

SOCIALIST  ACTION

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# BLACK DEATHS

# THE MURDER GOES ON



Moments of truth

For years die-hard Stalinists insisted that the 1956 Hungarian revolt was a fascist putsch. Now a document from the historical commission of the Hungarian Communist Party has told the truth.

The committee's chairman, Imre Pozsgay told Budapest radio:

*This commission regards what took place in 1956 as a popular uprising — an uprising against an oligarchic system of power which had humiliated the nation... The summary verdict which used the single word of counter-revolution to describe what happened in '56 does not stand up.*

Pozsgay says the roots of the 1956 crisis go back to the "socialist model chosen or enforced in 1948-49 which has proved to be a false path in its entirety".

As in Russia, Hungary's political liberalisation is accompanied by economic restructuring which imposes sacrifices on workers. While Pozsgay was



making his statement, Hungarian party leader Karoly Grosz was telling a Swiss audience that Eastern Europe may have to accept job losses and a temporary drop in living standards as the price for economic modernisation.

That certainly seems to be the way Poland is headed, with plans to close the famous Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk already well advanced. The government's new strategy to impose austerity on the working class includes a deal with Lech Walesa and other rightwing Solidarity leaders, who were invited for talks at the start of February.

Solidarity's National Executive Commission has promised to stay within the law and behave "responsibly in industrial disputes" if the union is legalised.

Some of Solidarity's leaders are unhappy with these compromises. At a meeting held in Gdansk in December, a group of them criticised Walesa for falling under American influence and for seeking to get too close to the government.

In an ironic development, the government's tame OPZZ union had denounced the deal. They fear if it goes through no one will bother joining their yellow union, so they have swung to the left to appear interested in workers' conditions.

CANBERRA

Our very own Unsworths

CANBERRANS have their first real local government elections on 4 March. But it's not ordinary local government. The new administration will have a \$1.5 billion dollar budget and employ 15,000 workers.

The majority of ACT people actually oppose self-government, fearing it will mean in-

Laws made to be broken

THE NSW Constitution provides for laws to ensure "peace, order and good government". But leaks from the police computer have revealed that some people in high places like to make their own laws.

Police Minister Ted Pickering has seven convictions for speeding. Then there's Liberal MP Paul Zammit, who was convicted of speeding while chairman of the parliamentary road safety committee.

Would he resign? No, he said, after all it was his first offence.

Not so, according to the leaky computer. He had six prior traffic convictions. Gulp! It resign, said Zammit.



John McBean: kicked upstairs

The National Party has also shown its deep regard for Greiner's "clean government" pledge. Officially, Greiner requires all ministers to declare their pecuniary interests. Unofficially, they're being selective.

Administrative Services Minister Matt Singleton was discovered lobbying for land development approvals on behalf of a motel company in which he controlled a 49 percent shareholding. This hadn't been declared.

Singleton was sacked from Cabinet but, like Zammit, is still enjoying the salary and perks of a parliamentarian. Lesser mortals would have been out of a job and probably prosecuted.

Meanwhile on the Labor side John McBean, NSW Labor Council secretary and leading scapegoat for the demise of the Unsworth government, has been kicked upstairs onto the bench of the Commonwealth Industrial Relations Commission.

His timing is perfect. The salaries of judges on the Commission are to rise from \$95,000 to \$180,000 a year.

McBean is, of course, an experienced advocate. Anyone who heard his spirited defence of racist 2KY broadcaster Ron Casey knows that.

CHEM WAR

Libya's not the first

THIS MONTH'S prize for hypocrisy goes to western governments including Australia, for their hue and cry over Colonel Gaddafi's alleged chemical weapons factory.

We had no brief for Gaddafi. But have the Australian and American governments forgotten the use of agent orange in Vietnam? During the war 17 million gallons of defoliant were dropped there. Over 20,000 US and Australian soldiers are suing their governments, and in Vietnam children are still being born with horrible deformities.

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Muirhead reports, black deaths continue

BLACK DEATHS in custody have been happening for two hundred years. It is grimly appropriate that they became a major public issue during the Bicentennial year of 1988.

Aboriginal activist Bobbi Sykes highlighted the issue in her poem *Ambrose* written in the 1970s:

*There were handmarks & fingerprints  
All over you  
When they found you,  
But you died  
By your own hand  
They said*

The Royal Commission has now been sitting for a year. It's looking at the evidence of the last eight years, during which 434 deaths in custody have been reported. Of these, 103 were black people.

Western Australia comes over as much the most dangerous place to be black. A third of the deaths in custody over the eight year period were in WA, while a quarter were in Queensland. Of the 16 reported since the Commission started, at least five have been in WA.

After a year on the Commission, Justice Muirhead has resigned, leaving behind an Inter-

rim Report. The Report tells us in passing that police particularly enjoy arresting people in certain States.

Queensland tops the national list for overall arrests. In August 1988, the Queensland cops arrested 6500 people all that. That's the highest number in Australia, even though NSW has the lowest population.

WA, for its part, has the highest number of arrests per head of population.

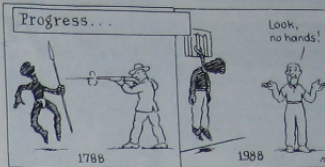
In WA half the Aboriginal people in jail are there for defaulting on fines. Poverty is just another criminal offence.

MUIRHEAD has a lengthy list of recommendations. One is that the offence of drunkenness be abolished in Victoria, Queensland and WA, the only States which still have it.

He declares, presumably on the basis of the charges police chose, that alcohol was involved in two thirds of the arrests that were followed by deaths.

Half the deaths occurred within eight hours of arrest. Muirhead recommends better medical and other attention in watchhouses. But he goes on to point out:

*"The explanations for these deaths do not all lie within prison*



walls or the confines of lockups, nor are they explicable only in terms of sentencing policies."

The real reason for the deaths is the social oppression of Aborigines, the poverty, harassment and discrimination built into Australian society. When we hear about NSW police taunting Aborigines by offering them football socks that's just a particularly public example of what goes on all the time.

So where will Muirhead's report go? To State governments who will do as much — or as little — as they like about its 56 recommendations. Police and screws in WA haven't exactly been cooperating with the Commission. They have a policy of giving no statements to it.

The police union, with financial support from the State Labor government, have issued challenges to the validity of the appointments of two commissioners.

THE QUEENSLAND Government already has its own report, signed by two Aborigines from Woorabinda and from Cherbourg. That is the "Power-Law Report on the Incidence of Rising Suicides by Aborigines on Queensland Communities Whilst in Custody."

The Royal Commission, while not intending to recommend any prosecutions, is at least careful to point out that it doesn't assume in advance that the deaths were suicides. But it suits them to have them all labelled suicide.

The government also likes the Power-Law recommendations that all blacks should work for the dole to give them self-respect, and that there should be more Community Police (outfitted with cast-off Queensland Police equipment).

Muirhead, while saying more Aboriginal police and screws would be nice, did also mention most black people's "deeply entrenched suspicion of the system" as an obstacle. Some of his statements about the underlying

causes of the deaths touch on the real issues of institutionalised discrimination and racism, but remain mere rhetoric because the Commission has no powers and no teeth.

All it can do is suggest to State governments that they might implement a number of "band-aid" measures.

Muirhead's first four case reports, released on 2 February, have not impressed the black community either. While he found that police and prison officers had mistreated several black prisoners, blaming this for causing at least one death, he rejected claims of foul play.

ALICE DIXON, one of the 119 year old Kingies Dixon who was found dead in Adelaide jail 18 months ago, spoke for many when she remarked:

*"I expected some retribution. I expected, not heads to roll, but justice... It doesn't seem to be happening."*

And it won't, not while the social realities that cause Aborigines to make up 15 percent of the prison population, and a quarter of those who die in custody, remain unchanged.

As it is to hammer home the point, a few days before Muirhead's case reports were released an Aboriginal man, Greg Karpany, was found hanged in Adelaide's Darlington police station. He was found dead only twenty minutes after being placed in the cells. Lance Walker, a relative and a member of the Committee to Defend Black Rights in Custody, found a bruise on the body and found a black eye, a red mark on the side of the cheek and bruises on both wrists and upper arms.

Walker had also heard cops saying over the police radio that they were "celebrating" the death.

It will take more than a Royal Commission to destroy the system of oppression that makes such things an everyday reality in modern Australia.

Carole Ferrer



SOCIALIST ACTION

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WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne  
Wednesdays, 7.00  
Lincoln Hotel  
91 Cardigan St Carlton

Sydney  
Wednesdays, 7.00  
Metro Hotel (Top Room)  
Bridge & George St City

Brisbane  
Thursdays, 7.30  
50 Barnes St  
West End

Canberra  
Thursdays, 6.00  
Blair Room  
Workers Club, Civic

## CAMPUS ISSUES

### THE FIGHT against the tertiary tax is on again, on campuses around Australia.

A national week of action is set for March, with a day of action on 22 March set to be the high point. This was originally proposed by student activists in NSW, but rapidly gained support in other states.

An attempt will be made to close all campuses on the 22nd. Demonstrations will involve both staff and students at tertiary and secondary levels.

Legislation permitting the tax, known as the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) went through Parliament early in the new year. Tertiary students now have to pay a fee of \$1800 per year for their course, regardless whether they graduate or not.

Wentley students can pay their fee up front, and gain a 15 percent discount.

John Dawkins and the Labor government are out to make education serve the needs of industry. At the same time, they want workers to pay for this educational restructuring by taxing students, the majority of whom will become, not high fliers of industry but teachers and poorly paid public servants.

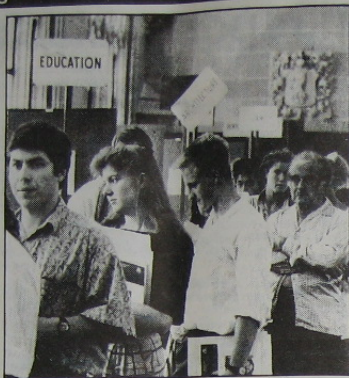
The long holiday period has seen a lot of activity on campuses. At Melbourne University 1700 students committed themselves to refuse to sign up for the tax. Working groups were established to deal with various aspects of the campaign: protest actions, media cooperation with the unions, and so on.

The students are not restricting themselves to a "don't sign" campaign. Demonstrations are planned, and students will organise book co-ops to overcome library restrictions on those who have refused to sign.

The first demonstration planned at Melbourne is against university Vice-Chancellor David Pennington during orientation



Students in the streets. 1985 is a new battleground.



Students enrolling at Sydney Uni: national action is planned against the tertiary tax.

## Students ready to come out fighting

week La Trobe Uni students will also picket their Vice-Chancellor's opening address.

At Latrobe University, a smaller campaign has been established. During enrollment, students made their resentment against the tax very obvious. At one of Melbourne campuses the response has been uneven. Undoubtedly the campus in the best position to oppose the tax is Swinburne (due mainly to administrative bungling), whilst little has been heard from Monash University.

The National Union of Students and NOLS (Labor Party students) have been notable for their absence from the campaign so far. Activist students have organised themselves without help from these conservative organisations.

Back in 1974 when the Whitlam government abolished tertiary fees, it seemed as if we had made some progress in the hard-fought struggle for free education for all. But we have learned that under capitalism, every reform has to be fought for again and again.

We have also learned that what Labor governments give,

they can once again take away unless we resist.

— Michael Doogan

• **Canberra branch of Socialist Action is holding a talk and discussion on "The Graduate Tax: How to Fight it" Thursday 23 February, lunchtime, ANU. See the 0-week handbook for more details.**

### QUEENSLAND

## Airwaves make waves

WE LIVE in a world of giant media networks, who decide what we are going to see and hear. Those few media outlets that present alternative ideas are increasingly important.

The enormous public support for Brisbane's 4ZZZ FM radio station shows how many students realise how many students come under attack from National Party elements in the Queensland University student union.

The station grew up 13 years ago at the height of the student protest movement, and since then it's given a voice to the sort of people the mass media ignore or misrepresent: Aborigines, women, lesbians and gays, environmentalists. The station has helped co-ordinated political campaigns, organising meetings and advertising rallies. The many attacks launched by student bureaucrats against the station over the years have been directed against its political commitment.

The latest attacks have been the most determined by far. On 14 December at 4:17 am, National Party students and security guards forcibly and illegally evicted 4ZZZ workers.

The same day 300 supporters of the station rallied outside, and later forced their way past security guards and police to begin a second occupation.

Several days after the 14th, another eviction notice was served to the station by the Young Nationals' student politicians. The date to quit the premises was set down for 19 January. At this stage many station workers wanted to move off campus to escape continual harassment. They put their faith in a legal defence.

But few people can participate in a legal defence. It's in the hands of lawyers and judges. We hope the legal defence works, but the campaign to defend the station shouldn't be allowed to depend on it.

There are two important reasons why it's better to stay on campus. First, moving will involve huge sums of money, putting 4ZZZ into greater debt. There's no guarantee any of it can be paid off.

Second, the station has received great political support while it remained on campus. People have volunteered to help with announcing, staff the reception, and collect news for broadcasts. This kind of support will be harder to mobilise if the station is away from the campus.

On 19 January, supporters again occupied the station, and the National Party backed off. The University Senate has now intervened, preventing the Nationals from taking further action by issuing its own eviction notice. So the debate continues.

Students' willingness to take repeated action is tremendously encouraging. The station has long helped to spread progressive ideas. But ideas really matter when they're acted on.

— Alan Burns and Adrian Skerrit

## INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS

# New wage deal: it'll be blood money

OF COURSE we'll get a substantial wage rise. Bob Hawke says so. And Greg Harrison of the Metalworkers declares that it's "pay back time for the unions".

The claim adopted at the special unions' conference on 9 February calls for a tax cut worth \$20 and a pay rise worth \$30.

Yet at the same time, Keating's declared objective in the new wages round is to "drive the wages figure as low as possible". The *Business Review Weekly* commented that "this didn't sound like cash in hand".

Well, which is it? Simon Crean explains the apparent contradiction when he describes ACTU wages strategy as being "about linking the wage adjustment to productivity improvement — thereby limiting unit labour cost increases and strengthening competitiveness".

The government accepts that they have to give something, because a stronger economy and a shortage of skills have put some workers in a better bargaining position. But all the talents of the ALP and ACTU leaders are being bent to see that we give away maximum trade-offs in exchange.

The wages deal being proposed for 1989-90 is in two parts: industry by industry award restructuring, and a national tax cut.

THERE ARE problems with both parts of the deal. Any wage rises from award restructuring will be tied to increases in productivity. What the employers give with one hand, they take away with the other (and more if they can get away with it).

And if you've already restructured, or have nothing to give away, there'll be nothing in it for you.

As for the tax cuts, Keating warned us as early as October: "These are not tax cuts gratis. These are tax cuts which come as part of the trade off."

This government's put the tax bite on us more ferociously than Malcolm Fraser ever did. There's been an 80 percent increase in revenue from PAYE taxpayers since 1983, and



A handshake's about all they got. John Halpenny and CSR workers just after they ended their strike.

\$670,000 in 1988, a 78 percent boost over the previous year. At the same time, judges have awarded themselves an 80 percent pay hike.

Meanwhile, as of November, 25 percent of workers still hadn't got their second-tier rise under the 1987 wage system!

So with industry short of key skills, groups of workers who find they have the muscle are beginning to secure wage rises outside the system. This is most noticeable in the metal and building trades, and the communications industry.

Some "wages drift" of this sort is inevitable, but the government and its little helpers among the union officials are desperate to keep it from escalating into a general "wage break-out".

That's why the government stepped into sack OTC head George Malby after he had secretly arranged big pay rises for workers and management.

The left union officials are once again striking militant postures. George Campbell from the Metalworkers made one of the better statements:

"Kelly knows as well as the rest of us that award restructuring is not going to deliver substantial net going to the short term... To increase in the short term, we look at it doesn't matter how you look at it, we are being sold a package which means restraint."

He went on to demand across-the-board pay rises to cover cost

of living increases.

JOHN HALPENNY has joined the rhetorical chorus, and Melbourne Trades Hall has proposed a delegates' meeting without setting an actual date.

But when it comes to actions as opposed to words, Halpenny and the Metalworkers play a very different role. Most of the national wage cutting deals originate in the AMWU offices.

In January Campbell even asked employers who were offering his members \$100 wage rises to hold back until the union Association had negotiated award restructuring.

When the Colonial Sugar Refineries workers went out for a mere \$40 late last year, who connected them with nothing? Halpenny and the AMWU. The sell-out has now paved the way for rationalisation of the plant. Those workers who retain their jobs will be working much harder, with perhaps \$10 to show for their magnificent struggle.

The big wage push of 1981 was led, or at least approved by union officials. If we're to defend our living standards today, it's going to take a rank and file revolt that can crush the officials aside.

— Liz Ross

At Socialist Action's annual conference we discussed today's economic and political trends, and the pace of the class struggle. Our feature summarises that discussion.

# Today's political battle grounds

FOR ALL the talk of "capitalist crisis" current on the left, most of the industrialised world is actually entering its sixth year of economic expansion. The expansion has been uneven, and partly fueled by Ronald Reagan's deficit spending on arms, but the system still looks a lot stronger than it did in the early 1980s.

The 1982-83 recession was a turning point. It weeded out the less efficient firms, so making capitalism more efficient. At the same time it intimidated the organised working class. Many trade unionists became convinced of the argument that wage break-offs only lead to unemployment, and the downturn was severe enough that governments and employers could go on the offensive.

From the head-kicking methods of Reagan to the more subtle "consensus" of Hawke, the result was similar wage "restraint" — a weakening of the unions and a rightward political tide.

As a result, profits improved to the point where the system could grow. The sustained growth, in its turn, made it easier for the bosses to restructure the capitalist system. Capital has become more international, partly because deregulation of industry and finance has made it easier for it to flow across national boundaries. In Australia, many more local firms have reached the point where the domestic market is too small, and high fliers like George Herescu and Alan Bond have invaded the bigger markets of Europe and North America.

The way last year's stock exchange crisis ripped through New York, London and Tokyo in quick succession shows how inter-linked national economies have become. At the same time, nation states have responded to the new situation by forming new trading blocs. Europe will be more closely integrated in the 1990s, the US has reached a free trade agreement with Canada, and even small fry like Australia and New Zealand have followed the same path with the CER agreement.

Meanwhile the rise of Japan and decline of America has made international economic relations more unstable. For the first time since World War II, no single power can dominate the world economy. Japan in its turn is already under pressure from newly industrialised countries like South Korea.

There is a powerful, world-wide trend away from central planning. Examples range from financial deregulation in Australia to the Gorbachev reforms in the USSR. This is sometimes seen as a trend away from "socialism" but it is really just capitalism's way of responding to the new economic climate.



South Korean workers have been on the offensive in a booming, newly industrialised economy.

The state has not stopped intervening. In fact, it's the state which is often leading the way, selling off companies, changing regulations, creating a new economic "culture". The aim is to put new competitive pressures on every sector of the economy. This is the main aim of Gorbachev, just like Thatcher and Hawke.

Governments often have to force these changes through against the opposition of sections of the establishment. For example, former British Conservative Prime Minister Heath opposes "Thatcherism" and large sections of the Russian bureaucracy are trying to sabotage Gorbachev's reforms.

The economic changes are also intended to discipline the working class. Under misleading "headlines" like "industrial democracy" workers in many countries including Australia and the USSR are being given the illusion that they have a greater influence over economic decisions. But the real purpose is to make them assume more responsibility for success or failure of individual firms, so that they are reluctant to take strike action.

At the same time, deregulation and privatisation are being used to erode working class organisation in areas where it has traditionally been strong. Sometimes just the

threat of privatisation can be enough to intimidate the workforce.

HOWEVER the expansion of the world economy may now be set to end. Continuing trade imbalances together with the huge third world debt put constant strains on the system. Economic growth itself makes the situation more critical, as the US economy sucks in more and more imports.

The new Bush administration will be forced to take measures to control the US budget and trade deficit, at the cost of American workers' living standards. The likely spending cuts could bring on a recession in America, which in turn might flow through to the rest of the world.

The Australian economy has grown almost continually since 1983. Recently it has been relatively buoyant — so much so that our rulers are increasingly worried about a new trade crisis because the economy is drawing in too many imports.

Paul Keating argues that a lot of the imports are equipment needed to boost production, and he may be right. There is no doubt that Australia has seen a significant boost in the rate of profit, which has fuelled increased investment.

Australian manufacturing has recovered from the bad times of the Fraser "resources

## Table manners of the rich and famous

JUST to remind us how filthy rich they are, Perth millionaires have a new way of showing off at their favourite swill-hole, the ritzy Mediterranean restaurant.

The species Perihorus grekus has adopted the old Greek custom of dashing the crockery into the fireplace. Except that instead of cheap china, they smash beautiful Czech crystal glasses at \$20 a throw.

One dinner party ran up a bill of \$4000. That was \$1000 for food, \$500 for the tip, and \$2500 for 125 smashed glasses.

Comments the Mediterranean's manager, more in sorrow than in anger, "Some of our clients are very rich. They are people who sometimes enjoy smashing beautiful things. Why? I do not know. I do not ask."

Sounds like more glass than class to us.

## Let them freeze

GOOD help is so hard to come by these days — Martin Spring, editor of the Times, advises his readers, "Servants have a bad habit of heating the kitchen by switching on the oven and leaving the oven door open. If you do that for several hours a day, it can cost you £25 a month or more. So make sure it doesn't happen in your home!"

## Season's greetings

LABOR's junior Election Minister Ros Kelly is really getting into her portolito... she sent out Christmas cards with a Leopard tank, an FA-18 Hornet jet and a battleship on them.

What was that about peace on earth, Ros?



Dan Quayle: on the ball?

## Out of bounds

SPEAKING of idle-rich politicians, we hear that Vice-President Dan Quayle found enough time last year to average three games of golf a week. And that was an election year.

The stats say he has a one in four chance of becoming president in the next eight years. Let's hope he hasn't got a habit of getting into bunkers.



Halperny: generosity kindred

## What did you get for Xmas?

ANOTHER consumerist Christmas is over. And leading the way was the Robb Report, which every year advises its megachurch readers (average profile: male, 41 years, entrepreneur, making \$500,000 annually) on the ultimate in conspicuous consumption.

This year, Robb's ultimate gift was a \$25 million slice of ersatz cake, made of 2500 diamonds to celebrate Beverly Hills 75th birthday.

Then there was a \$1 million silk elastic bra containing 2100 diamonds. And a full-length milk bathrobe at \$31,000. And a box of 12 personalised, gold-decorated cards with milk-lined envelopes, snip at \$1200.

Do people actually buy such stuff? Well, Robb's site gets calls from impatient readers a month before the issue hits the stands, so judge for yourself.

## A boss is a boss

There are still some naive souls who insist that Soviet leaders aren't really bosses, that they're fundamentally different than our western capitalists. But Russian weekly Moscow News keeps revealing the truth.

Of big-shot Soviet eye-surgeon Svatoslav Fyev (western) company executive knows that he and Dr Fyodorov will speak the same language. Not simply English, but the language of profits." It adds: "The oculist has a host of friends all over the world. With some of them he has shot beers..."



## CHEAP SHOTS

### Sweet tooth

ONE intriguing fact emerged at Ronald Reagan's retirement. In the old-but-fine White House bought 12 tons of jelly beans.

That works out at over eight pounds a day. Even allowing for his infantile tastes, Reagan couldn't have eaten more than a pound a day himself. After all, jelly beans are a high energy food, and Ronnie only worked a 26 hour week and was usually in pyjamas by 6 pm.

So where did all those jelly beans go? Our theory — Ronnie secretly sent them to the Contras as part of his master-plan to invade Nicaragua with the Good Ship Lollipop.



## HOUSING



## This summit is the pits

THE BIG swing against Labor in the WA elections has created shock waves.

Not long ago, Senator Walsh was blaming the housing crisis on greedy workers who wanted dwellings too big for their own good. But it's clear that housing costs were a factor in the WA poll, and suddenly the "Housing Summit" gets brought forward.

At the summit all the politicians will pontificate without addressing the basic issues.

The most pressing problems are rising house prices and shrinking land stocks. These could be addressed relatively easily. What is needed is a massive program of housing.



To use land more efficiently and reduce the problem of urban sprawl, higher density rental ac-

commodation can be created by State governments with assistance from the Commonwealth. If more rental stock were available, it would take the pressure off the real estate market and prices would stop soaring. Of course, right-wingers will demand to know where the money's coming from. Apart from our favorite solution (tax the rich, starting with land speculators) there is an answer well known to housing activists: put an end to the tax dodge known as negative gearing.

Keating restored full negative gearing provisions in 1987 after a brutally effective lobbying campaign by estate agents. They allows investors to finance housing purchases at taxpayers' expense. The only consequence

has been to create artificial demand in the real estate markets, one consequence being the current price spiral. By scrapping it, the government could hold down costs and raise revenue with one stroke.

More likely Hawke and Keating will stick to trivial measures: selling government land located where it's needed least, making cosmetic changes to the First Home Owners Scheme (then scrapping it after the next election).

Labor couldn't give a stuff about our housing needs. But they can count votes, so we can expect some grandstanding around the issue for months to come.

— Richard Emerson



## FEATURE

Anti-nuclear movements have declined in recent years. This is partly due to the general rightward drift of society, partly due to a decline in public anxiety as Reagan and Gorbachev have seemed to be doing something about disarmament. But there is still considerable hostility to nuclear warships, and union action even succeeded in turning away one warship in Melbourne last year.

Nuclear power could re-emerge as the industry for issue in coming years, as the industry shows concern about the Greenhouse effect to try to portray nuclear energy as a desirable alternative to fossil fuels.

Environmental issues continue to agitate local communities, with campaigns against toxic waste occurring in Western Australia and in Brisbane.

Finally there are battles being fought around sexual politics. While there hasn't been a major anti-gay backlash due to AIDS, there are certainly attacks on homosexuals, particularly in NSW and Tasmania. The NSW right is also stepping up attacks on abortion rights. Gays and women have shown some determination in resisting these attacks and socialists will continue to actively support them.

The organised left has continued to lose ground in Australian society. Within the Labor Party, there is a large faction devoted to securing jobs and pulling the party to the right (the "pragmatic" Socialist Left and Socialist Forum) and a genuinely militant socialist element which is not very large or influential.

Outside the ALP the organised groups have held their own, but their ability to influence and recruit other people has deteriorated.

The hopes for left unity have also faded. There are closer ties developing between groups here and there. But the dream of a much bigger "new party" still looks very unrealistic. This is not surprising. Unity can only be based on substantial political agreement, and this is simply not present on the left.

What is possible is agreement on practical actions: solidarity with unions under

attack, demonstrations around political issues, and so on. As in the past, this sort of unity is the kind Socialist Action will put forward as the best focus for the left in 1989.

**I**N THESE difficult times, a socialist organisation must choose its priorities carefully. Given the conservative political climate, and the largely unfavourable balance of forces in industry, we cannot expect to recruit large numbers of people through mass agitation. Most people will join left organisations, particularly the smaller ones, on the basis of the appeal of socialist ideas.

Consequently, the most important orientation for socialists is making propaganda for those ideas. But that shouldn't just mean speeches and articles about socialism. Marxism is only meaningful as a guide to action, and the best propaganda for socialism is always made side by side with practical involvement in whatever struggles are going on.

We defend the unions against government attacks, and explain that the state even under Labor — is a tool of the ruling class. We fight for abortion rights, and explain that capitalism oppresses women. And we argue for a militant response to these issues, while also arguing that the battle can only be finally won by creating a society where workers hold power.

At the same time steady, routine work to build our organisation is also needed: regular paper sales, bookstalls on campus, talking to people who've shown interest in our ideas. People sometimes criticise socialists for doing this sort of work, for it seems to be a diversion from the efforts needed to win whatever struggle is currently underway. That is a misunderstanding.

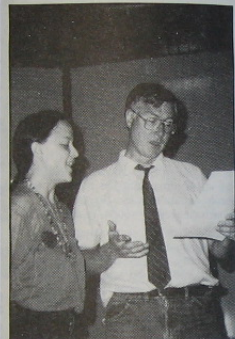
A group like Socialist Action exists to promote the class struggle, not only today but in the longer term. For that to be possible, we need to build an organisation that can survive and grow. It is only because socialists have taken this task seriously in the past that an organised left exists today.

## SOCIALIST ACTION

### Successful summer camp

OUR FOURTH national conference and summer camp attracted 40 members and supporters from Melbourne, Castlemaine, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane to a campsite near Murrumbidgee in the ACT.

Over three days we heard a range of educational talks and discussed the political work of the organisation on campus, in unions, and in producing our magazine.



Hamming it up in the Socialist Recital.

The educational talks included topics such as the struggle to defend the BLF, an assessment of the Greiner government's strategy in NSW, the significance of the Gorbachev reforms in Russia and American politics today. A highlight of the week-end was Phil Shannon's presentation on "Love, Sex and Socialism" a topic which sparked more discussion than almost any other item.

The conference business agenda was crowded. We began with our assessment of the economic, political and industrial situation which is summarised in the main feature article appearing in this issue of *Socialist Action*. We discussed our relationship to other groups on the left, the state of our finances (we're poor but surviving), and what sort of articles we want to publish in the magazine during 1989. Finally we elected our National Committee for the coming year.

On the social and entertainment side, we had an engrossing Socialist Recital as members acted out scenes from working class history, recited poems serious and comical, and adopted an appropriately irreverent attitude to a surprise visit from Mikhail Gorbachev. In between sketches, a trivia quiz tested comrades' knowledge and kept our minds alert for the game of charades which followed.

### Books for sale

ROSA's bookshop in Brisbane is now open for business, selling Socialist Action publications and other books and pamphlets. Why not drop in and browse at 50 Baynes St, West End? We're open daily 1:30 to 6:00 except Sunday.

## INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

# Public servants: campaigning builds confidence

THE CAMPAIGN to save 500 jobs in the federal Department of Community Services and Health is still in summer hibernation. Union members voted to accept an agreement and the unions (ACOA and APSA) before Christmas.

The agreement gained some protection of employment conditions for those workers about to be made surplus. But on the main issue, job cuts, little was accomplished and half the jobs have been lost. Selected work areas, covering half the jobs up for the chop, will be reviewed. But without the pressure of industrial action, little is likely to be gained that way.

In the agreement, management retained its right to carry out government orders and cut staff. The union officials won the right to go to the government and complain.

ACOA officials try to portray this as a great victory. Most members also saw it as a win, but with more recognition of the flaws. At least it has made management more respectful of us.

Most members were on strike, all up, for four days. Support for pickets was strong.

Canberra led the way in industrial action, showing that Central Office is not a union black hole. Scores of delegates proved to be excellent one-the-job organisers.

The campaign peaked in mid-December with a half-day occupation of the Secretary's office by 30 ACOA members. The Secretary had said his "door was always open" so we took him at his word.

During the sit-in we learned why Deputy Secretary Mick Roche is known as a "cockroach". He angered the occupiers by suggesting we weren't in the Department — just a "rent-a-crowd". Next he said we had been duped into acting as electoral cannon-fodder for ACT Branch Secretary Peter Parame who was participating in the sit-in.

When informed that the elections were over (with Parame losing) and we were there to fight for our jobs, the roach scuttled away.



Overall our industrial action, though uneven between different States and unions, and strung out by partial rolling stoppages, was reasonably effective. But for victory we needed more continuous, all-out action.

— Phil Shannon

## MELBOURNE

### Exploding jobs

AT THE Ammunition Factory in Footscray (Vic) workers are pondering how best to blow a retrenchment package.

The government is planning how to spend the 30 percent tax they'll net from the 200 they sack in March and the next 200 in October.

Though productivity has jumped 35 percent in two years, and workers can't see where the fat is to be trimmed apart from running down inventory holdings, the sackings will go ahead. Redeployment isn't an option, it seems, because the Department of Defence is chokka with refugees from the Williamstown Dockyard purge.

The Anmo Factory is to be a private corporation with shares retained by the government — for now.

Workers from many unions will be lumped together under a

new award with, for most, much worse conditions. Flextime will be a thing of the past, and sick leave will be cut from 10 to 8 days annually. The ACTU would have agreed to worse conditions, but the bosses feared they wouldn't get anyone to work under them.

As it is, workers will have to sign a contract and no one knows quite what the terms will be.

— Chris Rose

## BUILDING

### Bosses: a health hazard

YOU'D THINK disputes over asbestos were a thing of the past. But building workers still have to fight to protect their health.

At a building job owned by Petroleum Refineries Australia in Altona (Vic), the whole site is on strike, demanding that asbestos be totally removed in accordance with Trades Hall policy.

Most workers have been out for over four weeks. But members of the BWIU initially kept

working. That is, until a boss made the mistake of congratulating a BWIU organiser on his success at keeping the men at work! At which they all walked out.

BLF organiser Mick Young thinks the strike can win if they can keep the dispute out of the hands of the ACTU and run it themselves.

At another job at Therry St in the City, workers stopped repeatedly last year over management's refusal to accept union procedures to clean up unsafe areas.

The usual arrangement is that double time is paid to clean up an accepted safety risk. Management kept refusing to pay.

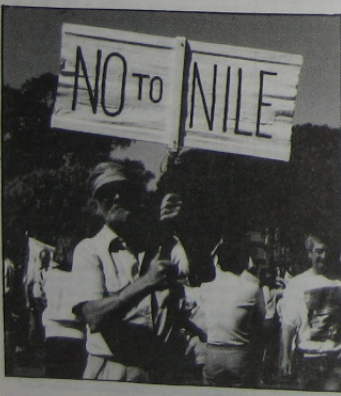
Even the Victorian Employers Federation safety officer was shocked at the state of the job and recommended a big clean up. The Department of Labour and issued a prohibition notice and listed three pages of safety breaches.

United action eventually won the dispute.

1989 would be a good year for building unions to go on the offensive. Faced with a likely glut of office space in the early 1990s, developers and builders are racing to get office jobs completed before their competitors. Even the long-established Blacklist of BLF militants has offered a bit in the face of employers' desperate search for labour.

The BWIU is the single biggest obstacle keeping building workers from cashing in on this situation.

— Jane Stone



Gays and women, and other people who don't want to be sent back to the dark ages, fought back against the right in NSW and Tasmania last year.

# Palestine: the masses are at centre stage

**T**HE PALESTINIAN uprising has transformed Middle East politics.

Apparently shattered after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the liberation has revived in explosive fashion Yasser Arafat, whose authority seemed in deep decline only a couple of years ago, now seems to set the political agenda.

The changed international attitude towards the Palestinians is not due to Arafat's supposed genius for diplomacy. Far more important is the impact of the *intifada*, the uprising of the Palestinians living in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

The *intifada* has shifted the balance of forces in the region. Previously, the Palestinian strategy relied on "friendly" Arab governments such as Jordan, whose real objective was to gain control of the West Bank themselves.

But now the "Jordanian option" so desired by Israel and the USA no longer has any supporters.

Syria hoped to gain increased influence through manoeuvres in Lebanon. But the *intifada* forced

the Syrian backed Amal militia to call off its murderous attacks on Palestinian refugee camps.

As a teacher at Birzeit University says, the issue now is:

"Not what Jordan wants, not what Syria wants, but what the Palestinians want... It is a chance for the Palestinians to declare their independence from the Arab states as well as from Israel".

**T**HIS ACHIEVEMENT is due to the duration and intensity of the uprising. The courage and determination of the Palestinians has had an impact even on Israelis such as historian Shlomo Avineri:

"In 1967 the Israeli Army needed fewer than five days to gain control over the West Bank and Gaza. In 1987 to 1988 the same army — much stronger — cannot restore order when faced with stone-throwing turbulent youths".

This is because the *intifada* is a struggle for political rather than military power. The previous government's defence minister, Rabin, made this clear in explaining his policy of "force, power and blows": "We



will make it clear who is running the territories. We are adamant that the violence shall not achieve its political aims".

The Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza also intend to make it clear who is running the territories. Not only with their regular strikes, demonstrations and overt political actions, but also with the rapid growth of popular committees which influence every aspect of daily life, they have shown they can take control of their lives.

The mass struggle has drawn in enormous numbers of previously non-political people.

For example, every Friday in Jerusalem very traditional women go to the mosque to pray. Then they come out leading demonstrations.

**A**CCORDING to a committee activist, "The participation of workers in this uprising is unprecedented". Strikes by Palestinians who go daily to work in Israel have had a big impact on the Israeli economy.

Other forms of mass action include strikes by merchants, civil disobedience such as refusal to pay taxes and boycotts of Israeli products.

Within the occupied territories, the uprising has been coordinated by the Unified Leadership. Their weekly leaflets announce demonstrations, strikes and other activities. Their authority is manifest in the widespread unity and discipline around methods and tactics.

Each of the four main parties affiliated to the PLO is represented.

But the most important forms of united organisation are at the grass roots.

Popular committees now run many aspects of Palestinian daily life in the territories. They

handle distribution of food under the curfew and siege conditions, organise guard duty in villages, promote agricultural projects, provide medical services, run classes for children whose schools have been closed.

Palestinian lawyer Jonathan Kuttab says these committees have become "the real source of power and authority in the occupied territories".

"It's extremely egalitarian," he said, "very much grass roots and totally different from the hierarchical structures that are generally prevalent in the Middle East".

**I**SRAELI Defence Minister Itzhak Rabin called the committees "the nucleus of the uprising". They have effectively functioned as a grass-roots government. Many people see them as a potential infra-structure of an independent Palestinian state.

No wonder the Israelis are desperate to destroy them. Committee members face arrest, long prison sentences and even deportation. Soldiers have shut down such apparently innocuous groups as the agricultural committee in Beit Sahur and the Society for the Preservation of the Family in Ramallah.

The Israelis continue to cast around for a strategy. Since Christmas there have been a record number of deaths in the occupied territories. Israel now admits that plastic bullets are lethal, and will end deportations because they don't work.

The term *intifada* means "uprising" but it also means "throwing off". The struggle has led the Palestinians to throw off old ideas, traditions and forms of organisation and create new ones. For that reason it has a revolutionary potential barely imagined 18 months ago.

— Jeff Rickert

**W**HEN AUSTRALIA's male workers marched off to the slaughter of World War Two, they left behind a labour shortage.

Suddenly women's labour was in the spotlight. The *Women's Weekly* portrayed the abhorrent heroines in the factories, doing their bit for the boys in the trenches.

The reality wasn't so glamorous and governments went to a lot of trouble to get women into industry. In January 1943 the Manpower Committee, originally created to reorganize the workforce, was given the power to direct people to work. All childless women between 18 and 55 had to register.

The Women's Employment Board (WEB) was established to set wage rates on those jobs where no female rate had been set.

Mostly it awarded 90 percent rather than the full male rates, and women were put on three months probation to prove themselves worthy of higher pay. Its social attitudes were conservative.

"There are of course many objections to females working in industry, particularly married females. There are special objections to their employment in particular industries, of which employment in hotel bars is one."

**B**OSSSES commonly refused to pay WEB rates, and the government was reluctant to pull them into line. So the women had to fight.

When the Victorian Chamber of Manufacturers instructed its members not to pay WEB rates, 3000 women in vital war industries went on strike.

At the Kaysenagh and English factory in Sydney, they went out for five weeks. The *Sheet Metal Worker* reported that "there was widespread interest and support throughout the trade, and volun-



Labour heroines: the Weekly didn't know the half of it.



Munitions workers during the war: women showed historic militancy.

## Class war within the World War

tary collections were made to supplement relief".

The strikes were usually in defiance of union officials, as happened at Balmain Cannery in Brisbane. Women workers were given 24 hours notice to move from high paying munitions work to low paying jobs at the cannery. The Ironworkers union journal reported that "they were being kept at work with great difficulty".

In fact they soon walked off the job. A meeting of members of Food Preserving and Ironworkers unions was held, at which the union officials argued that striking was a last resort in wartime.

Union officials commonly spouted platitudes about "the boys in the trenches" to discourage women from demanding their rights. It didn't always work.

"We know all about the boys in the trenches — they're our husbands and sons" shouted one group of workers, and promptly walked off the job, forcing the government to pay them higher wages.

**U**NION leaders were often primarily concerned with protecting men's jobs. The Australian Textile Workers Union opposed an application by an employer to employ women on night shifts, on the grounds that "it feared that if the application is granted it may lead to a displacement of male labour".

In defence of men's interests was an underlying priority even when the ACTU Congress of 1945 called for equal pay. The Congress argued that:

"The paramount position to-

day was the competition of cheap labour. This would be worse after the war which today had brought about a shortage of labour and an influx of female labour — which they would not be strong enough to remove after the war. It was therefore important that the competition for employment should be on equal terms."

Women nevertheless fought for the right to unionise. They applied pressure to change union rules so they could be admitted. Their union membership rose from 33 percent of the total female workforce in 1939 to 52 percent in 1945. The Sheet Metal Workers appointed women shop stewards and in 1943 they held two conferences and a women's committee was elected.

One of the most impressive strikes of the war years at Duly and Hansford in Sydney, was sparked off by the refusal of ten women to join the union. After ten weeks, the ten resigned and the mostly female strikers returned to work victorious.

The war years show how in some periods women are more militant than men. Better money and a new found recognition of their work changed women's consciousness. The tangled wages situation provided goals to struggle for.

But most important, precisely their lack of trade union experience meant that women could more easily take grass roots action. More accustomed to traditional trade unionism, men accepted arguments about subordinating their interests to war production.

Women were not so blinkered, and that's why we can learn from the role they played during the war.

Neon in Sydney went on strike for equal pay.

In 1951 women at Swifts meateworks in Brisbane took strike action and defeated a company attempt to reduce their wages to 66 percent of the male rate, and in half a dozen Sydney metal shops wartime rates were defended by a two and a half week stoppage.

Despite an ideological campaign which sought to force women back into the home, only about 50,000 out of 800,000 left work. By 1947, their proportion of the workforce had again begun to climb. However they remained more heavily concentrated in lower-paid, traditional "women's jobs". The impact of the ideological barrage was to restore conventional attitudes about "a woman's place".

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— Jeff Rickert



## SOCIALIST STANDPOINTS

**A**BORIGINES are the almost oppressed group within Australian society.

They face racial hostility, poverty and 50 percent unemployment. Various governments have announced programs which were supposed to rectify their plight, but with little effect. Even during the Muriehead enquiry, Aborigines continued to be killed while in police custody.

Naturally they've fought back, and the central demand of their struggle is land rights. Socialists support this demand, and sympathise with the ideas of black sovereignty which have recently emerged.

Yet at first that might seem like a contradiction. Socialists argue for uniting all the workers and oppressed people. We insist that only by changing all of society can any one group achieve liberation. How then can we endorse one group demanding the right to separate landholdings? Isn't the call for Aboriginal "sovereignty" divisive?

To understand the socialist view, we need to consider some history.

Aboriginal society was developed over some 50,000 years of hunting and gathering on the Australian continent. All aspects of Aboriginal life — clan organisation, food gathering, culture and religion — depended upon an intimate understanding of huge areas of land.

**M**ODERN day Aboriginal oppression began when white invaders seized this land from 1788 onwards.

The British war of conquest killed the black population quickly with guns and disease, and more slowly by destroying traditional food supplies. The war was driven by the profit motive.

Wherever Australian land could produce profitably for the home or world market, farmers, pastoralists or industrialists seized it.

Although the blacks resisted, and fought well, they could not win the war. By 1850, Europeans had settled more or less every cultivable area of NSW. The Aboriginal population of NSW had been reduced from about 100,000 in 1788 to about 6000 in 1850.

Those who remained had been driven to the geographic and economic fringes of Australian society. People from diverse areas were rounded up, dumped on reserves and forced on the bible. Later in the 1950s, mining in remote areas



Scene from *How the West Was Won*: Aborigines reenact the 1946 Pilbara walkout.

## The long struggle for land rights

was made profitable by new technology. Aborigines in these areas got the shove once again. They ended up living on the fringes of towns or in big city ghettos like Redfern in Sydney.

A third of Australia's Aboriginal population now lives in capital cities, but that doesn't mean the land has ceased to be a vital issue for them.

Most urban blacks have friends and family in outback areas. Others are themselves only temporarily in the cities. And urban Aborigines march repeatedly for landrights, so it clearly still matters to them.

**B**UT ISN'T this just nostalgia? Why don't socialists, who pride themselves on arguing practical strategies, just urge Aborigines to forget their origins on the land? Why not urge them to become part of today's society, and join the fight to build tomorrow's better world?

Firstly, Australia's black population is already integrated into the worst aspects of modern capitalist society. They live in capitalist slums, get arrested by capitalist cops, die in capitalist jails. They have a disproportionate share of that peculiarly capitalist institution, unemployment.

Secondly, for a long time the official government policy was "assimilation". Local and state governments did — and still do — withhold services from Aboriginal communities living on former reserves, hoping to pressure them to move elsewhere to "assimilate". The result is communities with no electricity or sewerage.

We also support the struggles of oppressed people for their own demands because, although we believe the working class is central to socialism in the long run, workers can also learn a great deal from the struggles of the oppressed.

Thirdly, Aborigines are well aware that a large section of white capitalist society is hostile to them.

Under these circumstances it would be the height of arrogance for socialists — most of whom are white — to tell Aborigines they'd be better off merging themselves into the social mainstream.

**O**UR CONCEPT of socialism includes self-determination. The working class can, by liberating itself, also create the conditions for the liberation of other oppressed people. But that doesn't mean we ram our notion of liberation down other people's throats. And it doesn't mean we ask oppressed people to sit back and wait while the working class carries out its appointed task.

We support self-determination so people in oppressed communities can choose to join an international workers' movement. Aborigines must have the

right to their traditional lifestyle, to which the land is central, before they can be asked to choose the possible benefits of modern society.

We also support the struggles of oppressed people for their own demands because, although we believe the working class is central to socialism in the long run, workers can also learn a great deal from the struggles of the oppressed.

Take the strike for higher pay by black workers in the Pilbara from 1946 to 1949. This was probably the hardest fought industrial dispute in Australian history. Then there were the militant strikes by the Gurindji people in the Northern Territory, which won equal pay for Aboriginal pastoral workers and government employees in the 1960s.

These struggles, together with political actions like the demonstrations at the Canberra "Tent Embassy" in 1972 and the "Invasion Day" mobilisation a year ago show how militantly Aborigines can fight.

It is important, not just for their sake but for ours, that Aborigines should be part of the fight for socialism. But for that to be possible, socialists have to make the demand for land rights a non-negotiable part of our own program.

— Eric Petersen

## REVIEWS

# The importance of being ethnic

THE NEW show "Una faccia, una faccia" follows in the footsteps of the review "Wogs out of work" which has trounced even "Cats".

"Wog" humour is now a style in its own right. In 1989 the writers of "Wogs" will present their own TV special, "Acropolis Now".

It's no longer a question of liking one show or another, but whether such humour is a good thing. To which the answer is: it depends on who is doing the laughing.

The phenomenal success of "Wogs out of work" was based on the fact that despite its seemingly racist title, it was a show by "wogs" for "wogs".

The first generation of Greeks, Italians, Yugoslavs and others, on top of doing the shit-work for Australian capitalism had to bear the added indignity of this and other insulting titles. For their children, the situation was rather different, if not much better.

They escaped their poverty and political tragedies that drove their parents to come here, but their own foreign-ness was regularly rubbed in by racists calling them wogs too. Plus they faced pressure from their parents to remain loyal to a country they'd never seen, and uphold a culture that often meant less to them than their parents dreamed.

This meant they had not one, not two, but three cultures. They were Australians at school, Greeks (or what have you) at home, but they found that their friends were most often Turks or Yugoslavs... fellow "ethnics" sympathised most easily with easily. They recognised each other.

These children are now in their twenties, and they recognize themselves and their problems in the "Wogs" shows.

A culture is strong when it can laugh at itself. The new generation of "ethnics" know some things that make them strong. They know that there are lots of them, they know that unlike the "guest workers" of Europe they will never be kicked out, and they know that the dominant Australian culture can look pretty funny.

Una faccia, una faccia begins with a send-up of Skippy the bush kangaroo. When told that the ranger has fallen down a mineshaft with a beam across his legs, and needs rescuing, our

(IS THIS MAN CONDESCENDING?)



una razza kangaroo says, "who cares?"

Later in the show the semi-alcoholic coolers and the yuppies who drink them are sent up in an ad for the new Italian drink "Fancooler" (sounds rude in Italian). Another line plays on all the ambiguities: "I no have roots in Australia... but I try!" At first I thought it was odd when one of the actors kept making snide remarks about Mark Mitchell (Con the Fruiterer from the Comedy Company). But it makes sense. When an Aussie makes jokes about migrants the contract between "wogs" themselves is broken. He's funny, but he's just another "skip" poking superior fun at foreigners.

Whether you think the "Wogs" shows are funny or not, the emergence of this kind of humour tells us more about the dynamics of real life in Australia than "Crocodile Dundee" can ever do.

— Mark Malcott

## BOOKS

### Football's bloody ballet

THE DAY a monster ruckman rearranged my ribs during a school footy game was the day my career in the physically more egalitarian game of hockey began.

But the attractions of Australian rules football remained, as they have for the people who contributed articles to *The Great-*

est Game.

They celebrate the athleticism, skill, spectacle, excitement, passion, grace and humour of the game. They honour the physical side too, but we're reminded that under competitive pressures it can lead to violence. One writer sums up the game as "ballet with blood".

The ugly side of football has worsened since the money-changers stormed the temple of Aussie Rules, to promote violence on the screen, and to set in concrete the equation: success = financial survival = big sponsorship — which means winning at all costs.

It doesn't have to be like this: black footballer Sid Jackson says that in Aboriginal football, the emphasis is on playing to play, not to win. Enjoyment matters.

White footballers who play for enjoyment are outcast. Former Carlton player Brent Crosswell movingly recalls how the "gentleness and purity of heart" of the young "Vinnie Cohear" meant he was "never going to make it" with Carlton. He lacked a bit of "mongrel" a bit of "dirt".

Coaches are opposed to players having sex before the game. It makes them "languid, reflective, genial" says Crosswell, and these aren't good attributes for winning premierships, sponsorships, and profits for brewery owners.

The book slams beer bosses and other who see a quid in footy for turning the game into a razzle-dazzle branch of the entertainment industry, and in the process committing such depredations as uprooting inner-city working class clubs.

The contributors (academics and working class players, women and men) give a varied picture of football as part opiate, part badge of proletarian pride. It's distorted like working class culture generally is under capitalism, but it remains the workers' game.

Not every reader will agree with Oriel Gray's sons, who "regard other codes with tolerant condescension", considering them necessary steps in the ascent of Man" but football remains the "Greatest Game". It will fly higher than today's greatest fly forwards, when the workers who make and love the game can permanently beat off the capitalist sharks who are raiding it.

— Phil Shannon

The Greatest Game, Heinemann, \$29.95 hardback.





# Hirohito: tool of two empires

**DID YOU** detect just a touch of schizophrenia in the Australian reaction to Emperor Hirohito's death?

Labor leaders back in the 1940s like Curtin and Evatt wanted to hang the guy for war crimes, yet Bill Hayden mildly troops off to this month's funeral to pay his respects. Public opinion, as expressed in letters to the editor, is divided between those who hold Hirohito personally responsible for every Japanese war atrocity and those who say, "Forgive and forget, he was only a figurehead."

Those champions of left and right nationalism, John Halpenny and Bruce Ruxton, have found a common audience to play to in denouncing Hirohito to the anti-Japanese gallery.

This obsession with Hirohito's individual guilt has obscured the wider issues and, as a result, Hirohito's real role in history.

**DESPITE** his claimed descent from the Sun Goddess, Hirohito was a constitutional monarch like the British royals, not an absolute one.

His grandfather, Emperor Meiji, had joined with Japan's rising capitalists to overthrow the Shogun, the most powerful of the feudal warlords, in 1868. From then on, the Emperor was part of the capitalist ruling class.

So Hirohito's semi-divine status was tailored to the needs of the Zaibatsu, the big industrial corporations like Mitsubishi, whom Japanese imperialism really served. Hirohito could not unilaterally launch or end the war, though as a leading member of the ruling class he certainly approved the expansion of the Japanese empire.

Hirohito knew what his armies were doing from the start. After Japan invaded northern China in 1931, he got firsthand reports from his uncle, a general at the front. Despite atrocities like the Nanking Massacre, his only criticism was that his generals were not winning quickly enough.

But the West was not inclined to criticize either. While the RSL still smolders today over the whites who died at Changi and on the Burma railway, we hear much less about the ten million Chinese who died at Japanese hands between 1931 and 1945.

Why? Because the emergence of militarism in Japan, and fascism in Germany, Italy and Spain — the response of ruling classes that had missed out in the scramble for empires and were galvanizing their state machines for a campaign of plunder — suited Allied interests in the thirties.



Emperor Hirohito: man of many parts

Germany and Japan seemed poised to strike at Russia, and Franco smashed the Spanish left. Churchill openly admired Mussolini while Menzies praised the "national spirit" of Germany and Italy.

**ONLY** when Japan began to threaten British interests in Asia, and Germany did likewise in Europe, did the Allies suddenly discover that "democracy" had to be defended. Only after the attack on its colonial outpost at Pearl Harbor in 1942 did the US come to the same conclusion.

This "defence of democracy" was a curious thing indeed. Jewish refugees from Germany were barred from most Allied countries, Asian refugees from the Japanese were deported from Australia immediately the war ended.

At the height of the war with Japan, when American bombing of Tokyo killed 120,000 civilians, the great democrats of Washington took a conscious decision not to bomb Hirohito's palace.

A recent ABC documentary revealed two reasons for this decision. One was that injuring Hirohito might stir up the population (as though 120,000 civilian deaths wouldn't).

The other reason made more sense. The US wanted to keep Hirohito alive for the period after the war, as a figure of authority to prevent Japan from collapsing into civil strife (read workers' revolt). The White House had obviously

learned from the First World War, when Russia, Germany and Italy all underwent revolutionary crisis in response to the devastation of war.

America's fears were well-founded. The two years after the war saw the greatest workers' upsurge in Japanese history, culminating in a militant strike wave in 1947.

General Douglas MacArthur, the US commander of the region, spared Hirohito a war trial on condition that he renounce his divinity, and made swift use of the Emperor's new-found common touch. Hirohito, who had never spoken publicly before, toured every one of Japan's 32 provinces appealing for national unity.

With Hirohito's help, MacArthur weathered the storm and, after 1948, allowed the Zaibatsu to re-emerge. Mitsubishi and the rest may have been rivals to American capital, but they were less expensive than running the country on huge injections of aid and less threatening than a fighting workers' movement.

**HIROHITO** was not the only tyrant kept in power by the Allies.

Yoshida Shigeru became Japan's Prime Minister from 1946 to 1954, despite being a staunch part of the military regime during the war, because MacArthur liked his anti-communism. Others of his political comrades were allowed back into power after brief falls



with Alec Kahn

from grace.

Nor was it just the workers of enemy countries who experienced such "liberation." Independence movements that fought alongside the "forces of democracy" got the same treatment.

The French seized back much of Vietnam, creating the divisions that ultimately produced the Vietnam War. The British invaded Greece to restore George II to the throne and put down a revolution led by the communist-led anti-Nazi partisans. And the Dutch tried to size back their colony of Indonesia, with Australia co-operating as a staging post during the four year war; black bans by wharves undermined this collaboration, however.

So while workers in the Allied countries may have believed they were fighting World War Two for democracy, their rulers were fighting for something very different: the continued dominance of one bloc of imperialism over its rivals.

**During his undistinguished career, Hirohito found himself serving both the challengers and then the victors in this struggle. Little wonder that Western capitalist opinion is still not sure what to make of him.**



MacArthur: used Hirohito to hold down the workers

29 MAR 1969  
OF VICTORIA



# HOUSING THE MADNESS OF THE MARKET



**STUDENTS SAY: AXE THE TAX!**

## CAT'S EYE

FRAME-UPS



### Kerry still on charges

THE POLICE frame-up of Maxwell Mmadzivanani, representative in Australia of the Pan Africanist Congress, has collapsed.

Despite the cops jackbooting their way through his home and stripping it bare, they've had to drop charges that he was associated with the fire-bombing of South African and US embassy cars because of a lack of evidence.

However they've continued with trumped-up arson and assault charges against Kerry Browning, another anti-apartheid campaigner, hoping to intimidate political activists in the ACT. The charges carry prison sentences of 5 or more years.

For some time now the police have been demanding more powers. They even ran a candidate in the ACT elections on the law and order issue. Only the cops stand to gain from the fire-bombings — they can frame ac-

tivists and use the bombings to boost their law and order crusade.

The Supreme Court will hear the charges on 17 April. Local anti-apartheid campaigners and others are meeting every second Saturday, 2 pm, in the Left Bank Cafe in Griffith to plan action in support of Kerry.

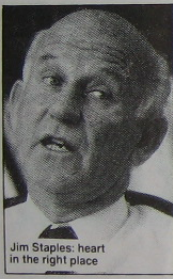
JUDGES



### Staples gunned

UNION militants and lefties have long demanded, "Abolish the bosses' court! And now the bosses' court, the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission has been abolished. Not by workers' struggle, but through being replaced by the new Federal Industrial Tribunal.

Of the existing 44 commissioners, 43 were appointed to the new tribunal. The odd man out was Jim Staples.



Jim Staples: heart in the right place

those of our citizens whose lot falls to be their employees."

Then in 1980 Staples gave wool industry workers pay rises of \$12 to \$15. They were reduced to \$8 on appeal and a 13 week strike ensued. And later still he recognised that "There is no such thing as either a single or a free market for labour in this country ... and never has been since convicts were first paddocked together ... and whipped under the law ..."

Jim Staples was a reformist, who hoped that from his position he could change aspects of society. He said he wanted to "combat stress and relative social deprivation at the bottom end of the earnings scale."

By 1980, the year that he denied wage rises were preventing economic recovery there were calls for his resignation. Because he wouldn't quit and couldn't be sacked, commission President Sir John Moore simply refused to give him any real work. Barry Maddern did the same when he took over from Moore.

Now the government thinks it has found a way to get rid of the one judge who actually embodies the much-touted "judicial independence" of capitalism. Staples comments: "The reputation of the commission as an independent body ... is now at an end."

If so, we're pleased. That reputation was a lie. And the new Tribunal will be a bosses' court, just like the Commission was.

DEMOS



### Blacks rally, Hawke dallies

SEVERAL hundred blacks from around Australia staged a protest at the opening of Parliament on 1 March, along with a small group of white supporters.

They raised three demands: a treaty between black and white Australia, more consultation about the ATISC legislation, and more action about black deaths in custody. And they insisted

Bob Hawke come out and talk to them by 3pm, a deadline later extended to 4pm.

Shorty O'Neill outlined the demands, calling on Hawke to meet his promise to provide resources for consultation among blacks, to work out their requirements for a Treaty. He called for power to be given to Aboriginal legal services nationally to see that justice is done, and the interests of Aborigines protected.

The demonstration ended with the burning of the Australian flag, and with Bob Hawke still unsighted.

CANBERRA



### ALP flops in poll fiasco

TWO DAYS before the ACT local elections 200 students marched against the amalgamation of two tertiary institutions. They chanted:

*Merge the Libs and the ALP not the ANU and CAE!*

The election results suggest that the students' chant was not so unrealistic. Only two parties got a shock. Only 23 percent of electors voted for Labor, while the Libs got a miserable 14 percent. Nearly a quarter voted for parties opposed to self-government.

Labor will have either five or six seats in an assembly of 17, and hopes to form a minority government or coalition with the support of the Residents' Rally (a middle of the road group) and the Fair Elections Coalition (leftish greens). The Liberals are also talking to the smaller groups about coalition. So a Labor-Liberal coalition is not out of the question.

The swing against the major parties does not represent a move to the left. The leader of one group allegedly has links with the neo-Nazi League of Rights.

**DEADLINES for next issue: early deadline: 7 April. Late deadline: 14 April. Send copy to the editor's home address.**

## SOCIALIST ACTION

### Don't miss our Easter school!

AT ROSA'S Bookstore, Brisbane, 50 Baynes St, West End. Tentative program: Friday evening social. Saturday morning: panel on blacks, women, migrants and gays. Saturday afternoon: US blacks. Aboriginal land rights. Sunday morning: why we fight for liberation. Sunday afternoon: ideology and oppression; how to fight back.

## STUDENTS

# Campus revolt stirs memories of 60s

IT'S JUST like campus in the 1960s" said one lecturer at the occupation of the Queensland Uni student union building.

It's not just nostalgia. The struggle against the National Party student executive has awakened a new willingness to fight, and a new social awareness among students.

It all began with the executive's dawn raid on 4ZZZ radio station on 14 December, when thugs illegally evicted the station workers. Student president Victoria Brazil's drive to destroy every progressive organization on campus had begun.

She tried to censor the Orientation Week handbook being prepared by the elected editors of *Semper*, the student newspaper. An alternative O-week handbook appeared, but she tried to force the first edition of *Semper* because it contained damaging criticisms of her leadership.

She then set about turning the Women's Rights area into an "equal opportunities" area where female graduates could start looking for well-paid positions in successful firms. Fighting sexism on campus, volunteer labour for women's hostels, and protecting women from rape were not to be part of the new programs.

Finally she blocked a motion on student council pushing for the affiliation of the Aboriginal and Islanders Committee. The motion would have given black students badly-needed money for campaigns against racism.

To think that at the election, Brazil claimed to be an apolitical moderate!

In response to her actions, students began a petition calling for the executive to resign and for new elections. Constitutionally, we needed 1800 signatures. We got 2400, but she showed her contempt for democracy by claiming the signatures were fraudulent, and refusing to accept the petition.

This led 600 students to rally outside the union building. We decided action was needed, and we occupied the union building on 2 March. Brazil then gathered some support from conservative men in "trough" playgrounds came to the occupation to kick heads. They showed their style by kicking one woman in the face and punching other people.



Cops get stuck into protesting Melbourne Uni students

An organizing meeting the following Monday drew 400 people. Feelings ran high and we decided to occupy again. Despite the efforts of six bouncers from a security firm, students forced their way into the building and confronted Brazil, demanding she resign. Following this occupation, a meeting of 1500 students voted almost unanimously for the resignation of the executive.

Given the way students have been mobilising against the National Party, they're likely to be interested in organising against the voluntary student union bill the Nationals are pushing. A march on parliament might be a good start.

— Patrick Palmer

GRAD TAX



### Boycotts and demos go on

IN THE fight against the tertiary tax, students are showing a lot of determination as the battle enters its third year.

The most active campuses have so far been LaTrobe and Melbourne.

LaTrobe's Education Action Group activists decided to organise a boycott of their Vice-Chancellor's address orientation

week. The response from first-year students was magnificent. 1800 of them, over 90 percent of the audience, walked out of the VC's address to attend an EAG forum on free education.

Melbourne University's EAG organised a boycott of the grading and confronted Brazil, demanding she resign. Following this occupation, a meeting of 1500 students voted almost unanimously for the resignation of the executive.

On 8 March, 200 Melbourne Uni students met and marched to the Admin in an attempt to get the \$40 late fee revoked. The registrar refused to negotiate on the issue, so they decided to occupy the Admin building.

The registrar called the cops onto the campus, and the police came in great numbers with "divvy" vans and mounted units. 37 students were arrested in the course of the resulting battles, and the police were none too gentle about it.

400 student on-lookers demonstrated their anger at the police methods and their solidarity with the occupiers, by forming a human barricade and making it as difficult as possible for the cops to get their divvy vans off campus.

The campaigning is expected to begin in NSW as part of the National Day of Action set for 22 March.

In Canberra in early March, 150 people rallied at the Australian National University, then

marched to the Civic Centre to protest against amalgamation of the ANU with the Canberra CAE and the Institute of the Arts. "No amalgamation on the cheap" was the slogan. The amalgamation if part of Dawkins' restructuring.

Meanwhile the Union of Students, controlled by Labor Party students, have been pursuing a High Court challenge against the HECS legislation.

This is despite the opinion of a leading QC that the chances of winning are very slim.

