in *Socialist Action*

number one seemed to endorse the weakest feature of IWW politics: The Wobblies' advocacy of sabotage in the collective power of the working class. Moralistic acts of sabotage by individuals are a dead end when, as has been the case through most of Aust-

ralian history, open forms of struggle are available to workers. Wobbly support for sabotage made it much easier for the police to frame the IWW Twelve in 1916 for trying to burn down Sydney. The Wobblies' related neglect of the need for a coherent political organisation then made

it easier for the Hughes Government to smash the group altogether. I'm sure that a majority of Socialist Action members reject these aspects of IWW politics.

By the way, "readers familiar with working class history" will have flexed their claws in irritation at the name *Socialist Action* used for the IWW cat. It was, in fact, known as the "Sab Cat".

RICK KUHN
Canberra

SOCIALIST ACTION welcomes letters from readers. Please try to keep them under 300 words. Address all correspondence to P.O. Box 274, Brunswick, Vic. 3056.

THE THINGS we hear. A little birdie tells us that 400 US Naval officers are booked into a certain Hobart hotel for next January.

Couldn't be for MX missile tests, could it? Or has the Pentagon just forgotten to cancel its reservations after the last kerfuffle?

SO THE charming Sheila Silverman has fleeced the Orange People cult and their guru, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, of \$78 million.

"Ma Sheela" led the cult's infamous takeover of the town of Antelope, Oregon. She dismissed local kids as "retarded", told the cult's private army to shoot opponents, and bussed in 4000 vagrants to try to capture Wasco county at election time.

The Bhagwan just kept building his collection of 91 Rolls Royces. His yuppie devotees kept singing the praises of unbridled free enterprise. Now the Orange People have had

their apple-cart upset by the second biggest banana. Servens them bloody well right.



CHEAP SHOTS

THE GOVERNMENT of Uttar Pradesh, a north Indian state, has spent two million rupees (\$200,000) getting its budget passed.

First it showered MPs, journalists and officials with gifts ranging from suitcases to vacuum flasks. Then it shouled MPs twenty successive five-course gourmet lunches. Despite Uttar Pradesh's poverty and a \$178 million deficit, the budget went through without a murmur.

"This is a corrupt convention," said one MP. "But I can't explain why none of the major opposition parties has opposed it."

Funny. We can think of two million reasons.

IS IT TRUE that John Howard has had a charisma bypass operation?

OPPOSITION to ID cards has come from an unexpected quarter. Joh Bjelke-Petersen went on radio to say, "They'll press a button, and it'll all come out, and if you're a man who's in the Liberal Party or the National Party, then you won't get the job."

Obviously Joh thinks Canberra has cottoned on to more of his methods than just attacking union rights!

PERTH high-tech millionaire Kevin Parry has donated \$260,000 to WA Institute of Technology for oceanographic research. But hold the applause.

Parry gets a big tax rebate. And the rights to any research findings. Very handy for business and his America's Cup challenge and his attempt to set a world record by sailing round the globe three times.

And he can count on an honorary doctorate for WAIT to boot.

STILL over in the west, WA Institute of Technology's Student Council has applied to join the Confederation of Industry.

What is a student body doing joining a group that is trying to cut youth wages, you ask? The Council sucks want cheap legal advice on how to screw their own workers!

SO MUCH for "academic freedom". A New Right watchdog group called Accuracy in Academia plans to monitor left-wing professors in America.

Head of Accuracy in Academia, Malcolm Coward, says, "We're looking for political bias based on incorrect information." Maybe he could start with his own claim that there are 10,000 known Marxist teachers on US campuses.

NOW THAT Ronald Reagan has calmed down after the Beirut hijacking, he might like to think about the following:

Hijacking first caught on when a Cuban plane was forced at gun-point to head for Miami in April 1959, four months after the Cuban revolution. So severe was the American treatment of the hijackers that two more planes



● THIS IS Brisbane Special Branch cop Barry Krosch in action, roughing up a young woman at a demonstration.

Krosch likes the company of young folk, especially students, so much that he has enrolled for an International Relations course at Queensland University. Now he can sit in on tutorials, noting students who raise left-wing viewpoints and unconventional ideas.

The Democratic Rights Activists Club at the university is demanding that professional snoop Krosch quits the campus. When they published a leaflet to this effect, campus security guards immediately began patrolling outside his lectures and tutorials!

were forcibly redirected to the US in 1959.

Airline officers commented, "The US encouragement to air piracy made the sad record of six Cuban planes being hijacked by October 1960."

ARGUING against US divestment from South Africa, Johannesburg business chief Nigel Mandy says that American TV programs

Not really, Nige. They'd still have Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela to look up to, or are those black heroes rated PGR?

INDUSTRIAL POLITICS

THE Builders Labourers Federation is Australia's most militant and controversial union today. Its leader, Norm Gallagher, is currently in jail; two Labor governments want to destroy it; and the NSW Trades & Labour Council won't even recognise it.

In this special feature, TOM O'LINCOLN examines the politics of the BLF, its rise to infamy, and why we defend it. And on page 10, he recalls an even more radical chapter of the BLF's history — its remarkable NSW branch of the early 1970s.

The BLF: Making of a maverick

Norm Gallagher — jailed for trivia

THIS HAS certainly been a great year for union-bashing. Northern Territory meatworkers and Queensland power workers have faced vicious attacks, while John Howard talks of "breaking union power".

But the anti-union drive that has captured the most media attention nationally is the attempt to destroy the Builders Labourers. Tragically and ironically, this union-bashing exercise is being carried out by Labor governments at both State and Federal level, with the collusion of the ACTU to boot!

Norm Gallagher has been jailed on trivial charges dealing with an ancient and not very interesting scandal. The evidence against him was flimsy, and yet he got a jail sentence, while the bosses allegedly involved with him got off with good behaviour bonds. It has since emerged that one juror was browbeaten into rendering a guilty verdict.

With Gallagher behind bars, Bob Hawke and John Cain have felt able to rev up the campaign against the union itself.

Cain's BLF (De-recognition) Act would withdraw any legal status or protection for the union from Victorian awards and entitlements. BLF members on State government projects would have to quit the union or be sacked, and the government could seize union funds and property. By threatening

employers and subcontractors on State projects with the loss of their contracts, Cain hopes to blackmail them into sacking BLF members.

Hawke's Building Industry Bill would give the Minister almost unlimited power to restrict the operations of the BLF and to exclude its members from particular projects. Through the Arbitration Commission, the Minister could allocate the BLF's members to other unions, and impose fines of up to \$10,000.

Socialist Action is for the unconditional defence of the Builders Labourers against these attacks. But if we are to fight the union-bashers effectively, we need to understand the nature of this controversial union; its history, its strengths and its weaknesses, and the reasons why it is being singled out for attack.

WHARFIES were once the bogymen of the employing class. The media portrayed them as irresponsible brawlers, wild-eyed reds and criminals.

These days the Builders Labourers get the same treatment. Striking doctors are accused "acting like Builders Labourers". Norm Gallagher is perhaps the most vilified man in Australia.

In response, some people see the BLs as romantic fighters, even revolutionaries. The union leaders, with their "Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win" t-shirts, encourage this image.

In reality the rank and file BLs are just ordinary workers. They battle to get by, and sometimes they battle the boss.

A couple of decades ago, builders' labourers were a downtrodden group at the bottom of a ruthless industry. A Sydney BL, Barney Barnett remembers when labourers had no toilets, no lunch rooms, no water on site. They would find themselves locked off a job on a wet day and get no compensation.

"In those days the death or injury of a labourer meant only a 40 cent 'position vacant' ad in the next day's paper."

Then in the sixties, Communists and other leftists won leadership of the union.

A rank and file team led by Jack Munday of the Communist Party won control of the NSW branch, and Maoist Norm Gallagher rose to power in Victoria. Gallagher also became federal secretary.



THESE LEADERS were able to build up the union because the industry began to boom in the late sixties. With their bargaining position strengthened, BLs fought for permanency, accident pay, improved safety conditions and higher wages. And they did so against a background of struggle in society as a whole.

These years saw the number and power of strikes grow by leaps and bounds, and a political radicalisation of workers and students.

Sydney took the lead. Union membership in NSW grew from 4000 in 1968 to around 12,000 in 1973. In 1970 the Sydney builders' labourers took on and defeated the employers in a spectacular strike.

Melbourne and the smaller States soon followed suit. When Sydney BLs began placing "green bans" on environmentally

(continued page 8)



BLF members mix it with cops

INDUSTRIAL POLITICS

unsound projects, their example was followed in Victoria. At the same time a rivalry grew up between the two State branches, based on Maoist-Communist Party jealousies.

The boom turned to bust in 1974. Unemployment rose, and in Sydney in particular the BLs were suddenly in a much weaker position.

At this point federal secretary Norm Gallagher intervened to smash his rivals in NSW. After the near-destruction of the NSW branch at his hands, many people thought the BLF was vulnerable. Other unions in NSW became very hostile, hoping to poach the BLFs members.

YET THE BLF HAS SURVIVED AND REBUILT. National membership has risen by about eighty per cent. The NSW branch has grown from about 3000 after the intervention to about 14,000.

The BLF was better placed to survive the economic recessions of the past decade than many thought. Technological change has eroded the role of tradesmen and increased that of labourers. At the 1983 ACTU Congress, for the first time, the BLF had more delegates than the main tradesmen's union, the BWIU.

The economic recovery of the past couple of years has further strengthened the union in bargaining strength and membership terms.

The BLF is efficiently run and has a lot of organisers. This means both that Gallagher's machine can keep dissenters within the union under control, and that the employers find his organisation hard to crack.

This strength has allowed them to act more militantly at times than other unions. The BLs storm into insurance offices, and

have even charged up Melbourne's parliament steps over health and safety legislation, clashing with police. They won a big victory at Victoria's Loy Yang power station, screwing major wage gains out of the State government.

And some employers hate them for it. Those represented by the Master Builders Association would like the industry under the thumb of the arbitration system, and would prefer tame-act unions like the Ironworkers and AWU.

But many of the developers who operate outside the MBA are just out for a quick buck. They'd rather do deals with the BLF outside arbitration, to avoid strife and get the job done fast. Many of them support the union against its rivals.

The biggest building job going in Sydney last year was run by Multiplex, the biggest in Melbourne by Grollo. Both are chummy with the BLF leadership.

'Odd allies?' But in reality, collaborating with employers is a big part of the BLF approach, whether it's the gross variety as when Gallagher smashed the NSW branch of the union, or more subtle alliances with the likes of Grollo.

In 1982 Gallagher attacked a Royal Commission into the industry as an attempt by the MBA to "smash the union and to destroy the developers as rival contractors".

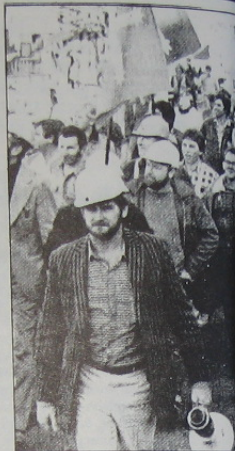
EVEN GALLAGHER'S MAOIST POLITICS ENVOKE CLASS COLLABORATION. The union's flag is not the red banner of class struggle, but the blue Eureka flag of nationalism. This means a political alliance with Australian bosses.

When the Mainline firm collapsed in 1974, the BLF supported E. A. Watts moving in to take over, despite Watts' poor industrial record. They knew Watts were one of the few companies who didn't pay crane drivers and dogmen between jobs. But that was irrelevant.

What mattered was that "Mainline was a large foreign company" whereas Watts were Aussie exploiters.

These politics bore their inevitable fruit at the economic summit in 1983. The summit was designed to establish the Accord, which transfers money from our pockets to boost company profits. Its class collaboration at its baldest.

Gallagher attended and prepared a speech. This opposed any "consensus" which failed to challenge social equality. It argued instead for a different "consensus" which would



redistribute wealth. He was not allowed to deliver the speech.

At first glance this made Gallagher appear more left wing than the other officials. But when you looked closer at the speech, you found that it said nothing about militant struggle. It accepted the desirability of minimising industrial "confrontation".

Even so, the criticisms it contained might have been useful. But nobody heard about it. Had Gallagher stood up and demanded the right to speak, then called a press conference, his criticisms would have been front page news. Opponents of the Accord would have been heartened. Those with doubts would have been encouraged to think critically.

But Gallagher said and did nothing. And since then, the BLF has been careful to pursue its claims within the Accord.

NORM GALLAGHER IS MEANT TO BE A COMMUNIST. Yet he has never launched struggles which might lead workers to challenge capitalist society.

For revolutionaries, trade union struggles over wages and conditions are essential. But they are not enough. Even if you improve



your lot, exploitation remains. And gains achieved at one point can be eroded later on.

If we are to build a movement to end exploitation, to end the wages system, we have to find ways to introduce socialist ideas into the industrial struggle.

The NSW branch under the old leadership, with its workers' control actions - whatever their faults and limitations - represented a valuable step in the right direction.

Labourers who had sacked their foreman could begin to think in terms of abolishing foremen throughout the industry. Unionists who had run the job themselves began to argue for workers making basic decisions about how industry, and all of society, should be run. The employing class began to appear more expendable.

But Gallagher denounced them, and moved to destroy them.

DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE MEDIA'S PAROXYMS OF HATE FOR TODAY'S BLF ARE JUST A POSE? NOT AT ALL.

The BLF leaders are no threat to capitalism. But they are mavericks, who sometimes flout the "rules of the game". They talk militant, and sometimes are militant.

These days, that makes them stand out from the crowd. And with everyone from the Labor Party to BHP trying to convince us that the class struggle is out of date, it makes them a thorn in the side of our rulers.

Gallagher is a ruthless bureaucrat, who crushes left wing opponents and collaborates with the bosses. He does not deserve his radical image. But he is seen by most people as radical and even revolutionary. In attacking him, our rulers mean to attack militancy and socialism.

For example, the BLF pickets at the Melbourne Cricket Ground or the Sydney Police Centre didn't really threaten the government. But because the picketers dared to get physical, Labor Premiers Cain and Wran vilified them. They want to intimidate all of us into foregoing our right to make

pickets effective.

Our attitude to the BLF leaders has two sides. From within the workers movement we oppose them and call for a revolutionary alternative. But we defend them against our common enemies, the bosses and their governments.

Under present circumstances, it is our responsibility to defend the union that assumes central importance. The coming battles will determine the direction of industrial relations in the building industry, and to some extent elsewhere, for years to come. The battles will be fierce, and contrary to the impression the media seek to create, they can be won by the BLs and their supporters.

Most Labour Councils have passed resolutions supporting the BLF. The Transport Workers, who occupy an important strategic position in the industry, have backed them at the national level.

In Victoria, the Cain government may have bitten off more than it can chew with its attacks. A massive and sustained police presence will be necessary to enforce Cain's legislation.

The danger point is NSW. Here the BLF is relatively isolated. This is partly because the Gallagher organisation is regarded by some in the labor movement as interlopers, after their "invasion" which smashed the old NSW branch. It is partly because this State is the stronghold of the BWIU, which is Gallagher's most implacable foe within the industry. The BWIU, the Australian Workers Union and the Ironworkers are all keen to poach BLF members.

The BLF is presently facing the lull before the storm. Both sides are waiting, sizing each other up. Industrial dispute is at a low point.

It is a time for those who would defend trade unionism in this country against Labor fakery and right wing bureaucrats to gather their forces and prepare to fight. For the lull is unlikely to last very long.

SOCIALIST ACTION

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Socialism

We fight for socialism: the creation of a classless society in which the economy will be democratically planned, and workers themselves will make the key decisions about economic and social life. Countries like Russia and China are bureaucratic class societies, and have nothing in common with real socialism.

Revolution, not Reformism

We are revolutionaries. The experience of Labor in power has shown the bankruptcy of attempts to tinker with the existing capitalist system. The capitalists will not allow a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. Their state is a weapon of class rule, and must be smashed.

A Mass Workers' Party

Workers need a revolutionary party. The working class cannot make a revolution through spontaneous upheavals. The bosses are organised, and we need to organise too. Today we work to build a stronger revolutionary movement out of the struggles being waged on the job and around social protest issues. Tomorrow we must create a mass workers' party to lead the struggle for socialism.

Internationalism

We are internationalists. The working class exists in all countries, and the struggle for socialism knows no national barriers. A socialist revolution cannot survive within a single country. It must be spread to other countries or it will fail. For these reasons we are for building a world-wide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against their others.

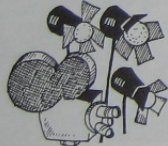
Liberation from Oppression

We fight for liberation and against the oppression of women, blacks, migrants and homosexuals. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. The fight against them is an essential part of building a united revolutionary movement. They can only be ended through ending capitalism and building socialism.

Socialist Action

We are for Socialist Action. It's no good just talking about the world: the point is to change it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only meaningful if they are a guide to action. In the unions, social movements and wherever people are fighting for a better world, socialists are in the thick of it. If that's where you want to be, join us today!

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Brisbane
Mondays 7.30
Phone 371 7114
for location

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE



SEQEB strikers and their kids play tug-of-war at a union picnic

"We workers must spit on their false unity!"

A GROUP of angry SEQEB workers was moved to burn an effigy of Simon Crean outside the ACTU Congress in Sydney on September 11. The Congress had refused ETU striker Kon Kell the right to speak.

As Kon commented, Congress delegates put only \$50 for the Strike Fund into their bucket outside the Congress hall. "But we have been given \$1800 here by rank and file workers, who are already contributing to our fund."

ETU strikers and supporters travelled from Brisbane to picket the ACTU Congress in protest at the pitiable lack of support for the SEQEB linemen's strike, now in its eighth month. They joined with 1000 builders' labour-

union officials are under attack from the rank and file, they call for unity. But when the likes of Crean and Hawke call for unity, watch out! Is it the kind of unity you find in a graveyard, the kind of unity you find in defeat, the kind of unity you find in a sellout?

"We workers must spit on their false unity! We must demand the kind of unity you find on the picket lines."

As Bernie said, the way to fight back is through "organisation, solidarity and struggle". The BLF's strength as a union comes from their understanding of this. They have also been strong in their support for the ETU strikers.

The TLC officials in Brisbane have also consistently called for unity around soggy, legalistic approaches that never had a show of winning the dispute, and attacked those who argued for action. Tom Barton, TLC Assistant Secretary, attacked the militancy of the Sydney rally at the Perry Park meeting the following Friday. (It now transpires that the TLC has been holding secret negotiations with the Queensland Confederation of Industry on the dispute, without telling the ETU.)

The workers showed what they thought of the TLC's approach at the next mass meeting on September 20, when they voted no confidence in Ray Dempsey. Members of the Strikers' Wives Committee went up to Trades Hall to demand action from Dempsey, but got little more than abuse.

Despite the bad prognosis for regaining their jobs, many of the 750 workers are still demanding

them back on the old conditions. They are determined to fight on, and determined that the dispute will not be swept under the carpet by the officials. But the TLC and the Labor Party have never had the confidence or the will to give them the support needed to beat Petersen.

Only much more solidarity and support of the fund, like that shown by the BLF in Sydney, can give the ETU strikers a chance of continuing their fight for the right to strike and the right to organise. It has now become a fight to maintain these rights for all workers.

— Carolle Herr

ABC DISPUTE



A fight for jobs needed

FOR THE first time in the long-running ABC staffing dispute, there has been an orchestrated strike action in more than one state.

On Friday 27 September, NSW and Victorian members of the ABC Staff Union struck for the day. The strikes featured pickets at major ABC buildings in both cities.

Further action is planned if ABC management doesn't meet the union's demands.

Unfortunately, the ABC Staff Union executive doesn't really want to fight about staffing levels as such. They're more interested in fighting to preserve their negotiating position with management.

Official motions put to NSW and Victorian stopwork meetings

didn't call for the replacement of the 300 staff who left on the voluntary retrenchment program, only for the "establishment of Staff and Systems Review Committees, with Staff Union participation."

The history of such committees is not encouraging for people who want to defend jobs and conditions. All they mean in practice is that the Union executive participates in the decisions to cut staff. It's the classic "arguing about the deck chairs on the Titanic" situation.

We need to reassess the staffing dispute urgently. After months of stop-works, threatened strikes, two 24 hour strikes and endless negotiations, we are no nearer to stopping the rot in the ABC. Managing director Geoffrey Whitehead and ABC management are no doubt happy with the current situation.

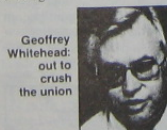
The move by staff-elected ABC Board member, Tom Molomby, in taking action in the High Court against Geoffrey Whitehead is also a red herring. We have nothing to gain from legal action.

It is obvious that the Federal government supports Whitehead, and the board certainly isn't gutsy enough to take him on. The government and Whitehead have made it quite clear that they want the Staff Union destroyed, or at least neutralised, so that they can proceed to dismantle the ABC.

It's time to stop flaring around with threats and pleas for management to take our union officials into their confidence. It's time for us to say we want a guarantee on jobs and on our futures.

This is not the easy option and it won't be adopted by the union executive without a fight.

The strikes last week in NSW and Victoria were a step in the right direction. Now we need to involve the other states and to put up demands that address the real problems: staff cuts and funding.



Geoffrey Whitehead: out to crush the union

What is needed in the Staff Union is a coordinated move from the rank and file to push for action and a change in direction for the dispute. The Work Area Representatives (WAR) committee has the potential to develop into a fighting group to coordinate action. We need it to become one.

— Martin Hirst, ABC Radio

TALKSHOPS

THE ACTU Congress: Much accord about nothing

SOME INNOCENT once Stubbbed the ACTU Congress "the workers' parliament". The phrase conjures up an image of delegates pouring in from factories and offices, a piece of the socialist future rudely intruding upon the present.

The reality, alas, is different. You only had to walk into the Sydney Town Hall foyer last month to see it. The ACTU Congress is no workers' soviet in embryo, but a council of quite different class: the brokers between capital and labour.

Every second delegate wore a business suit. Every drifting snatch of conversation was in union officialese. Men and women alike wore that slightly calculating, slightly self-important air peculiar to union bureaucrats.

In the main hall, maybe 300 of the 1200 delegates were present at any given time (the wages debate and Bob Hawke's address excepted, of course). Half of these would be talking or reading newspapers. Having jostled in their own unions to get the trip to Sydney, most delegates treated the Congress like the charade it really was.

One right-wing union took the disenfranchising of the rank and file even further. The Australian Public Service Federation sneaked a clause into its rules requiring a blue vote from its delegates. Left-wing NSW delegates had to leave the hall on key votes, rather than in order from Victorian heavy Monty Burgess.

The Congress speech by Ms Gail Cotton was mainly notable for the mildness of its criticisms about the accord approach... Ms Cotton won some applause from the Congress floor and cheap congratulations in the Sydney Town Hall foyer. But none of her supporters had the guts to back her up in the wages debate, indicating the peer group pressure being exerted on the union movement's militant mavericks."