Socialist Action has obtained a copy of the advice, and it confirms our fears: the QC says that even if the tax aspect of the legislation is thrown out, the up-front fees part could be enacted separately.

He even asked whether his clients politically wanted that scenario.

But it may be just what the ALP wants. They won't get a much revenue from the tax for a long time. Up-front fees would bring their own costs benefits much sooner. The main reason they have gone for a tax to be paid later is that they can argue it's fairer: that graduates with well-paid jobs can afford it.

But wouldn't they be pleased if NUS found a way to get the tax thrown out, while leaving the way clear for up-front fees? Dawkins would cry all the way to the bank.

— Michael Doogan and Jeff Goolhar

## SOCIALIST ACTION

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WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne  
Mondays 7.00  
Lancin ridge  
91 Cardigan St Carlton  
Sydney  
Wednesdays 7.00  
Merry Hill Top floor  
Bridge & George St Cc

Brisbane  
Thursdays 7.00  
50 Baynes St  
West End  
Canberra  
Thursdays 6.00  
Blair Room  
Workers Club, Civic

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OF VICTORIA

# Hawke-ing privatisation, once again

IS THE ALP running scared?

Losing government in NSW was a blow, but it could be blamed on Barry Unsworth's lack of personal appeal.

Then the Cain and Dowling governments just barely scraped back into power. In fact, the VEDC scandal had been exposed before the poll, John Cain would now be enjoying early retirement.

Add in the trade problems besetting the federal government, and complaints by the employers that "micro-reform" in industry is stalled, and Bob Hawke has grounds to be worried.

He brought forward the utterly empty housing summit so he could be seen to be doing something about the crisis in housing. One up to the masses.

Now he has made a second, desperate gesture to the rich and privileged, by reviving the privatisation debate.

It seems like only yesterday that Hawke and Keating were savaging the "ugly, unacceptable word privatisation" when it was first raised by the Liberal Party. Then they began to like the idea, and proposed it at last year's ALP conference.

I bombed, so they used a tried and true means of burying it: appointing a committee. The committee has met only once then, and ALP members probably thought the whole issue was dead.

But as the country's economic problems mount, the Labor

leaders once again look for new policies from their traditional source of inspiration: the ideas of the Liberal Party.

Admittedly, Hawke's proposals are more modest than John Howard's. Howard wants to flog off the two government airlines, the Commonwealth Bank, Aus-sat, OTC, Medibank Private, airport terminals, the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation, the Pipeline Authority, and the Australian National Line.

Thus far, Hawke is just talking about partial privatisation of Qantas and Australian Airlines. But if he gets that, more will surely follow.

**HAWKE says it's the best way to raise new capital for capital-starved airlines.**

Whether this is true is a technical argument. It's more interesting to ask: why are the airlines starved for capital? That answer is that deliberate government policies have made them so. Let's look at the history of Australian Airlines (formerly TAA).

TAA was set up in 1946 to ensure that privately-owned Australian National Airways couldn't monopolise air transport. It turned out to be so profitable and competitive that by 1957 ANA was broke and offered to merge with TAA. So much for the idea that the private sector is more efficient!

In October 1957 Reg Ansett took over ANA, and the government promised to keep a "balance" between the two airlines. TAA was instructed to choose



inferior aircraft, and was forbidden to operate within individual States.

TAA's avenues for raising capital were restricted, and successive governments milked the airline by drawing excessive dividends. From 1960 to 1982 there were no injections of capital into TAA.

Despite these problems, TAA operated efficiently. A study which compared the two airlines found that, once you allow for the advantages Ansett gets from its dominance of short-haul carriage, "the striking feature of the (performance) indicators is their similarity."

If TAA/Australian had a fair go it would be more successful than Ansett. That's why for all their talk of "inefficient" public enterprise, Hawke's business mates would queue up to buy it.

**WE DON'T** imagine there is anything inherently progressive about enterprises run by the capitalist state.

They can be appallingly inefficient, because of the bureaucratic way many of them are run. Ask any rail commuter. Their workers often have poorer pay than the private sector. And the recent public service "reforms" have completely demoralised large numbers of government employees.

But, privatisation will mean more than a change of ownership. It is a means to put new pressures on workers. Job security will be jeopardised, conditions eroded, unions attacked.

Services will only be maintained if they're profitable, and that will be harder for consumers to put pressure on a private sector management.

And it will be a new device for transferring dollars from our pockets into those of the rich. Who, if not working class taxpayers, is going to make up for the revenue the government currently gets from its enterprises?

For these reasons, socialists oppose privatisation. But to oppose it isn't enough.

**IF WE** want to solve the economic problems of this country, a critical look at public enterprise is a good idea.

The main problem with it is that it's run from the top down. Workers get directives designed by far-away idiots, implemented by middle-level hacks. Naturally there's no incentive to perform well.

The people who know best how to run any outfit, public or private, are the workers on the job. Management in both the private and the public sector have tacitly recognised this, and that's why they are introducing "industrial democracy" and "participation" schemes to tap workers' ideas and insights.

But the results have been poor. It heard an academic not long ago talking about a big plant where he'd studied one of these schemes in operation. Because workers didn't have real control over their situation, they either didn't generate many ideas or they couldn't be bothered passing them on. Productivity hardly improved at all.

Only workers' control of industry can really make it efficient. But that opens up the prospect of socialism and the Labor Party, despite occasional disclaimers, is an enemy of socialists.

— Tom O'Lincoln



The Mujahadeen: reactionary politics

# Afghans brace for the next round of fighting

**THE DEPARTURE** of the last Russian troops from Afghanistan marks the final defeat in a war rightly dubbed "Russia's Vietnam". Socialists can greet this defeat with some enthusiasm.

When Moscow sent its troops into Afghanistan in late 1979, it claimed it was representing the interests of the masses against a foreign-inspired counter-revolution. It claimed to be defending peace and progress against tyranny. It announced it had been invited by the Kabul government.

These arguments were a bizarre echo of those used by the United States when it went into Vietnam. And about as credible.

In fact, the Russians were in Afghanistan to prop up the regime against the will of the population, and to defend their imperialist position in Asia. In pursuit of these aims they murdered the President who had supposedly invited them, carried out a vicious repression in the cities, and launched a genocidal war (including the use of napalm) in the countryside.

They have now left behind more than half a million people dead (for the loss of 15,000 Russian troops), including tens of thousands of civilians, four million in exile in Iran and Pakistan, and another four million displaced within Afghanistan itself. This in a population of 18 million.

The economy is in ruins and city dwellers are in danger of starving in great numbers.

The reforming government that the Russian propped up for so long now looks weaker than ever, and most observers think it's on its last legs.

**THE REGIME** to the Kremlin was prepared to kill so ex-

tensively for was initially well-intentioned. In 1978 when the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power in a military coup, Afghanistan was a desperately poor and backward country.

Industry barely existed, the rural economy was very primitive and dominated by feudal landlords and tribal chieftains. Life expectancy was 40 years. Less than 10 percent of people could read or write. Women and ethnic minorities had very few rights.

The PDPA came to power through a military coup in April 1978. They determined to implement a 30 point modernisation program. Its most important decrees introduced reform by breaking up the great estates, abolished money-lending and regulated the size of dowries. Equal rights were declared for all tribes and nationalities.

But the PDPA faced the dilemma of all those who try to reform society from above. Its decrees enraged and terrified the old ruling class and its supporters. And while many of the reforms were popular with ordinary people, the workers and peasants were not actually mobilised to implement them. They looked on, more or less passively, as the government battled with the landlords and money-lenders.

When the religious leaders came out in support of the conservatives, they swung the issue over, and most observers think it's on its last legs.

anistan's provinces were in open revolt.

**RATHER** than trying to win politically, the government resorted to military measures. Air strikes leveled whole villages.

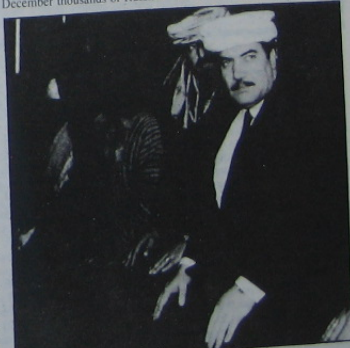
In the meantime, the regime itself was coming to pieces. Factional warfare erupted within the PDPA. Those on the losing side lucky enough not to be murdered were exiled to diplomatic postings in far-away countries.

Finally the Russians stepped in. As early as mid-1979 they had sent 5000 "advisers" who encouraged increased use of military force against dissident villages, and the burning of crops in areas where the rebels had established control. Then in December thousands of Russian

troops entered the country. President Amin was killed, and then accused of being a CIA agent. He was replaced by a more pliable puppet of Moscow, Babrak Karmal. Karmal was later replaced by the current leader, Najibullah.

With the entry of Russian troops, the civil war rapidly became a war of national liberation against the foreign invader. Five cities rose in revolt against the occupying troops in early 1980, only to be crushed.

**BUT** AS the war dragged on and the chances of victory by either side became increasingly remote, the Russians and their puppets attempted a political solution. Throughout 1987 President Najibullah worked for a "national reconciliation"



Najibullah in the mosque: praying for a miracle?



"Let me marry her, Mr Menzies, or I'll do it." In the 1950s, TAA was so successful its competitors wanted to merge with it.

### Jay walks

JAY Pendarvis, the New Right hero who won \$1.4 million damages from the meatworkers' union in the Mudginberri dispute, is not nearly so legal minded about the property rights of others.

He hasn't paid the rent on his Mudginberri station — due monthly in advance to the aboriginal Jabuluka Land Trust — since September last year.

Instead, Pendarvis has legged it to the thoroughbred horse stud in WA. He still makes \$500,000 from Mudginberri in a good month, so he's not exactly broke. The aboriginal owners are looking at legal action to recover the back rent. Wonder if the New Right will rally behind their court case?

### Noah's Aargh!

WE WON'T name the area to protect the guilty but a troop of mounted police was parading through the lanes of an inner suburb in December. An eagle-eyed cop happened to peer over a back fence and see a couple of dreaded marijuana plants!

Time passed. Then two days after Operation Noah the local fuzzi raided the said house and seized the said dreaded weeds. Add one arse to the Noah statistics. Wonder how many more busts the cops saved up to inflate the Noah success story?

### Top secret

REMEMBER how Foreign Minister Gareth Evans got a High Court injunction against Brian Toohy last November, claiming his Eye magazine was about to expose an ASIS agent and impel his life? And how the Eye had already circulated around Parliament the day before with no such story?

That cock-up wasn't enough for Evans, it seems. He decided that William Pinwell, who is co-authoring a book on ASIS with Toohy, must also be kept quiet about the "endangered" agent (who works in Canberra, by the way).

There was just one

catch. Pinwell didn't necessarily know who he was not meant to expose. So a Foreign Affairs funky had to reveal to Pinwell who it was, so that he could then sign an undertaking not to reveal the name! Strange indeed are the demands of "national security".



### Bush wacker

AMERICAN President George Bush has made great play of his war service record as a bomber pilot. He was shot down and claims he delivered his bomb load, told his crew to bail out and turned the plane out to sea to give them more time before jumping himself.

A rear gunner in the plane just 100 yards ahead of Bush's says that at the first sign of being hit Bush leapt to safety, leaving his two crew members to die.

### Lay preachers?

CATHOLIC dioceses across Canada have bought liability insurance to protect themselves from sexual assault charges brought against their clergy. They compare it to doctors' malpractice insurance.



### Drunk as a lord

SEEMS Bill Hayden isn't the only Labor "republican" with the tastes of a Sir John Kerr.

At last month's Parliamentary piss-up farewelling Sir Nimy Stephens, one ALP backbencher got so "tired and emotional" he couldn't even remember his address in Queanbeyan. His frustrated taxi-driver spent two hours exploring the blacklocks in the dead of the night before dumping the Labor lush back at Parliament House in disgust.

We hear Bill Hayden put him up for the night in his spacious Vice-Regal liquor cabinet.

### Fighting words

COMMUNIST Party official Laurie Carmichael these days packs all the punch of a box of wet Kleenex.

The Australian Left Review asked him what should be done to close off the tax loopholes which allowed the Bond Corporation to pay one cent in the dollar tax on \$340 million profit.

I don't think it's as simple as people try to make out ... they not [all] just escape routes. Some of the biggest write-offs are quite legitimate within the terms of the current law, it depends on where your company is domiciled, where the negative income is deposited, and how much you can get away with."



### May we quote you?

"I'VE been trying to create some news for three weeks. I'm not doing a very good job. I wish someone would put me on the air. I wish I knew what my schedule's going to be."

— US Vice President Dan Quayle.

"ALL of them are democratic, but there are degrees of democracy." — Acting assistant US State Secretary William Clark, on which of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and



### CHEAP SHOTS

Thailand democracies are

"WE won't just take anybody who comes along." — Bond University director John Day, explaining why he had less than a quarter of the target of 500 students.

"WHAT are we supposed to do, fight a fire whether we get paid or not? We're responsible to our taxpayers. It will teach them to pay their bills."

— Canadian district councillor Reeve Brown, after a 3-year-old boy died in a fire on Fairford Indian reserve when his fire department ignored the call due to an unpaid bill for previous coverage.

Handbags or sandbags? CAN our Labor champions of "restraint with equity" explain why the Defence Department had just bought \$15,222 worth of women's handbags from Scala leathersgoods?

To hold a few cosmetic cuts that Labor has made to military spending, perhaps?

### FEATURE



Housing groups demand something more than chicken feed.

# Housing: the perils of 'prosperity'

What alternative do socialists propose?

IT IS a bitter irony. Side by side we see the newspaper headlines: the "good news" that construction of new houses is slowing down, and the bad news that tens of thousands of young Australians are homeless.

Capitalism is the only society in history where "too many" homes can be built while people are living on the street.

The picture of homelessness presented by the recent Burdekin report is appalling, especially considering the federal government's obvious lack of interest in doing anything about it.

On conservative estimates, at least 20,000 young people have no place to live. One private consultant says the true figure could be as high as 70,000.

Homeless girls are raped in refuges, and children are forced into muggings and burglary in order to get money for food. Those forced into prostitution run a high risk of AIDS. No wonder, and they die young."

Aborigines are particularly vulnerable. In Perth, one third of homeless young people contacted by social workers were black. Their situation is becoming more desperate as traditional Aboriginal family networks break down, under the impact of the surrounding white society.

The plight of the homeless is only the most glaring aspect of a housing crisis that now grips large sections of society. Young working class families can no longer afford to buy dwellings, or if they can, it means a greater debt burden. Caught between soaring house prices and falling wages, workers

have seen the "Australian dream" turn into a nightmare.

And this in the midst of — indeed because of — a housing boom!

### WHY DID the housing industry become overheated?

The cycle of booms and busts is typical of capitalism. The housing upturn of the past couple of years has been part of the stronger economic growth, which is putting class pressure on Paul Keating's budget strategy.

But it also has its own special features. The previous housing downturn, brought on by rising interest rates and the fall in living standards in 1986, created "pent up" demand. There were people who needed homes, but they held back because of their demand. Then in the second half of 1987 several factors came together to spark a new upturn.

Interest rates began to fall, dipping below 14 percent in early 1988. This allowed the "pent up" demand to break through. In itself the fall in rates might have been a good development, allowing more workers to buy homes. But unfortunately an array of parasites was quick to take advantage of the situation.

Under heavy pressure from the real estate lobby, Paul Keating brought back full-scale "negative gearing" in September 1987.

This is a tax dodge that allows landlords to write off losses against other income.

Then in October 1987 came the stock exchange crash. A wave of investors took their money out of shares and put it into real estate.

Money poured into property. Prices be-

gan to soar, starting with existing properties. As the price of older houses rose, people were pushed into the new housing market, and the demand for land pushed lot prices up. First home buyers discovered that the housing "prosperity" was rapidly forcing them out of the market.

But the boom continued because there were plenty of investors ready to take their place. They bought cheap houses and flats, renovated them, and let them out at higher rents. Unable to buy a home, working class people now found it harder to rent one.

Meanwhile, middle and upper class people now affluent under the Hawke-Keating regime, kept the demand strong for more luxurious dwellings, and this helped to pull prices up at all levels of the market.

### THE BOOM has been hottest in Sydney.

For this there are many factors, including the arrival of foreign money following the 1985 fall in the dollar, and the impact of rising immigration. Both of these have been felt most in Sydney. But far more important is the desperate shortage of land.

Caught between the sea to the east and the Blue Mountains to the west, Sydney is running out of suitably located land for housing. The dizzying rise the city has seen in dwelling prices is above all an increase in land values, spurred on by speculators as the boom has become overheated.

The problem can only be solved by intelligent planning. The Greiner government has been addressing the planning issues, claims to be pushing its "urban consolidation" policy. That means encouraging higher-density housing in inner and middle

FROM PAGE 5

### Afghans

an increasingly right-wing platform.

The land reform process was restricted and the government made overtures to right wing forces including the former king. The family was declared to be the basis of society. The "sacred religion" of Islam was to be observed, and Najibullah himself posed as a good Muslim.

None of this could offset the government's subservience to the Russian masters, and the resistance (the Mujahideen) have rejected offers of a share in government.

Whatever the final military

outcome, the sufferings of the Afghan people are far from over. The recent national council of the Mujahideen revealed how deeply divided the movement is. The opposition is a jumble of religious differences, conflicting foreign loyalties, ethnic antagonisms.

The council quickly collapsed into squabbling factions and boycotts, and only barely managed to agree on a president and prime minister for its government in exile.

A new civil war after — or even before — the fall of the Kabul regime, is entirely possible.

Even if the Mujahideen can paper over their differences, they won't govern as effectively as they have fought. They share a

nostalgia for the old days, but this just puts them on a collision course with today's social realities.

After 10 years of war, the country is no longer a sleepy feudal backwater. It is not at all clear that the Afghan people will just accept the reimposition of the landlords, moneylenders and clerics to their old positions of power. Or that women and ethnic minorities will accept their old, subordinate place in society.

We welcome the military defeat of the Russians, because we believe the Afghan have to decide their own destiny without outside interference. The workers of Poland and other Eastern European countries are already reaping the benefits, as they raise demands for change

without having to worry so much about the Russian tanks rolling in. Gorbachev will think three times before invading another country.

But that doesn't mean we have any sympathy for the reactionary politics of the Mujahideen. On the contrary, Socialist workers and peasants into the arms of reactionary leaders, a credible progressive alternative to them can finally emerge.

Graham Willit

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INTERNATIONAL

**E**ASTERN Europe is exchanging fast.

In Hungary a government-appointed committee declares that the 1956 insurgency was a genuine popular uprising, rather than a fascist putsch, as the regime's traditional mythology has it. Multi-party elections are proposed (within certain limits).

In Poland, General Jaruzelski holds talks with Lech Walesa, and the government comes out and admits that the notorious World War 2 massacre at Katyn was committed by the Russians and not (as long claimed) by the Nazis.

Yet while the political reforms go ahead, the economic situation gets more desperate. Hungary's leaders announced the new line on 1956 at the same time that they warned of rising unemployment. And the Polish bureaucrats hardly bother to hide that they are talking to Solidarity because they themselves have run out of ideas for salvaging the Polish economy.

The economic crisis is the main reason for political reform. The right to say openly what everyone knows is true, a limited choice in elections, these are a small price for the rulers to pay, if workers can be convinced to suffer under austerity policies.

In Poland Lech Walesa and his supporters within Solidarity strike a key position. The strikes of 1988 showed the authorities that the Polish workers class cannot be simply repressed. They still have the confidence and industrial muscle to resist wage cuts and price hikes.

But perhaps they can be persuaded to swallow austerity measures if these are promoted by union leaders they respect. Walesa has begun to play the role of a Simon Crean — or better still, he is like Laurie Carmichael. One-time militant, still with a militant image, now restraining struggles in favour of a deal with the regime.

**I**F ECONOMICS make political reform urgent, then it is events in the USSR which make it possible. In the past, reformers have always feared the threat of a Russian invasion.

But after the Russian defeat in Afghanistan, Gorbachev will be reluctant to invade anyone. Beside, these days the USSR is the very fountain-head of glasnost.

The Soviet Union itself is holding elections, where some voters have a choice of candidates. Some observers greet this as genuine democracy, while others denounce it as a charade. Neither view is quite right.

For the workers, peasants and radical dissidents, the new elec-



Lech Walesa: in a key position

## Eastern bloc: two cheers for glasnost

toral system certainly is a charade.

A third of the seats in the new Congress are reserved for official organisations. These include the Communist Party itself, and also the youth movement, the women's movement and the unions — all of them bureaucratically dominated by the CP.

**WITHIN** these organisations, the rank and file is given little say in choosing candidates. For example, the CP is allotted 100 deputies. And for all Gorbachev's brave talk about the need to have multiple candidates, the Central Committee approved precisely ... 100 candidates!

The Academy of Sciences refused to nominate the hugely popular dissident Andrei Sakharov, even after a thousand Academy members demonstrated in his support.

To stand in a locality you have to be approved by public meetings, and the Soviet press has published numerous stories of how these are manipulated. *Moscow News* published a letter from Saratov, telling how a meeting set for 5 pm was closed to the public because the hall was full by 3.30. The managers of a local factory had busied in supporters for certain candidates early, during working hours.

If someone too radical still slips through, they are then screened by a CP-controlled

committee. No wonder that after all the "democratisation" 82 percent of the candidates turned out to be CP members (compared with only 71 percent in the old Supreme Soviet). As for giving power to the working class workers are 24 percent of the candidates, compared with 35 percent previously.

Yet within the ruling bureaucracy there is a genuine political struggle and the elections are real in that sense. They allow reformers like Boris Yeltsin to battle it out with the conservatives. Gorbachev knows he has to shake up the political system if his economic program is going to get implemented.



Russian shoppers face 'cheerless shops' says Pravda

And that's what really matters. As in Poland and Hungary, it's the economic crisis that drives political reform. Although the regime has managed to squeeze some economic growth out of the system this year, it's all happening far too slowly.

**S**OVIET FIGURES show 5 percent growth last year, Western estimates say 2 percent.

Soviet figures aren't faked, but there is a built in tendency to exaggerate growth a bit, so let's assume growth was 4 percent. That would be about the same as the USA. But it's far from enough after years of stagnation. And it brings new problems with it.

As in the USA, the growth is associated with a budget deficit. But unlike the States, Moscow hasn't funded the deficit with foreign borrowings. Instead, the regime has printed money, with inflationary consequences.

As in the USA, the growth is associated with a budget deficit. But unlike America, Moscow hasn't funded the deficit with foreign borrowings. Instead, the regime has printed money, with inflationary consequences.

To cope with inflation, the Kremlin is falling back on price controls. But such methods only lead to shortages and queues. *Pravda* summed up the overall situation:

*"Cheerless shops, a rationing system in many regions of the country, one-third of the harvest rotting, these are the realities."*

In Russia directly, and in eastern Europe indirectly, Gorbachev has allowed a public debate to open up on the future of the "socialist" countries. He must be worried about what will happen if he is shown to have no answers.

— Tom O'Lincoln

NSW POLITICS

## Greiner's Green paper: gruesome prospects



Randwick. But the Prince of Wales has no room to accommodate these services. Prince Henry has large specialist units covering neurology, spinal injuries, cardiology and AIDS. The Prince of Wales could only make room for them by bulldozing adjoining suburbs.

**THE GREINER** government's Green Paper is a step towards radically altering the Industrial Relations system, and smashing militant unionism.

They sought to pave the way with the Essential Services Act, but protest strikes before the enactment of the law pushed up strike figures. The Liberals were in the dog house with some employers, at a time when the electorate was angry about cuts in public services.

So in the second half of 1988 the government backed off a bit. A series of long lunches between Industrial Relations Minister John Fahey and Labour Council chiefs John MacBean and Michael Easson resulted in a more laid back, collaborative style.

In the mean time, Greiner had appointed professor John Niland to write a Green Paper on industrial relations. His report was tabled in parliament on 3 March, 1989. The Liberals now intend to draft a new Industrial Relations Act towards the end of the year.

The government originally wanted the existing Industrial Commission and Conciliation Commissions disbanded and their powers, in altered form, given to a special arm of the Supreme Court. The idea was to shake up the "industrial relations club" — the chummy relationship between the Commissions and the union bureaucrats.

Niland's Green Paper has given Greiner a fair amount of what he wanted.

It calls for a decentralised system of industrial relations and a changed Commission. Lawful and unlawful industrial action are defined more clearly, and sanctions against "illegal" militancy are stepped up. The paper recommends a category of conscientious objector membership, so as to break up closed shops in some industries and erode preferential employment of unionists in others.

It also calls for extended use of secret ballots.

Greiner didn't get his way over the altered Industrial Commission, which will remain separate from the Supreme Court. But positions on it are up for grabs, and existing commissioners are not assured of getting back their jobs. Especially not Commissioner Macken, who

failed to deliver Greiner's cost cutting work practice change in TAFE colleges.

Niland's recommendations are in line with the direction of similar reviews in other states and in the Federal sphere. They call for awards to be broadly framed at industry level. Awards and agreements would then be fleshed out at enterprise level, in cosy round-table discussions between bosses and workers, with the Commission being called in if both parties wish.

Weaker unions would no longer benefit from gains made by those with greater muscle. Workers with different awards and agreements would be easy to divide and rule.

The Green Paper distinguishes two types of union action. "Interest" disputes are those which are part of the process of establishing new awards and agreements, and they're categorised as lawful. "Rights" disputes are those occurring during the life of an award or agreement, and these are described as unlawful.

The new style Commission would decide which category your dispute fits into. If they say it's unlawful, they could impose fines of up to \$10,000 a day, or deregister your union more easily than before.

This is a change from the existing legislation which, in effect, makes all strikes illegal but

is actually unworkable. The new distinction between interest and rights disputes is being hailed by the media as "realistic" because union officials will be agreeable to suppressing disputes that violate the guidelines.

The key question, of course, is whether the union membership will be so easily controlled.

— Dorothy Morgan

SYDNEY



### Politicians: a health hazard

**NSW HEALTH** Minister Collins recently announced that the Prince Henry Hospital is to close. There are two reasons for this: the official and the unofficial.

Officially the government says it's a matter of necessary cost cutting. And this is one of their objectives. But unofficially the government is also out to make a killing on the property market.

If Prince Henry Hospital is closed, it will mean a massive cutback in health services for the working class suburbs of southwestern Sydney.

Health Minister Collins promises that all of Prince Henry's facilities will be transferred to the Prince of Wales Hospital, about 10 kms away.

— Eric Petersen



Teachers rally against Greiner in 1988: more action will be needed.

**T**HE JANUARY blow-out of the current account deficit to a whopping \$1,537 billion has brought the usual calls for wage cuts.

Ever since Paul Keating's "banana republic" scare of 1986, the country's trade problems have been a favorite pretext for everyone — from the Prime Minister through the ACTU leaders to the Confederation of Australian industry — who wants to hold our living standards down.

Of course, we have to oppose these calls. But to do so effectively, we have to understand why Australia's trade position is the source of so many problems.

From 1984 to 1986, the world market prices of this country's exports fell compared with the price of imports. In economists' jargon, there was a "deterioration in our terms of trade."

More wool, coal, wheat and iron ore may have been going out of the country, but Australian exporters were getting less foreign exchange in return. And meanwhile the bill for our imports continued to rise.

The result? More money paid for imports than was received for exports: a balance of trade deficit. At the same time there was a deficit in the trade of "invisibles" — payments for transport services, travel, interest, profits and dividends. The two types of flow, taken together, make up the balance on current account. So this too was in deficit.

**T**HIS WASN'T something new. Historically, Australia has run more current account deficits than surpluses.

How does Australia pay for the shortfall? Through compensating flows of money into Australia, in the form of investments, loans and grants.

After 1986 the terms of trade improved in a commodity price boom. World prices for wool, wheat and many metals have been high. The improvement moderated the current account deficit, but it didn't eliminate it. The reason, strangely enough, lies in the economic recovery of recent years.

During 1988 the economy grew fairly rapidly. But the small Australian economy was unable to meet all the demands of expanding industries.

Economic growth encouraged investment. Much of the machinery and equipment needed for increased production had to be imported. So did many ingredients, raw materials or components used in producing goods for sale.

The government and its business



Tell Mr Keating I'm still waiting for the trade picture to improve...

## Behind the balance of trade disaster

ness mates point to the current account problems and say: "Australians are living beyond their means. We will have to tighten our belts, import and consume less, and export more." That means wage cuts.

**WE MIGHT** say: who cares if there's a current account deficit, as long as a flow of capital into the country keeps us afloat? But the present capital account surplus can't be relied on to continue indefinitely.

It largely depends on foreign governments, corporations and financiers being prepared to invest here, and lend money to Australian bosses and governments. If they start having doubts about whether the Australian economy can keep growing, they will demand higher interest rates for any further investments.

But rising interest rates make it more expensive for local capitalists to borrow for investment. They'll slow or stop their expansion programs. If foreign investors see this happening, they will stop transferring funds into Australia.

If capital inflow stopped, much of the country would cease to operate.

The government has tried to slow the economy and reduce

imports by "snugging up" interest rates. This is a risky business. First, because it runs the risk of choking growth off entirely. Second, because higher interest rates draw in short term capital, and this pushes up the value of the Australian dollar.

With the dollar valued fairly high, imports are cheaper. So more people buy more of them. By the same logic, Australian exports are dearer overseas, so they're harder to sell. As a result, the trade picture can worsen rapidly. It's one of the classic contradictions of capitalism.

**THERE IS** another way capitalist governments can slow an economy down: cuts in government spending or increases in taxes.

But neither of these is an attractive option in an election year. Keating has promised tax cuts, and will find it hard to weasel out.

So the only "policy instrument" that remains is holding down wages. If wages fall, more of what workers produce will be available for investment. If it goes into producing exports it can improve the trade picture. Though even here, the improve-

ment may be slowed by the fact that many investment goods have to be imported before the exports come off the production line.

If our main concern were to make Australian capitalism work better, wage cuts might make sense. And this is just how a former leftist like Laurie Carmichael has got to the point where he's constantly advocating "wage restraint".

But our concern is the interests of the working class, both in Australia and overseas. And experiences teaches us that after over a decade of "restraint" and after six years of capitalist economic recovery, workers in Australia are really no better off. Unemployment has fallen, though it's still at historically high levels. And real wages have never recovered.

Meanwhile, executive salaries are soaring.

And now a new economic crisis seems to be on the horizon. Our rulers, with the help of the ALP and ACTU, made us pay dearly for the last one. It would be a tragedy if the Australian working class was prepared to accept further attacks without fighting back.

— Rick Kuhn

## Cupid, draw back your bow ...

**L**OVE AND sex play quite a role in furthering human fulfillment — or lousing it up. So socialists often discuss it.

For Rosa Luxemburg love "turns the world around us into a glittering fairy tale, and releases in us what is most noble and beautiful ... It lets one live in rapture and ecstasy."

Alexandra Kollantai honoured sex, which she called the "ultimate accord of complex, spiritual feelings."

But neither was blind to the way love can be soured by emotional and physical hurt. They knew the sex in pornography, prostitution and rape is no glittering fairy tale.

Personal relations can be pretty dismal under capitalism.

What Lenin called the "dismal couplings" of prostitution, the plastic pseudo-fun of *Playboy* and the exercise of power through rape are all manifestations of a sick society.

And love doesn't escape either. Ruling class families need their patented blood heirs to pass on wealth. The working class family is there to provide capitalism with a stable environment to breed the workers of the future, and rest and rejuvenate the workers of today.

No wonder women feel oppressed within the family, men desert their wives, and kids can't wait to escape. All the loving relationships are soured under the pressures of society. Yet although the family is a capitalist institution, people stick to it because it keeps at bay what Kollantai called "the darkness of loneliness." The loving relationships may be sour, but they are better than nothing.

**CAN SOCIALISM** do better? A common notion about socialism is that it will do away with private property in love, and replace it with "free love." The watchdogs of the "Moral Majority" jump up and down at any such suggestions, and warn about the dangers of "casual sex."

For love to be free, does sex have to be casual?

The Freudian shrinks say yes: the sex drive is life's motor. You can deny and repress it, but you can't deny it. So you can divert and sublimate it, in six-day bicycle racing for example, but it gets everybody somehow.

Socialists don't think sex ex-



A look at love, sex and socialism

plains everything about human behaviour (like religion or landscape painting), but we would go along with Freud in seeing sex as an essential biological need. If it wasn't, our species would die out.

But unlike other animals, we are not limited to our biological starting points. Sex is for more than procreation. For Lesbians and gay men, it's mostly unrelated to having kids. And unlike the fruit fly, we can choose not to have sex.

The opposite of no sex is lots of it, and that's a prospect to set off our moral watchdogs barking. They rightly fear that a freer attitude to sexuality threatens the traditional family, where women are often treated like property and children have few rights. Since this family situation conditions people to accept the

authoritarian conditions they face at work, a threat to it is a threat to the system.

Of course, most of the wowers don't put it this way. They warn of another danger: that in a world of free love, that as meaningless as drinking a glass of water" (as a young woman in one of Kollantai's novels put it).

**OTHER** critics have traditionally warned that in a socialist society, women would be "nationalised".

This fear only reflects the capitalist attitude to women. As Marx once put it, the bourgeois means the means of production here will be nationalised, and since he sees his wife as an instrument of production, he thinks she'll be

seized too.

But socialists want to end a situation where women are treated as means of production, and where too many sexual experiences are already about as satisfying as a glass of water.

The 1917 Russian revolution made divorce freely available, lowered the age of consent, legalised abortions and made them free. Homosexuality was decriminalised.

The aim was a society, as Engels put it, of men who have never known what it is to "buy a woman's surrender with money of any other instrument of power" and women who have never known what it is to "give themselves to a man for other than real love, or refuse to do for fear of economic consequences."

Under Stalin the revolution was destroyed. Stalin and his successors created a new type of puritanical society, where the family and monogamy were a rigidly enforced norm.

**OUR STRUGGLE** for socialism is for a world very different to that of either Fred Nile or his counterparts in the Kremlin. A world where love and sex are truly free.

Women will no longer be re-stereotyped as passive creatures of the emotions, whose lot in life is to attract men (rather than work creatively alongside them) and find fulfillment only in home life and babies.

Men will be better off too. No one will face the pressures that destroyed Ernest Hemingway, for example. Hemingway was "all man". He fought in every available war, and shot everything that moved through the length and breadth of Africa. But he so feared impotence that when he lost his virility at 62, he shot himself.

Lesbian and gay relations will be a normal part of life, and probably a lot of people will be bisexual. Jealousy and unrequited love will not disappear. But petty jealousy and all the stupid barriers to love that we face today can be eliminated.

Kollantai saw socialism as opening up the "diversion, poetry, light" of love and sex. This has been part of the perspective of every mass socialist movement. The abolition of capitalism can make that a reality.

Love, sex and socialism — it promises to be quite arousing.

— Phil Shannon



# Why Chifley put the boot in

THEY CALLED him "Boots-and-all" Chifley. But the famous Labor leader didn't get his name fighting the bosses, or even for his role in the Second World War.

He earned it by swearing to fight the workers and their unions "boots and all" during the 1949 coal strike.

This seven-week strike was a decisive struggle between the ALP leaders, who wanted to tie workers to arbitration, and the Communist and other union militants, who argued workers could only make gains through direct industrial action.

The coal miners were the most militant workers in Australia, with a long history of struggle against their dangerous conditions of work. The Miners' Federation called the strike in support of claims for long service leave, a 35 hour week, a wage rise and better pit facilities.

Chifley hit them hard. He banned the use of strike support money, earning the name "baby stave". Eight union officials were jailed for up to a year for refusing to say where the union's funds had gone.

The ALP leaders charged that the strike was a Communist conspiracy directed from overseas. One of the miners asked: "Of course we've got Comos among our leaders. But they don't do much unless they get the men's support."

The 23,000 miners remained solid until Chifley sent 1400 armed troops into the open-cut mines to mine coal under heavy police protection.

Ironically, the ALP had been formed partly by trade unionists in the 1890s who wanted to stop the use of government troops against strikers. Now a Labor government used them itself.

**BEN CHIFLEY** claimed to have a grand vision for the Labor Party:

"I try to think of our Labour Movement, not as putting an extra shapance into somebody's pocket or making somebody Prime Minister or Premier, but as a Movement bringing something better to the people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of the people. We have a great objective — our light on the hill."

The vision was one of improving capitalism. Unfortunately, as always, accepting capitalism



Miners strike in 1949: Labor sent in the army

mean behaving according to its economic logic.

Throughout their years in power in the 1940s, Labor kept tight control of the economy to balance the books and contain inflation. They enforced austerity, pegging wages and rationing food and petrol. They pushed productivity, incentives, training and modernisation.

Until 1946 they claimed it was all part of the war effort, but when the war ended the austerity continued. Chifley and the State Labor governments battled to hold wages down until they were beaten by massive metal workers' strikes in Victoria and Queensland.

During the postwar years Chifley also allowed the creation within the Labor Party of Santamaria's "Industrial Groups" — anti-Communist cells who systematically witch-hunted leftists of all shades within the party and the unions. They later formed the basis of the Democratic Labor Party.

The Labor Party began ex-



Ben Chifley: no socialist

pelling people on the grounds of alleged communist sympathies, and proscribed the leftist New Housewives Association and the Australia-Russia Society. In this way Chifley's ALP helped lay the basis for Ben Menzies' later attempt to outlaw the Communist Party.

His government also had the dubious distinction of establishing ASIO.

**CHIFLEY** had a reputation as a socialist, but he never questioned the virtues of private enterprise.

He believed the government should only get involved if it was for the overall good of the bosses and their system. He planned public investment to provide facilities like the Snowy River electricity scheme, because they benefited private industry. He tried to improve welfare benefits — widows' pensions, maternity schemes, a national health scheme — because it was the most efficient way capitalism could manage these social problems.

He also tried to nationalise the banks. But a closer look at his actions shows how limited his objectives were. Bank nationalisation was a long-standing party policy. But Chifley's main aims were to help industry to expand, to balance overseas debts and to protect depositors in the event of another depression. At first he made minor reforms to the banking system, but when these were thrown out by the courts, he decided to nationalise.

He came up against the full power of the Finance industry, the media, and the conservative parties. The newspapers screamed that people's savings were in danger. Hundreds of bank employees were paid to campaign full-time on the issues. Eventually the courts ruled his proposals unconstitutional.

**RATHER** than calling on workers to struggle for the modest reform, Chifley meekly accepted the decision. He would not go in "boots and all" against the capitalist establishment. The "light on the hill" was quietly extinguished.

Having alienated the employers and stabbed trade unionists in the back, Ben Chifley was thrown out in the following election. The ALP was to face 23 years in the wilderness before Gough Whitlam came to power, only to get the same dismal cycle in motion once again.

More recently we have had wage cutting under Bob Hawke, corruption under Neville Wran and Barry Unsworth, hand-outs to the bosses under Brian Burke and John Cain. The "light on the hill" is re-lit only at election time, and "boots and all" attacks on the working class are a way of life for Labor in power.

These experiences should tell us something: if we want to change society, we must fight the bosses through our own strength, and not seek short cuts through parliament.

— Patricia Langenacker

## REVIEWS

UNTIL 1965, black Americans in the South lived under a system of virtual apartheid known as Jim Crow. Their struggle for freedom would be dramatic material enough for dozens of films.

Yet virtually none have been made. *Mississippi Burning* supposedly fills this vacuum.

The film is based on real events, in a small Mississippi town in 1964. Three civil rights workers, one black and two white, disappeared, and the FBI were called in. A massive hunt eventually found their bodies. After a delay of months the sheriff, his deputy and other local figures were convicted under federal legislation for "violation of civil rights".

*Mississippi Burning* presents this as the story of the two FBI agents, one a Washington bureaucrat trained "by the book" (Willem Dafoe) and the other (Gene Hackman), from Mississippi himself, a true "down home" character, rough but folksy.

Willem's methods don't work. Hackman's unorthodox style (such as kidnapping the mayor and threatening to cut off his balls) succeeds. The message seems to be that to protect civil rights you have to abuse them.

I don't know if the FBI did use such methods, but that's irrelevant to a political judgement of this film. It does effectively create the atmosphere of a small southern town of the period — the cadillacs, the bouffant hairstyles, the you-all accents. It does show the poverty and violent treatment of the blacks, and the racism of the whites. But there is a lie on the surface.

Throughout the film, the subjects are the whites and the only good whites the FBI. The blacks are really only part of the period background.

Sure, they are shown to be oppressed — the scenes showing them being beaten up were only too realistic for my taste. But they are almost exclusively shown as victims, essentially passive, suffering and seeking solace in their church. In only one brief, background scene do we see a small demonstration.

Yet 1964 was a time of mass action in Mississippi known as Freedom Summer. Nearly 1000 Northern white civil rights activists set up political workshops called Freedom Schools, and toured the state to encourage black voter registration.

Mississippi Freedom Summer was part of the larger Southern civil rights movement which had started with the Montgomery (Alabama) bus boycott in 1955.



Civil rights workers at a Freedom School: their role is virtually ignored in *Mississippi Burning*

# A scorching tale with the wrong heroes

Tens of thousands of blacks demonstrated, held sit-ins in segregated facilities, challenged school segregation, in active resistance against their centuries old oppression.

Many whites saw their position of power threatened, and retaliated by burning down churches and bombing houses. The Ku Klux Klan was resurrected, and local police used water cannon, dogs and cattle prods on non-violent demonstrators.

*Mississippi Burning* shows us the burnings and lynchings. But it leaves out both the mass struggle and the political context. The murder hunt is carried out in a vacuum. The FBI are made out to be the heroes.

Perhaps that doesn't matter given this show is really a cop movie. There is a Chase. There is Love. Interest. Lots of people get thrown around, crashing into lots of furniture. And the antagonism between the two unwill-

ing partners ends up as Mutual Respect.

If you enjoy cop movies, you might like this one. But if you want to learn about the struggle of American blacks for their freedom, see if you can find the video of the terrific scene shown on TV last year: *Eyes on the Prize*.

That documentary needed none of the heart pounding music of "Mississippi Burning" to move and inspire me.

— Janey Stone

## BOOKS

### Reformers' rocky road

*BLOOD From a Stone* is a valuable book. Andrew Markus has collected letters and documents from the Australian Aborigines League and in-

terspersed them with newspaper cuttings from the 1930s.

These years were a watershed for official policy. Aboriginal spokespersons and some whites urged governments to accept that extinction was not inevitable. By 1934 pressure groups were strong enough to stop a punitive expedition over a police death.

One of many letters to the Minister demands that a planned "Big Game Hunt and study of Native Customs" should not include "willful shooting at natives". The tide was turning. But the League's secretary William Cooper could still quote a prominent parliamentarian publicly advocating genocide and a mass murder by police that was sanctioned by a JP and never came to trial.

Most of the League's correspondence was written by Cooper, a determined and eloquent advocate who had seven months regular schooling.

Cooper was born in Irti-jota country, (around Echuca) in 1861. He worked "For a Fair Deal for the Dark Race" the motto of the AAL. His concerns included land rights, citizenship, and equal education (the unwritten rule was that Aborigines never got beyond grade 3, if they got to school at all).

He fought for social security benefits, the right to be given a reason for expulsion from a reserve, and an end to the sale, murder and abduction of women and children. And he condemned the Stage legislation that required Aborigines to have a permit to visit Perth, required a licence to work and permission to get married.

Cooper would probably have been embarrassed at the way the book focuses on him personally. You'll have to set this defect right by "thinking black" when you read it.

The effect of the League's petitions and entreaties is hard to gauge. The reader gets the impression that attempts to ameliorate the degrading conditions on the Cumerongra reserve on the withdrawal of rations, abuse. Most of Cooper's letters were ignored.

But at a Yarra Bank rally, trade unionists passed motions of support. And the declaration of a Day of Mourning on 26 January, 1938 created a tradition which still inspires the people for whom the AAL fought. Aborigines League was formed.

— Chris Rose

*Blood From a Stone*, Allen and Unwin, \$9.95

# Rushdie: publish and be damned

**YOU HAVE to hand it to the Ayatollah Khomeini.**

His edict to 'kill Salman Rushdie' has done more than Salman Rushdie himself ever could to discredit Islamic fundamentalism in the eyes of the world.

Progressive people will stand fully behind Rushdie's right to parody religious beliefs (which is what the 'blasphemous' *Satanic Verses* really do). They are, after all, only beliefs, unsupported by any halfway respectable proof. While individuals are entitled to hold them, the notion that they must be above satire or criticism is absurd.

Indeed, since most religions claim to advocate 'do as you would be done by' it is hard to see how they can complain about blasphemy. Rushdie has merely insulted the beliefs of fundamentalists the way that religious literature insults the ideas of us rotten non-believers who are destined to fry in hell.

More seriously, Islamic leaders claim that Rushdie is inciting racism by mocking their religion. Yet other religions have been mocked far more brutally — the Judeo-Christian concept of God by Mark Twain's *Letters From The Earth* and the Jewish family by Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, for example — without pogroms ensuing.

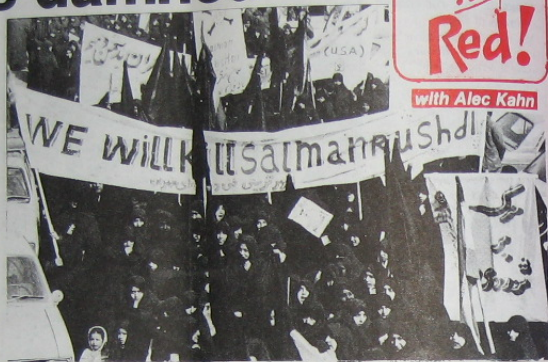
In fact *Satanic Verses* assails real racism just as much as it does Islam. British police and immigration officers get heaps for their treatment of blacks, and Mrs Thatcher appears as 'Mrs Torture'.

Anti-Moslem prejudice has been fuelled by the fundamentalist reaction to the book, not by the book itself. Rushdie made this point himself to Britain's *Socialist Worker*. 'In England,' he observed, 'the most reactionary elements within the Asian community have fed stereotypes present in the most reactionary elements within white society.'

**SO IT IS to Rushdie's credit** that he also condemns the hypocrisy and racism that is behind much of the West's 'detence' of his freedom of speech.

'It's no pleasure to me to be supported by the *Sun* when it's referring to Asians as rats,' he told *Socialist Worker*. 'I'm not on the *Sun*'s side in that. I'd sooner be with the rats.'

Many in the West have used the furor over *Satanic Verses* to portray all Moslems as fanatics. Rushdie went on to refute this racist attitude. 'Anything that is progressive (in the Islamic world) is regarded as Westernised and dismissed. In every Muslim country



Fundamentalists demand Rushdie's death. They're wrong, but our western leaders are hypocritical.

there is a battle by some sections against the veil, arranged marriages etc.'

The real problem is fundamentalism, not Islam specifically. The fundamentalists of other religions would be just as barbaric as Khomeini if they were in power. The Moral Majority in the US bombs abortion clinics and wants women to die in childbirth or backyard operations rather than allow legal terminations. Jewish fundamentalists are spearheading Israel's brutal occupation of the West Bank, citing a biblical promise that Israel would one day occupy the Middle East up to Iraq's Tigris River.

'Ah, but the fundamentalists are not in power in the West,' the holier-than-Islam brigade will respond. But those who are in power have set a pretty strong precedent for the death threats and attacks on free speech against Rushdie.

It was Ronald Reagan, after all, who bombed Tripoli in an attempt to assassinate Gaddafi, while Margaret Thatcher had three

alleged IRA members assassinated in Gibraltar. In the last year alone, Thatcher has tried to censor the BBC, suppress Peter Wright's *Spycatcher*, and jail public servants who make revelations in the public interest.

These same leaders were deafening in their silence while Khomeini butchered left-wing critics in Iran, because that suited them. Read her words closely and you'll find that Thatcher's real objection is merely territorial... that Khomeini is inciting murder on British soil. If Rushdie was in Iran, she would say as little as she has about all the other leftists who have perished there.

**INDEED, the whole outrage in the West at Islamic fundamentalism is starting to look just a little contrived.**

Let's not forget how the US propped up the ghastly General Zia while he introduced 'hardline' Islamic law to Pakistan and closed the shrines of the broader-minded Sufi Moslems.



Seeing  
Red!

with Alec Kahn

And Western imperialism has only itself to blame for developments in Iran. In 1953 the CIA engineered the overthrow of the elected Mossadegh government, which wanted to nationalise the oil industry. It restored to power the Shah, who repressed the left on behalf of the US for 25 years with his hated SAVAK secret police, thus channelling popular opposition behind the reactionary mullahs prior to the 1979 revolution. The West bowed the wind in Iran, and now it is reaping the whirlwind.

While western liberals act very pious about the excesses of Islamic fundamentalism, socialists see religion as an understandable but mostly debilitating response to the misery of poverty, racism and imperialist domination. To quote Marx properly, it is 'the sigh of the heartless world — the opium of the people.'

Religious fundamentalists come to power in the East and not in the West for one reason only. The capitalists of the West overthrew religion with science during their bourgeois revolutions, and have spent the two hundred years since holding the other half of the world in semi-feudalism.

We defend Salman Rushdie because the freedom to criticise religion is vital to breaking humanity from pie-in-the-sky dogma and backwardness.

**But we do not join those who, in the name of opposing Khomeini, boost him by pretending that all of the world's one billion Moslems are like him. Nor can we ever forget that it is the ruling classes of the West, far more than of the East, who have maintained the exploitation that gives Khomeini his following.**

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# SOCIALIST ACTION



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## THE WAGE-TAX CON



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Would you buy a used  
Accord from this man?

CAT'S EVE

SEXPLOITATION

Russia's new  
Pere-sexism

WOMEN ARE already proving to be among the victims of Mikhail Gorbachev's "perestroika".

As the economy is restructured, women are being used as a reserve labour force. When jobs are cut, they are the first to get the sack and it's hard to find new employment.

In the Sunday supplement to *Izvestia* newspaper not long ago, a letter to the editor told of one such experience. Ms T. Volkova wrote:

"I am 49 years old, an experienced engineer, and I got retrenched. Two months I looked for work. Wherever I went, they said straight out to me: 'We're sorry, you're old. And we're cutting back on staff.'"

One way of softening women up for this sort of treatment is to promote "femininity". The same issue of the paper devoted two pages to the "whirlwind of countless beauty contests" all over the USSR, mostly involving professional models. The press

SOCIALIST ACTION

EDITORIAL

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BRISBANE

PO Box 99, St Lucia  
Queensland 4067  
Tel (07) 870 3705

CANBERRA

PO Box 17  
Jamison Centre,  
ACT 2614.

WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne  
Monday, 7.00  
Lincoln Hotel  
91 Castlereagh St. Carlton

Sydney  
Wednesday, 7.00  
Metro Hotel (100 floor),  
Bridge & George St. City

Brisbane  
Thursday, 7.30  
20 Beames St.  
West End

Canberra  
Thursday, 6.00  
Bar Room  
Workers Club, Civic



Russian women: "femininity" won't help an oppressive situation.

agent for one major quest made it clear that women are being displayed as sex objects in order to promote commercialism in Soviet life.

"Why wait until we have proper standards of women's shoes, clothes, cosmetics — in a word, women's needs and interests — when we can use annual beauty contests organised by professionalists to finally provide in our country a Beauty Industry in all its facets?"

The Kremlin may find Russian women are prepared to fight for a few needs beyond fashions and cosmetics. As for us, we tend to sympathise with the woman who wrote in to say:

"We need this kind of promotion. What we need is more quality produce in our shop counters. And you can't send these models out to the farms — the cows will run away!"

PRISONS

Screws stir  
up trouble

OLD GUARD prison officers in Brisbane's Boggo Road jail are trying to stir up trouble to justify heavy security and undermine the few reforms made by the new Commission.

On 7 April, several prisoners were savagely beaten up. One Aboriginal prisoner, Michael Pearson, was savagely bashed around the head by five screws and suffered partial loss of sight in one eye. He was not allowed to see a doctor for 15 hours. All

the nuclear angle — he wants a uranium enrichment plant for the Northern Territory. And the government is cynically using people's fears for the environment when it calls for a "controlled liberalisation" of the ALP's current "three mines policy" which restricts uranium extraction to Ranger, Nabarlek and Roxby Downs.

Primary Industries Minister John Kerr knows that the environmental arguments in favour of nuclear power are crap: he has been circulating scientific papers showing that a doubling of nuclear energy output would reduce Greenhouse warming by only three percent. But he likes the idea of selling that uranium, and thinks the Greenhouse Effect will make it easier.

SCHOOLS

Principal gets  
a caning

SIX students were detained by police at Kedron High School in Brisbane, following a demonstration.

The Principal, a man named Beilby, has been transferred from two schools already, Acacia Ridge and Woodridge. There have been problems for 18 months due to his authoritarian and dogmatic approach, but finally the students have taken a stand.

Lincoln Carson, a star footballer, was told by the PE teacher that he wouldn't be allowed to play in future, because his black shorts were "the wrong fabric". This led about 100 students to call a meeting, then hold a demonstration outside Beilby's office. When he refused to speak to them, they held a sit-in in the library, and he then called the police.

They detained six students, all Aboriginal.

Beilby claims that "a small group of Aboriginal ringleaders were trying to take over a school". The issue has become a racial one because only Aboriginal students were arrested.

Queensland Teachers Union officials seem to have badly misjudged the issue. One official came out saying the union "feelingly and equivocally supported" Beilby. The weight of community feeling, black and white, and the fact that some unionists are taking the issue up seem to be changing their mind.

Parents and students are building a campaign. A meeting of 100 people on 11 April demanded that the suspension of the six students be withdrawn.

John Button is also keen on

the prisoners' injuries otherwise on their backs.

The authorities claimed to be searching for home brew, but none of the assaulted prisoners had any.

Most of the searches and bashings are carried out by the mysterious Special Squad, who often use dogs.

It's unclear whose authority the SS are under, what guidelines they follow, and even whether they are prison officers. They appear for periodic violent searches of the jail and never wear identification.

LABOR GOVT

Greenhouse  
& yellowcake

THE DEATHS and destruction from Cyclone Alvin and the recent rain and floods in eastern Australia have given us a mild foretaste of what the Greenhouse Effect has in store for us.

In order to be seen to be doing something, Bob Hawke has announced he's providing \$8 million for research into the subject. You can tell an election is getting close, and the environmental votes are being counted: he knocked back a request for \$1 million last year.

There's another motive, too. Hawke expects the research to highlight the environmental disasters being caused by the increase of fossil fuels, and he thinks that will set the stage for promoting nuclear energy as an alternative.

John Button is also keen on

COVER STORY

Who'd trust a Keating bearing gifts?

AFTER "bringing home the bacon" last year, Paul Keating offered us a handful of pork rinds in April.

There was no giving we could wriggle out of via his tax cuts. But he could console himself that he's gouged far more out of us through "bracket creep" over the past six years.

With traditional Labor voters deserting them in droves, Hawke and Keating had to hand out a few crumbs in the welfare area. But he managed to combine them with some cruel attacks.

The DSS "work test" will be tightened up. And the definition of "de facto" relationships will be tightened, to the point where if you and another person have lived together at a previous address or if you have joint assets or liabilities you can be deprived of sole parent benefits.

With skills so short in key areas that the unions could easily win pay rises of 15 or 20 percent, the government had no choice but to offer the ACTU a 6.5 percent wage increase. But it'll be phased in. And Keating reminded us that it's the ALP who's keeping the rise as small as possible.

The employers, he said, were almost besting the ACTU wanting to hand out money to workers. Thank heaven the Treasurer was there!

"You can't run the economy if you don't run wages. The key to this job I do, is that I run wages."

Yes, Paul Keating "runs wages" and that's why ours have fallen so much.



"You'll take what I give you, sleazebags."

Just to reassure the employers the government was still entirely on their side, Keating also announced he was relaxing the government's crackdown on income tax earned in tax havens.

PERHAPS he needn't have bothered. Almost as he spoke, Transport minister Ralph Willis was demonstrating the government's loyalties in far more dramatic fashion, threatening Sydney air traffic controllers with \$500 a day fines.

200 air traffic controllers in Sydney and Bankstown had imposed overtime bans on 6 April as part of their campaign for a wage rise and better air safety.

The wage demand would simply have made good some of their losses under the Accord.



The demand for better safety through adequate staffing and modern equipment was entirely in the public interest, and far more so than a hundred studies by "safety experts".

For years now the controllers have warned the public that Sydney airport is dangerously overloaded with planes and undersupplied with proper control tower equipment. An accident is waiting to happen, and many controllers have left the industry rather than wait around to be part of it.

It's a very sad thing that the air controllers failed to break through the resistance of the government and their own federal union officials. Overseas experience shows that a defeat for air transport unions (like the American controllers' union PATCO, smashed by Reagan) leads to an erosion of safety standards.

BUT WILLIS clearly thinks it's a low priority compared with maintaining wage controls under the Accord. One source of the Labor government claims that its union-bashing and wage cutting are essential to shore up an economy faced with a looming crisis.

So much for Hawke and Keating's earlier claims that the Accord had been for economic salvation. So much for Finance Minister Walsh's boast only a few months ago that the country had "largely overcome the economic problems inherited by the Hawke government in 1983".

In fact, the government is now trying to balance out an unstable economy, hoping desperately that its strategy will hold together just long enough for it to somehow pick the right moment and stagger through to another election win. They may pull it off, but only because of the Liberals' chronic disunity.

Interest rates are at minus levels because it's the only way foreign financial institutions can be persuaded to keep paying for the country's current account deficit. If working class home-buyers suffer, too bad. In fact, Keating will be pleased because he wants to force down consumer demand.

THE CURRENT situation is a classic example of how capitalism, even when it grows, produces economic contradictions which bring it undone again.

Wage cutting has boosted profits, and recently the employers have finally gained enough confidence to re-invest these profits. The result is a surge in demand for investment goods that has outstripped the domestic economy's ability to supply them. The shortfall is met by imports and — presto! the investment boom brings a trade crisis.

This is that wondrous creature the free market at work — the recipe for prosperity which is currently being promoted by such diverse figures as Margaret Thatcher, Mikhail Gorbachev and Deng Xiao-ping.

The investment surge will bring further problems. It will raise the weight of capital goods within industry compared to human labour — what conventional economists call the "capital-labour ratio" and what Karl Marx called the "organic composition" of capital.

This matters because only living human labour can produce new wealth. As its relative weight within the system deepens, the rate of profit will fall too. The current economic upturn will give way to recession, as has happened over and over again in the history of the capitalist system.

Capitalism is a system of crisis. That is why Labor's original Accord, which claimed to be able to fix what it caused, the capitalist system, was a fraud.

And it's why any future "social contract" offered by any Labor Government should be regarded with contempt by Australian workers.

— Tom O'Lincoln

Week-end school

BRISBANE branch hosted its second annual educational week-end over the Easter break. 35 people attended all or part of our Marxist School, including several members from Sydney and Melbourne. All agreed it was a resounding success.

Activities kicked off Friday night with a party at Rosa's Bookstore. Then we had talks and discussions over the next two days around the theme: 'Oppression: what is it, and how can we fight it?'

We looked at the way capitalism oppresses women, gays and blacks, but the forms of oppression vary with class position. Other sessions on the Saturday focused on education, the media and the family, and the role these institutions play in keep people downtrodden.

However oppressed groups are not just passive victims. Throughout history they have fought back as a talk about the American black liberation movement illustrated.

On Sunday we talked about the centrality of Land Rights in Aboriginal struggles and addressed the history of the Gay Liberation movement.

The final session compared reformist, separatist and socialist strategies to end oppression, and concluded that the struggles by oppressed groups can help build a revolutionary movement to change society.

These Socialist Action educational week-ends are getting better all the time. We're already looking forward to the next one, to be held in or around Sydney over the Queen's Birthday week holiday in June. If you'd like to come along or even offer a talk, get in touch with our Sydney branch.

New pamphlet

OUR LATEST production is *A Soviet Historian Speaks Out*. The pamphlet contains a letter Pravda from a Russian academic, in which he argues that the USSR is not a socialist society.

That's not to say the man shares Socialist Action's politics, but his letter opens up some important issues for anyone following the course of 'perestroika' today.

DEADLINES for next issue: early deadline 12 May, late deadline 19 May.

**SUBSCRIBE to Socialist Action**

STUDENTS

Campuses still bubbling

"DEMOCRACY now!" chanted 300 students occupying the finance offices of the University of Queensland student union on 13 March.

The occupation was the latest action organized by Students for a Democratic Union, to keep the pressure on the National and Liberal controlled student union led by the infamous Victoria Brazil.

As we've reported in the past, this executive illegally attacked radio station 4ZZZ, refused to support free education, attempted to sack the elected editors of our student newspaper, as well as attack women's rights and the Gays and Lesbians on Campus group. They are now supporting a National Party bill designed to cripple the union through abolition of compulsory student unionism in Queensland.

In response to these attacks a petition of over 2200 student signatures was collected. Under the union constitution, this compelled the executive to conduct a referendum on the question of whether to hold new elections. Brazil refused to accept the petition, claiming the signatures to be fraudulent, though without offering any evidence except her own assertions.

Of course the petition is valid. Her tactic is to delay things so new elections aren't called this semester. Then she can claim it is unconstitutional to hold elections in second semester before the end of her term in office.

So the Students for a Democratic Union recognized that due to her stalling tactics, there was only one way to remove her and the executive: for us to immediately resign and call new elections. With that in mind, around 300 students commenced an occupation of the finance office. If finances could be immobilized, the union would grind to a halt. The plan was to remain there until the executive resigned.

But Porter, the registrar, backed Brazil by demanding we end the occupation immediately, or he would call in the police. We overwhelmingly rejected his demand.

At 4:30 pm, 45 police sledge-hammered down the doors we had barricaded, and began arresting students who attempted to stop them entering the building. According to the union secretary, the total damage from the occupation reached \$3000. Either the police wrecked the joint after they dragged us out, or the executive can't be be-



Drumming up support? Students march against the tax.

lieved — we didn't damage anything.

The students then sat in the roadway to block the police vans carrying four students. After a 45 minute delay, and four more arrests, the cops managed to clear a way out.

The occupation was a success even though it was broken up. It breathed life back into a campaign that was losing momentum, and once again put the executive onto the back foot. They have been forced to recognize that the petition is valid.

However it's essential to recognize that Brazil's stalling tactics have been effective: a win in the referendum will only be a moral victory. The only way we can remove her from office is to force her to resign and get new elections this semester. That means more democratically organized direct action like the occupation.

— Tony Mitchell

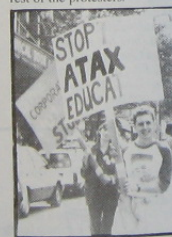
GRAD TAX

A Day of Real Action

YOU HAVE to admire the staying power of the students fighting against the tertiary tax.

4000 from campuses around Melbourne gathered in the City Square on 22 March as part of the national Day of Action.

They resisted efforts by members of the ALP-dominated National Union of Students to divert the demonstration. NUS had planned their own quiet meeting followed by a concert. They were ignored.



The crowd began shouting demands that the charges be dropped, and cops be kept off campus, and resolved to stay there until those inside the building were let out. This last demand was met, leaving the students feeling elated.

In Brisbane 200 students marched from Roma Street Forum to the Education Department, and in Canberra 150 marched from the ANU to Parliament House.

— Helen Rosenberg

ASIA



The scene of the police assault on Hyundai's shipyard.

Cops can't stop these Korean workers

— it was occupied territory. During the occupation period, English will be the official language.

BUT a growing capitalist system creates its own gravediggers. As the Korean economy became one of the fastest growing in the world, a militant new working class came on the scene. Protests by students and intellectuals grew.

THE NEW rulers took over the old imperialist framework: 85 percent of the police forces were inherited from the Japanese colonial occupation. Imperialist rivalries then led to the devastating Korean War, in which over 3 million died.

The 1985 general elections were a turning point. An opposition grouping outpolled the official parties. The military still controlled the presidency but the writing was on the wall.

The country's dictator, General Chun, had to make way for a new face who could promise reform. General Noh Tae-woo. Through fraud and bribery, and divisions among the opposition, Noh managed to win a presidential election in 1987. But the breathing space created by the political liberalisation made it possible for students and workers to take the offensive.

Union organisation began to take off. Although forced to formally work within the government sponsored union federation, workers were creating vehicles of struggle. In June 1987 there were 2722 unions with a million members. One year later there were 4729 unions, with half a million more workers involved. This growth equaled that achieved over the previous forty years.

Producing cheap exports meant low wages. Low wages required cheap food. So food imports were allowed to ruin the peasantry, and the peasants were forced into the cities where they formed new pools of cheap labour.

With the cops attacking them, the government dominated by the military and behind them economic superpowers like Japan and the US, Korean workers should have no illusions that their problems. Already they are devoting a lot of attention to problems of politics and international solidarity.

So the fruits of Korea's economic successes were very unevenly distributed. More than four fifths of labourers were getting wages less than the 'minimum' cost of living, despite a working week of nearly 55 hours.

They'll do a lot more to inspire us in the years to come. — Tom O'Linnon

WHEN POLICE carried out their spectacular assault on the Hyundai shipyard in Ulsan, Korea, it was a new high point in the class warfare that has gripped the country for over a year.

1980s. There were 113 'labour actions' in 1984. This more than doubled to 265 in 1985, reached 276 in 1986, then soared to 3,749 in 1987. Figures for last year aren't available but they'll be higher still.

10,000 cops staged an amphibious assault on the world's largest shipyard on 30 March, only to find that most of the striking workers occupying it had managed to slip away. But the battle was far from over.

The struggles are not just more frequent, they have a different character. In 1980, over 70 percent of all disputes were defensive, largely over demands for unpaid wages. By 1986 this sort of demand accounted for only 17 percent.

Four days later street fighting was still continuing, production still had not resumed almost a week later, and the press reported that "the mood at Hyundai headquarters was gloomy".

Instead workers were demanding a better deal in Korea's booming economy.

KOREA HAS a turbulent history, with most of its troubles coming from outside invaders.

The Hyundai struggle was only the most spectacular in a powerful wave of industrial disputes early this year. The country's Economic Planning Board estimated that in the first quarter of the year, the disputation had cost the bosses US\$2.39 billion in lost production — eleven times higher than the first quarter for 1988.

Modern imperialism arrived on the scene in 1910, when Japan announced a policy of open colonisation. This followed its victory in the Russo-Japanese war. By 1911 there were 15,113 Japanese officers running the country.

This occurred despite fierce repression. On 8 January forty thugs armed with wooden clubs and iron pipes, and wearing masks, raided two meetings of union activists, injuring 23 of them. The raid led to a protest rally of 30,000 workers.

The imperialist presence sparked the first national working class mobilisation, a demonstration on 1 March 1919. Japan reacted with a policy of 'cultural colonisation' which sought to impose Japanese language, art and religion onto the Korean people.

At the end of the Second World War, one form of foreign domination gave way to another, striking underground railway workers less than a month before the battle at Hyundai.

Worker militancy has grown dramatically since the mid-1960s. In the official terms, Korea was not being liberated

### Seven year itch

YAWN — so Bob Hawke has become the 16 millionth Australian to comment on his unfaithfulness to Hazel Wender. If he'll ever shed a tear about his unfaithfulness to the workers who voted for him? Probably after the divorce comes through.



### Selective memories

THE Greensborough by-election has given the Victorian Labor government an undeserved fill.

It was caused by the resignation of Pauline Toner.

Toner's election in 1977 in a by-election was dutifully recounted by the press.

We could be wrong, but none of the media mentioned the industrial situation in Victoria at the time of Toner's election.

When she was bumped into Parliament, the Latrobe Valley power workers were on strike. Electricity was rationed. Lots of workers were laid off.

And yet she won. During a strike. Strange no one wants to remember.

### Only following orders

ORDERS by supervisors, the Nuremberg War

Crimes Tribunal held, are not a defence to a criminal act in war.

But that didn't stop four Israeli soldiers charged with beating a Palestinian to death from calling a General to show that what they were doing was in fact legal.

General Shomron told the military court that orders issued to field commanders justified the soldiers laying into their victim.

"You can beat someone to prevent an incident, disperse a violent demonstration or to stop someone who is resisting arrest," he explained. He admitted, however, it is a matter of opinion who someone stops resisting.

Clubbing to death, we guess, settles the dispute.

### An arm and a leg

IF YOU think the housing crisis here is costing you an arm and a leg — in England, an artificial leg which belonged to wartime flying ace Sir Douglas Bader is being auctioned by his widow so she can move out of a rented farmhouse and buy a home of her own!

### Masking gases

CHEMICALS ARE of course big business. The Pentagon will spend \$624 million on buying new chemical weapons this year.

It will, however, cost them \$179.5 million to destroy obsolete chemical weapons.

### Helping police with their enquiries

DID YOU notice that when 150 cops went berko at that Toowoomba police rugby carnival — gatecrashing hotel lifts, cos, urinating in lifts, punching holes in walls and threatening to frame hotel owners on dope charges — the Queensland government set up two inquiries within a week?

Strange about that — the cops can murder blacks, put the jackboot into leftists and unionists and run corrupt rackets for years before a finger is lifted against them. But abuse the business class (in this case, Toowoomba publicans) and the government is down on them like a ton of bricks.

Can't have dogs who don't know their masters, can we?



### GIMME shelter

ADELAIDE landlords are feeling just a teensy bit embarrassed right now.

The housing group Shelter has got hold of a secret blacklist of over 100 tenants being circulated by the SA Landlords Association. The blacklist has just three faults. First, it's illegal, since tenants no chance to defend themselves. Second, it's inaccurate, since several people on it haven't rented private housing in over 5 years. And third, it's unsubstantiated, since even the Landlords Association secretary, who drew up the list, couldn't tell the ABC program "The Investigators" why some people are on it.

Numerous people on the blacklist have launched defamation actions against the Landlords Association. Looks like the landlords may have to hand out some "rent subsidies" shortly.



### Lousy Housey

BUT LADY Bader needn't have worried if her kids have a shed in the backyard. In answer to a reader's question of whether planning permission was needed to replace a two by five metre wooden shed with a brick structure, the Observer newspaper replied no, unless of course their correspondent intended to put Granny there. Then, the paper explained, "you do need planning permission because you would be altering the use."

### Breath-taking gall

WE REPRINT the following item from Wales' Bristol Evening Post without comment.

"People living near a Bristol factory that handles the controversial chemical lindane say they have been left 'gasping for air' after breathing gases from the site.

"Factory manager Mr Paul Rhodes said that the firm 'was trying to get rid of lindane because it will be banned over the next two years'.

"Mr Rhodes defended the safety of lindane. 'All the 15 chemicals we use are just as bad,' he said."

### On the street where you live

ACCORDING to the British Labour Party, the housing crisis affects us all, whether we have a house or not. One member with a sense of conscience put it so clearly — complaining that a visit to the opera can be spoilt by having to run the gauntlet of those reduced to begging to survive in our affluent society.



## FEATURE

# Greiner: in Labor's footsteps

Our feature looks at recent developments in NSW

THE GREINER election victory last year was a shock to Barrie Unsworth if to no one else: when Barrie faced reporters he could barely string a few words together.

Yet the result wasn't surprising. The Labor machine had been demoralised, its membership declining and its policies barely distinguishable from the Liberals. Its most recent legacy was a string of attacks on unions and living standards, ranging from the mauling of workers' compensation and deregistering the BLF to downgrading of education and health.

So Greiner's ascendancy didn't raise much public interest at first. The election had been fought over the ephemeral issue of "law and order". Yet once in power, the new government set out to offer a new, rightwing alternative to Labor.

The core projects were cutting back and disciplining the public sector, and weakening unions by changing the industrial relations system.

In particular, Greiner needed to tame the large body of government workers. His budget strategy demanded a cut in public sector jobs combined with increased workloads. He began with attacks on teachers and public servants, with electricity and railway workers to follow.

He planned to sell off public assets, and selectively privatise parts of functions of the public service. The government could then use the funds raised this way for electorally popular programs like law and order campaigns, and main roads.

Greiner looked to two reports to set the scene for the changes and help sell them to the public. The Block Report had been commissioned by Labor, and was written by the same David Block whose earlier report paved the way for the "reforms" which have demoralised large sections of the Commonwealth public service.

Block is a fan of Margaret Thatcher. He recommended "letting the managers manage" and Greiner seized eagerly on this point. He put managing director-like heads in charge of autonomous government departments, and gave them responsibility for cutting jobs by 10 percent.

The Liberals also commissioned a state audit under commissioner Curran. The auditors reported in July 1988 that the state was in debt to the tune of \$46 billion. They cited "inefficient" organisations such as State Rail, Elcom, and the State compo board, advised selling assets and suggested taking on contract labour.

Even conservative accountants balked at the Curran commissioner's accounting methods. But the report set the stage for cuts, and made it harder for union militants to convince their colleagues to fight them.

ANOTHER factor making life harder for unionists was the legislation passed



Nick Greiner: a new strategy for the bosses?

through parliament in 1988. By early August, the Essential Services Act was in place.

Like similar legislation brought in under Labor, it provides for forcing strikers back to work. But what's especially ferocious about it is that it widens the definition of essential services, so that almost any militant action can be targeted.

Unions can be deregistered for a minimum of three years for engaging in activities "contrary to the public interest" and government inspectors can seize union property and compel work to be done. This legislation was one of the factors that drove striking Elcom employees back to work in



Barry Unsworth: paved the way

October 1988.

However, confrontation with the unions is not the centre of Greiner's strategy. He appears to have decided on a slightly more sophisticated approach after seeing the strength of protest stoppages against the Act last year. Greiner told a bosses' luncheon in December that use of the Essential Services Act is "less likely to arise" if the government gets the changes it wants in the industrial relations system.

In June 1988, Industrial Relations minister Fahey appointed Professor Niland to produce a Green Paper on industrial production. The government wanted the paper to give them a mandate for increased legal sanctions against strikes, stepping up powers to deregister unions, smashing compulsory unionism and bringing in factory-level awards and agreements.

Nilands delivered a fair amount of what Greiner wanted. But his recommendations are really just part of a wider pattern of industrial relations restructuring which is occurring around the country.

The Green Paper calls for a decentralised system. There is to be a category of conscientious objector to union membership, aimed at breaking up closed shops. There will be greater use of secret ballots.

The Green Paper distinguishes two kinds of union action: "interest" disputes which are part of establishing new awards, and "rights" disputes occurring during the life of an award. The former are lowly, the latter are not. A new style Commission would

### TELECOM

## To hell with sacrifice!

BEFORE the latest ALP/ACTU wage restraint deal could be stitched up, Telecom workers throughout Australia had responded to it with a resounding "no".

"With some members' pay below the poverty line, the proposal offered them not enough money and not soon enough, they decided. Mass meetings in the bigger eastern states voted instead for an alternative motion which rejected the deal as "totally inadequate and pathetic recompense for one of

the most significant award reorganisations in the union's history".

The motion said that current pay rates were too low for workers who have developed, operated, installed and maintained a telecommunications system of world class.

And in a call for action it concluded:

"Unless the government and other parties recognise the above factors and deliver wage increases for award restructuring that are significantly higher. Then a major industrial campaign will be launched."

A NSW member explained his support for a militant stand by saying: "Any doubts about life after restructuring have been dispelled by examples like the

State Electricity Commission, where members took a few dollars only to regret it later when management used the restructuring to their own ends."

In Melbourne state officials and rank and file activists joined forces to oppose the deal, explaining that the unions (ATEA and ATPAO) had lost between 14 and 23 percent in wages between 1982 and 1988. They would now need 16 to 29 percent just to catch up with CPI rises, let alone be paid for increased productivity.

Yet the proposed deal would give a maximum of 12 percent for the lowest paid, and 6 to 8 percent for most.

The meetings reflected considerable organising within the union ranks by opponents of

government wages policy. In Queensland an opposition grouping has been meeting for two years, and putting out a regular newsletter, *Communication Worker*. In NSW rank and file workers and some officials organised leaflets and workplace discussions before the mass meeting.

In Victoria, branch council members have opposed the Accord since it was launched. They moved the alternative motions and have set up a wages campaign committee.

Whether this national vote is the signal for a real struggle around wages remains to be seen. But it's good far once to see a major union tell Crean and Kelly where to get off.

— Liz Ross



## INTERNATIONAL

**R**ESISTANCE to national oppression is hotting up in Eastern Europe and the Russian empire.

The most recent headlines are about Soviet Georgia, where 18 people were killed when soldiers attacked demonstrators, provoking a general strike that shut factories and brought public transport to a halt.

The demonstrators have openly demanded independence from the Moscow regime. In fact this demand has been prominent in Georgia since 20,000 people demonstrated in Tbilisi on 25 February, the day the Red Army entered Georgia in 1921.

That the creation of Soviet power is now looked upon with distaste by Georgians is one more damning commentary on the "socialism" built by Stalin and his successors.

**I**N ANOTHER "socialist" country, Yugoslavia, the agony of Kosovo continues.

The trouble is being provoked by Slobodan Milosevic, leader of the Serbian Communist Party, who has been stirring up Serbian chauvinism for over a year now. Serbs make up eight of the approximately 23 million people of Yugoslavia.

Under Tito, the fear of other nationalities that Serbia would dominate the country led to the creation of two "autonomous provinces" within Serbia: Kosovo and Vojvodina. Most people in Kosovo are ethnic Albanians.

Today Yugoslavia faces an economic crisis. But not all areas are suffering equally. The northern republics of Slovenia and Croatia are more economically viable than Serbia. Kosovo and Macedonia are more depressed.

Per capita income in Kosovo is one third that in Serbia. Serbian Communist Party leaders are worried that poor provinces like Kosovo will ally themselves with the northern republics against the government in Belgrade.

In 1981 a nationalist uprising in Kosovo was crushed by Serbian troops in brutal fighting. But the problem persists. Today the Albanians outnumber Serbs in Kosovo eight to one, and they have a higher birthrate. This has an uneven Serbian chauvinism.

Playing on their fears, Milosevic continues the policy he began midway through last year of sending in thousands of Serbian police and soldiers. Now he has used new legislation to transfer control of the Kosovo police and judiciary over to Serbia.

The rioting which resulted has already led to numerous deaths (over 20 at the time of writing).



Georgian fruit vendor in Tbilisi: where will the national unrest lead?

# National strife: bursting out all over

**B**UT NATIONAL oppression is not the unique preserve of the so-called "socialist" societies.

Consider the predicament of the Turks of Western Thrace, a northern region of Greece. The Greek socialist paper *Workers' Solidarity* recently exposed the appalling situation there.

The Greek state says there is no distinct Turkish minority because other Muslims live in Thrace: Pomaks (Bulgarians) and Gypsies. Nonetheless, because of the similar treatment meted out to them all, especially the youth, a common ethnic consciousness has emerged.

Since 1938 a law says persons of non-Greek extraction who make a journey may be suspected of not wanting to return. Needless to say, it is a local official such as the regional police chief who decides. Such persons can then have their property confiscated.

Turks find it almost impossible to buy land or even repair existing buildings. It is hard for them to get a driver's licence, even harder to get a licence to

operate agricultural machinery.

Their farm land is often expropriated on the pretext that it is needed for a university or airport... which is never built. 500 acres of land in Komotini expropriated to create an industrial zone were redivided a year later among Greeks.

They have the lowest per capita income in Greece, the fewest telephones and televisions, the highest incidence of tuberculosis and the highest infant mortality rate. Basic education is a joke. There are not enough qualified teachers, so Turkish children are illiterate in both Greek and Turkish.

The greatest benefit to the Greek state is that anti-Turkish chauvinism keeps Greek workers tied to their own ruling class. Such sentiments are deliberately manipulated. For example, Turks who are conscripted into the army never get past the rank of corporal because they are seen as "agents of Ankara" (the capital of Turkey).

**M**ARXISTS have always argued that national oppression is built into capitalism.

The ruling class, whether it's the private capitalists of Wall Street or the Kremlin bureaucrats, use national divisions to divert workers' attention from the main source of their problems: economic exploitation.

That doesn't mean we're indifferent to national oppression. We support the right of national minorities to fight for their rights, including their right to secede and set up a separate state. That applies to the Palestinians, the Tibetans, the Basques in Spain... and it applies to the oppressed nationalities in Greece, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

The Soviet constitution, in fact, formally guarantees to its various constituent republics the right to secede. Gorbachev only reveals the hypocrisy of the Soviet system by setting his face against the demands of national minorities.

But as the people of Southern Ireland can testify, national independence doesn't solve all your problems. Capitalism will find new ways to exploit you, and your own local rulers will be the main beneficiaries.

For that reason, all the national ferment currently underway will lead to little good unless it opens the way for people to consider social and economic issues as well.

— Mark Matcott

## INTERNATIONAL

**L**ECH WALESA running for President of Poland?

He might not be planning to do it until 1995, but the fact that it can be discussed shows how rapidly Eastern Europe's government and Solidarity have signed an "anti-crisis" pact. Solidarity is to be legalised and elections to the Polish *Sejm* (parliament) are to be reformed. Like the Gorbachev reforms in the USSR, the changes in Poland are partly a response to economic crisis. But unlike them, they are also being imposed on the regime by pressure from below.

On the surface, General Jaruzelski's willingness in talk is curious. Last year the government had succeeded in riding out two powerful strike waves by workers in May and September. In the latter case, a strike by 3000 miners in Silesia triggered a movement that at its peak involved over 100,000 workers in 20 enterprises.

Significantly, the strike wave only receded after Interior Minister Kiszczak offered the concession of "round table" talks with Solidarity. Lech Waleasa then persuaded reluctant workers around the country to end their strike.

But Waleasa's ability to impose his collaborative style on the workers' movement has diminished over the last few years. This reflects an increasing distrust of Waleasa's politics, as indicated by the continuation of some of the strikes even after he intervened.

**A** NEW radicalism is believed to be growing in the industrial cities of Lodz, Szczecin and Gdansk. At the beginning of the "round table" talks in February, 8000 coal miners at Belchatow struck for higher wages. The Belchatow mine supplies coal to Poland's largest power plant and the strike clearly placed Solidarity negotiators under pressure.

Eventually the strike was abandoned after Solidarity National Executive Commission members persuaded the miners to accept a 2000 zloty increase instead of the 30,000 they were demanding.

The continuation of strike action into 1989 suggested to the government that its old solutions of coercion combined with making local concessions were no longer workable. At the same time, the country's poor economic performance in 1988 had made a mockery of the so-called "second stage" of economic reform.

# "Lech for President" is no solution



Waleasa: accepted no-strike deal

Tax incentives to attract foreign investment and joint private-state ventures are yet to make any impact. And attempts to convince Poles that price rises and wage cuts are in their interest have failed miserably. So Jaruzelski has finally decided to make political concessions that incorporate Solidarity into the reform process.

**T**HIS DECISION caused frictions in the government. The Polish Communist Party is notorious for its internal divisions, dating back to the great upheavals following the rise of Solidarity at the start of the 1980s. In those days, a division between reform and anti-reform factions practically paralyzed the party. After the imposition of martial law in 1982, a third of the party's membership resigned.

The legalization of Solidarity is a good development, but on the whole the reforms look ominous. Decisive political power remains in the party and the military, not in the *Sejm*. Apart from that a presidential position is to be created that will have wide-reaching powers such as the issuing of decrees and parliamentary veto. Contrary to Waleasa's suggestions, the regime will have the numbers to elect the president.

**F**OR THEIR part, Waleasa and the opposition have agreed to accept responsibility for helping reduce the budget deficit, inflation and the foreign debt, and for introducing market competition.

Last May the *Sejm* got the power to close unprofitable plants, order layoffs and block wage rises. Solidarity will now be under enormous pressure to support and implement attacks on the workers.

The deal also includes a statute that Solidarity cannot call strikes until it convenes a congress. The congress is to be held "within a year".

So the Solidarity leadership is compromised and the regime gains credibility for its "democratic" institutions. But Jaruzelski's success is far from assured. It depends on whether he can stave off a conservative backlash within the state bureaucracy, and the ability of Waleasa and the Solidarity leaders to quickly sell the pact to an impoverished and an increasingly sceptical workforce.

The workers are also being offered a left alternative. A section of the old Solidarity leaders such as Andrzej Gwiazdka are opposing the deal. The new Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) is seeking to build rank and file organisations in the workplaces and to promote a genuine socialist perspective.

The "historic" agreement between Jaruzelski and Waleasa may turn out to be just another stage in Poland's on-going class warfare.

— Philip Whitefield



Solidarity rally



**WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

# The continuing battle for child care

THESE childcare workers aren't kidding around.

"It's not just Hazel that Hawke is cheating on, his child care centres!" declared Annie, whose child has been at a council run child care centre for a number of years. She was speaking at a rally organised by the Victorian Child Care Action Group.

The rally was protesting about the new government requirement for parents who want subsidised child care to go to the Department of Social Security for income assessment. Many recently employed parents want nothing to do with Social Security and their long delays. Previously centre managers assessed income. As we go to press six councils are boycotting the new assessment process.

Another issue is that of home based child care. Councils pay parents a pittance to care for children in their own homes. The women have to supply toys and pay for all the extra overheads.

They are classified as independent contractors, and are fighting to be recognised as employees.

Parents and children also came in droves to a march of child care workers and mothercraft nurses later in the week, striking over the indefinite adjournment of their wages claim by the Industrial Relations Commission.

Childcare workers earn between \$272 and \$302 a week. Their claim for a \$59 increase has been with the Commission since July last year.

At the hearing, even before the employers put their case, the commission suspended proceedings on the grounds that the federal Industrial Relations Commission was considering a similar claim for ACTI and NT workers, and that national wage bench was proceeding with the award restructuring case.

The workers were outraged. A union organiser compared their position to that of nurses, declaring that sooner or later the sense of their exploitation will become so clear that they will not put up with being stood on any longer and they will take action."

And take action they did — a stop work meeting, a rally and their first ever strike, with parents' support. Parents often have to wait two to three years before a place is available for their children. Parents want quality child care, and the workers who



Demonstrating for child care in Melbourne

look after their children should be paid quality wages.

Even though places at child care centres have increased they still only cater for 47% of children needing care. The demand for free, 24 hour centres, controlled by staff and parents was first seriously raised by the women's liberation movement in the early seventies. Now that women are 46% of the workforce and over half of women over 15 work, the need is even more immediate.

The demands of 20 years ago were raised at a time when the traditional family — mum, dad, 2 kids and a dog — was more the norm. Today more Australians aged 25 to 29 are living together than are married. Only 36 percent of traditional households are occupied by the nuclear family.

With the changes in the family unit and in work patterns, parents simply cannot be expected to do all the work of child-rearing themselves. Just like universal public education took on a number of the tasks of raising and training school-age children, it is only logical that education should be provided for the under-fives.

Although child care seems a simple demand it is very difficult for capitalism to carry it out. The system still needs the sexist role-models which the family reinforces — women as "home bodies" — to divide the workforce, by channeling women into certain "women's jobs" and convincing workers generally that these jobs are less important.

That's why our rulers keep trying to have two bob each way; they keep talking about child care, then finding ways to restrict it.

The only way to get them to make up their mind is to step up the kind of demonstrations and industrial action we've seen recently.

— Jeff Goldbar

**ABORTION**



## Huge rally in Washington

HALF A million marchers filled the streets of Washington on 9 April to support abortion rights.

It was the biggest rally since the Vietnam war, maybe the biggest in America's history.

A famous Supreme Court decision of 1973 gave women the right to choose abortion. On April 26 this year, the Court began hearing arguments seeking to limit or even overturn that judgement.

The original decision reflected changes in American society. More women had entered the workforce, and were becoming more confident in demanding their rights. Women fighting for freedom for black people and the Vietnamese began to say: what about us?

So America gave the world a new concept: Women's liberation. It was this changing mood that made it possible to demand greater abortion rights.

During the 1970s the country swung back to the right, and in the 1980s Ronald Reagan appointed conservatives to the Supreme Court. There may be enough of them now to turn back the clock.

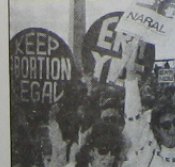
Fortunately, the tide in America has turned once again. There's no major left swing, but polls show most Americans are becoming more progressive in their thinking. The Washington march reflected this.

The demonstrators were aiming in particular to sway the vote of Sandra Day O'Connor, a Reagan appointee who is a critic of the 1973 decision, but may still be a swinging vote.

Though they pretend otherwise, the judges can be swayed by mass protest. One of them, Justice Rehnquist, admitted in a 1986 lecture that judges "go home at night and read the newspapers." They talk to their family and friends about current events."

You can bet they're talking about the events of 9 April.

— Richard Emerson



Rallying for abortion rights in Washington

**SOCIALIST STANDPOINTS**

EVERYONE is middle class in Australia, people sometimes say to us when we mention the class struggle. Or they say: "there are no classes."

In some ways these are reasonable statements. It all depends on what you mean by "class."

If the word conjures up a picture of workers shuffling their feet, tugging their forelocks, and saying "how'd ye be, Squire" as the boss goes by — then there is no class system in Australia.

And if you ask most people "which class do you belong to?" they might say they're middle class.

If you look at the question just as a matter of income, this can easily lead to the conclusion that people on pensions or the dole are "lower class" Alan Bond and Kerry Packer are "upper class" and the rest of us are middle class.

But socialists have an entirely different perspective. There is a sense in which social classes are a necessary part of capitalism. This has to do with relationships at work between people and the resources necessary to produce wealth (the "means of production").

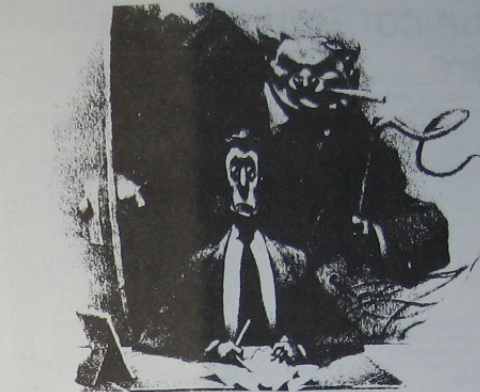
**THE CAPITALIST class is made up of people who own or control the means of production: the factories and offices, the machinery and equipment. Because they control these things, they can get other people to work for them.**

This system also determines the purposes for which production takes place. In a rational society, no one would do work unless it had a useful purpose. In capitalism, the boss doesn't care whether the goods being produced are useful or not. He or she wants a profit.

If useless or harmful goods yield a profit, workers will be hired to produce them. If a cure for AIDS or a better mousetrap is unprofitable, employers will throw their workers out the door before they can produce it.

Workers' place in production influences the rest of their lives. Their incomes are lower than those of most other classes, and their health is worse. They have less access to education, and they get a worse deal in the courts. One study found that 26 percent of professional people against whom offenses were proved had the charges dismissed. Only 4 percent of unskilled workers were so fortunate.

The class system explains the distribution of wealth. One per-

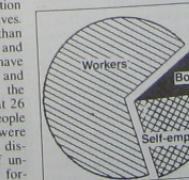


## Our class society

cent of the adult population owns over a fifth of Australia's wealth, the top tenth almost 60 percent. The bottom half own less than 8 percent.

**BOSSES and workers are the two main classes in capitalist society, but not the only ones. There are farmers, rich and poor, and there are the layers of hard-core jobless, derelicts, druggies, prostitutes and crims that socialists refer to as the "lumpenproletariat".**

In between the capitalists and the working class there are also middle classes. The term "capitalist" makes most people think of a top-hatted 19th century caricature. But it applies just as well to the top managers of BHP or Ford, Telecom or VicRail. These people may or may not own shares in the company they run. But together with the other senior managers (and in the public sector, politicians) they control the resources and call the tune.



How the Australian workforce breaks down into classes

They make decisions about levels of employment, investment in new means of production, marketing goods and selling assets. They have the right to change the decisions of their subordinates about day to day operations.

Whereas in Karl Marx's day the big firms were often owned and run by individuals, today the large corporations are typically run by bureaucratic capitalists. In this way, the bureaucrats running industry in Russia and China, where control is centralised in the state machinery, are essentially similar to our own rulers.

The power capitalists have as owners or controllers of means of production explains why they tend to have high incomes and status.

Workers have no control over the means of production. Unlike capitalists who make a living selling goods, workers have nothing to sell but their ability to work. Their role is to follow orders, expanding their labour costs, when the way the boss says, whether this means gutting chickens at Stegless, pressing panels at GMH, or processing deposits at the ANZ bank.

**WORKERS' labour creates society's wealth, including the means of production. But because the bosses have a monopoly of control over the means of production, they can take the lion's share of the wealth.**

The self-employed form a distinct class. Like the bosses they own some capital, but it's not enough to relieve them of the burden of working themselves. They might hire employees, but still work alongside them.

In public and private bureaucracies there is another kind of middle class. Supervisors and forepeople tell you what to do at a given moment, but they don't control the productive process as a whole.

A third kind of middle class is made up of professionals who exercise a lot of control over their work. Lawyers and doctors often fall into this category, as do university and college lecturers. All of these middle class layers can be squeezed in times of capitalist crisis. In fact, because they lack workers' ability to organise and stop production on a mass scale, they can be very badly hit and become quite desperate.

This brings us back to the most important class in our society, the working class. Because of their position at the heart of the productive process, workers have a social power that no other oppressed group possesses.

This makes the working class the key to any strategy for socialism. And it explains why socialists are so concerned about analysing modern society in class terms.

— Rick Kuhn

## WORKING CLASS HISTORY

**T**HE 1912 Brisbane general strike saw some fierce battles between workers and police.

In the main demonstration on "Black Friday" 73-year-old working class activist Emma Miller, leading a group of women, attacked the Police Commissioner on his horse with a hatpin. The Commissioner fell and got a "shaking and painful bruising".

Meanwhile thousands of workers were being savagely attacked by the cops.

Brisbane industry had been shut down in a dispute over tramwaymen's right to attach a union badge to their watch-chains.

**I**N 1904 the tramwaymen had tried to form a union. The tramways were managed by a man named J.S. Badger, known as "Bully Badger".

The workers put forward a log of claims for better wages and conditions, and the right to wear the union badge. The company prohibited the badge.

On 18 January, 1912 the tramwaymen tested the ban. Crowds watched as each defiantly clipped the forbidden badge to his watch chain. Those who didn't were booted. At the Countess Street depot the badge wearers were taken off the trams. Badger gave them the choice of no badge or no job.

To the tune of "The Wearer of the Green" the defiant unionists sang:

"We'll never flinch, or budge an inch, or scab or snoodle or cudge.

"But beat old Bully Badger by wearing 'o' the badge!"

That night 10,000 people joined a mass protest meeting in Market Square (now King George Square).

After Badger refused to negotiate, most of the working population of Brisbane downed tools, and on 30 January the general strike was on. It was run by an Exemption Committee that allowed some essentials to be delivered.

Women were prominent in the strike, and were praised in union bulletins as "excellent picketers". The Worker commented:

"The spirit imparted to the movement by Medarles Miller, Huchart, Bowman, Finney and Peggy and numerous other sterling women workers has added more than sentimental weight to the present fight for unionism."

Realising that the government and police could not protect

# Emma Miller & Brisbane's fighting workers



A contemporary view of "Black Friday".

striking unionists, the strike committee formed its own force of Vigilance Officers. The Police Commissioner did not see the 500 Vigilance Officers as helping his kind of law and order, and the employers and the government became worried.

The government recruited 3000 "specials" from the business and rural communities. Contingents from the landed gentry rode in from Esk, Beaudesert and Lockyer, moving conservatively author Mabel Forrest to celebrate them in verse:

"Quick to help the right to win come the specials riding in. How the women's glad hearts best

all along the cheering street."

Women like Emma Miller, however, were not cheering but organising.

**O**N 2 February, the day after the general strike began,

he walked with a limp ever afterwards.

The women shattered conventional notions about the "weaker sex". The *Toowoomba Chronicle* lamented:

"The amazons associated with the strike societies are stated to have defied police. This may appear heroic, but it was really presuming on the chivalry of the constables."

The ladies of the establishment acted rather differently. The Queensland Women's Electoral League gave their support to "independent workers" (ie. scabs), and praised the Specials, whom they wanted to see become a permanent organisation.

**T**HE FINAL outcome of the struggle was mixed. Justice Higgins of the Federal Arbitration Court declared that the tramwaymen had the right to wear their union badge.

They were also granted increased wages, but this was overturned on appeal. The sacked workers could only gain re-employment on restrictive conditions laid down by Badger.

The strike led to the emergence of a workers' newspaper, the *Daily Standard*, and the strikers came out of the struggle with a new feeling of collective strength.

The Brisbane working class had also gained new insights into the role of the police. One woman wrote in the strike bulletin:

"We now realise the purpose for which the police force exists. It exists to intimidate us, to break our unions and strikes, and help employers to bind and rivet us to the chains of ignominy which they have been carefully forging."

The labour movement honoured its women in the 1912 Labour Day March, by giving Emma Miller pride of place. "Then" reported the worker, "came the banner of the Women Workers with about 200 mothers and daughters of Labour behind it".

In Australia's first general strike, women were among the finest fighters.

— This is a condensed and edited version of an article by Pam Young in the latest issue of *Hecate* (available from PO Box 99, St Lucia 4067, \$5).

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## REVIEWS

**I**AM a Woman Who Wasn't Born Yesterday, so I'm a potential reader of the new magazine *ITA*, recently published by Ita Buttrose for "older women" (over 35).

Ita tells us in her opening issue that the good thing about Not Having Been Born Yesterday is that "we don't have to conform to other people's images of what or how we must be".

So far, so good. But a few sentences later we read this description of ourselves:

"We can be all woman — confident, smart, educated, understanding, determined, successful, ambitious and fun".

So we find that *ITA* is just the same as all other women's magazines. It's about creating an image. In this case it's also about boosting an ego. Ita's.

Her face looks out from the cover with a Mona Lisa smile and a \$5 price tag.

We might have hoped this much announced publication would be different. When Ita says that we "older" women need to be taken seriously she strikes a chord. The first issue was sold out within hours.

But the prospective audience that is "informed and wants to know more than the latest gossip" must be disappointed.

The second front cover shows "the divine Miss Hepburn". Most of the articles are about sex, family, fashion, health, and home pursuits such as cooking and gardening. One or two work related articles talk about women in management or new ideas in office designs. One or two "political" articles are light interviews with light weight politicians.

For the rest there is travel, face lifts and "the joys of the afternoon nap".

Even within its limited world, *ITA* is hypocritical. It's all very well to say there should be no apologies for the signs of age, and to bemoan the lack of "close-ups of sweating brows with wrinkles". Why then the ads for skin cream "especially for those showing the visible signs of premature ageing"?

In this too, *ITA* is like other "women's" magazines. Having created an image ("most of us look pretty good") Buttrose uses it to sell advertising.

The Woman Who Wasn't Born Yesterday isn't always presented as having a good time. I can't resist quoting here the overworked professional with two children who said, "I don't mind having sex with my husband, as long as he doesn't wake me up while he does it".

But really it's a rather ordi-

# New style, old tricks in Ita's mag

nary "women's" magazine. Why then did Bob Hawke launch it? It can't just have been to get the first Honorary Feminist Award.

When the newly created Honorary Feminist says "the imag-



Hawke receives an "Honorary Feminist Award". Is this what today's woman needs?

ination, foresight and determination of women like Ita Buttrose are changing the face and culture of this country" he's probably chasing the women's vote, the current worry of the ALP's electoral analysts. After all, magazine editors are important opinion makers.

Ita's editorial actually gives some acknowledgement to the Women's Liberation Movement. But she seems to think that the struggles we engaged in lead logically to this end: to be "recognised in the United States and Europe" by "publishers, marketers, and retailers — even anyone who wants to expand their market".

If you'd rather expand your consciousness, there are better magazines around.

— Janey Stone

## BOOKS

### Old Commos never die...

AUSTRALIA has not (so far) been a storm centre of socialism.

But since the 1880s there have been women and men who have called themselves socialists and have struggled to do away

and for all, with poverty and injustice.

John Sendy's biography of Ralph Gibson tells about one of them.

Gibson was one of those thousands of people whose horror at the misery caused by the Great Depression of the 1930s made them want to fight back.

Sendy traces his work in the British and Australian Labour Parties, and his growing disillusion as he watched them forcing the burden of the crisis onto the shoulders of those workers who had voted them into power.

In 1932 Gibson turned his back on his well-to-do background and a promising academic career, to join the Communist Party of Australia. For more than 50 years he has argued with the party, despite jailings and assaults, the terrible revelations about Stalin's so-called "socialism" and the resulting splits and decline in the CPA.

During most of this time, Gibson was a full-time worker for the party. He organized the much of the activity among the inter-war years in the movement against war and fascism, and the great strike wave after World

War 2.

He helped edit the Victorian Branch newspaper and was a prolific writer. Many of his books and pamphlets — including his vision of *Socialist Melburne* — are still worth reading.

His greatest skill seems to have been as a public speaker. At the CPA's regular afternoon public meetings in the 1940s, he would hold and move crowds of up to 2000 people.

He worked tirelessly to spread the ideas of socialism, of class struggle, of opposition to war to the working class, knowing that this was the only class that could give these ideas life.

In the end, though, Gibson's vision of socialism and how to achieve it was tragically flawed. As late as 1987 he was still arguing that Stalin had made a "mighty contribution to the advance of humanity despite... grotesque cruelties".

And while he correctly saw that the CPA in the 1970s and 1980s was drifting into reformism, that Stalin had made a contribution to the reformist "traditional" authoritarian party structure of the Stalinist days would stem the tide.

Gibson fought all his life for noble goals, but very different politics will be needed if we are to achieve them.

— Graham Wiltell

# Friedrich: perils of National Safety

**BALD** bearded men all over Australia must have sighed with relief when that manhunt for National Safety Council boss John Friedrich finally ended.

But while Friedrich is now getting his just desserts, his trial and the Government inquiry will focus entirely on the concerns of the ruling class of this country.

The Establishment doesn't like having one of its major banks ripped off for \$100 million, even if it is the nominally "public-owned" bank of Victoria. Nor does it like its security forces again looking like fools, allowing defence access and classified documents to an international con-man who didn't even own a passport.

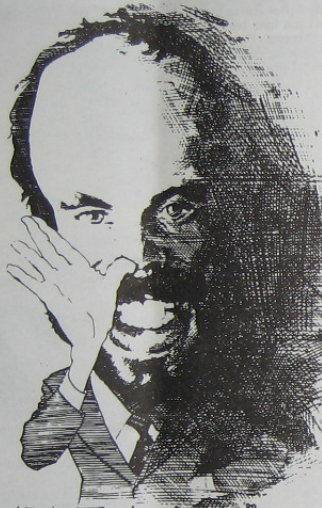
For the rest of us, however, the Friedrich affair raises very different questions.

Once again, we saw the dubious delights of private enterprise in action. In the very week that eight people died in Cyclone Aivu and the eastern states had their worst floods in 15 years, the 450 employees of the best-equipped rescue organisation in the land were being told there was no work for them! Merely because one boss turned out to be an over-ambitious charlatan, the NSCA was dismantled just as a large chunk of the country needed it more desperately than ever.

What this says about private enterprise, and the privatisation schemes of Bob Hawke, is obvious. Friedrich's ransack of a privatised essential service is not the rarity that "free enterprise" apologists would like to make out, even in Australia where such privatisation is limited.

The high-rolling Dr Geoffrey Edelsten left a trail of ruined medical practices behind him on his way to the bankruptcy court, while his mates in private medicine have long plundered the public purse through over-servicing. In privatised education an entire school, MDR Grammar, was deserted in Queensland because its director closed it and did a fill when parents asked too many questions about what he was doing with their fees.

I don't want to suggest that most bosses are corrupt. They don't need to be — the system lets them rip us off with perfect legality. Many more have Friedrich's other fatal flaw: they are just plain incompetent at keeping a business afloat. Even in "good" economic times like the present, 12,000 businesses a year collapse around Australia, according to NSW government figures. Of these failures, 45% are due to "managerial incompetence".



Whether it's a milk bar with one shop assistant or the NSCA with 450 employees, it's the workers who pay for this incompetence. Since the NSCA was based in Sale in country Victoria, hundreds of employees will have to pack up and seek jobs elsewhere, while waiting three months for the receivers to forward money owing to them in holiday pay, etc. In the NSCA's case, the rest of us pay as well, by losing a vital service and by having to make up the State Bank's bad debts.

**THAT'S not all there was to the Friedrich affair. There are also the suggestions of paramilitary activities connected with the NSCA.**

The notion that the NSCA could be turned into a private army or CIA front is unlikely. For a start, its 300 operational staff formed a United Firefighters Union (UFU) closed shop. When the NSCA let the Federal Police use one of its helicopters to watch protesters at Pine Gap, the UFU very quickly put an end to such overtly political activity by the organisation. That

hardly seems the atmosphere in which a private army could thrive. It is possible, however, that Friedrich (maybe with others) was using the NSCA as a cover for his own rightwing ends. Many NSCA recruits were ex-military personnel, and aside from the Pine Gap affair Friedrich took the organisation into close co-operation with the Air Force, via rescue contracts, and the police, to whom he lent helicopters to search for escapees and marijuana plantations.

Some NSCA staff are known to have tried to procure Uzi sub-machine guns. The National Crime Authority also received information (which it fobbed off to the Federal Police) linking Friedrich to international arms dealers. Fiji has been raised as one area of its dealings.

This seems to go way beyond the brief of a mere rescue organisation boss. The kindest interpretation is that Friedrich was simply an over-zealous empire-builder, and police, for the contracts that might come his way.

But more sinister interpretations are also obvious. After all, we have the curious fact that ASIO, which



**with Alec Kahn**

has sniffed out leftwing clerks in places as obscure as the Australian Archives Office, could somehow overlook Friedrich's past (or rather, lack of it) despite his direct access to defence areas.

ASIO's ineptness is one explanation, but so is its collusion with whatever Friedrich was up to. Of only one thing can we be certain — the promised Federal inquiry will not give us any answers in this regard.

**THE CHUMMINESS of the Establishment is the other thing that stands out about the Friedrich affair.**

Those of us who can't even get a housing loan must be staggered at the ease with which Friedrich got huge loans against the NSCA's relatively modest assets, on little more than a handshake.

Even when doubts grew about him, Friedrich was given an arm-chair ride. The National Crime Authority fobbed off the arms-dealing information to the Federal Police, despite such inquiries specifically being part of their charter.

When NSCA president Max Eise raised his own suspicions about Friedrich with Victorian police chief Kel Glare last October, Glare merely told him to "prove it". Glare then helped nominate Friedrich for the Order of Australia (which he received on Australia Day).

Even after Victorian police brought Friedrich back from WA, they were at pains to praise his "co-operation". They even had the gall to try to turn Glare's embarrassment to their own advantage, claiming that they would have checked on Friedrich if their long-disbanded and disgraced Special Branch snoops still operated.

When no one bought that one, they tried to claim they could not have arrested Friedrich in Victoria, due to its limits on questioning and finger-printing. Apparently no one is arrested in Victoria these days unless they really want to be!

So John Friedrich is getting the trial he deserves. But he won't be getting the investigation he deserves. Because that would reveal far more about a system that punishes workers for the crimes of their bosses, and promotes a crooked little empire-builder until he jumps and bites it, than any government could ever allow.

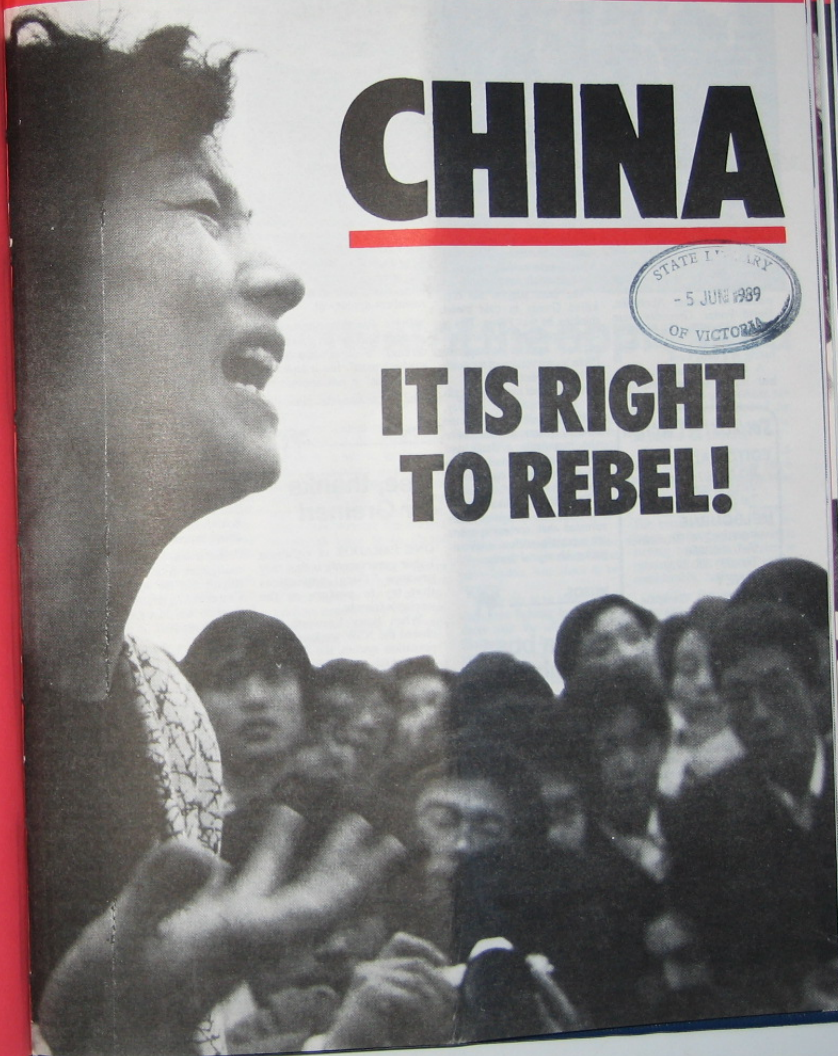
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# SOCIALIST ACTION

JUNE 1989 No. 40

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50 CENTS



# CHINA



## IT IS RIGHT TO REBEL!

POLICE

## Judge, jury, executioner?

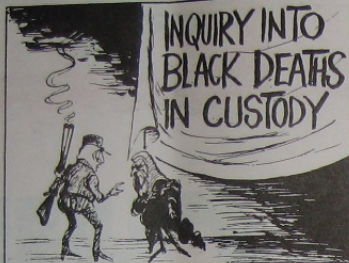
THE COPS were a bit "up-tight" said NSW Police Minister Pickering. He was trying to explain the murder of 32 year old David Gundy on 27 April.

Pickering has grounds to be "up-tight" too. Although the circumstances are still unclear, enough has emerged to show the killing was no accident.

The Aboriginal community report that Gundy's house was invaded at night by 70 police of the Special Weapons and Operations Section. He was hit by eight shotgun blasts.

The incident followed the death of two police on 24 April. These killings led to a huge mobilisation in several states in pursuit of another Aborigine, David Porter. Grenades were thrown into the home of Porter's brother, one landing and detonating in a baby's cot.

A few hours earlier, police had leaked to the press that



"It's none of your business — he wasn't in custody."

Porter was going to be "blown away".

Queensland police made it clear that all Aborigines were suspects. Dozens of Aborigines homes were raided, usually at night, invariably at gunpoint.

The facts suggest the cops killed Gundy in cold blood, thinking he was Porter. This in turn suggests that they are desperately anxious to suppress Porter's own version of the death of the two police.

Nick Greiner has resisted calls for an independent inquiry, leaving it in the hands of the coronial system. It is the police who investigate a death and present evidence to a coroner, so the way is wide open for a whitewash.

The Muirhead inquiry into black deaths in custody has revealed that coroner's courts are especially useless in investigating Aboriginal deaths.

The Muirhead inquiry into black deaths in custody has revealed that coroner's courts are especially useless in investigating Aboriginal deaths.

MUSOS

## He's a boss all right

BRUCE Springsteen has helped to assure that the American music industry must now abide by the Federal labour laws which cover overtime payments and working conditions.

Two former employees of "The Boss" have recently won an 18 month legal battle concerning wages and overtime payments. Bruce commonly expected his workers to work long hours without overtime rates and frequently handed out fines for minor offences. For all his blue-collar image Bruce claimed the music industry was "a different world" presumably because he employed people in it.

Springsteen has recently drawn up a document which all

## INQUIRY INTO BLACK DEATHS IN CUSTODY

of his employees must sign before working for him. This is basically an agreement meaning that staff are unable to take any legal action against Springsteen or to discuss his life or work with the media. One roadie signed after being told that it was a rental car agreement.

Peter Parcher, Springsteen's attorney told the press "Bruce is certainly 1001 percent for the working man". But it looks like "The Boss" is just another boss after all.

COMPO

## Gee, thanks Mr Greiner!

ONE PARADOX of rightwing Labor governments is that they produce Liberal oppositions that try to posture as the worker's friends.

When Barry Unsworth butchered the NSW workers' compensation system, the Libs tut-tutted. And in the 1988 election they hinted they would undo some of the damage.

"Vote Liberal for workers' comp" chanted Liberal canvassers in blue collar electorates. Now they've announced their reforms. The injured workers' right to sue the boss for negligence will be restored, only if the worker has suffered an incapacity of over 33 percent. This will limit negligence claims to an estimated 2000, or 2 percent of injured workers.

Meanwhile there will be other cutbacks. If you sue for negligence, you'll forfeit the right to sue for compensation. So you can't sue a negligence insurer to make a decent compensation settlement.

And you'll no longer get compensation for injuries you

suffer travelling to and from work. If a "journey accident" isn't due to another driver's fault, you'll get nothing from Workcover or Transcover.

This will save the government \$30 million, which will go a long way toward paying successful negligence suits.

The rest of Unsworth's butchery goes untouched. Employers continue to be released from any obligation to provide light duties, and weekly benefits will continue to erode in real terms.

Already they're scarcely more than DSS payments. Greiner, like Unsworth, clearly expects the long-term incapacitated to depend on Social Security.

We don't have to just cop these outrages. In the early 1970s, building unions forced the weekly payment up to the award wage during the first 26 weeks of incapacity. Later the BLF made successful raids on insurance companies to stop delays in payouts.

This kind of action will be needed again, not just in NSW but also in Victoria, where the Cain Labor government is planning new cuts.

STUDENTS

## Defiant demo over outrage

KARL MARX used to talk about "rural idiosyncy".

But it was some particularly malignant morons who were responsible for the Melbourne University Agricultural Society's decision to advertise a "Rape and Tillage Ball" in mid-May.

An outcry among the campus community soon obliged the university Union to take down all the posters advertising it. Brunswick Town Hall did the same, but they said the couldn't cancel the ball itself because they were locked into a contract.

That didn't satisfy fifty women and men students who turned up to picket the event. A few aspiring Malcolm Frasers in penguin suits hurled abuse, but they couldn't make themselves heard above the angry chants of the demonstrators.

**THE Socialist Action winter camp will be held at Austinner near Wollongong over the Queen's Birthday week-end. For information contact your local branch — phone numbers this page.**



# China: festival of the oppressed

A SINGLE spark, said Chairman Mao, "can ignite a prairie fire." A prophetic remark.

When former Communist Party leader Hu Yaobang died on 15 April, China's rulers breathed a small sigh of relief. The man sacked as General Secretary in 1987 because he was too popular with student protesters was out of the way.

Yet, within hours of his death unofficial posters praising him appeared on campus walls, and the next day demonstrations were held in Beijing and Shanghai. Within a week students and unemployed youth were rioting in the cities of Xi'an and Changsha. Within two weeks half a million people were on the streets of Beijing.

On the seventieth anniversary, of the May Fourth Movement, a 1919 student demonstration for democracy and reform, 100,000 students and supporters marched in several places. By mid-May the regime had lost control of the streets of its major cities and workers were walking out of their factories.

This explosion did not spring from nowhere. The leadership and demands have been maturing over the past few years.

There is little doubt that the students who have led this movement were prominent in earlier campaigns (or have learned from those who were). In December 1986 thousands of

students marched in ten provincial cities.

As the movement became more political the government moved to crush it. In January 1987 it launched a purge of academics, newspaper editors and party officials. Hu Yaobang was the most prominent victim. Under this pressure the student movement came to an abrupt halt.

Again in June 1987, student protests about the murder of one of their number led to demonstrations condemning party corruption, and calling for democratic rights.

**DESPISE the defeat of these campaigns the students maintained their organisation.**

At Beijing University they have been holding open air political forums for months. Room 3108 at Fudan University in Shanghai has been a regular venue for political meetings. Dissident magazines have circulated widely. In both cities it was only hours after the Hu's death was announced that the first posters were put up, so organised were the activists.

Government harassment had been increasing. The launch of a new independent magazine in March was disrupted by the police. When the Shanghai *World Economic Herald* published an article critical of the official, authoritarian "Marxism" of the Communist Party, its editor Qu Benli was threatened with the

sack.

It was no idle threat. He was eventually sacked after the death of Hu, for publishing the truth about Hu's fall from power.

When dissident Professor Fang Lizhi was invited to meet George Bush on his recent visit, he was openly obstructed by secret police.

Rumours abounded that Zhao Ziyang, one of the more liberal party leaders, was about to be removed.

Seeing this as an attack on all they were fighting for, the students took the offensive. It is likely they had been organizing for the anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, but they used Hu's death to move into the streets earlier.

**THE STUDENTS had given managers the right to hire and fire, and workers were wary about sticking their necks out.**

For ten days after 16 April, the demonstrations were made up almost entirely of students, with some support from their professors. The teachers and workers who stood up at that point came on 27 April when students led a march of some half a million people through Beijing.

While bosses refused to allow their workers to join the protest, many did anyway, if only in their lunchtime. Others rushed from shops and offices seeking to present their

demands to the government approached the Great Hall of the People on their knees — as in the days of the emperors.

The students went out to address as many people as possible in street meetings, at railway stations, at bus stops.

They got a good response. The economic cost of the reforms of the last ten years is starting to be felt. Inflation is running at 27 percent, and is considerably higher for food.

And last September the government cut back sharply on its spending. Construction projects were aborted, orders cancelled. Some factories have closed, and others are unable to pay wages.

The students clearly touched a nerve among workers, though it took some time for them to become active involved. This isn't surprising. The regime has given managers the right to hire and fire, and workers were wary about sticking their necks out.

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SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 3

## SOCIALIST ACTION

EDITORIAL

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BRISBANE

PO Box 99, St Lucia  
Queensland 4067  
Tel (07) 870 3705

CANNBERRA

PO Box 17  
Jamison Centre,  
ACT 2614.

WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne  
Mondays 7.00  
Lincoln Hotel  
91 Cardigan St Carlton  
Sydney  
Wednesdays 7.00  
Mehrop Hotel (top floor)  
Bridge & George St City

Brisbane

Thursdays 7.30  
50 Baynes St  
West End

Canberra

Thursdays 6.00  
Star Room  
Meyers Club, Civic

## COVER STORY

to hand food and drinks to the marchers. Some simply stood and watched. But everyone noticed that unlike 1986, when large numbers were arrested and beaten, this time the police and army seemed content to be swept aside.

When 3000 students went on hunger strike in mid-May, they were supported by strikes in Beijing involving up to two million workers. Offices and factories closed down and public transport ground to a halt. A million people assembled in the streets.

Many brought banners naming their workplaces. Reporters identified a watch factory, the brewery and three electronics factories. Office workers did the same. From the Supreme Court, the Museum of the Revolution, even from the Party school.

"Before, we were afraid to speak," said one woman worker. "The students have given us courage."

Given the power of the movement, its demands are remarkably limited. The chief call is for "full freedom of speech, of association and of the press" as student leader Wang Dan wrote. The movement also demanded elimination of corruption and nepotism in the party and state machine.

No call has been heard to legalize opposition parties. Indeed many students deny this is one of their goals.

**ALTHOUGH** China's rulers opposed even these modest demands, they took a hands-off approach for some time, hoping the student movement would exhaust itself.

But when the working class

began to move it was a different story. Within hours of the first big strikes, the government declared martial law and called in the army.

China still claims to be a socialist society. In reality, that society has always been essentially capitalist. Bureaucrats and private bosses control the means of production: the factories, offices, and mines. Workers must live by selling their labour for wages.

The rulers draw their wealth and power from the exploitation of that labour. For this to continue, workers must stay on the job. Nothing threatens the system more than a militant workers' movement.

The lot of most workers is hard. The introduction of western-style market mechanisms has brought affluence to a minority but has also widened inequalities in society. Workers have faced attacks on their conditions and job security.

Between talk of a socialist paradise and the grim reality of daily life, the gulf is enormous — hence the need for political dictatorship. Hence, too, the panic among the rulers when workers start to challenge the system.

Late on 19 May, Premier Li Peng declared martial law. Demonstrations were banned, the press muzzled and the army called in.

In a stunning display of courage and organisation, unarmed people poured into the streets and surrounded the tanks and troop trucks, calling on the army not to attack the people. The crowds slashed tyres and pasted over windscreens. They handed food and cigarettes to the troops, then argued and pleaded with

them through the night.

**FEARING** local troops were unreliable, the regime had brought in soldiers from the provinces who knew little of the democratic movement. But blocked by the human wall, the soldiers had no choice but to listen to the workers and students. Their arguments began to sink in.

This is a key role of barricades in mass struggles. Unarmed or poorly armed workers can't normally defeat the army in a violent clash. The purpose of barricades is primarily political, as Leon Trotsky concluded after Russia's 1905 revolution:

*"The barricade serves the cause of insurrection because, by creating a barrier to the movement of troops, it brings them into close contact with the people."*

*"Here, at the barricades, the soldier hears the talk of ordinary honest people, the fraternal appeals, the voice of the people's conscience, and as a consequence of such contact ... military discipline disintegrates. This, and only this, ensures the victory of a popular rising."*

The difference this year was the generals' fear that the mass mobilisation was too strong, and that the troops would mutiny.

**THE** UPHEAVALS have opened up a new era whose real implications will only become clear over time. Moderates and hardliners in the leadership may come and go, political liberalisation may be conceded, withdrawn, conceded again.

But for millions of people, something fundamental has changed. They know the government can be defied. Just as the 1905 Russian revolt was a "dress rehearsal" for the 1917 revolution, the "Beijing Spring" will lay the basis for new struggles.

Lessons will be learned about politics and strategy. And one lesson is more vital than any other.

The student rallies were magnificent, but they were not enough to threaten Li Peng and the hardliners. What really frightened the government was the signs of a mobilisation by workers.

There has been talk of "people's power" but even the spectacle of millions in the streets was not enough to remove Li Peng. What can remove him and his fellow bureaucrats is a movement based in the workplaces, led by political organisations with working class politics. That is where the Chinese activists must turn their attentions.

It is only workers' power that can transform the face of China.

— Graham Willett



Hu Yaobang: his death was the spark

For a time, the hardliners within the government lost ground. Senior army officers declared: "The people's army belongs to the people and cannot be opposed to it. It cannot suppress the people."

These officers are not humanitarians. They belong to the same officer caste who suppressed demonstrations during the Cultural Revolution and opened fire on demonstrating Tibetans last year.

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## GREEN POLITICS

**THE** BIG vote for Green Independents in Tasmania has set off a sickening round of mainstream politicians declaring their concern for the environment.

Bob Hawke announced he was the head of a green government, and Labor came down reluctantly on the side of opposing mining in the antarctic, and even handed over a token \$250,000 to Sting to help save a bit of the Amazon. But the most hypocritical of the lot was Robin Grey, scrambling madly to find a formula to stay in power.

It was not so long ago that Gray described the Franklin River as a "leech-ridden ditch". Now he appeals to the Greens to support his minority government and says he'll address their "environmental concerns".

The Tasmanian election results themselves suggest most voters can see through this sort of posturing by the major parties.

But with people like Bob Brown and Christine Milne emerging as an electoral force to be reckoned with, and with environmentalists talking about setting up some kind of national political network, the real question is what we are to make of the Green Independents themselves.

Have they got a strategy that can save our environment? And how are they addressing the wider social issues confronting Tasmania?

**OF COURSE** their environmental policies themselves are quite good.

They were right to oppose the pulp mill at Wesley Vale. They are right to demand that industry exemptions from pollution controls be ended, to oppose the Huon Forest Products mill which would force local fish farms to move, to propose tax incentives for motorists using fuel efficient vehicles and so on.

And they have been prepared to organise campaigns for their policies. Christine Milne didn't just write a letter to her MP about the Wesley Vale pulp mill, she organised local residents.

For a lot of people, these are grounds enough for voting them into office. But what are the practical consequences of electing the Greens?

Let's not forget the ALP used to organise campaigns for worthy causes, including the environment. Labor Party branches were often central in building local anti-uranium groups during the 1970s.

Yet once in power, Bob Hawke let uranium mining pro-



Bob Brown is manhandled in anti-logging protest: can he accomplish more in parliament?

## Courting the two-bob capitalists

ceeded and sold uranium to France. Meanwhile, the years in power have meant that the ALP is less and less an organisation that campaigns for progressive causes.

**THE** PITFALLS of parliamentary politics can force you to choose: compromise your principles or lose office. Unless you have a powerful movement outside parliament to back you up.

The other is that environmentalists have to address economic issues. The Tasmanian Greens have tried to do this.

To counter the argument that saving nature costs jobs, they replied that the large, destructive companies have been shedding labour, and are "automating people out of work".

Small business, they argue, creates more jobs and should be encouraged. This means providing it with facilities and expertise, setting up "incubators" with shared facilities and support, and government loans and grants. "The government's job is to help small business in the packaging, presentation, export and marketing of their goods," Brown contends.

Secondly, this policy is linked up with Tasmanian chauvinism. "If heavy industry is going to come to this state," says Brown, "it's going to have to do so on Tasmania's terms. He attacks past governments who have given control to boardrooms outside the State."

**BROWN** thinks favouring local industry will give power to Tasmanians. In reality it simply favours local exploiters at the expense of foreigners and mainlanders. It is the same silly nationalism we so often get from confused leftists, taken to a ludicrous extreme.

From "Buy Australian!" we have progressed to "boost Tassie industry". Soon it will be Fortress Launceston!

Anyway, if Tasmanian local areas are a big success, what is to stop Alan Bond launching a take-over bid?

So the Green economic policy, to the extent that they have one, threatens to pit them against the unions and ally them to the most narrow, small-business interests.

Of course, the vote for the Tasmanian Independents is an encouraging sign, insofar as it shows a lot of people have seen through the major parties and are looking for an alternative. But the alternative is not going to be found in parliament.

The alternative is an organising people at the grassroots. That, after all, is how Bob Brown and Christine Milne got to be famous to begin with. And the most effective place to do that sort of organising will be, in the long run, among workers.

For these reasons, those environmental activists who think the Tasmanian Greens have a recipe for success are really heading in the wrong direction.

— Tom O'Lincoln

**SOULD** WE TRY THAT AGAIN WITH WHO? A cartoon illustration showing a person being manhandled by police.





### Road hazard

THIS isn't a police state, but sometimes we wonder. A Perth mother has been pulled up by police for driving an unroad-worthy pram.

Sandra Fallon was strolling with her 12-month-old daughter Caroline when a police car pulled up alongside with siren blaring and light flashing. The officer said the tyres on the pram looked a bit worn and gave me a week to buy a new one, otherwise I was told I would get a \$50 fine. He said the police were clamping down on all things... prams, bikes, the lot.

Sgt Jim Bates of the Warwick police said that prams were considered vehicles under the Road Traffic Code. Sandra Fallon has had to pay \$169 for a new pram.

### Uncle Scrooge

MICKEY Mouse's family company, the Disney Corporation, is threatening to sue a Florida childcare centre for breach of copyright.