THE CONGRESS was a triumph for "moderates" Simon Crean and Bill Kelly. The Accord has well and truly copied the left unions into trailing the ACTU Executive and the Labor Government.

So the Congress swiftly endorsed the wage discounting enshrined in the Accord Mark II. The ruling class Financial Review summed up the debate as well as I can:

"After a strong profit rebound and pages of record company profit results, there has been relatively little anti-corporate rhetoric at this week's Congress. "Former Communist Party of Australia member John Halfpenny, of the Amalgamated



GAIL Cotton and ACTU secretary Bill Kelly — the Congress was a triumph for the "moderates".

Met Workers Union, argued in his speech seconding endorsement of the wages discounting deal that the profit share of national income now was about right."

Only dissenting voice was that of the Food Preservers' Gail Cotton. The Financial Review smugly noted to employees:

"The Congress speech by Ms Gail Cotton was mainly notable for the mildness of its criticisms about the accord approach... Ms Cotton won some applause from the Congress floor and cheap congratulations in the Sydney Town Hall foyer. But none of her supporters had the guts to back her up in the wages debate, indicating the peer group pressure being exerted on the union movement's militant mavericks."

ESSENCE worse was the Orassion on the SEQEB dispute. This opened with a long ovation for a delegation of sacked SEQEB linemen sitting in the visitors' gallery.

But when one asked to address the Congress to plead for something more than a verbal support, the chairman refused. "Are you a question delegate?" he boomed after a question not asked of Bob Hawke, who came along to insult the BLF the next morning.

The linesman moved to the microphone to speak anyway, only to be physically escorted from the hall by ACTU officials to cries of "Let him speak" from

his workmates. Aside from an Actors' Equity delegate who vainly asked that "the young man be allowed to speak", the left raised scarcely a peep.

Nor did they offer a dissenting word when Queensland TLC secretary Ray Dempsey fawningly thanked the ACTU for its "support" (ie one aborted blockade of Queensland). In 15 waffling minutes, Dempsey put just one action proposal to the Congress: "I urge you to help the sacked workers by buying a raffle ticket in the foyer." The SEQEB workers, meanwhile, had left in disgust.

Outside, they burned an effigy of Simon Crean. Attacked by a union official later for the act, worker Bernie Neville replied, "We did burn an effigy of Simon Crean, but only because we couldn't get the real thing."

THE ESSENCE of the Accord is to divert unions from struggle for better conditions, into endless lobbying for increasingly dubious trade-offs.

So left and right alike voted for pages of policy prefaced by toothless phrases like "The ACTU calls on the government to" and "Congress believes". Left amendments were equally toothless, invariably framed as "recommendations" to the Executive or the government. The Executive did some backscratching for the left in return.

The Federated Ironworkers put up a mischievous NCC-inspired motion backing Labor's support for the US Alliance. It was blatantly designed to put the left officials on the spot. So Simon Crean had it referred to the Executive for "consideration".

To keep up its militant credentials, the left got through a token "Week of Action" against apartheid, unopposed by the Executive. Little wonder — it comprises voluntary bans on South African trade for just seven days!

NSW union official Barry Cotton moved the "Week of Action" for the left. Then he rushed off to a luncheon meeting to argue against his own ACOA members imposing any bans over staffing! (He lost.)

AS PREDICTED in our last issue, the Meatworkers did best out of the Congress in terms of support for struggle.

After all, even union officials are threatened by court seizures of funds. The Meatworkers got aid for their Mudgebriera dispute by the device of holding a meeting of those unions already involved.

John Halfpenny — profits 'above right'



In the all-pervasive atmosphere of "moderation" imposed by the Accord, the BLF wisely did not even raise its problems. The Congress would undoubtedly have left them high and dry. So the ACTU now has a laughable 12-page policy on industrial relations which avoids mentioning the BLF once!

Yet the BLF provided the highlight of the Congress, with stirring 1000-strong march of builders' labourers in support of the SEQEB workers on Dupont One. They left a huge "Norm" banner strung up over the Town Hall steps as permanent calling card of the visit.

That display of rank and file solidarity was worth more than a dozen do-nothing ACTU Congresses, however smug Simon Crean and Bill Kelly may have been about their big week afterwards. — Ken Stevens



Bernie Neville: watch out for the ACTU

ers and others who had stopped work to march and rally outside the Congress.

At both state and federal level, the labour movement 'leadership' has been a barrier to making any real ground in winning the dispute. They have consistently called for 'unity' around positions that offer no way forward to beat Job Belke-Petersen's anti-union offensive.

Bernie Neville, another member of the Strike Committee put it nicely at the rally, "When

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Courting Equal Pay . . . a case for "comparable worth"?

EQUAL PAY at last! That was one woman's response to receiving the old age pension. She was a metal worker speaking at a recent conference in Melbourne, which brought together 200 trade unionists.

Why do many women have to wait so long? Didn't we get equal pay in 1972?

Only on paper. While there have been many equal pay decisions, a 1983 government review remarked tellingly: "The equal pay principle has had almost no impact on the gap between women's pay to men and women."

In 1983, average weekly earnings for women workers were 66.5 per cent of those for men. If only full time workers are considered, women's wages have increased from 65 to 80 per cent of men's, but have grown by only 2 per cent since 1976.

The 1972 decision was about "equal pay for equal work", which sounds fine. But since then, over 60 per cent of employers have reclassified women's jobs, so that they can pay them at a lower rate. Meanwhile, of all the OECD countries, Australia has one of the highest levels of job segregation. Women-only areas account for two-thirds of the female workforce and are not covered by the 1972 ruling.

The ACTU is now backing another attempt to win equal pay. This time they're trying the concept of "comparable worth". As practised in the USA, "comparable worth" means comparing similarities between jobs women and men do.

In the city of San Jose, California, this was done using painters and secretaries. The secretaries scored more points than the painters and they were awarded a 30 per cent pay increase. The employers are appealing, but comparable worth cases have been accepted or legislated for in 15 American states, all EEC countries and Canada.

In Australia, the ACTU plans to argue on the basis of a comparison between nurses and ambulance drivers. Unfortunately, there are snags here. Firstly, nurses' pay has to be made uniform throughout Australia.

It seems clear that any real gains in equal pay will not be won by relying on the ACTU going through channels. Only a militant struggle will achieve anything significant. Certainly, that is the lesson of history.

Different wages for females and males were enshrined in the basic wage decision of 1907. Every decision in the following decades reinforced the basic pattern, despite an attempt by the Rural Workers Union to win



AN EARLY Equal Pay march by Newcastle hotel workers.

tralia before the ACTU will put the case. Then the ACTU will seek a ruling establishing that the 1972 equal pay case decision encompasses that of comparable worth.

If they clear this hurdle, they then have to decide whether the "comparable worth" case fits in with the Accord's wage fixing guidelines. The ACTU claims it does, but if you look at the guidelines you begin to wonder.

Most importantly, the guidelines demand that there be no flow-ons, and that the economic cost be negligible. Yet if this comparable worth case is to be more than a token, it must flow on. Given that employers complain it will cost \$6 million to implement, the cost is clearly not negligible.

Despite the ACTU's professed commitment to the cause, delegates had to fight to get comparable worth included in the ACTU wages policy discussed at the recent congress. Nurses' delegates had another fight to put some real commitment into the ACTU's support.

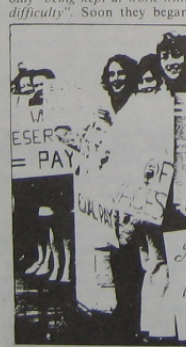
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equal pay in 1912 and the passage of legislation for equal pay in Queensland in 1919.

There was a Council of Action for Equal Pay from 1937 to 1948, whose main efforts were lobbying the ACTU and making Arbitration Commission submissions. But real change only took place when rank and file workers took direct action during World War II.

With the start of the war, women's wages were frozen and industrial conscription enforced in the traditionally female occupations. Even so, employers complained that women were only "being kept at work with difficulty". Soon they began



WOMEN picket the Arbitration Commission in 1974

taking industrial action to force wage increases. In 1941 it was Sydney textile workers, in 1944 it was printers.

The main area of struggle, however, was in the metal trades where women were doing "men's" jobs. The government set up a Women's Employment Bureau (WEB) to "control" wages and conditions. The rate for the job was set at 90 per cent of men's. The employers fought every step of the way to sabotage implementation of the WEB rate. But women workers struck again and again to enforce the higher rates, and often to win more.

In the quieter postwar decades, the old lobbying tactics regained centre stage, but accomplished little. Then with the rise of the women's liberation movement at the end of the sixties, the struggle revived.

In 1969, in protest against a miserable token equal pay decision, women chained themselves to the Arbitration Commission. They went on an "equality ride" on Melbourne trams, paying only a portion of the fare on the grounds that they did not earn as much as men. (Delegates to the recent equal pay conference repeated this historic action in September.)

Women picketed ACTU congresses, organised one of their own, and were in the thick of a strike wave in 1972. In that year, a second equal pay decision was handed down, to be followed by a third in 1974.

Gains conceded by Arbitration amounted largely to making official what women had already won on the job through their own strength and through the solidarity of their male comrades.

One long-time activist remarks, "The struggle for equal pay has proven to be one of the most protracted struggles women in Australia have had to fight". And it will go on for a long time yet, because the oppression of women is economically and socially necessary for the capitalist system. If we are to become equal, that system has to go.

Meanwhile, we have to fight and fight again for every dollar. That was the message of the September equal pay conference.

"It's only when rank and file women are active in their unions," said one speaker "that the unions will win equal pay."
— Liz Ross

REVIEWS



THE CPA-led miners' strike — was it really "ultraleft"?

INTO THE MAINSTREAM

SINCE ITS formation in 1921, the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) has made a firm impression on the political landscape.

Tom O'Lincoln's book *Into the Mainstream* sets out to analyze the party's history, focusing on its post-war record. In the opening pages, O'Lincoln presents the basis of his argument:

"The one political tradition which could have provided a real socialist vision for our times — the authentic tradition of revolutionary Marxism — has been consistently rejected by the vast majority of party members."

At the same time, however, the book's highly critical character is kept within perspective:

"(Ex-members) pointed out that the party had many achievements to its credit, and that many of its members were among the finest fighters for their class. It is a sentiment with which I sympathise."

Into the Mainstream is not the first historical package of the CPA's experiences. Yet it is the first of its kind. It inserts itself into a number of historical debates and offers a challenge to established orthodoxy — an orthodoxy constructed by a number of CPA members. For example, O'Lincoln notes:

"A kind of conventional wisdom has grown up about the militancy of the late forties and especially about the defeat of the coal strike of 1949."

Into The Mainstream, by Tom O'Lincoln (Stained Wattle) \$10

Supposedly, the party's "ultraleftism" was a cause. This reflects an adjustment of the party's political posture:

"Condemnation of the CPA 'ultraleftism' of 1947-9 is really an attack on militancy itself . . . in building up this conventional wisdom . . . the CPA leaders established the ideological basis for the right wing trade union practice which they followed in the late fifties and sixties."

O'Lincoln argues that the missing yet necessary support could have been built among rank-and-file trade unionists and Laborites. The party's main problem was its "bureaucratic and manipulative behaviour". In dismissing the charge of "ultraleftism", O'Lincoln simultaneously defends revolutionary politics.

Similarly, he challenges other myths such as the party's alleged "sectarian" evaluation of the Whitlam government.

CPA history has also been distorted by a certain amount of scape-goating and factional manoeuvring. For example, the excesses of two party leaders became the explanation for failure in the early fifties. In true Stalinist style, they were forced to publicly repent. One even

promised to "eliminate all forms of subjectivism from my make-up".

The title of the book describes the party's transformation. From its early days in the twenties, the party absorbed the Russian Bolsheviks' radical critique of capitalism. This meant sailing against the main political current, and offering an alternative to flaccid Labor politics.

The rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia found expression in communist parties around the globe, including the CPA. Proclamations of the USSR often became a substitute for a concrete analysis of Australian conditions.

With the removal of the spectre of Stalin in the late 60s, a theoretical vacuum formed. Alas, Stalinism and Marxism were considered synonymous. The Marxist baby was thrown out with the Stalinist bath water. Impressionistic feminism eventually filled the vacuum.

Despite the book's rigorous nature, one aspect of O'Lincoln's treatment is a little unsatisfactory.

Where current leaders of the CPA refer to the "sex-blindness" of Marxism, he responds by listing Marxists who have tackled women's oppression. This is fine.

However, the "sex-blindness" critique also maintains that Marxist categories cannot explain the sexual division of labour. Presumably O'Lincoln thinks they can, and some acknowledgement of this broader problem could have added to the book's argument.

Testing one's politics in water is one thing, liquidating them is another. From the CPA's sabotage of the 1977 Laborite ballot vote strike, to its infatuation with the Prices and Incomes Accord, it has had an aptitude for accepting capitalism's logic.

Into the Mainstream is a handy contribution to Australian political history. O'Lincoln neatly sums up the party's contemporary orientation towards the left



CPAers march in 1984

union bureaucracy.

"At no time did the party present an alternative to Laborism. At best it occasionally played the role of providing a theoretical rationalisation of sections of the ALP."

So the CPA today is ready to follow through organisationally what it articulated politically long ago: to sink the party ship to the lower depths of the turbulent political mainstream.

— Philip Whitefield

FILM

Mad Max — beyond bullshit

MOST bullshit artists take themselves seriously — that's what makes them artists! The latest Mad Max movie "Beyond Thunderdome" proves that you can raise bullshit beyond even art to the level of myth.

The first "Max" movies were just nasty escapism garbage, a vehicle (pun) for gore, machismo and auto stunts. Who could ever forget the uplifting moment when Max handcuffs a miscreant to a soon-to-explode car, then hands him a hacksaw with which to amputate his own wrist? It's bullshit all right — the kind you can find in any video store.

But it made money, more than usual. The American and Japanese market response was most gratifying. So it was no myth that the "Max" later giddy world of the Hollywood mythmakers. What better setting for myth than the Australian desert?

Perhaps because "Max" came out of the genre of post-nuclear holocaust movies, it seems to offer some progressive ideas. Civilisation as we know it is just not an after the blast, etc. Everyone will be ugly and wear silly furs, etc.

If that's a political message, it makes me feel someone sold me half pack of popcorn . . . it's no much! I'm quite sure that if "Max" had been like Rambo and his dim dim past included time spent in Vietnam, then "Max" would have just as unashamedly driven his weird hot rods through hordes of Asians. At least we've been spared that.

As devoid of anything substantial as "Max" is, it is becoming a little less objectionable. Max himself is much less macho, especially after he meets the children who are the real focus of the story. The really unkillable character of the movie turns out to be pathetic villain Angus. Anderson.

And of course there is Tina Turner . . . "We don't need another hero". Perhaps this all means that there will be no more "Max". That we should be so naive.

— Mark Marcolin

The day that Kerr sacked Whitlam

THE DAY John Kerr sacked Gough Whitlam, I was eating lunch in a pub.

Some salesmen at the bar, obvious Liberal types, suddenly hooted with delight at a radio news-flash. "He's sacked him," they chortled. "You beauty, Whitlam's gone!"

Isn't it funny how that moment you first got the news stays in the memory? An advertising agency later made a great ALP commercial, based purely on recollections like that. Hearing of a close friend's death often sticks in the mind the same way. And the Kerr Coup was a death, in a way. A death of an innocence that Labor voters had about the "neutrality" of the state of Australia.

Now the principal actors in the Supply Crisis are re-emerging for its tenth anniversary. John Kerr has defended his actions at length in the *Bulletin*. Malcolm Fraser is posturing against Apartheid to restore his name. Gough Whitlam returns to address a \$25 a plate Fabian Society dinner on November 11.

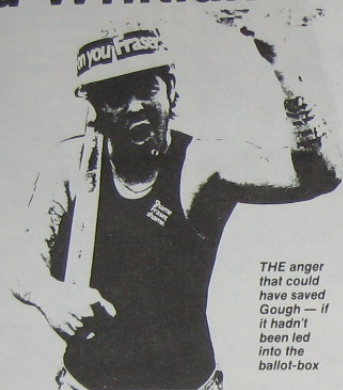
The old myths about 1975 will doubtless be rehearsed. The Constitution or the CIA was the key problem, that Kerr only wanted to "let the people decide", that Whitlam did "too much too fast".

So what was Whitlam's undoing?

Forget the nonsense that he did too much too fast. Whitlam ended conscription and recognised China in his first week of office. His other major reforms—Medibank, increased urban



Kerr and Whitlam at a 1987 law dinner



THE anger that could have saved Gough—if it hadn't been led into the ballot-box

spending and free tertiary education—all came or were mooted in his first eighteen months. If the electorate thought it was too much too fast, they didn't show it. Whitlam got back in May 1974 with a comfortable working majority.

LABOR HIT the skids in late 1974 and early 1975. The world recession, on top of inflation, hit Australia. Ford sacked 500 workers. Dunlop laid off 6000, the Mainline building company collapsed.

Whitlam's response was to throw his reforms into reverse. "One man's wage rise costs another man's job," announced treasurer Frank Crean. That lion of the left, Jim Cairns, gave half-million dollar hand-outs to EZ and APPM to prevent mass sackings. Bill Hayden's 1975 budget was so austere that Fraser kept it when he took over.

Far from mollifying the employers, this retreat only fed into their propaganda war for Liberal policies. For 1974 had seen big wage rises. They simply did not trust Labor to carry out the full-blooded austerity they now wanted.

The press blew minor peccadilloes by ALP ministers up into major scandals... a land deal by Cairns' son, the "Morosi affair", the Iraqi loans. Labor was slaughtered at the polls in Queensland and in the key Bass by-election in Tasmania.

Still, when the Liberals blocked Supply on October 16, 1975, it was far from certain that they could topple Whitlam.

They still had to contend with

Labor's working class base. Forty thousand angry workers rallied for Whitlam in Melbourne. A passing remark by ACTU president Bob Hawke to a Canberra rally, that the unions might have to block supply to employers set off a wave of anticipation about a general strike.

With workers turning mean, Whitlam intransigent, and just seven weeks of Supply left, the millionaire press began to hesitate. Speculation was rife that Fraser was about to back down. Senior Liberals like Margaret Guilfoyle and Reg Withers were thinking of crossing the floor.

THEN John Kerr stepped in and saved Fraser's skin.

Kerr's appointment in 1974 as governor-general epitomised Labor's blind faith in the neutrality of the State. Whitlam saw Kerr, the NSW Chief Justice, as a figure "acceptable" to both sides. Kerr supposedly had working-class credentials. His father was a boilermaker, he was a mate of ALP senator Jim McClelland, and he had leaned to Labor in his youth.

Kerr also had ruling class credentials. The DLP invited him to become their leader in 1955. He was offered a Liberal seat in the late fifties. He sent unionist Clarrie O'Shea to jail in 1969. Whitlam would have known at least two of these facts when he appointed Kerr.

Whitlam also had a blind faith that Kerr would stick by Constitutional conventions. A day after his sacking, he was still stunned, according to Jim McClelland,



with Alec Kahn

Whitlam's sacking, after a disastrous year for Labor politically and economically, meant almost certain defeat at the polls.

Yet the defeat could have been turned into victory.

The sacking enraged workers. Every waterfront struck. Within hours, thousands were marching in every capital city. Office workers roamed the streets with placards, students rushed in after exams. In Sydney, the crowd chanted for a general strike in Melbourne, it stormed Liberal offices and fought police. Six key unions demanded a general strike.

The next morning's press almost visibly trembled. "Keep calm" was its message. Melbourne's influential Age openly attacked Kerr's risky move.

Tragically but predictably, Labor saved the situation for them. "Cool it," urged Bob Hawke. "Maintain your rage," urged Whitlam, meaning maintain it for the ballot box on October 13.

SO THE thirty left unions, who confounded the lawyers by freeing Clarrie O'Shea with a general strike in 1969, called just a token four-hour stoppage.

The press, emboldened, rallied behind Fraser. As Whitlam's electioneering took over from mass strike action, the press easily switched the debate back to the economy. Labor was trounced at the polls.

The Constitution, the CIA, Kerr's character and so forth were all interesting subplots of the main drama. They were not, however, the key to it.

November 11 was fundamentally a showdown between class forces.

As long as the showdown was fought in the parliamentary arena, the bosses had the upper hand. They had the economic power to force Whitlam to abandon his mild reforms. They had the political power, via their press, to smear him before the electorate. And they had the state power, in the form of the Governor-General (and behind him, the courts and the Army, which was reportedly put on alert), to sack Whitlam when all else failed.

Only when the showdown moved into the workplaces and the streets, did they hesitate.

And herein lies the real lesson of November 11 for future working class political strategy.

SOCIALIST ACTION



No. 3 NOVEMBER 1, 1985 30 CENTS



NURSES: THE NEW MILITANTS

• Nicaragua's revolution under siege

• Germany's Greens: Whizkids with a fatal weakness

CAT'S EYE

HI-JACK

Ronnie meets Rambo

REMEMBER how Ronald Reagan announced, after the Beirut TWA hijacking, that he had just seen "Rambo" and would know what to do next time?

The evening after the Achille Lauro hijack, and less than two days before America's retaliatory sky-jack, Ronald Reagan had Sylvester Stallone, producer and star of "Rambo", over at the White House for dinner with Lee Kuan Yew.

Coincidence? Maybe. But given the way Ronald Reagan's mind works, maybe not.

Reagan's gall in carrying out the sky-jack and demanding the four alleged terrorists is staggering. The four were already in the custody of officials of the PLO, which had negotiated an end to the Achille Lauro crisis. Reagan himself had earlier accepted that the PLO could try and punish them.

Just imagine the fury from the White House if, say, Cuba was to snatch "Take me to Miami" hijackers out of US custody in a similar fashion.

Afterwards, Reagan sent a personal letter of apology to Egyptian President Mubarek.

Mubarek refused to open the letter. He insisted that the people of Egypt deserved a public apology.

Mubarek has continued his predecessor Sadat's policy of collaborating with American imperialism. In return for military aid, Egypt was the first Arab state to recognise the Zionist occupation of Palestine.

The Egyptian — Israeli accord over the Sinai then gave the Zionist armies the go-ahead to invade Lebanon.

This collaboration has encouraged America to commit "counter-terrorist" acts such as the recent sky-jack.

The people of Egypt do indeed deserve an apology...from Mubarek as well.

YOUTH WAGES

McDonald's get McDone

THE McDonald's restaurant chain in Western Australia has failed in its bid to push through a test case for lowering youth wages.

McDonald's spokesman Norman Sinclair said the chain



● Rambo Reagan — "sorry"

faced black bans and "vandalism" if it went ahead with the proposed cut of up to 10 per cent for "cadets".

"Our intention remains the same, but there has been a lot of unnecessary pressure and we have been misrepresented."

McDonald's knows all about misrepresentation. On hearing of its defeat, McDonald's backers in the Confederation of WA Industry savagely attacked the unions and the WA Industrial Commission. "The issue is now dead. We saw the chance for 5,000 to 10,000 jobs for juniors... We tried but it was hopeless," said Confederation director Bill Brown.