It seems that the Very Important Babies childcare centre had the gall to paint Mickey and other Disney characters on its outside walls to brighten them up for the kids. So the Disney Corporation is launching a lawsuit to stop them. Last month, Disney Corp extracted a public apology from the organisers of the Oscars over a Snow White dance routine they presented. Apparently Disney claims copyright over the Snow White fairytale character as well.

But suing a childcare centre? Like that old protest button used to say, Mickey Mouse is a capitalist rat

### Slumming it

LATEST sick fashion amongst Melbourne's upper class is Depression furniture.

The tres chic Candelstickmaker antique shop in fashionable Balwyn is selling a dresser made from old packing crates at \$165, as well as other items cobbled together from kerosene tins and the like by the styling of the 1930s.

Maybe the October '87 stockmarket crash has given the rich a taste for things to come.

### Easily impressed

ALAN Bond may not be a fit and proper person to own a TV network, and his university may have had to cancel its science faculty for lack of interest. But he knows a lot more than most of us about politics.

His latest foray is into Hungary, where the anti-socialist state-run Kobanya brewery is up for sale. Bondy wants to take it over, saying he is impressed with Hungary's commitment to economic and political reform. Strange... didn't he say the same thing about Chile when he bought its telephone network off dictator Augusto Pinochet?

### Worse than the disease

IT'S great television. After every disaster Margaret Thatcher visits the hospital wards, comforts the

hurt, vows that it will never happen again...

But victims of the Hillsborough soccer ground disaster staying at Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield didn't want a bar of her. One man told staff to "keep her away from him". Others tried to get themselves discharged before she came. One person in intensive care managed to tell her to get lost. Another who couldn't speak made his feelings known by kicking off the bedclothes.

Thatcher managed only five minutes in the ward because the reception was so cold. And surprise, surprise, none of this appeared on the evening news.



### The trials of Terry

POOR Sir Terry Lewis. The Queensland government has withheld its \$685,000 share of his



## CHEAP SHOTS

### Glasknow your place

JUST in case Russian workers get too carried away with glasnost, Moscow News ran the following comment on democracy in the workplace recently.

"No good can result if management is exercised by two sides which would oppose each other on some issues. In day-to-day work, one man must be the boss, orders must be fulfilled and the strictest order and discipline are necessary."

Hmmm... wonder when perestroika will produce the next lot of perestroikers?

superannuation payout, and the Tax Office has frozen the \$110,000 he put in.

Now Sir Terry is saying that he won't get a fair trial because of the torrent of publicity over his crooked dealings from the Fitzgerald inquiry.

But we have faith in Queensland justice. Terry, we guarantee you will get as fair a trial as anyone else in Queensland who has been through the hands of your police force.

Only thing we can't guarantee is that you'll get Justice Angelo Vasta to preside at your trial.

### Fast learners

MARGARET Thatcher recently announced that "We are a grandmother". The Queen is said to be amused.

Three Tory backbenchers moved a sickly-sweet motion congratulating the PM on her new grandchild. We liked the amendment moved by leaving Labour MP Dennis Skinner, saying that the House hoped the child learned to crawl as fast as the three Tory MPs.



### True believer

IT HASN'T got much publicity in Australia, but Rupert Murdoch recently became a Catholic. Get ready for toppers news on page three.



Voicing the capitalists

Western Australia for refitting. Kerry Packer seems set to be the new landowner.

The strike was in its third week as we went to press. The strikers have called on the rightwing NSW Labor Council to co-ordinate a 24 hour stoppage in their support. Although the Council is unlikely to stir itself, support action is already being undertaken by maritime unions, who struck for 24 hours from midnight, 25 May.

A lot more action like that is needed to save what is probably the last really big workplace left in Sydney.

Donations and expressions of support can be sent to the joint disputes committee care of the Metal Workers union. Families who are moving to the island

will be needing assistance. Occupiers are guaranteed three meals a day.

The smooth operation of the cleaning roster on the island is a little reminder of how efficiently workers can run their affairs, without bosses.

The Defence Minister is playing it tough, but that has so far served only to strengthen the workers' resolve. Many of them are over 50, so their skills are not in demand elsewhere, and the dole queue beckons.

One weapon being used against the government is the threat of a Land Rights claim. The Metropolitan Lands Council is attempting to have the island declared a sacred site. If this succeeds, the Aboriginal community has stated that it would not claim the land while the dockyard remains open.

— Eric Harrison

## FEATURE



# The Palestinian uprising

Janey Stone looks at the issues

**T**he uprising in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza has had a profound impact on Israel's society.

Prime Minister Shamir visited a reserve paratroop unit on the West Bank earlier this year, and held a much publicized question and answer session.

"Every day, I have to disobey the law by being forced to beat innocent people", said one soldier and others made similar protests. Shamir's feeble reply was: "We hate those PLO leaders of the *infidafa* who force us to kill Arab children".

He then tried to gain support by referring to the suffering of the Jews under the Nazis. A soldier responded: "and should we imitate them?"

The prime minister has learned his lesson. Next time he won't take the media with him. Publicly, Shamir is intransigent: "There will never be a Palestinian state", he told a rally in February. He proposes elections, but precludes Palestinian autonomy.

The current uprisings reflect the varying concerns of activists. The "Down with the Occupation" coalition has held demonstrations and established links with Palestinian villages. "Women in Black" hold weekly public vigils, and have emphasised support for Palestinian women.

Even among those who would like to smash the *infidafa* there is a growing realisation that it's not possible. Many in the top echelons of the military believe a settlement is necessary. An organisation of retired generals argues that "the occupation must be ended, because its continuation represents a worse danger to security than its end".

The standing of the army is under threat in the eyes of Israelis as well as in the eyes of the world. There is a widespread awareness that the *infidafa* cannot be suppressed by military means. The chief of staff admits the army can only reduce the level of unrest, but it cannot "alter Palestinian consciousness and cannot change Palestinian will".

(Continued page 8)

## UNIONS



### Workers rights & land rights

STRIKING workers are occupying Sydney's Cockatoo Island Dockyard, in a desperate battle to save their jobs.

150 of the 1500 workforce, many accompanied by their families, are living on the island and holding several navy ships to ransom.

The Commonwealth Government, which owns the island and leases it to a private company, is determined to terminate the lease. They intend to sell the land (a prime piece of property in Sydney harbour) to private interests, and send the ships to





# Amazon forest: in the wars

**IF YOU'RE** worried about saving trees in Australia, spare a thought for the Amazon rainforest.

In the last five years alone, an area of the Amazon the size of France has been destroyed. Each day, farming, logging, hydro-electric schemes, mining, smelting and gold prospecting drive deeper into the jungle.

This threatens our planet's survival. The Amazon is the lungs of the earth. It produces 15 percent of our oxygen, and absorbs half the carbon dioxide released by the burning of fossil fuels. It's an essential regulator of the world's climate.

It is also the largest remaining rainforest, home to 200,000 indigenous people and an estimated 30 million different species of plant and animal. Obviously it should be saved.

But most of it is in Brazil, and Brazil is broke. In 1982 the country's foreign debt was the biggest in the world, costing 85 percent of export earnings just to service. Inflation is 70 percent, unemployment 20 to 40 percent. To stave off disaster, the Brazilian government promotes the plunder of the Amazon.

**INTERNATIONAL** companies like Goodyear, Volkswagen and Nestle destroy huge tracts of forest to set up immense cattle ranches, paper and timber mills, and rice plantations.

The ranches are highly inefficient. At least ten times as much meat is produced per hectare in Northern Europe, and untouched forest produces ten times as much food in tropical fruit. Where 3000 hectares house one ranch worker, the same amount of forest could provide food and shelter for several hundred.

Japanese banks are financing a new road that will open the Western Amazon to logging and the export of Brazil nuts. Pig iron production for European and Japanese markets is also increasing, and it already destroys over 1000 square kilometres of forest per year.

Brazilian bosses are no better. The state electricity company Eletrobrás plans to flood over 12,000 square kilometres of inhabited forest to create 80,000 dams. Many will be funded by the World Bank.

These projects dislodge hundreds of thousands of peasants and Indians each year. They must either flee deeper into



The Amazon burns: is our future burning with it?

the forest while it lasts, join the miserable city slums, or clear and burn more forest for farming.

**THE FRENZIED** activity is also having a disastrous effect on the indigenous inhabitants. Brazil's constitution is supposed to protect their land rights, but the National Indian Agency (FUNAI) vows to integrate them, thereby destroying their culture and lifestyle.

FUNAI works with local and international capitalists, and with the powerful Brazilian military, to wipe the Indians out. When 20,000 prospectors backed by the army and mining companies entered the northern Amazonian territory of Roari-ma, the land of 9000 Yanomami Indians, FUNAI removed volunteer doctors and nurses. They were left with no health assistance, and whole villages died of measles, influenza and whooping cough. The Yanomami now face extinction.

The army wanted to increase the flow of settlers into the region to block all Indian land demarcation within 95 Kilometres of Brazil's northern border. The project envisaged a corridor of military occupation and settler colonisation which would be impossible to remove, should the government attempt to enforce the Indians' constitutional rights.

But the Indians are fighting back. In February a thousand chiefs from 20 tribes (united for the first time), met with politicians, banking officials and civil servants to oppose several hydro-electric schemes. 3500 Indians threatened to occupy the area if one of the dams went ahead.

"We will bring Indian peoples together to fight," said one chief. "We will not accept the dams. Where will we live? What will we eat?"

Indians have fought and won before. The Kayapo tribe halted a nuclear waste dump on their land, and forced changes in the constitution.

**RURAL** workers, too, have fought to preserve the forest. The National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS), representing 150,000 who live in and off the jungle was successful in setting up twelve "extractive reserves" which protect five million acres.

That was before one CNS leader and socialist, Chico Mendes, was gunned down by ranchers outside his home.

Chico once joked that the rubber tappers had become "environmentalists by accident" in the course of fighting for their rights as workers.

But it's no accident. As workers find they can act to

change one aspect of their lives, they begin to think about other aspects. And Brazil has seen quite an array of militant workers' struggles in recent times.

In 1986 over 23 million Brazilian workers were involved in strikes, including a 24 hour general public sector strike. Then in March this year about 35 million struck for two days in protest against cuts in living standards.

Last November, the leftist Workers' Party won impressive victories in municipal elections. It now represents 30 million people. It is this workers' movement which potentially has the power to take on the companies wrecking the Amazon.

But there is no reason why they, or the Brazilian Indians and peasants, should fight alone. The economic crisis facing the country is just a part of the brutal operations of the world capitalist market. And the destruction of the country's rainforest is only part of a wider assault on our environment by greedy companies, from Brazil to Tasmania, and from Sarawak to NSW.

In the most immediate sense, their fight is our fight. And given that the world's oxygen supply is at stake, success will mean we'll all breathe a little easier.

— Louise Walker

**LIGHT RAIL** — no way! Trams and trains are here to stay!!

The chants rang out from 500 workers and residents of Melbourne's northern suburbs, marching down Sydney Road. We stopped at Brunswick Tram Depot, heard speakers, and then raised a rowdy cry: "The workers, united, will never be defeated!"

The demonstration was organised by the Save the Upfield Line Committee (SULC), a group formed at a public meeting in March. The meeting overwhelmingly voted to oppose the ALP government's proposal to introduce light rail in the Upfield Corridor.

SULC has good reasons for its stand. Commuters to and from the outer suburbs of Upfield and Gowrie would face a slow crawl along the tram lines, and would lose their link to the western suburbs via North Melbourne station.

Sydney Road shoppers would be inconvenienced, rail workers would lose jobs, and people with disabilities would lose an accessible service.

There are other, related issues. The Labor government is just as keen on freeways (and on helping out their transport magnate friends) as the Liberals ever were. They plan to use land freed by closing the railway for the Western Bypass, an extension of the Tullamarine freeway west of the city.

**RECENTLY** the SULC activists have held street stalls, gathered signatures, addressed community groups and talked to the media, as well as building for the big rally. And the unions have been involved — a vital factor.

The tramways union has provided a full time worker, and light rail unionists have been active in the committees. Activists have been handing out the union leaflet to commuters, as well as speaking at factories along the tram and train routes.

The unions aren't just opposing light rail, they've come up



Marching against the light rail project

# We can win this transport battle

attempt to divide the opposition. Trams would be kept along part of Sydney Road during shopping hours, but light rail would still replace the trams.

This might placate shopkeepers and mean more jobs for tramway workers, but it's hard to believe any government would run two tram services within two hundred metres of each other for long. SULC has rejected the new option unanimously.

**SINCE** lost the previous struggle against light rail in the Bayside suburbs, what prospects are there for victory this time?

Anti-light rail forces are far more united now. The involves tramway and rail unionists which supported the Bayside light rail, is particularly significant. The recent demonstration was a lot bigger than any seen in the previous struggle.

Activists are also encouraged by the ability of a community movement to call a halt to the Brunswick to Richmond power line project last year.

The previous battles have led to teach. Union bans halted work on both the Bayside light rail and the power line. If the government is determined to push for light rail in the northern suburbs, union action is vital this time too.

So how can we make it possible? In both previous campaigns, the unions were moved to act when residents disrupted

construction and got arrested. So resident action can build union action.

If residents take a stand, it lets union members know how strong local feeling is about the issue, and shows them there is a basis for community support if the union acts. It also puts any reluctant union officials on the spot.

So while a range of activities is needed to increase public awareness, we should concentrate on further demonstrations and other forms of direct action.

**THE** CAMPAIGN needs to be as large and united as possible, drawing in residents affected by both the light rail and the Western Bypass. After all, they're part of the same overall scheme.

We need a mass campaign, because actions involving hundreds — better still thousands — of workers and residents will make a much bigger impression than those limited to smaller groups of activists.

At every stage we have to involve the unions, and encourage them to act. This shouldn't just mean talking to union officials along an alternative proposal that would revitalise the service along the tram and train routes.

Called "Upgrade the Trains" the Keep Sydney Road Trams' proposal gained strong support at the March public meeting. That's not surprising when you realise that Brunswick and Coburg have the lowest car owner-

ship rate in the metropolitan area.

In the face of such widespread sentiment, the government has produced an extra "option" in an cials. We need to find ways to put our views directly to union members.

We have to encourage the rank and file mobilisation that was so important in the Bayside struggle. There it was rank and file members (despite opposition from the officials) who pushed for the industrial bans, which for a time looked like forcing the government to back down. It was the same rank and file workers who tried to fight on, after official manoeuvring got the bans lifted.

The campaign is also an opportunity to raise wider social issues. Transport is something all sorts of community groups have in common: migrant communities, women concerned about safety, people with disabilities.

During the Bayside campaign, People for Equitable Transport used their contribution to the struggle to educate the whole city about issues facing people with disabilities. The government has adopted a callous, destructive campaign policy, because it represents privileged layers of society, in a society where privilege and power go together.

In fighting back against one policy, we can begin to challenge other aspects of the society which produced it.

— Robert Stansby

and Liz Ross

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 11

## Rosa's BOOKSTORE

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## THE UNIONS

IT IS a historic win for South African workers.

On 27 April, union activist Moses Mayekiso and his fellow defendants were acquitted on charges of sedition, subversion and treason.

After the decision Moses thanked his supporters around the globe: "With their support, we have won a little bit of freedom... We will carry on the fight against apartheid and capitalism, towards socialism and democracy."

The years 1984-6 were a dramatic period in South African politics. A wave of revolt swept the country as blacks organised their own systems of local government. Alexandra, a township bordering an affluent white suburb, was the scene of a "six day war" in February 1986 between young residents and police.

Mayekiso helped form the Alexandra Action Committee, which organised rent boycotts, campaigned against the police and corrupt town councilors, and organised street committees in an attempt to run the township democratically.

For this he was prosecuted. But the judge ruled that the street committees were not illegal, and noted the appalling conditions facing residents.

The decision did not reflect any liberal trend among judges, or a relaxation of state repression. Prior to the Mayekiso trial the same judge had jailed an ANC supporter for twenty-five years. The day after the decision, three ANC members were sentenced to death.

The successful outcome of the Mayekiso trial reflects the strength of the forces supporting him.

As a leader of one of South Africa's most militant and successful black unions, NUMSA, Moses Mayekiso could not be imprisoned without cost to the regime. Black unions have developed at a phenomenal rate since the early 1970s, and NUMSA is part of the one million-strong Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

The unions were strong enough to win average wage increases above 20 percent in 1988, keeping them ahead of inflation. COSATU is now considered to be the main anti-apartheid organisation that operates legally.

Metal workers organised several top-work protests for Mayekiso, and several trade unions maintained a presence at the trial.

Meanwhile an international campaign in some twelve countries, including Britain and the



## A win for solidarity

USA, put pressure on Pretoria. Overseas trade unions sent solidarity messages and placed full page ads in newspapers. Here in Australia we held pickets, raised money and won union support.

Finally, the decision reflected Mayekiso's position as an activist from Alexandra. While independent black organisation in the township has been repressed, government "reform" plans have failed. Attempts to

win over residents' "hearts and minds" by revamping local government and upgrading some areas have flopped.

As in other parts of the country, only a fraction of residents participated in local government elections last year.

Over 100,000 people in the township are homeless. By recognising the role played by street committees in improving

local conditions, the judge was attempting to offer a concession to local activists. But it is unlikely to have much impact. As Moses Mayekiso told his supporters after the trial:

"We are back, and we will start where we stopped. I want to hear that the street, yard and block committees are meeting tomorrow." — Phillip Whitefield

## MELBOURNE

### How to win a wage rise

WHILE MOST of us wait for those elusive National Wage Case rises, Melbourne building workers are taking action.

Earlier this year contract scaffolders won rises of \$40 a week. Steel fixers have now decided to go for a similar amount.

At a February mass meeting they drew up a log of claims and set up a committee to lead the campaign. Unfortunately the union, the BWIU, doesn't like such rank and file initiatives. They interfered with the campaign, and refused to endorse mass meetings called by the committee.

Said one steel fixer: "We have

to beat our own union leadership, before we get on and deal with our log of claims."

They struck for a week, using flying pickets to get all the steel-fixers out. They also marched on the BWIU office to ask they why they didn't recognise the committee. When the union finally accepted the committee, they returned to work but are maintaining overtime bans.

The pay claim is outside the wage fixing principles, which is one reason the BWIU disliked endorsing it. But they had little choice.

Wages on large city sites have gone through the roof in recent months, as employers race to complete projects. Workers know there is money to be had, all you have to do is go for it.

That conflicts with ACTU policies of "wage restraint" but the ACTU is prepared to cope with it by quantifying any wage

rises that occur.

The Industrial Relations Commission recently changed from a paid rates award to a minimum rates award in the industry, in the hope of preventing flow-ons when wage rises are won. Workers on large city sites will get a supplementary payment on top of the minimum rate, so they'll get good money while the building boom lasts. But there will soon be regional and other variations.

The BWIU also opposed the steel fixers' committee and their log because, as one steel fixer explained, the struggle had "become a fight against award restructure and multi-skilling". Multi-skilling in the building industry will be a threat to trades and other skilled workers. They'll lose their industrial leverage if other people can do their work.

— Juney Stone

## SOCIALIST STANDPOINTS

# Human nature: it just ain't natural

THERE are some things that are natural for homo sapiens to do or not do. We cannot fly, for example, but it is natural for us to eat and procreate and come in out of the rain.

Beyond this, however, what is "human nature" is not a matter of our physical needs and abilities, but a social question and therefore a question of politics.

The conservative position, propounded by pop psychologists such as Desmond "Naked Ape" Morris, is that human nature is fixed, much like animal instincts.

So we fight in the trenches and on the soccer terraces because we, like animals, are territorial. We live in nuclear families because animals do. We have hierarchies because chooks have pecking orders. Socialism will fail and equality is a Marxist pipedream because competition is ordained to guarantee our species' survival. Women were meant to be subordinate and races cannot mix with "outsiders".

This pessimistic view of humanity provides the favourite argument of our rulers, who say that society cannot change from its admirable status quo because people cannot be other than they are. But these theories about the inevitability of competition, patriotism and territoriality, the family and divisions between the races are just glib excuses for the very unnatural nature of capitalism.

Under different social conditions, what is regarded as human nature differs. Slave owners used to argue that blacks were fated by nature to be servile, and scientists industriously studied differences in racial head shapes to "prove" this. Now that slavery has passed away as a social system, we laugh at such folly.

The American Indian and the Australian Aborigine regard private ownership of land as unnatural; their colonisers regarded it as a basic need. The sally as the highest form of love; the English establishment in Queen Victoria's time saw it as the lowest.

The Sioux Indian culture stressed co-operation rather than competition, and when scientists confronted them with IQ tests early this century they had great trouble persuading them that it



Racial prejudice is no more "natural" than greed.

was not "natural" to help each other answer the questions.

WITHIN capitalism today, we see constant evidence of human behaviour different to the competitive, greedy model.

Charities would not collect a brass razzoo if people were selfish. People pitch in to help each other during natural disasters, and often the biggest sacrifices are made by those with least to give. Philanthropy is a dying game. The Ethiopian famine appeals proved that ordinary people still care about each other. When a building worker was crushed by falling steel in Victoria last year, hundreds of his colleagues rushed to give blood.

To survive, capitalists must compete. To survive, the working class must co-operate. For society to function at all, co-operation is essential. The working class, on the job, is "natural" ingrafted with it in order to produce the necessities of life. When a group of workers decides to withhold the thousands of natural, voluntary acts of industry, the industry of industry, by staging a work-to-rule, chaos ensues. The bosses who claim that competition is the key to prosperity suddenly decide that they cannot live without co-operation!

This same habit of co-operation has led workers to combine in unions and overcome "natural" divisions of race and gender in order to resist low

wages, unemployment and lack of safety. It has given rise to mass anti-war movements that oppose the "natural" hostility between nations.

Of course, workers still don't kick and fight in wars, or assault and rob other workers, or make sexist remarks to women passing building sites. But are such values produced by "human nature" or by a society built on scarcity, competition, alienation and the oppression of women?

While capitalism remains unchanged, while things are "normal", these values are deep-rooted in us as part of the "natural" status quo. "The ruling ideas of any society are the ideas of the ruling class," said Marx, acknowledging the hold of capitalist ideology.

MARX went on to argue, however, that this consciousness is never static. When people challenge some part of the system, they challenge the system's ideas as well.

Most major strikes that involve women and men show them in a new and more equal than in the past. They are the light, as they respond to the demands of a united struggle. When workers show class solidarity on the battlefield (as in the World War One mutinies now coming to light) it takes the firing squad to reassert "human nature".

And in the absence of scarcity and want, working people rarely steal. In a society where production was planned to fully meet

our material needs, theft would be as pointless an exercise as stealing water is today.

In the process of changing their social circumstances, people change themselves. They become fitted to found a new society with a new definition of "human nature". In every strike, in every revolution, the oppressed shake off the "muck of ages", to borrow another line from Marx. Out go the values of the gentry society of the bankers, generally and their pop psychologists.

Socialism doesn't claim to be able to change human nature so that people will be able to fly. But the competitive and barbarous struggle for survival under capitalism will be replaced by a system that does not demand beast-like behaviour.

Co-operation and solidarity, the values that give us most reward now, will be free to blossom. An ethic of collaboration and challenge will replace destructive capitalist competition in science, art and sport. Sport, for example.

Planned health and employment, played for all at all costs, to "do it for Australia", or to define your masculinity or femininity.

Under socialism, what the Desmond Morris now call "human nature" will be viewed as the unnatural behaviour of a sick and ailing society, just as we now view the bear-baiting and wild-burning of the Middle Ages.

— Phil Shannon

**H**ARRY McShane, life long socialist, died a year ago. Fortunately, he had found time to relate the epic struggles of his life in an autobiography, *No Mean Fighter*.

Harry was a member of the British Socialist Party until 1920. In that year he left the BSP to join with John McLean to form the "Tramp Trust Unlimited". Working out of a small office in Glasgow, the five members of this group threw themselves into the struggles of the workers and unemployed.

Their political activity was enormous. They produced 20,000 leaflets and pamphlets at a time, addressing topics that ranged from unemployment to the Irish question. They leafleted shipyards and engineering works the length and breadth of Scotland, following up factory gate meetings with evening education sessions.

Their first pamphlet was entitled *The Irish Tragedy - Scotland's Disgrace*. The issue was important in Scotland as Scottish troops made up part of the notorious Black and Tans.

What was central to Harry's politics was that the working class had to liberate itself. He would not let MPs or trade union leaders take over the struggle.

So he was an enthusiastic supporter of the demonstrations staged in 1920 by the unemployed against the local Parish Council, which distributed benefits only after you went to them cap in hand. After much angry agitation, the demonstrators won their demands.

**I**N 1922 Harry found himself in prison, after resisting an eviction, and had time to think about the Communist Party.

The problem that faced the Tramp Trust after thousands of leaflets, and hundreds of meetings was that there were still only five of them. The Communist Party was a revolutionary organisation, and offered a more effective means to build the struggle. Harry decided to join.



## Harry McShane was no mean fighter

His life-long commitment to the unemployed was well and truly sealed when he helped set up the National Unemployed Workers Movement, and became its secretary.

After eight years in Canada Harry returned to Glasgow in 1931, just as the government was deciding to cut unemployment benefits by 10 percent and introduce a means test. The means test meant that if one person in a house was working, they were expected to support the rest of the household. This broke up hundreds of working class families.

**T**HE SCOTTISH contingent sang the Internationale as they crossed into England, in a show of international solidarity. When the marchers arrived in Hyde Park they traded stories of their experiences. The Scots had a fairly trouble free time, but marchers from Northern England faced continual police harassment. There had been a few punch-ups, and some of the unemployed arrived in London battered and bruised.

— Ross MacKenzie

The marchers had collected a petition to be presented to parliament. An MP wanted to present it, but true to form Harry insisted the unemployed do it themselves. Of course the government wasn't going to accept this. When Harry and some others went to collect the petition from the railway station, the police locked them inside. When the marchers heard this a riot followed.

From 1944 Harry started to question the line of the Communist Party, following peace agreements between Russia and the west. The party leadership instructed all branches to drop their current work and collect signatures supporting a five power peace pact. Harry's Gorbals branch refused, and were promptly attacked by the leadership.

In 1951 the party published *The British Road to Socialism*, which proposed achieving socialism through parliament. Harry opposed this too, arguing that parliamentary action could never replace the struggles of the workers themselves.

**H**ARRY WAS also strongly affected by reading Stalin's pamphlet *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, which announced that the law of value existed in Russia. In Marxist theory, this law is at the core of the capitalist system.

McShane later was to arrive at the conclusion that Russia was a capitalist society, and that a class struggle was needed to overthrow the state there as in the west.

For two years, Harry wasn't allowed to speak to any CP branch meetings. Finally he was given an ultimatum: change your ideas or face expulsion. He decided to resign. The capitalist press offered him large sums of money to tell his life story, but he refused.

Instead he stuck to his revolutionary politics, and in the 1970s he emerged as a featured speaker at Right to Work rallies.

In a preface he wrote to a book on the theory of state capitalism, Harry expressed the principle that always lay at the heart of his politics: "The urge for action has always come from below, from those who work with and are dominated by the means of production. The worker as a human being has feelings, desires and passions that are thwarted by present conditions. This leads to thought, actions, and then more thought. Therefore the danger for the rulers of the world."

# Telling the bosses to ship out

**THE PLAY "Ship Of Fools" looks at unemployment and its effect on people. It's great entertainment, which at the same time leaves you with something to think about.**

Two major themes run through it: the plight of outcasts in the middle ages, and the problems of unemployed people under capitalism. The play switches back and forth the discussions of the medieval rulers of Basle to a group of long-term unemployed in contemporary Australia. The idea is to bring out essential similarities between the two societies.

The story opens in medieval Basle, where the local business people and clergy are complaining about the numbers of vagrants and fools in the town. A discussion ensues, and it is decided that the riffraff will all be gathered together and be sent down the Rhine in an old barge.

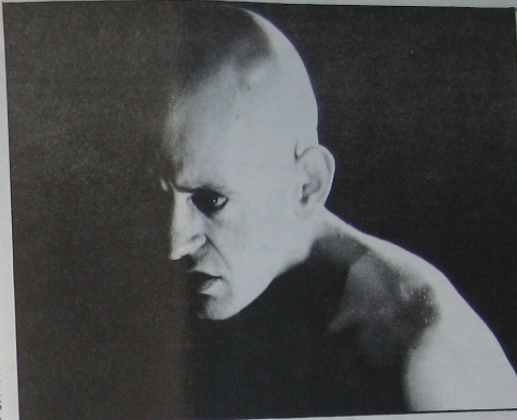
Meanwhile, in a modern DSS office a group of long-term unemployed are being interviewed for a work-for-the-dole scheme. This scene is both hilarious and moving as we meet the characters, each a misfit in their own way and therefore unemployable. As the play progresses we see these characters develop, despite being cast aside by conventional society.

"Ship Of Fools" shows the difficulties unemployed people have to face, and at the same time gives a bit of insight into the motivations of the ruling class that is prepared to throw away "useless" members of society. The business man in the play remarks on how untidy vagrants make the town look, and how bad they are for business.

Back in medieval Basle, the church launches an inquisition into why a large barge of "fools" was let loose on the Rhine, but the inquisition gets derailed. The upper class of Basle is applauded for their bold and innovative scheme. Margaret Thatcher and Paul Keating would agree.

Director Robert Draffin says that "work is a major factor in making people feel that they are part of a larger whole". This comes through clearly in the development of both the "fools" and the unemployed.

At first dispirited and demoralised by their rejection from society, the unemployed gain new life when the opportunity arises for them to renovate an old army base found in the bush, defying the common myth that



A peasant stands up to interrogation in "Ship of Fools".

unemployed people are naturally lazy.

The "fools" of medieval Basle renovate an abandoned leproarium and start to live there. But in the end, these attempts to hide from society's oppression can't succeed. The climax of the play shows there are no solutions within class society.

**Stark lighting and bare sets, combined with dynamic acting, make for powerful performances. "Ship of Fools" is playing at the Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney, from the 17th of May.**

— Rick Colby

BOOKS

## Exploding ALP myths

**LEFT WINGERS in the Labor Party sometimes claim the Hawke government has dumped the party's real tradition.**

In her book *The Labor Legacy*, Carol Johnson says they're mistaken. She argues that previous ALP regimes didn't consistently champion workers' interests either.

Johnson shows that great Labor heroes like Curtin, Chifley and Whitlam all took up the cudgels for the employers, believing they could improve workers' lives without challenging capitalism. This meant policies that would keep profits high

enough to keep bosses investing. That, in turn, meant reining in the workers.

When Hawke and Keating tell us to make sacrifices, says Johnson, they are simply applying traditional ALP principles. "Ship of Fools" the 1940 basic Curtin delayed the 1940 basic wage until 1946. Chifley attacks the miners' union in 1949 in order to put a stop to militant struggles that were making real gains outside the arbitration system. Whitlam came up with wage indexation not to improve workers' wages, but to hold them within "reasonable" bounds.

Despite this Chifley and Whitlam, in particular, have something of a Great Reformer image. *The Labor Legacy* shows how their loyalty to the capitalist system cut these reforms short. It was low income workers whose pockets were picked to pay for Chifley's welfare programs. And it was Gough's "horror budget" of 1975 that set the pattern for the Fraser years.

The book is an eye-opener, but it's still too generous in giving Gough all the credit for what reforms he did introduce, like ending conscription or equal pay. It was really the activists in the unions, the anti-war struggle, the women's liberation movement that put pressure on the ruling establishment. Whitlam only offered that establishment — reluctantly at times — a program for making concessions

that had become inevitable. Carol Johnson has a tendency to see political change as coming from above. She thinks that socialists can achieve their ends by following the parliamentary road, building a new society through an "alternative economic strategy".

Yet the "alternative economic strategies" developed in the 1970s gave rise to the Accord in the 1980s. A fine step toward socialism that turned out to be

And even if parliamentarians do try to bring about change, they will progressive changes, they will soon run into the forces that brought Whitlam undone: media hostility, obstruction by public service bureaucrats, and behind both of them the power of private industry. Dismantling the system that oppresses us will take more radical measures, organised by workers on the job and ordinary people in the community.

The first step to creating a movement of that sort is to discredit the ALP in the eyes of militant workers. For all its limitations, Carol Johnson's book provides a lot of useful ammunition.

— Stephen Boyce

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LAST September I became a father for the first time. Jane and I had an exuberant baby girl called Freya.

Like most new parents, I've found it an exciting time. But it's also been an eye-opener to discover first-hand what a raw deal parents and babies get in this system of ours.

Let's start at the birth. Innocently I assumed that, 15 years after Whilliam gave a few days' paid paternity leave to public servants, it would be standard in private industry. How naive I was.

No, I was told, if you want to attend the birth and help Jane in the first exhausting days after hospital, it's too bad. Take it off your annual leave, or as leave without pay if you must.

Women get much the same lousy deal. Maternity leave just means the "right" to take a year's leave without pay after birth. Most women I know are back at work long before that, because you simply can't raise a baby and pay the rent on one parent's wage these days.

Now Labor intends to drag government workers down to the same low standard. In a bitter dispute with the women at Melbourne's Government Clothing Factory, it wants to remove their 12 weeks of paid maternity leave under the guise of award restructuring.

Yes, Labor's dividing army of admirers will reply. But were also supporting the ACTU claim for twelve months' unpaid parental leave to be extended to men.

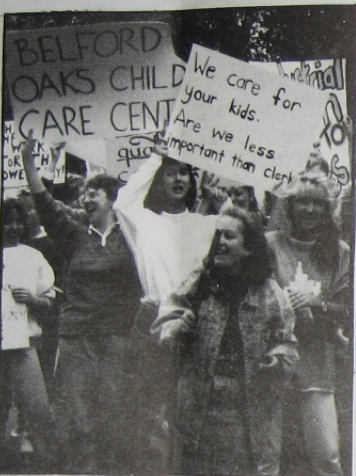
Sorry, but I'm not overjoyed. Sweden has a year's parental leave for either partner on 90% of full wages. When Labor sold us the Accord, they loved to quote Sweden as their model. They never do over parental leave. Instead, their ACTU mates are pushing this cheapskate claim whose real aim is to ease the demand for childcare places by recruiting men to supply a second year of unpaid parental care in the name of equality.

Even if the claim succeeds, few men will take advantage of it. How many working couples with kids can afford to live on a single wage for two years, while each partner takes a turn at home? And how many couples will decide to have the man at home and live on the woman's income, when the average female wage is only 70% that of men's?

THE PARENTAL leave problem was bad. But after Freya was born, the story got worse. In the 1950s governments wanted a higher birthrate, so they set up a good infant welfare service. Today, population growth is a lower priority, so infant welfare is facing a squeeze.

The service is particularly threatened in Victoria. Infant welfare nurses got a well-earned pay rise after the 1987 nurses' strike, and over Melbourne suburbs are rapidly growing. But the Can government, which shares infant

# The woes of parenthood



Childcare workers demonstrate

welfare funding with local councils, has effectively frozen its contribution. Instead, it is concocting a "fair share formula" and encouraging local "reviews" of the service, aiming to cut it in the inner suburbs to meet outer Melbourne's demands.

So Melbourne City Council, where we live, may be cut back from 8 nurses to 6.4, a 20% cut in staffing. Nurses will have to spend more time weighing and measuring babies, and less on talking to mothers about the problems of raising an infant. They will have less chance to detect and help women who are not coping, and that will mean more stressed housewives and neglected children. As the job becomes more mechanical, councils will have an excuse to bring in more cuts, like putting on semi-trained nurses or getting women to weigh and measure their own babies.

Mothers in our area are fighting back. They've formed a group called KUT (Kids Under Threat) and held public meetings. They've already pressured the Council into making the eight nurses permanent. But since Labor will cut back by natural wastage, that's only a brief reprieve. While Lord Mayor Winsome McCaughey jets around with a million dollar budget to win

and dine the International Olympic Committee on behalf of Melbourne business, the Council won't commit itself to keeping the service at current strength.

**OUR NEXT problem is childcare. We've gone to five different creches to try and book a spot, and I know of a woman who had to go to 22 before finding one.**

At \$100-\$150 a week, childcare costs as much as private schooling, yet the workers get Third World wages. Few people get places handy to home, and that means time-consuming detours during the rush to and from work. Worse, without workplace-based creches, you get no chance to see your child during the day.

Labor last year announced a plan to help employers set up work-based childcare, but it was just for show. It only offered help with initial capital costs, when most of the expense is in wages.

After a union meeting at work, a couple of us went to the Equal Opportunity officer to find out our company's attitude. She had all the excuses down pat.

No, the government subsidy wasn't enough.

No, work-based childcare is too difficult in the city, since creches must be on the ground floor with



with Alec Kahn

plenty of open space. No, people won't bring kids into a polluted city on crowded public transport. No, there's too many other competing demands — an executive gym, for example!

Most of these excuses just mean that the company sets no priority on childcare. But it is also hiding behind the wider problems of the system. Yes, our cities are polluted and have inadequate public transport and open space. People wouldn't want to inflict that on their kids. Proper work-based childcare for millions of city workers may well be insoluble this side of socialism.

That shouldn't let employers off the hook. Most, like ours, expand into industrial sites in the suburbs. There's no excuse for not having work-based creches there. And we shouldn't have to pay private school fees for the privilege of using them.

**AFTER these experiences, I was galled when Ita Buttrose dubbed Bob Hawke an "honorary feminist" at her recent magazine launch.**

But I shouldn't have been surprised. For upper-class feminists like Buttrose, what matters is that they have better access to prestige jobs under Labor's Equal Opportunity schemes.

Childcare is a minor issue for the wealthy. A rich woman in our area hires a full-time nanny to look after the baby, while she spends her days shopping. The Melbourne Age recently featured paediatrics lecturer Dr Margarita Silva and lawyer Irene Zetler. Silva pays a team of people more than \$200 a week to clean, cook, and look after her two infants. Zetler had her law firm install a fax machine and photocopier at home so she could stay with her baby while working.

No working-class woman can aspire to deals like these. As I've found out, no working-class male can either.

The problems of parents with babies ultimately boil down to class issues. That means we must look to the traditional tactics of class struggle, rather than "honorary feminists" like Bob Hawke, upper-class feminists like Ita Buttrose, and company feminists like our Equal Opportunity officer, to solve them.

PT 555 00-114  
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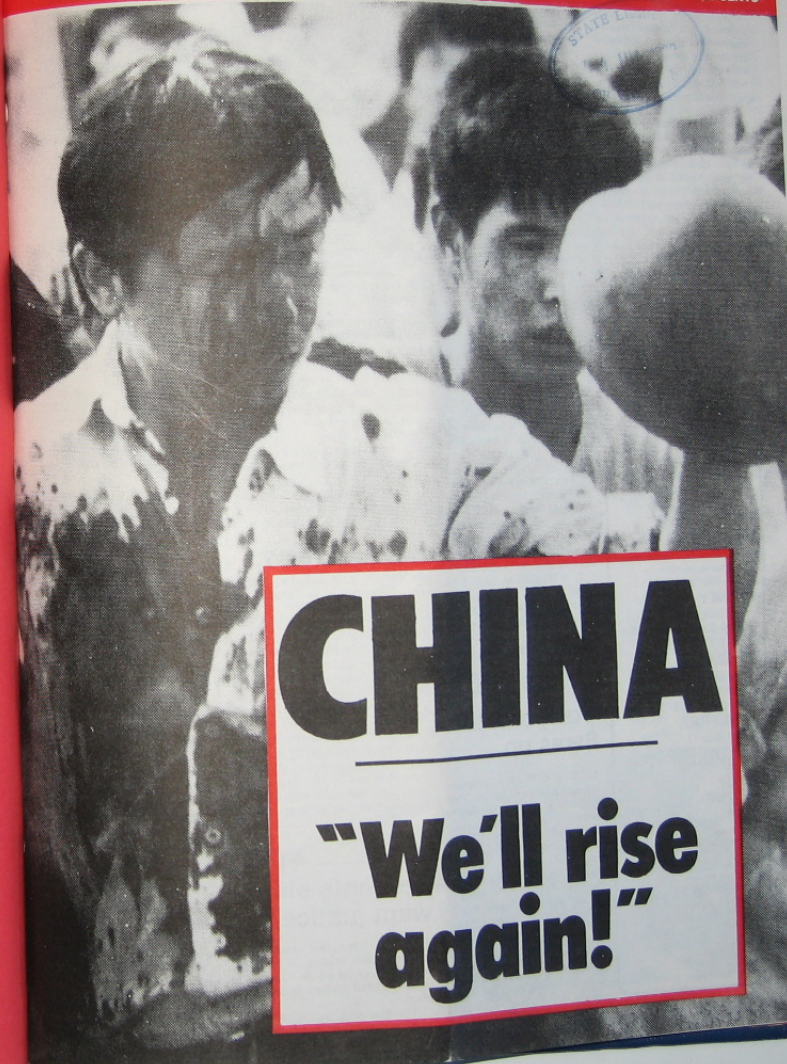
# SOCIALIST ACTION



JULY 1989 No. 41

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50 CENTS



# CHINA

**“We’ll rise  
again!”**

## CAT'S EYE

### DRUG REPORT

## Olympics in needle park?

AUSTRALIA'S sporting establishment has always claimed that only the sporting superpowers cheat by using performance-enhancing drugs. That myth was exploded by the recent Senate Enquiry report.

The Enquiry found that drug-taking occurs in all sports, at all levels, amateur and professional, and amongst all ages. It brought to light the slack drug testing by the elite Australian Institute of Sport, the bribes for favourable testing for Aussies paid at European meets and disguised as "miscellaneous fares" and the false hotel accounts used to cover up steroid purchases.

Why are the politicians suddenly taking notice? Cleaning up the country's sporting act will improve Melbourne's chances of getting the 1996 Olympics.

The Olympics are a handy trumpet for our rulers to blow, to get our minds off poverty, and to put Australian capital on the map of international trade and investment. Individual bosses

also like to sponsor athletes, but it's better if they don't get caught using drugs like Ben Johnson.

The Enquiry's proposals to detoxify our sport attack the symptoms, and blame the victims. Drug users will be banned for two years, just long enough (as overseas experience shows) for an athlete to go on drugs full time and arrive in peak steroid condition for a crucial competition.

The sale and supply of steroids without a prescription will be made a criminal offence, but that will only boost the black market.

With Olympic Gold and drug company profits at stake, corruption cannot be far away, and the proposed drug-testing body won't be immune. But if it does confound our expectations and stay clean, and if it can stay abreast of detection-filing techniques like masking drugs, then the country's sporting competitiveness will decline.

So rightwing sports writer and rugby coach Alan Jones asked the inevitable question in the *Sun-Herald*: do we want "clean losers" or "tainted winners", and suggested that the latter is the "way of the future".

What nobody seriously addresses is why athletes risk cancer, strokes, diabetes, liver damage and kidney failure. They are victims of a society built on exploitation and competition, which offers individual rewards to working class people only through escape into sport. They are then under pressure to win at all costs from coaches, doctors, and sports officials.

It is capitalism that drives them to drugs. And the widespread use of steroids in countries like Russia is a reminder that capitalism prevails in the East as well as the West.

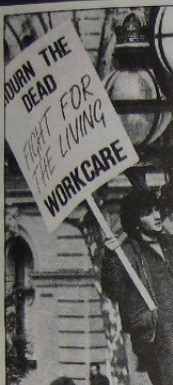
### THE UNIONS

## Compo battle flares up

NICK GREENER'S proposed changes to compo law in NSW might be an outrage, but they've put the issue back on the political agenda. And trade unionists are showing they have long memories.

10,000 workers rallied in Sydney on 7 June to demand a decent system. Drawn mostly from building unions, they marched to Parliament with banners and chants that condemned the Liberals.

But once they'd reached Parliament House, they also gave ALP leader Bob Carr and Trades Hall Secretary Michael



Rallying against compo cuts in Melbourne.

Easson's roasting.

They remembered Carr well as one of the Labor MPs who had legislated in 1987 to abolish workers' rights to sue for negligence, and to release bosses from any obligation to provide suitable employment to injured workers.

Carr's vacuous speech could scarcely be heard above the jeers.

Easson was also remembered as one of the Trades Hall crawlers who kept mum in 1987. His speech about condemning this and that was interrupted when he was hit between the eyes by a scrunched up leaflet. "The mouse that roared," said one wit.

One problem for the future is that the building unions that called the rally have a Duke of York strategy. Having marched the troops up one hill, they want to lead them down again. But it will take a serious mobilisation to stop the new compo attack.

In Melbourne, unions have held a march through city streets in protest against cuts to Work-care proposed by the state government, and have initiated a campaign of guerrilla stoppages.

### SCHOOLS

## Students still want justice

THE SIX Aboriginal students expelled from Brisbane's Kedron High School on 30 March, won a partial victory in mid-June.

The four boys had been expelled from all schools in

Queensland, and the four girls from Kedron after a clash with the Principal named Beilly. Director General Ian Matheson tried to deny the obvious, saying: "The action we took was proper and appropriate, and had nothing to do with race."

But this flew in the face of protests from the Aboriginal community and Legal Service, and from the parents, who also conflicted with a determination from the Human Rights Commission that the students should return to the school.

The State government panicked, and rushed through special legislation on 8 June to make sure Matheson's expulsions were legal. The ALP voted for the bill, and Mary Kelly of the Teachers' Union repeated the union's disgraceful support for the principal.

"The union supports its members at the school. Their concern is for the ongoing manageability of the school, as well as for the reputation of the staff."

It's a bit late for that. Principal Beilly's name is already mud.

In the face of continuing community protest, the State government finally declared that the students were only expelled from Kedron, not other schools. That's something, but justice will only be done when they're reinstated, and Beilly is sacked.

### MELBOURNE

## Building boss uses thugs

VIOLENCE ON a building site? Well, the media just naturally blame the BLE. But the liars are really transparent this time.

Knuckleduster wielding "security guards" beat up a group of building workers at a Melbourne building site on 20 June, injuring about 15. The media tried to link the incident to the forthcoming BWIU-FEDFA amalgamation vote.

But the real reason is that the ongoing campaign of steel-fixers for a hefty wage rise has hit builders hard.

It seems likely that developer Bruno Grollo wanted certain steel-fixers ambushed. But workers from a number of trades and sites were attacked by the goons, including a young apprentice who was thrown from the first floor.

Outraged building workers rallied and struck for a day, including all BWIU and FEDFA members from the Grollo site.

Grollo has now agreed to resolve the thugs and pay medical costs. The steel-fixers' campaign is continuing.

## ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

# The economy's in for a wild ride

WHAT A crushing blow! A recent poll shows the government running behind the Liberals on its favourite issue: economic management.

But it's no wonder, with the dollar sagging and every measure of trade performance looking disastrous.

The \$1.8 billion current account deficit announced on 19 June was only the latest in a series of body blows that have shaken the "world's greatest treasurer".

For most working class families the crisis has been felt most immediately in the form of ruinous mortgage rates for housing. But there is also the on-going problem of real wages that are now declining slowly, after the more rapid wage-cutting of the mid-1980s.

The central promises of Labor's Accord were to "maintain real wages over time" while reducing inflation and unemployment. The central thrust of its industry policies was to re-gear industry to exporting so we wouldn't be so dependent on primary commodities.

The link between the two was supposedly that restraining wages in the short term would boost profits and stimulate investment. Encouraged by the ACTU, workers went along with this plan for years, through all the wage "discounting" and super deals and two-tiered rip-offs. The minority who didn't, like the BLE, were hammered.

Today Labor's whole program is in a shambles. But why?

THE FIRST phase ("Accord Mk 1") seemed to work. Wages didn't rise, despite an economy rapidly pulling out of recession. All the benefits of the recovery went to boosting profits.

But for several years, the employers refused to invest their profits in productive industry. It all went on speculation and take-overs.

It took the dramatic fall in the dollar, which made it much easier to export, plus soaring commodity prices overseas, plus much more drastic wage-cutting under the later stages of the Accord, to create an atmosphere of "business confidence" among our rulers.

Finally investment began to rise. Again, for a short time, the



"Raise wages? I'll gouge your eyes out first."

Accord seemed about to bear fruit.

But there is a central law of capitalism that Hawke and Keating had forgotten. Capitalism is a system where success itself paves the way for new disasters.

Investment has meant stronger growth. So strong, in fact, that the narrowly based Australian economy has been unable to meet the strong demand for equipment which resulted.

Employment has risen, and the newly employed workers have spent a fairly high proportion of their wages. After all, why save when most of your bank interest is eaten up by inflation (still above 6 percent) and taxes? This meant consumer demand for things like appliances and cars was also too strong for domestic industry to meet. So the imports poured in.

A lot of government and Amedia propaganda focuses on consumer demand. That's so they can blame us for their problems. The cry that "we're living beyond our means" can be used as an argument for the on-going wage "restraint".

But quite clearly the central dilemma is the way that the investment boom has over-

The housing industry has slumped dramatically. Sydney, with its crash-room patterns, is not representative of the national pattern, so let's look at Melbourne. The percentage of dwellings sold at or before auction, which was up to 70 and 80 percent last year, has fallen well below 60 percent. Builders have seen their sales plummet.

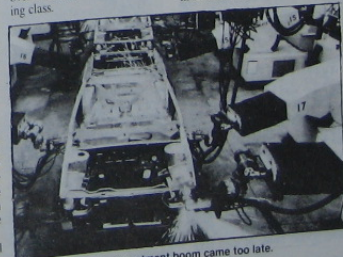
Westfield's shopping centres have reportedly had a disastrous April and May, and Coles' sales are stagnant. Used cars are hard to sell. So working class consumption has clearly been throttled back, although this hasn't shown up in some of the statistics yet because of a time lag in reporting.

The tax cuts which Labor has finally delivered will help slow the decline in our living standards. But let's not forget that the money the government had gouged out of us over several years as inflation has pushed us into higher tax brackets.

KEATING AND Hawke have cynically postponed the tax cuts to the last possible moment, so they could get as much as possible out of us through "bracket creep" and then hand back some crumbs just before an election.

This calculation now seems to have come unstuck, as Labor fears workers will spend the tax cuts rather than save them. One of the government's unspoken objectives in raising interest rates is to make sure we don't do that. For a lot of working class families, the tax cuts will simply mean a bit of money is available to hand straight over to the banks.

Meanwhile the bosses are still flush with cash, and despite the storm clouds on the economic horizon, are expected to boost investment by another 30 percent saving class.



Robots at work: the investment boom came too late.

## SOCIALIST ACTION

### EDITORIAL

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### CANBERRA

PO Box 17  
Jamison Centre,  
ACT 2614.

### WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne  
Mondays, 7.00  
Lincoln Hotel  
91 Cardigan St Carlton

Sydney  
Wednesdays, 7.00  
Metro Hotel (top floor)  
Bridge & George St City

Brisbane  
Thursdays, 7.30  
50 Baynes St  
West End

Canberra  
Thursdays, 6.00  
Bank Row  
Workers' Club, Civic



"Well, we took those suckers for a ride!" ACTU bureaucrats in the early years of the Accord.

cent in the coming financial year. Having started investing too late, they are going to stop too late.

The likelihood is that the continuing investment boom will mean a huge trade and current account deficits, which will mean continuing high interest rates.

That will mean a slump, maybe a severe recession. The boom itself creates the conditions for a bust. Isn't capitalism wonderful?

The likelihood of a slump is increased by the slowdown which is underway in the world economy. This will mean an end to the heady days of high commodity prices, and that will have a dampening effect on Australian exports.

In the face of this situation, workers all over the country are trying to protect themselves, by fighting back against wage cuts and worsening conditions. The Qantas mechanics, the air controllers, the car components workers have all shown that rank and file trade unionists are willing to act.

So have the combat struggles in NSW and Victoria.

But they're stuck with trade union leaders who are desperately trying to hold the struggle back. Kelly and Crean now openly identify their main task as "adverting a wages break-out".

They still try to tell us that their approach of doing deals with the government is more "realistic" than our ideas of militant action. Some of their fake-

left supporters even cling to the fantasy that the Accord can be a way of building working class power.

The statistics prove them wrong. Not only have we suffered economically under the Accord — a fact no one seriously tries to deny any more — but the union movement itself is beginning to crumble at the edges.

Union membership was expected to fall somewhat as a result of a changing workforce. Old, unionised industries like shipbuilding have declined and it is logical that it takes a while to organise new industries. But the Labor government and the Accord have accelerated the membership losses.

In 1976, 51 percent of the workforce was unionised. By 1982, after six years of brutal union-bashing by Fraser and two recessions, it had fallen only marginally to 49 percent.

During the next six years — under Labor — it is estimated to have fallen to 42 percent.

The reasons for this are simple enough. The unions are now run more completely from the top than they have ever been, with a minimum of rank and file mobilisation. The shop stewards and job delegates are less active in leading struggles, so there's less incentive for them to recruit new members. Wage fixation is sewn up in bureaucratic deals, so why should young workers feel a need to join the union?

The bosses, the Labor government and the ACTU have collaborated in creating an eco-

nomic program and wages system that ripped us off far more successfully than Malcolm Fraser ever managed to do. If we are going to break out of it, we need a new political and industrial approach.

We need a working class movement that takes as its starting point, not the needs of "the country" — we have seen that in practice this means the interests of the bosses — but the needs of the people who produce the wealth.

We need a wages strategy based on struggle and not elaborate deals that are too obscurely formulated for most workers to understand.

We need a political movement that fights to change the system, not help our exploiters operate more efficiently.

Changing the system would mean placing political power in the hands of the working class itself, not phoney "Labor" leaders. Today, it is only small groups of socialists who are fighting for an approach of this sort.

But as the new economic crisis begins to unfold, it is likely more people will start to consider it.

— Tom O'Lincoln

SOUTH COAST

Power to the workers!

POWER WORKERS on the NSW South Coast are fighting to save 600 jobs.

The Electricity Commission plans to close Tallawarra power station which has a workforce of 400. This means closing Huntley Mine which supplies it and employs 150 miners.

The Greiner government is behind the closures, though they plead ignorance. Elcom has wanted to close Tallawarra for some time, but was restrained by the government. Energy Minister Pickard promised it would stay open.

Now the government has broken its promise. Pickard sent the first few days following the announcement hiding in his office.

The coal miners would have no chance of finding another job, and Elcom doesn't bother to pretend otherwise. They are making farcical promises that the power station workers could be redeployed. But any redeployment would be to distant places.

All the South Coast miners have joined the fight to defend the jobs. 6000 workers struck

from 20 June. The power station workers are more isolated than the miners, mainly because of the defeats their union, the ETU, has suffered in recent years.

Following Bjelke-Petersen's victory in Queensland's SEQEB dispute, ETU members all over Australia accepted award restructuring in return for a 4 percent pay rise. Several NSW power stations shed jobs. Last year 1000 Elcom jobs were cut.

Now workers at other NSW power stations seem reluctant to support those at Tallawarra. Government propaganda about an oversupply of power is having some effect. Workers fear that taking action could expose them, too, to the risk of closure.

WAGE FIXING

Few dollars, no sense

WHAT'S HAPPENING about wages?

Well, the ACTU's latest plan has not been accepted by the Industrial Relations Commission, at least in principle. The full Wage Bench is now considering the actual amount they'll dole out, but a decision is unlikely before the beginning of August.

Meanwhile prices are rising every week.

What will we get? In exchange for award restructuring we'll get somewhere between \$20 and \$30. This will come in two instalments, with the second unlikely to arrive before mid-1990. That's if you have something you can restructure. Otherwise, you get nothing.

On a conservative estimate the new wage deal will leave us at least \$100 behind since 1983.

Overall the ACTU claims workers could get up to \$70 per week from the new system. But the *Business Review Weekly* is quite right to say that "wage earners will find that the reality is less rosy once inflation, the timing of wage rises, and continuing tax obligations are taken into account."

Rosa's BOOKSTORE

For the best of socialist, black and women's liberation literature and politics. At discount prices. Open 2 to 6 pm daily except Saturday and Monday 50 Baynes St, West End, Brisbane. Ph: 846 2145

Eastern Europe: looking for a way out

POLAND'S Communist Party must be feeling a little unwanted. In the country's June elections, Poles gave a crushing victory to the candidates of Solidarity.

In the lower house (*Sejm*), the Solidarity-backed "Citizen's Committee" secured all but one seat out of a possible 161. In the newly formed Senate, it won 92 percent of the seats.

This result appears to have genuinely shocked some of Poland's rulers. Prime Minister Rakowski was so demoralised that he opted not to contest the second round run-off election. Along with Interior minister Kiszczak he had failed to win 50 percent of the vote even though no other candidate was allowed to oppose him.

The election, which followed government-Solidarity talks in April, were designed to leave the Communist Party with a parliamentary majority. In exchange for the right to organise openly, Solidarity was to accept joint responsibility for economic reform.

This dubious agreement not only gave legitimacy to a parliament elected on an undemocratic basis, but it goes a long way toward getting the regime off the hook for Poland's economic mess. Solidarity's key political adviser Bronislaw Geremek put it bluntly:

"Solidarity bears full responsibility for the fate and future of the country, and stands ready to support reform-oriented policies and the change of the system."

THE MAP of oppositional politics may well be redrawn over the coming year, as Solidarity members who favour industry re-structuring clash with activists trying to defend workers' jobs and living standards.

Because it has brought the opposition's leaders closer to power without any mobilisation of the workers in struggle, the landslide election victory has only made them more cautious.

When it became clear that Rakowski and Kiszczak would receive a low vote, Lech Walesa described them as progressive. A cautious plea, as it was the same Rakowski who attacked Solidarity only last year when he announced the closure of the Gdansk shipyards.

Polish voters ignored Walesa's advice. Only two out of 35 national list candidates received the 50 percent quota, and there were only three outright victories in the other protected seats. This put further pressure on the union to find a legal or parliamentary solution to keep Rakowski and Co in the parliament.

How did the Polish regime get itself into this humiliating situation? It was desperation that forced General Jaruzelski to legitimise Solidarity and to proceed with political reform. The failure of his economic policies to control inflation, restock markets with consumer goods, cut the budget deficit and lower the foreign debt eventually pushed the regime to the negotiating table.

The decision to deal with Solidarity was by no means universally popular in the Party leadership. A Central Committee meeting in January turned into a public spectacle when Jaruzelski and the Politburo clashed with opponents over the proposed "round table" discussions.

The reformers only succeeded when Jaruzelski threatened to resign as Party leader. Again in April, a Politburo member and an April, a Politburo member and one of the state controlled unions (OPZZ) threatened to organise strikes if Solidarity was legalised.

THE PARTY's electoral debacle is likely to sharpen these differences within the ruling class. Conservative hard liners will agitate to curb Jaruzelski's influence and may try to sabotage the new parliament.

To prove the reformers are worth continuing with, Jaruzelski will have to attract greater investment from the west.

The law legalising Solidarity was an important gain for the



Lech Walesa: charging into Jaruzelski's arms.

working class. As well as being permitted to organise openly, the union gained the right to publish a daily and a weekly newspaper.

But while an opening now exists to rebuild in the work place, Solidarity's obsession with the elections has meant that organising workers has taken a lower priority.

According to one source, the union's national membership is as low as one million, one tenth of its former size. Still, despite a growing rift between its "political" and "trade union" wings, Solidarity remains the key working class organisation in Poland. Many workplace meetings have been held since legalisation.

Because legalisation took place based on laws from the martial law period, a legal strike is hard to organise. It's possible only after long delays and compulsory negotiations. This fact, combined with appalling living conditions and the failure of political reform to improve them, could lead to an unofficial strike wave similar to the two seen last year.

The mines in Silesia — the driving force last year — may be the flashpoint. Walesa would need more than his charisma to extinguish the fire this time round.

MEANWHILE in Hungary, a crowd of 250,000 assembled on 17 June for the reburial of Imre Nagy, who was executed by the pro-Soviet regime installed after the crushing of the 1956 uprising.

The ceremonial rehabilitation of Nagy is another turn of the screw for all those Communist Party members worldwide who swallowed the story that 1956

(Continued page 6)



Solidarity student activists confront the cops. There are lots of struggles ahead in Poland.



### Your taxes at work

WHEN naughty New Zealand banned nuclear shipping, the US announced it would punish the Kiwis by cutting off all intelligence briefings.

It never meant the threat seriously, though. The National Security Agency gets valuable South American and South Pacific information from NZ's listening station at Tangimoana. So it continues to send intelligence to its former ANZUS ally.

Alas, the US forgot to tell Australia. So America's loyal lackeys in Canberra wasted thousands of hours checking Australian intelligence before passing it on to the Kiwis to make sure that no US-sourced information slipped through. Another inspiring example of our taxes at work.

sit a manager to prevent him sneaking off to the bar at lunch time. A third had to mend a broken zipper on her boss's pants. One executive even got his secretary to mind his kids... then didn't return for three days!

notion of swindling the public won't change," he says. Yep... that's what we thought business ethics were all about.



## CHEAP SHOTS

### Piglets at play

WHERE do cops go on holiday? Of course: to a police state.

NSW's "Inesit" have been invited to join a South African tour that lets them patrol black townships with the local stormtroopers. The tour is organised by aptly named Pressure Point Travel.

Pressure Point manager Ken Oething, an exp-sock, said the "emphasis was on having fun". Let's hope no innocent people are shot in their homes amidst the gaiety.

What's next, the Beijing drive-your-own-tank holiday?



### Uneasy listening

AWA, which runs the Sydney radio station 2CH, has won a contract to supply Radio Beijing with 49 hours of "easy listening" music each week.

"We can guess what songs they'll be playing for Deng Xiaoping. It's My Parly... Silence Is Golden and Strangers in the Night... but definitely not Power To The People... Born Free or The Revolution."

### Women's role

MAKING the coffee isn't the only demeaning task given to women in the corporate world, according to a Wai Street Journal survey of jobs that secretaries have to do for their bosses.

One American secretary had to clean out her boss's smelly car when his catch of fish went rotten after an angling trip. Another was told to baby-

### Who needs ethics?

UNIVERSITY has offered its Master of Business Administration students "business ethics" as an elective subject for the coming semester. But not one budding corporate executive in the course has chosen to take it.

Says Professor Simon Dombberger: "On the demand side, ethics seem to be low on popularity." They sure are... a study last year found that pricing rigging on Australian sharemarkets was so common as to be "almost legitimate by default."

Queensland University's School of Management suburban Vic Doblinson doubts the value of "business ethics" courses anyway. "The

### Christian charity

SEVENTY cubs and brownies have been left with nowhere to meet after the Devonshire Avenue Baptist Church kicked them out of its hall in Hampshire, England.

"We don't want atheists in our hall," says Deacon Lee Emerson. "Only seven went to Sunday School."



### Student power

SEVEN-year-olds at a nursery school in Sheffield, England, have caused the departure of their headmistress by boycotting classes.

### May we quote you?

WE'RE going through a period in Australia like that which preceded the overthrow of Hitler.

— Alan Bond, on "Bond" bashing

HAPPY campers you are. Happy campers you have been. And... happy campers you will always be.

— US vice-president Dan Quayle to Simpsons

A PEOPLE without a state is like a shit in the rain.

— the words that earned Croatian Anto Kovacic six years jail in Yugoslavia

POLICEMEN are insulting about everyone. It's not especially against coons. You hear remarks about poofs, Paks, lesbians, women, students, the rich, the media, politicians, all foreigners, the Scots, the Irish... you name it. We hate everybody.

— policeman to UK TV producer Roger Giel

## CHINA IN CRISIS

IN 1919, amidst the defeat of the German revolution, Rosa Luxemburg responded to those who were gloating over the restoration of order: "Order reigns in Berlin! You ignorant stooges! Your order is built on sand. Tomorrow the revolution will rise up again, clashing its weapons, and will terrify you with the clarion call: I was, I am, I shall be!"

So too in China. The massacre, the arrests, the victimizations cannot solve the economic and social crisis which brought millions into the streets. In our feature article, Graham Willett looks at the recent events in China and their underlying causes.

# China: an order built on sand

WITH TANKS, machine-guns and tens of thousands of troops, China's rulers have crushed the movement for democratic reform that gripped their country for seven weeks.

Over several hours on the night of June 4, troops drawn mainly from the 27th Army rampaged through Tiananmen Square and central Beijing, shooting wildly and crushing barricades and protesters alike beneath their tanks. For the next week they continued randomly shooting and beating people until the city had been terrorized into submission.

For all its military might, the army did not find it easy to win. Even after the savagery of the troops was clear to all, citizens still went into the streets to resist. Any soldier foolish enough to stray from his unit was beaten or lynched. In the south of the city, scores of tanks and troop trucks were set ablaze, either by local residents, mutinying soldiers or both.

The workers and students of Beijing did not stand alone. All across the country protests swelled on the news of the massacre.

In Shanghai, thousands of people threw up barricades, occupied highways and rail lines and brought the city to a total halt for five days. Bus drivers went on strike; railway workers refused to sell tickets or allow trains to operate. When a train ploughed through a demonstration, killing six, it was torched by the crowd.

In Chengdu, hundreds died as police and soldiers fired on rioters who had burnt a whole city block to the ground. Xian residents occupied the old part of the city. Nanjing students seized the Yangtze River bridge for a day while workers were on strike.

No major city escaped the storm of protest but as time passed movement activists, recognizing the great danger that they faced and seeing no way forward, called for a retreat. Nearly half the arrests reported in the first two weeks were from outside Beijing and leaders rightly decided against "unnecessary sacrifices".

Various attempts have been made to explain the savagery of the troops in Beijing. Were the troops brutalized peasants, brain-washed or drugged? Perhaps. But the fact is that the government chose to unleash these troops, and for a reason.

Riot control measures would probably have cleared Tiananmen Square—the numbers of protesters had dwindled signif-



Deng Xiaoping (inset): his brutal methods won't solve China's problems.

icantly by the start of June. But the students were only part of the problem. Around them stood a movement of millions. The aim of the government was to smash this movement to pieces by killing its leaders, arresting its activists and terrorizing its supporters.

IN THE end military force won out, both in Beijing and the provinces. Against unarmed citizens that was inevitable. But this was only the beginning of the terror. The army and the secret police moved through the campuses and factories, rounding up anyone suspected of political activity.

National television showed scenes of people being bullied and humiliated by the army. Other programs broadcast the names and faces of activists who had been turned in.

The working class was singled out for special attention. In Beijing, the Workers' Autonomous Union, which had been set up by workers who supported the democratic movement, was reported to have been

wiped out during the military crackdown. Nine leaders of the Shanghai branch, who had taken up the leadership of the national organization, were arrested at the end of the second week of the repression. A small support demonstration demanding their release was the last major political action in that city.

The official union, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which had earlier endorsed the movement and donated say on to it, now demanded that workers stay on the job and work to eradicate all traces of the illegal union.

Many activists appear to have escaped arrest by seeking refuge with families and friends. But they have made it clear that they see this as a retreat, rather than a surrender. While they cannot stand up to the repression that the regime has unleashed, they intend to remain in hiding until further opportunities for action present themselves.

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FROM PAGE 5

## Eastern Europe

was a "fascist putsch". The Hungarian government has now admitted that the rising was justified.

Unfortunately, political liberalisation in Hungary as in the USSR is accompanied by economic policies which mean attacks on the working class. Unemployment is to be allowed to rise, while the abundance of goods in the shops is little consolation to the large numbers of workers who can't afford to buy them.

Bond Corporation has fol-

lowed up its acquisition of a Hungarian brewery with a joint venture agreement to run a new telephone system. We expect this system will be run very much the same as the phone company Alan Bond owns in Chile.

In Czechoslovakia and East Germany, activist groups are still fighting to force some cessation of those countries' old-style stalinist regimes.

The Prague government has begun drafting a new constitution which pointedly reaffirms the "leading role of the party" and has repeated claims that the reforming leader of 1968, Alexander Dubcek, was an agent of foreign powers.

After a wave of demonstrations in January, commemorating the self-immolation of student Jan Palach in 1969 in protest against the Russian invasion, a number of people got stiff jail sentences for "incitement to rebellion".

The "Movement for Civic Liberty" (HOS) has issued a manifesto signed by 100 well-known personalities. The statement calls for democracy, protection of the environment and independent trade unions. Unfortunately, it also follows the current trend in Eastern Europe to rely on market mechanisms to solve economic problems.

In East Germany organised dissent is beginning to make itself felt, with reports of repeated student demonstrations in Leipzig and Dresden.

Unfortunately, decades of stalinism have convinced most

people in Eastern Europe that "socialism" is a dead end, and that the answer lies in copying western capitalism.

But there are dissidents who don't see it that way, including the East German group "Socialism From Below" which endorsed a statement last November declaring that so-called "market socialism" can "only mean a sharp decline in the living standard in our countries, inflation and the selling out of social gains".

The statement calls for solidarity "with all those who are struggling for their rights and against repressive apparatuses, whether in Gdansk, Reinhausen or South Africa, who are fighting for international democratic socialism."

— Philip Whitefield



## CHINA IN CRISIS

Leaders who fled Beijing a week after the massacre told Western reporters that they would devote themselves to building and strengthening underground networks with the aim of bringing down the government.

They are displaying the same courage, though on an even greater scale, that they displayed after the defeat of the campaign of December 1986. Then, too, they continued to organize and to seek out the political lessons of their campaign and its defeat. As one government official said at the time, "They have learnt their lessons well, and they now know which methods would work and which would not."

And there are things to be learnt from the latest upheavals. Not least is the fact that the Chinese people are capable of fighting with enormous courage and initiative for demands in which they believe. The struggle for democracy in China need never again be the work of small bands of dissident intellectuals.

**WHILE nothing can detract from the courage of the students and their supporters, the fact is they did make mistakes — the defeat they have suffered was not unavoidable. Perhaps the worst mistake was to let slip the opportunity presented by the two week period between the declaration of martial law and the massacre.**

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The ruling group was obviously deeply divided during this period over how best to deal with the social and political crisis. Yet while the party leaders debated whether to use the army or not the movement stood still, mesmerized apparently by the factional struggle within the government, hoping for the triumph of the liberals.

Had the students directed their supporters towards the factories to win the workers to a more active role in the movement — strikes and occupations on a wider scale, the pressure might have cracked the party wide open.

The army should not have been allowed to sit quietly on the highways, nor to leave the city. Agitators might have been able to break individual soldiers from their units or break whole units from their commanders. That would have given the movement the basis for self-defence, and perhaps have made military intervention impossible.

And the countryside remained quiet. Certainly many peasants are very happy with the regime's economic policies and do not meddle in politics; but there may well have been scope to win over the less well-off.

These are tactical mistakes and it is no shame that the Chinese students made them. The movement for human liberation — for real socialism — always advances on the basis of its mistakes. In the course of great struggles, strategies and tactics are tried and found wanting and others tried, until over time there develops a way forward.

It is the role of socialists both to support the Chinese movement and to help it draw out the lessons of its activities.

The democratic movement was very limited in its demands: "full freedom of speech, of association and of the press" as Wang Dan wrote. There was no call for the overthrow of the government, only the removal of its more conservative members.

Yet there is little doubt that many of the best activists are Marxists who retain a healthy contempt both for Western capitalism and for the Chinese bureaucracy. The Internationale was the anthem of the movement. What was lacking was an understanding of the true nature of the Chinese social system — not socialism as it claims to be, but bureaucratic state capitalism.

**THERE HAVE** been critiques of Chinese society in the past that came close to this analysis in the past. Wang Xizhe, one of the leading activists of the Democracy Wall movement of 1978-81, raised the spectre of a "dictatorship of the Communist bureaucrats" and of a "bourgeoisie state without a bourgeoisie".

If activists can clarify and build upon this sort of analysis they will have a much clearer role of their real task — the overthrow of state capitalism in China, and the creation of a new social order.

What has also become clear in the aftermath of the massacre is who are the real friends of the Chinese students and workers and their movement for democracy. Millions of people around the world were revolted by the cold-blooded murder of thousands of peaceful protesters. Tens of thousands took to the streets in dozens of cities condemning the Chinese government, and calling for diplomatic and economic sanctions.

Western governments, however, were

much more cautious. US President George Bush, finally broke his silence. He urged "restraint" and imposed a ban on arms sales — quietly ignoring the fact that there are no arms deliveries pending.

Margaret Thatcher was "appalled" but did not show any enthusiasm for offering any sort of refuge for Britain's Hong Kong subjects who she is keen to hand over to the Chinese government in 1997.

China's opening up to world trade and investment is like a golden egg to Western capitalists and their governments are anxious about to risk upsetting the goose that lays it.

In the Eastern bloc the response was mixed. The Hungarian government, remembering the use of Russian tanks against the people in 1956, condemned Beijing.

The Soviet press unreservedly reprinted official Chinese government dispatches, while Mikhail Gorbachev maintained an embarrassed silence for two weeks then called for "dialogue". It was left to dissidents opposed to Gorbachev to join Chinese students in a protest rally.

Cuba greeted the bloodbath, denouncing the students as "counter-revolutionary", "anti-socialist" and "bourgeois deviants". This ought not to surprise us. Fidel Castro has a history of supporting state violence against democratic movements.

He backed the Russian tanks against Czech reformers in 1968 and Polish tanks against Solidarity in 1981. In Africa he set his own troops to help the murderous Ethiopian dictatorship crush the Eritrean liberation movement.

China's students will look in vain for an real support from either the bureaucrats who rule in the East or from their counterparts in the West.



## The roots of the crisis

**UNDERLYING** the rebellion, and the divisions within the ruling class, is a deep-seated economic malaise.

By the late 1970's, it was clear to a section of the Chinese ruling class that Maoism had failed in its attempt to build a modern independent industrial economy.

Mao Zedong's strategy was to pour investment into heavy industry, keep the country isolated from the world economy, and drive the people to produce rather than offering material incentives. As far as possible economic decision-making was concentrated in the hand of government bureaucrats.

While there had been real economic development, growth rates were declining, and China was falling behind its Asian rivals like Taiwan, South Korea and Malaysia.

Labour productivity was dismally low by world standards — and the quality of output was even worse. After thirty years of single-minded concentration on the development of heavy industry, the crucial steel sector was a mess. China's steel output had dropped from 64 per cent of Japan's total in 1956, to 24 per cent in 1975. And of that, only 20 per cent was of world market quality.

The clique that ran the economy had blindly poured ever more funds into investment — well beyond what a small backward economy could absorb. Massive factories sprang up, assuming that sufficient concrete and timber could be found to complete them. But power shortages, lack of coal and oil, and shortages of raw materials hindered production.

Official estimates indicated that fully 20 to 30 per cent of industrial capacity was under-utilised because of these bottlenecks. A quarter of all enterprises were operating at a loss.

The regime itself calculated that one-third of all investment between 1949 and 1978 was wasted.

Because of this, and despite all their sacrifices, the Chinese people continued to endure very low standards of living, especially in the countryside. As one Party secretary said, "We have been building socialism for thirty years but still many people in the rural areas do not have enough to eat and are poorly clothed".

**ONE HUNDRED million peasants** (about 10 per cent of the total) were as poor in 1980 as they had been in 1949, according to the *People's Daily*.

Two and a half times that number could neither read nor write. Only one in fifteen peasants had enough education to be able to operate basic farm machinery. Women remained viciously oppressed and superstition was rampant.

The problem of how to deal with all this preoccupied the ruling class all through the 1970's. A power struggle erupted around the dying, senile Mao Zedong, which was resolved some two years after his death with the triumph of Deng Xiaoping.

turn to page 10

**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 be organised 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 worldwide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against others. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

### 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, building a united revolutionary movement, 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 used to change it. In the unions, social movements and wherever people are fighting for a better world, socialists are in the front line. If that's where you want to be, join us today!

## CHINA IN CRISIS



A cyclist hits the dirt as bullets fly.

Deng remained committed to the aim of strong modern China, but he was prepared to admit that this would take at least to the middle of the 21st century to achieve.

More importantly, he was prepared to adapt new methods. The state monopoly on investment and trade was to be replaced by a partial privatisation of the economy. China's isolation from the world economy was reversed and foreign investment and technology were welcomed. The state plan was reigned in, and market forces and enterprise autonomy were allowed to flourish.

The first stage in the process of change came in 1979 with the freeing up of agriculture. Prices for rural products were increased and local markets were set up for the sale of output over and above state quotas. The intention was that rural production would generate profits that could be invested in light industry.

Peasants were allowed to leave the communes, and within two years 90 percent of them were farming on private family plots. Ten percent of peasants moved out of agriculture altogether and into other rural activities such as processing, commerce and services.

The initial results seemed wildly successful. Rural productivity and output skyrocketed. But soon enough problems emerged. After a lifetime of misery, those peasants who were doing well (which was by no means all of them) preferred to spend their new wealth on homes, televisions and videos and other consumer goods.

**THIS HAD** two negative consequences. One was that there was a marked deterioration in China's balance of trade with those countries who were supplying these goods. More dangerous was the slump in rural investment and the decline in its infrastructure.

Because the family plots were so small, the use of machinery, fertilisers and pesticides declined. Without the communes to take responsibility, major works like irrigation fell into disrepair. Grain, which was still subject to strict state pricing controls, became a less attractive crop and production fell year after year.

In an effort to deal with these problems, the regime now allows peasants to sell their leases officially all land remains state property. The hope is that the more efficient

But very few of these changes have been put into practice. Chinese workers retain a reasonably strong shop-floor organization in their factories, and are often able to ensure that managerial authority is not exercised against the interest of workers. Sackings are rare.

Only 5 percent of workers are on the contracts that are meant to have replaced job permanence. Bonuses are still often distributed equally rather than by productivity.

Strikes, go-slows and occasional violence against uncooperative bosses are the tactics workers usually use to resist attacks on their wages and conditions.

The danger in pushing ahead with the next stage of the reforms is that this involves freeing up prices and abolishing subsidies on food, rents and other essentials. Working class opposition is considered almost inevitable.

Where China's rulers go to from here is far from clear. Certainly the repression of the democratic movement solves nothing. It does not address the issues that have divided the ruling class. Nor has the defeat been so crushing that further resistance is ruled out. The students are underground and millions of people have tasted their own power.

The butchers of Beijing may yet have occasion to ponder the words of Rosa Luxemburg's comrade in arms, Karl Liebknecht:

*"Every drop of blood is a seed of discord for today's victors, like dragons' teeth, because from them will grow those who will avenged the fallen. The vanquished of today shall be the victors of tomorrow, for they will learn from defeat."*



Hongkong protest: solidarity spread around the world.

farmers will buy out the less efficient, who will become either landless labourers or move into rural urban factories.

The freeing up of the industrial economy ran into the same mix of success and failure. With the economy freed from the dead hand of the bureaucracy, growth rates rose sharply. Gross National Product doubled in the space of ten years.

But the regime now found itself subject to the vagaries of the world economy — and it didn't like it. So it zigged and zagged between policies.

When imports grew at too fast a rate for the economy to absorb or pay for, the government cracked down. This happened three times in the past decade. When inflation took off in 1987-88, price controls were restored on many goods; government spending was cut and there were efforts to assert a greater control over investment.

Faced with all the problems that their successes have generated, and ground down by the constant policy changes, the Chinese ruling class has become deeply divided. There is no obvious support for any return to the discredited Maoist model of development. Rather differences are over how wide to open the doors to the West and how fast to push forward the pace of reform.

Zhao Ziyang wanted to keep up the rate of change, especially in the area of price reform, allowing some parts of the country (especially the coast region) to set the pace, even at the risk of alienating those sections of the populace and the ruling class that were falling behind. Li Peng wanted a more controlled and cautious process of development.

**THE REGIME'S** great fear was the potential power of the working class. Workers had as little control over production under Deng as they had under Mao. But they were capable of considerable resistance. The most important reforms announced for the urban economy have basically foundered on the opposition of the working class.

The abolition of job security and wage equality and a shift of control over enterprises to local managers had been announced with much fanfare in 1984. Managers were given the right to hire and fire and to decide on wage levels and the distribution of profits.

## INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS

# Fighting back at Cockatoo Island

**THE COCKATOO Island Dockyard workers continue to inspire the Sydney labour movement with their strike and occupation.**

A mass meeting on 2 June decided to continue the campaign in defence of jobs. The strike has been going on since 10 May, and has disrupted the refitting schedules of several navy ships.

Since ship building work ceased in 1982, the dockyard has been used for refitting Oberon submarines. The worksite is operated by CoDock, a subsidiary of ANI Engineering, which leases the dockyard from the Commonwealth government. In April 1987, the Department of Defence decided to close the dockyard, but gave the workers an undertaking that it would stay open until at least 1992.

In May this year the Defence Minister, Kim Beazley, gave ANI notice to quit by December 1990. Development options include a plan by Kerry Packard to turn the place into a playground for the rich.

The Hawke government expects to collect \$120 million from selling the island, and is prepared to dump 1500 jobs in exchange.

The workers say their skills are not in demand elsewhere. The dole will be the only option for many, especially those over 50. Many of them have been at Cockatoo Island for 20 years or more. In 1987 when the closure was first planned, the workers were offered a million, few thousand dollars redundancy. Now CoDock will not even talk to their union.

The strikers have been kicked in the pants by the NSW Labour Council. Days before the June 2 mass meeting, the Disputes Committee recommended a return to work. At a CoDock meeting on June 1, following delegates were gagged, and the meeting quickly closed, because the delegates wanted to move a motion of support for the Cockatoo Island workers.

The strikers voted to stand firm and reject the Labour Council recommendation. They are determined to stay out indefinitely, but will need support from other unionists.

They're visiting workplaces and union meetings in several



The fighting workers of Cockatoo Island.

States asking for support. Already maritime unions have held a 24 hour strike, while dockyard workers at Sydney's Garden Island and in Western Australia, who would potentially get extra work if Cockatoo is closed, have struck levies to raise money for the strike fund.

Public Service Association members invited strikers to address their annual conference, and hundreds of them marched down to the June 2 mass meeting with a message of support. They also collected \$1400.

The NSW Teachers' Federation leadership has been stand-offish, but hopefully rank and file pressure will force them to let a speaker from Cockatoo address the union's approaching annual conference.

**Donations and messages of support should be sent to: Cockatoo Island Workers' Shop Committee, c/o Fed. Ship Painters and Dockers Union, 36 Mort St, Balmain NSW.**

**DOCKS**



## More jobs to go

**THE THREAT** of industrial "reform" looms over the Australasian waterfront.

As a result of the Commonwealth government's proposed deal to "clean up" the wharves, the Waterside Workers' Federation is set to lose about a third of its membership. The union will have to give up the gang system where they had some control over employment, in favour of

hiring by individual employers. And the wharves will probably be forced to accept some sort of casual workforce.

Until very late in the game, the WWF leadership did little except make militant noises. In practice, they were right behind the main changes. National Secretary Tas Bull says they're only "accepting the inevitable" but in their submission to the Inquiries into the industry, the WWF officials actively promoted the idea of job cuts and increased productivity.

The union has already lost 70 percent of its members since 1960s, as a result of containerisation. The WWF leaders at that time traded off jobs for job security. When recession hit during the 1970s, the out of work wharves had nowhere to go but the dole queues.

And having accepted this sort of deal once, it has been to its own gain for the union to accept it again.

The new deal will allow for permanent stand down provisions in the wharves' award. The union is going through the motions of opposing that, but it has agreed to take the issue to the Industrial Relations Commission and abide by the decision.

Encouraged by the WWF's weak stand, the employers got cocky and began demanding the right to impose compulsory redundancies, and insisting that permanent stand down clauses be effectively agreed to in advance.

Finally the union took action, with thousands of wharves around the country engaging in stoppages.

The watersiders find themselves fighting alone. This tragic situation could have been avoided if the WWF officials had shown more solidarity with other workers in recent years.

One factor in the minds of the WWF's officials and members is that if they did try to resist the changes, they would be isolated. But if they face such a prospect now, it has a lot to do with the officials' behaviour over six years of the Labor government.

When the government moved to smash the BLF, the Wharves' leadership did little although the members certainly sympathised with the Builders' Labourers.

And when the Miners' Federation found itself facing a cruel industrial restructuring, Tas Bull warned them not to expect a "blank cheque" from the Waterside Workers.

Had the WWF officials acted in solidarity with other unions under attack, the industrial climate might be different today.

There is still plenty of fight in the union's rank and file. They came out in support of the Cockatoo Island workers, they're involved in the struggle against the Greiner government's attacks on compo, and they are still prepared to stop work in protest against nuclear ships.

If the wharves are to get the best terms out of the coming round of restructuring — and unfortunately better terms now or later can be hoped for — it seems all by building on the traditions of militant action, rather than more cosy deals with the Labor government.

— Liz Ross

Socialism by the sea

THEY CAME in by car, bus and train from all the eastern capital cities to attend the Socialist Action winter school, held at Aulhammer on the South Coast. The weather was freezing and the building hard to heat, so it was just as well we had some top notch political talks to listen to.

Robert Tierney from Canberra told us about an epic strike at GMH in Melbourne in 1964. Despite previous ethnic tensions, all the migrant groups pulled together in a massive strike in defiance of the anti-union Penal Powers, and it took some truly outrageous sabotage by Trades Hall and some of the union officials to finally get them back to work.

Rick Kuhn took up the question of what the next federal Liberal government will be like. In a talk called "The ruling class re-thinks", he outlined the development of new rightwing economic and industrial policies among the traditional party of the capitalists. The Libs are likely to come to power as the country enters an economic recession, and at that point the fake co-operation of the Accord will give way to more open head-kicking by governments.

In order to explain how not to fight back against the head-kicking to come, Janey Stone regaled on Saturday evening with an account of the terrorist tactics of the early Russian revolutionaries. They were courageous, and once even blew up a Tsar, but it took the mass movement built by the Bolsheviks to put an end to the old regime.

Tom O'Lincoln told us about a little-known but very important South American Marxist: Jose Carlos Mariategui. In addition to being the founder of the Peruvian socialist movement, Mariategui made the first Marxist analysis of a Latin American country. He was a revolutionary internationalist, and supporter of the early Comintern.

And Carole Ferrer and Ric Colsey highlighted different aspects of the German revolutionary movement after World War 1. There were bracing walks by the sea, table tennis to warm up again, and we invented some new songs. Come along to our summer camp and hear them!

For next issue

Deadlines for Socialist Action number 42 are as follows: early deadline 14 July, late deadline 21 July.

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HISTORY, said Karl Marx, repeats itself and the second time round it's a farce.

Not that the farce is very funny for Tim Anderson. Disbested was the most common initial reaction when news spread that the NSW police had charged him with the murder of the victims of the Hilton Bombing of 1978.

Anderson is already known as a victim of one of the biggest frame-ups in Australian legal history. With fellow Ananda Marga members Ross Dunn and Paul Alister, he was charged in 1978 with the attempted murder of a Nazi.

In the two ensuing trials, the prosecution based its case on police verbals and the fantasies of a mentally deranged police informer, Richard Seary.

Seventeen prosecution witnesses conspired to give false evidence. This perjury inside the court was amplified outside by a hysterical press campaign. Combined with the urgings of the trial judge, the pressure upon the jurors was overwhelming.

The first trial produced a hung jury. At the second trial in 1979 Anderson, Dunn and Alister were convicted and got 18 years.

Appeals to higher courts were fruitless.

The case was finally reopened in 1985 largely as a result of agitation by two journalists. Tom Molombay and Irina Dunn, and State MP George Petersen. NSW Attorney-General Paul Landa established a judicial inquiry by Justice Wood into the convictions.

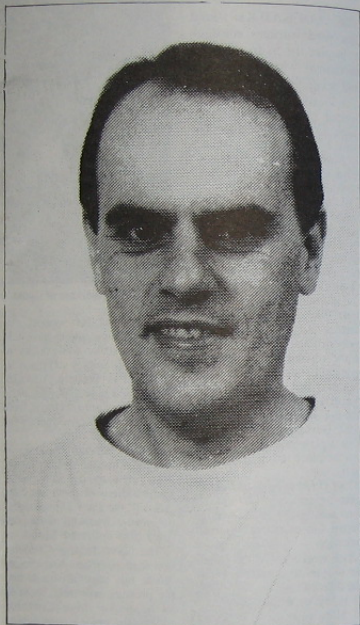
Wood's report was insipid. It found a "doubt" about the convictions where it should have found a frame-up. It turned a blind eye to the verbalising activities of Special Branch, which then included the famous killer, Detective Roger Rogerson.

But it could not avoid the conclusion that Seary's evidence was useless.

Anderson, Dunn and Alister were pardoned and released after seven years in prison and received a lousy \$100,000 compensation. But now another frame-up is underway.

The 1979 trial was peppered with allegations that the three defendants had placed the Hilton bomb, which killed two council workers and a cop. But the police didn't lay charges, not because the charge was absurd, but for other charges were equally absurd — but probably because Paul Alister insisted he could prove he was in Adelaide at the time of the bombing.

It's a recycled frame-up



Tim Anderson: victim of outrageous persecution

So this time they're proceeding against Anderson alone. They've abandoned Seary, and instead are standing over some petty crims to get them to put words in Tim Anderson's mouth. This evidence, too, will have to be amended as one of these witnesses mentioned his story at the aborted 1982 Hilton inquest.

The cops are once again using the media, "Sub justice" counts for nothing as the police conduct regular press conferences to air their slanders.

But why this big production? The cops are motivated partly by hatred of Anderson, who continues to campaign against political police. They also fear the faint chance the Greiner government might look into the Hilton bombing, and they know the evidence points to Richard Seary,

who was experienced in making and using bombs in opal mining.

A government inquiry might reveal how the police botched the investigation and then decided to frame Alister, Anderson and Dunn.

By charging Anderson now they have prevented any judicial inquiry into the facts of the bombing. A criminal court will receive only snippets of dubious information that form part of the police case.

The NSW judiciary is willing to go along with this travesty of justice, just as they were last time. Fortunately Tim has friends and supporters, and they've set up the Campaign Exposing the Frame-up of Tim Anderson (CEFTA). You can write to them care of PO Box 8737, Sydney South 2000.

— Denis Alop

JUST TWO centuries ago a crowd of poor Parisians attacked the Bastille, the hated Bastille.

Having taken control they beheaded its Governor, De Launay, and paraded his head around the city on a pike.

On 14 July this year, De Launay's modern equivalents — people like Maggie Thatcher and French President Francois Mitterand — are gathering to celebrate the bicentenary of those events.

They will be raising their glasses to revolution, but to one they can heartily endorse: a bourgeois revolution. Between 1789 and 1799 the power of the French monarchy and aristocracy was overthrown, and the capitalist class seized power.

Before 1789 politics was dominated by the king, while economic power was divided between the landowning class and the new capitalists, whose economic strength was on the increase. Both classes chafed under the king's rule.

The landowners wanted a piece of the political action, and sought to shore up their social position. The bourgeoisie wanted political control, to open up more space for capitalism to develop.

INITIALLY the spark for the revolution came from the aristocrats, who forced the king to call a medieval-style "parliament" in an attempt to raise finance. But when it was called the bourgeoisie seized the political initiative.

They wanted moderate democratic reforms. But when the aristocracy and the monarchy refused to compromise, a section of the bourgeoisie turned to the masses. Society began to move rapidly to the left.

In 1793-94 the middle sized and small capitalists led the struggle against the aristocrats and the more conservative forces from among the bourgeoisie. There were three main groups among the revolutionaries: the *Montagnards*, the *Jacobins* and the *sans-culottes*.

Danton represented the *Montagnards*. His interest in abolishing feudalism was to acquire land and derive income from it, in order to live a life of ease as a capitalist.

Further to the left were the *Jacobins*, whose best known representative was Robespierre. This group can best be described as independent producers, on their way to becoming capitalists. Typically they were small



Demanding the king be deposed: a painting by Francois Gerard.

When France was gripped by revolution

scale bosses with a number of employees under them.

The *sans-culottes* ranged from the poorest sections of the population to small business. Around 45 percent of the revolutionary commissioners in Paris were artisans. About 18 percent were shopkeepers, while wage earners and other workers made up only 10 percent.

It was these members of the revolutionary committees who were the main activists when Robespierre was in power. They carried out the mass executions of the aristocracy and their sympathisers — the "terrible hammer blows" as Karl Marx put it, which rid France of feudalism.

One prominent *sans-culotte*, Hebert, had demanded an intensification of the Terror, more rigid economic controls, an all-out attack on religion, and transfer of real power to the activist citizens of Paris.

In March 1794 Robespierre's Committee of Public Safety, the virtual government of France, arrested and guillotined the Hebertist forces. Then to eliminate the forces to his right, Robespierre sent the followers of Danton to the guillotine the following month.

THE COMMITTEE of Public Safety had agreed under pressure from the masses to control prices. But under capitalism, price control always goes together with wage control. Having wiped out the leading *sans-culottes*, Robespierre felt confident to publish a decree cutting wages, in some cases by over 50 percent.

At the same time he threatened all his remaining enemies, including other *Jacobins*, with the guillotine. But at this point the capitalist class decided the revolution had gone too far. On the 9 day of the month of Thermidor (according to the new calendar introduced by the revolution), Robespierre was forced from power. The next day he was executed.

The one force that could have saved him from death, and the revolution from shifting back to the right, was the *sans-culottes*. But on 9 Thermidor they were in the streets demonstrating against Robespierre and his wage decree.

Robespierre had seemed all-powerful, but he had really been balancing between contradictory social forces. His capitalist economic measures cost him the support of the lower classes, and this put him at the mercy of the right wing forces among the bourgeoisie.

As one historian says "Robespierre paid with torture and death for the inescapable contradictions of his politics." It was an experience to be repeated many times since, the best known recent example being Chile's Salvador Allende.

The birth of capitalist society in France, as elsewhere, was a violent affair. So when was a Thatcher and Mitterand raise their glasses, remember just what they are celebrating.

It is a reminder that the next major step forward in human history, the creation of socialism, will also require a revolutionary transformation.

— John Pussant

## SEXUAL POLITICS

**I'M a faggot and I'm proud of it!** With declarations such as this New York's Greenwich Village exploded, twenty years ago this June, into three nights of rioting. Gay Liberation was born.

The riots followed a police raid on a gay bar—the Stonewall Inn—which was frequented by poorer lesbians and gay men, including many blacks and drag queens.

As the cops closed the bar and made their arrests, a crowd gathered. They jeered as the paddy wagon arrived, and hurled stones and bottles at the police, who barricaded themselves in the Inn.

The crowd then set the Inn alight and took over the streets, building barricades and shouting slogans of gay power and gay pride.

In the wake of the riots, Gay Liberation Fronts grew up around the world. They were not the first organizations to fight the oppression of lesbians and gay men. There had been a long history of gay law reform groups, one of the earliest and best known being the Scientific Humanitarian Committee set up by Magnus Hirschfeld in Germany in 1897.

The 1950s had seen a number of "homophile" groups, like the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society formed in the U.S. Moderate organizations like these, which restricted themselves to "helping" gays and seeking sympathetic friends in high places, were joined in the early 1960s by more militant groups like SIR (Society for Individual Rights).

**T**HE SOCIALIST movement too has a history of supporting gay rights. Around the turn of the century, the German Social Democratic Party defended Oscar Wilde and supported gay law reform.

The Russian revolution abolished legal penalties for homosexuality, as part of a general assault on sexual oppression. Abortion was legalized, divorce laws loosened, and attempts made to socialize housework through communal kitchens, laundries and nurseries.

So what was so special about the new movement? Its style, for a start.

Groups like SIR had taken direct action—for example picketing the US State Department over discriminatory employment practices. But SIR's picketers still emphasized respectability, wearing neat clothes to emphasize that they could get a job

# Stonewall: a vision of liberation



A rally in New York marks the anniversary of Stonewall

with the State Department if it weren't for discrimination.

By contrast, gay liberation was as provocative as possible, for example disrupting lectures by anti-gay psychiatrists with noisy chants and egg-throwing.

More important was the movement's critique of society. Gay Lib saw itself as part of the wider radical movement of the time. The struggles of blacks and women were a big influence, while the GLF name was taken from the National Liberation Fronts in Algeria and Vietnam.

**A**CCORDING TO the GLFs, gay oppression was not simply a blot on an otherwise acceptable society. It was deeply rooted in the system.

Gay sexuality was a challenge to the systematic sexual repression of the capitalist system. In particular, it challenged the rigid gender roles allocated to women and men, and brought into question the "naturalness" of getting married and having children as a lifestyle for everyone.

Gay Lib very quickly split up into a multitude of groups. Many lesbians, offended by the sexism of men in the movement, moved off into Women's Liberation or into their own separatist groupings. Divisions emerged over the extent to which you could win worthwhile reforms within the system.

The gay movement declined in parallel with the wider radical movement. Where they once

called for liberation, gay activists today confine themselves largely to law reform, AIDS support, and activities within the gay "community" built around bars and other commercial venues.

But the movement had a lasting impact. It is largely due to its efforts that we are accepted more today than twenty years ago, and that a gay scene which gives us somewhere to meet can exist relatively openly.

The movement also made an invaluable contribution to the struggle for socialism. In the wake of Stalin's counter-revolution in Russia, repressive laws and attitudes to sexuality had been re-established. The revolution's commitment to sexual freedom was largely buried, in Russia and in the Communist parties elsewhere.

**A**LONG WITH the women's movement, gay liberation helped revive that commitment. Gay Lib put flesh and blood around socialist ideals of sexual freedom, and challenged the prejudices against homosexuality that had lingered among even the best socialists.

It also highlighted the importance of fighting anti-gay ideas as part of overcoming the divisions that weaken the working class.

Socialism also has something to contribute to gay struggles: a strategy for liberation. Sex roles and the family are vital to capitalism, because they insure a authoritarian environment for them to grow up in. So a new social system is necessary to end sexual repression.

Within capitalism, the class struggle provides an environment where ideas can be challenged and changed. For example, British miners led the 1985 Gay Pride March in London, after being supported by lesbians and gays in their long strike, and BLF leaders supported a pro-gay motion at the 1987 Fightback Conference in Melbourne.

And it's only in the class struggle that we can build a movement powerful enough to overthrow the class society which breeds sexual repression.

Twenty years after Stonewall, the vision of liberation is as valid as ever. To achieve it we need the kind of movement that made Gay Lib possible: a mass movement that challenges every aspect of capitalist society.

—Robert Stannish

## SEXUAL POLITICS



Marching against the Right to Life, Melbourne, 1973.

# Fighting for the right to choose

**M**ASS RALLIES for abortion rights in Italy and America have recently reminded us that under capitalism, no reform we win is ever safe from attack.

We will have to fight for these rights again before we're through, so its useful to review the issues and the experience of the past.

For all the talk about women's "natural" role as mothers, it's hardly how little of our biology is really linked to reproduction. In fact much of it acts to limit our reproductive role.

Our fertility is limited by menstruation, pregnancy and menopause, it's only for few days in the month, and after menopause we're not fertile from puberty on.

So it has to be our social position that keeps us so closely tied to reproduction. As one early women's liberation writer commented:

*"If women by nature were primarily passive breeders, there would be no need for women's oppression or of repression that is implacably devoted to keeping them in their 'natural place'."*

**S**o the fight for abortion rights raises the issue of women's position in society, and the oppressive nature of this society generally. It was in an attempt to show this that Stella Browne wrote in the *British Communist* in 1922:

*"Birth control for women is no less essential than workshop control and determination of the conditions of labour for men."*

Despite the health risk it involves, women have used abortion

for centuries, if only because other means of contraception fail. One survey of 350 societies claimed that "there is every indication that abortion is an abdicatory universal phenomenon", and it's only since the 1800s that it's been illegal in the west.

The industrial revolution brought changes in the family. No longer was the household the centre of production, as it had been in peasant society. With the separation of work from home, and the disruption of traditional age and gender roles, women's role within the newly formed industrial working class changed.

Capitalist society still needed to maintain distinct roles for a number of reasons. For example to ensure that workers reproduced themselves, and to benefit from the lower wages that could be paid to children and women. But with traditions disappearing, the state had to intervene. Banning abortion was part of this, and by the 1870s, most European countries had restrictions on it.

But the growth of capitalist society also gave rise to progressive movements. A pro-abortion movement had sprung up in Germany by the late 1800s.

In America Margaret Sanger (birth control activist and socialist), began publishing *Woman Rebel* which in addition to fighting against wage slavery, advocated the "prevention of conception".

Sanger sold her publication on the streets, and called for direct action. She helped open a birth control clinic and used the subsequent trial as a political platform.

More recently, the women's liberation movement revived the demand for reproductive

freedom. In this country, in the early 1970s, an ad in the *Camberra Times* filled a page with the names of women who declared they'd had abortions, and defied the police to act. The Women's Abortion Action Campaign filled the streets of our capital cities with demonstrators.

When a severe anti-abortion law was brought down in Queensland in 1977, the Women's Campaign for Abortion launched a powerful campaign that won support in the trade union movement. The bill was defeated, and Joh Bjelke-Petersen himself conceded that the Campaign's militant actions were the reason.

**W**e have won many victories, yet the legal attacks on abortion rights currently before the US Supreme Court, and Senator Harradine's attempts to deny Medicare benefits for abortions in Australia, remind us that under capitalism no gain is ever secure.

The struggle for abortion rights can only be successful in the long run if it's part of a wider struggle to change society.

That is why the most determined, and successful abortion campaigns have always raised demands pointing beyond simple legalisation. From its earliest days the women's liberation movement called for free abortion on demand.

After all, whatever the laws, the women of the upper classes can always get an abortion. If worst comes to worst, they can fly to another country. On the other hand if it's legal, but too expensive, working class women will be frozen out.

Of course, our rules insist their system "can't afford" to grant free

abortion on demand. Partly this is by process; after all, they managed to find money to fly Bill Hayden around the world on an obscene junket not long ago.

**B**ut there's also an element of greed. If you break down one area of oppression then the whole edifice can crack. Women might demand—and win—real equal pay, access to non-traditional jobs, free 24 hour child care.

And other oppressed people would be encouraged to demand justice. Immigrants would insist on a fair go, aborigines would want a serious effort to stamp out racism, people with disabilities would insist on measures to help them live free lives.

These struggles would not only affect the family and social relations. They would certainly have a big impact on the work-place. The fight for equal pay leads naturally into the fight for higher pay for all. If the struggle gets intense enough, workers will start questioning the whole class system.

No indeed, capitalism can't afford that! The fight for abortion rights is a fight for freedom, and it will always be a threat to the system we live under.

—Liz Ross



Margaret Sanger selling pro-abortion literature.

# After Beijing: is socialism dead?

**SOCIALISM is dead. That is the conclusion of the Western press from last month's barbaric massacre in Tienanmen Square.**

From Time magazine, which decided that the masses everywhere have rejected communism, to Melbourne Age bullhorn Claude Forêt for whom the massacre was just one more reason to privatise Qantas, the tone everywhere was one of smugness.

The West has used the crimes of Stalinism to declare socialism dead many times before. Last time was 1968, when Russia's tanks rolled into Prague. The next few years saw the greatest growth of leftwing ideas in the West in half a century. So the current obituaries are a little premature.

Indeed, no-one demonstrated the power of the socialist idea more movingly than the Chinese students who sang the Internationale as Deng's tanks butchered them. While the western press now joins Deng in misrepresenting them as anti-communist, I struggle to recall anyone ever dying with a hymn to capitalism on their lips.

Even after the massacre, it was impressive how many Chinese remembered similar atrocities in Chile, at Kent State University and under Nazism, and refused to draw anti-socialist conclusions. Instead they branded Deng Xiaoping a fascist.

The Western pundits conveniently forget that China's students and workers were rebelling against the capitalist-style privileges and corruption of their rulers. To view the rights that they demanded as 'capitalist' is a sick joke. They are rights that we extracted in the West only after decades of struggle, from the Tolpuddle martyrs' fight for unionism last century to the Brisbane street marches of a few years ago. The only right capitalists ever granted willingly is the right to invest, and they already have that in 'communist' China.

As if to underline the point, on the very day that Bob Hawke wept for the Chinese students, his government deported Chilean activist Sergio Buschmann and did a deal to send Vietnamese refugees back to Vietnam. Human rights matter a lot to Bob, until he has to grant them.

Business Review Weekly expressed the true capitalist view of human rights even more succinctly. The re-establishment of authoritarian rule in China, it left, contained 'some joy' for business as it guaranteed a 'more stable' climate for investment.



Bitter satire from a Yugoslav youth paper

**FAR FROM being deterred by the Chinese events, the left should draw several important conclusions.**

Certainly the movement has suffered a terrible defeat for the moment. But the purges cannot hope to root out even a tenth of the millions who were drawn into it. The tensions will remain, ready to explode as soon as the decrepit Deng dies or the next split opens up inside China's bankrupt bureaucracy.

Much of the left has been hazy about China until now. Like the other Stalinist states, it has never had anything to do with real socialism.

The Stalinist model has always been much closer to what Marx and Engels contemptuously dismissed as 'barracks socialism' in the Communist Manifesto. Or, as we usually put it, 'state capitalism'... the sort of command-economy structure that western capitalism adopts in time of war. The status of the ordinary worker in China and Eastern Europe is little different to that of a worker in a Ford factory here.

Like every other Stalinist regime, the Chinese Communist Party depends for its power on the Army, not on the working class.

The revolution of 1949 was a military take-over with no working

class participation, the Communist Party even ordering against a general strike. It was a huge progressive step for China, wrenching the country out of feudalism and imperialist rule, but it was a take-over by a radical nationalist army and nothing more.

A genuine socialist state's arms would be controlled by the working class's organs of power, not by a standing army. So China tries to portray its army as a people's army. For example, it pretends to have a policy of people's war, under which it falls back in the face of aggression to allow the masses to destroy an invader.

This fiction was laid bare in Korea, in Tibet and in border conflicts with Russia, India, and Vietnam, where the People's Liberation Army behaved like any conventional army. Relative to population, the PLA is the same size as Australia's army, so even in that crude sense it is not a popular institution. As its atrocity last month showed, it is just as divorced from the people politically too.

**WHILE the Australian left must re-assess its view of China, the danger is that it will mirror its mistake of 21 years ago.**

Then, as Russia crushed the Czechs, many leftists were se-

Seeing  
Red!  
with Alec Kahn

duced by the Cultural Revolution into thinking that China had a truer, more dynamic form of socialism. We now know that the Cultural Revolution was a fraud, engineered by Mao against his party opponents.

Today, as China's tanks reveal its true nature, much of the left is pinning its flag to Gorbachev's mast, just like two decades ago, it is throwing its hopes behind a more benevolent dictator.

But bureaucratic shifts between liberalisation and repression, between 'radicalism' and conservatism, are par for the Stalinist course.

Periods of liberalisation, like China's 'hundred flowers' phase, are needed from time to time to ginger up economies in which the masses are grossly alienated and apathetic. So are the ensuing purges, as sections then go 'too far' either in demanding democratic rights, or in draining capital from the economy into their own pockets. Just now, Russia is at the liberal end of the cycle, but nothing fundamental has changed. Gorbachev's reforms will only be of lasting value if the workers of Eastern Europe can use the breathing space to overthrow their masters for once and for all.

**THE BEIJING massacre holds one last lesson for us. That is the need for a mass party of the revolutionary left.**

Revolutionary upsurges like China's began spontaneously, but they rarely end that way. If the left has not prepared with a disciplined mass party which can organise continuing resistance, subvert the army, publish an illegal press, and build workers' councils to take over the running of society, then the disciplined organisation of the army will end the struggle for us. And it is simply not good enough to say, as many Australian leftists do, 'I'll join when the barricades go up.' As Beijing showed, it is too late by then.

For the Chinese movement, inexperienced and operating illegally, creating such a party could not be on the agenda this time. But those heroic fighters who continue the struggle underground will be impelled towards it.

For leftists in Australia, who have the benefits of hindsight and legal organisation, there can be no such excuse for procrastination.

# SOCIALIST ACTION

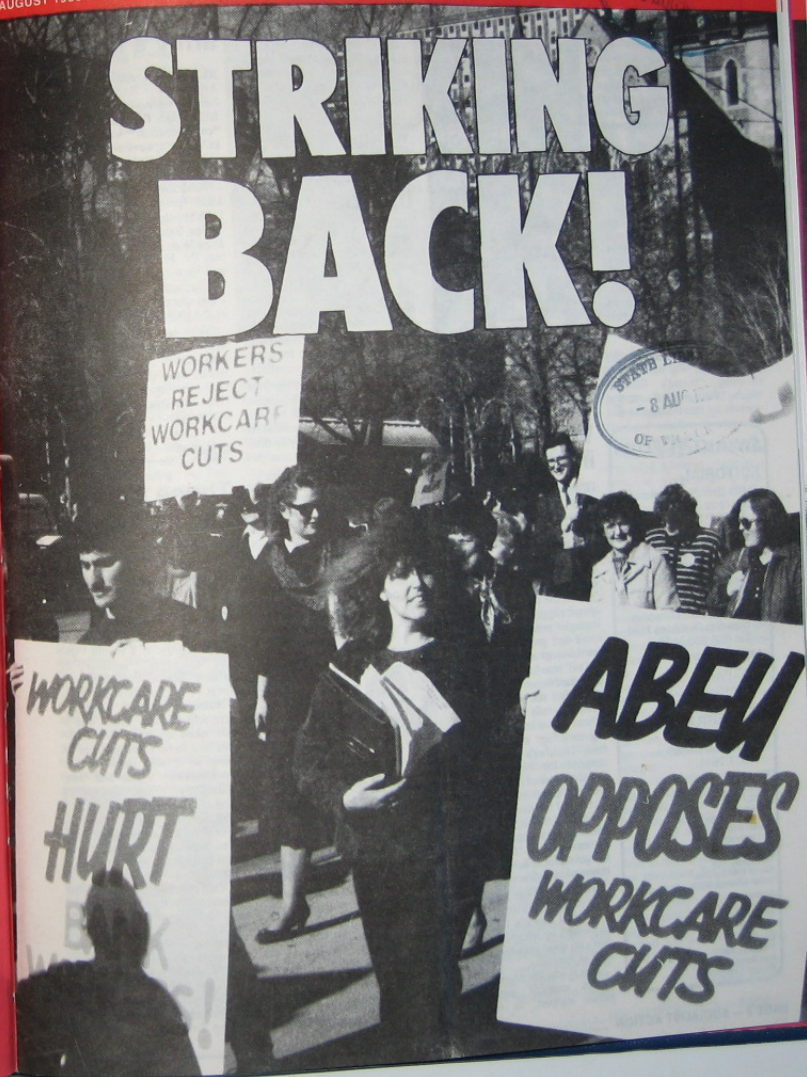


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## STRIKING BACK!





## SOCIALIST ACTION

### Remember Stonewall!

TO CELEBRATE the 20th anniversary of the Stonewall riot and the birth of gay liberation, Socialist Action Melbourne branch held a public meeting on the topic: "From gay oppression to gay liberation."

Over 60 people packed a room at the YMCA. Graham Willett told the story of the Stonewall events, when bar patrons fought police in an explosion of pride, then discussed the rise and decline of the gay liberation movement. He argued that lesbians and homosexual men today need an analysis of society as a whole, as well as an understanding of their oppression and how to fight it.

The following discussion lasted well over an hour, and informal discussion went on after that.

### Canberra

Socialist Action in the ACT has been busy supporting the struggle for democracy in China. Members are active in the China Support Group and we've well represented at the demonstrations, as well as inviting a Chinese student to speak to our branch.

After the Beijing massacre, we held a meeting at the ANU campus where 30 students heard Rick Kuhn denounce the crackdown and argue that a new revolution was needed to create genuine socialism in China.

### Sydney

BUSKERS aren't the only people who think the \$2 coin is a good thing.

Sydney Socialist Action members have been taking a bucket to Newtown shopping centre on Saturdays and collecting money for the workers occupying Cockatoo Dockyard. Newtown shoppers are responding generously with their change. Thanks to a steady stream of \$2 coins, we raised around \$300 in our first three collections.

Sydney members participated in the "Day of Outrage" against Greiner, and are active in the battle against the third runway.

A protest demonstration against the runway is set for October.

### Deadlines

DEADLINES for the next issue are as follows: early deadline Friday 18 August, late deadline Wednesday 23 August.

**SUBSCRIBE to Socialist Action**

## QUEENSLAND



# Capitalism breeds corruption

THE FITZGERALD Report was released with great fanfare. At 2 o'clock, Premier Mike Ahern promised to implement its recommendations "lock, stock and barrel". By the 6 o'clock news, he was saying it had all been implemented already!

The report recommends setting up new Electoral and Administrative Review and Criminal Justice Commissions. Groupings like the Licensing Branch, the Drug Squad and Special Branch, it suggests, should be scrapped. Supposedly this sort of reorganisation will eliminate most of the abuses in Queensland.

That is a fantasy. To take just one example, Victoria abolished its Special Branch cops years ago. But political files are still kept. And there's always ASIO. And Fitzgerald stops short of recommending some important changes. No proposal to decriminalise victimless crimes. No call for "one vote, one value" in the electoral system.

"Community policing should become the primary policing strategy," says Fitzgerald. But having more Aboriginal, women and migrant cops will just be tokenism. And us doing half the cops' job for them, is only going to make the police more effective at repressing our struggles.

In many ways the report is a whitewash. Some people have been charged, and more will be. John Bjelke-Petersen and Russ Hinze have been forced out of politics. But John and Russ haven't been charged.

In another sense the report's conclusions are quite useful.

Fitzgerald makes clear that corruption is not just a matter of a few "bad apples". It is widespread throughout the parliamentary, legal and police systems, including the Police Union and the Police Complaints Tribunal.

Of course, the southern media would have us think this is a peculiarity of Queensland. And it is true that the long years of National Party rule have allowed the growth of what Fitzgerald calls a "police culture" (yes, apparently they've got some).

This in turn reflects the dominance of mining capital, the stronger agriculture and weaker manufacturing, all of which have led to a dispersed and weaker labour movement alongside a weaker urban capitalist class.



Wayne Goss: no prince

But have we forgotten the scandals of the Unsworth and more recently the Cain governments? What about the Rotherwells affair in WA?

Capitalism breeds corruption because it is an inherently unfair system. Those who have power use it to enrich themselves. Those without power are tempted to use illegal means to get ahead, knowing that otherwise the dice will be loaded against them.

Capitalism also breeds repression. The ABC show "Police State" gave the impression that Bjelke-Petersen had a master plan for suppressing civil liberties, and that all of us who opposed him unwittingly helped him by resisting.

But there was an economic motive for the original ban on street marches in October 1977: anti-uranium marches were growing, and had the support of many trade unionists. It was after several militant pickets at the wharves that Bjelke banned marches. After all, what is a National Party government for if not to defend mining interests?

Would Labor be much better? Not to judge by ALP leader Wayne Goss. When John supporter Lynn Powell was dumped as Speaker of the House by the Ahern government, Goss rallied to his defence on a totally opportunistic basis.

Goss has no more principles than the Nats, and in the end Labor simply represents the "soft cops" option as compared to Ahern's "hard cops".

—Carole Ferrer

## BOUGAINVILLE

# An island battles injustice

THERE ARE signs of mounting crisis in Papua New Guinea.

In February, hundreds of soldiers smashed the windows of the parliament building in protest over low wages. Riots swept the Highlands in July, after the assassination of the locally born Minister of Communications.

But the most important unrest is on the island of Bougainville. It erupted when Francis Ona's Landowners' Association demanded \$15 billion from Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (CRA), operator of the island's enormous copper mine, in compensation for the loss of their pension for the life of the mine owners.

Last December Ona formed the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, and blew up electricity pylons and mine buildings with the company's own explosives. Since then, several hundred militants have continued to attack CRA property and personnel, forcing the closure of the mine.

The government sent in 2000 security troops, announced a State of Emergency, and forcibly evacuated villages around the mine. These actions led to demands for the secession of Bougainville from Papua New Guinea.

**SECESSION is not a new demand in Bougainville. Its roots go back to 1884, when an imperial conference united the island with the mainland of PNG.**

This decision was entirely arbitrary. Bougainville's economic and cultural ties were with the nearby Solomon Islands, rather than distant PNG. (Port Moresby lies 1500 kilometres to the west.)

Australia got control of the island during World War I. Anti-colonial movements were active from the beginning of Australian rule, and from the 1950s they increasingly began to demand secession.

The first secessionist movement was the Hahalis Welfare Society. By 1962 it was able to lead a boycott of the head tax, in support of demands for building a crucial road link. A battle between Hahalis and police led to over 600 arrests, but all were triumphantly acquitted and the road was built.

In the same year, a group of Bougainvilleans asked a visiting UN mission to transfer their island to US control, because Australians treated them like dogs.

These examples highlight the main objections to colonialism



Cops unload guns to fight Bougainville rebels in the 1970s

at that time: the economic neglect of the island and Australian racism. The development of the CRA copper mine after 1964 created additional sources of discontent, including environmental destruction and the meagre royalties and compensation paid to the islanders.

**RESISTANCE to the mine Reached a high point in 1969, when the Rovorova tribe declared: "We won't sell, and we will fight to defend our land."**

District Commissioner Ashton, who later admitted he had offered a "mere pittance" for Rovorova land, led a group of police armed with tear gas and batons to forcibly requisition it.

His tape recorded commentary on the first attack runs



Bougainville strikers, 1975.

"Seven minutes to nine. There is the first gas bomb going off. A beautiful shot. Right in the middle of this group."

PNG gained independence in 1975. The removal of direct Australian control did not bring an end to the secession struggle in Bougainville. One reason is that the Port Moresby government dominated by PNG mainland interests, had granted CRA extremely favourable conditions for operating the mine.

Bougainvilleans found they had to wage their own fight for better benefits. As one of the MPs told the House of Assembly in Port Moresby: "You expect us to join with you and support you, but where was your support when we needed it?"

The struggle on Bougainville today has similar causes. Racism still exists. Francis Ona speaks scathingly of the "economic apartheid" practiced by CRA, with whites filling the better jobs and benefiting from a dual wage structure.

And while Bougainville nowadays has twice the national average revenue for government services, economic neglect continues in the form of poor housing and roads.

**ENVIRONMENTAL destruction also worries Ona. Company officials admit that an indestructible and highly carcinogenic chemical is being stored indefinitely on the site, and tailings from the mine have only just begun to be removed.**

The security forces have even further inflamed the situation. Even Prime Minister Rabbin Namaliu has described their be-

haviour as "disgraceful and dishonourable". The security forces have burnt down villages, and severely beaten the Bougainville Premier and Minister of Agriculture. Local mine workers held a sit in protest after being harassed by the troops.

The security forces are unlikely to defeat the insurgents quickly. The thick jungle is ideal for guerrilla tactics.

But the weakness of the guerrilla strategy is its failure to mobilise Bougainville's 3000 mine workers. In fact, some recent actions — such as the attacks on "redskin" workers from the mainland — could divide workers and alienate them from the struggle.

**It's a pity, as Bougainville mine workers have tremendous militancy, for example in their big 1975 strike.**

Nevertheless, the Bougainville rebels deserve our support. They declare: "We are fighting to save our land from foreign exploitation." We endorse that, just as we endorse land rights struggles throughout the region, including here at home.

The Hawke government, predictably, has lined up with the PNG government and provided them with four Iroquois helicopters. Foreign Minister Gareth Evans makes pious noises about them not being used for military purposes. But even if the PNG adheres to this, the choppers allow them to free other resources low them to free other resources for repressing the revolt.

It's more proof that the ALP government is just another capitalist enemy: our oppressed, and the enemy of the oppressed nations of the region.

—Martin Verhoeven





Many currents claim to be socialist. Our feature looks at the vexed issue of

# Socialism and freedom

of this century, socialism has demonstrated repeatedly that it is the superior economic system in the world today."

As proof we are offered comparisons between China and India, Cuba and the rest of Latin America whose "masses sink ever deeper into hopeless poverty." These comparisons contain an element of truth, of course. You could add that the Soviet Union has achieved industrial development under its Stalinist leaders.

But how does China stack up against South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore? How does Russia stack up against Japan, which has also become an industrial society in this century? And what of Poland, which must beg for food shipments from the European Community?

The economic argument won't wash. What *Direct Action* calls "socialism" is neither more nor less successful economically than western capitalism. Each has ups and downs, each experiences booms and busts. On balance there is little to choose between them.

**SO WE MUST return to politics. The fact is that if the eastern bloc states have had some economic achievements, their claims to be democratic have always been a lie.**

The Russian regime now acknowledges that after 70 years, it is only "learning that the previous Kadar regime was accepted in Rumania, North Korea and Albania a bizarre sort of authoritarianism prevails: Rumanian ruler Ceausescu reportedly begged every telephone in the country!

Bulgaria is terrorising its Turkish minority, Cuba is isolating AIDS victims in special camps, East Germany and Czechoslovakia routinely use the police against demonstrators.

Need we go on? *Direct Action* recognises there is a problem, but seems to think it has been a necessary evil until recently. "Privileged elites have made virtue of necessity. Since democracy had to take a back seat through the most desperate periods of socialist construction, the privileged bureaucrats say that must always be its place in the socialist project." (My emphasis)

Every time a left group publishes something like this, they strike another blow at the future of the socialist movement. Quite understandably, ordinary workers look at political life in the eastern bloc states

## May we quote you?

"I CAN find more interesting things to do than stay here. We haven't had a decent strike in NSW for ages."

— Justice Macken, quitting the NSW Industrial Commission

"THERE are more police selling drugs than you can poke a stick at."

— The NSW Police Minister on Sydney's western suburbs

"IT'S no business of ours. The Chinese must handle their own problems."

— Pravda's editor, after not reporting events in Beijing

"WE WILL get the unions out of the yards. The workers may join them but we may also choose other workers."

— Jerry Piskoznaleski, leaseholder in Poland's now-privatised Lenin shipyard, birthplace of Solidarity

"THEY'LL think I'm tacky. They'll know I only spent \$100,000 on the marble."

— Resident of a Fifth Avenue apartment in New York

## In the Pool

EDMUND Rouse, the Tasmanian media magnate and mate of Robin Grey who has been charged with attempted bribery of a Labor MP, once claimed that he was from the Yogi Bear school of business management. Smarter than the average bear, you see.

Our memories might be hazy, but we thought that Yogi liked national parks, and never let the rangers catch him with his paws in other people's picnic baskets. Rouse reminds us more of Yogi's sidekick. His name was Boo Boo, as we recall.

Beyond these issues is the company's union busting strategy. For four years, Pittston has been transferring resources to a non-union subsidiary.

West Virginia governor Gene Baliles has billeted hundreds of cops in motels near some of the mines, in a policing operation costing the taxpayers a million dollars a month. The union points out that Pittston contributed several millions to Baliles' reelection fund.

The miners are ready for a fight. They have no patience with wishy washy speeches. When one of their officials tried to quiet them down at a recent rally, saying "We've got a program here," a heckler shot back: "Program my ass. It's time to stop the goddamn scabs!"

## Would you believe . . .

- That the oil companies are slick operators?
- That the Ayatollah led Iran to Iraq and ruin?
- That a book about Dr Geoffrey Edelstein and over-servicing is called 'Goodbye Mr Scripts'?



## CHEAP SHOTS



## Stitched up

NABIHAH Abu Gush, an 18-year-old Palestinian on the Israeli-occupied West Bank, has been sent to jail for two months for knitting a sweater in the colours of the Palestinian flag.

## Christian charity

PASTOR Brian Revell has kicked a children's playgroup out of his church hall in the north of England, claiming that he received direct orders from God.

"God didn't give me a reason when he spoke," says Pastor Revell. "I obeyed and didn't ask why."

A WOMAN with Down's Syndrome received 3000 pounds compensation after being raped in a council bus in England recently. So the Department of Social Security immediately cut her disability benefits.

But Thatcherism has a softer side too. Nicaraguan refugee Justo Samoriba was refused political asylum, only to be granted it four days later. Nothing had changed in the meantime, except that he'd won a \$5.3 million lottery.

## Land of hope and glory

AMERICAN teenagers really enjoy life in the land of the free.

Forty-two percent of girls and 25 percent of boys say they have seriously thought of suicide. Eighteen percent of girls and 11 percent of boys say they have actually attempted it.

## MINERS



## Fighting back, east & west

FOR MANY years, coal miners have been a mighty force in the class struggle. This month we've seen them in action once again, at two opposite ends of the globe.

In mid-July miners in the vital coal-producing Kuznetz Basin (Kuzbass) went on strike over pay, living conditions (they live in vile shacks and have to breathe heavily polluted air), abolition of the privileges enjoyed by Soviet bureaucrats and political reform.

The strike later spread to the Donets Basin (Donbass) in the

Ukraine and other areas, and the movement embraced whole local populations. TV news showed young women joining in the meetings.

Because there is a labour shortage the miners were in a strong position, and the authorities desperately offered the miners enough concessions to get them back to work. One impor-



tant gain from the strike was forcing Gorbachev to bring forward local elections. He had originally postponed them after the thrashing some Communist Party heavies got in the national elections not long ago.

The miners are only the tip of the iceberg of dissatisfaction now gripping the USSR. This was clear from a televised special session of the Soviet parliament, where deputies spoke of the "despair" that is widespread in the population after four years of perestroika.

Meanwhile in the heart of the "free world" over 45,000 US coal miners have been on strike for months. The Pittston Coal Group wants to reduce its commitment to health care and pensions schemes, and to introduce Sunday shifts.



# Restructuring: exploitation's new face

**A**WARD restructuring has been greeted with a chorus of approval in some quarters.

Industrial relations minister Peter Morris calls it the "most exciting change". Jim Maher from the Shop and Distributive union calls it the "best deal ever". And the metal trades bosses praise the ACTU's "vision and authority" in bringing it about.

But when given the chance to vote, thousands of rank and file workers have given it the thumbs down. Obviously they can see through the rhetoric.

Award restructuring, as supposed to offer job satisfaction and career structures, make a breakthrough for women workers and make the economy productive.

Workplaces will have fewer job classifications. Each job will have more tasks in it, so workers will need to be multi-skilled. This is supposed to mean more interesting jobs.

**T**RAINING and retraining will be provided, and will make possible a new career structure, with more choices and chances to advance.

Ironworkers' secretary Steve Harrison claims that "a person who is missed out on an apprenticeship or training can aspire to be a chemical analyst, a metallurgist, a technical tradesman ..."

Supposedly there won't be any more "women only" jobs, ghettos of low paid work. In an office, everyone will use key-boards, and keyboard workers can learn new tasks and "aim for the top" like anyone else.

But why are our employers doing us all these favours?

They and the government have an economy near crisis. After years of belt tightening by workers, Australian manufacturing industry is still not competitive. Despite years of industry plans, most companies cannot export. The economy is being propped up by high commodity prices, and everyone expects them to fall over the next year or two.

So they need more productivity gains. Award restructuring is to ensure that no wage rises are given to us without productivity trade-offs.

A government brochure, *The Way Ahead*, says bluntly:

*"Unchecked labour cost increases will swamp any competitive advantage Australian companies might otherwise reap from productivity reforms such as award restructuring."*

**T**HAT'S WHY Peter Morris and Paul Keating get up in wage hearings and urge employers to be tough in demanding trade-offs and "genuine" productivity gains. It's why media boss Brian Hogben told the journalists' union:

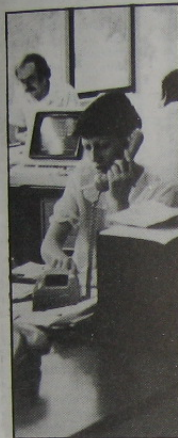
"I am sure that a person who is missed out on an apprenticeship or training can aspire to be a chemical analyst, a metallurgist, a technical tradesman ..."

Take the maritime industry. On one of BHP's iron ore ships alone, 12 jobs will go. And the new ratings' jobs will mean that workers get 20 weeks training to become a part engineer, boiler-maker, electrician, in fact everything including part sailor. Plus they'll be expected to do some of the watch-keeping.

Or take Richardson Pacific's industrial fans division, which was making heavy losses 18 months ago. They implemented a reform package and got a hefty payout from the government for training and workshop relay.