Ah, the smell of martyrs burning. Brown went on to say that he thought the Industrial Commission might have seen the exercise as a "cynical move by the employers, rather than an effort to do something about youth unemployment".

You said it, Bill, not us.

SNOOPS

Cop rumpus on campus

THE ENROLMENT of well-known Special Branch Cop Barry Krosch at Queensland University, reported in the last Socialist Action, has triggered an astounding security operation by the university administration.

Krosch's tutorials have been guarded every week by the head campus security guard and reinforcements, even once by the Registrar. Numerous leaflets and posters opposing Krosch's presence have disappeared without trace. Campus security guards are even trying to get police powers of arrest to deal with "disruptions" on campus.

Krosch has arrested many staff and students at Brisbane marches in the past. Since his



● Mubarek — owes apology

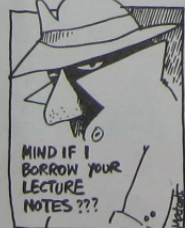
enrolment this semester, he has figured in violent arrests on August 20 and at Hamilton what on October 17.

Yet campus liberals are still demanding "proof" that he uses information gained on campus against staff and students.

How much proof do they want? Over recent years in Brisbane, activists have not got particular jobs, or have lost them, thanks to Special Branch. People have been planted with drugs and framed in other ways. Some have copied outlandish charges like wild destruction on marches, or been singled out of large groups for repeated arrest. Photos of "radical leaders" are shown to line-ups of police before marches. Some have been attacked in parliament on information which could only have come from Special Branch.

The Hope enquiry in South Australia made Special Branch's role quite plain. Of 30,000 files examined in that state, not one was on a right-winger. Special Branch exists to harass and spy on the left.

As for the idea being pushed by some Krosch supporters that he may be just a bona fide student, we suggest they pull the other leg. If Krosch is so keen to get a degree, let him enrol externally where he can't snoop on other students.



LAY-OFFS

Rank pulls rank

"WHAT is good for the employer is good for the workers. Profits create jobs."

That piece of nonsense is the bottom line of most modern economic "theory". It has been argued in one form or another, by everyone from Milton Friedman to Simon Clean.

Perhaps these worthies would like to explain that view to the workforce at Rank Industries' refrigerator factory in NSW.

Rank plans to sack all 560 of them at Christmas.

Rank Industries made \$196 million profit internationally last year. It forecasts a \$265 million profit this year and \$300 million next year.

That adds up to over one million dollars per sacked worker. But the company says, "It is a strategic aim not to stay in whitegoods."

It just sounds Rank to us.

RACISM

Shock poll on PCF

A COUPLE of years back, the French Communist Party (PCF) came under savage criticism on the left when one of its mayors led a march against immigrant workers.

Now a shock survey has confirmed that the incident was no mere aberration. It appears that followers of the once-Eurocommunist, now Moscow-line Stalinist, PCF are more racist than the French national average.

The survey found that 55 per cent of PCF supporters would have difficulty accepting that their children wanted to marry someone of another race, compared with a national average of 47 per cent.

Just 19 per cent of those interviewed were sometimes upset by the proximity of people of another race. But for PCF supporters, the figure was 26 per cent.

Just 48 per cent of French "communists" said they were never worried by people of another race.

Stalinism, and its liberal variant in Eurocommunism, have always contained a strong element of national chauvinism. But even the PCF's harshest critics on the left will be staggered by the degree to which racist attitudes have taken hold amongst its followers.

APARTHEID

So much for CHOGM sanctions: union bans are the way

THE LAST month has seen a variety of responses to the South African crisis.

In South Africa itself, renewed rioting broke out, for the first time reaching into white areas. The gold miners' union threatened new strike action.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM), hypocrisy and token measures were the order of the day. In Australia, at last, union officials stirred themselves for a week of action.

Like Malcolm Fraser before him, Bob Hawke set out to use CHOGM to strike progressive poses and win funds from black African nations on an issue that will cost Australian bosses little.

The shallowness of his stand can be gauged by the fact that at home, Aborigines are angry over his "preferred model" for land rights legislation. Hawke, so eager for "consultation" in South Africa, has given Australian blacks no serious chance to discuss the legislation.

At CHOGM, Hawke quickly watered down his call for general sanctions in a bid for consensus (what else?) with Maggie Thatcher. Britain, of course, is a major investor in South Africa, so there was no way Thatcher was going to consent to any meaningful measures.



Rather than embarrass Thatcher and undo the charade of "Commonwealth unity", Hawke switched to graduated action. Thatcher's staffers scathingly called his new stance a "curious acknowledgement of the unwisdom of doing something now".

Hawke's other proposal, for a committee of "representative persons", was fittingly described as "fair-land stuff". Pretoria is hardly going to change its tune just because a bunch of superannuated elder statesmen tell them to.

More significant than the hot air emanating from the Bahamas was the ACTU's industrial



Protecting friends of apartheid: Socialist Action member Sue Donnelly is arrested at a Kim Hughes game in Perth

action.

Mail, telecommunications, trade and travel were all hit. Waterfront unions banned cargo into and out of South Africa for 24 hours, and building and distribution unions announced plans to boycott South Africa products.

Communication equipment at Pretoria's consulates and at South African Airways offices will not be repaired or installed. Of course, there is a great deal of empty image-polishing involved here too. Union leaders who meekly agreed to discounting of our wages at the ACTU Congress have now seized the opportunity to look courageous at little real cost to themselves.

Even so, it is a important development in Australian politics. The industrial bans, especially those by the Postal and Telecom union which are to be permanent, are an example of the power the organised labour movement has to put muscle into political protest campaigns. It is a lesson the peace movement has gone a long way towards forgetting, so it is good to have a timely reminder.

The Liberals are repeating Thatcher's fatuous argument that trade union bans and sanctions hurt South Africa's blacks.

Of course, trade bans hurt the economy and thus hurt blacks, and South Africa's blacks know this, and yet they still demand we impose trade bans. They are prepared to make sacrifices in the struggle for freedom, as oppressed people always are, business as usual with South Africa — hurts them a lot more in the long run.

After CHOGM, Hawke talked of Australia imposing its own sanctions ahead of the rest of the Commonwealth.

But it was a statement heavily qualified with maybes and phrases like "move in that direction" and "subject to Cabinet approval".

Waiting for Hawke's sanctions would be folly. Trade union bans are the best way we can help shackle Pretoria's iron grip.

The ACTU's token week of action is at least a pointer in the right direction; we now need to make the bans total and permanent.

REBEL TOUR

Hughes & Co harassed

KIM HUGHES and his rebel cricketers had a torrid few weeks before slipping out of Australia to commence their tour of South Africa.

In Adelaide, batsman Michael Haysman had to quit his job a day early to avoid an angry picket outside his sports store. In Melbourne, Kim Hughes slipped in and out of back doors to avoid 150 protesters and address a Richmond Football Club grand final breakfast.

South Melbourne Cricket Club, which played three of the rebels in its side, competed under heavy police guard. That didn't save the club from having its pitch dug up and Graham Yallop's indoor cricket centre spray-painted overnight.

(Yallop says he would play in Nazi Germany if the price was right.)

Perth saw the most determined protest action. Demonstrators first turned up at Floreat Oval where Kim Hughes and Terry Alderman were playing. After a club official demanded \$10 a head to get in, thirty protesters sneaked in through a hole in the fence. The official vented his spleen by assaulting two journalists instead.

Next day, protesters temporarily halted play in a Fremantle game, saturating rebels Tom Hogan and Graeg Shipped. Umpires walked off the field when demonstrators reflected light from mirrors into players' eyes and walked in front of the sightscreens.

The next weekend, yet another match in Fremantle featuring Hughes and Alderman was hit. Holes were dug in the pitch the night before, and slogans daubed on the sightscreens. Heavy-handed police action saw five protesters arrested during the game.

The rebel cricket tour has already inspired three rugby players to breach the sporting boycott, including Aboriginal rugby star Glen Ella. Ella is competing in South Africa as an honorary white player, and it seems likely the rest of the Aboriginal community will treat him that way when he returns to Australia.

Despite South African claims that sport is now integrated there, apartheid continues to permeate every facet of it.

The only changes made have been legal ones, to allow blacks to compete in white areas.

Blacks still carry a pass to do so, however. And access to sporting amenities is still massively biased in favour of whites.

Per capita, white areas have over twenty times as many rugby fields and public swimming pools, and twelve times as many athletic tracks, as non-white areas.

White schools have twelve times the sports facilities of non-white schools. The school system remains strictly segregated.

The enormous hours most blacks must spend travelling to and from work in the white cities ensures that few have time to train for sport, either.

As a result, the cricket system that Kim Hughes' rebels will be dignifying has just ten per cent black players, despite blacks comprising 70 per cent of the population.

PEACE MOVEMENT

WEST Germany's Greens Party, "Die Gruenen", formed in 1980, a broad coalition of peace and environmental activists, feminists and utopians, pacifists and socialists.

Their electoral successes, the visit of Greens MP Petra Kelly to Australia in mid-1984, and the NDP's vote last December, have created

The Greens: Whizkids with just one fatal weakness

THE WEST German Greens Party is the wunderkind of the modern peace movement.

By mid-1982, scarcely two years after its formation, its vote was a round 9 per cent in opinion polls and state elections. It had fifty MPs in six of Germany's eleven state assemblies, and 30,000 members. It pulled 20 per cent of the under-25 vote, and a staggering 30 per cent of first-time voters, better than the Christian Democrats.

This was for no single-issue peace platform, but for policies including unilateral nuclear disarmament, withdrawal from NATO, support for liberation struggles, tough environmental controls on business, gay equality, the 35-hour week, and equal rights for immigrant "guest workers".

What made this phenomenon possible? Some of the circumstances were similar to those that created Australia's Nuclear Disarmament Party.

West Germany's ruling Social Democrats, the SPD, had moved steadily rightwards during the 1970s recession. They openly supported nuclear power and NATO.

Yet the radical left was fragmented and unable to pose an alternative. The Communist Party, despite its 50,000 members, had little white credibility due to its pro-Moscow line. The Maoist groups, always small, had splintered completely after the China's Gang of Four upheaval.

BUT OTHER factors also came into play, which gave the Greens a big start over any similar endeavour in Australia today.

The SPD, unlike the ALP, had a mass membership of over 800,000. Many student radicals from the late sixties had joined it, hoping to shift it left. By the late seventies, this layer was disillusioned and ready to move. Petra Kelly, the Greens' best-known public figure, was a

interest amongst anti-nuclear activists here in a Greens-type party. There is even speculation that the Communist Party may dissolve itself next year to form one.

In this two-part series, ALEC KAHN examines the West German Greens, their politics and their performance.



Greens MP Petra Kelly; a member makes her point in a gasmask

typical example.

The trigger was to be NATO's decision to deploy Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe.

These placed West Germany in the front line of the US "first strike" strategy, and had a big impact on the anti-nuclear movement's thinking.

Germany's anti-nuclear movement, unlike Australia's now, had been "blooded" in militant struggle. At demonstrations like Brockdorf, marchers waged running battles with police across miles of countryside, as they tried to occupy planned nuclear sites. This militancy, and the NATO decision, opened the movement up to radical ideas.

Germany's electoral system, too, helped small parties. Just 0.5 per cent of the vote gained electoral funding; the Greens recouped half of the two million dollars they outlaid in their first three years of electioneering.

And under the proportional representation system, just 5 per cent of the vote gained seats in federal and state assemblies. (About ten per cent plus preferences is needed for the Australian Senate.) Leftists and environ-

mentalists were already in the practice of running "Alternative Lists".

YET SINCE reaching their remarkable highpoint, around late 1982, the Greens have failed to kick on. In fact, they have fallen back somewhat, not even making the 5 per cent threshold in two state elections this year.

Their most basic problem dates back to their foundation. Their platform contains some quite radical policies. But they are based on a weak analysis. For the Greens, the central problem is "industrialism", the domination of industry over ecology.

Capitalism is a secondary issue, unpleasant only in large doses. So the Greens see themselves as "beyond" class politics. A party slogan goes, "We are neither left nor right, but out in front."

Their inaugural federal congress at Saarbruecken showed the weaknesses of this "neither left nor right" attitude. Most delegates wanted abolition of West Germany's Law 218, which restricts abortion. But conserva-

tives threatened a split.

So the Greens adopted a compromise, that if a woman was prosecuted under Law 218, her male partner should be too. In going "neither left nor right", the party now had an abortion policy more punitive than the status quo! (Even today, the policy, while supporting decriminalization, avoids calling for full accessibility.)

Compromise was impossible on issues like unilateral disarmament, however. So conservatives like ex-Christian Democrat MP Herbert Gruhl, who wrote the Greens' original program, soon quit anyhow.

The Greens' anti-industrialism remained, though. On paper, they supported the 35-hour week. Yet they also advocated smaller industry, and claimed that Western living standards were bloated by exploitation of the ecology and the Third World. A significant wing of the party argued, logically, that they were really for a fall in Western living standards, and longer working hours.

Influential theorist Rudolf Bahro typified this thinking. Bahro even opposed anti-pollution and anti-unemployment measures, seeing them as mere props to industrialism. He wanted to take Germany out of industrial society, and back to ruralism, through rural-based socialism, in which unemployed, students and teachers could take refuge. (Bahro recently left the Greens and joined the Orange People.)

Such reactionary overtones attracted some dubious types. Ex-Nazi officer Werner Vogel became a Greens candidate in 1983, and this year the West Berlin branch was dissolved after it refused to expel neo-Nazis.

THESSE overtones made it impossible for the Greens to make inroads into the SPD's working class base.

While the Greens poll well in university towns (20% in Tübingen, for example) and middle class areas, their working class vote is weak except where there

(continued page 6)

COVER STORY

FLORENCE Nightingale is dead, so how come we're still getting her wages?"

With slogans like this, a mass stop work meeting of Victorian nurses voted on October 11 for the unprecedented action of an indefinite stoppage. Thousands of nurses then marched through the streets of Melbourne to the office of the Health Minister David White.

After nine months of negotiation and court talk-shops, Victoria's nurses had finally come to the conclusion that, as one nurse put it, "It's the only way to get what we want".

The main issues were simple. Most important was the ever intensifying problem of staff shortages and workloads. Then there was the low pay. One nurse told me she had got more as a shop assistant than as a third year nurse.

That hospitals are in crisis is not new. There are 27,000 people waiting for elective surgery — and this only means that their pain and discomfort hasn't yet brought them to imminent risk of death.

Hospitals have been instructed to cut back on costs. This has been done by cutting beds, not staffing new wards, and by trivial measures such as eliminating free coffee. Business as usual, according to an Alfred Hospital nurse, means "stretching nurses to their limits".

So now nurses have decided not to take it any more. They are angry and fighting back.

INDUSTRIAL action started on September 30, when nurses stopped wearing their uniforms to work.

It entered a new phase on October 7, when they implemented RANF policy so that the ratio of nurses to patients could be kept at a minimum safe level of one to 15 at night and one to 10 during the day.

This required that the hospital management give 24 hours notice of admissions and discharges.

Some hospitals complied with this. But the intrinsigent administration at the Alfred Hospital, acting on White's instructions, provoked a confrontation. The nurses walked off the job. Next day came the vote for an indefinite strike wide strike.

When it started on October 17, there were amazing sights all over Melbourne. Nurses noisily picketed hospitals, handed out leaflets to passers-by, collected money and above all expressed their determination to stay out until they won.

The general feeling was that it was now or never.



Nurses march through Melbourne

No more Florence Nightingale

For most of them, this was the first time they had been on strike. The media said that they were "industrially naive". But it was quite the contrary.

Wendy, a student nurse at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, explained: "Nurses' conditions were so bad because people haven't fought to change them. But now nurses have changed. In the strike they're learning a lot about government tactics and union power".

DAVID WHITE and the media used all the traditional methods to attack the nurses. They claimed patients would die, and conducted a misinformation campaign about rejected offers. They were threats about holding up the national wage case.

But the nurses were not intimidated.

"Patients' lives were endangered before all of this. There was no proper care because of lack of staff and supervision", said another Royal Melbourne student. And on a placard: "Over-

worked nurses: Under-cared for patients".

In any case, the skeleton staff provided during the strike actually meant that some wards had more staff during the strike than before, due to their very severe shortfall in regular numbers.

So the strike was a terrific breakthrough for Victorian nurses. But there were some problems. Only a percentage seemed to be picketing. Many nurses didn't realise that a strike is hard work, and treated it as a holiday.

The official motion was for a 24-hour strike. It took a motion from the rank and file to get the much more effective indefinite strike.

It was also tragic that there could not be combined action with the other hospital workers in the Hospital Employees Federation. The RANF and the HEF have had a number of conflicts. Yet the encouraging response of rank-and-file HEF members to the strike shows the possibility of united action.

HEF members at Prince Henry's declared they would not cross a picket line. Unfortunately, nurses there initially didn't set one up for just that reason!

Nurses have not yet been accused of going outside the Accord. But the purpose of it, as an Alfred Hospital nurse said, is to keep wage demands to a minimum. "It has been very effective at holding wages down," he commented.

Commonwealth public servants' wage claim last year was not accepted as an anomaly because flow-ons were expected. Any gains the nurses make will be sure to flow on. Successful action in Victoria will act as an inspiration in other states. HEF members are bound to respond too.

The public servants' claim was also initially supported by the ACTU. But when arbitration failed and members turned to industrial action, they withdrew support in the name of the Accord.

So in spite of their verbal support for the nurses, we should expect the ACTU to invoke the Accord sooner or later.

THE strike finally ended after five days with only a partial victory. The government's offer on staffing ratios was vague but they did agree to co-operate with the RANF on admissions and discharges.

But lower level nurses will get no increases at this stage — they will have to wait for arbitration.

A number of nurses at the mass meeting argued over what some called a sell-out. Quite rightly, they should share the officials' confidence in "neutral umpires".

But most importantly, nurses have learned to strike. They will use this knowledge as conditions in the hospitals continue to deteriorate.

Because as a staff nurse at Peter McCallum said, "The health system is one of the million things that are decaying at the moment. And Labor has got to a pitiful state. This is going to radicalise nurses across the country. There can't be an end until we get better conditions."

— Jane Stone

Movement Against Uranium Mining
MELBOURNE XMAS FAIR
 Saturday December 7
 10am-4pm, Church of All Nations,
 Palmerston (near Lygon St.)
 Bargaing, music, food, fun for kids
 Enquiries & donations of goods, phone
 M.A.U.M. 663 1428 or Val Macfarlane
 533 4625

LAATEST status symbol for the Torak-Vaocluse set is, believe it or not, the toilet bowl.

An average bowl and cistern cost between \$85 and \$200. But the industry now has special upmarket models for the rich. Stevenson's are selling imported Italian toilets, with gold fish levers and champagne-tinted china, at \$698. The Old Sydney Renovation Company has antique Victorian ceramic toilets, with hand-painted floral

bowls, for up to \$750. Top (or should that be bottom?) of the range is Brodware's Olde English Pull-Chain Toilet, with timber-crafted cistern and seat and brass flush-pipe, at \$850. As we always suspected, the bosses have more aise than class!

REMEMBER Lester Maddox? He was the law in order redneck who preceded Jimmy Carter as Governor of Georgia, USA. A sworn enemy of racial desegregation, communists and homosexuals, he was aptly described as "an axe-handle politician."

Readers will be saddened to learn that Lester Maddox now appears to have contracted AIDS. Caught in, he claims, at a clinic in the Bahamas.

Wonder how the right-wingers and fundamentalists who've been telling us that AIDS is God's way of punishing homosexuals, prostitutes and other deviants are going to explain that one.



TRUST Neville Wran to give the phrase "gambling with public health" a whole new dimension.

The word in Sydney is that the Crown Street Women's Hospital, closed down by Labor, is to be made available as the site for a casino!

OVER 1400 people have died in air crashes this year. Yet 'fire blocker' covers will not be fitted on US aircraft seats until the end of 1987.

Fire blocker covers

* **"THERE'S enough sex on radio without having condoms rammed down your throat,"** says Festival of Light chief, Reverend Fred Nile, opposing male contraceptive advertisements.

Sounds like a felicitous position to us. Just keep your lips pursed and your teeth clenched, Reverend, and you'll be safe.



CHEAP SHOTS

prevent airline seats igniting so easily. At present, flaming arrears send the temperature in the cabin to over 1000 degrees in a few seconds. Even bigger killers in burning aircraft are the hydrogen cyanide and carbon monoxide fumes that the seats give off.

Igniting fuel almost always causes aircraft fires. Yet some airlines still use gasoline rather than the less inflammable, but more expensive, kerosene. As usual, profits come way before people's safety.

SOLO, or Supporters of Law and Order, is a new Victorian group. Pledged to support the cops, it condemns "the deteriorating standards of community life."

Solo's founding patron is recently-resigned Victorian governor Sir Brian Murray. It is publicly backed by top cop Mick Miller, and former police



* **NICE to see former ALP left-winger turned hippie, Dr Jim Cairns, has rediscovered the working class. Even if it is only to provide a remarkably silly explanation of the Morosi family's Wyuna co-operative fiasco.**

"Working class people don't sign things," says Jim. **"The way we went about this was typical of a working class operation."**

Pictured above are working class Jim and Julie, signing the add book or two at a book promotion.

chief Reg Jackson. "We don't sell soft drink or petrol... starts Solo's advertising. But speaking of deteriorating community standards, we bet it does a nice line in cut-rate airline tickets.

"In the Lord's Prayer, could you change the line 'Give us this day our daily bread' to 'Give us this day our daily Swan Lager'."

The Pope hesitated, and then saw his anxious accountant glaring at him from the other end of the room. Making a quick estimate of Bond's fortune, the Pope sang out to the accountant, "When does our contract with Tip-Top expire?"

THE POPE granted Alan Bond an audience at the Vatican. Bond offered a large donation to the Church in return for a little favour.

non-socialist politics mean their conception of women's liberation is sterile.

Rather than socialise household, for example, through communal laundries, dining rooms, creches etc and job rotation, they resort to moral exhortation and the dubious "wage for housework" which only reinforces women's domestic role:

"Men and women must be capable and willing to run a household together. Work in the home and child-rearing must be socially recognized and monetarily compensated as a full-time occupation."

So there are profound weaknesses in the Greens' formal politics. What, though, of their political practice? Have they been able to make effective use of parliament, either to win reforms, to build the extra-parliamentary movement, or to propagate their ideas?

* **Next issue: The Greens in parliament.**

INTERNATIONAL

FOR THREE decades now, sections of the Western left have looked to the Third World for inspiration — to the revolutions in China, Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua in particular.

Yet today, the apparent momentum towards socialism in the Third World has all but run down. At the same time, right-wing dictatorships like South Korea, Taiwan and

Brazil are shaping up as industrial powers of the future.