The result? Profits are back on the board, productivity is up, and 100 out of 230 workers have lost their jobs. The company has saved over \$2.5 million in wages alone.

As John Griffiths, managing director of the Southern Cross foundry in Toowoomba com-



The modern office. Will multi-skilling make it a better or worse place to work?

*"The AJA says publishers would benefit from having a more skilled AJA workforce ... This is an incomplete argument. Increased skill is not a benefit. Benefits could only accrue to publishers if increased skill makes AJA labour more cost effective."*

So there are two closely linked aims: wage restraint and increased productivity. And increased productivity means jobs will go.

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mented after a similar exercise, "the shedding of labour was an inevitable component of the restructure."

**T**HERE ARE other, more subtle ways the bosses benefit at our expense. They aim to undermine union militancy and worker solidarity. The Australian commented:

*"Workers will eventually start to place more emphasis on their individual abilities and their capacity to improve them ... as the primary means of improving pay, rather than a general wages round won by industrial action."*

The skills training will not open up wide vistas for most workers. What employer is going to pay for training they can't use?

A lot of public service training only covers specialised skills that are not transferable. Or in the case of some skills like keyboard use, you will have enough training to get by but not enough to get a skilled job as a keyboard operator.

In unstable industries only a core of trained workers will be secure. For the rest we'll see a lot of less skilled casuals with no career paths or job security.

Multi-skilling can also be deskilling. The Electrical Trades Union argues that under the new restructuring in the metal trades, when training is divided up into modules, workers will only be partially trained. Work and safety standards will fall.

Finally, a number of key trades will find their industrial leverage has been removed. If anyone can do your job, scabbing is easier to organise. So the award restructuring is closely linked to attacks on militant unions, especially in the building industry.

It is understandable that award restructuring has an appeal to many people. Learning new skills, doing a better job, new career prospects ought to be something we could welcome.

But when it uses them for its own purposes, capitalism turns them into another way to exploit us. So we support people like the South Australian refinery workers, who told Peter Morris:

*"We've fought long and hard for what we've got. We're not giving it away for the 'good of the economy' or so that Mobil can make another million dollars profit."*

— Liz Ross

# It's one in the eye for Kelty!

**T**HE VOTE by members of the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen against amalgamation with the BWIU is a slap in the face to all those pushing Bill Kelty's plan to reorganise unions.

FEDFA members in Victoria and Queensland voted two to one against amalgamation. In Queensland the BLF has not been deregistered, and the building industry is not so politicised as in Victoria or NSW. FEDFA members in building would simply rather amalgamate with the BLF, while those in mining see no purpose in merging with a building union.

In NSW, where the BWIU and FEDFA have almost total control of building sites and there was little organised opposition to the proposals, the "yes" vote won narrowly.

In Victoria, opponents of amalgamation fought hard. When the union officials refused to include arguments for the no vote with ballot papers, over 500 members signed a petition to the Industrial Commission. They got the "no" case included. A poster war raged on building sites.

Victorian FEDFA members opposed the amalgamation for several reasons. The effect would be to absorb the FEDFA into the BWIU.

The new union would be very bureaucratic. Building has traditionally been a militant industry, where well placed workers can command high wages. But militant groups such as crane crews would lose their leverage in a large bureaucratic union, and be easier to control.

**I**N ADDITION, the BWIU is notorious for not servicing its members. Everybody in the building industry knows how the BWIU has failed to support steel-fixers currently campaigning for a wage rise.

FEDFA members not in the building industry feared their concerns would be submerged in the larger union, so there was substantial opposition among power workers in the Latrobe Valley.

These objections combined with a certain amount of less admirable craft elitism to sink the amalgamation proposal.

Although the "yes" vote won in the BWIU, there were many members opposed to it, because they saw it as a further strengthening of the reigning bureaucrats and their anti-militant policy.



In April they called their first mass meeting since 1973. The members passed a motion against amalgamation, but the meeting had no decision making power. One speaker after another condemned the platform, the effect was to gagged the microphone. Finally the workers voted to "go home for the rest of the day in protest at the apathy and incompetence of the officials".

(although the BLF was also "dead").

The incident at Grollo's 101 Collins St building site illustrates the lengths to which some people were prepared to go. Hired "security guards" beat up several building workers in an apparent attempt to fabricate "BLF violence". But it backfired.

The thugs were supposed to attack steel-fixers but it was plumbers, labourers, plasterers and a painter, from other sites, who got injured.

**S**Ocialists have traditionally been for united industrial unions, and supported the famous call of the Industrial Workers of the World for "One Big Union". But bigger unions are only an advantage if they are democratically controlled, and if they are a more effective vehicle for fighting the class struggle.

The Kelty plan for amalgamating unions, which the BWIU are keenly pursuing, would have the effect of wiping out a number of traditionally militant unions. The only beneficiaries in the building industry would be the BWIU bureaucrats who have nothing but contempt for their members.

In the weeks before the election, there was an orchestrated media campaign to use BLF bashing to smear the opposition. The BWIU's Don Henderson told the press and TV that Builders Labourers were manipulating rank and file workers

The goons were called off this site and three others.

Of course, the media portrayed this all very differently. They tried to claim the violence was due to BLF opposition to amalgamation, and the ABC even presented the protest demonstration as having led up to the clash.

**N**OT LONG after this Department of Labour inspectors blitzed four city building sites where the BLF has a strong presence. One ended up with 100 supposed safety defects and all work was ordered suspended. But it was quite some time before anyone actually told the workers to stop work.

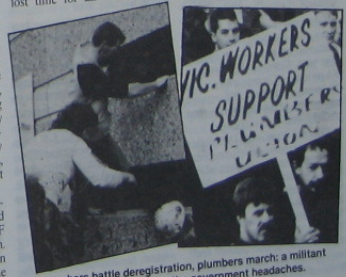
The move was political. The Master Builders Association themselves said the Department of Labor is "paying particular attention to companies who are not doing enough to keep the BLF off their sites".

Clearly, the government and their BWIU mates are not having it all their own way. BLF organisers visit many building sites with impunity. Attempts to replace on the job action with Disputes Board hearings are not succeeding either. Workers on jobs around town continue to take 24 hour stoppages over safety.

The government's feeling frustrated because the current building boom means workers are often able to use industrial muscle, and employers will meet their demands rather than lose production.

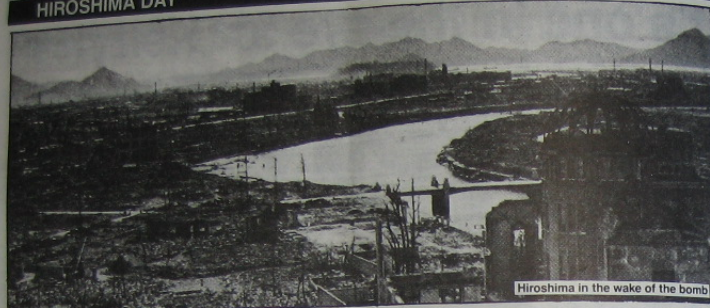
With a big glut of office space on the horizon, it has seemed that the industrial tide would soon turn. But if Melbourne's Olympic bid succeeds, building workers could be in a strong position for years to come.

— Janey Stone



BLF members battle deregistration, plumbers march: a militant building industry keeps giving the government headaches.

## HIROSHIMA DAY



Hiroshima in the wake of the bomb

# Atomic imperialism's grim dawn

**NOWADAYS** everyone agrees that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a terrible thing.

Yet a lot of people also accept that it was necessary. A necessity, they argue, because it was the only way to bring a quick end to the Pacific war and avoid a bloody invasion of Japan.

It is the oldest of the many arguments that claim nuclear weapons are a necessary evil. But the argument collapses when you look at the historical facts.

By July 1945, Japan was down for the count. The bulk of the Imperial Navy had been sunk, the air force was reduced to sporadic kamikaze attacks, American B-29 bombers were meeting little resistance. Most importantly, the allied naval blockade was strangling Japan's economy. With Germany defeated and Russia due to declare war in the Pacific, Japan was on a hiding to nothing.

All the top military officials realized that the atomic bomb should not be used, because their intelligence indicated Japan would capitulate by November without even an invasion.

Admiral Leahy of the US navy said the bomb was "of no material assistance" in ending the war. General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander in Europe, said that "it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing."

General Curtis Le May (air force) said the bomb "had nothing to do with the end of the war," because conventional bombing was "driving the Japanese back to the Stone Age" (the same words he used about Vietnam in 1966). The warhawk Le May can't be accused of undue moral sensitivity, so his military assessment carries a lot of weight.

The scientists building the thing were divided. Some opposed using it on moral grounds, but even those like Oppenheimer who favour its use did so because, as he put it, they "didn't know beans about the military situation." They just swallowed the official line that a bloody invasion was the only alternative.

Why then did President Truman authorise the bombing? The war was not a glorious struggle for democracy, but a battle for control of large sections of the world. The strongest power would gain the most.

Once the bomb had been tested in July, Truman could welcome the break-up of the forced alliance with Russia. Truman already realised that Russia would be America's main postwar imperialist rival, and he intended to use the atomic bomb to reduce or eliminate Soviet influence from Europe and Asia.

The bomb gave him, he said, "an entirely new feeling of confidence" in his dealings with Stalin, and "it put us in a position to dictate our own terms at the end of the war."

Secretary of War Stimson saw the bomb as a "master card" of diplomacy. Secretary of State Byrnes sought to use the "implied threat" of nuclear attack to "make Russia more manageable in Europe."

General Groves, boss of the Manhattan Project, said that he had always understood that "Russia was our enemy." Two of the Project's leading scientists, Edward Teller and the mathematician John von Neumann, both "considered Russia as an enemy from the beginning."

Compared to these political realists, the military realists who saw the bomb as unnecessary were right but irrelevant. There

was a tremendous rush to end the war before the Russians advanced on Japan. And it worked. "Our dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan," confided Truman to his diary, "forced Russia to reconsider her position in the Far East."

The bomb's power had been effectively demonstrated. Truman had rejected suggestions for either a demonstration explosion on an uninhabited island, or for a warning to allow for evacuation from Hiroshima.

In the postwar negotiations, the nuclear threat was an important factor forcing Stalin to modify his territorial claims in Europe as well as Asia.

Learning well from his rival imperialists, Stalin wasted no time in launching his own "Manhattan Project" in the 1946 Five Year Plan. In 1949 the first "socialist" nuclear bomb was tested, and the world was locked into a mad arms race that is with us to this day.

Forty-four years after Hiroshima the ruling classes of the world pack a nuclear punch equal to a million Hiroshimas. Fifty thousand "necessary evils" are aimed at us and our fellow workers worldwide.

And only by deciding that imperialism, and the capitalism that spawns it, are themselves unnecessary evils can we hope to end the danger of nuclear destruction.

— Phil Shannon

GREENHOUSE



## Nukes are no solution!

SINCE The Greenhouse Effect hit the news, capitalist politicians from Nick Greiner

to Neville Wran have started pushing nuclear power as an alternative to coal-fired power stations.

But US expert Bill Keepin has worked out just how unviable a solution this is. Apart from the dangers of nuclear power—remember Three Mile Island and Chernobyl!—the economics don't add up.

Even assuming nuclear plants can be built in six years, they

**I'M A FOOL FOR NUCLEAR FUEL!**



would still have to build one every one to three days for the next 37 years to meet America's energy needs. The cost would be between \$500 and \$800 billion each year.

Keepin argues for some simple energy saving alternatives. For example, an 18 watt compact fluorescent light bulb lights as much as an ordinary 75 watt incandescent globe. Over the bulb's ten year lifetime, almost 200 kilograms of black coal will be saved.

Using methods like these, energy consumption could cut be in half. Keepin argues, this would cut carbon dioxide emissions by half, save \$220 billion a year, and impair no one's lifestyle.

Ah, but would it be profitable? That is the issue in Greiner and Wran's mind. And that is why solving the environmental crisis is so hard under capitalism.

## REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

# Triumph and tragedy in China's revolution

**ON OCTOBER 1, 1949** Mao Zedong declared that "China has stood up".

The victory of the Communist Party and its peasant army marked the end of a century of crisis, poverty and famine, war and revolution.

By the start of the 20th century the old ruling class of landlords and bureaucrats, humiliated by western imperialism, had virtually surrendered their hold on the state. They had retreated to their landed estates, content to extort wealth from the peasants by ever more vicious means.

When a group of intellectuals raised the banner of revolt on October 10, 1911 the imperial government simply collapsed. But the rebels were unable to stem the decay of Chinese society. Government fell into the hands of provincial warlords. The imperialists strengthened their grip.

A capitalist class had emerged in the second half of the 19th century, but it was unable to seize power. The bourgeoisie was small and weak, and dependent on its foreign trading partners for its very existence. It clustered fearfully in the coastal cities and poured what wealth it did accumulate into trade and finance. Industry was almost non-existent.

The capitalists could not unite the country, liberate it from imperialist rule, and develop its economy. Other social forces would have to do that.

**THE 20th century saw the rise of powerful peasant and worker movements.**

By the middle of the 1920s the countryside was in revolt. Peasant associations spread rapidly through the provinces, led by young revolutionary intellectuals. Their members numbered perhaps two million poor peasants, but tens of millions more looked to them for leadership in the struggle against their landlords.

In the cities, some two million industrial workers were employed in large scale, modern factories owned almost entirely by foreign capitalists. Around them were another 10 million workers in smaller factories and workshops, self-employed artisans and the unemployed.

Despite their relatively small numbers this working class had



Strikers march through Canton in the 1920s

the potential to lead the country forward. Well organized, militant and politically aware, China's workers launched major strike waves in 1922 and 1924.

By 1927 the working class movement had begun to threaten the power of Chinese and foreign capitalists alike.

Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist movement had launched a military offensive, aimed at conquering all of China. The working class and peasants rose in support.

**THE WORKERS and many of the peasants were under the leadership of the young Communist Party formed in 1921. The party had grown very rapidly, reaching a membership of 58,000 by 1927 but it was very inexperienced. Unstandably, it looked to the Russian Communist Party for advice.**

But by the mid-1920s the Russian party was almost entirely under the control of Joseph Stalin. Stalin was only concerned with the national interests of the Russian state, and he thought this was best served by an al-



Mao Zedong on his long journey to power

liance with Chiang Kai-shek. Stalin told the Chinese Communists to subordinate themselves to Chiang, even though he was closely aligned with sections of the capitalist class.

Despite misgivings, the Chinese party complied. But as Chiang enjoyed one military triumph after another, he decided he could dispense with Communist support. And as the workers and peasants began exploding into insurrection, he began to fear their power. Chiang's armies began to ruthlessly put down the peasant associations and unions in the areas they controlled.

When he entered Shanghai he found the workers already in control of the city. Chiang de-manded the Communists hand over their arms, and they complied. He then turned on them in a wave of terror that lasted for months and took tens of thousands of lives. The Communist Party was virtually wiped out.

This disaster removed from the Chinese working class the historical stage. Socialist revolution was out of the question for decades.

Yet the capitalist class also remained weak, and Chiang was unable to unify the country under his control. His Guomindang government ruled by playing off foreign powers, warlords and landowners.

**IN THIS political vacuum, a section of the middle class — intellectuals, sons and daughters of the landlords and bureaucrats — were drawn more**

and more to seek radical solutions. They turned to the Communist Party, which was rebuilding on a new basis.

After the 1927 defeat, the party retreated to the countryside. Under the new leadership of Mao Zedong, it developed new theory and practice of revolutionary struggle. It was above all a nationalist revolution. The vehicle would be a guerrilla army based on the peasants. The program was to use the state to mobilise resources to create a strong national economy.

The Communists won peasant support through selective land reform, and they won prestige nation-wide by waging a guerrilla warfare against the Japanese invaders during the second world war. After the Japanese withdrew, Mao's armies triumphantly captured one Chinese city after another.

The workers were relegated to the role of passive bystanders, and although the Mao regime eventually called itself "socialist" neither they nor the peasants ever controlled it.

Power lay with the state bureaucracy and the rigidly disciplined army. China had "stood up" and broken the power of the local capitalists and foreign imperialists. But in their place emerged a new state capitalism.

The regime has had some economic successes, but like all class societies it has also had economic crises. And as we saw in June, it is no more responsive than its equivalents in Washington, Moscow or Canberra.

— Graham Willitt

## INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS

**INDUSTRIAL accidents** are the second greatest cause of violent death and injury, surpassed only by motor vehicle accidents.

Each year approximately 500 Australian workers are killed on the job, while another 300,000 suffer non-fatal injuries. And that's not counting occupational illnesses.

No wonder safety and compo are important industrial issues. The earliest unions created funds for medical and funeral expenses, and workers demanded that employers and governments act on safety.

Unions also began demanding compensation for lost wages and medical expenses. Eventually union pressure made judges accept that workers could sue for "negligence" but this only helped a minority. If an employer had taken rudimentary safety measures, the causes of workplace injury were usually outside the legal definition of negligence.

So the labour movement began campaigning for "fault-free" compensation. In NSW the first compo law was enacted in 1926.

Under many compo schemes, employers pay a percentage of their total wage bill to an insurance scheme. The insurer invests the money. Injured workers apply to the insurer for medical expenses and periodic payments, more than the dole but less than wages.

If the insurers won't pay, you can sue. But that costs money, so workers usually get inferior "justice".

Often there are appalling delays and harassment by insurance company spies. Building unions had to launch mass raids on insurance company offices in 1979 to force them to cough up.

**FOR THE employers** this type of compo has its advantages. The insurance premiums can be cheaper than making the workplace safe, and they'd rather have the issue handled by lawyers than by militant shop stewards.

And they can count on governments rigging the deal in their favour. Governments always insist the premiums must not interfere with employers' profits, and payouts must not hurt the profits of insurance companies.

As always under capitalism, the starting point is not people's welfare but profit margins. So



Marching for Workcare in Melbourne

## Compo: how insult follows injury

when the bosses holler, governments leap to attention.

In late 1986 compo insurers in NSW threatened to stop insuring employers. The Unsworth Labor government hastened to toe their bidding. Its 1987 "reforms" slashed benefits, and abolished workers' right to sue for negligence. Profits rose.

Now Nick Greiner promises to reform the reforms, but on the same basic principle: employers' premiums must go down, not up.

So while in the large print they restore limited common law rights and promise rehabilitation, the fine print abolishes "journey claims" and limits rehabilitation expenditure.

**VICTORIA'S "Workcare"** and the scheme covering Commonwealth employees are different — they are "unfunded".

Under Workcare the employers pay a small levy on their wage bill. This goes into consolidated revenue. Payments to injured workers are administered by the Accident Compensation Commission. The money comes out of general government funds without any specific amount being set aside for it.

Workcare's so-called liabilities are simply estimates of payouts over the next 30 years, not an existing debt. This hasn't stopped treasurer Jolly saying

"these are figures that the Work Care system cannot afford".

The Cain government wants to cut payments to partially incapacitated workers (who can still work, but not necessarily at their trade) from 80 to 60 percent of pre-injury earnings. It wants to establish medical panels who can ignore your own doctor's advice.

Both NSW and Victorian governments say cuts in benefits will be offset by rehabilitation. But the money to establish special medical institutions with qualified staff hasn't been provided.

While all employers of 20 or more people are required to set up rehabilitation schemes, a recent survey showed 40 percent had failed to do so.

Meanwhile the federal government is cutting Social Security payments to injured workers. The Commonwealth employees' scheme is also unfunded and we can expect the same sort of attacks on its viability and cuts like those now happening in Victoria.

**IF THE bandaids are getting thinner, what's being done about prevention?**

Reams of health and safety legislation have been produced in most States since the early 1980s, usually under union pressure. But the only bodies with authority to enforce safety requirements are the understaffed inspectors of the industrial ministries.

In NSW in 1987-88, a grand total of 20 employers were fined for safety breaches. The average fine was \$500.

Many safety improvements have come from workers' action rather than legislation. For example, crane crews on building sites no longer "ride the hook" as a result of industrial struggles in the 70s. When workers on the Sydney Opera House building site took over the job, they placed top priority on safety.

So a socialist solution would start by placing the workplaces under the democratic control of the workforce. A socialist compo scheme would pay out full wages and ensure full rehabilitation as a worker's right, not as a way of pressuring someone unable to work. But these are solutions we will have to fight for.

**Under capitalism, too, the way to get better benefits and safety precautions lies in union action. But under the Accord, union militancy has declined. And it's no accident that after six years of the Accord, our compo schemes are coming under sustained attack.**

— Eric Petersen

## REVIEWS

# How to escape from a State of Shock?

**IN 1979 at the Weipa Aboriginal Reserve on Cape York Peninsula, Alwyn Peters killed his girlfriend Dierdre Gilbert. Seven years later, he still loves her.**

He thought Dierdre's death was his punishment for not marrying the woman to whom he'd been promised as a child. The penalties for breaking tribal law are meted out through magic now, he believes, not by the spear.

In "State of Shock" filmmaker David Bradbury uses Alwyn's case as a point of departure to probe the oppression of Aborigines, and the resulting violent and self-destructive tendencies among them.

The people who themselves tell the story of their dispossession: their houses at Mapoon burnt to the ground, they were shunted off to Weipa where they came into conflict with local Aborigines and took to the log.

The spirit of the old ways — magic — informs the spirits of the new: alcohol and dispossession.

Those who benefited from the dispossession are not scrutinised very effectively. The Aborigines at Mapoon were driven off their land by the Queensland government in order to hand it over to mining companies.

The film blames Comalco for burning down the houses. The company, it should be said, blames the Queensland government.

The Presbyterian Church who ran the Mapoon mission first raised the question of compensation in 1964, without consulting the people themselves. Comalco agreed to pay \$300,000 to the church for accommodation and employment creation projects at the mission, and allow grazing access to some areas. The church accepted this as full discharge of the company's obligations.

Sixty-two new houses were constructed at Jessica Point, which were rented to Aborigines. They must feel richly compensated every time they pay the rent.

The company employs blacks, but they're the first to be discarded when the market for bauxite slumps. Its contributions to the Weipa Aborigines Society, established in 1973 to finance



Alwyn Peters with his mother in David Bradbury's film.

and administer social and education development projects will total \$2.6 million in 1990. That's hardly a princely sum, and of course it's tax deductible. But it compares well with the government's input.

Anyway, this building of a company town infrastructure in the guise of charity is beside the point. The people in the film wanted their land back. And the company isn't even using it.

They want their land, and they should have it. But it's paternalistic to think this is the only way out of their dispossessed state. Aborigines and Islanders are also workers at Weipa. As well as land they need paid work and accessible training.

Addressing the audience before the screening I saw, David Bradbury said some Aborigines, a minority he felt, had voiced disapproval at the portrayal of drunkenness and violence in the film. It focuses on this aspect of today's Aboriginal society al-

The media tell us lies all the time. We are used to the yellow press and its sensational headlines, often without substance.

What John Phelan does in his book *Apartheid Media* is explain just how disinformation works, and how it has been incorporated into the South African political system. And he ties it in with his home country, the United States, where he says it has become an art form.

Here is a sample.

"The Rand Daily Mail had been the exposé of 'Muldergate' the government's secret use of taxpayers' money to buy favourable coverage ...

"In the manner of the Washington Post's relentless cover of Watergate, but under significantly greater duress and danger, the Mail had revealed the millions of rand poured into the Citizen, an English language paper supportive of the National Party but otherwise having no economic reason to exist.

"This was the centre piece of a host of other shady public relations schemes.

"A foreseeable result of these revelations, according to the legal pattern of South Africa, was the establishment of an advocate general to investigate government corruption who had absolute power to gag any reportage of the cases he was investigating.

"In the result, Mulder's career was ruined, but the Rand Daily Mail is closed, whereas the Citizen is still being published."

Phelan shows how the South African Broadcasting Corporation attempts to prevent blacks and whites alike from seeing and hearing what happens in other countries, particularly other African states. They fear someone might get the "wrong ideas".

Fortunately, the blacks seem to have got those ideas anyway.

Phelan's solutions are not "community media ... will have a humanising effect on the high-tech bureaucrats of opinion and entertainment" and he thinks that the threat of economic sanctions is more effective than actually imposing them.

Whereas in reality it is mass struggle and economic pressure that can shake the regime.

But this book provides fascinating insights about the way we are lied to by our rulers.

— Marnie de Saxe

*Apartheid Media — Disinformation and dissent in South Africa*, 1, by John Phelan, Lawrence Hill and Co.

BOOK



## White racists, yellow press

**POLITICIANS tell lies all the time.** For example, John Vorster when he was leader of South Africa, 1, by John Phelan, Lawrence Hill and Co.

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 15

# On the side of the angels?

**A**MONG the more interesting visitors to these unfair shores lately were the American couple, Curtis and Lisa Siwa.

The Siwas head the Guardian Angels, an unarmed vigilante group which Curtis Siwa founded in 1973 to protect New York subway commuters from muggers. From an original band of 13, it has grown to now claim 5,000 members in 60 American cities, and the Siwas want to spread the idea to Britain and Australia.

One might expect the Establishment, which is all for law'n order and Neighbourhood Watch-style 'community policing', to support the Siwas. But government and police reaction to the Guardian Angels is usually hostile.

On their recent visit to Britain, Home Secretary Douglas Hird denounced them, Scotland Yard tried to have them deported, and railway police ejected their first patrol from the underground. One railway police boss here has already said he will ban the Guardian Angels from his trains too.

Even in New York, where mugging is endemic, the forces of order did not exactly welcome them with open arms. Mayor Ed Koch denounced them until commuters' anger forced him to recant and offer them auxiliary police status. To their credit, the Angels rejected it. 'The cops are stigmatised,' said Curtis Siwa at the time. 'We are not cops. We are of the citizenry.'

Siwa had good reason to distrust the cops. He told journalist John Pilger in 1981, 'Two Angels have been killed in the line of duty: one fighting off a mugger, the other shot dead by a cop who didn't even tell the Angel to freeze or nothin'. They just shot him. Cops are assholes. Everybody knows that.' Siwa himself received death threats from cops, and the New York Police Department gave him a police guard to protect him from his own members!



Angels' leader Curtis Siwa.



Guardian Angels being checked for weapons before patrolling.

**A**T FIRST the police's hostility seems odd. The Siwas are no radicals. Their ideas are a mixture of the mildly progressive and reactionary.

They have supported anti-Nazi marches and condemned the violence of American TV and culture. Yet they also support the castration of sex offenders, and get almost hysterical about graffiti on trains... forgetting that capitalists have daubed their graffiti over the environment for decades and called it advertising.

But the police have a reason to be hostile. Along with the army, they have a virtual monopoly on legal organised force in society, and they protect it jealously.

This monopoly leads millions of workers who distrust the police to still accept them because there is no-one else to turn to when their lives or property are threatened. By undermining the monopoly, the Guardian Angels unwittingly raise a very subversive idea... maybe we don't need the cops! Maybe workers, with the right organisation, could protect themselves!

That is why the Guardian Angels recruit so well amongst blacks and Hispanics, and can run all-woman patrols, and even one composed entirely of deaf mutes who communicate by sign language. They have a natural appeal to oppressed groups who get the worst from all sides... from racist sexist cops as well as from redneck louts and ghetto crims.

Civil libertarians also object to the Guardian Angels. They argue that the police are responsible to the people through parliament, but

the Guardian Angels are responsible to no-one.

Like most liberal arguments, this is based on legal fiction. The cops are very loosely responsible to parliament (have MPs ever voted for them to harass blacks more than whites?) and parliament is very loosely responsible to the people. In reality, we control the cops no more than we control the Guardian Angels... less, maybe, since the Guardian Angels rely on public approval to survive.

One wonders who security guards answer to, except the employers whose property they protect. Or who bodyguards answer to, except the rich and the politicians who hire them. Civil libertarians never complain about the armed protectors of the limousined classes, so why do they object when an unarmed group tries to protect the working class mugs who have to use public transport?

**I**AM NOT suggesting that the Left should rush off and join the Guardian Angels, however. While we should defend their right to organise independently from the cops, they have serious shortcomings.

Their approach to crime is a band-aid one. While they may make the trains they travel on safer, they cannot demonstrate any impact on New York's booming overall crime rate, despite their growth and ten years of operation. They merely move the muggers on elsewhere. They have no socialist aim of organising against the poverty and alienation that cause crime.



with Alec Kahn

Although they don't intend it, they are also elitist. They require three months of training in unarmed combat and then 8-10 hours patrolling a week. In theory anyone can do this, but in practice few working-class people can devote that much spare time to just one problem in their lives.

Their semi-military chain of command also smacks of elitism, with Curtis Siwa as commander-in-chief and patrol captains responsible to him. The general idea is still that a tightly-run elite is needed to protect the rest of us.

So the Guardian Angels are a different animal to the citizens' policing that socialists normally support... the black defence groups that sprung up during the US Civil Rights movement, the tenants' patrols that Housing Commission residents organise, the anti-poofter-basher patrols run by gays in Adelaide, the self-policing done by the occupiers of Tenants Square. These are readily open to the people they aim to protect, and directly answerable to them. They point in a socialist direction... to a system in which workers' collectives in every corner of society will not only make the laws, but use their mass organisation to ensure that they are obeyed.

**T**HE Guardian Angels have no such direction, so they seek to coexist with the status quo.

The Siwas now say that the cops are okay, that we need the Guardian Angels only because there are not enough cops, and that their members will register with the police if necessary. This may be intended to make the concept more palatable to Australian police. But there's no real reason for the cops to accept them, unless they can control them like they control Neighbourhood Watch.

The Siwas intend to return to Australia to set up their first patrols. So long as they remain independent of the cops, the Left should support their right to do so, because it is a right we want for the whole working class. If they inspire groups like Asians and blacks to organise their own self-defence, they may even do some good.

But most likely, the band-aid nature of the Guardian Angels, their elitism and their lack of any real political direction will turn them into a macho version of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, trying to do a good deed for the working class but taking it nowhere.

# THE LIBS: THREAT OR JOKE?



**How seriously should we take them?**







INDEPENDENCE won't be easy for Namibia.

This country of nearly 850,000 square kilometres has a population little over a million. Over a century of imperialist domination and capitalist development has left the indigenous people in poverty.

The average annual income for blacks is only a tiny fraction of that earned by whites.

In November Namibia will elect its first "independent" government. This is a cause for celebration, but it should be tempered by the knowledge that in practice the country will still be the prey of outside forces.

Germany launched the imperialist conquest of Namibia, claiming "South West Africa" in 1884. The original ethnic groups of the region were carved into fragments, with the preponderant Ovambos in the north being split between Portuguese Angola and the new German colony.

South Africa seized the country in Germany in 1915, and imposed an even harsher colonial rule. The blacks were forced into bantustans and there were the pass laws, contract labour and apartheid characteristic of Afrikaner rule. South Africa's main interest was in Namibia's huge reserves of diamonds, uranium and minerals.

The South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) has been fighting an independence struggle, and recent peace agreements appear on the surface to have crowned their efforts with success. The settlement resulted from a carefully controlled stabilisation agreement for southern Africa between the major power brokers: the USA, the USSR and Britain.

The deal meant the removal of Cuban soldiers from Angola and reduced Gorbachev's desire to reduce Russia's financial and military commitments in the area. For the USA, it is an attempt to build faith in the power of dialogue and subtle economic pressure.

SWAPO was not even invited to join in the negotiations. The organisation's guerrillas were extremely confused when they were told to return across the Angola border to report to military camps. And some of them were to meet a bitter disappointment: the terms of the April 1 cease fire were so ambiguous that the UN's forces made no attempt to stop the South African army killing 300 unsuspecting guerrillas.

## Namibia: still prey to Pretoria



A SWAPO guerrilla surrenders to UN troops

South Africa comes out of the deal fairly well. It ended a war in which the Namibian end alone was costing it \$1 million a day. It will keep a decisive economic influence over the country through its mining and manufacturing companies. It will also retain Namibia's only deep water port at Walvis Bay, which has fishing, salt and manufacturing industries.

For its part, SWAPO has met with business leaders of DeBeers and Anglo American, and assured that "no major nationalisations will occur" and a free market system will prevail.

It's not even certain that SWAPO will succeed in the elections. The rules say you need 66 percent of the vote to be able to devise a constitution. And the pro-South African parties like the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance are being assisted by the local police, who harass and intimidate SWAPO activists.

As well, up to 100,000 whites currently living in South Africa are entitled to vote. With only 600,000 voters in Namibia itself this could make an impact. Lux-

The fact that South African corporations dominate the Namibian economy opens up the possibility of co-ordinated action between South African and Namibian workers against the common foe.

And that's important, because Namibia cannot really be free without the liberation of South Africa itself. Even Zimbabwe, with a larger economy, finds it difficult to avoid trading through South Africa's railways and ports.

— Phillip Whitefield

### SOUTH AFRICA



## It's not much better, sport

THE LATEST round of cricketers and rugby players visiting South Africa has predictably been justified on the grounds that racism is on the way out in that country's sport.

Anyone tempted to believe this should consider a few facts. The South African Rugby Board claims to have opened up to blacks. Why then are the "coloured" (mixed race) and black Rugby Associations not members of SARB?

When SARB held talks with the African National Congress it got such a hostile response from its white members that all memory of it has now been buried.

Rugby's prestigious Craven Week high school competition is supposedly open to blacks, but this means little when schools are segregated. The same applies to the cricketing equivalent, Nuffield Week.

Blacks among the visiting players would be "honorary whites" but they could find this status doesn't extend much beyond the door of their hotel. A few years ago visiting West Indian cricketer Collis King was kicked off a train because he was sitting in a whites-only carriage. Trains have since been desegregated, but railway stations have not.

Richard Emerson

DEADLINES for the next issue of *Socialist Action*: early deadline 22 September, late deadline 6 October. Please send all contributions to editor's home address.

## DEMONSTRATORS call "we want bread, not a prime minister!" to Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Polish Solidarity's prime minister elect.

The new government for its part claims it can meet the demand for economic improvements. In forming a coalition with both the Polish United Workers Party (the Communists) and its smaller satellites, they hope to drag the country out of its malaise. Says Lech Walesa, "I want to help the reform wings of the Peasants Party and the Democratic Party to get into government and answer the call of the times."

Poland's economy is in tatters. It owes more than \$390 billion to the west, and industry relies on outdated machinery. Inflation is running at 150 percent. Pollution is at frightening levels and infectious diseases like Hepatitis A are rampant.

The country's previous rulers, the PUWP, are completely bankrupt, having made two attempts to form a government without Solidarity following

elections that were rigged in the PUWP's favour. Even General Jaruzelski's election as president was only possible because seven leading members of Solidarity abstained, after eleven Communists voted against him.

So the coalition became inevitable. The PUWP needs Solidarity to contain worker unrest and sell brutal austerity measures that all the parties see as inevitable.

**IT WOULD be a mistake to imagine that Poland's blue bureaucratic ruling class has lost power just because Mazowiecki is prime minister. The PUWP will control the army and police. Control of these ministries was enough to cement Communist Party control in coalition governments just after World War Two.**

They are also demanding foreign affairs and the media. Given they also control the presidency, it is clear they can step in at any stage if things get out of hand. In industry, where real power lies, a vast army of bureaucrats control every aspect of economic life.

The deal leaves Solidarity and the Peasant Party to do the dirty work. The Peasant Party gets agriculture in a country plagued by food shortages. Solidarity gets industry and labour in a country plagued by low productivity and with a militant working class.

The deal is no better than previous ones Solidarity rejected, with its Senate leader Gerard



Walesa (left) and Mazowiecki: sitting on a powder keg

## Solidarity: freed to do the dirty work?

Walesa on his election to the presidency, several thousand workers at the Pans Commune shipyards in Gdynia downed tools and 11,000 transport workers paralysed trams and buses in Silesia. At the end of June health workers took to the streets of Warsaw.

When the parliament attempted to bring in anti-abortion laws, Walesa supported the move. He was forced to retreat in the face of a backlash from union members and women who set up street stalls gathering petitions in defence of their right to choose.

Some dissidents are developing a deeper political understanding of the social system they live under. Groups are emerging who oppose both Stalinism and western-style capitalism.

The most promising is the Polish Socialist Party (Democrat Revolution). The party has branches in the major cities and cratic in the strike movement. Self-management committees have emerged and taken up environmental issues.

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gratulating Jaruzelski on his election to the presidency, several thousand workers at the Pans Commune shipyards in Gdynia downed tools and 11,000 transport workers paralysed trams and buses in Silesia. At the end of June health workers took to the streets of Warsaw.

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**THE GOVERNMENT will be looking for injections of US dollars. But the west will set tougher conditions. George Bush sees the Polish crisis as an opportunity to open the country up to western economic influence. But western governments will also be concerned to keep Poland politically stable. As a top Polish economist remarked: "If the west wants to avoid an open revolution in Poland, what we need is money."**

Lech Walesa put it even more pointedly when demanding western aid: "We cannot wait any longer. I am sitting on a powder keg."

Lech is used to containing explosions, though. In 1981, in the

**FORTUNATELY, rank and file Solidarity supporters have ideas of their own.**

In August, dissidents within the movement formed a group called "The Agreement to Oppose Democratic Elections" to oppose Walesa's policies. They accused the government of using Solidarity as an arm of running Solidarity in an undemocratic way and attacked the price rises Walesa has agreed to. They called for a mass strike wave.

This group is still cautious, seeing strikes only as an "anti-mass weapon" but workers themselves are bolder. Over June and July thousands went on strike over wages and prices. At the very time Walesa was con-

### Playtime

INSURANCE giant National Mutual held an executive training seminar last month. Managers from across Australia were flown in for five days of intensive workshoping.

For the first session, all the managers were blindfolded. Half were told they were cows and half were told they were ducks. The cows had to moo and the ducks had to quack. Mooing and quacking under their blindfolds, the managers had to be heard together with any other managers making the same noise.

National Mutual management gave itself an 80% pay rise last year. Now we know why it really is a jungle up there at the top.

### Your taxes at work

FRANK Moonhouse wrote a book called *Conferenceville* about the ruling class war of conferences. Now Price Waterhouse has discovered that there's gold in them thar hills.

The trick is to pick a topic of government policy of burning interest to big business and hold a two day conference on it. Charge \$995 a head (tax deductible, natch) to executives to attend, and then get high-ranking public servants to address several sessions for zilch. Bung on a few cocktails, and pocket the difference.

In May it was "New Commercial Opportunities in Defence Procurement", with speakers courtesy of the Defence Department. At tax return time it was a seminar on company tax (and how to get around it), with two of John Boucher's big boys doing the honours.

Of course, the public service nabobs bring an entourage of lackeys (at \$995 a head *Sum* public coffers) to listen to the boss advise big business on how to legally milk the public purse. And who pays for Price Waterhouse's nice little *earner's*? We do, from every bloody angle.

### THE ECONOMY

## The Budget

(from page 3)

When Hawke made that famous statement, bodies like the Institute of Family Studies estimated that 800,000 children were living below the poverty line. The government has dodged the issue by changing the definitions. In April child payments for low-income and pensioner families were fixed at 15-20 percent of the married rate pension.

Presto. The new benchmark. Presto. The problem solved! But the government's package will only lift a quarter to a third of

these 800,000 children above the original (Henderson) poverty line.

As for youth, the budget offers \$100 million over four years for welfare measures, but \$64 million in one year alone for TAFE. Not that we're against spending money on TAFE, but this is the government's main concern is to provide a better flow of skilled labour to employers. (Ironically, however, when the extra skilled labour becomes available, the demand for it will have fallen away.)

You would think the bosses would be delighted with this budget, but as usual they wanted more.

In particular they complained about the new tax arrangements

### On the tube

THE BAD news from Rumania is that there is only one star on Rumanian television — President Nicolae Ceaucescu. The good news is that TV is only broadcast for two hours a day.

### Unhappy Hooker

POOR George Herscu. The Hooker Corporation down the gurgler, and his own company in liquidation. He could do with some cash.

Maybe his old mate Russ Hinze will help him out. After all, George "lent" Russ \$100,000 in late 1983, which was still unpaid at the time of the Fitzgerald inquiry.

By one of those coincidences that abound in sunny Queensland, the loan was made just when George was having trouble with Brisbane City Council over an access road to his Sunnyside Sharemarket huckster, Rene Rivkin. Rivkin wore a bow tie made of solid gold.

Not sure that amongst the guests, Bondy was somewhat upstaged by Sydney shareholder huckster, Rene Rivkin. Rivkin wore a bow tie made of solid gold.

### Spring quiz

WHO said about dealing with student protests, "It takes a bloodbath, hell, get it over with. No more appeasement."

- a. China's Deng Xiaoping in 1989
- b. Korea's Chun Doo Hwan in 1988
- c. Australia's John Dawkins in 1987
- d. America's Ronald Reagan in 1970
- e. All of the above

### Answer to Spring quiz

It was Ronald Reagan in 1970. Yep, the same Ronald Reagan who said "You cannot massacre an idea" when China crushed student protests in June.

that make tiny inroads into their profits. Under the new system, they'll have to pay the bulk of their taxes 15 days after the end of the financial year, with the rest payable nine months later.

The previous system of deferred payments meant they got to hang onto that money longer and to use it. In effect the government has been giving them huge, interest free loans. Meanwhile wage earners pay as they earn, and nobody feels sorry for us!

### The bosses can stop worrying.

The tax changes are balanced with new give-aways to industry, and the budget papers forecast only a "slight decline" in the employers' profit share, a share

which was recently described as "bloated" by Keating himself.

— Richard Emerson



BRINGING HOME THE BACON - 1989

## COVER STORY

The conservatives are still getting their act together, but as Rick Kuhn explains, it's only a matter of time til we cop

# A very Liberal dose

SINCE 1983 Australia's conservative parties have been in a mess. John Howard, Andrew Peacock and Ian Sinclair couldn't offer their usual supporters, the capitalist class, a serious alternative to the Labor Party.

But they've been gradually getting their act together. To understand the emerging conservative alternative, we need to understand the nature of the political parties of the right.

These parties have distinctive features reflecting the political inexperience of bosses themselves. Capitalist interests are divided in many ways. Along industry lines, for example: manufacturing versus mining versus banking. They can and do split according to their size, their profitability, whether corporate headquarters are located in Australia or abroad.

The diversity of capitalist interests makes it difficult for a single voice which *directly* expresses the views of capital to emerge.

But modern industrial society with its parliamentary systems has developed large, well organised parties.

The conservative parties are based on branches and individual membership rather than the affiliation of firms or corporations, as with business organisations. They also have their own bureaucracies. Unlike employer associations, the Liberal and National Parties are not directly subservient to capital. The politicians need to win popular support. So the conservative parties have some autonomy.

But unlike the ALP they don't have a substantial source of funding distinct from those who wield economic power. Fund raising for the predecessors of the Liberal Party—the Nationalists and the United Australia Party—was handled by committees of businessmen such as the National Union in Victoria and the Consultative Council in NSW.

The existence of these organisations limited the parties' freedom of action, so the Libs won control their own funds. But apart from contributions from the Electoral Commission and its State counterparts, these are largely from business.

Small business and the self-employed are well represented inside the party (alongside the occasional worker member), but so are members of the capitalist class and their lawyer and accountant mates. John Elliott, chief of Elders and President of the party, is the prime example. So while some business heavies like Alan Bond may lean to Labor, the Liberal and National Parties are the parties of the capitalist class.

BOB MENZIES seemed to be in office for ever. But since the 1970s the Libs lost their way, partly due to failed economic theories.

During the 1950s and 1960s the conservatives, just as much as Labor, thought that Keynesian economic policies could crisscross the economy. If the economy turned down, the Government could boost its own spending and slash interest rates, and all



would be well. If inflation took off, a cut in budget outlays, a tax hike or higher interest rates would cool the economy down.

So the theory went. But Keynesian methods were never really tested during the boom years, because the economy grew so well. The first serious test came with the crisis of the early 1970s growth rates fell, while unemployment and inflation rose.

The conservatives and Labor both shifted their economic thinking. The ALP's response was the Accord. On the conservative side we saw the emergence of the "new right".

While Bob Hawke wanted to think these were utterly counterposed, there were great underlying similarities. Both saw wage cuts as the most effective way to boost profits and hence growth.

The major parties also agreed that increased competition would improve economic efficiency. Greater reliance on market forces seemed a way of restraining wages and, through balanced budgets and a smaller public sector, forcing governments to shape up.

The main differences between the ALP and conservative parties during the 1980s has been over how to achieve wage cuts, and the pace of industry deregulation to encourage competition. The Liberals called for more confrontation with the unions, and for a deregulated

labour market. As the Liberals developed their policies, they drew on academic theories, the Thatcher experience and various "think-tanks". These included the Centre for Policy Studies, the Institutes of Public Affairs and the H.R. Nichols Society.

They were also reacting to what they saw as the failures of some right wing governments. While they liked the way Ronald Reagan smashed the US air traffic controllers' union, his massive increase in public spending (on arms) went against the idea of small government. They were even more disappointed with Malcolm Fraser.

Fraser was a fan of Ayn Rand, right wing author of *Rack* novels, and he loved free market rhetoric. Yet he turned out to be a big spender in practice, leaving behind a \$10 billion deficit.

THE FRASER approach was to combine free market rhetoric with policies much like those of the Menzies years. He cut some social Australian policies to channel money into welfare spending and changed money success, poorer of business. But with little long term success.

The Industrial Relations Bureau, which attempted to smother closed shops, failed. The CER and CEEP Acts directed against Commonwealth Public Servants were some

cessful in weakening unions, but also helped to radicalise public servants. Fraser's union-busting was fairly ineffectual compared with Menzies' Penal Powers or the Hawke Government's carve up of the BLF.

He only survived into the 1980s because of the resources boom, which created a temporary and somewhat artificial prosperity. But the boom led to a wage push by the unions, which showed the working class was still strong. The end of the boom brought a new economic crisis, which rapidly undermined the government's economic strategy.

Unemployment soared and the rate of profit reached a record postwar low.

From 1980 Liberal MPs like John Hyde, Peter Shack and Jim Carlton began to take free market ideas more seriously. They became more and more critical of Fraser, and formed the "dries" faction.

The new right's influence grew with the 1982-83 recession. While Fraser floundered, Bob Hawke shifted Labor politics to the right. This gave added weight to the Liberal right, for only their "dry" ideas offered a strategy distinct from the ALP's.

New rightist Jeffrey Babb said of the mid-1980s: "It is quite clear that the Hawke Government has done far more to implement the neoconservative agenda than the Fraser Government did." The Accord was better at cutting wages and, to some extent, in encouraging the restructuring of Australian industry.

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Marching against Fraser in the 1970s. Mal was cold, but not very dry.

There followed a crisis of confidence among the Liberals' key supporters. As Jenni Hewett and Peter Robinson remarked in 1987:

*"Traditional links... have become disrupted in the past few years... while much of big business has been neutralised in terms of opposition to the Labor Party, small business has become much more vociferous and organised in campaigning against government policies."*

**THE LIBERALS** needed a new political and economic program, but the process of working it out has been protracted and painful.

Malcolm Fraser's successor Andrew Peacock was deposed in 1985 by his deputy, John Howard. This was a move towards "drier" politics. Howard purged "wets", including Ian McPhee who hankered after the Keynesian policies of the 1960s, from his front bench in 1987. But his own program was far from clear.

In 1988 he tried to side step the problem of economic policy by appealing to racism. This did have some popular appeal, but it was damaging to Asian trade and the business migration program, and caused further divisions inside the party.

The party's confusion has led to major conflicts. In 1987, Joh Bjelke-Petersen tried to mobilise the widespread discontent among conservative voters with the lack of a coherent alternative to Labor. The "Joh for PM" push failed, but it brought home to the Liberals and Nationals how desperate the situation was.

WHILE Andrew Peacock has had a "small-P" liberal image in the past, his return to power this year was not a defeat for the new right forces. Despite Howard's dryish credentials, the new right were critical of many of his policies, including the taxation proposals which were the keystone of his 1987 election campaign.

The divisions inside the Liberals between pro-Howard and pro-Peacock forces reflect

some personal squabbles. More importantly they are between politicians of different ages whose formative experiences are different, and they reflect conflicts between different sections of the ruling class, with Peacock and McPhee being close to manufacturing capital while much of the new right is associated with mining and some rural industries.

While Peacock won a personal victory, the party machine has continued to consolidate the strength of the "dries". A struggle in the Victorian Liberal machine in 1988 saw rightwing lawyer Michael Kroger emerge as President. Then John Elliott moved from Liberal Party Treasurer to the Presidency.

In parliament, right wing economics professor John Hewson took over the Finance portfolio and became shadow Treasurer after Peacock's coup. Peter Costello, who had come to prominence as a barrister in the union busting Dollar Sweets case, and other dries won preselection over wet parliamentarians in Victoria.

Ex-National Farmers Federation leader Ian McLachlan did the same in South Australia and right-winger Bronwyn Bishop defeated wet Senator Chris Puplick for the number one slot on the NSW Liberal Senate ticket.

Ironically, the new right's ability to influence the party has been enhanced by the ALP's pro-business stance. Since sections of business were reasonably happy with the Hawke Government, they devoted less energy to influencing the Liberal Party.

This left the field more open to the ideological right and those sections of capital which back it.

The passivity of the ACTU and the union leaders generally in the face of anti-union attacks by the extreme right also helped increase the right's prestige. There was the appalling collapse of the unions during the SEQEB power workers' struggle of 1985, then the defeats at Dollar Sweets, Mudgeberrin and Robt River.

Some of these coincided with a balance of trade crisis, and the unions may have been intimidated by forecasts of economic doom. But in any case the union defeats gave a spur to the right within the Liberal party.

So the Liberals, despite continuing internal divisions, have been moving consistently rightwards, and are now gaining confidence. They promise to slash government spending on social security and to attack the influence of unions. That is not to say they want to literally smash the union movement, any more than Maggie Thatcher has done in Britain.

## How the bosses organise

OUR RULERS organise in many ways, and even informal links through golf clubs or charity organisations can be important. Interlocking directorships provide informal networks.

But formal organisations count the most.

Employer organisations pursue the interests of different types of employers, regarding government policies (protection, regulations, taxes). Some cover small groups and conditions who make the same product, while wider organisations cover industry sectors, like the Metal Trades Industries Association, who have common problems.

Then again they're organised by size: the Business Council of Australia brings together the chief executives of the largest corporations, while the Australian Small Business Association targets small employers.

Common hostility to the Whitlam Government, internal financial problems during the 1970s recession, mergers amongst employer associations and encouragement from the Liberal Party inspired the formation of the Confederation of Australian Industry in 1977.

But pressure for a single peak council from a

Like Thatcher, a Liberal-National government would encourage the conservative wing of the union bureaucracy and legislate for greater penalties against industrial action.

**THIS IS** not a program which the most intelligent Australian bosses will go for at present.

Labor's Accord is widely recognised as the most effective way to hold down wages at a time when workers have considerable potential bargaining power. Now is not the moment when most employers want a show down with the unions.

But the current phase of economic growth may come to an end quite soon. The conservatives are preparing policies which will make sense for the capitalist class if there is a deep new recession.

Should the Australian economy move into crisis over the next year or so and the conservative parties come to power, we would be facing a new era of savage attacks on the unions, on welfare spending, on everyone who isn't a parasite like Peacock or Hewson.

Of course there is a quite different possibility. The current economic situation is so complex and frustrating, it is possible the conservatives could win office even before the next recession. They would be in policy ahead of the situation for which their policies are designed.

In that case, like Nick Greiner in NSW, they would no doubt take a harder line than Hawke on industrial relations, welfare spending and the size of the public sector, but their policies would still be moderated by having to deal with a union movement not yet frightened by a surge in unemployment.

What is increasingly clear is that the conservatives represent a credible alternative for the bosses, for the first time in years. In the class struggles ahead, we will once again have two serious enemies: the open champions of the bosses will once again stand alongside their Labor Party defenders.

group of Australia's largest companies, the "big 50", was apparently crucial.

But the experience of the Hawke Government has tended to agitate fragment business organisation. Dissatisfaction with the performance of business at the 1983 Economic Summit led the "big 50" to set up the Business Council of Australia, and the CAI later lost the Bankers' Association, Farmers' Federation, the Master Builders and the Metal Trades Industry Association.

The Australian Federation of Employers was set up in 1986 as a rival to the CAI. It included the NFF, Small Business Association and the Australian Chamber of Commerce, but has subsequently declined.

Reflecting its declining support, in May 1989 the CAI decided to scale down its operations. It had become so divided over general policy questions that it couldn't come up with a coherent position. So all that remains is an industrial relations body taking a hard line against wage rises.

Ironically, the most coherent advocate of employer interests is now the ALP. That employer interest is now the ALP. That employer interest is now the ALP. That employer interest is now the ALP.

## 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, and 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 worldwide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against others. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

### 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 used to action. In the unions, people are fighting for a better world, socialists are in the thick for a better world, socialists are in the thick for a better world, socialists are in the thick for a better world, that's where you want to be, join us today!

# Brutal realities of the free market

ONE OF the remarkable events of the 1980s has been the rehabilitation of that long-disgraced and discredited institution: the free market.

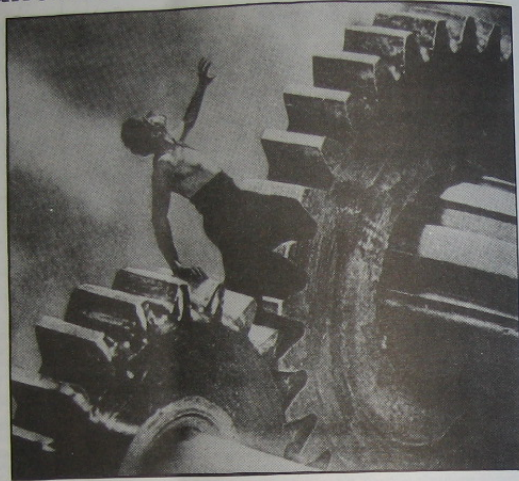
The depression of the 1930s had brought home to capitalists and economists alike just how disastrous "market failures" could be. The achievements of government-led war economies during the 1940s, and the growth of both Russian and western economies in a planning framework after the war, persuaded most people that the government should intervene to fix up market failures.

On the left, full-blown nationalisation and central planning was taken for granted as the first step toward socialism, while even conservative governments happily administered state-run steel industries and car companies.

The crisis of the 1970s put an end to all that.

The Soviet economy entered a "stagnation era" despite gigantic levels of investment. In the west, mass unemployment became a part of everyday life and profits fell. And as that happened, new rightwing ideologies began to dominate economic debate.

Behind the stolid facade of Brezhev's "socialism" the experts began demanding a turn to free market mechanisms, and in the west the disciples of Milton Friedman ran rampant.



the joke, "and we pretend to work".

In the 1970s the free market ideologists began to point out what a drain this situation was on national economies. As the economic crisis of the times put more pressure on each economy to compete, governments began to swing rightwards.

By the 1980s the world was gripped by massive privatisation of government enterprises. Those not sold off were "commercialised", and had to compete on their own. Everyone, everywhere, had to be competitive.

Rightwingers, east and west, claim the market is superior, because it rewards hard work and initiative, and does away with red tape. The consumer gets better service and the economy grows, they say. But it's not hard to knock a few holes in these arguments.

**YES, the lash of competition will drive you to produce efficiently, and some get rich. But efficient at producing what? For whom? McDonalds are awesomely efficient, but the main result is a lot of stomach aches.**

And while individual competition makes them operate at cost purposes, Melbourne and Sydney are currently watching building firms put up skyscrapers

with breathtaking speed, but there are too many and it's no secret that some of them will not get any tenants.

In times of recession, the market produces vast amounts of waste. Goods that can't be sold are left to rot. People are thrown out of work, their skills suddenly good for nothing.

Competition can be destructive in other ways, too. Reporting on the competition between two private cooperatives operating bus lines, *Moscow News* said last year that "members of one cooperative threw stones at moving buses belonging to the other cooperative and put iron goosenecks under their tyres."

One of the most dishonest arguments of the free-marketiers is that they're against government "monopolies". Because capitalism is a system of monopolies wherever you look at it.

Any minority has a monopoly control of finance, the factories, access to elite schools and key government functions. In industries where there are lots of small operators, competition will eventually weed most of them out, leaving a few big fish. As Karl Marx remarked, "one capitalist always kills many".

**ALL IN all, the "free market" is really a slave market, and socialists are right to fight for its abolition. But we should also learn**

from the failures of government ownership and planning.

Unless it is democratic, a state-run economy is no more efficient than the market. Each has its different drawbacks, for example bureaucratic government authorities often provide slow service and callous treatment of their clients.

But ironically they sometimes have the same drawbacks, too. In the fifties, the Communist Party of Australia pointed out the absurdity of trucks on the Hume Highway, some carrying cars from Melbourne to Sydney and others, loaded with the very same brand of cars, headed the other way.

Soviet planning, they argued, was free of these features. Yet last year *Moscow News* reported that of the huge quantities of meat shipped into Moscow from the provinces, on order from the central planners, 760,000 tons are taken right back to the regional towns by shoppers who come into the capital on shopping trips!

How can they make such ridiculous mistakes? Their information is limited, and they are fed false information by enterprise managers.

Only by bringing the workers of each factory, farm and office into a democratic planning process can we make planning work better than the market.

—Tom O'Lincoln

# Dockyard occupiers show that it pays to fight

THE 1600 workers of Cockatoo Island Dockyard have ended their heroic strike and occupation.

At their regular weekly meeting on 18 August they voted by a clear majority to accept a redundancy deal. The deal consists of a \$500 bonus per worker for finishing the two Oberon Class Submarine refits now half-done, and two weeks' pay for every ten days of service, and a promise of "negotiations" about the island's future.

Only one week previously they had knocked back a similar offer. But the strikers were finally worn down by their isolation.

The NSW Labour Council played a treacherous role throughout. Following an initial weak statement of support, the Labour Council kicked the strikers in the teeth at their June 2 mass meeting by directing them to return to work.

At subsequent Labour Council meeting, Cockatoo workers and their supporters called for a general stoppage, but these gestures were squashed by the dominant right wing.

The sympathy of most rank and file workers for the strike was never in doubt. Financial collections always got encouraging support, and the loudest cheers on the July 25 "Day of Outrage" were reserved for the Cockatoo unionists. But the kind

of solidarity strike action that could have brought them victory never materialized.

Maritime Services Board workers stopped work for 24 hours in support of Cockatoo, and the waterfront stopped for 48 hours. But without more general action by the unions, these were never much more than token events.

The strike and occupation on the island remained solid and well organised throughout, but the workers remained effectively marooned on their island.

Labor's new Industrial Relations Commission held off for quite some time before picking the most damaging moment to intervene. Towards the end of the strike it threatened to impose fines on the occupiers. This threat, which the Labour Council bureaucrats had virtually invited the IRC to make, was a major factor in the final vote.

The ACTU had also intervened by playing soft cop to the IRC's hard cop. Bill Kelly's mob, all smiles and reasonableness, promised to "go in and bat" in negotiations on behalf of the workforce — provided they ended the strike.

The closure of the dockyard will leave most of the workforce contemplating a bleak future. Many are over 50, and their skills are not in demand elsewhere.

When they said they were fighting to avoid a life on the dole queue it wasn't just rhetoric.

It seems the island has already been earmarked for sale to Kerry Packer, who plans to turn it into a resort for millionaires. No doubt we'll soon be hearing about a tourist-led recovery.

The return to work means the workforce will complete the last two submarine refits. After that the government has nothing to fear, and even less reason to negotiate.

Nevertheless the occupation, with its 24-hour organisation, is something the dockyard workers can be justly proud of. They were offered nothing at first, and they won something because they were prepared to fight. There is a lesson in that for every workplace.

The shutdown of the dockyard is closely tied to the needs of Australian imperialism. Since the Vietnam war, the US is less keen on large scale troop deployments in Asia, and this means our rulers want a stronger independent military force to assert their interests in the region.

The 1987 DIBB Report called for a more mobile strike force, and this means a new class of submarines based in Western Australia. There, they will be closer to where the action is: Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Sabre-rattling is becoming more popular in Canberra. The recent Operation Kangaroo ex-

ercise, costing \$28 million, was basically a rehearsal for an invasion of Indonesia, just in case radical nationalists come to power there.

—Eric Petersen

COMPO



## "Going up" say lift workers

SYDNEY'S lift mechanics have been on strike in support of a claim for top-up workers' compensation insurance, an increasingly vital issue now Greiner's comp legislation has gone through.

Despite government threats and pressure from their union officials, 1500 members of the Electrical Trades and Metal Workers unions stayed out for three weeks, while 1300 lifts went out of action.

A frustrated Nick Greiner threatened to investigate ways of having them sued if accidents resulted from faulty lifts.

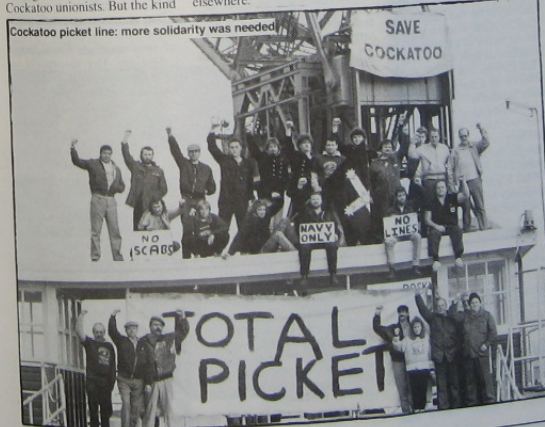
The mechanics' absence was sorely felt, especially in multi-story buildings. The daily press ran a series of features about improving your fitness by running up stairs, but not too many people were convinced. In some buildings, workers won agreements from employers that time spent waiting for lifts counted as work.

The mechanics are back at work but the fight goes on. The two unions have voted to join the building unions' industrial campaign around the issue. Unfortunately, that campaign is currently on a back burner.

Threats by Greiner to heavily penalize any employer who agrees to top ups have led the union officials to accept a moratorium on industrial action. Top up deals are already widespread in NSW 200 companies have taken out policies since 1987, and the recent campaign by building unions forced over 300 to sign up. Employers are now looking for loopholes in the comp legislation that will enable them to meet union claims while dodging Greiner's penalties.

After all, top-up insurance only costs building companies \$4.35 per week for each employee, and that's cheap for industrial peace in a booming industry.

—Eris Harrison



AT THE age of only 16, Rosa Luxemburg was the leader and theoretician of a revolutionary party, the Polish left organisation "Proletariat".

In 1893, at the age of 23, she attended the Congress of the Socialist International and took original and independent positions on the issues. In the course of her political career she participated in the great upheavals that shook the Russian empire in 1905, defended a revolutionary perspective within a socialist movement moving toward reformism, and launched a new German revolutionary movement after World War I.

It was no wonder her contemporary Franz Mehring later remarked: "There is not doubt that the finest brain amongst the scientific successors of Marx and Engels was Rosa Luxemburg".

At the 1893 Congress, Luxemburg stood up against the accepted view that every socialist must call for the independence of Poland. Concerned to combat nationalism among Polish workers, she demanded the right to oppose this call. Her stand led to a major debate with Lenin, both sides of which can be read with profit even today.

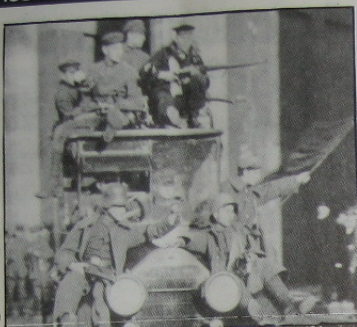
From that year on she lived in Germany, where she confronted the reformism rife within the huge German Social Democratic Party. One of its leaders, Eduard Bernstein, argued that the development of capitalism was paving the way for a parliamentary road to socialism.

LUXEMBURG replied in her pamphlet *Reform or Revolution?* She pointed out that the difference between reformists and revolutionaries is not just a difference in methods, but also in aims:

*"Legal reform and revolution are not different methods of obtaining social progress, like hot and cold dishes at the buffet of history. They are different factors in the development of class society, factors which condition and supplement each other, but at the same time are antithetic to each other..."*

*"Therefore whoever chooses the path of legal reform as a substitute for, and in contradiction to, the conquest of political power is not choosing a more peaceful slower path to the same aim, but is choosing a different aim altogether..."*

Reformists end up seeing reform as an end in itself, so they accept the assumptions of capitalism: bosses controlling the work, workers selling them their labour. For Luxemburg reforms were important, but their greatest



Luxemburg's Spartakists battle Reichwehr troops in 1919

# The revolution's living flame

value lay in the fact that in struggling for them, workers begin to see the nature of the system and learn how to fight it.

Rosa always took as her starting point the idea that workers transform themselves through struggle. She learnt from the 1905 Russian revolution that the more widespread and protracted the struggle, the more their ideas are changed.

What began as a fight for better conditions led to demands for a new form of society. This is because a mass strike lets workers feel their collective strength. And they are not just confronting individual employers, but also the state. This raises the question of whose interests are served by governments, the police and the military.

**HER EMPHASIS** on the importance of mass action contrasted sharply with the top-down approach of the party leadership. Seeing a party which was

bureaucratic and increasingly conservative, she tended to emphasize the element of spontaneity in the revolutionary process.

While she always insisted that party organisation was essential, she was unable to find her way to the conception of the party that Lenin developed: a fighting vanguard organisation that gave direction to mass struggles, rather than stifling them.

In 1910 the German party split into a reformist group which was adopting policies in support of German imperialism, a centre group which leaned to parliamentary methods, and a revolutionary group led by Luxemburg.

When World War I broke out the party leadership voted in support of the war, and Luxemburg and her supporters were isolated. She spent most of the next four years leading her small band from prison, denouncing the war in every way possible.

"A hundred thousand kilos of bacon, coffee substitutes—imme-

diolate delivery! Profits are rising as proletarians fall. And with each one sinks a fighter for the future."

*"The madness will cease and the bloody product of hell come to an end only when the workers waken from their frenzy, extend to each other the hand of friendship and drown the bestial chorus of imperialist hyenas with the thunderous battle cry of the modern working class movement: Workers of the World Unite!"*

FOLLOWING the Russian Revolution of 1917, Luxemburg called on German workers and soldiers to follow the lead of the Russians and overthrow German capitalism. But with the Social Democratic Party controlled by right wingers and without a separate party of her own, she could only have a limited impact.

Her supporters, organised in the Spartacus League, set about building a revolutionary movement, and Rosa led it once released from jail, but it was much too late.

The socialist leaders joined forces with the generals of the Kaiser's army to crush an insurrection which took place in Berlin. Thousands of workers died, and on 15 January 1918, Rosa Luxemburg and her close comrade in arms Karl Liebknecht were murdered.

Rosa Luxemburg was born a few days after French workers proclaimed the Paris Commune, and died the year after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. What a tragedy she didn't have the organisation necessary to lead her own revolution when it was on the agenda in Germany.

She remains a great figure in socialist history, the "living flame of revolution" as Clara Zetkin called her. Her theoretical insights began from the proposition that "the liberation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves." That is as true today as ever.

—Edla Ward



# China: the workers' crucial role

WHILE IT was headed by students who spearheaded the democratic movement in China earlier this year, workers played an important role. Just how important is now becoming clear.

They were deeply involved in the demonstrations, the occupation of Tianmen Square, and in creating independent trade unions. And workers were the backbone of the insurrection which took place in dozens of provincial cities after the Beijing massacre.

The working class made its public entry into the movement fairly late, and very cautiously. It was not until the April 27 demonstration, hundreds of thousands strong, that they first expressed support. Even then it was mostly in the form of applauding marchers as they passed factories, offices and construction sites. Some joined the march, but usually only during lunch breaks.

But once mobilized they became increasingly confident. By mid-May some two million were on strike in Beijing, and marched in their thousands behind banners identifying their workplaces: banks, ministries, electronics firms, breweries, the massive steel complex.

When martial law was declared most returned to work, but they came into the streets at night to argue with the troops.

**SUCH** was the public picture. But behind the scenes, worker activists were also busy.



Bottling Coca-Cola in Peking: the world market

On April 21, the Beijing Autonomous Workers Union was founded and published open letters to the people and the government.

Its public launch took place a month later in Tianmen Square before half a million people. This did not proceed without difficulties.

Initially the union's sponsors had stayed on the fringe of the square, meeting nearby in the Forbidden City. Partly this was because of the hostile response they'd had from some students. Partly it was for fear of arrest.

The fear proved justified. On May 29, activists plastered the walls of the city with leaflets advising the union's official launch for the next day. That night three out of four executive members were arrested. Recognizing that the locked doors of the Forbidden City were no protection, union activists went into the square and set up their tent alongside those of the students.

The union published its rules and a declaration stating its aims. It was to be a "truly representative workers' organisation", which would "speak in the name of the workers and take up the issues that concern them". Unlike the CP-dominated official unions, it would not be just a welfare organization, but would "address political and economic demands." It would be democratically organised.

**THE UNION** aimed to be the means by which workers participated in the democratic movement.

This wasn't just a matter of in-



Coal miners in Tangshan. The working class represents the best hope for the future.

suing slogans and propaganda. The union set up committees to work alongside the students in maintaining order, and protecting the lives of participants. It also guaranteed the supply of necessary products for everyday life—vegetables, grain, manufactured goods.

Undoubtedly the activists' ambitions far outstripped their meagre resources. While the union seems to have existed in at least half a dozen cities, estimates of its membership vary from as few as dozens to as many as 3000.

But the mere existence of the union was a tribute to the political consciousness of at least a section of the Chinese working class, and indicated that these workers could do given the right circumstances. In the years of economic reform initiated by Deng, workers have suffered less than might have been expected. That isn't because Deng and his group aimed to improve their lot. On the contrary, the regime has set out to hand over ever greater power to local managers, to abolish job security and to tie wages to productivity.

But workers have often been able to resist. Strong organisation on the job has meant that through strikes, go-slow, and sometimes physical threats to managers, employees have been able to protect their wages and conditions. So those workers who risked their jobs by joining the Autonomous Workers Unions reflected a considerable class consciousness in the workforce.

**THIS** should be no surprise. Despite the Communist Party dictatorship, Chinese workers have a history of struggle. During the Cultural Revolution, they took ad-

vantage of the turmoil to launch struggles for their own interests, economic and political.

During the "Democracy Wall" movement of 1978-81, workers played a leading role and led to establish independent unions, modelled generally on Poland's Solidarity, whose rise and fall was closely watched. Some began to question whether China was really a socialist society, whether it was not in fact in the grip of a bureaucratic ruling class.

Again during the recent uprising, the struggle for reform led some workers to new political insights. The Beijing Autonomous Workers Union produced a document analysing the "mode of exploitation according to the model taught by Karl Marx in *Capital*."

While many of the activists of the independent union probably died in Tianmen Square, many others survived the massacre and have escaped arrest.

In the aftermath of the massacre, strikes swept the country, though in many cities workers in essential services (power, food and transport) stayed at their posts to support the movement.

While the movement has been crushed, workers have had a taste both of freedom and of their own power. The leaders are alive. The activists will have learned important lessons: the need for independent organisation, the dangers in relying on the more "liberal" factions within the Communist Party, the strength workers have when they decide to fight.

This in turn means that when the struggle resumes, as it inevitably will, the Chinese working class will start fighting on a higher political level.

— Graham Willitt

# Green politics: old versus new?

**I**F WE spent the first half of the eighties exploding nuclear bombs to rain down on us every minute, the second half has brought us the threat of environmental collapse: the ozone layer, rainforests destruction, the Greenhouse effect.

The Tasmanian Greens' electoral success made me feel more optimistic. Though I don't think they can do much good in parliament, and I've criticised their leanings toward small business, their win is a sign that people want action.

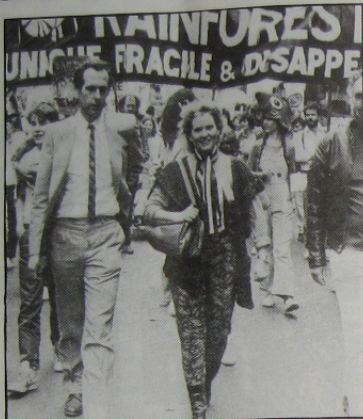
But just what are we looking for? I went to some bookstores looking for answers, and the most relevant book seemed to be the two year old *Green Politics in Australia*. This is a collection of articles claiming to present a coherent perspective.

Most of the authors come from the left, but they argue for "a new synthesis...which Marxism and traditional Left groups are unable to provide." Drew Hutton compares old and new "paradigms" approaches to the world's problems.

The old paradigm is mechanical. It sees people ("Man") conquering nature, counterparts male and female roles, and leads to militarism and environmental destruction. The new one wants harmony with nature, a rethink of gender roles, and peace.

Marxism, we are told, is in the first category. We Marxists counterpart workers to bosses, call for class warfare, and want to dominate nature. No wonder a new, post-Marxist politics is needed!

Yet on closer inspection, this tale of two paradigms falls apart. Hutton presents two tables with the features of outlook no 1 set off against those of no 2. According



Green celebs march: yet to provide a real alternative

to Hutton, the old paradigm stands for *market forces*, but also for *centralisation*. The new one includes workers' control but also allows some private ownership of industry.

**S**O THERE'S more than a few contradictions to the "new syntheses".

Sill Hutton is right to want a society based on harmony between people and with nature. That demands radical social changes, and here the authors explore some important issues.

Debates on nuclear power have shown the importance of economic arguments, and Merv Partridge tackles them head on.

I enjoyed parts of Partridge's chapter immensely. He underestimates that people's lack of power

at work—the alienation of labour, we Marxists call it—explains many destructive tendencies in our society. And so he calls for democracy in the workplace:

*"The predominant relations at sites of production are relations of domination and subordination...decisions about what to produce, as well as the products of human labour, are...controlled and disposed of by remote superordinates...No weapon-making, warrior-making, poverty-making and environmental-unmaking will only cease once we have succeeded in resolving the relations of domination."*

How are we going to achieve a society where work is democratically run? Here the book is disappointing.

**F**EMINIST Ariel Salleh calls for "eco-feminism", arguing that our problems come from male dominated, "patriarchal" society. Capitalism is a form of patriarchy, she says.

I see it a bit differently but I won't argue about social systems here. The test of a theory is what action it leads to. But this is where Salleh is weakest.

She presents an interesting history of women's groups and campaigns, but some have only tenuous links to environmental questions. How do Reclaim the Night campaigns or Women Against Rape fit into "eco-feminism", what pointers can they give us for coping with the Greenhouse effect?

And is feminism really that effective within the Green movement if "one problem all wings of the German (Green) Party have sexism"?

I hoped for better from Merv Partridge, powerful critic of workplace alienation. Not that I expected something as "old paradigm" as class struggle. But it was a real let down to find that his key strategy is "ethical investment" campaigns.

Now it's true some companies can be made to clean up their act a bit by shareholder pressure, and for people who have both progressive politics and a lot of money to invest, that's useful.

But to imagine most wage and salary earners can take such action is a fantasy, as is the suggestion that BHP or Alan Bond will hand over their power because some investors kick up a fuss.

**W**ITH Partridge so disappointing, I turned expectantly to Jack Mundy's chapter on Green Bans.

He tells the story of workers and residents acting together to save the environment, and an inspiring tale it is too. But for those of us who remember the old NSW Builders' Labourers, there is something missing.

The BLs also fought for, and won, workers' control on the job. On the Opera House site, for example, they elected foremen and regulated production, showing that class struggle can achieve the workplace democracy that Merv Partridge wants. But Mundy doesn't mention it, so this chapter too offers no guide to action.

Drew Hutton tries lamely at the end to comment on what should be done. First, he says, we must keep the issues on the political agenda. Fair enough, but hardly a strategy for change. Secondly, we need a vision. OK, but the question is how to achieve our vision.

Finally we are offered "...new wave cooperatives and ethical investment projects."

It's not good enough. If we are to avoid an environmental catastrophe, we desperately need a strategy. This book offers next to none.

Our Marxist politics of class struggle, revolutionary organisation and militant action might be a frighteningly "old paradigm", but they're streets ahead of anything the authors of *Green Politics* have to offer.

—Tom O'Lincoln



**TWENTY YEARS** after Gay Liberation made its big splash, the ripples are still spreading.

Only now are films sympathetic to gays breaking through into mainstream English language cinema. The movie of the successful play *Torch Song Trilogy* is probably the most important film marking this breakthrough.

*Torch Song Trilogy* is the story of Arnold Beckoff, a gay Jewish female impersonator living in New York in the 1970s.

Arnold (played by writer Harvey Fierstein) believes in love and is looking for a Mr. Right to settle down with. We meet two of his Mr Rights—the physical, self-proclaimed bisexual Ed, played by Brian Kerwin, and the younger "sweet kid" Alan (Matthew Broderick). The other loves of his life are his mother, with whom he has a continuous battle about his sexuality, and later his adopted gay son David.

All but the most closeted gay men will probably find part of their life portrayed in this film. There is the battle for understanding from relatives, shown in Arnold's conflicts with his mother as he dares to claim equality between his six-year relationship with Alan and his parents' thirty-five year marriage.

There is the ever-present threat of poofier-bashing, shown in all its ugliness when a group of thugs attack and kill Alan, bringing his relationship with Arnold to a tragic end.

There is also the ambivalent relationship to the gay "scene" of bars and sex clubs, which holds out the prospect of love, sex and friendship but can also be lonely and frightening.

We see the camp humour and camaraderie of groups of gay men together. And we're shown the conflict with lovers over the appropriate amount of discretion, over self-hated and the question of just how far out of the closet to come.

Certainly *Torch Song* is no Gay Liberation manifesto. It is unnecessarily cool about showing the characters touching or kissing.

In many respects Arnold is the ideal American boy—he loves his mum and looks forward to settling down and raising kids. Even the fact that he is a drag queen is not necessarily challenging—effeminate, implicitly gay characters have appeared for ages in movies as figures of fun.

What is thoroughly untraditional in *Torch Song* is that a character like this should assert his dignity and his right to respect, without this depending on his somehow



One of *Torch Song*'s steamier scenes. The film is too coy about physical affection, but is still an important breakthrough.

## Coming out with a torch song

becoming a "normal" man by denying his effeminacy or his sexuality.

*Torch Song*'s demand is essentially that homosexuality be recognised as every bit the equal of heterosexuality. It does not explore Gay Liberation's attacks on heterosexual norms and refusal to demand "an equality which is merely the common yoke of sexual repression," as gay activists put it at the time.

But it is not hostile to these broader challenges. At one stage in the film Arnold visits a back-room with a drag queen friend. Arnold is obviously uncomfortable, but his friend, who loves the anonymous sex on offer, there, is in no way put down for enjoying it.

And the film deserves credit for demanding equality with uncompromising consistency. Refusing to give ground to any suggestion that gays have no place in raising children, it shows Arnold doing a better job with David than his original, heterosexual parents.

And in showing David as a young man comfortable with his gayness, it declares itself in favour of young people's right to express their sexuality.

Reviews in the mainstream press have harped on about the fact that *Torch Song Trilogy* contains no references to AIDS, as if that were the only serious issue that gays have to deal with.

With Fred Dagg, you'll laugh at the world and be inspired to change it.

There are lots of issues which we should be serious about—poofier-bashing, our rights to love as we want and to raise children, our own self-respect and respect from the rest of the world.

*Torch Song Trilogy* takes a passionate stand on all of these issues. Not a bad way for us to "come out" into mainstream cinema.

—Robert Stainesby



## He wields a keen dagger

**JOHN CLARKE'S** political satire is at its cutting best in the latest collection of his radio pieces, *A Complete Dagg*.

Amongst his victims are the advertising industry, accountants, "the banking dog," Wall Street which seems like any other street except "the criminal element gets to work regular hours," and the taxation system which has more loopholes for the wealthy than a mile of wire netting has for an active blowfly. The "Dagg metaphor is contagious.

In the marvellous style of Damon Runyon, who wrote with wry humour of the crooks and gangsters of the New York underworld, Clarke takes us to the Australian dives of political thugs such as Little Bob, Landside Howard, Baby-Face Richardson and other robbers like Complete Dawkins "who operates a little protection racket in the universities and runs the potatoes over to Paul the Spook".

Unfortunately then, that he takes a blunt and indiscriminate cosh to the unions, comparing industrial disputes to petty squabbles over icecream.

Whilst the union leaderships deserve Dagg's dagger thrusts for their hypocrisy and complacency in managing capitalism, the trade unions are a vital defence for the working class against the fiscal felons and capitalist muggers that Clarke vents his wicked wit on.

This blenheim apart, Dagg's latest tome is a vibrant blast against the exploiters of the world.

It is serious and funny (some advice—do not read the sporting skits on farknelling or golf with a mouthful of hot tea).

With Fred Dagg, you'll laugh at the world and be inspired to change it.

—Phil Shannon

John Clarke, *A Complete Dagg*, Allen & Unwin Australia, 1989, \$14.95.

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# Hollow man turns Trojan horse

AUSTRALIANS were treated to an odd sight last month. Andrew Peacock ran a "dry run" election campaign with no election in sight.

The Liberal leader had no opponent, no new policies, and no voters to face at the end. The only surprise was that he didn't conclude with the boast of another failed Liberal leader, "We didn't win, but we didn't lose."

The one policy he did hint at got him into trouble. His idea of a discount for inflation before taxing bank interest or giving company tax deductions for borrowings only irritated big businesses like BHP. The workers it was aimed at remember only too well past fistfuls of dollars offered but never delivered by the Libs.

In fact Peacock finished his mock campaign being dubbed the "Hollow Man" by the Bulletin. It was hardly a tour de force. But Peacock's trouble goes deeper than just standing for nothing.

**PEACOCK'S first problem is that he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and has never quite figured how to get it out.**

His breeding is pure ruling class. One ancestor governed Victoria while others owned the marine engineering firm Peacock and Scotch College, where he was a prefect and member of the 1956 rowing team. (A fellow rower has told what happened when he complained that Peacock was not pulling his weight and was only in the team for prestige. Peacock burst into tears and told on the boy, eventually getting him expelled.)

Peacock followed a well-worn Establishment path into politics, doing law at Melbourne and becoming president of the upper crust marriage bureau called the Young Liberals. While other young lawyers of his time campaigned for Aboriginal rights and against hanging, Peacock engaged in such socially useful litigation as trying to close down the Young Labor Association's cafe. He married a fellow Young Liberal, the now-infamous Susan, whose daddy was a prominent state MP.

With such credentials, he inherited the blue-ribbon seat of the great Menzies himself at age 28. At the by-election he argued in



favour of conscription and the Vietnam War. Since he was of fighting age, protestors asked why he hadn't enlisted to go there himself. Instead Peacock became Minister of the Army, sending working class boys to shed their blood for him.

Peacock's next stint in government was under Malcolm Fraser, where he turned the title "Minister of Foreign Affairs" into a double entendre. Jetting around the world in his Gucci clothes and permanent Gold Coast tan, the Toorak playboy thrived in the job. There were no tricky wars to involve Australia in, and Fraser produced the big policy initiatives over Zimbabwe and the Olympic boycott. Peacock handled the chores like recognising Kampuchea.

The job gave Peacock a view of himself as a mover and shaker in world politics. Ex-Labor senator Jim McLellan tells of an incident in New York when he attended a fabulous banquet put on by the Brazilian government for UN delegates. McLellan suddenly thought of the political prisoners being tortured in Brazil's jails and ger wearing his usual smug grin on the way in. When he met Peacock the next day, he recounted the incident to him. Peacock's only reaction was to look slightly hurt. "Henry in town? He hasn't called me," he complained.

An acute assessment of Pea-

demolish Peacock is a comment on Hawke rather than on his opponent.

But the toughening of Andrew Peacock has another purpose. He has shed his small-l liberal veneer like last summer's tan to tone in with the Liberals as they head to the right.

Step one in the change of image was the shadow treasurer job under John Howard. Peacock had no grasp of what he was talking about, so became a willing puppet for the Treasury hardliners. By the time Bjeike-Petersen and John Stone launched their wacky "Job for PM" campaign, he was their nomination for the job of tame Liberal leader. When Ian MacPhee needed him against the New Right, he was nowhere to be seen. Even his one liberal gesture of late, the revoking of Howard's racist "One Australia" policy, was more a move to end damage to the Liberals than an act of principle. When the moment of truth had come earlier under Howard, Peacock was not one of those who crossed the floor.

**THE BEST indicators of where Peacock now stands are the people he has behind him.**

There is John Hewson, his shadow treasurer who is a one-track record playing a tune of "Cut and privatise" ad nauseum. Hewson is a millionaire restaurateur whose idea of hardship is appearance's sake. Hewson makes great play of his working class origins, presumably on the theory that since he was born with a ticket out, he is now entitled to burn down the theatre.

There is John Elliott, the party president, who after collecting \$22 million worth of shares, virtually free in a deal arranged by Elders' executives for themselves, demanded massive welfare cuts. Peacock's response was that he did not intend to lecture businessmen on morality.

And soon to join him in parliament is Ian McLachlan, the millionaire grazier who coyly gave cricket vocation as "shearer" in his cricket days. Now that he fronts the National Farmers Federation operations at Mudginberri and Peacock is promoting him as one of the new talents in the party.

That is the real problem with Andrew Peacock. He is a "hollow man" like the Bulletin says, but a hollow man serving as a conduit for British right-wing politics. And to get rid of his pampered image, he is adopting those politics as his own.

**THIS well-earned image of the soft Toorak playboy hurt Peacock badly last time he led the Liberals. So his minders are getting rid of it this time around.**

Peacock now avoids the Little Lord Fauntleroy pout and pompous cliches like "As surely as night follows day" that were once his trademark. He tries hard to look serious without seeming miffed, or to look smiling and confident without appearing frivolous. He is obviously after the patrician air that appeals to those middle and working class types who still admire the royal family.

He takes every opportunity to remind us of his supposed victory in the great TV debate with Bob Hawke in 1984. Yet any critical viewer knows that Hawke is a piss-and-wind verbal bully. Hawke is good at talking over people, but drowns in his own tortured syntax as soon as he has to reason because he accepts so many Liberal premises. The fact that he couldn't

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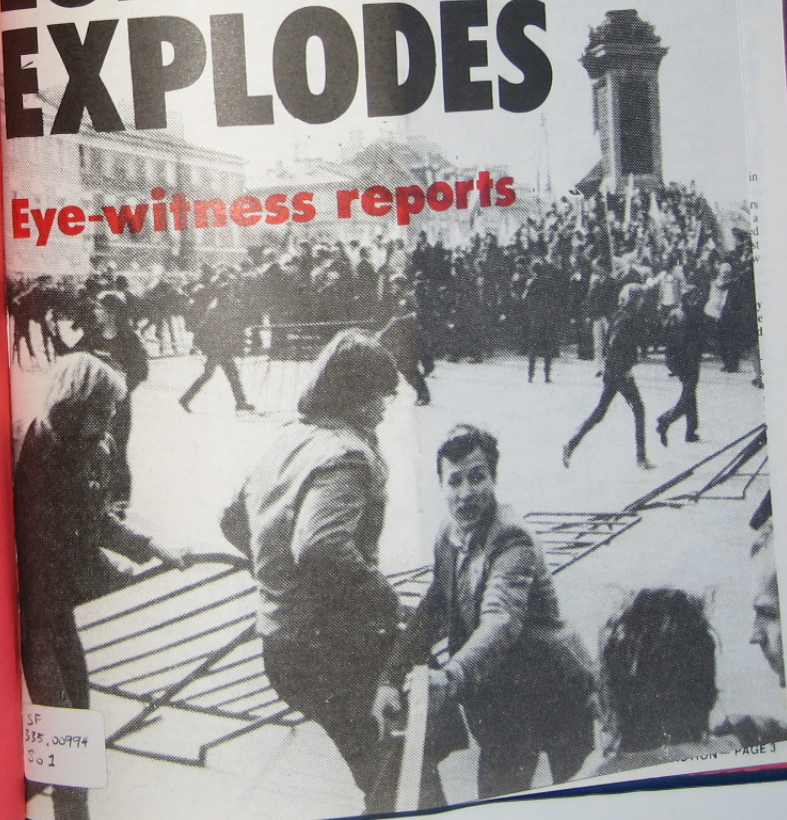
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SECTION — PAGE 1



OBITUARY

Death of a rebel

**HUEY NEWTON**, who founded the American revolutionary Black Panther Party in 1966, was gunned down in August, in the black ghetto he had never deserted.

The civil rights movement of the early 60's mobilised tens of thousands but failed to substantially change the lives of America's blacks. Non-violence was proved a failure. Black anger burst into ghetto riots, and Malcolm X's arguments for black power led logically to the anti-capitalist ideas of the Panthers.

Newton talked about "black people arming themselves in a political fashion... We're going to talk about political power growing out of the barrel of a gun." He was particularly hostile to lifestyle politics and separatism, calling their proponents "porkchop nationalists".

Presented by the media as advocates of violence, the Panthers took up arms against police brutality and racist murder. The sight of blacks standing up for



Huey Newton in 1969

their rights, arms in hands, generated a groundswell of support inside the black community. By 1969 they had branches around the country.

It was too much for the authorities. In two years 28 were killed by police, hundreds including Newton, were arrested on trumped up charges. Eldridge Cleaver was forced into exile, and the Panthers were destroyed as an organisation.

Repression and flawed politics led to their defeat. Although they called themselves Marxist-Leninists, the Panthers swung between welfare activities in the ghettos and armed confrontations. Although they built alliances with white dominated movements, particularly against the Vietnam war, they did not see the central importance of organising in the working class.

Many of the party's leaders have today abandoned political activism. But Huey Newton never did. He faced constant harassment from the police and long periods in jail. Despite his flawed politics, he deserves the credit for helping organise the first American revolutionary organisation for 40 years.

UNIONS

Drivers saved from Davis

"WE TOOK on the ALP and beat them at their own game." These were the words of the new Victorian secretary of the Transport Workers Union, Keith Wise.

After 18 months of hard work and legal wrangles, the reform group in the Victorian TWU has won the elections. The union has been led for the past 13 years by Jim Davis, a member of Hawke's powerful Labor Unity faction. That has ensured strict adherence to the Labor Party's

wages policy for the past seven years.

For the members this has meant wage cuts in real terms and longer hours, while the big transport companies such as TNT and Mayne Nickless have been increasing their profits annually.

The reform group had its origins in a strike by drivers at Carlton and United Brewery two and a half years ago. When CUB sold its trucking interests to Linford, there was no guaranteed continued employment for the drivers, and nothing offered to the owner drivers at all. After a two week strike the workers won job offers for all and improved redundancy for those who chose to take it.

The importance of this dispute was that the 24 hour picket was run by rank and file drivers. TWU officials gave no more than token support. Rather the drivers looked to their own action and to support by other workers.

It is not surprising, then, that when the leading militants were eventually victimised by Linford, the union didn't back them. And as they prepared to contest the election, many of the reform group's supporters were forced out of jobs with the connivance of the union.

During the last year Davis has tried a number of manoeuvres to prevent the reform group from standing. For example he attempted to have owner drivers, who make up half the union's membership and who are the most critical of the union's policies, disqualified from voting. The courts threw this out.

While pursuing their court challenges, the reform group continued to visit yards and talk to members. Whenever possible they went to picket lines. They ran on a platform of democratising the union, and developing policies more in tune with



The brewery picket that began it all.

members' needs, through industry based rank and file committees.

The new leadership plans to concentrate initially on long neglected health and safety issues. The first membership meeting in over a year attracted over 300. A stopwork meeting at TNT in the first week won a victory on a pay issue for casual workers.

Drivers should not imagine that all their problems will be solved now that they've elected a new leadership. Like all unionists they will find themselves confronting the realities of Accord politics.

Union officials are not a substitute for militant action by the members. Without that action, even the best officials can find it hard to stand up against pressure from employers and governments.

The reform group gained its impetus and its initial organisation based on a mass strike. It is to that heritage it should look in leading the union now.

— Michael Presidie and Janey Stone

EASTERN EUROPE

The East German crisis

THE UPHEAVAL in East Germany has been an occasion from some pretty gross hypocrisy on the part of western politicians.

The West German regime, which props up its eastern counterpart economically and which restricts Polish immigrants, has seized the chance to make propaganda about the wave of refugees from the GDR. West German chancellor Kohl carries on about "freedom" but mainly sees the refugees as a good source of skilled labour, and as a means to persuade western workers that we're so lucky to live in the "free" west.

Yes, the East German state is an ugly dictatorship. But those really committed to fighting for freedom are not leaving it. "We are staying" is a frequent chant of the demonstrators. Surveys have shown that many of those leaving are drawn from relatively privileged sections of the population, who are going west because they think they can find lucrative jobs.

Of course, they should have the right to emigrate. So should everyone else, including people currently kept out of America and Australia by immigration restrictions. But our main sympathies are with the brave people demonstrating in the streets

The pilots can't win flying solo

HOWEVER the pilots' strike ends, they deserve a lot of credit for their solidarity. For weeks they've held firm against the airline companies, the ACTU, the government, the media and the Industrial Commission.

Bob Hawke's rigid attitude has sparked a lot of controversy. The Federation repeatedly offered to go back simply in return for direct negotiations, and the media has often argued for negotiations. The sight of Hawke compensating the airlines but no one else had the Victorian Chamber of Commerce frothing at the mouth.

But Hawke is concerned with destroying the Federation, not with settling the dispute.

For all the talk about "greedy pilots" the size of the pilots' claim is not the real issue. Pilots' wages are less than 1 percent of total airline costs. Meanwhile politicians and judges get pay rises of 36 and 16 percent. The senior executive of Australian Airlines leaps from \$100,000 to \$225,000 and Reserve Bank's governor gets a rise of 130 percent.

The airlines are offering large salaries in the new contracts and scab pilots' pay is rumoured to be very high.

Hawke and the ACTU say that the pilots have stepped outside the centralised wage fixation system. But the Pilots' Federation isn't affiliated to the ACTU, and isn't obliged to carry out its decisions. Besides, Hawke is now backing individual contracts for pilots, which are outside the system anyway!

HAWKE is simply afraid the pilots will set an example of how workers can fight back against his policies.

He remembers 1974, when Ansett pilots won a 24% wage rise, setting off a massive strike wave throughout industry. Today most workers know the Accord has cut real wages and many are watching with interest to see whether alternatives can work.

But what frightens Hawke more than a wages break out is that a win for the pilots would threaten his plans to restructure industry.

This is why the government is so hostile to the Federation and wants to smash them, as it did with the BLF in 1986.

It is also why the ACTU is so vehemently opposed to the pi-



lots. As an Age writer put it "In the pilots' dispute, the union movement has become part of the police force on patrol against industrial lawlessness."

If the employers agreed to negotiate it would be a major blow for the Accord, whatever the wages outcome. Hawke plans instead to rebuild the industry gradually, using foreign pilots and renegades who sign the contracts, and training new ones.

Under these conditions, the pilots are unlikely to win in the long run without the support of other workers. They have fought well so far because of their solidarity, and their powerful position as highly trained operators. But this was also the case for the American air traffic controllers in 1981. Eventually that industry was rebuilt without the controllers' union.

To do the same here Hawke needs the co-operation of other workers in the industry. This is why he has paid compensation so that other airline employees aren't stood down.

THE ROLE of even most "left" union officials has been disgusting.

At the ACTU congress they opposed some government tactics, particularly the use of the airport. But their motion also supported the ACTU's anti-pilot stand. Virtually the only union to

actively support them has been the BLF, who sent them a letter of support and have distributed leaflets to workers explaining why.

Some weak arguments are used to justify the lack of solidarity.

It's said the pilots are "middle class". But class isn't determined by how much money they are paid, or what class you think they are in. There are quite a few highly paid workers in such industries as the building industry, while many small employers, such as milk bar proprietors, work long hours for a much lower income.

Pilots sell their labour power like other workers, and despite their own ideas about being professionals, are really operators of machinery, sophisticated and hit-and-miss though it may be.

To hear ACTU officials say the pilots ignore the claims of low paid workers is really a laugh. The pilots are claiming a catch up for lost wages under the Accord. And the Accord, let's not forget, promised the "main-tenance" of real wages over time.

It's precisely under the Accord that lower paid workers have suffered. The stronger unions have maintained their positions better, by doing deals. Poorly organised workers usually have the worst conditions, and

so have nothing to trade off in productivity deals.

Historically, low paid workers have benefited when those in a stronger position have launched struggles, which inspired the rest of the working class to follow their lead.

FOR the pilots to win they had to spread their struggle and get some form of united action among airline workers. This would be difficult because they have themselves failed to spread their unions in the past. But a struggle is the time to overcome past hostilities.

The pilots would have to drop their elitism, and stop arguing that their claim deserves special treatment. Most importantly, they would have to actively campaign for support from rank and file workers, and provide a focus such as picket lines.

Unfortunately, there is little likelihood this will happen. More likely, pilots will end up accepting contracts with new airlines. Instead of leading a break out of the Accord, their efforts will only help to legitimise individual contracts.

That would be a sad ending for a group of men who have shown a lot of the gumption many unions sadly lack in these days.

— Janey Stone

POLAND

WHEN I visited Poland in September, I saw a society that has been living with crisis for nearly a decade.

The economy is debt-ridden, living standards have fallen, food and housing shortages are chronic.

While the ruling Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) floundered, the workers have sought to create an alternative of their own, through Solidarity.

At the start of the decade they held the government at bay for 17 months, organising in their workplaces and publishing hundreds of independent newspapers and magazines.

There was widespread discussion of workers' self-management of industry.

Many wanted other forms of political organisation, too. Jacek Kuron said that "the awareness of the necessity for transformation is extraordinarily strong... Wherever we turn, everywhere there is a call for a party." By March 1981 the country was on the brink of revolutionary upheaval.

But Solidarity's leadership was not made up of revolutionaries, and in decisive moments they wavered. When its activists were brutally bashed in the town of Bydgoszcz, Lech Walesa talked of industrial action but did nothing. Workers began to lose confidence.

The regime, now gaining confidence, decided to smash the union. General Jaruzelski declared martial law, jailed the Solidarity leadership and drove the movement underground.

**BUT WHILE the regime could jail its enemies, it could not solve the country's problems. As Newsweek pointedly observed:**

*"Jaruzelski repeatedly announced the introduction of new economic reforms only to find that nothing worked. His reforms consisted largely of half-measures, but even sweeping initiatives would have failed without a degree of popular support he could not mobilise."*

Neither could he stop the people from resisting. The union survived underground and the opposition press flourished. Where they couldn't set up a union branch, activists got involved in the "self-management councils" promoted by the regime, and used them as a forum for dissident ideas and a way to organise at work.

Two years after the imposition of martial law, for example, workers at the FSO car factory used the self-management coun-

# Fighting for socialist alternatives

Liz Ross reports on her visit to Warsaw and Wroclaw



Gdansk shoppers queue in a snow storm.

cil to deny bonuses to the management.

By 1988 the government faced a new crisis. The authorities increased food prices of up to 500 percent. Workers began to fight back, beginning with a small group of municipal transport workers, who struck and won a 50 per cent pay rise.

At the end of April, thousands were on strike in the steel mills and ports, demanding not only wage rises but recognition of Solidarity, freedom for political prisoners and amnesty for strikers.

**A MIXTURE of concessions and repression ended this first strike wave, but Gdansk shipyard workers who marched out of the yard chanting, "Solidarnosc, Solidarnosc," also warned the government: "The end of the strike does not mean we have resigned our cause."**

And indeed the situation exploded into open revolt in August.

Jastrzebie miners occupied their mines, formed a strike committee and announced 20 demands. Within two days 8500 miners from the pits were out, as well as port and bus workers in

return for promises of reform.

**AT THE ROUND Table talks the government conceded limited elections, legalisation of the union, and the prospect of a share in government for the Solidarity leaders.**

In exchange, the union's leaders accepted a two year strike moratorium and an economic austerity program. "The Round Table," says Jozef Piniar, "achieved the co-optation of the workers' movement, creating a new Solidarity led from above."

Meanwhile the economy continued to deteriorate. Inflation soared, budget deficits mounted, the prospect of hunger faced a large section of the population. Workers had had enough, and August 1989 saw a strike wave bigger than those of 1988, begun once again by the miners.

Again the regime made concessions. The PUWP had to accept a Solidarity-led government, though of course it still controls state power through the bureaucracy.

What does a Solidarity government mean for the workers? I spoke to members of the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) in Warsaw and Wroclaw about the current situation. (The party's Polish initials are PPS/RD.)

The party argues that the new government is an improvement on the Jaruzelski regime — almost anything would be — but that the free-market solutions to the crisis being advanced by both Solidarity and the PUWP are not in workers' interests.

For example most of the food queues have disappeared. But that is only because the price reform has meant many people can't afford to buy what's in the

Szczecin. Next came the Gdansk shipyard, and more mines. Factories came out in Poznan, Wroclaw and the railway repair yards.

Warsaw union leader Henryk Wujak pointed out that the strike wave had shown some changes in Solidarity:

*"In the events of these last weeks the underground enterprise committees and the higher structures played practically no role. New activists have come to the fore... They are young, radical, they are demanding their social and political rights and they do not want to wait any longer."*

The conservatism of leaders like Lech Walesa, already apparent in 1981, was highlighted by the radicalism of the new activists. Potentially, this was a revolutionary situation, Jozef Piniar, Wroclaw Solidarity leader and a founder of the new Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) says:

*"After the August strike the mood was so strong that if Walesa hadn't spoken to the government, we could have had a workers' government."*

But Walesa did speak to the government, then convinced workers to call of their strikes in



Underground press: martial law couldn't stop it

POLAND

shops. The PPS/RD argues for direct links between the Solidarity rank and file and the farmers, instead of ending subsidies and allowing the market to decide.

**IN ANY case, the PPS/RD says the movement cannot be satisfied with reforms. It must go forward to end Stalinism, and establish social control of the market and mass democracy.**

The Solidarity leadership want to take Poland in an entirely different direction. While the details aren't finalised, you can get a pretty good impression of what's in store from the proposals of free-market guru Jeffrey Sachs, who is advising the government to give the economy a "cold shower".

"Prices," he says, "have to be made realistic (i.e. higher). A uniform and stable dollar exchange rate has to be introduced, the Budget deficit and subsidies have to be scrapped, domestic and foreign enterprises have to be given free play."

In this spirit, the Solidarity leaders have accepted an offer from the European Community to airlift food to Poland on the proviso that it's sold at market prices, with the profits being invested in industry.

These methods, Jozef Piniar warns, can only lead to "some kind of authoritarian state with the market and privatisation" and with worsening corruption.

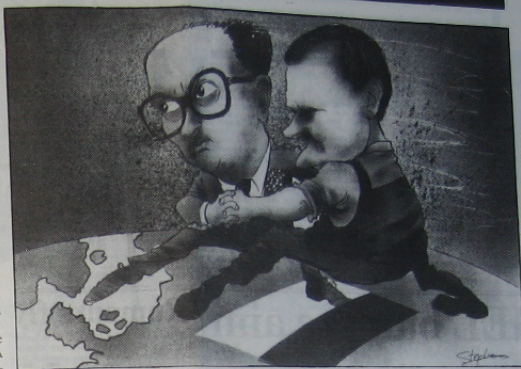
"We have a process where the *nomenklatura* (bureaucrats) are staying on, now as private owners of the means of production. They are operating as speculators. That won't lead to economic success."

Piniar expects Polish workers to resist. "I was in Argentina and I saw the results of Sachs' reforms. The Polish working class will not accept such pauperisation. I am sure they will defend themselves."

**JACEK Suchorowski, leader of the Solidarity branch at Hutmen steelworks in Wroclaw, told me about one case of resistance even while the government was still enjoying its initial "honeymoon".**

On the day we met, meat prices at the works had jumped to the equivalent of two days' pay. There were spontaneous strikes, and management had to increase some overtime rates.

At the same time the boss employed an environmental officer, a complete ignoramus. He will earn far more money than the workers, because he's part of the *nomenklatura*. But Jacek is determined that "this is the last time" plum jobs are handed out in such fashion.



Lech's Light Fantastic: the workers are the wallflowers

Another Wroclaw militant said that in the local aircraft factory, Solidarity members have rejected the Round Table no-strike deal and are claiming the right to strike under the union's old statutes.

But more than defensive action will be needed. The steel industry, for example, is in a mess. Only two steelworks in Poland have modern technology, and the government has targeted the industry for rationalisation. At Hutmen the workers are preparing a response. Jacek explains:

*"Our steelworkers' branch of Solidarity is planning how to defend against closure of the factory. We're developing a program to economically rebuild the works — totally outside the existing bureaucratic framework. If the government closes the factory we will advance the alternative program."*



Election tally room: Solidarity won the vote, but who will benefit in the end?

I said I was worried that through such alternative plans workers end up taking responsibility for solving the bosses' problems, but the PPS/RD members believe that in the current crisis it can be the basis for advancing a program for wider social change. "Fighting unemployment is the first priority," Jacek argues. "The problem is employment, not this factory."

The party is actively involved in building a national committee of rank and file steelworkers' representatives. Several months ago, they and other militants organised a meeting of delegates from 20 plants, which established a national coordinating committee and agreed that all plants would take solidarity action if any of them were in dispute.

The committee has drawn up a national log of claims on pay, tax relief, and better welfare provisions.

**MANAGEMENT quickly raised wages, to head off an immediate strike. But that has only postponed the inevitable crisis and confrontation.**

PPS/RD members are also helping organise timber workers who are fighting a British firm of furniture builders, and have established contacts in the coal industry.

Can the government keep control of the industrial situation? The party's activists have differing assessments. Some I talked to in Warsaw think that Swedish-style work teams, which aim to lessen the alienation of the assembly line, and privatisation can be used to buy off dissatisfaction among some groups of workers.

Solidarity is pushing worker share schemes which it portrays as a kind of "workers' ownership". Piniar fears that factories can be established which only assemble parts produced in the west, so that it is difficult for workers to establish control of them.

Jozef Piniar argues that the crisis is too deep for such tactics to work. "Right now it's a honeymoon period, but the transition to a free-market is impossible without the workers fighting back."

Already workers see the market reform as bad news, yet a return to Stalinism has little appeal. We will have the opportunity to argue that we, the workers, should take control."

I had more than one discussion about just what a real workers' government would look like. Some members look to a

(continued page 6)



## FEATURE

wished — the head of the TV network was removed from his post.

At Pushkin Square, when we first arrived, we had to seek out the sellers of unofficial newspapers in a subterranean passage, where they had gone to escape police harassment. That day it was an "underground" press indeed.

Equally important, the mainstream media still largely toe the party line. *Pravda* has improved, but it is still a tedious and dishonest publication.

What matters in the end is not political liberalisation — for that can always be reversed — but the creation of a modern economy that will make democracy a viable reality in the longer term. So it is not glasnost, but perestroika, that is the acid test for Mikhail Gorbachev.

At the same time, glasnost does not occur in a social and political vacuum. It is a tactic used by Gorbachev to win support among a social grouping that can be mobilised without getting out of control: the intellectuals. Free information in and of itself is of limited value to Siberian coal miners, or to working class women who must queue for hours in the shops of Soviet cities. But it means a whole new way of life to academics and journalists. So it is not surprising that Gorbachev's reforms evoke immense enthusiasm among sociologists and in the editorial offices of *Moscow News*, while most of society is at best hopeful, and increasingly becoming cynical.

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**THE THEORY of perestroika is simple. Industry will be freed from direct, centralised state control, and the government will use economic levers to influence its course. Each productive unit is to be self-sustaining and must compete on what is called, with a straight face, the "socialist market".**

The workforce in each enterprise will make crucial decisions themselves, through a "self-management" that is supposed to be democratic. Meanwhile at the fringes of the system, co-operatives and private leasing arrangements will allow private initiative to supply badly needed goods and services.

How is it working out in practice? Few people in the USSR like what they see.

To the extent the theory is really implemented, it has serious consequences for the working class.

Maybe you can make production decisions, even elect your manager. But if you know your firm has to compete in a difficult market, this democracy is far from liberating. You are forced to elect a manager who drives you hard. You may even have to vote to renege on your fellow workers, with the threat of bankruptcy looming as the alternative.

If the entire workforce in a factory takes equal responsibility for the results, how does a hard worker in one section feel if the factory goes broke because of low productivity in another section of the enterprise?

Already, perestroika has meant some retrenchments, and it is likely to mean more. Leningrad feminist writer Olga Lipovskaya warns that working women will be among the first victims of rising unemployment. And economist Ye. Kovalyova wrote last year:

"Just think: who is the first to be sacked during a transition to cost accounting? It turns out that mothers of large families, who have to stay at home when their children are ill, more of a liability to enterprises."

The co-ops are often financial successes, as are some leasing arrangements. But if a meal is going to cost you two or three days' wages in a co-operative restaurant (we encountered this more than once), what use is that to the working class? It can even be harmful, if goods are illegally diverted to the co-ops from the state run restaurants and caterers.

In fact the co-ops and leases are creating deep resentments. Last year *Pravda* reported collective farmers telling one lease operator: "You're a capitalist... you'll get help here over my dead body."

But the main problem is stagnation in the core areas of the economy. Here, to a considerable extent, perestroika is just not happening.

Workers quite rightly resist changes that mean speed-up or wage cuts, and which bring a frightening atmosphere of uncertainty. At the same time the vast army of Soviet bureaucrats resist any shake-up that challenges their entrenched positions, and they opposed demagogically to the workers to line up with them against Gorbachev and his trendy intellectual lackeys.

Thus one of the worst by-products of perestroika may be that it forces sections of the working class into the arms of the more conservative bureaucrats.

Given the resistance, the "perestroichiki" at the top have tried to do things gradually, using half measures. But that only breeds dangerous new dilemmas. Not only does it give the bureaucrats time to find loopholes in every new directive, but by grafting bits of the free market onto the existing bureaucratic system it opens the way for unexpected ruptures.

The press reported a classic case while we were in Moscow.

The Omsk electromechanical works has gone over to running its own affairs and competing on the market. Its latest director is very efficient and has found ways to operate better and save money.

But the works depends for its supply of metal on state-owned monopolies, as yet unreformed, which have twice simply failed to deliver. Alternative supplies aren't available. Unable to complete its products, the electromechanical works has gone into debt. Because the works is operating under the new system, the state refuses to bail it out, and the workers are facing unemployment.

**GIVEN THE opportunities offered by glasnost and the perils of perestroika, it's no wonder people are fighting back.**

The unrest in the Baltic, Georgia and Armenia is already well known. So we took the opportunity of a visit to the main Russian cities to study the opposition movements in the Russian-speaking part of the country.



Protesting against rigged elections



Women workers: perestroika's first victims?

There is plenty of unrest here too. Professor L. Lisovsky recently expressed in *Pravda* his alarm about what students were saying in Leningrad:

"Abolish examinations in Marxism-Leninism, abolish exams altogether, declare war on the Komsomol (Communist Youth) apparatus, liquidate the Komsomol altogether, introduce a week of struggle against military training..."

Radical opponents of any system are initially drawn to two types of perspective. Some, like Australia's Labor lefts, place their hopes in gradual reform. Others romanticise foreign societies and their social systems, the way Australian Communists used to romanticise Russia. Today's Russian opposition is still largely caught between these two alternatives.

The Democratic Union is a very militant movement, willing to rally in defiance of police and to face arrest and jail. While they oppose violence they think in terms of mass civil disobedience and, more recently, general strikes. Olga Lipovskaya is an activist in the DU, and when we spoke with her we were impressed with her determined opposition to the regime.

What the DU lacks is a coherent social program. It is simply for democracy, and this leaves a vacuum which in practice is filled by the most naive pro-capitalist ideas.

For example Olga said that in today's Russia, everyone in the economy is just out for themselves. When we replied that this was also true in the west, she came back with the classic arguments of Adam Smith, to the effect that in a market system, people working for themselves are automatically working for the general good as well.

We in the west have long since recognized that when Kerry Packer enriches himself, he is not doing us any favours at all. But some Russian activists take more persuading.

The other main opposition movement, and the largest, is the network of Popular Fronts. These are not mass movements as in the Baltic republics, but they are something of a force.

Within the Moscow PF the lead is generally given by the socialist current whose best known leader is Boris Kagarfitski. These activists also want to destroy the power of the ruling bureaucracy, but they put forward the ruling bureaucracy that would be a "third way" between Stalinism and western capitalism.

They want collective property alongside genuine workers' democracy, and while they don't mind using some market mechanisms in the economy they rightly insist that workers must be the beneficiaries, not the victims.

They have recently formed a committee whose declared aim is the creation of an independent Socialist Party. We spoke to two of the committee's activists, Yefim Ostrovski and Stas Rozimirovich. While we liked their socialist perspective, we found their strategic orientation very worrying.

**THEY ARGUE for a strategy of "revolutionary reform". Using new grassroots organisations such as the strike committees established by the coal miners, and the self-management committees that have sprung up in many localities, they hope to overturn the power of the bureaucracy step by step.**

When we suggested that the party might prove capable of defending itself against this sort of gradual process, they replied flustered that the apparatus were "more and more losing control, they're divided and have no program."

Perhaps, but if they see their survival threatened, the bureaucrats are likely to generate a leader and program. When a revolutionary class is in decay, that opens up revolutionary prospects, but it can also open up the way for society to take a huge step backwards, if one or another reactionary element rallies the rulers among the repressed. That is what Hitler did.

Another possibility is that Gorbachev himself could put aside his liberal face and attempt to continue economic restructuring without glasnost. Yefim and Stas certainly regard this as a danger, indeed they describe Gorbachev and his backers as "market-stalinists" who could opt for a Chilean style

## 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 worldwide class movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against others. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

#### 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 our fight against the capitalist system. 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 meaningless if they are not 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!

## FEATURE

solution: "the market at the bottom, and Pinchelet at the top".

The organisational strength, but also the political weaknesses of the Popular Front were demonstrated at a rally we attended on 14 September. It was addressed by Andrei Sakharov, PF representatives and a speaker from "Communists for Perestroika". There were several thousand people present, and the PF-backed alliance that called the rally will be a force in the forthcoming local government elections.

But in a society gripped by crisis, it is not enough to win votes. Elections can be rigged, overturned, even nullified if the army if the result threatens the ruling Communist Party. Yet the speakers said nothing about mobilising for struggle.

And it was clear that the PF is anxious to preserve its good relations with liberals inside the CP. When the "Communists for Perestroika" speaker asked rhetorically, "what should the Party do?" the crowd yelled back "dissolve!" But the people on the platform were quick to discourage such calls, and the speaker went on to advocate a vote for the "Yeltsin-Gorbachev bloc".

In what way was such a rally really offering a clear alternative for Muscovites? If the new Socialist Party is to have any future, it will need to address these contradictions in the practice of the Popular Front.

There are also smaller groupings that could make an important contribution, for example the Democratic Communist faction within the Democratic Union. One of its leaders is Trotskyist Sergei Byets.

Sergei analyses Soviet society as a kind of bureaucratic class society, with capitalist tendencies but also other features. His group has grown over the recent past and its left wing has a fairly regular publication, *The Spectre of Communism*, claiming a print run of 80,000.

He regards civil war as inevitable. While he recognises the anti-socialist ideas of the DU leaders are a problem, he prefers to stay within the DU because he thinks the Popular Front makes too many compromises with opportunists like Boris Yeltsin.



Industry's in the doldrums, but are market mechanisms the answer?



Miners' strike showed the power of the working class.

**T**HE OPPOSITION groups need a mass base, and naturally they paid close attention to the big strike movement among the coal miners last summer. The strike had a profound impact on Soviet society.

It is not clear that the miners themselves have won lasting gains. The government conceded them material benefits at the time, but it's widely believed that Gorbachev can not, for economic reasons, afford to meet their demands for on-going improvements in living standards.

The main importance of the strike lies in its effect on people's psychology. "Now every worker knows they can strike," says Yefim Ostrovski. "It's broken down the psychological barriers".

Gorbachev sees this as a great danger. There were stirrings in the railways towards the end of the strike, and the regime used a combination of concessions and intimidation to dampen them down. The concessions have created the impression in the west that Gorbachev is sympathetic to the workers. But the repressive aspect was exposed in a letter to the weekly *Argumenty i fakty* by railway worker N Kukharehuk:

"Management got me and my fellow railway workers to sign statements that we would

not go on strike. This was after a general meeting where a telegram was read out about increasing discipline and suppressing strike movements. The management, fearing unrest among the miners, sent such telegrams to all the big railway junctions.

"There wasn't even any discussion held about our problems... only bans and demands for signatures. Such an attitude to us by management doesn't foster mutual understanding and attempts to work better, it only heightens the existing confrontation."

Under the impact of the miners' strike, the opposition groups have begun to devote more attention to organising workers. Two groups of activists in Leningrad, one calling itself "Independence" are trying to build a new movement in industry. Moscow has become the centre for a national network of "Socialist Trade Unions" (Sotzprof) which has actually managed to get registered by the authorities.

Sotzprof is closely aligned with the group working toward a new socialist party, and sees itself as becoming the party's industrial wing.

Even many activists in the Democratic Union have been convinced by the miners' strike that it is workers who have the power to defeat the regime.

This trend is the most hopeful sign in a society wracked by crisis. If the opposition in Russia is politically unclear and organisationally weak, that is partly because it has been isolated from the one social force that can pose a real alternative to the regime in practice.

Many of the elements needed for an effective opposition are present in Russia today, but a new synthesis is needed.

The movement needs the uncompromising militancy of the Democratic Union, alongside the socialist perspective of the best elements in the Popular Front. It needs to centre its strategy on the power of the working class, which the miners strike has so convincingly demonstrated. And it needs to make militant, working class socialism the basis for the new political party which many activists are now trying to build.

In a land where the name of socialism has been deeply compromised by the rulers in the Kremlin, this is not an easy perspective to develop. But it is essential if the ills of stalinism are not to be followed by new agencies for the peoples of the USSR.

## SOCIALIST ACTION

### Sexual politics

OVER the past few months Melbourne branch of Socialist Action has run a study group exploring sexual politics.

The group has met once a fortnight to look at issues like the history of women's and gay oppression, differences about why oppression occurs, and strategies to win liberation. In particular we have grappled with the differences between Marxist analyses and those that use the notion of 'patriarchy'.

In the future we hope to look at the theories of Michel Foucault, whose ideas have influenced much of the left's thinking on sexual politics. You don't have to be a Socialist Action member to attend the study group. Just ring Robert on (03) 387 8420 for details.

### New pamphlet

THE EVENTS in China last May and June raised some desperately important questions about socialism. Is China the kind of society socialists are fighting for? If not, how can the Chinese students and workers best fight their murderous rulers?

In his new pamphlet, *It is right to rebel*, Graham Willett argues that China is a kind of capitalist society, where workers are exploited and most people are oppressed. He explores the historical roots of the democracy movement, and the independent workers' movement that grew up within it. The pamphlet concludes that only a new revolution, this time led by the working class, can introduce genuine socialism in China.

### Public meetings

OVER 40 people came to Sydney branch's public meeting on "The Perils of Perestroika". Tom O'Liverick, who just returned from Moscow where he met with representatives of different oppositional movements, analysed the crisis of the Soviet system and the prospects for the growth of a new socialist movement.

A similar meeting is scheduled for Melbourne on 16 October, to be followed a week later by a meeting on Poland. Liz Ross will report on her visit to Warsaw and Wroclaw at the YWCA, 7:30, 23 October.

## SOCIAL ISSUES

# We're gay, proud and in the streets!

**T**HE GAY movement in Sydney took a step forward on October 2.

Over 5000 people turned out, not to a parade or a dance party, but to a political protest. They were responding to the "Cleaning March of Witness for Jesus" organised by far-right parliamentarian Fred Nile as part of his campaign to ban the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

Nile's march was a direct assault on the symbolic heart of Sydney's gay community, following the route of the Mardi Gras along Oxford St to Taylor Square. He was not made welcome. Jeers, boos and a few eggs greeted him along the route, and angry chants drowned his attempts to speak at the end. One man ran up to him and planted a kiss on his cheek, much to Nile's disgust, while another snatched his microphone to shout "Gay love is best - go to hell Fred!"

Among the gay rights supporters there was a festival atmosphere, with flamboyant drag, leather and camp humour in abundance. In terms of bringing lesbians and gay men together to stand up for their rights, the day was an undoubted success. But Nile achieved a victory too, successfully rallying his supporters in the heart of gay Sydney.

With the numbers mobilised on the day it would have been simple to sit in on the street and block Nile's march, robbing him of any consolation from the day. The police could have done little to stop a crowd of this size. But organisers were so concerned to maintain the demo's respectable media image that they worked hard to prevent any confrontation at all. Marshals encouraged the crowd to leave the Square as soon as the marchers arrived, and went so far as to line up with mounted police to keep protesters off the road. The idea that we can rely on appeasing politicians and media-shaped public opinion to defend gay rights in a society based on the heterosexual nuclear family is ridiculous and dangerous. We need to show instead that we are capable of defending ourselves if we are not treated justly.

In Brisbane 200 people marched from the botanic gardens to parliament house to protest against anti-homosexual laws. The protest was sparked



Fred Nile gets a Gay welcome

from the arrest of five men in Roma.

Support from the public was overwhelming with smiles, raised thumbs, friendly car horns and amicable comments. There was an open speaking platform, where speakers showed wide differences in their analysis, putting paid to the idea there is a homogeneous lesbian and gay community in Brisbane. Yet the mood of the rally was strong, cohesive and supportive.

It is a pity that the Queensland Association for Gay Law Reform has no immediate plans for further action. We could build on this success. But the Labor Party wants us to stay off the streets until after the forthcoming elections, thinking gay rights is a vote loser. Given Labor's record on the issue in WA and Tasmania, where homosexuality hasn't been decriminalised, it is a big mistake for us to hold back just because it might help the ALP get elected.

A much better lead is offered by the demonstrations set for the week-end of 21 October. This is the anniversary of the arrests in Tasmania of people collecting petitions for repeal of anti-gay legislation.

— Patrick Palmer and Robert Stainby

### ABORTION

## More rallies planned

A NEW coalition of women's groups has been formed to keep the pro-abortion struggle going in Brisbane following a meeting on 18 September.

The group is planning two militant street demonstrations. The first will be a Speak-Out on Friday, 17 November as part of free speech activities in the Queen Street Mall. It will be followed by a rally in King George Square and a march on Parliament House, to be held on Saturday, 25 November.

The rallies are timed to coincide with the State election campaign. There has been a weekly picket in recent weeks outside the headquarters of the Right to Life. On one occasion the builders marched inside the building to harangue RTL supporters. The picket was also used to collect signatures on a petition to parliament.

Building workers from local construction sites dropped by to sign the petition and express their support.

— Marie McFarlane

## QUEENSLAND

**IF YOU** fly with the crows, you get shot with the crows. Joh Bjelke-Petersen once said that, and dumped Queensland premier Mike Ahern has learnt how true it is.

To mix a metaphor, Tony Fitzgerald was a cat among the pigeons. It was his inquiry that turned the Nationals' slowly mounting problems into a crisis. The Fitzgerald Commission, apparently initiated by deputy Bill Gunn and others as a lever to out Petersen and Hinze, got out of control and exposed the whole party.

Mike Ahern was supposed to extricate the Nationals from their problems and create a modern image for them. He presented an image of honesty and integrity, his support for sex education and legalization of condom vending machines appealed to suburban liberals. What's more he had the support of the bosses. A 1987 survey showed most big capitalists wanted Bjelke-Petersen replaced with Ahern. Joh's free enterprise rhetoric was just a thin veneer over the reality of government patronage and heavy subsidies. He was out of step with the free-market trends of the eighties.

What's more the State's economic vulnerability had been exposed when commodity prices slumped early in the decade. The more far-sighted capitalists wanted to follow the Hawke government's lead in diversifying industry. In December 1988 Ahern launched an economic blueprint for cutting back government involvement and expanding the State's industrial base.

**BUT NOT** everyone liked these changes, or Ahern's less reactionary social views. One reason Ahern was sometimes indecisive was that he had trouble reconciling these policies with the interests of the Nationals' rural base.

The rise of millionaire grazier Russell Cooper is a victory for these rural grass roots. The new regime has tried to appease urban voters by including more city members in the cabinet. But the new front bench in straight from the Joh mold. It includes Yvonne Chapman, who wants to cut social welfare to single mothers who fall pregnant again. Ivan Gibbs who recently said he had never witnessed racism in Queensland, and Attorney General Ian Henderson who wants to re-introduce hanging.



## Joh's crow-shooters just won't croak

Cooper himself is a Joh clone, who declares that gay law reform will occur "over my dead body". He has refused to endorse Ahern's commitment to implement all of Fitzgerald's recommendations.

The new regime is already turning back the clock in education. Mike Ahern had been responsible for legislation that allowed reinstatement of teachers with minor drug convictions. And he showed signs of responding to criticisms over underfunding of state schools.

The restructuring of work categories and overall pay increase for teachers negotiated under Ahern could be seen as a response to the campaign by Queensland teachers for awards comparable to those operating in other States.

**THE COOPER** government marks the return of Joh-style confrontation. The new premier wants to cut teachers' leave from ten to four weeks, with six weeks of "professional development" courses, dealing with things like stress management.

Cooper's victory is likely to cost the government votes. National Party research before the spill showed that National voters in marginal city seats preferred

Ahern. The Queensland press is hostile to the backpeddling, and a recent *Sunday Mail* editorial all but endorsed the ALP.

With the Nationals polling around 17 per cent, and the Liberals unlikely to win enough seats to dominate a coalition, Queenslanders are looking to the ALP. But what has Labor got to offer?

The Queensland Labor Party's historical roots are in the conservative machine of the Australian Workers' Union. Because the Joh regime was so reactionary, Labor has not even needed to adopt leftwing policies to give it a progressive image. Labor's approach is to be a "respectable" as possible.

They sold out the SEQEB power workers, whose union was smashed by Joh, and have raised spat protest against the subsequent spread of Voluntary Employment Agreements.

While blacks were mobilising against Expo in 1988, Labor jumped on the Expo bandwagon, going so far as to praise Bjelke-Petersen's role in organizing. Recently, Labor politician Dean Wells advised gays and lesbians not to demonstrate, but to distribute ALP how to vote cards instead.

**AND LABOR** has a strong law-and-order streak.

The Murrhead Inquiry found evidence of suspicious black deaths in custody. Fitzgerald unearthed massive corruption at all levels of the police force, and a Gold Coast cop is currently before the courts on charges of bashing a prisoner. Yet Labor's police spokesperson Terry MacKenroth is calling for more cops!

The real opposition to National Party policies has always come from radical political movements independent of Labor. Brake illegal street marches in defiance of Petersen's crackdown on civil liberties, or the mobilisation by women and trade unionists against his attacks on abortion rights. And demonstrations against the Commonwealth Games and Expo have done more to challenge racism in Queensland than Labor has ever done.

Nevertheless, because the ALP is seen by most people as a progressive alternative to the Nats, a vote for them will be something of a protest against all the abuses in Queensland politics. Workers will see voting Labor as a class vote. For these reasons it's worth voting ALP.

And having Wayne Goss in power will be the quickest way to demonstrate in practice that people's illusions in the Labor Party are completely unfounded.

— Jeff Rickert

## SOCIALIST STANDPOINTS

# The ailments of a crook system

**FEELING CROOK?** It's a common feeling. Every day, 40,000 people die from malnutrition and millions go hungry whilst food is destroyed to force up the price and the profit.

Messes, diphtheria, whooping cough, diarrhoea, the diseases of malnutrition, are under control in countries like Australia. Instead, over 23,000 Australians die each year from smoking related diseases like lung cancer while diet contributes to over half of Australia's premature deaths from heart disease, etc. Industrial accidents and diseases kill and maim with monotony.

This is inevitable under capitalism. The food and tobacco industries exist to make profit without regard to consumers' health. Bread-makers, for example, can produce more bread with white flour than wholemeal flour (and hence return more profit) but the nutritious wheat-germ and fibre is lost.