What has happened to the Third World revolution? Is it even meaningful to talk of a Third World any more? **DAVID LOCKWOOD** looks at these questions and the implications for socialists today.

Whatever happened to the Third World revolution?

REMEMBER the Third World? A vast sea of poverty and exploitation, only relieved by the occasional band of guerrillas, advancing, whatever the odds, towards socialism. . . .

At least, many Western leftists still tend to see it that way.

Thirty years after the Bandung conference of non-aligned nations proclaimed a 'third way' between American capitalism and Russian communism, it is probably a good time to take another look at the Third World. The picture has changed more than a little.

There is no one 'Third World' any more. Within the term, the familiar scene of famine in Africa has to be set side by side with other scenes. With the scene of South Korea's mighty ship-building industry, of India's steel mills, of Brazil's car plants. With the scene of 'communist' China, once the champion of self-reliance, throwing itself on the mercy of the world market. With the scene of the most recent revolutionaries, in southern Africa and Nicaragua, not even getting started on the Third World's familiar road of 'socialism' through state control.

Today we have to ask what are the prospects for revolution in the Third World — and for the regimes that issue out of those revolutions?

FOR SOME years after the second world war, the prospects for the Third World seemed rosier and rosier.

More than half of humanity threw off the shackles of colonialism. In many cases, new leaders appeared, speaking the language of 'socialism' or 'humanism'. Their aim was clear: to use the efforts of the masses, through the state, to bring about economic growth and eliminate poverty, exploitation, inequality and suffering.

Some, like Mao in China, Castro in Cuba and Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, saw themselves as part of the orthodox Communist movement; others, like Sukarno in Indonesia, Nkrumah in Ghana and Nehru in India, as part of a distinct, but closely related 'socialist' perspective.

What united all of them, together with post-colonial regimes that didn't see themselves as socialist at all, was the idea of development through the state. The new leaders, most often nationalist intellectuals, would bring development by extending the



A radical peasant leader recruits in Brazil

regimes whether of the left (like Algeria and Egypt) or the right (like Brazil and Argentina).

From quite early on, some Third World countries were able to achieve higher rates of development than others, and began to pull away. The 'Newly Industrialising Countries' — for example, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore — managed spectacular rises in growth through a combination of extremely low wage levels and an authoritarian state.

To keep wages down, dictatorship was inevitable. The most vicious regime, the one that destroys union and left-wing militants most ruthlessly, is the one most likely to steal a march on its rivals and attract moral foreign investment. The last point is vital, because the newly industrialising countries are overwhelmingly dependant on the world market, and in particular, on Japan and the US.

DO THESE countries provide a way forward for the Third World? Industrialisation has undoubtedly improved the life of their populations. Wages are very low, life styles austere at best — but they are a distinct advance on what was possible before.

However, the idea that what is going on is national economic development — a general rise in continuing raising of living standards — is fantasy. Due to the nature of modern production techniques, industry in the newly industrialising countries tends to remain limited to a ghetto of high growth, which sucks in a tiny minority of the population. The effects on the rest, in the rural areas, are limited.

So in Brazil, while the car plants produce at high-tech speed, large areas of the country are still devoted to fairly primitive agriculture. In India, while intensified agriculture produces a surplus of food, some 300 million Indians go underfed every day.

A more extreme part of state-induced development was taken by those Third World countries who considered themselves part of the 'communist' fold. Their trail, best described as state capitalism, seemed already to have been blazed by the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

Here, the Russian ruling class needed to defend its economy from Western capital, and that meant a military defence. For that,

(continued page 8)

FROM PAGE 4

The Greens

are local environmental struggles. In the working class Saarland, despite the acid rain issue, their vote in a recent state election was just 2.5%.

Only in 1983, when the unions launched a huge 35-hour week campaign, were the Greens forced to take unemployment and working hours seriously.

By then, the opportunity to win some of the SPD's working class vote had been missed. For in mid-1982, the SPD coalition with the Free Democrats collapsed, and the SPD went into opposition. It immediately put on its "left" face and adopted a platform of "jobs and environment".

So effective was this tactic by the SPD, that it not only shored up its own base, but reduced the



The 35 hour campaign: forced Greens to shift

Green vote to a disappointing 5.6% in the March 1983 poll.

TODAY, the Greens' program still avoids any fundamental pro-working class or socialist change.

It merely calls for smaller-scale private enterprise, with worker participation rather than control.

"For the present workers should be given at least a qualified right to participate in the decision-making process. In the long run,

however, we want to strive for real worker participation in decisions affecting the productive capital and assets of the company."

Likewise, the Greens call for "more direct democracy", meaning more "plebiscites and referendums". The notion of direct democracy through workers' councils is entirely absent; parliament is still to rule.

The ramifications flow into other areas. Despite their "anti-patriarchal" stance, the Greens'

INTERNATIONAL

a modern industrialised economy was necessary, and this could only be achieved if the state marshalled the entire resources of the country.

In terms of economic development, placing to one side the numbers killed through forced collectivisations and party purges, the scheme was a considerable success. It was no surprise that backward countries looked to its example after the war. And yet the two experiences took place in very different contexts.

The construction of state capitalism in Russia proceeded against a background of world slump and depression. State capitalism in China, Cuba and Vietnam was constructed during the world boom that followed the war.

The former succeeded due to Russia's huge size and population, and the relatively simple production methods of the 1930s. The latter made some strides forward at a time when the rest of the world was striding forward as well.

While Russia was able to survive slump, war, boom and slump again (though not without considerable internal problems), the Third World state capitalists, being that much weaker, have been much more severely affected by the world crisis.

Vietnam and Cuba have had to solve their problems by throwing themselves on the mercy of the USSR. Both of them receive billions of dollars a year from the Kremlin. Neither would be remotely capable of meeting their import needs without this aid.

Russia provides 80% of Vietnam's imports, in return for which it gets military bases plus the pressure of Vietnam's army on China's southern flank. In Cuba, the con-

tinuing need for Russian aid has been exacerbated by the catastrophic fall in the price of sugar, the main export crop. That aid has been estimated (in 1983) at some \$250 per head per annum.

For China, the good offices of the Soviet bureaucracy were not an option. Once China rejected Russian domination in the 1950s, there was no going back.

The only solution was to swing right over from Mao's policy of attempted 'self-reliance' to an 'open-door' policy to the west: to open up the Chinese economy to the world market, to start competing for foreign investment in order to survive.

Having established a security relationship with the US, the regime proceeded single-mindedly to increase western investment. Between 1978 and 1981 the total volume of imports and exports to the west rose by 94%. As *Beijing Review* pointed out, "We are currently absorbing foreign investments and importing technology on an unprecedented scale."

The development ghettos began, 'Special Export Zones', previously seen only in the more backward newly industrialising countries, were set up. Sealed off from the rest of the country, they hoped to attract foreign investment by cheap labour, tax holidays and hand-outs from the regime. If there is any doubt about China's strategy, listen to the governor of Fujian province:

"We are now studying the wage rates of Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea. We believe that our wage levels will be lower than these places. In order to protect the investors' profitability, the wage rate cannot be too high."

The investment has come through, though not in amounts as large as the regime would like. The incomes of some Chinese, particularly the peasantry which is able to control its own surplus, have risen.

But there is a price that the Chinese ruling class has had to pay. In opening up China to the world economy, they have seen their ability to direct the Chinese economy continually reduced. The need for foreign currency to finance the importation of technology becomes more desperate (which probably explains the regime's bizarre offer



Congolese guerrillas: China today is not so inspiring



An Indian village: despite intensified agriculture 300 million go hungry

to turn the Gobi desert into a nuclear waste dump for the West Germans).

While the power of the world economy over China will continue to grow, China's power within the world economy remains pathetically weak. The brave new world of Third World 'communism' ends up as just one more form of dependency — either on Russia, or on the world market.

FOR THOSE Third World revolutionaries who have come to power since the end of the boom, state capitalism hasn't even been an option.

Five years after the revolution in Managua, 60% of Nicaragua's economy is still in private hands. The Sandinista regime is doing everything in its power to placate Nicaraguan business. Nicaragua's ambassador to the US complained, "It is very difficult to convince the White House that we are a coalition government with a public sector not very much bigger than the one in Britain."

While it is true that the Sandinistas did not come to power on a socialist programme, neither did Fidel Castro's guerrillas in 1959. In Cuba, economic blockade and military threat from the US pushed the regime down the path of state capitalism. In Nicaragua, it has had precisely the opposite effect.

When the Portuguese empire collapsed in 1974, liberation movements came to power in Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Angola. Once again, they promised their peoples that having driven out the colonial power, the State — now headed by revolutionaries — would create the material basis for development and socialism.

But the economic power-house of southern Africa, South Africa itself, has proved too strong for them. By breaking (or threatening to break) its economic links with the three new regimes, South Africa has brought them to the verge of economic disaster, particularly in the case of Mozambique.

By March 1984, the Mozambican government was forced to sign the Nkomati accord with Pretoria which led to 800 organisers of the African National Congress being kicked out and economic links being resumed.

For Zimbabwe, with its more developed economy and greater resources, the prospects



seemed brighter. But the new state is dependant on the 6000 white farmers that produce 77% of its agricultural product, and on South Africa for its foreign trade. The combined pressure has made the economy of Zimbabwe look very much like that of Rhodesia.

State capitalism was constructed in the USSR in mid-Depression due to Russia's economic power. It was constructed in the Third World, tied to the apron strings of a world boom.

It cannot be constructed today in Nicaragua or southern Africa because they simply do not have the power to create state capitalism in crisis conditions. On the contrary, the new regimes have become the vehicle for pulling their economies deeper into the world market.

THIS LEAVES all the schemes and dreams which inspired the notion of the 'Third World' in a pretty tenuous situation. The outlook for building socialism looks bleak. Except for one thing.

When Leon Trotsky pointed out after the Russian uprising of 1905 that since capitalism ruled on a world scale, workers' revolutions were now on the agenda — in both advanced and backward countries — on a world scale, he was quite right. But the world working class to which he pointed hardly existed.

While it has been developing, revolution in the Third World has been very different to the scenario Trotsky mapped out. For the most part, workers have hardly been

involved at all. Power has generally been taken 'on behalf of the workers and peasants by nationalist intellectuals.

It is their regimes that are currently presiding over the confused jumble of development and backwardness, industry and starvation, state capitalism and market socialism, that is the Third World today.

But in the midst of that jumble, a world working class now exists. It exists in the tough and battered trade unionists of the newly industrialising countries, in the unorganised workers fighting economic 'reform' in China, in the workers under 'revolutionary' regimes who are no longer prepared to sacrifice for the sake of the world market.

It exists because its interests and those of even the most 'progressive' Third World regimes are being forced further and further apart. It exists because it will be forced, and is being forced, to fight.

The fight today is the same for the workers in the advanced and backward countries. There is no longer a First, Second or Third World, because beneath the facades — the 'free world' and the non-aligned movement, the socialist republic of this and the democratic people's republic of that — the reality remains. The reality is capitalism, in its infinite variety, subject to infinite pressures, lashed together by the world market, torn apart by the interests of each ruling class.

The Third World is dead. Roll on the world workers' republic.

SOCIALIST ACTION

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Socialism

We fight for socialism: the creation of a classless society in which the economy will be democratically planned, and workers themselves will make the key decisions about economic and social life. Countries like Russia and China are bureaucratic class societies, and have nothing in common with real socialism.

Revolution, not Reformism

We are revolutionaries. The experience of Labor in power has shown the bankruptcy of attempts to tinker with the existing capitalist system. The capitalists will not allow a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. Their state is a weapon of class rule, and must be smashed.

A Mass Workers' Party

Workers need a revolutionary party. The working class cannot make a revolution through spontaneous upheavals. The bosses are organised, and we need to organise too. Today we work to build a stronger revolutionary movement out of the struggles being waged on the job and around social protest issues. Tomorrow we must create a mass workers' party to lead the struggle for socialism.

Internationalism

We are internationalists. The working class exists in all countries, and the struggle for socialism knows no national barriers. A socialist revolution cannot survive within a single country. It must be spread to other countries or it will fail. For these reasons we are for building a world-wide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against others.

Liberation from Oppression

We fight for liberation and against the oppression of women, blacks, migrants and gays. All of these forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. The fight against them is an essential part of building a united revolutionary movement. They can only be ended through ending capitalism and building socialism.

Socialist Action

We are for Socialist Action. It's no good just talking about the world: the point is to change it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only meaningful if they are a guide to action. In the unions, social movements and wherever people are fighting for a better world, socialists are in the thick of the fight. If that's where you want to be, join us today!

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INTERNATIONAL

IN OCTOBER the Nicaraguan government extended the state of emergency which has been in force since 1982. President Ortega also announced that various civil rights would be suspended.

Free expression, public assembly, unrestricted movement and mail privacy are no longer guaranteed. The right to strike is suspended and the press will be more strictly censored.

The reason is the continuing war Nicaragua is fighting against US-backed mercenaries. So the cries of "totalitarianism" which the new measures will elicit from the White House are rank hypocrisy.

At the same time, the new restrictions highlight some peculiar features and limitations of the Sandinista revolution.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) was a revolutionary movement similar to those led by Mao and Castro. It sought to free the country from a brutal dictatorship and to break Nicaragua out of its poverty by mobilising the resources of the whole country.

But unlike the cases of Cuba and China, the Sandinistas in power have not expropriated private enterprise. The lands and companies of former dictator Somoza are in state hands, but the rest of the economy is largely private.

THE REVOLUTION of 1979 saw the mobilisation of the masses, especially in the cities. The workers rose up in their hundreds of thousands and smashed the Somoza regime. Major reforms were achieved, including equal pay for women, the right to organise unions, and an end to police repression.

Yet it was not long before the Sandinistas began to rein the initiative of the workers. The FSLN was prepared to use mass pressure to restrict the power of the capitalists, but opposed any



Ortega workers kept in check

moves to abolish capitalism itself. Within a year, militant workers came under attack from the new regime and leftist union leaders were jailed.

The end result was the consolidation of a Sandinista



A soldier guards the harvest from "contras"

Nicaragua's revolution under siege

regime which is controlled neither by the bourgeoisie nor the working class.

Certainly the Sandinistas enjoy widespread popular support. President Daniel Ortega was elected last year with over 60 per cent of the vote. And of course, Ortega and the FSLN claim to represent the workers.

But this is nothing more than conventional capitalist parliamentarism. There is universal suffrage, as in Australia. People get to mark a ballot paper every few years, but the workers as a class do not control the state.

In the factories, there are various forms of "workers' participation". Between FSLN managers and FSLN union officials, however, this participation is kept within strict limits.

In the localities, various Sandinista mass organisations

make concessions both to capital and labour. This happened last year when, in the run-up to the elections, the state of emergency was eased with more rights for bosses and workers alike. Now the government has decided to crack down again on both.

Such a balancing act occurs against the background of continuing US aggression.

The American charges of "totalitarian communism" in Nicaragua are, as we have seen, baseless. But what matters to the White House is the spectacle of a Latin American government making its own decisions without deferring to the US. That is intolerable to the US imperialists. Hence their support to the murderous "contra" mercenaries and their continual search for the right circumstances to invade Nicaragua.

The war is a terrible drain on Nicaragua's economy, diverting resources away from the harvest and killing thousands of people. Together with the US economic blockade, it has thrown the economy into permanent crisis. Shoppers find that basic necessities of life are rationed, and are sometimes not available at all except at ruinous black market prices.

Real wages have fallen by up to 30 per cent.

So far, popular support for the Sandinistas and their war effort has held up pretty well. At the mass rallies celebrating the sixth anniversary of the revolution in July were well attended. Even so, the population is beginning to grow weary of continual sacrifice which appears to lead nowhere.

HISTORY shows that workers are usually prepared to make immense sacrifices for a revolution they feel is in their interests, and Nicaragua has been no exception. But gradually Nicaraguan workers are becoming aware that the regime is not really representing their interests.

The FSLN does not trust the capitalists and does not intend to allow them to control the rudder of state. Nevertheless, it has systematically subordinated the country to a capitalist pattern of economic development.

In their drive to win the contra war, the Sandinistas are desperate to boost production. To this end, they are offering incentives to the employers. And to keep lines of foreign credit open, they are making payments to foreign banks.

The resources to placate domestic and foreign capital in this way can only come from one

place: the exploitation of the working class. And that is where the FSLN are getting them.

In the factories, fringe benefits are being eliminated. On-the-job shops which provided bargain goods are getting the axe. Worker protests against this are met with pious lectures on the evils of "economism".

In agriculture, the regime has begun a drive to force workloads back up to the levels of the Somoza regime. Agriculture Minister Jaime Wheelock says the sugar harvest must double output and more.

HOW LONG will workers maintain their enthusiasm for defending the revolution, when the revolution increasingly takes on the old, repulsive capitalist features?

This is the fundamental dilemma which arises from a revolution which has only gone half way.

Nicaragua's predicament can only be solved by taking the revolution forward toward socialism. That means putting the workers themselves in power. It means worker control in the factories. It means creating democratic workers' councils to replace a parliamentary system which in the end has historically suited capitalism rather than the working class.

And since the resources ultimately don't exist within Nicaragua alone to build a socialist society, it means actively aiding the class struggle in neighbouring countries.

The Sandinistas are not prepared to do any of these things. Instead they cling to an alliance with the bourgeoisie, and support the Contadora peace program formulated by a number of nearby capitalist powers — a program which Daniel Ortega has admitted means relying on those same capitalist powers for the country's security.

So the end what is needed is a new revolutionary movement, one which would be as militant as that which smashed the Somoza regime and which would be much clearer on the need for workers' power and socialism.

The Sandinistas would oppose such a movement, just as today they are prepared to send the cops in against strikers, and just as not long ago they jailed workers for going on strike.

The Sandinistas would oppose such a movement, just as today they are prepared to send the cops in against strikers, and just as not long ago they jailed workers for going on strike.

The old Australian song is right: "when they jail a man for striking, it's a rich man's country, yet." The Nicaraguan revolution has achieved many things, but it has not abolished capitalism. A new struggle is needed for that.

— Tom O'Lincoln

EDUCATION

Cathie hands out the cuts



Education minister Cathie, special services have been lopped

VICTORIAN Education Minister Ian Cathie almost had things his way this month. The Labor government handed him the task of implementing a 1% cut in the Education Budget, with further cuts of 1 1/2% in the pipeline.

To do so, Cathie used the pretext of predicted lower enrolments in schools in 1986 to knife over 600 jobs, in spite of an earlier 'good faith' commitment to maintain teacher numbers.

Initially, the unions were slow to respond. The TTUW (technical teachers) campaign of half day stoppages was out of step with the VSTA (secondary) one day stoppages. At first, the VTU (primary) did not strike at all.

Cathie exploited this disunity by stonewalling. He made no offers, 'assuring' unionists that he proposed no decline in teachers' conditions and that jobs would be lost through 'natural wastage'.

The ugly face of that natural wastage has already emerged. Many schools' Special Needs, English as a Second Language, disadvantage program and teacher librarians have been pruned. Teachers' and students' conditions are clearly at risk.

Numbers attending TTUW and VSTA stopworks, at first very impressive, had ebbed due to Cathie's tactics. So there was tremendous excitement at the October 22 stopworks when a joint strike and rally at parliament house on October 29 won thousands of votes.

Its success shows that there

are plenty of teachers with the necessary extra reserve of morale to continue the fight. It also shows that the basis exists for close co-operation in struggle between the two unions.

Then in a colossal display of contempt for the rank and file, the executives of both unions announced next day that the October 29 stopwork was off. Supposedly this would allow a Teachers' Federation of Victoria meeting to get the VTU to join a three-union stoppage again this year.

VSTA and TTUW members can keep their hat in the ring by approaching VTU branches to pressure their executive to join a strike and rally at Parliament House.

Local branches of all three unions should get together to leaflet students after school, and so begin to win crucial parent support.

— Mark Malcolm, VSTA member

GRIFFITH UNI



The nutty professor

THE "New Right" is pressing its unwanted attentions on Griffith University in Brisbane.

Women Who Want to be Women, an anti-abortion and "pro-family" group, have attacked the new Gender Studies courses to be offered there, even linking them to AIDS in a petition to parliament.

WWW has a champion at

Griffith in Professor Hiram P. Caton. Caton's attitudes are truly bizarre. Try this:

"Homosexuality is perhaps the most humiliating of all male put-downs. Consider an experience common today. The young woman... forces a young man and they spend some time together. Then he abruptly ends the friendship, telling her he has a male lover. It can be a devastating shock... How can you but regard men with suspicion and anger?"

Caton, like Queen Victoria, seems unaware of lesbianism. He quotes farcical statistics:

"About 5 per cent of Australian males are homosexual while another 5 per cent are bisexual. This... leaves five per cent of women without partners, and another 5 per cent barren."

Yet there is the danger of a convergence between the likes of Caton and sections of the women's movement. Caton

enthusias about the 'emergence of a new parliament in the midst of the trendy camp,' and continues:

"The feminist campaign against sexism in an assertion that women are no longer available for casual use and enjoyment. In this way they are retrieving their dignity... This reassertion of women's dignity is entirely congenial to the conservative outlook."

Sections of the women's movement are indeed falling into the trap of buying sexually repressive ideology. Take this recent strategy suggested by *Women Against Warships*:

"One of the most effective ways to deter nuclear warship visits to our ports is to make their stay as unpleasant as possible by confronting the sailors at bars, showing disapproval of other women who 'date' sailors... alerting the health authorities to the danger of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases... and through mass public protest actions."

Feminist strategies of this sort ultimately reinforce the right wing ideology that is behind the attack on the Gender Studies course and the raids on Queensland abortion clinics.



RACISM

OS students fight visa tax

SEVENTY protesting students were attacked by Sydney police on October 10, and thirty arrested.

The students had occupied the Martin Place GPO clock-tower, over Labor's threat to deport overseas students who haven't paid the crippling \$3500 "visa tax" to study in Australia.

The racist visa charge has already risen 65% in two years. Full fees for overseas students seem imminent.

The demonstration was the latest shot in a two year campaign against fees in Sydney. The well-organised Overseas Students Collective has been lobbying MPs, holding demonstrations and signing up overseas students to the "Delay the Fees" campaign.

OSC organizer Steven Gan says over 500 have refused to pay the visa tax this year. He expects the number to skyrocket next year, because many overseas students cannot afford the crippling tax.

A survey at University of NSW supports this. Over 62% of overseas students there come from families with combined incomes of under \$15,000. In Australia, they often subsist on less than \$4000 a year, well below the poverty line.



Education Minister Ryan pushing racist measures

Labor MPs have not responded to the lobbying. Education Minister Susan Ryan argues that fees for overseas students are preferable to fees for everyone. She is also pushing the universities into a racist quota system for overseas students, supposedly to protect Australian places and prevent racial hostilities building up.

Let even Labor's own Goldring committee say that local enrolments are really falling because of government funding cuts to education.

— Michael Hudson, UNSW

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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS



Workers at Port Kembla: BHP is no fairy godmother to them

BHP's 'fairy godmother' — not so selfless, really

AUSTRALIA'S biggest company, BHP, has announced that it will subsidise the exports of companies which use its steel, through the Steel Manufacturers Export Project (SMEP).

Sounds like an incredibly selfless thing for the Big Australian to do, encouraging smaller, less powerful firms to compete on world markets. And it should help improve Australia's balance of payments, something the Government says we should all support.

No wonder BHP calls SMEP "a kind of fairy godmother." But SMEP will serve BHP's corporate interests extremely well. The project will expand the market for its products by expanding the markets of its customers.

BHP is just taking its previous export strategy a step further. For decades the Company has used the profits from the sale of steel in Australia, at prices kept high by tariff barriers, to keep its export prices down.

Today, the Government's steel industry plan guarantees BHP the lion's share of the Australian market. It also provides the steel monopoly with subsidies to discourage it from charging higher prices still. So the Big Australian makes big profits locally, which help it cope with the lower profit margins on its international sales.

There are economies in large scale production of basic steel.

When the local market is as small as Australia's the only way to take advantage of these economies is by exporting. So the only way steel production can be profitable in any one country is by selling a substantial propor-

tion of its output overseas.

With SMEP, BHP will not only subsidise the price of the steel it sells directly overseas, but also the steel that goes overseas in the form of more highly processed products. The manufacturers of those products will be more able to undercut their overseas competitors. By helping its customers in this way, BHP is expanding the size of its own local market.

Although BHP is a multinational corporation, it has an interest in promoting Australian production. Around the world protectionist shutters are coming down against steel imports. By expanding its steel exports in the form of products which are more highly processed, BHP is trying to by-pass these tariff barriers.

What BHP is doing may boost profits and in the short term it may help Australia's balance of trade. But the cost is borne by Australian workers, as employees, taxpayers and consumers.

BHP has improved its performance by drastically cutting its workforce, sacking thousands and thousands of workers in order to increase productivity (production per worker). Sacked workers pay for BHP's exports with their jobs.

All Australian consumer products which include steel are more expensive because protection keeps steel prices higher than they would otherwise be. As consumers, we pay for BHP's exports.

The subsidies to BHP, to keep its local prices down a bit, are paid for out of taxes. Especially after Paul Keating's tax "Reforms", it is workers who are paying those taxes.

So the SMEP fairy godmother

will be conducting a large scale protection racket.

But BHP's racket is only a subsidiary of a still bigger operation, whose aim is to increase the competitiveness of all Australian industry — at our expense.

The Hawke Government is behind this bigger protection operation. It wants to help Australian industry to restructure. That means widespread sackings and the introduction of new technology in the drive to lift productivity, encouraging take-overs and mergers to allow for economies of scale, and the closure of sectors or companies which can't adapt. With accelerated depreciation allowances, concessions for research and development and other subsidies, Bob Hawke is doing a "SMEP" industry-wide.

So in reality, "Australia's interests" are opposed to those of Australian workers. We are being made to pay for the improved competitiveness of Australian industry.

That increase in competitiveness isn't even last year's long. Other countries are also trying to improve their industries' competitiveness, at the expense of the working class. They are boosting productivity through sackings, speed-ups, and the introduction of new technologies, and are subsidising exports with money raised through taxation.

The chase for international competitiveness is like a boss monkey chasing its own tail. But the monkey is riding a tiger. The sooner workers around the world despatch their monkeys, the sooner we can put our energies into improving our lives rather than running in circles.

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

SEQEB: Officials throw in the towel

IT'S OFFICIAL! Queensland's TLC has now openly admitted what many of us already knew: it has abandoned the struggle to reinstate sacked SEQEB power workers.

Former Communist and TLC executive member Hugh Hamilton conceded defeat in a feature article in the *Sunday Mail*. All his union could recommend, he said, was that the strikers find alternative employment. Of course, he also offered some empty rhetoric:

"We have to make a proper assessment of the present situation and see that we need new methods of organisation and struggle. And the details of those new methods should be spelled out through the collective wisdom of both the trade union movement and the community at large."

Similarly, state ALP president Ian McLean told the strikers on 11 October that "we can't win" because "everything has changed" and strikers will no longer work. But the power of industrial action had Bjelke on the run at the start of the dispute. It was only when the union bureaucrats sent the power operators back to work that Petersen gained the upper hand.

The TLC's idea of "new methods" of struggle now amounts to giving \$20,000 to the Labor candidate in the Redlands by-elections. Meanwhile the strikers are so disillusioned with the Labor Party's role that they have decided to run their own candidate, Jackson Brown, from the Gold Coast. Predictably, he has been denounced by TLC secretary Ray Dempsey as "anti-union."

The labour leaders' pathetic performance is only encouraging Petersen to make further attacks. New contracts which restore the 38-hour week, a clause which bans even talking about strikes, and other attacks on conditions, are about to be imposed on all SEQEB workers and also on workers in FNQ and Capricornia electricity boards.

Legislation has been drawn up for the introduction of contract labour eliminating penalty rates in the hospitality industry. Disagreement among the employers is the only thing holding up its implementation.

Fortunately some hotel workers seem prepared to fight



Jackson Brown: standing against ALP over SEQEB

back. "Despite the low commitment to union conditions you find with a high percentage of casuals and a high turnover of staff, some of the workers are mobilising on the issue of penalty rates," says Mark Morrison, a delegate at the Crest Hotel.

— Carole Ferrier

MAIL STRIKE

Aust Post out of sorts

SYDNEY mail officers have staged a series of mostly wildcat walkouts in recent weeks.

Australia Post are bringing in new roster which involve compulsory weekend work and cuts in real pay. Currently a mail sorter's maximum wage is just \$62.2 per fortnight.

With the Chamber of Commerce, the Labor government, Arbitration and the press all backing Australia Post, APWU officials are doing little to avert this crucial dispute. But mail sorters themselves, led by shop-floor delegates, have refused to budge. Finally, union officials had to call a mass meeting on October 14.

After debate lasting an incredible six hours (including a 1½

hour report from officials and other delaying tactics), we threw out the official resolution and voted to strike indefinitely from October 21. A more militant motion, to strike indefinitely right away and establish a rank-and-file dispute committee, narrowly lost by 350 to 216.

A further motion, moved from the floor and carried unanimously, called on all mail centres to stop if any attempt is made in any centre to bypass mail or stand-down sorters over bans. This produced total walkouts on October 15, 16 and 17.

As this goes to press, the dispute's future is uncertain. But NSW sorters have "given the mail" to Australia Post that we are no pushovers.

— Steve Drakeley, mail officer

DSS BANS

Joint action by clerks

THE FIGHT is on in Social Security.

Victorian DSS workers have begun escalating their campaign on staffing, with solidarity between their two unions beginning to strengthen.

A mass meeting of clerks (represented by the ACOA) and clerical assistants (APSA) on 21 October reaffirmed a range of bans and limitations, and decided that each union would back the other's actions. In the event of walk-outs, strikes or pickets arising from stand-downs, cross-union solidarity action is to be automatic. If these decisions are seriously implemented, they could begin to have a real impact.

The solidarity proposals, moved by Socialist Action mem-

bers, were supported by Assistant State ACOA secretary Doug Lilley. Lilley suggested they were simply normal practice. But in the recent past, relations between the two unions have been strained at the official level, and only rank and file pressure and joint walkouts in some offices have begun to make solidarity a reality.

The present DSS staffing figure is about 10,000 and has been consistently falling. A joint union/management review on staffing has produced sharp disagreement, with the government proposing 9,570 staff and the union demanding 10,250.

In the aftermath of last year's abortive pay campaign, there has been considerable cynicism and disillusionment in some offices. So at the start, the DSS staffing struggle appeared fragile. It was also uneven, with support pretty weak in some traditionally strong offices, yet strong in unusual places like Dandenong.

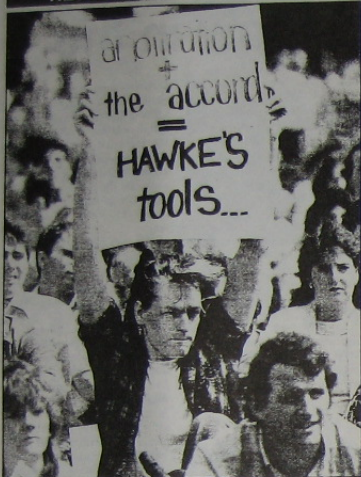
Clerical assistants began implementing bans on October a ban on duties of unfilled positions, a ban on out-of-office classifications, and the working of a 7½ hour fortnight. The clerks' union came into the struggle eight days later with more modest bans of its own.

The actions are not powerful in themselves, yet they have allowed a campaign to gradually build up. When management tried to make members break bans, walkouts took place in a number of offices, adding more momentum.

Officials of both unions have been anxious to keep the dispute from escalating rapidly. They are for avoiding stand-downs and walk-outs. Yet these have already occurred, and the mass meeting decision for greater solidarity can only encourage a more militant atmosphere.



Mail sorters: \$62.2 a fortnight maximum and face a cut



Angry Sydney ACOA members meet during the campaign

Strung up by the Accord

SUDDENLY, there we were. On the front pages of the papers, along with the BLF and the doctors, crippling the economy and threatening the Accord!

And make no mistake, that was exactly the impact of the three public service unions' 1984-85 action over pay. As Paul White writes:

"By this time about \$58 million worth of revenue had been blocked, according to the government. A week later Ralph Willis was complaining that about \$41 million was held up in Telecom, \$4 million in Australia Post and over \$1 billion in the Tax Office."

You would think unions able to exercise such power would win. The result, however, was disappointing. The unions did not win their original demand for an 8.3 per cent pay rise, though their action did eventually force the government to give them a small increase. Given the somewhat equivocal result, it is important that union members understand the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign.

Until recently, we've only had the officials' version. We now

From Tragedy to Farce,
by Paul White
(ACOA Reform Group) \$1

have another analysis, from socialist union activist and ACOA Reform Group member Paul White. Titled *From Tragedy to Farce*, his pamphlet outlines the events and attempts to draw out some lessons.

In the last months of the Fraser government, a wage freeze was imposed on all workers. But by early 1983, amid rising discontent, the two main public service unions (ACOA and AFPSA) prepared to break the freeze. Union officials called off the move, in exchange for promises that the ALP/ACTU Accord offered a brighter future.

The Accord was hailed as the sure deliverer of our pay rise. It promised to "ensure comparability" in wages and conditions with state governments and the private sector.

The union leaders should have known better. Had the ACOA journal not written in April 1982 that the Labor government was "behaving identically" to the

Fraser government, "forcing us into long arbitration processes with the aim of delaying and minimising any result"?

However as 1984 wore on, rank and file pressure again began to build. Separate action taken by members of APSA and Federated Clerks in Tax began to have an effect. Bans in Tax were particularly effective. By mid-November, the unions took their first joint strike action.

Yet the officials were still fully in control. This became clear at the December mass meetings, when members agreed to official motions to call off all action, in return for Arbitration Commission agreement to hear the claim.

The turning point came on 10 January, 1985. As Paul White puts it:

"When the Arbitration Commission finally handed down its decision, it was clear that we faced an historic defeat. Our claim was unceremoniously dismissed and a nil increase awarded... The decision provoked unprecedented anger and spontaneous walk-outs across the country."

Again, the officials quickly moved to channel the anger. Yet as the quote at the start of this article indicates, even the selective bans they opted for as a strategy proved more effective than any one expected.

Not only did the bans affect government and business. More importantly, the action members were taking had an impact on them. They began to feel their strength.

Then the government started standing workers down in Tax, Customs and Veterans Affairs. Fellow unionists in their own and other departments walked out.

For the officials, this was a danger sign. Their whole aim was to get the claim back onto the Arbitration merry-go-round. They couldn't do this if members' action challenged the Arbitration system itself. An ALP/ACTU compromise was worked out and pushed through by the officials.

It was a miserable result. At the height of the campaign, when even the officials acknowledged our strength, it was suddenly over. We lifted bans and went back to Arbitration. Three months later, we got a mere 2 to



"And now I'll read the Commission's decision."

4 per cent with no backdating.

What can we conclude from the experience? For Paul White, the result was an utter disaster: "Seldom do unions suffer such devastating defeats as did the unions involved in the 1984-85 commonwealth public service pay campaign." For the officials, of course, it was all a stunning success.

The reality is more complex. While the result was not the major victory claimed by the unions, we must not forget that as a result of our industrial action, we did force the government and the Arbitration Commission to give us something.

It is also too one-sided to speak, as Paul does, of the unions "meekly submitting to the so-called Prices and Incomes Accord". The Accord was adhered to, but when it did not deliver, members fought. Moves to withdraw from the Accord won support from about 40 per cent of members at a Victorian mass meeting.

Paul argues in his pamphlet that the Accord offers nothing to workers except defeat and demoralisation and he concludes with a reference to the "iron law of industrial relations. This is that unionists only ever get out of Arbitration what we are willing to extract from it through bitter, tenacious struggle." All very true.

Minister Willis: bans held up millions



Minister Willis: bans held up millions

I would also like to see him set the pamphlet against the background of the role of the Accord in Australian industrial relations generally.

The confrontationist policies of the Fraser government were proved failures in the "wages push" of 1981-82. Labor came to power pledged to replace them with more subtle means.

The result was a widespread demobilisation of trade unionists. One consequence was a sluggish response from much of the PS rank and file to the early stages of the pay campaign. This, in turn, meant no alternative rank and file leadership could be built. As a result, the union officials could control the campaign.

These dimensions are missing from the pamphlet. Even so, public service unionists can learn a lot from it. And it is only by learning the lessons of a (largely) failed campaign that we can ensure that we have not fought in vain.

— Liz Ross, ACOA

THE SEVEN YEAR STITCH-UP

TIM ANDERSON had seven years in jail during which to write this book.

Like hundreds of others in NSW jails, Anderson and his Ananda Marga colleagues Dunn and Alister were put there by police "verballs" and frame-ups. They were convicted in 1979 of conspiracy to murder Nazi Robert Cameron.

Unlike most other prisoners, Anderson had the backing of a campaign of Margis and civil libertarians working for his release.

After a committal hearing, two trials, two appeals, an inquest, numerous submissions and much



Lionel Murphy: only judge to oppose frame-up

legal hoop-jumping, Anderson, Dunn and Alister were released, though not acquitted, in May this year after a judicial inquiry.

Being the involuntary occupant of the centre stage, Anderson is naturally concerned to present enough detail to set the record straight.

He reminds us that a "Who's Who" of legal and political figures were parties to the frame-up.

After the Hilton bomb explosion in February 1978, Malcolm Fraser and Indian PM Moraji Desai called for the blood of Ananda Marga. Special Branch detectives arrested and "verballled" the Margis four months later. Detective-Executioner Rogerson assaulted Anderson. Governor-General Cowan awarded bravery medals to the arresting officers.

Police Union president Greaves prosecuted the Margis at committal. Magistrate Murray Faquhar refused bail. District Court judges Nagle and Lee told jurors to convict. State Chief Justice Gibbs and his brethren (except Murphy) turned down their appeals.

All were duly whitewashed by

Free Alister, Dunn and Anderson
by Tim Anderson
(Wild & Woolley) \$7.95

Justice Wood's judicial inquiry.

The book is not, as its sensationalist cover claims, "the true story of the Hilton Hotel bombing".

The book can say with certainty that Ananda Marga didn't plant any bomb, but it can't say exactly who did plant the Hilton bomb.

We can only talk about likelihoods. ASIO and the political police gained new powers after the Hilton bomb, and originally appeared to be the bombers. Anderson, however, provides evidence which makes it more likely that the Hilton bomb was planted, like the alleged "murder weapon", by that pathetic waste product of capitalism called Richard Seary.

Seary had acquired experience with explosives as an opal miner and wanted, for reasons of his own, to frame the Hari Krishnas. After the explosion, he approached Special Branch to suggest that Harris planted the bomb (p. 222).

This suggestion, however, was too absurd even for Special Branch (p. 204), who instead insisted that Seary infiltrate Ananda Marga and link them to the bomb (pp. 204 and 57). Special Branch wanted not a lunatic, but plots, conspiracies and terrorism. Seary told them all the nonsense they wanted to hear (p. 162).

But where was the hard evidence? Finding none, Special Branch and Seary manufactured their own evidence about a murder plot.

The cops supplied the verbal, Seary supplied the bomb. The capitalist press contributed by supplying anti-terrorist hysteria which persuaded the jurors to overlook their doubts: "Hilton Blast — Sect Link" was a typical headline.

A member of the jury which convicted later explained, "As well as printing stories about the Hilton, the papers also painted a picture of AM as a dangerous terrorist group... I feel that this image affected us in making a decision."

The role of the capitalist press seems to confuse Anderson.



Tim Anderson: 7 years to write

Fairfax, Packer, and Murdoch papers were clearly a force behind the frame-up. Yet Anderson, their victim, rehabilitates them on several occasions by quoting them favourably.

As a result, the torrent of abuse poured on the Margis appears as something accidental, rather than the typical behaviour of these tabloid rags.

Still, the task of socialists is not to be holier-than-thou. We can only applaud the efforts of the author and his colleagues to battle their way out of prison. Such victims are too rare to dismiss.

Let's hope they win compensation and acquittal. Their struggle is still ours.

— Denis Alsop

DOCUMENTARY Great TV, weird views

SOUTH AMERICAN revolutionary leader Simon Bolivar predicted that "Tyrants will rise from my tomb", and fewer predictions have been more amply confirmed. All of Latin America has felt the lash of dictatorship at some time or other.

This was the theme of Jack Pizze's first instalment in his TV series about South America, *Sweat of the Sun, Tears of the Moon*. Judging from the first two episodes (the second was about entertainers), this series is about entertainers! But the going to be great TV. But the politics are confused as all hell. Pizze visited Bolivia and Chile to study the roots of dictatorship. He offers three clues. There is the supposed social irresponsibility of Latin peoples, who leave control of important affairs to others; the apparently perverse tendency of

South Americans to base their economy on a single product; and the personal example set by Bolivar, who was a bit of a tyrant himself.

Yet since Pizze made this TV show, the Bolivian workers have twice waged bitter and prolonged general strikes in defiance of attempts to impose rightwing policies on their country. Pizze himself speaks of their heroic struggles of the more distant past, of the great revolution of 1952, and how they have been prepared to face torture and death.

Are these people really socially irresponsible?

It is true that Bolivia, like other South American countries, is dependent on a few key exports. Pizze mentions almost in passing that "foreigners" have played a role in this, and also in the coup which imposed Chile's Pinochet dictatorship. Had he investigated a bit further, he would have found that the key is imperialism, particularly of the North American variety, which keeps the rest of the western hemisphere underdeveloped.

Underdevelopment, in turn, does lead to brutal regimes. Capitalism in South America can survive no other way at times. That is why we are out to abolish capitalism. Pizze understands little of this.

Oh well, let's be realistic. TV is always superficial and its politics are usually lousy. Watch the Pizze series for entertainment, as I certainly will.

But if you want to understand the roots of Bolivar's social conflicts, including the recent labour struggles which have been thoroughly blacked out by our media, read a socialist account like James Dunkerley's *Rebellion in the Vents*.

— Tom O'Lincoln



Brazilians flame mounted police: Is dictatorship their own fault?

The cracks open up in the Cain facade

WHAT A dire month October was for John Cain.

When it began, he led the country's most stable Labor government. As it ends, he is openly at war with his police force, badly muddled over his Governor's resignation and has a party secretary who publicly admits organising the Nunawading how-to-vote card scam.

His nurses and teachers have been out on strike, and Norm Gallagher has emerged from Pentridge Prison vowing revenge with a 35-hour week campaign.

Where did it all go wrong for little Johnny?

As usual, Labor's wounds are largely self-inflicted. Industrially, they strung along the teachers and nurses for months. It served Cain right when both jumped on him just as everything else went haywire.

But the political intrigue is especially fascinating.

It all began with the police airline tickets racket. Up to twenty senior cops have been under internal investigation since April, for accepting 75, 90 and even 100 per cent discounts on Continental Airline flights. Some were falsely listed as airline employees to qualify.

The story broke publicly when Assistant Commissioner Stewart was suspended and forced to retire in early August. The cops say Labor leaked the story to the press to disrupt their campaign for early retirement, and that the



Peter Batchelor: took the rap for Nunawading

tickets did not compromise them anyway.

All I can say is that a few cops look like getting their early retirement sooner than they expected, and it serves them right. Cops have been taking "freebies" in return for "goodwill" for years, from the complimentary hamburger at McDonald's upwards.

If cops are not "compromised" by this practice (even beyond their usual anti-working class bias), then what the hell were they prosecuting Norm Gallagher about a few months back?

THE COPS needed a way to hit back at Cain. That is where Labor's stupid fake "Nuclear Disarmament" how-to-vote card in Nunawading came in.

That card may have been a charlatan act, but it was hardly the crime of the century. It is not even entirely clear that it was illegal. Yet the police have investigated it with amazing vigour—far more than the average house-breaking or even rape.

First they placed an ad in Nunawading's local papers, asking anyone misled by the bogus card to come forward. The law bans "misleading" how-to-vote cards, but courts interpret this leniently. So the cops wanted actual voters who had been misled.

Then they doubled the investigating team from two to four officers, as the pressure on them over the airline tickets intensified.

With ALP suspects refusing to talk, the cops turned on NDP members to try to get them to do in ALPers who had handed out the fake cards.

Teachers were visited at school and heaved for information. Cops seized an NDP newsletter from one member's home. They even tried to get another to undergo hypnotherapy to recall ALP supporters she had seen!

The cops got nowhere. Then the Hartley-Crawford wing of the Socialist Left decided it was time to inflict a well-deserved political wound on their "moderate" opponents inside the faction who had organised the fake card.

My information is that, four days before the police investigation was due to close, Hartley supporter Tom Ryan of the Food Preservers Union went to ALP state secretary Peter Batchelor, a "moderate". Ryan demanded that he publicly admit his role in organising the scam, or have it done for him.

Hence Batchelor's remarkable confession, and his even more remarkable claim that he was



John Cain: suddenly, no longer impregnable

acting as a private citizen and not as a party officer. The Hartley wing had drawn the blood it wanted. It closed ranks to protect the Cain government, joining a unanimous vote of confidence in Batchelor.

LESS fortunate was Victorian governor Brian Murray, who stupidly defied Cain's advice and took a free round-the-world holiday with Continental straight after the Stewart suspension.

Cain had distrusted Murray, a Liberal appointee and ex-Navy man, since taking office. When the press got hold of the story of Murray's free trip (apparently leaked indirectly by the cops to divert fire from themselves), Cain went for his jugular.

But in typical Labor style, Cain tackled him purely over the question of propriety, rather than wage a full-scale attack on the reactionary role of governors and royalty.

The latter is something Labor supporters could mobilise behind. But who was going to get upset about public free-loader Murray free-loading off someone else for a change?

Cain simply looked like he was piously picking on Murray. Public opinion ran massively against him. Then Cain himself admitted accepting free accommodation from Alcoa on a business trip to



with Alec Kahn

Pittsburgh.

(Cain argued that it wasn't analogous. And he's right. Cain is far more in Alcoa's pocket than Murray was in Continental's. Remember the Portland smelter electricity deal?)

TO GET Cain off the hook Bulletin journalist and ALP hanger-on Richard Farmer wrote that Murray and Liberal leader Jeff Kennett were conspiring to block Supply and dismiss Cain a la 1975.

With the tenth anniversary of the Kerr Coup coming up, it was a nice idea. Alas, Farmer had no hard evidence to back it up. He had merely asked Kennett a few private questions about blocking Supply, got some dodgy answers, and not even written them down.

If a re-run of 1975 were really brewing, Kennett and Murray would have needed far more than some two-man conspiracy. As in 1975, a whole period of press attack on Cain would have been needed to legitimize the blocking of Supply. Yet despite the last month, Cain is getting a very easy run from the media. And little wonder: the employers like what he is doing for them in Victoria.

Within three days, the writs were pouring in against Farmer, and even Cain had to denounce the story as "rubbish".

Where does this leave Victorian politics? Not quite where it was before. John Cain is less secure, so he will work even harder to keep the employers on side. But his impregnable facade has cracked. And straight away, the nurses in particular have widened the breach.

The worm may have turned in the Garden State.



Brian Murray: professional free-loader bites the dust

SOCIALIST ACTION

No.4 DECEMBER 1985 30 CENTS



THE FARCE OF "ARMS CONTROL"



- Who's who in South Africa's black resistance
- Childcare: The demand gets louder
- How Australia's class war has shifted gear

GAYS



Bjelke hits the bars

A NEW ROUND of government gay-bashing has begun in Queensland.

The Bjelke-Petersen government has made it illegal for bars to serve "drug dealers, sexual perverts or deviants and child molesters."

The aim of the legislation was made clear by a cop during a recent raid on a Brisbane gay bar. "All you gays will be driven south over the border within three months."

At one level, the legislation is ridiculous. One publican asked, "Why can't the police arrest these deviants, perverts and others if they are all so easy to spot?"

But in reality, the legislation joins a battery of other sexually repressive laws which function not to "protect" people, but mainly to control and victimise them.

In one particularly disgraceful case recently, Juvenile Aid and Children's services took away a 15-year-old incest victim and locked her up in a girls' home to prevent her having an abortion.

Commenting on the new legislation, police minister Glasson said, "If they come out in public and exhibit their trends I will not condone it. Even dogs don't go on that way. If you go to Sydney and look at homosexuals and lesbians in their secret — no, their open — places they meet, it would make you sick."

Welfare minister Muntz has chimed in, asserting AIDS showed homosexuality to be "unnatural, immoral and unhealthy."

It is an open secret in Brisbane that two prominent National party MPs are paedophiles.

One state cabinet member recently offered a 14-year-old black kid \$1200 to spend the night with him. (Fortunately, the youth wasn't too broke to refuse.) The second MP was mixed up with police in making sex films



• Jim Nolan — fears confirmed

with young actors. Both are backing the new legislation, of course.

Gays in Brisbane are organising against the current purge. They have set up a gay support group, a hotline on police harassment, and a petition against the raiding of gay venues and the denial of their right to socialise publicly.

The pink triangles will soon be out in Brisbane if this gay-bashing is not resisted.

GOVT CUTS

Open drain kills girl

AFTER the first of the early summer flash floods, a twelve-year-old Sydney girl has become the victim of another preventable accident.

Michelle Worth from the outer western suburb of Fairfield, died in hospital several days after being swept into an open storm drain which local residents had warned the council about for years.

The story gained prominence after a highly dramatic rescue. Several bystanders raised the alarm, dashed by car to various points where Michelle was likely to emerge, and finally risked their lives by plunging into the drain to pull her body off pipes where she had been snagged. The rescue showed the real nature of "human nature," left to its own devices.

Now Michelle's family and other local residents are angry at government bodies who, while insisting that backyard pool owners enclose their pools, refuse to cover public waterchannels such as those that killed Michelle and fifteen other children during the last decade.

The NSW minister for water and sewerage, Mrs Janice Crosio, mouthed off about education programs and said that the

government couldn't afford the \$20m needed to enclose all open drains in NSW. The same Mrs Crosio swam in the shit at Bondi beach last summer just to prove that the government was doing a really great job of sewerage disposal. It seems to us that she's still covered in the shit.

The Fairfield drain now has a warning sign saying it is dangerous. Big deal!

WASHINGTON

President II, the Movie

OLD Republican actors never die. They just assume political office...

Ronald Reagan will soon hang up his autoco cue for the last time, so America's power brokers are casting for a replacement.

The first choice was Charlton Heston. What other actor could have grovelled so effectively before Roman imperialism as *Ben Hur*? And who could forget his moving "light a candle for Poland" monologue?

Heston, like Reagan before him, would first have to undergo a training course as Governor of California.

The arrangements were just about complete when curious fate intervened. Heston was offered the lead role in *Dynasty*. The dilemmas of acting! Heston no doubt thought of George Raft and John Garfield, who each turned down the lead role in *The Maltese Falcon*, and regretted it the rest of their lives.

In the end, Heston opted for the TV role. He'll be there next year dodging fake bullets rather than real ones.

At least we'll know what station to avoid.

SECREY

Black-out on ID cards

THE much-vaunted Commonwealth "Freedom of Information" Act is not all it's cracked up to be.

The NSW Privacy Committee has just forked out \$100 for a request for information on the proposed national identity card system.

Much to the annoyance of the committee's executive member, Mr Jim Nolan, over 80 percent of the material released was blacked out.

Mr Nolan said that of the readable text not deleted under



• Burke — all for a private uni

FOI exemptions most of it was "salutations". He said that the actions of the Prime Minister's department in censoring the material had confirmed his committee's worst fears.

Ours too, mate!!

PRIVATE UNI

Labor sell-out by degrees?

FORGET John Howard's huffing and puffing. Privatisation at least of the universities, is under way in WA, courtesy of Labor premier Brian Burke.

There is no money for public education. But Burke is throwing his government's resources behind a \$100 million private university, to be set up at Yanepch Sun City, 70 kilometres north of Perth.

Burke has announced a feasibility study for the private campus, which will be funded by the Tokyu Corporation of Japan, marketed by WA's Exim Corporation, and administered by Murdoch University.

Murdoch academics are unhappy about a private university impinging on their academic freedom. How do you fail a paying client? They also fear the relatively isolated university, which aims to attract fee-paying Asian students, will become a target for racists.

You're right if you think you have heard of Yanepch Sun City before. Alan Bond developed the coastal town in the seventies, to be the site for the Australian defence of the America's Cup. Fortunately, Bond didn't win it that time, and had to sell the place.

Now Yanepch is the site for another multi-million dollar deal. But there are no megabucks for the Australian and overseas students who cannot afford the expected high fees.

COVER STORY

Arms control: Why the summits keep bombing out

Gorbachev and Reagan getting nowhere at Geneva



ARMS MANUFACTURERS in the US went into a panic, as did some of the loonier far-right politicians. The press seized the opportunity to discuss the clothes worn by Nancy and Raisa. And when all the smoke had cleared, it was obvious that the November summit between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan had led to absolutely nothing.

This failure was entirely predictable. Summits, like the longer periods of "detente" which we experience from time to time, have nothing to do with disarmament or lessening the threat of war.

They are simply vehicles of political expediency for the ruling classes of East and West.

Senator Valentine and her Panda acolytes needn't have bothered sending "good vibes" to the summiteers. For the ups and downs of the arms race have far more to do with economics than the good or ill will of politicians. And even when Washington and Moscow manage to bury their rivalries to some extent, it is usually at our expense.

THE ORIGINAL "cold war" was to some extent a response to the first postwar economic downturn which hit around 1947-48. It's likely that the rather amiable relationship between Russia and the USA, their new empires, might have lasted longer with an expanding economy.

But with economic slump, each side felt it had to boost its military profile and tighten discipline within its own camp. Soon the two camps were at war in Korea, and American arms spending rose from 4.3 percent of GNP in 1948 to over 13 percent in 1951. This vast arms spending, in

turn, became in an unexpected manner the basis for a new period of detente. The waste spending involved in arms production slowed the process of "accumulation of capital" which is at the centre of capitalist growth, and this led to a slower, but steadier and more stable growth pattern. The economic pressures which had led to the state of the arms race as early as 1956, when Khrushchev began to speak of "peaceful co-existence". And while the decade and a half that followed saw various quite serious east-west conflicts (Berlin, the Cuban missile crisis, Vietnam), the general pattern was still for spending in the US declined from its high point of 13 percent of GNP to about 9 percent in 1969.

What brought this accommodation between the superpowers to an end was the re-emergence of economic problems, and the increasing fragmentation of the two imperialist camps.

With the more rapid growth of the non-arms-producing countries (Japan and Germany in particular), and the cutbacks in arms spending in the other states, the role played by the arms economy on a world scale declined. And as the production of weapons systems grew more capital-intensive and specialised, the benefits in terms of providing jobs and technological spin-offs grew less and less.

Profit rates declined, consumer demand and unemployment re-emerged as major problems. The

world entered a new economic crisis, and as it developed, so did new inter-imperialist rivalries. Ronald Reagan came on the scene.

DURING ALL this long and complex history, summit meetings had little or no impact on the state of the arms race, or on improving relations between the superpowers.

The Kennedy-Khrushchev talks in 1961 were followed by the Cuban missile crisis. A meeting between Lyndon Johnson and Alexei Kossygin in Glassboro, New Jersey, in 1969 played no role in forestalling the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia or ending the war in Vietnam. On the contrary, what ended the Vietnam war was the military struggle of the Vietnamese people together with mass protest action in the west.

More recently, a summit meeting between Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev in 1979 led to the Salt II agreement — quickly aborted by Congress — and was followed by the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and Carter's chauvinist boycott of the Olympics.

The recent spectacle at Geneva has opened up no more hopeful prospects.

The Reagan-Gorbachev summit made nary a dent in the Star Wars project, not to speak of the dismal prospects for a comprehensive test ban treaty. The story of the latter, in fact, speaks volumes about the realities of geopolitics today.

There was a time when the US opposed such a treaty because there was no adequate technology for verifying whether each side was complying, and not carrying out secret tests.

But today that technology exists. Scientists now declare that new seismological techniques make it possible to detect quite small explosions. Norway recently detected an explosion of about half a kiloton at a Soviet site more than 3000 kilometres away.

So now Washington simply finds new pretexts to oppose a comprehensive test ban treaty. The *Washington Post* quoted Dr Lynn Sykes of Columbia University as saying that the main impediments to such a treaty "are neither scientific nor technical, but rest on the notion that the security of the United States is best enhanced by continued testing and development of atomic weapons."

IN SHORT, Washington does not want arms control. Under such circumstances, summits can only be exercises in grandstanding.

The logic of the imperialist rivalry between the superpowers, and the pressures placed on them by deteriorating economies, have pushed Russia and the US into a new era of escalation. The current economic upturn does not change that, nor will it be followed by a new and deeper crisis.

For that reason, only an anti-imperialist struggle can stop the insane drift toward nuclear war. And only a socialist struggle, economic relations inside both war camps, can put an end to the threat of nuclear destruction once and for all.

— Richard Emerson



Missile test: The US keeps finding pretexts not to ban them



Bjelke: More gay-bashing

Socialist Action SUMMER CAMP
 Friday, Jan. 24 — Monday, Jan. 27 at Bundeena on NSW's South Coast!
 Fun, surf, songs, cricket, relaxation — and politics too! Talk to the State of the Left, SEGBE, the Rural Crisis, English Revolution, Bolivia, etc. etc.
 \$45 incl. meals. Kids half price. Concessions available. More info. to local branches of Socialist Action.

Greens blue over parliamentary strategies

Hesse Greens: in coalition with SPD

LATE IN October, after stormy debate, delegates to the Hesse state congress of the West German Greens Party threw out a plea from their national leadership.

They voted to enter a coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD), West Germany's pro-NATO, pro-nuclear equivalent of the ALP. In return, they get a new environment ministry, to be headed by Greens MP Joschka Fischer.

The vote highlights a debate that has split the environmentalist-pacifist Greens for years.

The "fundamentalists", who dominate the party, want it to stay independent, and use both parliament and the streets to challenge the system.

The "realists" want to do deals with the SPD. Only by extracting reforms can the party keep its following, they argue.

The "realists" have the numbers in Hesse, a state very suited to their strategy. Since 1983, the Greens have held the balance of power there. The SPD has ruled with the Greens "toleration". But it has given little in return.



Petra Kelly: defied Greens' call to resign

In 1983, the Greens demanded the SPD drop charges against 2000 protesters, arrested over marches against Frankfurt airport extensions. The SPD needed Green votes for their 1.5 billion mark unemployment program. In the end, the Greens meekly accepted a 2 million mark allocation for "alternative production" apprenticeships, and dropped their other demands.

In 1984, the Greens unsuccessfully tried to get the SPD to shut two nuclear power plants in Hesse.

Now the Greens have an environment ministry. Already, industrialists are muttering about an investment freeze in Hesse. Johannes Rau, who will lead the SPD in the January 1987 federal poll, swears he will make no such coalition in Bonn.

THIS IS NOT to say that the Greens have totally failed to win reforms. Various states now ban certain pesticides, and are desulphurizing some coal power plants. Other parties take environmental policy more seriously now.

But in view of their aims, this is little. The Greens want to restructure German society, albeit to a pre-industrial rural utopia, and discard nuclear power and NATO.

What, then, of the "fundamentalists"?

Their approach is the classic left-reformist strategy: to build a movement inside and outside parliament. This strategy always assumes that the army, courts and the rest of the state will refrain from violent repression.

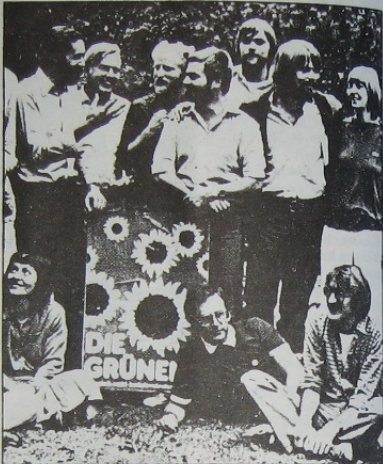
However, the "fundamentalists" have hit trouble long before reaching that acid test.

The Greens' 27 federal MPs went to Bonn in 1983, making it clear that they would use parliament to build the extra-parliamentary movement.

Amidst press hysteria, they vowed to reveal State secrets and disrupt trials. Greens leader Petra Kelly said, "Non-violent resistance must be carried into parliament. We cannot risk less than we ask those in the streets to risk."

It didn't happen. After a small march, the 27 MPs took their seats in Bonn carrying pot plants. There the defiance ended. Their speakers addressed the House with the traditional "Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen". After the first session, one Green MP even joined the throng to congratulate new conservative chancellor Kohl.

More importantly, a mere six months later, just nine of the MPs bothered to join an important march on Mutlangen army base. Just three took part in a Greens-sponsored tax strike to



withhold the portion of personal taxes going to defence. The co-optive power of parliament was taking hold.

The MPs did walk out over the Cruise missiles, and the Greens took care to publicise other of their extra-parliamentary actions. But with no trade union base, and with the peace movement in decline after Cruise missiles were installed in 1984, the Greens' plan to use parliament to build action in the street has largely become wishful thinking.

The press is now quite smug about the Greens. "Ignored and outmanoeuvred by Government and opposition," was one paper's judgement. The conservative *Times* of London puts them on the head: "They provide some valuable yeast in the system."

GREENS PARTY STATE MPs have similar problems. A 1982 survey found that none felt able to put their ideas into practice once taking their seats.

Some, with fuzzy ideas about "decentralisation", even back

PUBLIC DEBATE
US Bases: Should Pine Gap's Lease be Renewed?
 Friday December 13
 7.30pm, Unity Hall, 636 Bourke St., Melbourne
 Speakers: Peter Staples MP (Labor), Sen. David Hamer (Lib), Belinda Probert & Alan Roberts (PHD)

right wing proposals. Their first 300 speeches, one survey showed, included support for private schools, aid to small and medium business, privatisation, and opposition to the welfare state.

The effect on the rank-and-file has been just as debilitating. Petra Kelly says:

"My party in Nuremberg has increasingly become just an electioneering group...getting money, and at the next election getting money again. And I go there and we talk about what I have done in parliament and what they can do to help... They call me up, 'Get a star for our concert', 'Can you make sure you send us this and send us that.' So I do all that downwards and get nothing back."

(Kelly is a bit hypocritical to complain about doing everything downwards. She has refused to resign her seat mid-term so that another Green can take it over. Kelly says she supports rotation "in principle", but after four years rather than two.)

Greens' congresses now openly discuss a "crisis of existence" in the party. And well they might.

Largely an electoral phenomenon, the Greens' failure to take a clear pro-working class stand and their increasing focus on parliament suggest that they are now on the way to becoming a trendy-left equivalent of the Australian Democrats.

— Alec Chubb

SOUTH AFRICA sometimes fades from the news. But most people now know there is an on-going struggle there, waged by often heroic fighters.

Who are these fighters, and what are the politics of their organisations?

Once, the answer was simple. The resistance to apartheid was the *African National Congress (ANC)*. The ANC remains the best known opponent of the regime.

The ANC stands on its "Freedom Charter", which states, "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." It calls for democracy, but does not specify how to win it. The ANC launched a series of protest stay-at-homes in the late 1950s, based on the Charter, but the state defeated them.

Next, the ANC turned to armed sabotage, recruiting a military elite to act on behalf of the masses. Despite some spectacular operations, the campaign was a disaster for the ANC. In 1963, leaders of its military wing (including Nelson Mandela) were captured. The rest went into exile.

The ANC since then has largely recruited activists out of mass upsurges after they have occurred. It was the main political beneficiary of the Soweto uprising of 1976. Student rebels, forced into exile, joined early.

SINCE forming early this century, the ANC has also used other strategies; most notably, passive resistance and appeals to white liberal opinion.

One thing links them all together. The ANC uses mass action — strikes, marches and sit-ins — as purely demonstrative acts. Mobilisation of the masses and their self-emancipation had never been the centre of its strategy.

The ANC's theory has long been decisively influenced by the



Buthezi: a sinister element



Rioters flee tear-gas; events took the ANC by surprise

Who's who in the black resistance

Moscow-line *South African Communist Party*, which operates inside it.

The Party believes that South Africa has a form of "internal colonialism", the colonising power resides in the country itself. The main struggle is for democracy, requiring the unity of all oppressed classes.

This postpones the struggle for socialism until after democracy has been won. It requires the majority of blacks, the workers and peasants, to subordinate their demands, lest they frighten off the black "middle class".

We would argue that apartheid and capitalism are so closely tied that the struggle against them cannot be separated. So the self-emancipation of the workers and peasants has to be the core of that struggle. The black middle class, such as it is, has to be won to following the workers' lead.

THE INTENSITY of recent events took the ANC by surprise. To reinvent itself into the political equation, it has tried to link its armed wing directly with the township uprisings — feeding guns into black areas and so on.

This would make sense if the

WHETHER this is fair to the exiles is not the point. What matters is that the wide support for ANC leader Nelson Mandela does not translate into support for ANC leadership. Other organisations are fulfilling that role.

Best known is the *United Democratic Front (UDF)*. A loose alliance of opposition forces, it claims 600 affiliates from youth, church, community, sporting and professional groups, plus trade unions. It claims 1½ million members, though it has far fewer activists.

Because it is so loose, the UDF has been unable to give day-to-day political leadership in the last year. It hardly exists organisationally in the townships. After the smashing of the attempted march to Mandela's prison, it has been unable to answer the question: Where now?

Some UDF leaders, notably Alan Boesak, want more passive resistance. Others stress immediate armed insurrection. None see the need to mobilise the industrial power of the black working class.

A more sinister element is the shadowy *Inkatha ye Sizwe* group of Chief Gatsha Buthezi, head of the Kwa-Zulu "homeland" and self-proclaimed leader of the country's five million Zulus. Buthezi denounces apartheid whilst participating in the regime's institutions.

Since 1976, Buthezi has used Inkatha to dampen revolt, break strikes and intimidate his opponents. During the Soweto uprising, he called for "the establishment of vigilante groups to protect black property against political action".

Inkatha has become a para-military organisation. It was implicated in violence against Indians in Natal recently, and has clashed with UDF supporters.

(continued page 6)



Boesak and Mandela's portrait: wants passive resistance

A PARTHEID Can Be Peacefully Reformed Department, Thabane Ntshwa, a 23-year-old black diesel mechanic, is currently serving an eighteen month jail term in Johannesburg.

His crime? He scratched the slogans "We want our land" and "Release our leaders, release Nelson Mandela" onto a stainless steel mug that he used at lunch breaks at his factory.

The slogans are invisible from four feet away, and scarcely legible close up. But the magistrate, after assuring Ntshwa that he was a compassionate Christian, felt unable to ignore the possibility that the other 135 blacks who used the canteen may have had their passions "whipped up."

ALSO having his passions whipped up by South Africa is Liberal leader John Howard.

One of his aides recently briefed a journalist on Howard's principled attitude. "It's not the sort of government we would want to support. You could hardly call it



CHEAP SHOTS

free enterprise. And they appear to have done nothing to deregulate their economy."

THE "Broad Left," the new encounter group for union bureaucrats which is the heir-apparent to the Communist Party, has done a mail-out to its Victorian supporters.

The Technical Teachers Union (TTU) paid for the postage. No doubt TTU secretary Dave Robson, a founder of the Broad Left, will explain this to his members when he tells

them why he is jacking up union dues between 15% and 700%, the latter increase being for unemployed members for whom the union does virtually nothing.

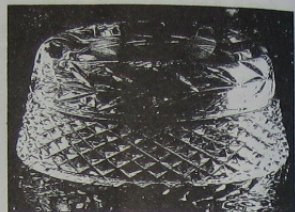
WE'VE heard some cute euphemisms from employers, like "retrenchments" for sackings. But this one takes the cake.

Workers at Northcote Social Security office in Melbourne had bans on over a staffing dispute. The manager announced that she would bring in area management heads "to heavy them," take them off higher duties and stand them down if the front counter was closed.

Workers suggested that this sounded like a threat. No, it was just "an awareness raising exercise," the manager replied.

THE DISCREET charm of the bourgeoisie always disappears when it comes to buying Xmas presents for themselves. This year, David Jones

is selling 14 carat gold-plated "one-upmanship" playing pieces for \$119 each. Poodle owners can feed their mutts from Galway crystal dog's bowls at \$149 each.



For poodles of the rich: \$149 crystal dog's bowl

is selling 14 carat gold-plated "one-upmanship" playing pieces for \$119 each. Poodle owners can feed their mutts from Galway crystal dog's bowls at \$149 each.

Top of the range is "the ultimate games set," a five-in-one set of chess, checkers, backgammon, roulette and dominoes. Hand-crafted in Italy from pigskin and wood, its price is a mere \$2750.



Sterling silver swizzle stick \$119 for the cocktail set

detailed interviews with 15 kids from high-rise flats. Nearly half thought that being rich meant that you could eat two chickens and two legs of lamb a week.

One girl, who was very hungry during the interviews, said rich people could eat apples, oranges and bananas. "You can buy oranges if you're rich," she said.

MEANWHILE, a Melbourne survey has found that Housing Commission children think that fruit and meat are luxuries for the rich.

The Children and Poverty Campaign did

Charter is a capitalist document. We need a workers' charter that will say clearly who will control the farms, who will control the factories, the mines and so on. There must be a change of the whole society."

Mayekiso's solution is a party based on the existing black unions. Since most black workers support (however passively) the ANC and the UDF, such a party would either blur the issues he mentions, or the existing trade unions simply would not be in it.

Sorely needed in South Africa today is a group of workers—at best, it would number hundreds initially—who place working class self-emancipation at the heart of the struggle for liberation and socialism.

They would not be a mass party at the start. They could not win over the mass of the trade unions in a day. But they would be beginning.

— David Lockwood

PERSPECTIVES

The shifting balance in Australia's class struggle

SOCIALIST strategies are never worked out in a vacuum.

Because we believe the most important factor in shaping political consciousness is the experience of work and struggle, industrial and political trends are something that we always watch carefully. You will often hear socialist trading opinions about "the nature of the period we're in."

What then of our own times? Not just this week or next, but the last few years and more generally the years since capitalism slid into serious crisis in the mid-seventies? What hopes, what prospects, what opportunities have they offered?

Traditionally, revolutionaries have associated economic crisis with increased revolutionary potential, as people become disenchanted with the system, and fighting mad about hardship and injustice. Conversely, they have associated economic prosperity with conservatism.

Generally, they have been right. The long boom of British capitalism last year, when it was the "workshop of the world", saw most workers un-unionised and voting almost wiped out the revolutionary left in the west.

Likewise, the rise of the New Unionism in Britain, and Germany's near-revolutionary situation in 1923, were associated with economic slumps.

But economic crisis does not always mean radicalisation and struggle. As Leon Trotsky observed, sometimes the reverse happens. Recession and mass unemployment can shatter workers' confidence. Booms, by increasing demand for labour, can make workers aware of their pivotal role and more ready to strike.

AS CAPITALISM entered a period of world-wide crisis around 1973-74, revolutionaries hoped for great opportunities.

And certainly, in the developing countries and the "third world," there have been massive struggles: in Poland, Nicaragua, Iran, and more recently in the Philippines and South Africa. New labour movements have flexed their muscles in Brazil and Korea, while this year alone Bolivia has seen two prolonged general strikes.

But the story in the west has been much more disappointing. The graphs on the next page show the pattern of strikes in countries with union movements roughly similar to Australia's.

A broad pattern can be discerned. There is a period of struggle, peaking between 1973-76, followed by a brief downturn around 1977 with rising unemployment. Then there is a recovery around 1979, with a temporary economic upturn, followed by a quite serious downturn in struggle after 1981-82, along with economic decline.



The Latrobe Valley strike: defeat marked the end of the militancy of the early seventies

Certainly, there have been important exceptions to the general pattern. The US, Spain and New Zealand experienced little drop in strike action in the late seventies, while Britain's decline was quite severe. Nevertheless, by the eighties an obvious similarity developed across the board, with only New Zealand bucking the trend with resistance to Muldoon's wage freeze.

Australia conforms to the international pattern. All the "big battalions" of the Australian working class (coal miners, metal workers, construction workers, watersiders) have followed it.

There is unevenness from state to state. Industrial Victoria has seen the most serious decline in strike struggles, while Queensland's Joh Bjelke-Petersen, with his constant attacks, ensures that unionists continue to be embroiled in battles whether they like it or not. Overall, however, workers have become noticeably less combative.

SO MUCH for the raw figures. What matters for socialists more than the sheer dimensions of industrial dispute is the quality.

How much are the rank and file workers taking their own initiatives? How much are the strikes about workers seeking to better their conditions, and how much are they a product of desperate defence of existing conditions?

Here too, the news is bad. In Australia and overseas. A comparison with Britain reveals some interesting insights.

As in Britain (with its 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes, its Upper Clyde Shipyard workers' strikes, its strikes to free the Pentonville dockers from jail), there was a big rank and

file push behind Australia's militant industrial struggles of the early 1970s.

Women fought for equal pay on the job, carworkers rioted at Ford, builders' wages imposed the "Green Bans", and there was street-fighting during the 1969 general strike to free Clarrie O'Shea—all reflections of a radical mood among the rank and file.

Australia's labour bureaucracy rode the tide more than Britain's. We had the thirty "rebel unions" in Victoria, for example, where the officials shifted markedly to the left. As a result, we never had an independent layer of shop stewards, unlike the famous "British shop stewards" that right-wingers fawnitate about.

After 1974 the British shop stewards' movement was gradually tamed, and rank and file militancy with it. Workers' participation schemes, productivity deals, and full-time "union convenor" posts that made many stewards into minor bureaucrats, all undermined shop floor strength.

By contrast, Australia had a milder recession. And whereas Britain had a Labour government cleverly co-opting the unions, we had Malcolm Fraser provoking strikes. So militancy held up much longer.

Take the Medibank general strike of 1976, with its scenes of turbulent mass delegates' meetings. Only after the defeat of the Latrobe Valley power workers and the surge of mass unemployment in 1977 did militancy begin to ebb.

As in Britain, in the late 70s saw new areas of militancy emerge here in the public sector. Under attack from cost-cutting governments, hospital unions, state and federal public servants, and Telecom technicians all moved

(continued page 8)

FROM PAGE 5



Who's who

A KEY TO transforming this difficult situation is the black trade union movement. Over half a million black workers are now in unions. In the last three years, strikes have run at a rate of one per cent.

The unions' relationship to political action is still under debate. Some believe they have no part in politics, that they should simply defend their members' conditions. But that is practically impossible in South Africa.

Alec Erwin of the Federation of South African Trade Unions has another view:

"It's essential for union federations to be independent of any kind of political affiliations, because it would be too divisive.



Soweto rioters of 1976: many joined the ANC when exiled

We are not considering a workers' party. It would be premature and unwise."

Yet black workers are forced into politics, dragging their unions behind them. With no working class political organisation, they must fall in behind the organisation that does exist—the UDF.

Moses Mayekiso of the Metal and Allied Workers Union represents a third view. He correctly identifies the flaws in the ANC's Freedom Charter:

"The Freedom Charter talks about 'people'. Who are the 'people'? Matanzima (president of the Transkei 'homeland') is people. Buthelezi is people. The

PERSPECTIVES

leftwards.

This did not reverse the general retreat, but it provided industrial arenas in which socialists could win small audiences. The successful "Grey Collar" rank and file group among public servants in Sydney and Canberra, led by socialists, was a good example of what socialists could do, holding a conference of fifty government workers and leading a militant march through Sydney during one dispute.

The 1980-81 push for shorter hours during the "resources boom" revived militancy in Australia, but by now the union officials had a much tighter control. All too often, gains were "won" only through productivity deals. And when the 1982 recession hit, there was little revolt against Fraser's wage freeze.

OVER THE last ten years, trade unions have found themselves increasingly on the defensive.

From 1970 through to 1975, wages and hours demands consistently caused around 70% of strike action. What the statisticians politely call "managerial policy"—sackings, victimizations and the like—caused 15% or less.

But by the period around 1977-79, wages and hours claims fell to a little over half of disputes, while "managerial policy" made up a quarter of them.

During the "resources boom" push for wages and shorter hours, the balance was restored and workers were on the offensive again. But the situation has deteriorated badly since then. In 1983, defensive action against "managerial policy" leapt up to a huge 43 percent of disputes. Last year, workers fighting to improve wages and hours made up less than a third, while "managerial policy" clung tenaciously to the

32 percent mark.

For socialists, this defensive framework means rank and file rebellion is harder to organise, as workers lack the confidence to act independently of conservative union bureaucrats.

But opportunities to organise in the working class do not disappear altogether. There are still plenty of struggles for us to relate to.

These are simply more bitter and more difficult. The metal workers scarcely needed our help when they walked out for two days in 1974 and won a famous \$30 rise. But socialists today have played a small, yet useful role in backing the Queensland power workers in their nine-month battle. In Britain, the left gave valuable aid to the miners' strike, and won hundreds of people to socialist ideas in the process.

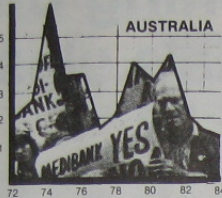
MORE SERIOUS perhaps for us than the industrial trends, has been the decline in radical social movements — for that is where small leftwing groups have often found it easiest to recruit.

Until 1972, mass movements over Vietnam, women's liberation, apartheid and student struggles grew alongside industrial militancy. The two often fed off each other. For example, unions campaigned for women's right to equal pay and against the South African rugby tour.

But after Gough Whitlam ended conscription in 1972, movement activity fell away sharply. The pattern became one of shifting struggle, back and forth between the industrial and political arenas.

INTERNATIONAL STRIKE ACTIVITY 1972

(Millions of working days lost per year)



Workers took the offensive in 1974, winning massive wage rises. In 1975, economic slump dampened union struggles, but fueled the ruling class offensive which toppled Whitlam and produced an angry movement in the streets against Fraser and Kerr. When this, in turn, was defeated at the polls, the struggle shifted back to industry with the Medibank battle in 1976.

Again in 1977-78, as strike levels fell, a new pulse of movement activity emerged — over gay rights, uranium, the right to march and civil liberties in Brisbane. It was more scattered and drew in fewer people, but it was still radical and defiant, and in the case of uranium and civil liberties, it was significant trade union support.

In the eighties, the class struggle and movement activity ceased to alternate and instead have quite simply grown apart.

The wages push during the "resources boom" was seen as largely irrelevant by anti-nuclear activists. These activists were responding to the decline of the movement against uranium mining by launching a new "peace movement" around the issue of nuclear destruction. Disappointed by the failure of the ACTU to take serious action against its paper anti-uranium policy, the members of People for Nuclear Disarmament consciously turned away from a working class orientation.

Peace movement leaders argued for making the movement "respectable" and middle class, thinking they could win in the middle ground this way and thus build a bigger movement. And if sheer numbers proved anything, they would have been right. Huge peace marches wound through

the capital cities once a year, and the Nuclear Disarmament Party was able to pull half a million protest votes in 1984.

Yet the middle class nature of the movement also gave it its underlying weakness. The government treats it with far greater contempt than Fraser displayed over the uranium issue. The peace movement has a hand-wringing, liberal tone and it has failed to build an activist network in proportion to the passive marchers it can turn into the street from time to time.

Given the low level of class struggle, little can be done about this now except by arguing to individual activists about the importance of the working class. But in any future industrial upsurge, a key task for socialists will be to find practical ways to demonstrate the viability of such ideas (initially, no doubt, on small scale).

THESE THEN, are the experiences of the last decade or so of class struggle. For socialists, the world has become progressively more difficult, though we have participated in (and occasionally led) important and successful campaigns.

Many of the left have drawn drastic conclusions of one sort or another from these difficult times. The Communist Party is casting about for a decorous way of dissolving itself into some kind of vague "broad left" party or movement. Others retreat into sterile and abstract propaganda, and abstain from activity.

Yet while the times are hard, they are not impossible. It is possible both to retain a clear and distinctive political profile, standing on principle, and yet keep yourself relevant to the society around you.

On the one hand, it is precisely during a downturn in struggle that clear and uncompromising arguments for socialist ideas become essential. There is always a minority, however small, which rejects the rightward trends. Recruiting these people to socialism is far more important than trailing after others who are fleeing rightwards, and who can only pull you with them.

On the other hand, arguing ideas does not mean abstaining from struggle. On the contrary, the only way socialist ideas can be kept alive is by continually relating them to strikes, demonstrations and other forms of radical action. For socialism is not an abstract blueprint; it is a guide to action or it is nothing, and revolutionaries must learn and re-learn how to apply socialist ideas to ever-changing circumstances.

And there are plenty of struggles around even today. From the Queensland power workers to the public servants in Social Security to the nurses, people do fight back.

Finally, it's important to be clear that the downturn will not last forever. The world is a more unstable place than it used to be, with sharper peaks and troughs following each other in the class struggle. The labour movement is weakened but it is far from destroyed, and at some point militancy will revive. The same goes for social movements in a crisis-ridden world, threatened with nuclear war, new radicalisations are inevitable.

We must be prepared for the upturn when it comes. This means facing up to the present difficult conditions and learning to argue socialist ideas in a relevant fashion. It also means refusing to capitulate to the atmosphere of apathy and pessimism which abounds.

— Alec Kahn and Tom O'Lincoln

SOCIALIST ACTION

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Socialism

We fight for socialism: the creation of a classless society in which the economy will be democratically planned, and workers themselves will make the key decisions about economic and social life. Countries like Russia and China are bureaucratic class societies, and have nothing in common with real socialism.

Revolution, not Reformism

We are revolutionaries. The experience of Labor in power has shown the bankruptcy of attempts to tinker with the existing capitalist system. The capitalists will not allow a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. Their state is a weapon of class rule, and must be smashed.

A Mass Workers' Party

Workers need a revolutionary party. The working class cannot make a revolution through spontaneous upheavals. The bosses are organised, and we need to organise too. Today we work to build a stronger revolutionary movement out of the struggles being waged on the job and around social protest issues. Tomorrow we must create a mass workers' party to lead the struggle for socialism.

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We are for Socialist Action. It's no good just talking about the world; the point is to change it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only meaningful if they are a guide to action. In the unions, social movements and wherever people are fighting for a better world, socialists are in the thick of the fight. If that's where you want to be, join us today!

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS

IT WAS a fun activity with a serious message.

In Melbourne office buildings, public servants brought their kids to work for a morning. They brought fruit and milk for morning tea, rostered themselves to look after the children during the morning, and then took them off to a picnic at lunchtime.

The action, organised by the public servants' union ACOA, aimed to highlight the need for child care services at work for government employees. Media response was disappointing, with the *Herald* tucking the story away in a corner and the *Age* ignoring it altogether. But at the very least, a lot of office workers found themselves discussing the issue for the first time in a while. And so they should, for it is going to become more pressing in the coming years. And not just because of Labor's current moves to slash child-care spending.

In the past financial year, females accounted for about 80 percent of jobs growth. A report issued by the Bureau of Labour Market Research says this trend will accelerate in the coming decade, as the female labour force expands by between 32 and 42 percent.

THE TRADITIONAL setup, whereby women stayed home and looked after the kids, was seriously eroded in the sixties and seventies. As women continue to pour into the workforce, it is bound to be eroded much further still.

Widespread changes in society are making it extremely urgent that child care become a social responsibility, like education and health insurance.

The demand for major child care programs was first seriously raised by the women's liberation movement in the early seventies, and in the course of the decade the trade unions endorsed it. Some small advances have been achieved.

Government funding for some creches is now available, and employers can claim tax exemptions for money spent on child care. The Esplanade Park industrial estate, opened in 1977 at North Ryde, NSW, was built with a \$98,000 centre to serve the estate's fourteen factories and warehouses.

The ACTU itself opened a centre in Moorabbin, Victoria, in 1978 at a cost of \$100,000. It appears that Melbourne's public servants will indeed get some facilities in a few years' time in a new building presently being constructed.



Childcare is a must, and that's no kidding

Yet all of this is largely tokenism. Few working parents today have access to child care where they work, and very few can get it without paying.

THE ORIGINAL women's liberation demand was quite radical and comprehensive. The movement fought for free, 24-hour centres, controlled by staff and parents. They wanted a non-sexist environment.

Socialists have endorsed these demands, not only because they are just, because they point to important aspects of capitalist society which oppress women.

The family unit is a basic institution of capitalism. It imposes on individual couples the burden of raising the workers of the future, and it also provides a sexist and authoritarian framework for doing so. Men dominate women, parents dominate children, and women and

children alike become "private property".

The extreme right, egged on by ideologues like Mary Whitehouse and Fred Nile, would like to build the capitalism of the future around the maintenance of this key institution.

Unfortunately for them, the "private enterprise system" is too contradictory for that to be possible. The longterm trend since the sixties has been for more and more women to enter the workforce. As a result, the family has declined in stability and importance. Personal relationships have been reshaped to the extent that "de facto" marriages are now accepted as fairly normal. So, to a limited degree, is homosexuality.

With both parents so frequently working, it is absurd to expect them to do all the work of child-rearing. Just as universal public education took on certain

of the tasks of raising and training school-age youth long ago, so it is only logical that society should take on responsibility for much of the care for younger kids.

YET IN practice, it is virtually impossible for capitalism to carry out this obviously necessary reform. As a society in crisis, it cannot afford the ideological dislocations or pay the economic price.

The system still needs the sexist role-models which the family reinforces. It still uses the image of women as essentially "homebodies" to divide the workforce, by channelling women into certain "women's jobs" and convincing workers generally that these jobs are less important.

At the same time, the resources are not there for a major reorganisation of the care of children. Just as public transport services are under attack even though it would be more socially efficient to expand them, so child care funding is currently being cut back even as the proportion of females in the labour force grows.

The women's liberation demand for a wide-scale socialisation of child-rearing can only be possible if the economic structure of society is turned upside down, so that the aim of economic activity is human needs and not private profit.

Workers know they need child care. The ACOA surveyed 1772 parents, and found that only ten percent said care was not needed. Twenty-seven percent said they were not completely happy with the arrangements they had. We can safely assume that if presented with the option of a truly radical improvement in available care, many more would become disenchanted with what is currently offered.

Sixty percent said that lack of suitable childcare had affected their career, and 51 percent wanted facilities to be located at or near their place of work.

If the workers in each workplace were themselves in charge, making democratic decisions, widespread free child care on the job would be a reality in short order.

That is one of two reasons why socialists fight for child care. One reason is that the demand is sensible and just, something that should be automatic in this modern age. The other is that this sensible demand can only be achieved in a socialist society, and consequently the struggle to win it offers important arguments for revolutionary socialist ideas.

— Tom O'Lincoln

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

Rail plans not so "rational", say strikers

THE CAIN Labor government in Victoria wants to "rationalise" its rail system.

That means the same as it does in private enterprise—sackings. So the last month has seen turmoil on Victoria's railways, with an Australian Railways Union (ARU) campaign of strikes, maintenance bans and other actions. Highlight was a joint mass meeting with Tramways Employees Union members, after which 5000 angry workers marched on parliament while Labor MPs watched from behind police lines.

Rail workers were not conked by assurances that no jobs would be lost. Losing 2500 workers in six months by "natural attrition" seemed a bit far-fetched.

Labor plans to cut the massive amounts of overtime worked because of low wages. Railway workers earn between \$225 and \$300 per week. They can only reach the national average of \$415 with overtime.

In fact, the system is run on overtime. Station assistants (225 of them are to go) can't even get their rostered days off or their annual leave.

The government argues the railways must have a fixed budget and stick to it. They will negotiate cuts to fit into that budget. At the moment, the system can't run with the staff it already has. A month ago Transport Minister Roper complained that there was a shortage of guards. Now he says there are too many!

Railway workers feel that the government will use the rail deficit to gain public support for the dismantling of the rail system, and the sale of its profitable bits to private enterprise.

Even the Melbourne *Age* noticed the irony of hiring expensive managers whilst operating grades are reduced. Outside consultants were paid a fortune to conduct a review. Then another crowd was hired to review the review! Now two British Rail cutback experts will charge \$161,000 and \$145 a day.

The ARU leadership has kept control of the strike. A motion to establish a rank and file strike committee at the first mass meeting was ruled out of order. The union executive want to be part of the government structure and be consulted about change. At the time of writing, they have



called off all action, and are taking part in the consultative process.

At one meeting, a motion for the union to leave the Labor Party was moved by a group of leftwingers and militants. This was clearly much more radical than the leadership's plea to Labor to implement its policy to extend public transport.

ARU Secretary Joe Sibberas' power base in the party and in the Socialist Left would be threatened if the ARU leaves the ALP.

That such a motion would eventually come up at a union strike meeting is not surprising. Labor governments are attacking the very people that help them to win office.

As a tactical lever against the ALP and its union official members, it may have some use. But it is a diversion. If you leave the ALP, you should propose an alternative. Otherwise, leaving the ALP is of no political value.

— Jeff Goldhar

DSS BANS



Official rivalry ruins struggle

THE FIGHT is off in Socialist Security in Victoria.

The staffing dispute, launched with high hopes only a few weeks ago, has ended in defeat and disarray. A ludicrous "compromise" means less work and more staff now, in return for less staff and more work after February 1986.

The beginning of the end came when the joint campaign between ACOA (the clerks union) and APSA (clerical assistants) split in two. Within days of the joint mass meeting, the officials of the

two unions were having separate negotiations with the government.

This was followed in quick succession by a separate APSA strike, during which ACOA members were implicitly given permission by their officials to cross the picket lines; an attempt by APSA officials to "suspend" the campaign in return for a Working Party to look at the issue — an attempt strongly rejected at a mass meeting; and finally, the ACOA decision to pull out while APSA were having a two day strike.

But the real disaster was the way in which the campaign has shifted the personal and political differences between the two sets of officials — which date back to the pay campaign of 1984-85 — to the workplace level.

Good rank and file relations have been seriously strained in many offices. The delegates and the next few months repairing them. It is not going to be easy.

Many members believe that the official rivalries could be kept in check by the joint Disputes Committee, which was made up of delegates and officials from both unions.

Unfortunately, these rapidly degenerated into slanging matches. Even before the first meeting, it was made quite clear, to ACOA delegates at least, that there was to be no free exchange of opinions and issues. Instead, each side would speak as a single bloc — the sort of thing you do when negotiating with management rather than with co-workers.

Talk of a joint meeting of all delegates and stewards seemed to offer a way around the impasse, but the call came too late.

In the Disputes Committee, as

in the campaign as a whole, the dominance of the two sets of officials was a problem. In the end their separate interests, aims and agendas prevailed over the common interests of the members.

Members must be prepared to assert themselves against the officials whenever necessary. If we have learned this much, then the campaign will not have been fought in vain.

— Graham Willett, ACOA member, Socialist Security

SEQEB STRIKE



Workers call for support

POWER workers are sticking to their guns in Queensland, in the face of the monumental back-off by the ACTU and local union officials from their struggle.

The weekly meetings at Perry Park that have been held throughout the ten month strike are continuing.

On 22 November, a meeting of 200 threw out the officials' resolution and voted, with only a dozen or so against, for Bernie Neville's motion which called on the ETU (Electrical Trades Union) nationally to get behind the strike.

The strikers want the ETU to impose national levies and call a national stoppage for Human Rights Day, December 10. There SEQEB depat at 12.00 noon on that day in defence of union rights.

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INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE



Striking Canberra nurses jeer MPs

Strike One for ACT nurses

CANBERRA nurses have staged their first ever concerted strike. And like their Victorian counterparts, their militancy has staggered everyone.

The strike began as an indefinite stoppage. Royal Australian Nursing Federation (RANF) members at Royal Canberra and Woden Valley Hospitals, nursing homes and community nursing went out over staffing.

About 1200 nurses and supporting unionists marched on the ACT Health Authority headquarters. They jeered politicians and BLF members attempted to storm the building.

Building sites and metal-workers from the Mint stopped work for the afternoon to support the nurses, and the Trades and Labour Council gave \$20,000 to the strike fund.

The attitude of the Health Authority was typically contemptuous. Health Minister Neil Blewett suggested the nurses wait for the 1986 Budget!

The RANF withdrew a skeleton staff left to care for patients already in hospital after a week, leaving only a team for emergencies. The nurses have also used rolling walk-outs, and picketed deliveries.

Eighty per cent of Canberra nurses are RANF members. The rest are not unionised, or are in the Hospital Employees Federation, which offered little support apart from refusing to work with volunteers.

The RANF in NSW banned patient transfers from the ACT, effectively blocking that option to the Health Authority. RANF members at the privately managed but publicly funded Calvary Hospital, where staffing problems have been fewer, worked on. Some patients were discharged from Canberra and Woden and readmitted at Calvary.

Many nurses were anxious to keep public opinion on side. Press coverage was favourable, so to maintain this support they let in supplies and provided an emergency team at each hospital. There was no attempt to picket Calvary.

A nurse at the Royal Canberra picketed said, "We're too soft. The way to win is by stopping all supplies and getting the support of other unions."

— Mary Gorman

COMPUTERS

Clerks say "Hold it!"

ONE DAY you could report for office duty and find your "boss" is a computer, sitting on your desk and coldly urging you to work faster while crippling your hands.

Staff at the Veterans Affairs Department in Brisbane recently took action against management's program to computerise

clerical tasks, which is bringing this bleak future closer.

Members of the clerks' union, ACOA, were unimpressed by the Department's vague expressions of willingness to cooperate with the unions over questions of new technology. It has, for example, supplied wrong sized desks "by mistake".

And 170 staff have reported Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) in the Department recently. But this figure is not large enough to slow management's heroic rush into the space-age.

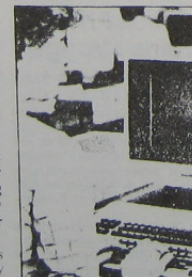
The ACOA members decided that the Department's introduction of the Interim Disability Pension system should be treated as a pilot study. This way, specific questions such as job loss, adequate equipment, work satisfaction and de-skilling could be researched before the full national impact of the system is felt.

The ACOA stated seven months ago that it would only accept ergonomically sound furniture. As a result, the Department has ear-marked \$500,000 nationally for the upgrading of screen-based and associated equipment. They then went ahead with the new system, before the results of an agreed audit into the adequacy of this sum are known.

The response of the workers concerned has been mixed. A national vote to delay the introduction of the system pending results of the audit was lost. The tense Brisbane meeting stood at 29-28 for the bans. Unfortunately, most of the clerks in the relevant section voted against the motion.

The new system represents a slight time-saving for these over-worked officers, who resented "outside" interference in their sub-section.

The vote was not strong enough to actually carry out bans. However, the vote is promising. Initial tentativeness



The desk-top computer: crippling clerks' hands

over action is not surprising, given management's unwillingness to make plain their high-tech future to those who will be burdened with it.

Anton Harris, APSA member, Veterans Affairs

BRISBANE

Garbos face "big stick"

QUEENSLAND is about to witness another round of anti-union attacks. This time it is against Brisbane's garbos.

Liberal Lord Mayor and Bjelke-Petersen fan, Sallyanne Atkinson, has asked the State Government for legislation similar to that introduced in the electricity industry earlier this year.

She wants the power to dismiss employees of garbage contractors if they refuse to service households, as well as restraining injunctions and daily fines of \$50,000 per individual and \$250,000 per union for 'disobedience'.

Atkinson says, "It could be seen as having the big stick in the cupboard. We won't bring it out unless we need it." Asked if she wants to take away the right to strike, she gave a typical Bjelke-Petersen reply, "I don't believe we are, because they can leave."

Her campaign continues the actions of the previous Labor Council, whose contracts with waste disposal firms denied garbos the 38-hour week entitlement of their Federal award.

Earlier this year, Atkinson introduced large, wheeled bins without immediately informing residents of what constitutes acceptable waste. Some bins have been grossly overloaded with heavy refuse, making them difficult to handle and creating breakdowns of the loading machinery.

The industrial action provoked by these issues is being used to justify Atkinson's union bash.

Officials of the garbos' union, the Transport Workers Union, have reacted cautiously. State secretary, Len Ward, and the state industrial officer, Allan McPaul, indicated the union would challenge the legislation in the Federal court.

However, as the SEQEB dispute has shown, this is not enough. Moreover, it lays the groundwork for another sell-out. Atkinson's 'big stick' won't be defeated by legal arguments. Sustained industrial action is the only answer.

— Jeff Rickert

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Privatisation: Who's afraid of the big bad Howard?

PRIVATISATION has suddenly become Labor's new bogey. "John Howard wants to sell off Australia Post and Telecom, sack public servants, and replace them with contractors. We have to keep Bob Hawke in at all costs."

We're going to be hearing a lot more of that kind of argument over the next few months. That's because Labor's Prices and Incomes Accord is now coming under pressure from both sides.

So far, the economic recovery has been mainly based on increased consumption, boosted by government spending. If it's to continue, investment will have to rise. But the economy is showing problems that could scare off new investment.

Australia's balance of payments is in a bad way, because of declining world prices for some of our main exports — wheat, sugar, coal, minerals. And the value of the dollar has fallen again.

To attract overseas funds back into Australia and discourage imports (and a further deterioration of the balance of trade), the government has moved to slow the economy down. It does this partly by allowing interest rates to rise. But that will decrease the attractiveness of productive investment, by raising the cost of loans. Companies with loose cash will prefer to put it into bonds or other securities.

So Hawke is already considering a further attempt to boost "business confidence" with more wage cuts. He would certainly move to do so if the dollar fell again. That way he would dampen the inflationary effects of devaluation (which causes higher import prices), at our expense. And he would boost profit rates, which are what "business confidence" is mainly about.

PUT WAGE cutting is getting increasingly difficult. Workers as well as bosses are aware that the economy has picked up. Workers' bargaining power has grown. And they are beginning to demand a share in the prosperity they are hearing so much about from Hawke and Keating.

So nurses in Victoria and the ACT have engaged in their first



John Howard: Labor's bogeyman to keep us behind the Accord

ever strikes over pay and staffing. The BLF is campaigning around the 35-hour week. Storemen and Transport Workers are fighting for improved superannuation.

Among the stronger unions generally, union officials are coming under increased pressure from the leaders of these unions, "faced with a revolt from their union shop stewards on a further wage discounting proposal... would have little choice but to put the interests of their own unions first."

In 1983, the Accord had an appeal to workers who had been through a recession. They had seen mates and family members laid off, or strikes ended in defeat. The Accord seemed to offer an alternative way of defending living standards and jobs, without the risk of defeat involved in industrial action.

Now it has become clear to some workers that there is no

alternative to militancy, and that improved economic conditions offer a better chance of success.

So far, the mood has not changed nearly enough to shatter the Accord. But a confrontation next year over increased wage discounting might be another story. The union officials, who have benefited from the Accord far more than their members (because they get to be on all sorts of fancy committees) are keen to avoid such an unpleasant prospect.

ENTER John Howard... in a smothered jungle cat suit. The government and the union officials are increasingly emphasizing the threat of a Howard government, of "dry" economic policies and especially of privatisation.

Since the rightwing of the Liberal Party view state ownership and government intervention in the economy as

"socialism", the emergence of Howard offers the labour leaders a handy means of creating the impression there is something inherently progressive about Telecom and the Accord both. We must unite to defend them, they argue.

But nurses, public transport workers and public servants know perfectly well that state ownership, even under Labor, is no guarantee of decent wages and conditions, or even of jobs. And the Accord is just one more wage-cutting mechanism.

Socialism is about workers' control from the shop floor up. State ownership becomes socialist when the workers control the state, and government "incomes policies" become socialist when they operate to fulfil human needs rather than boosting profits.

That isn't to say we're indifferent to privatisation. Just as workers aren't indifferent to the reorganisation of a company or department in either the public or the private sector. If reorganisation or privatisation is undertaken to cut jobs and wages, break union organisation or reduce services to the public, we fight back.

At the moment, however, this is not the immediate threat. Privatisation is a gimmick for Howard to create a "hard" image, in a desperate attempt to lure employment support away from Labor. Supporters of the boges are essential for there are few advantages and considerable dangers for them in turning a public monopoly like Telecom into a private monopoly.

MEANWHILE, the Liberal and National parties are at odds with their own base among employees' and farmers' organisations.

The main threat continues to be Labor and the Accord, which is reducing our wages and perhaps worst of all, restricting our ability to mobilise and fight.

It is precisely that ability to fight which will be decisive in turning back any future onslaught from a Howard government. Workers must begin to rebuild it now, by waging struggles outside the Accord.

But for the moment, the cry "Privatisation" is like hearing a boa constrictor shout "Beware the jaguar" while it strangles you.

— Rick Kuhn

"THE QUESTION is not what this or that proletariat, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment considers as its aim. The question is *what the proletariat is*, and what . . . it will be compelled to do . . ." — Karl Marx, 1844

IT SEEMS strange to many people, the way socialists are always going on about the working class, especially in Australia.

You might be able to talk about classes in England, they will say to you, where the recent miners' strike shows just how alive class feeling is in that country — but Australia?

Surely we are all middle class here now? After all, even Lang Hancock and Robert Holmes a Court work every day, often for longer hours than the rest of us. And even if they are richer than the rest of us, most people can reasonably expect to own their own home as well as little luxuries like colour TVs and video tape recorders. Where are the "toiling masses" of socialist propaganda in all of this?

What this argument does is to confuse two different ways of seeing the world. For socialists, your class position depends on your standard of living, or on what class you think you belong to.

Marxists, on the other hand, look at more basic and underlying features. We look at the distinction between those who work for others — who have to work if they are to avoid a life of misery and poverty on the dole — and those who hire others to work for them.

Robert Holmes a Court could retire tomorrow and live off the profits produced by his factories and mines. No worker, in the Marxist sense of the word, could do that, for the simple reason that we do not own any means of producing profits.

THE DISTINCTION between these two classes is not any less in Australia than overseas, nor is it any less today than in the past.

On the contrary, all sorts of groups, whom Marxists would call workers but who used to think of themselves as middle class professionals, are more and more adopting trade union organisation and the militant industrial tactics of the working class.

Teachers, public servants and, most recently, nurses have all been driven to accept that rather than being middle class, they are in fact white-collar workers. Any confusion we have about the class that we belong to can be dispelled by the reality.

All this carry on about the working class...



British miners show their sympathies in the 1920s

But even if there is still a working class today, why do Marxists insist that this is the group in society that will bring about socialism?

Looking around us today, it is not as if workers show any more inclination towards socialism than any other group. Nor could you claim with any honesty that the working class has been sucked in by the poisonous hatreds of racism and sexism that capitalism breeds and which socialism aims to destroy.

For socialists, it is not the present ideas and actions of the working class that put it at the centre of our politics. As Marx himself said 150 years ago, it is

what the working class is that makes it so important.

MARXISTS point to the working class' unique location at the heart of capitalist production as the key to its ability, and eventually its inclination, to struggle for socialism.

The first feature of working class life that leads it towards a socialist solution to the problems of capitalism is its organisation.

Industrial capitalism brings together millions of workers in every country into thousands of workplaces — and within the workplaces into groups, work-teams, assembly lines, shifts. Organisation and discipline are

everyday features of working life; their advantages as a method of getting things done are obvious to all.

And so it is that, confronted by the ever-increasing infringement by bosses on their living standards, workers are driven not merely to resist, but to resist in an organised and disciplined way. Through the whole history of capitalism, the tendency of the working class to organise itself — most obviously into trade unions — has asserted itself again and again.

The constant repetition of this process led very early on to a linking up between different workplaces, and to the establishment of organisation across industries and between them.

The struggles of the working class are not confined to defending wages and conditions.

At the heart of any conflict between workers and bosses is the question of who should decide on the distribution of the products of workers' labour. That in turn raises the question of why some people own both the means of production and the products, and some people (the vast majority) do not: a question of why classes exist.

ONLY rarely are workers consciously aware of this element of their struggles. But it is there, and in periods of extreme struggle, this aspect will tend to emerge.

For example, when workers are being laid off because their boss is not making enough profit, questions of why an employer's need for profit is more important than the workers' need for wages can emerge.

When it happens that the question of ownership of the means of production is posed on a mass scale — a revolutionary situation — the sheer size and organisation of the working class will give it a real power.

But more important than size is the ability of this class to seize its workplaces. Demonstrations, riots, seizing parliaments are all chased after and fabricated.

As usual, the main fabricated evidence was police verbals — unwritten, unsigned "confessions" attributed to the accused by police witnesses. Lovell also argues that fingerprints were found.

When workers are meeting together, in what have become their own factories, electing their own governments, it is then that a society where the interests of the majority prevail — a socialist society — can become a reality.

— Graham Willett

Tampering with the evidence

RAY, PETER, and Brian Mickelberg were sentenced to 20, 16 and 12 years jail in 1983.

These penalties are fairly stiff by Australian standards. They indicate the legal system's horror of the alleged crime: theft of gold bullion from the Perth Mint.

The theft was skilfully organised. Stolen cheques were used to purchase the bullion. The actual handlers of the cheques and the gold were all innocent casual workers hired over the telephone.

The organisers who ultimately received the bullion (it has not been recovered) participated only as voices on the telephone. Nevertheless, the police identified the Mickelbergs as the organisers and successfully fabricated the evidence that convicted them.

The Mickelbergs may in fact have done it. Or perhaps the police did, and then sought to cover up their involvement by implicating the Mickelbergs by refusing to argue that they had nothing whatever to do with it.

In any case, whodunnit is not central to the book and cannot be dealt with here. The book is of interest mainly as a case study of police procedure.

Lovell demolishes the myth that police investigation searches after the pure unbiased truth. He shows how the police in this case searched for a conviction, no more or less.



Avon Lovell: police myths demolished

Evidence pointing away from the Mickelbergs was ignored or destroyed. Evidence pointing toward the Mickelbergs was chased after and fabricated.

The Mint swindle was a highly unusual crime. The degrading punishment, inflicted on the Mickelbergs is not at all unusual. It is inflicted on thousands.

My main complaint about the book is that it speaks as if the Mickelbergs were the only ones

— Denis Alsop

The Mickelberg Stitch

by Avon Lovell
(Prisoners Action, Box 215, Glebe 2037) \$9

The judiciary are as responsible as the police for this, for they accept the verbals as good evidence.

This horrifies Lovell, but there is a rational explanation for it.

Capitalism glorifies the acquisition of wealth. This can be done by trade, exploitation or theft. Although exploitation is the preferred method, as long as there is property there will be some theft. Nevertheless, the exploiting classes hire a police force to defend their methods of accumulating wealth and to suppress any others.

The police cannot abolish theft, but they can fill the prisons. It follows that police will be less concerned with pure unbiased truth and more concerned to put someone away.

Police often shortcut the process of prosecution by verbalising guilty people. They also sweep into prison hundreds of people who are totally innocent of the alleged crimes.

Just as sporting commentators regard bonecrunching tackles as a legitimate part of the game, so the judiciary regard verbals as a legitimate part of the trial. You have to protect yourself from hard tackles; you also have to prove that you didn't say it. So much for the presumption of innocence.

Lovell is probably correct to suggest that some powerful figures in Perth were quietly calling for blood. The theft hurt no-one and impoverished no-one, but it produced for someone a massive gain on a scale approaching the profits of a big exploiting class. It was a bad beyond the pale. Someone had to pay.

Then the pain and the impoverishment starts — in the penal institutions.

The Mint swindle was a highly unusual crime. The degrading punishment, inflicted on the Mickelbergs is not at all unusual. It is inflicted on thousands.

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Harry Joy is assaulted by his alter ego in Bliss: gratuitous symbolism

FILM



Bliss Bombs, tediously

I WENT to see the film *Bliss* with high expectations. After all, it won three Australian Film Industry Awards and has been described as "the first Australian masterpiece."

I was sadly disappointed. The plot is thin, the action slow, and the politics at best confused and at worst reactionary. It is a film that is, in a word, tedious, lightened only by the occasional humorous scene.

How then did *Bliss* win such accolades from the Australian film industry? As part of its deficit slashing exercise, the Hawke Government has cut back the very generous tax concessions given to investors in Australian films, although it has not abolished them. At one stage, such investors could get a deduction of 150 per cent for money invested and be taxed on only 50 per cent of the income earned.

The film industry has campaigned vigorously, to retain some form of tax concession. They have had nothing, however, to point to as an example of the success of the concessions. The film industry has turned a sow's ear into a silk purse, proclaiming *Bliss* a master-work. Armed with such a product, the

industry can then claim that the concessions are producing results and should be attacked no further.

Bliss is a film that was made with the intention firmly in mind of creating a masterpiece. For that reason there is a lot of gratuitous symbolism, thinly connected to the big question that underpins the whole film: did Harry Joy, advertising agent, die and end up in hell, or did he live and end up in hell on earth?

There is nothing new in the message that life under capitalism is hell. Socialists have been pushing just such a message, or a variation on it, since capitalism began. However, we know that the material basis exists, to continue the analogy, to create heaven on earth.

What is Harry Joy's answer to the hell he finds himself in? To cut the story short, it is to find a woman (in this case, a prostitute with a taste for mysticism and idleness) and settle down in some idyllic spot far removed from the rat race. The idiosyncrasy of *Bliss* is portrayed as something liberating.

This elitist solution is not an option for workers, who for a start could not afford it. Socialists like William Lane have tried to set up independent rural socialist communities in the countryside, but they have failed because they have had nothing, however, to point to as an example of the success of the concessions.

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— John Passant

Labor pains: the same the world over

GOUGH WHITLAM never gives up.

His new book is a litany of the misunderstand or ignored achievements he attributes to his government. His newspaper series begged readers to see them as proof that reforming governments are still a wonderful idea.

Yet no sooner had Gough burst into print, than the present Labor prime minister began to hint of new wage cuts, should the dollar fall any lower. The truth is that Labor governments are not really about reform at all... at least, not reforms in the interest of the working class.

Whitlam did carry out genuine reforms, such as ending conscription, largely because the powerful radical movements of the time had forced the system to make concessions. But by mid-1974, the reformism had given way to an increasingly reactionary turn. With the advent of recession, employers would not accept further concessions. The unions had to be attacked and Whitlam steeled himself to the task.

He sacked treasurer Jim Cairns as a signal to the stock exchanges that his heart was in the right place. Bill Hayden came in to cook up the horror budget of 1975, and to erode our pay packets on the sly with wage indexation.

The bosses weren't satisfied, and we all know how Whitlam bit the dust. Bob Hawke has learned the lesson, and has never even pretended to try to make gains for the working class.

CRITICS of Labor often focus on the personalities of the leaders (Gough's arrogance, Bob's cynicism) or on the specific problems of Australia (supposedly too conservative for reform).

But a glance at labour governments overseas suggests that the pattern is well-nigh universal.

Take Francois Mitterrand of France. Elected by a left coalition including the Communist Party (sound radical?), he began with an expansionist economic strategy aimed at cutting unemployment, boosting welfare, and increasing wages.

Mitterrand soon found he could not force private capitalists to invest. Every time he did something they didn't like, money poured out of France.

French bosses wanted to restore their profits by cutting wages and welfare. In the end, Mitterrand saw it their way. In 1982, he froze wages, introduced hospital charges, and cut the dole. In 1983, a second austerity

package promised 100,000 more jobsless.

Since then, Mitterrand has presided over sackings in the steel industry, and a racist campaign against immigrant workers (egged on by the Communist Party). Now there is much talk of an electoral tide from the right, even including Jean-Marie Le Pen's fascists.

The socialists' only hope appears to be the rising star of 'charismatic' Socialist Party figure Gustave Henuu — of Rainbow Warrior fame!

Meanwhile, the Socialist Party PM of Spain, Felipe Gonzalez, plans to eliminate 60,000 jobs in unprofitable industries.

BUT THE most interesting labour government is in Greece, where PASOK leader Andreas Papandreu is in power.

Papandreu also has severe problems: 18% inflation, a \$13.5 billion foreign debt and 8.3% unemployment, with youth unemployment especially high.

Greece does not have our system of wage indexation, but many workers get an automatic cost of living adjustment called ATA. It exists by government decree. Many strikes and mass demonstrations have tried to make it into law.

Papandreu has set out to undermine ATA. On top of a 40% hike in transport costs and 15% rises in the prices of bread, sugar, oil and gas, the PASOK government announced that the ATA for the previous four months would be just 2.1%. The annual



Mitterrand: 'socialist' austerity

increase stands at 6.3%, while inflation rolls on at 18%. Thousands of workers have gone on strike against such austerity from a supposed workers' government. On 1 October, 160,000 of the 235,000 strong workforce of Salonika, Greece's second city, came out in a one-day stoppage.

Tens of thousands have rallied in the central square of Athens, and marched to parliament demanding that the monopolies pay for the economic problems. Farmers joined in with rallies and 'tractor-cades' around the country.

With all this going on, PASOK has decided to buy \$10 billion worth of jet fighters, tanks and navy destroyers, as part of a new NATO militarisation drive. This is from a government 'elected on a program of hostility to NATO!'

Most recently, 100,000 Athenians marched on the US embassy to commemorate the 1974 student uprising, which led to the fall of the military junta. Police shot dead 15-year-old Michaelis Kaltezas during the

Seeing Red!

with Ken Stevens

protest. Hundreds of students occupied Athens Polytechnic in response.

Papandreu expressed his personal dismay at the shooting, but the fact remains that the forces of the state are as reactionary as ever under his regime. This is capitalism, and labour governments do not change that.

Little wonder that Papandreu's electoral stocks are beginning to fade. Like Whitlam and Mitterrand, he is increasingly carrying out classical austerity measures, capitulating to the right on foreign policy, and risking electoral disaster.

DOES THIS mean there is no place for reform? Not at all. Revolutionary socialists are for reforms. In fact, we argue that they are not only possible but necessary.

However, they do not come from electing labour governments. They come from militant class struggle, and they can be wrung from conservative and labour governments alike only through that struggle.

Left to themselves, labour governments invariably turn clones of their right-wing counterparts within the parliamentary system.



Greece's Papandreu at an election rally: now workers rally against him