Food adulteration is an old cost-cutting practice. In Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century, the food capitalists added iron filings to tea, brick dust to cocoa, and water to milk. Now dye is added to peas to keep them looking green, and sugar, salt and chemicals are added to almost everything.

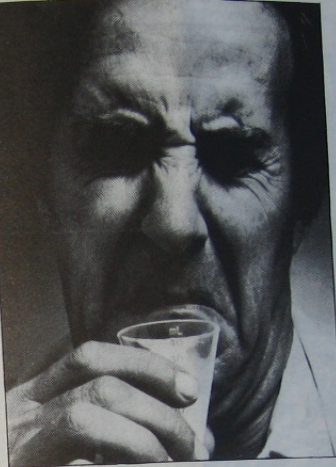
People happily consume beer, tobacco and other drugs in a society where stress and worry create the need for escape. And pushing them is routine for an advertising industry that can sell everything from plant manure to Prime Ministers.

Any reforming health minister who attempts to take on the tobacco companies runs foul of their economic power and the threat to government revenue. One and a half billion dollars in tax revenue from tobacco flows annually into Treasury coffers in Australia whilst the victims make an early trip to the coffin.

Current government policies making public service offices smoke free don't derive from any desire to promote health. Rather, the government is worried about future compo claims for passive smoking related conditions.

**THE STATE** will only ever act on profits when the costs threaten profits by harming the productivity of the working class or when workers or others force them to.

In the 1850s in Melbourne, one in five babies died before



their first birthday and contagious diseases were rife in the crowded, unsanitary urban slums. This threat to the raw human material of industrial capitalism prompted a campaign of public health reforms including sewerage and a safe water supply.

Meanwhile workers in several countries were fighting to shorten the working day. Miners fought for such things as pithead human material of industrial capitalism prompted a campaign of public health reforms including sewerage and a safe water supply.

Pure food laws were only enacted in the US when an outcry followed the publication of socialist Upton Sinclair's book *The Jungle* in 1906.

In Britain, the state paid more attention to public health as war approached, demanding a healthy worker in the trench as well as at the factory bench. This cost the state a little but saved a lot.

The conventional attitude to women's health has always involved a double standard, but with a difference. Middle and upper class women in the 19th century were supposedly unable to do anything more than light needlework, but they had to wear extremely unhealthy clothing such as girdles. Working class women meanwhile worked in dark, stuffy, dangerous sweatshops — their frailty was only remembered when making

arguments against them voting.

Only as a result of the women's liberation movement is it now possible to get reasonable access to abortions. And even doctors have had to respond to the movement — less radical forms of surgery for breast cancer since the 1970s are a result of pressure by women.

**CAPITALISM** hinders medical solutions to new health problems. The rivalry between drug companies to patent an AIDS cure (and cash in on the multi-million dollar AIDS "market") means researchers don't exchange knowledge.

Bosses skimp on safety and health at work, because this "overhead" eats into profit. For example the current building boom means safety standards being ignored and frequent injuries and deaths. Such dangerous practices as riding the hook on cranes were only banned due to industrial action by the BLP in the 1970s.

Our everyday living and working conditions are the "social germs" for cancer and heart class germs" for cancer and heart disease. They are known as the "diseases of affluence" which would be funny if they weren't fatal. It is the unemployed who wear those in low status jobs who suffer from this "lifestyle" dis-ease the most through a combination of poor diet, lack of exercise, stress and drug use.

Nowhere is this equation between inequality in health and inequality in wealth as marked as with Aborigines. They have high rates of several completely preventable diseases. Infant mortality has dropped a lot — it is now "only" four times that of other Australian children. Meanwhile amongst 40 year olds Aborigines have fifteen times the death rate.

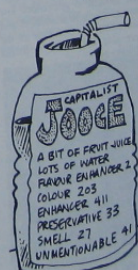
**TO CHANGE** all this more is needed than education and publicity. If you suffer shortages of income, time and satisfying work, you can't pursue a good diet and an active leisure. Nor are our working conditions and our living environment under our real control.

Socialism is about people's needs and health is a fundamental one. Health under socialism is about safety at work, safe food and an end to hunger, greatly reduced working hours to reduce leisure time and energy for physical and intellectual achievement. We need childcare on tap and a breakdown of the stereotypes of the beery male and the fragile, anorexic female.

In the meantime, the collective struggle to make life more humane and healthy at work (opposing productivity deals, organising around hazardous substances, airconditioning etc.), campaigns against environmental pollution, fighting the health cuts can make some improvements and raise awareness among ordinary people.

This is something we can get our teeth into which will be a whole lot better for us than a Big Mac. Health and capitalism is a worldwide epidemic, but one that can be cured.

— Phil Shannon and Joyce Shore



# Those working class heroes of 1917

AT THE height of World War One, the workers of NSW staged a massive industrial rebellion. Within a few weeks, almost 70,000 people had walked out on strike.

Often called the General Strike, the 1917 strike was not, in fact, supported by all unions. The biggest NSW union, the Australian Workers' Union, was never involved in action (although it contributed to the strike fund). This is one of the reasons for the strike's defeat. But it was an impressive episode in the history of class struggle, and we can learn some valuable lessons from it.

By 1917, Australia had been at war for three years. The Federal Government, led by WM Hughes, had been successfully opposed by the unions on the issue of conscription, and both Hughes and NSW Premier Holman remained hostile to the union movement.

The economy was a disaster. The war had caused the loss of overseas markets; prices and unemployment rose while wages fell. Since the war began, the cost of living had risen by 30 per cent, the basic wage by only 15 per cent. As usual, the sacrifices demanded of the workers was greater than that asked of the bosses, and frustrated workers saw profits rising and dividends increasing while they suffered increasing hardship.

Industrial action had declined with the coming of the arbitration system, and recent strikes had tended to be confined to one industry.

The public transport areas, where the strike began, already had substantial grievances, low pay, no access to arbitration, and worsening of conditions as the war sent the railways' profits plummeting.

IN 1916, the unions had successfully resisted attempts by the Commissioners to introduce a new "time and task recording" card system, designed to cut jobs and keep tabs on individual workers, into the railway workshops. In July 1917, workers found the system operating, and resolved that they would not put up with it.

Labor Council intervention postponed action for a few days, but the Commissioners refused



Scenes from the great strike

to negotiate. Indeed, they toughened their stand even more in response to overtures. On 30 July, a conference of delegates from affected unions issued an ultimatum: withdraw the card system, or we strike on 2 August. On that day, 5780 rail and tram workers walked out.

The strike spread quickly, largely through rank and file initiative — either through direct support or through refusal to work with scab labour. Miners, road transport workers, maritime workers, carters, waterside workers, members of the Seaman's Union, coal lumpers and unions in food production and distribution, all got involved.

From the beginning, a cross-union Strike Defence Committee operated. Unfortunately, it was composed mainly of union officials, and its activities and statements did not reflect the anger and determination apparent among the striking workers. On 8 August, it said to the Premier:

"We feel our responsibility as much as you do, and if an honourable understanding can be reached even now, what threatens

to be a great national calamity can be averted. You know as well as we do that ... the mining and other unions will be involved in a few days. We want to avoid that. ... We are not here to threaten at all."

The government, on the other hand, presented the strike as an attack on the basic tenets of Australian life and the Parliamentary system. But it didn't just rage publicly against the strikers; it set in motion some determined strategies to defeat them.

**ARMIES OF scabs were recruited and set up in huge, guarded camps, where they received free food, beer and visits by vaudeville performers and by grateful politicians.**

Leaders of some of the more powerful unions were arrested and jailed. The striking railway unions were de-registered, and the government announced that it would no longer negotiate with the Defence Committee. Strikers' families were denied State relief.

Nevertheless, on 31 August, a huge meeting of metal trades unions voted unanimously to continue the strike.

The Defence Committee, in panic, and negotiating through the Lord Mayor, conceded more and more. On 6 September, in discussions with the Industrial Commission, it agreed to recommend a return to work on the government's terms. The card system was to stay, and the scabs were to stay, and victimization was given a green light with the Commissioners to have absolute discretion in filling vacancies, only being obliged to "give prior consideration" to former employees.

The railway workers were outraged at this sell-out. Unfortunately, a majority of the unions involved voted to accept it.

Of those who applied to be "re-employed" 2,200 were knocked back. By 1920, 440 of these were still on the blacklist.

Over the next month, other unions drifted back under varying conditions.

**THE MINERS were fairly successful in "discouraging" the scabs, but the waterside workers returned to face drastic changes in their conditions and contracts.**

WWF members were only employed as casuals when the bosses were desperate for labour. Twenty-three unions had been de-registered, and scab unions were operating alongside them.

The government had clearly achieved its stated aim of getting rid of the "extreme and revolutionary element" in the unions. In all, the strike lasted 82 days and involved nearly 100,000 workers. The Defence Committee raised 23,000 pounds, but the government spent 100,000 pounds to break it.

The lack of unity among railworkers meant that nearly half stayed at work. This provided an experienced base to be used by the government to train scabs and to keep the railways running. The scabs generally kept the State moving, while the government's other measures worked more or less as intended.

The Defence Committee of linking up the unions in a joint list of demands, it went on the defensive and sought class peace on any terms.

That the struggle went on for as long as it did was a tribute to the strength and determination of the rank and file, who started the strike and kept it going for 82 days in the face of incredible odds.

—Eris Harrison

# Aussie spies roam the globe

**ALFRED Brookes, first Ahead of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), believed that a country is ruined if it is not policed by clandestine services.**

As journalists Brian Toohy and William Pinwill show in *Oyster*, their history of ASIS, he has been supported in this by Liberal and Labor governments for almost forty years.

ASIS tends to be a bit of a joke these days ever since its agents, with masks and guns, smashed down a door at the Sheraton Hotel in Melbourne, terrorised guests and staff and were caught by the local cops.

But there is a more sinister side. ASIS is partly about the collection and interpretation of information from overseas sources. The other facet of its work is special operations. This is where the dirty tricks like bribery, deception, blackmail, sabotage and assassinations come in.

ASIS has its fair share of such work to its "credit". In 1958 it supported a CIA inspired military revolt in the Indonesian island of Sumatra. In the 1960s it worked closely with the CIA in Vietnam. Its agents dressed as Viet Cong and conducted killings in the villages. Naturally, the VC copped the blame.

The organisation played a role in the bloody 1965 coup in Indonesia. It spied on students in the Philippines in co-operation with Marcos' secret police. It is highly likely that it gave the Malaysian government reports on the activities of its students here in Australia. ASIS also played its small part in the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile.

Although the Labor Party did not set up ASIS, its leaders have always been supportive of its work. Gough Whitlam was, at most, wary of Australia's secret police. He recalled the agents from Chile but was happy enough to endorse a special operation, backed by the British, in the Solomon Islands.

Even the 1974 Royal Commission on Espionage was directed more at dampening down Labor Party rank and file calls for more drastic action against the intelligence services.

The ALP leaders' loyalty to ASIS and the rest of the secret police flows from its loyalty to Australia's national (imperialist) interests.

As a junior partner of Western imperialism in the Pacific, Australia's rulers have sought sup-



port and protection for their own economic and military goals in the region from both the US and Britain. Part of what it can offer is information and practical support in their covert actions.

**Ruling class ideology ultimately defends ASIS on the grounds that it warns us of aggression by foreign dictators. Oyster presents damning proof that, far from protecting us from them, it helps to inflame them on the workers of other countries and ought to be abolished.**

—Jeff Goldhar

FILM



## Holy social crisis, Batman

**THE history of popular culture is the history that produces it. Almost nowhere is this clearer today than in the unfolding of the Batman character.**

Created in 1939, Batman showed the birthmarks of the creator's world. The Great Depression, the rise of fascism, the shadow of the approaching war — all these underlay the grim and gloomy comic book hero and the world in which he existed.

In a world in which all the old values were coming unstrung, Batman offered reassurance. He

was justice, order, the triumph of right. He was a vigilante, it is true, but one who stood squarely within the law.

He was precisely what the sixties generation was to reject so honestly — clean cut, earnest, prudent, thoroughly "square". And the TV show took up the attack with a vengeance. Over two years *Batman* mercilessly stomped the character and all it stood for.

Batman was a figure of fun with his ridiculous little morals tracked on each episode about both on justice or right — all presented with a campy deadpan seriousness that the audience was encouraged to see through.

The defiance and protests of the sixties have gone. As the world has drifted through the long recession of the seventies and eighties, cynicism and selfishness have become all the fashion.

Which brings us to the latest stage in the Batman saga: the movie.

If Gotham City was a grim and dangerous place in the comics, in the movie it is positively grotesque. The architecture is an impossible mix of styles and sets impossible, unsettling, even nightmarish. It is a corrupt and decaying place and so too are its leaders.

Against this backdrop, the main characters play out their roles. The villain is the Joker. In

the comics he was really just an overressed bank robber. Jack Nicholson presents him as a psychopath and a sadistic mass murderer.

Against him stands Batman. He is still on the side of the law — but now he is way outside it. Hardly a single criminal is actually brought to justice through the whole movie. Instead, Gotham City's streets are littered with the corpses of the bad guys.

And as for his motives ... This Batman is not the traditional square-jawed defender of right but a deeply disturbed individual, driven by unresolved childhood traumas. Beneath the frightening costume is concealed an even more frighteningly unbalanced personality.

The message of the movie is the message of the eighties — it is dangerous out there and even the heroes are suspect.

—Graham Willert



The capped crusader: deeply disturbed

# Behind the hype: a bosses' war

“DIAMOND” Jim McLelland’s “Stirring the Possum” is one of the more interesting autobiographies by an ALP politician.

That’s because unlike most Labor MPs, McLelland began as a genuine radical, being a Trotskyist during World War 2. With the hoopla over the war’s 50th anniversary, I was especially interested in his account of the Trotskyist stance of the time. They were amongst the very few to see WW2 for what it was, an imperialist conflict rather than a defence of democracy, and they refused to support the Allied war effort.

While McLelland naturally resonates that view today, it’s worth going over why he was right the first time, and then answering his revised opinion that an Allied victory was the only supportable alternative to worldwide fascist repression.

Firstly, just how anti-fascist were the Allies? Before the war, King Edward praised Hitler while Churchill and Menzies lauded Mussolini, Churchill even appearing with him at a 1939 fascist rally in Rome. When Mussolini invaded Abyssinia, Britain and France offered him the richer half of the country. Similar responses met Hitler’s annexations of the Rhineland, Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia.

In Spain, where the left fought a three year war to defend an elected government, the “democratic” Allies sat idly by while Hitler armed France’s fascists to the teeth. The Allies ignored the mounting evidence of Nazi persecution of Jews. Britain deported thousands of “illegal” Jewish refugees back to Germany, and every nation except Canada and Australia shut its doors to them by 1939.

None of this was due to naivety. British PM Neville Chamberlain is now portrayed as a fool for his Munich “peace” with Hitler, but a cynical majority in Britain’s ruling class saw concessions as better for the Empire than confrontation, especially if they could play fascism off against Russia.

Sadly for Chamberlain, Stalin was just as cynical in the game of imperialist chess. Ten months after Munich, the Stalin-Hitler pact carved up Eastern Europe between the two dictators and freed Hitler to advance west. A month later the world was at war.

**M**ILLIONS of workers answered the Allied call to defend democracy, but their leaders knew the real battle was over empires.

Churchill signed the high-sounding Atlantic Charter with President Roosevelt, promising to



The mayhem of WW2: was it worth fighting?

“respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they live.” But he then excluded “India, Burma and other parts of the British Empire”.

So Gandhi’s “Quit India” campaign for independence in 1942 was met with mass arrests, beatings and shootings.

After the war, India again demanded independence with a naval mutiny and huge marches in Bombay. Britain again drowned the movement in blood. Only when I saw that India had become an economic and military liability did it get out in 1947.

The same happened in Greece. Communist-led partisans who resisted the Nazis went on after the war to depose the monarchy and start a revolution. But the Yalta Conference between Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt in 1944 had agreed to a carve-up of Europe, which gave Greece to Britain. So British troops invaded and restored King George II.

In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh’s nationalist Vietminh helped the Allies fight Japan’s occupation, hoping to gain independence. But after British Major-General Douglas Gracey took the surrender of the Japanese in 1945, he rearmed them to put down the Vietminh. By 1947, the south half of Vietnam was back in French hands, setting off 28 more years of war.

And in Indonesia, Holland fought from 1945 to 1949 to try to regain its colony after Sukarno declared independence on the defeat of Japan. If the Allies aimed to liberate the world, they had an odd way of



with Alec Kahn

**I**N NON-OCCUPIED countries like Australia, socialists had more complex tasks.

Millions rallied behind the ruling class war effort through a fear of fascist invasion. Socialists needed to counterpose the alternative of arming the workers, both as more effective (Europe’s regular armies had fallen to the Nazis in a way even badly armed resistances never did) and as a way to assert workers’ rights against all bosses rather than just Japan’s or Germany’s. Australia’s Communist Party made a weak attempt to set up a “people’s brigade”, but it was always to be loyal to the war effort and under the regular army’s control.

The inequality of sacrifice by the classes gave socialists a chance to pose the question “Whose war?” Workers died or put up with 60 hour weeks and rationing while bosses were guaranteed profits by the “cost plus” system and bought goods on the black market. In Australia, women drafted into industry were often militant over getting just 60% of male pay. In Britain, miners, Rolls Royce workers and Clydeside apprentices all struck in 1943-44 over such inequities, four Trotskyists being jailed in the Clyde strike. In the blitz, the rich sat safe in their luxury shelters while workers were locked out of the underground until, led by the British Communist Party, they took it over. But mostly, the Communist Parties backed the war effort and opposed workers’ struggle.

After the war socialists had a final task: to prevent the return of colonial control. Communists agitated against the Australian Army against the 8th and 9th Battalions helping the Dutch in Indonesia, and wharries held up Dutch arms shipments.

But the damage was done. With no independent working class force, the new superpowers, America and Russia, were free to carve up the world. Fascism had lost, but a new breed of US and Soviet puppets, from Marcos to the Shah to the East European regimes, soon imposed very similar police states.

McLelland and his fellow Trotskyists were right... it was a war run by imperialists. The pity is that with their tiny numbers, they had no chance of turning the guns the other way.



So 1

# SOCIALIST ACTION



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# CRACKING THE STALINIST WALL



The revolt in Eastern Europe



## EASTERN EUROPE

AS THE states claiming to be "socialist" move into crisis, their claim to have emancipated women are being exposed.

In the countries we visited in September, Poland and Russia, "equality" simply means women do two jobs: the low status, low paid job in industry, plus unpaid domestic drudgery and endless queuing.

And the claimed "right to work" is a myth.

In the 1960s under Polish leader Gomulka, chronic unemployment reappeared among women and job discrimination was re-introduced. Then in the 1970s there was an ideological campaign in favour of the "socialist family" in an attempt to get women to accept more flexible working arrangements.

Yet they cannot be happy in the home. In an impoverished economy, a second wage is essential. Although women are entitled to three years' unpaid maternity leave in addition to four months' paid leave, many don't make use of the extra time.

The most outrageous recent attacks on women's rights concerned abortion. In Poland abortion is a mass phenomenon. According to unofficial figures there are about a million a year, partly because other contraceptives are hard to get. The official women's magazine *Kobieta i Zycie* writes:

"It is easier to learn from another woman at work that the pill makes you fat or makes hair grow all over your body than to find a serious leaflet or booklet. It is not only that contraception is not promoted on a mass scale. We do not even have the means of contraception themselves. Good ones that is!"

THE STATE has often done deals with the Catholic Church. In September 1987 the first sexual education book was introduced into Polish schools. After a hysterical Church-backed campaign, it was withdrawn.

When the latest attack came, though, women were ready to resist. At the beginning of 1989 a draft law formulated by the Church was presented to parliament, proposing up to three years' jail for anyone having or performing an abortion. Lech Walesa indicated he liked the proposal.

*Kobieta i Zycie* got a flood of letters. "We want the sole right to decide how many children we have," wrote one reader, "and we want to be able to legally terminate our pregnancies."



At a Soviet protest rally

# Shattering the myth of emancipation

Warsaw's feminist group gathered signatures on petitions. So did a group of Solidarity factory activists in Bydgoszcz, who claimed that the Solidarity leaders were "too much in the hands of the church".

Then on May 6 a thousand people took to the streets of Warsaw, carrying banners reading: "No to the Inquisition" and "Will abandoned babies be adopted by the monks?" Other slogans warned against a joint dictatorship by the Party and the Church.

The demonstration was supported by the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution), which grew out of the militant wing of Solidarity.

At a second demonstration on May 10, women workers told a journalist that "women have taken time off work, if only briefly, to make it clear we want to protest." The regime backed down, and the new Solidarity government won't revive the bill.

Still, the Szczecin feminist collective has claimed that it's "the same shit" under the new government, and that further struggles will be needed.

IN THE USSR, *perestroika* has also meant new attacks on women.

The regime claims to address women's problems. After taking power, Gorbachev called for the creation of Women's Councils (*zhensoviety*), and they sprang up instantly all over the country.

Olga Lipovskaya investigated the *zhensoviety* and found they were "just an aid and ally to the Party".

"The local branches at the workplace or in the community are still ruled by the Party committees. In our district of Lenin-grad, the person responsible for the network is a man. I have met the woman responsible in the Executive Committee. She has no consciousness of what women's problems are ...

"They have no juridical status, they have no economic status, they don't have their own funds."

WHY IS it that the eastern bloc states, which always claim to champion equal rights, never achieve them? Soviet *Women* magazine gave a hint earlier this year. Discussing part time work, it noted:

"One part of the legislation pushes an enterprise to fulfill the plan, and that means a woman has to work more. Another part permits women to work less. The administration is obliged to choose, and it's clear what the choice will be ... The administrator ... simply sees the woman as a labour resource."

While workers, male or female, are just a "labour resource" there can be no equality or liberation. But this situation can change.

In the 1989 miners' strike, many thousands of women joined the movement. Some were miners' wives, but others struck in their own right, as mine workers or as factory workers taking solidarity action.

If workers themselves could seize power in the so-called "workers' states" emancipation for women could become more than an empty phrase.

— Liz Ross and Tom O'Lincoln



Polish women cheer Solidarity's election win. But attacks on abortion followed.

## EAST GERMANY

# Fight for freedom's not over

THERE IS an old German socialist song: "Brothers, to the sunlight, towards freedom!"

That is what the people of East Germany are aiming for, and in some ways they have won it. It is thrilling when millions of people gain the right to express themselves and travel freely.

Yet not everyone is thrilled. In addition to some very worried East German bureaucrats are also western Europeans who are shaken authoritarian regimes in Warsaw and East Berlin. Our rulers don't want this example widely followed around the world. This even while George Bush was inately claiming the credit for breaching the Berlin wall, he and his advisers were expressing hopes that the situation would stabilise.

West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl does want an influx of skilled labour from the east, but wants it to come in a controlled pace that suits the needs of capitalist industry, not the aspirations of the workers themselves.

Meanwhile, a range of European countries is uneasy at the prospect of a reunified Germany, which would be a mighty economic power. We can expect an increase in anti-German propaganda soon, appealing to World War 2-style chauvinism.

WHAT KIND of state is East Germany, and why is it now in crisis?

The "German Democratic Republic" was imposed on its citizens by the Russian occupiers after the war, much as the "Federal Republic" was imposed on the western part of the country by the Allies.

The GDR's economy faced great disadvantages. It had less industry, and was cut off from both the Ruhr in the west and from the coalfields of Silesia, which had become part of Poland. Its rivers ran not to the sea but into West Germany, and the Russians had plundered half the railway tracks.

The new stalinist regime still achieved economic growth through investment in heavy industry, but workers faced severe shortages of consumer goods. After Stalin's death in 1953, demands by the government for more productivity sparked a demonstration by building workers in East Berlin. Demon-



Berliners take to the streets.

strations began to spread throughout the country, with demands widening to include free elections.

Russian troops and local police crushed the movement. The regime arrogantly declared that the people had "lost the government's confidence and would have to work to regain it," prompting Bertolt Brecht's bitter reply: "Wouldn't it be better to dissolve the people and elect a new one?"

After the defeat of the rising, what option was left to workers but to flee westward? As skilled labour left the country, the regime faced a new crisis, which it met by erecting the Berlin Wall in 1961.

Since then the GDR has seen the same economic success. It is the tenth strongest economy in the world, with living standards

While the GDR government could ban Russian magazines, it didn't like, it couldn't stop its people learning about "glasnost" from West German TV.

For a time, East German leader Erich Honecker could hold the line by sheer intimidation. But the flood of refugees getting to the west through Hungary alongside Gorbachev's visit exposed his weakness. While Gorbachev deserves no more credit than Bush (the simply told local party leaders that Russian tanks wouldn't do their dirty work), his failure to back Honecker was enough to seal the government's fate.

LISTENING to our media, you would think the East German people were in love with western capitalism. But things are not so simple. Certainly the higher living standards of West Germany have an appeal, and those who do head west expect to get better

higher than in some member states of the European Community. Those Warburg and Trabant cars we've seen driving westward may not be the best quality, but there are a lot of them on East German roads.

But more recently growth has slowed. Like so many eastern bloc states, the GDR has borrowed heavily from the west more per head, in fact, than Poland. And mounting economic problems have coincided with the political upheavals in Poland, Hungary and the Soviet Union.

While the GDR government could ban Russian magazines, it didn't like, it couldn't stop its people learning about "glasnost" from West German TV.

Of course, as the GDR's rulers try to patch together some kind of "glasnost-perestroika" combination, some of the economic benefits available to East German workers may disappear. As in Russia and Poland, any introduction of "market socialism" will bring unemployment with it.

Child care facilities are inferior to those in East Germany, and for the first time the immigrants will face the spectre of unemployment. 7 percent of the labour force in the Federal Republic is out of work, whereas unemployment has been virtual-

ly non-existent in the east.

Of course, as the GDR's rulers try to patch together some kind of "glasnost-perestroika" combination, some of the economic benefits available to East German workers may disappear. As in Russia and Poland, any introduction of "market socialism" will bring unemployment with it.

THERE IS no sign that this is what the protesters want. They have demanded political freedom and democracy, not a return to the free market.

But it is not hard to imagine how a combined propaganda offensive by East and West German politicians and media could sell "economic restructuring" a section of the population.

Fortunately there are signs of an independent movement



Strike Breaker Holidays will appeal to those who deserve something much more exciting. Like Muroro Atoll or the Bermuda Triangle.

#### British justice

THE good old British bobby... a woman who twice attempted suicide in the cells at Hammersmith Police Station has been charged by police with damaging the blanket she used in trying to hang herself.

And at Boston in Lincolnshire, police locked up a man charged with littering for two hours until he agreed to take off his cap.

#### Horsing around

WHO says the Royals are slack? Royal Family watchers in Britain have revealed the lengths that Princess Anne went to in order to save her marriage to Mark Phillips when it was on the rocks.

In December last year, for example, she held a surprise dinner party for 700 guests at Gatcombe Park to celebrate Mark's fortieth birthday, which had occurred on September 22.

Most generous of the top 50 was F&I Insurance, which gave away \$2.5 million, or just 4% of its profit. About average was Coles Myer, which parted with 0.5% of profit. A long last was, you guessed it, John Elliott's Elders, which shelled out a miserable \$200,000, or only

0.03%. A National Australia Bank boss groaned, "As soon as this article is published we will get another 1000 requests across our desks."

The Financial Review has surveyed Australia's top 50 companies to discover how just how philanthropic they are. Over half were too shy to respond. The answers of the rest suggest why.

It's a novel idea, but the destinations are a bit drab. The sort of people who hold the concept of Poetic licence to kill NO, Israel does not oppress the Occupied Territories. Which is why this poem hung in huge letters on the neonboard of a senior Israeli officer in Gaza for several weeks until "Ha'aretz", Israel's top newspaper, ran it.

Yes it is true that I hate Arabs  
I want to take them off the map  
Yes this is all my work  
My life passes pleasurably  
One shoots a bullet and a head is flying  
It is a pleasure to feel when the bullet touches  
Knocks into the head and it splits.  
Then I feel liberated and even a pleasure  
To see how the head is flying off.  
There are beautiful places in the Territories  
There is sea and sand and many gains.  
It is a pity that there are Arabs there too.

FROM PAGE 5

## East Germany

emerging that wants genuine, democratic socialism.

There have always been people who wanted a non-capitalist alternative to the system. Until the 1980s there were only isolated figures such as philosopher Robert Havemann, with informal circles around them.

But the 1980s brought the growth of a world-wide peace movement, and under the protection of protestant churches an East German peace movement emerged. To the government slogan of peace through strength, they counterposed a slogan of their own: "make peace without weapons!" Des-



Honecker, yesterday's hack.

pite repression, the peace groups mobilised hundreds of activists and had thousands of sympathizers.

When the peace movement ebbed, as it did in the west, perhaps 2000 oppositional ac-

## May we quote you?

"THEY shouldn't be killing the rhinos."  
— *Kylie Minogue, asked about the South African situation*

"GEORGE Bush wants to give tax breaks to the rich and we want to give tax breaks to the near-rich."  
— *Congressman Brian Dorgan on the Democrat alternative*

"NO government in the world would have tolerated having the main square of its capital occupied for eight weeks."  
— *Henry Kissinger, about to do a business deal with China*

"WHAT on earth is it?"  
— *Princess Fergie, picking up a dead rat in a museum*



HEART OF GOLD



HEART OF DIRT

"OUR people are linked by more than sediment."  
— *George Bush on Polish-US Relations*

## Big spenders

REMEMBER how the New Right used to say that if we got rid of social services, charity from the rich would take care of the poor?

The Financial Review has surveyed Australia's top 50 companies to discover how just how philanthropic they are. Over half were too shy to respond. The answers of the rest suggest why.

Most generous of the top 50 was F&I Insurance, which gave away \$2.5 million, or just 4% of its profit. About average was Coles Myer, which parted with 0.5% of profit. A long last was, you guessed it, John Elliott's Elders, which shelled out a miserable \$200,000, or only



## CHEAP SHOTS

### Begins at home

THE Fairfaxs are one wealthy family who do support charity. Back in 1959 they set up the Fairfax Foundation to look after past and present employees who were in hardship, and kicked it off with \$200,000. Today Foundation assets total \$15 million.

Who does the Foundation help? Its biggest beneficiary at the moment is... Warwick Fairfax! The Foundation trustees have given the Fairfax group an unsecured (yes... no collateral) loan of \$10 million for 12 years at ten percent, or half the current rate for business loans.

That's a million dollars a year that Wokka Fairfax is saving in interest payments.

### Food line

LATEST joke circulating Moscow food queues: "How do you know you've got Russian arms?"

Answer: When you've got an empty shopping bag and cannot remember if you've gone shopping or not.

some of the existing political institutions. The Boehlen meeting called for a "coalition of reason" a slogan also used by the ruling party.

They will have to grasp the need to dismantle all the existing structures if they are to succeed. For that they need an independent working class movement. And there are signs of one developing, with reports of hundreds of workers joining new unions in the factories.

The East German upheaval has gigantic potential. Movements like these led to the creation of workers' councils in Hungary in 1956 and part of Poland in 1981, pointing the way forward to real socialist society that would combine democracy with a planned economy.

— *Tom O'Lanclin*

## FEATURE

# Gay issues for the 1990s

## GAY ACTIVISM around the AIDS issue bears the mark of the conservative 1980s.

With the decline of radical social protest movements and the lower level of class struggle in the 1980s, radical lesbian and gay politics were affected too. While a lot of people kept on working very hard, gay politics became more conservative, and mainly involved the promotion of a "lifestyle".

Small groups, centred on particular aspects of life, have combined with the commercial scene to become that ambiguous thing apparently transcending class and social divisions: the "gay community".

Despite continuing homophobia, capitalism these days affords us some freedoms, though within strictly defined limits: the ghetto. Much has thrived there. It continues to provide support and a positive reassertion of our sexuality. It is a place where some people live out their lives in a more creative and unhibited way.

But it's also alienating. The community orients to a consumer lifestyle, while racism, sexism and reactionary politics are as commonplace as in straight society.

Not too many people talk about fighting oppression, linking up with other oppressed groups or with the working class. And that's not entirely surprising, since the opportunities to do that have been fewer this decade.

The community, then, is a contradictory thing. It has been forced on us by society's prejudice, but we have also helped to create it. For that reason it is a potential base for radicalisation and struggle. It gives us a sense of our strength, and at the same time a knowledge of our twilight existence in society.

Without this community, AIDS activism as we know it today would be inconceivable. It is from this community that AIDS activists have emerged.

"Protect our community and ourselves" has become a rallying point.

## BUT THE community should not be the end goal in lesbian or gay male politics, because that would mean accepting our oppression.

In fighting AIDS we are not simply fighting a virus, but also an array of social and political institutions that have allowed the epidemic to take its present course.

Reflecting the current political climate and the activists' orientation to a separatist community, AIDS activism has generally confined itself to lobbying the government.

Combined with some more militant pressure tactics such as occasional demonstrations, this has yielded some limited success. The government has adopted some reasonable policies, allowing community groups an important role and sponsoring laws against workplace discrimination.



A gay demonstration in the seventies: where has the radicalism gone?

At the same time AIDS councils are performing valuable work in educating people.

Yet there are also plenty of reactionary policies around we still have to fight. Reliance on penal measures and state powers will only drive those affected by AIDS underground. It will mean they receive no education on prevention or management of the disease.

Compulsory testing for migrants and prisoners turns groups that are already the target of society's prejudices into handy scapegoats, and also can be the end of the wedge for assaults on civil liberties in the rest of society.

AIDS policy is uneven from State to State, partly reflecting the reactionary climate in WA, Tasmania and Queensland. The continued prohibition of sex between people of the same gender has allowed State governments to force AIDS Councils to withdraw explicit safe sex pamphlets.

Fearing cuts in funding, and terrified of confrontation, the AIDS Councils failed to fight hard enough against the pressure. This was consistent with the cautious politics that characterize the Councils all over the country.

Prominent AIDS activist Adam Carr formulated these politics clearly in the April, 1988 issue of *Outrage*.

"The AIDS epidemic must force us as gay men to rethink our attitudes to government, and to the established order of things generally. The epidemic... (has) forced gay men and government into working relations..."

"That the organised gay community and its institutions are now inextricably bound up with, and in many ways dependent upon, the various arms of government and the political process is quite undeniable... like it or not, we are now part of the system."

Yet even the best of these governments has shown we can't rely on it. Federal Labor has shown it is unwilling to take on the more reactionary State governments even when a nation's health is at risk.

AND MORE important, are we really a part of the system? It is a system that hates our guts, a system whose police beat us up and even try to frame us for murder, as with the "Family" affair in supposedly liberal South Australia.

Do we want to be part of a system that forces down the wages of workers, treats women as second class citizens, keeps Aborigines in illness and poverty and holds up Bob Hawke as a macho role model?

It is one thing to recognize that we need to secure government funding, and to expect to create of an AIDS bureaucracy working with the government. It is another thing altogether to see this as representing a constructive new relationship between us and the system.

We have only got the funding and the AIDS bureaucracy because we fought the AIDS successfully in the past.

If we forget this we won't be prepared for the AIDS fight. We won't be prepared to any potential backlash, or be mobilised to extract new concessions from the government.

## FEATURE

Seeing ourselves as part of the system will mean we end up with the wrong allies. As we draw closer to Neil Blewett we will find it harder to build alliances with health workers who come under attack from the government. Yet only last year — strike at Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital in Melbourne over staffing levels — where many people with AIDS are treated — highlighted how closely linked our interests are.

Similarly if we are allies of Brian Howe, what sort of support can we expect from Social Security staff who are engaged in endless staffing battles with him?

It is already clear that other groups of workers can be won to a progressive stand on AIDS issues: last year in WA, building workers threatened industrial action if the State government implemented proposals for HIV blood tests before granting superannuation. So we have common interests with building workers — but wasn't it Adam Carr's "system" that smashed the BLF? To go forward around the AIDS issue and wider questions of lesbian and gay male politics, we need a much wider community than our current ghetto.

We need a community grounded in struggle rather than lifestyle, and one in which all the oppressed are welcome while the hostile nature of capitalist governments is never forgotten.

—Michael Connors

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**THE AIDS issue is tied up with the reactionary ideologies of our time and the profit motive of our economic system.**

Because in the west AIDS first emerged mainly among gay men it became a stigmatised disease, with a Festival of Light leader announcing: "By being a homosexual you choose to die." This atmosphere led to criminal negligence by the US government, which did nothing between 1980 and 1985.

When medical research began, it was held back by companies' greed for profits. Each one jealously guarded its work rather than sharing information. And when drugs have become available they're notoriously expensive.

A Wall Street conference in 1986 proclaimed that "if you can develop something for AIDS... you can charge anything for it." But participants expressed concern that HIV infection wasn't spreading fast enough. Patrick Gage, of the drug multinational Hoffman La Roche complained:

*"You have to understand that AIDS isn't a market that's exciting. Sure it's growing, but it isn't an asthma or a rheumatoid arthritis."*

## Lessons from the past

**THE 5000 strong mobilisation against Fred Nile in Sydney on 2 October raised a lot of important issues for anyone fighting against sex oppression — in fact, for anyone fighting back against oppression of any kind.**

The protest action made it clear that Nile's gay-bashing politics are opposed by a lot of people, and in that sense was a significant step forward.

Yet at the same time there were important weaknesses. The organisers worked hard all day to prevent any confrontation. Marshals went so far as to line up with mounted police to keep protesters off the road. As a result, much of the potential of the mobilisation was lost.

The organisers weren't just wimps. They approached the day with a particular political approach.

They argued that parliamentary opinion was on a knife edge in NSW about lesbian and gay rights, and also about gay law reform in Tasmania, Queensland and WA. So the task, as they saw it, was to win over one or two more politicians in each State and so tip the balance. To this end, any protest must be kept as respectable as possible.

That meant the gay community had to be controlled to make sure no one acted "violently". Even mobilising large numbers was risky. The *Village Voice* (Australia) quoted an anonymous bar patron as saying that to mobilise the queens you needed to get them angry, and if you get them angry they'll want to beat up Nile and his supporters.

The end result, as demo organiser Tony Westmore said in the *Sun Observer*, was "the level of cooperation and trust that has developed between the local police and the Mardi Gras marshals. When crowd control became an issue, the police did not have to



San Francisco gays smash up City Hall. Are respectable methods a better way?

confront the crowd themselves, but just asked the marshals!

Actually the police did confront the crowd, but that doesn't change the basic issue. In order to woo politicians, community leaders allied themselves with the cops against the demonstrators.

**IT IS not enough for socialists to just denounce these leaders as traitors. We need to look at what's wrong with their politics.**

In suppressing militancy in order to win a few polities, the rally organisers were putting all their eggs in one basket. If we don't win that vote in parliament, all is lost. We have built up no strength that can force the hand of parliament through the threat of continuing action in the streets.

This doesn't mean we have to be blood-thirsty. There was little danger of anyone actually giving Fred a black eye. But we could have occupied the streets, insisting that they belong to us and not to gay-bashing bigots. We could have marched up chanting slogans, and not stood along the footpaths.

There are deeper problems too. It is a good thing that lesbians and gays look for allies. This is something socialists always argue, in opposition to separatists who imagine we have sufficient power by ourselves to change our situation. But the rally organisers look for alliances with those who already hold power in society: cops, politicians, and business people.

Seeing these people as allies only makes sense if there is no fundamental conflict between the power structures of society and lesbian and gay rights, if our oppression is simply an accident or a misunderstanding.

The minute you recognise we live in a society based on oppression, and that politicians and cops are among the oppressors, this approach becomes nonsensical. Helping

the cops control the streets only strengthens their hand in a wider social battlefield, and so in the end only weakens us.

We certainly need allies. But we should look to other people who might also be tempted to punch Fred Nile's head in, women fighting for abortion rights, militant trade unionists, Aborigines and many others who are not friends of the police or the politicians.

**WHAT'S MORE** the rally organisers' whole approach is elitist, expecting change to come through cooperation between a few community leaders and the elite of society, rather than a democratic movement for change involving masses of people.

When you consider that the rulers of our society have substantial reasons to oppose gay rights (they rely on the family institution, traditional gender roles and conservative prejudices to keep maintain ideological control) it is madness to rely on courtling the establishment.

Our whole history shows this. The greatest gains for lesbians and gays have come in the wake of the militant Gay Liberation

movement, whose birth was marked by the Stonewall riot on 1969.

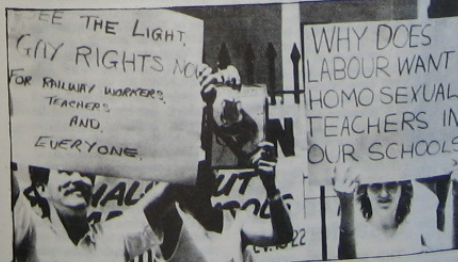
After years in which cautious "homophile" movements had cautiously lobbied for a respectable place in society, Gay Liberation came out fighting and transformed people's perceptions around the world.

The movement declined along with others in the course of the 1970s and 1980s, and the politics that dominates the lesbian and gay male scene today is basically a retreat to that earlier approach, which achieved some law reform when it suited the ruling class, but made little practical difference to most people's lives.

The Mardi Gras itself began as a militant protest for our rights, and was attacked by the cops. It was only after repeated confrontations on the streets that we won the right to parade unmolested. And the result was to strengthen our influence, including our influence on those politicians whom some gay leaders are so anxious to please.

**if we want to not only offend ourselves, but win new gains in the 1990s, the tradition of Stonewall has to be our starting point.**

—Robert Staunby



The two sides meet: confrontation can't be dodged

## 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 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 worldwide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against others. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

#### 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!

# Fighting teachers show some class

TEACHERS have shown a lot of fighting spirit this spring.

Even private school teachers have voted to take strike action over pay issues. Although a minority of posh schools pay their staff well, poorer schools are another story. On 26 October, 3000 private school teachers filled Sydney Town Hall with placards such as "Teachers wage war".

But as usual the public sector is where teachers are best organised.

NSW teachers have taken strike action over salaries and workloads. Negotiations between the government and the union over "structural efficiency" have been bogged down for months. Then when the Greiner regime finally offered a 9 per cent salary increase, it demanded trade offs longer working hours, fewer holidays and the right to reduce salaries for teachers they claim aren't performing well enough.

Teachers hit back with a 24 hour stoppage on 26 October, the same day as the private union. The Sydney mass meeting voted for a series of rolling strikes throughout the State. Calls for no-rank and file for an indefinite strike got quite a bit of support, but were defeated.

Officials from the Teachers' Federation opposed the indefinite stoppage by claiming that Greiner's interpretation of Award Restructuring was out of line with trends in other States. They claimed that a bit of pressure would eventually force him to change his stand.

The government responded to the strike with a pay offer of 6 per cent, tied to productivity trade-offs yet to be disclosed.

NSW high school teachers have also been fighting over "Meadowbank" classes — extra classes given to teachers who have finished HSC instruction. The government has stood down over a hundred staff who refused to take them. In quite a few schools the entire staff have held stopwork meetings when somebody was given one of these "extra" classes.

The government has responded to widespread resentment at the new policy. There is currently a moratorium on action over the issue, but the dispute could escalate when it expires.



TRAMWAY employees and other Melbourne workers at a rally in the City Square. Trammies have spent the last months of 1989 resisting government plans to abolish conductors. The Cain regime made this move after its success in removing guards from trains.

It's not only the union that's fighting back. People with disabilities point out that it will make it that much harder for them to travel. Women have reminded the government of how hard it is to get prams onto trams without help. They and other groups were represented at the City Square rally. Unfortunately, the struggle has been hampered by a Tramways Union leadership that holds back from decisive action, preferring "guerrilla" stoppages and public relations gimmicks.

Meanwhile in Victoria, Education Minister Kirner faced a mass walkout by teachers when she visited Sandringham High School. Students cheered.

During the next two weeks, Kirner had to dodge evening visits to various functions for fear of facing a crowd of teachers out of the front. Then on 26 October, a whopping 80 per cent of members of the three teacher unions supported a one day strike. Even non-unionists joined in.

Why this explosion? Teachers have devoted endless unpaid hours to carrying out the government's rationalisation of schools, and more unpaid hours to meetings to facilitate the new Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) courses.

Meanwhile salaries have fallen at least 8 percent in real terms, and the government insists any pay rise must be traded off against a one hour increase in teaching workloads. But the main issue is the dead end career structure, whereby after 7 years' service you may not be able to advance any further, unless you move into non-teaching duties.

The Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association has responded with its "Classroom Teaching" campaign: members

have banned all work not stipulated by industrial agreements. This includes all meetings on school amalgamations, the VCE, excursions outside school hours, even playing ping pong with the kids at lunch time.

In the past, unions have avoided bans, fearing they would alienate parents. But when Kirner made a public statement saying that if the VCE failed, Labor could lose government, VSTA members recognised they had a bargaining chip. The mass strike meeting voted by over 95 per cent to pursue the bans strategy.

Unfortunately the other two unions have yet to act on the decision. Even the VSTA has lifted its bans after being told to do so by the Industrial Relations Commission, on pain of losing a 3 percent wage rise. The VSTA will consider re-imposing them at a special general meeting on 18 November.

— Mark Malcott and Philip Whitefield

BLF

## Gov't courts disaster

THE BLF is supposed to be "dead" but the tradition of go-

vernment harassment of the union is alive and well.

During October, organiser John Cummins was imprisoned for unpaid fines arising out of an assault charge of two years ago. He was not given the option of doing community service work. Building workers from a number of trades and sites rallied and marched around the city. Giving the police the slip, they rushed to 222 Exhibition St, the scene of many earlier confrontations and now the location of Steve Crabb's office.

Crabb was in charge of industrial relations and a leader of the original attack on the BLF. Now as minister for corrective services he had the power to arrange for Cummins' release.

About two hundred BLs and supporters got up to the 17th floor before the security guards closed off the lifts. It was quite a sight to see blue-singletted labourers besieging around the lift-lobby of a public service building.

The action proved successful. By the evening news coverage, Cummins had been released to do community service work instead of a prison sentence. And building workers had shown yet again that militant action gets results.

— Janey Stone

## Now it's "total war" against the drug traffic! says Colombian President Virgilio Barco Vargas.

In late August the authorities arrested almost 11,000 people suspected of involvement in the drug trade, seized \$200 million worth of equipment and drug stocks, and curtailed civil liberties.

The emerging new class of drug barons or "narco" are threatening the dominance of Colombia's present rulers. Basing themselves on their new industry, they have begun to engage in greater and more independent political activity.

In July this year the mafia backed far-right groups in setting up the Movement for National Restoration (MORONA) to contest the presidential elections. Their influence extends into business, the courts, the army, government bodies and the Church.

THE ELECTION campaign has been bloody so far. August 16 and 17 saw the murders of a Supreme Court judge, a commander of police in Antioquia and three left activists.

But it was the killing of Liberal senator Luis Carlos Galán that led to President Barco's declaration of "total war". At the time of his death he was considered the most likely candidate to win the presidency. He also represented the current in the Liberal party most able to negotiate peace with guerrillas strong in some rural areas. This made him popular in the cities.

His murder should come as no surprise. He was an outspoken opponent of the drug trade. The mafia has eliminated ministers, directors of major dailies, politicians, anti-drug judges and police almost unceasingly in the past few years.

This most recent military mobilisation has produced limited results. Of the 11,000 arrested, two-thirds were released for "lack of evidence".

Very few "Mr Bigs" were touched. Of the two major cartels, only the reputed treasurer and another who is third in charge of the Medellín cartel were picked up. No attempts were made to crack the well protected Medellín retreats, used as command posts when life gets tough outside.

THERE ARE reasons why these limited measures have failed.

Firstly, some of the state's top leaders have given in under the strain of assassination threats. Two of the president's justice



A cocaine raid in southern Colombia.

# Behind Colombia's bloody drug wars

ministers have protected the mafia, by refusing seven US extradition orders against cartel chiefs and other drug personalities.

Also, sections of the armed forces have been bought off. Top police officials keep the drug chiefs informed of planned raids. It is not uncommon for leading government figures to be caught with large quantities of cocaine. And recently an army captain was caught with top secret government documents concerning army activities, just before he was to deliver them to the mafia.

For many years Colombia's rulers have taken advantage of drug money. In 1974 the "Sinister Window" was set up through the Banco de la Republica for the laundering of dollars of dubious origin.

The country's economy has become dependent on the drug trade. Last year \$1200 million passed through the "Sinister Window" — that's 4 per cent of gross domestic product.

Another method the system uses to gain from the trade are presidential amnesties. As each new president takes power, an amnesty is declared and large stocks of drug capital are diagnosed healthy by financial institutions.

The Colombian ruling class is

divided over how to cope with the crisis. Some on the far right have suggested reintroducing capital punishment. Some even want involvement from the US Green Berets! For these people, the drug war is partly just an opportunity to introduce reactionary features into society.

But they are countered by those who want to take a softer line. The mayor of Medellín wants negotiations with the mafia, although it is unclear what would be negotiated. His supporters claim it is the only way out of the spiral of violence — "fight the drug traffic" — an increase from \$10 million — and suggested it could send troops. But what are Washington's real motives?

THOSE SECTIONS of the ruling elite who are well disposed toward the drug cartels are not necessarily simply corrupted by them.

The military are waging a struggle against leftist guerrillas and other activists in rural areas, and the mafia has proved a valuable ally.

The need to control land to launder drug money has brought into conflict the drug dealers with the guerrillas. At first the cartels paid a "revolutionary tax" to use the land. But eventually they formed an alliance with cattle ranchers and other land owners. They set up paramilitary

"self-defence" groups, often with support from the army.

These vigilantes fight the guerrillas, as well as attacking members of the agricultural workers union. In 1987-88 more than 1200 members of left organisations such as the Peoples' Front, A Luchara and the Patriotic Union have been murdered. Dozens of judges, journalists and priests have also been killed.

Barco's declaration of "total war" has been warmly welcomed in Washington. The US has offered \$65 million in aid to "fight the drug traffic" — an increase from \$10 million — and suggested it could send troops. But what are Washington's real motives?

CBS television reports have established links between the CIA and the Colombian drug cartels, and Senator John Kerry claims that the CIA sent arms to Colombia, as well as engaging in the cocaine trade in order to raise money for the Nicaraguan Contras.

So US policy is more likely to focus on combating left wing movements, and on setting a precedent for direct military intervention in Latin America, than on fighting the drug trade.

— Louise Walker

**Beazley flops,  
Labor fizzles**

KIM BEAZLEY got a rowdy reception at Queensland University recently, when he tried to speak about "Australian Defence Responsibilities".

About 50 students took over the platform, chanting "Pine Gap out! Nurrungar Out! US Bases out!" and "Victory to the pilots!" They then addressed the audience of about 20 on Australian imperialism and recent developments at Nurrungar.

Rattled Queensland Uni Labor Club members demanded the following week that two academic staff involved in the demo (Socialist Action members) be sacked. They claimed the issue was "freedom of speech" and suggested that students picket a Socialist Action campus club meeting that week.

We decided to call their bluff and turn our meeting into a public debate with them on freedom of speech. We pointed out that the Labor Club had not been involved in the "Free Speech in the Mall" campaign, had never protested control of the media by Bob Hawke's mates Skase, Packer and Bond — and had made no protest when socialist Jan Rintoul was banned from campus.

The majority of the 70-strong audience supported our stand, and nothing's been heard from the Labor Club since about the issue.

**New pamphlet**

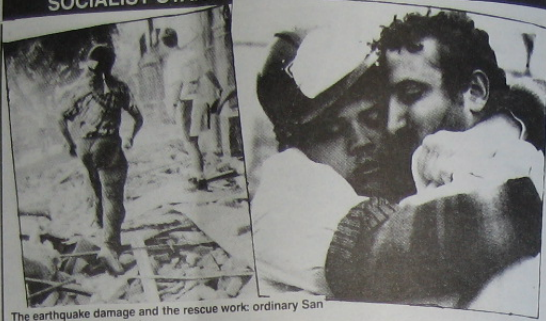
IN 1988, Social Security workers in Sydney ignored the conservative advice of their union leaders and fought the government in a long and determined strike. They won gains beyond what the union leaders believed possible.

Socialists were part of the leadership of the strike, and now two of them have written the history of it. Called *Fighting Labor's Cuts*, the pamphlet by Eric Harrison and Dave Main, is now available for \$4 from branches of Socialist Action and the International Socialists.

**Summer camp**

The 1990 Socialist Action summer camp is no longer far away. It will be over the Australian Day week-end at a campsite in the Dandenongs near Melbourne. In addition to lots of educational talks and entertainment, our conference session will discuss the work of the organisation's four branches.

If you'd like to come, contact your local revolutionaries. For how to reach us, see page 2.



The earthquake damage and the rescue work: ordinary San Franciscans rallied to help.

**It's time to make the bosses quake**

THE BIG quake which shook San Francisco in October exposed more cracks than just the San Andreas fault.

It opened up a big hole in the myth that ordinary people are naturally jealous, self-centred, and incapable of co-operating to run society, and that our bosses can do a better job.

Disasters have a way of challenging conventional ideas about the "natural order" of things. In the 18th century, the great Lisbon earthquake convinced many people that God was a myth, for how could a divine being allow it to happen?

They also expose the greed and short-sightedness of our rulers. After a ruinous quake in Nicaragua in 1972, dictator Somoza's cynical channeling of international relief funds into his private bank accounts discredited his regime, and paved the way for the Sandinista revolution.

After the recent San Francisco events it emerged that the collapse of the Nimitz freeway, which killed 60 people, could have been avoided. Highway and Transit Authority officials said only a third of a strengthening project had been completed before Federal and State funds were cut. As in Australia, US governments prefer to devote their energies to raising the profits of big business.

WE ALSO saw the free market, which is praised so highly by Andrew Peacock and Mikhail Gorbachev, at its most vicious.

Price rip-offs by merchants were rife for essential goods such as water and medicines. After an initial hiccup, the stock exchange rose as capitalists

thought about all the profitable construction activity and vehicle sales that would result. Even insurance shares rose in expectation that premiums would rise.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported bluntly: "On Wall Street, California's killer earthquake was just another chance to make a buck." In San Francisco itself, stock brokers carried by candlelight, neatly illustrating the priorities of what Marx and Engels called the "vampire class".

The aftermath of the disaster showed the class divisions in society as well. The local power monopoly restored power first to their customers in the swank Pacific Heights region, whereas the poor and aged residents of some other districts were told they would have to wait for up to ten weeks.

Don't imagine the same thing couldn't happen here. In the destructive South Australian bushfires of some ten summers back, the firefighters' union accused the senior bosses of the fire services of diverting men and equipment to protect the luxury homes of the chief fire officer and other notables, while the houses of mere mortals were left to burn.

BUT WHILE the ruling class failed the test, the San Francisco earthquake provided new evidence of ordinary people's capacity for selfless heroism and cooperation.

Thousands of Armenians, facing desperate problems of their

own, raised money for San Francisco. And in northern California, the local people were out helping each other.

They organised to find shelter for the homeless, distributed food, and carried out rescue work. Ordinary citizens directed traffic. And this in a city whose reserves of volunteer workers were already exhausted by the struggle to maintain AIDS programs.

Then there was the case of James Betts.

When Betts crawled into the ruins of the Nimitz Freeway in save six-year-old Julio Benamen, he was risking his life. What remained of the freeway was teetering, yet Betts says he never thought twice about spending six hours in there to save the boy.

Neither did the Oakland residents who rushed to prop up the freeway with makeshift supports.

It is actions like these that prompted Adam Smith, whose ideas supposedly inspire today's selfish New Right, to conclude "there seem to be principles in man's nature which interest him in the fortunes of others, and render their happiness necessary to him".

Even Dan Quayle praised the "spirit of voluntarism" though he hastened to add that "the Administration is not in control". We will see more of that spirit when the working class is in control, and we have a social system based on generosity instead of greed.

— Phil Shannon

**The bleak face of British justice**

THERE IS no doubt that police officers seriously misled the court. In fact they lied."

With these words, Britain's Lord Chief Justice released three of the Guildford Four in October. The fourth was released soon after.

Gerard Conlon, Paddy Armstrong, Carole Richardson and Paul Hill were convicted in 1975 of murdering the victims of a pub bomb. They served fourteen years in prison, although it has been clear for years that they had nothing to do with the bombing.

In 1977 an IRA unit gave detailed descriptions to British police as to how they, and not the Guildford Four, had planted the bombs. But an appeal court didn't want to know. "So far as this new evidence is concerned," said Lord Justice Roskill, "we reject it in all its aspects."

Finally this year a second appeal has freed them. The prosecution didn't oppose the appeal, but simply threw its hand in, and for good reason. The defence lawyers were in a position to prove that the British police knew, even at the time of charging the Guildford Four, that they could not have planted the bomb.

The cops had stumbled upon witnesses and other hard evidence that proved Gerard Conlon was in London during the bombing, and had never been in Guildford in his life. They suppressed this evidence, and defence lawyers only learned of it this year.

HAD THIS come out in court, it would have confirmed what the defence said from the beginning: the accused had been beaten and tortured into signing absurd confessions. The prosecution preferred to minimise the impact of this revelation by letting the Four go.

The sight of Gerard Conlon walking free on our TV screens was memorable. But after showing that, the capitalist media have been profoundly silent.

They want us to forget that the much-vaunted system of "British justice" that did this to the Four is also our system.

In fact at this very moment, a



Gerard Conlon after his release

famous Australian victim of previous police frame-ups. Tim Anderson, is currently undergoing a committal trial on charges of bombing the Hilton Hotel. The only evidence against him is provided by a supergrass.

Anti-apartheid activist Kerry Browning is facing a similar ordeal in Canberra.

And in Western Australia, the gold bullion lifted in the Great Mint Swindle has turned up, creating greater pressure to reopen the case of the Mickleburg brothers who were convicted on police verball.

THE POINT is not just that coppers lie their heads off in court. That's not news, and it happens world-wide.

The point is also that the British police develop all their latest repressive methods in Northern Ireland. Then the same methods eventually arrive in Australia.

Following the disastrously mistaken IRA tactic of bombing British pubs in 1974, the British police discovered that well-publicised "terrorist trials" are marvelous ways to sell the idea of greater police powers.

After the Birmingham bombings, they were empowered to arrest without trial. Using these powers, they detained the Guildford Four while fabricating the evidence.

When Richard Scary or ASIO bombed the Hilton in 1978, the Australian cops were delighted. All pending inquiries into the political police were scrapped. ASIO was given increased powers to tap phones, intercept mail and blackmail "terrorists".

Meanwhile, by 1978 the British had taken the wraps off specially trained SAS troops and paramilitary police who were unleashed first in Northern Ireland, and later against striking coal miners. The Australian police followed by establishing the SWOSS squads, one of which murdered David Gandy.

The release of the Guildford Four also raises other political issues. It is a blow against the "Hang 'em high" advocates of capital punishment in the Tory Party. "This is a very powerful argument against capital punishment," admitted Harry Greenway, MP for Ealing North. "If the Guildford Four had been hanged, it would have been very serious indeed."

**WE ARE left with the question of other political prisoners still being held.**

Six men framed for the Birmingham pub bombings remain in prison, although the squad which investigated the bombings has since been disbanded, because its officers had been found to consistently force evidence and force false confessions from suspects.



The Hilton bombing: people are being framed for it to this day.

Since their trial forensic evidence offered as "conclusive" has been shown to be inaccurate, an expert witness has been found to have altered his notes, and two witnesses have offered evidence that the accused were beaten by police.

And parliament itself has been exposed. Thatcher's Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, told the House of Commons in 1987 that he could not submit the Guildford Four's case to the court of Appeal because there was no new evidence. It was a lie.

Finally, the trial exposes the class system that capitalism is based on. The original trial judge of the Guildford Four, Lord Donaldson, was educated at a public school and then Cambridge. He was head of the National Industrial Relations Court which jailed the Pentonville dockers in 1972.

In 1984 he ordered the postal workers to lift hands on the private firm Mercury. At that time he owned £4500 worth of shares in Cable and Wireless, a company with a 40 percent stake in Mercury.

In reality, the cops and the courts and their parliamentary mates do not exist to dispense justice at all. They are there to enforce class rule and imperial power. Paul Hill said rightly of his imprisonment:

"This case, as with the Birmingham Six case, was an example to the Irish community. It was a method of terrorising the Irish community."

— Denis Alsop

# When revolt gripped the British navy

Mutineers ditch Captain Bligh at sea.

**T**HE YEAR 1789 marked the 200th anniversary of the mutiny on the *Bounty* as well as the storming of the Bastille.

And indeed the British naval mutinies of the time had much in common with the French Revolution. All were fired by the demand for bread, but also the quest for liberty.

Returning from a voyage to Tahiti, Captain Bligh's crew mutinied in April 1789, depositing Bligh and his loadies in a longboat on the open sea. The sailors had little difficulty choosing between a return to the poverty of England or a pleasant life on Pacific islands.

Hollywood presents Bligh as an obsessive disciplinarian. It is true that he had a violent temper, and he humiliated the sailors (calling them "scoundrels, rascals, bellhounds, beasts and infamous wretches") but the lash of his tongue was worse than that of his cat-o-nine tails. He ordered only eleven floggings totaling 229 lashes in the two year voyage — almost sanely by the brutal standards of discipline in Lord Nelson's navy.

Thus the supposed brutality of Bligh is little more use in explaining the mutiny than the fanciful theory of one historian, according to which the captain and Fletcher Christian were lovers, who fell out when Christian switched to heterosexual activity in Tahiti.

Possibly the captain's restraint arose from the situation aboard ship. He was transporting breadfruit trees in hundreds of flower pots, and consequently had no room for a contingent of marines. And this is the reason the sailors could stage a successful mutiny so easily.

**IT WAS harder in the rest of the navy, where the oppression and inequality which characterised all of British society found a concentrated reflection in the regime aboard ships.**

In the eighteenth century, the sailing ship was central to the imperial economy. The English fleet contained the largest workforces in the world. A Man-of-War had 600 men.

Samuel Leech, a sailor who survived the navy, described in his memoirs the factory regime on board, in which "a set of human machinery" moves "to



the will of the all-powerful captain".

The sailors did not want to be there. Press-gangs, the courts or utter poverty drove them aboard ships. Their life was an endless saga of back-breaking work, brutality and boredom. The officers diddled the men of food and liquor, and creamed the profits.

The balance of class forces was hairline. The men outnumbered the officers, but the officers had the marines. The marines were there to quell dissent at the point of a musket. They also presided over the floggings, a practice of calculated terror meant to cow the men. Leech described the lacerated back after flogging as resembling "roasted meat burnt nearly black".

Desertions were rife. And often grievances over lousy food, lousier captains, shore leave and wages developed into organised mutinies or strikes, usually armed.

**INTO THIS explosive situation came the news of the French Revolution. The demand for equality was heard from Paris to the London docks.**

Writers like Tom Payne, veteran of the earlier American revolution, addressed the British public with passionate treatises on "The Rights of Man". Mean-

while Mary Woolstonecraft, also inspired by the revolution, published her "Defence of the Rights of Women". It was a time of demands for social equality, and inevitably they spread to the ships.

Leech complained that the officers "do not treat with a sailor as a man." And a leaflet by mutineers of the Thames Fleet in 1797 raged against sailors being "the victims of tyranny and oppression which vile, guildd, pampered knives wallowing in the lap of luxury choose to load us with."

The Admiralty reacted harshly to mutinies. Skeletons of mutineers were hung in chains at the entrance to harbours. Yet successful mutinies spread by example, and mutineers pressed the demand for no vicissitudes.

The *Windsor Castle* mutinied in 1794, turning the ship's cannon on the marines, and won their demands including no vicissitudes. This precedent terrified the Admiralty. When the *Callidon* mutinied four weeks later they were promised their demands and no vicissitudes, but the officers reneged on their promises and five of the strike leaders were hanged.

**BRITISH sailors remembered this betrayal, and bore it in mind during the gigantic wave of mutinies in 1797.**

Soldiers and naval officers had been given a pay rise and the sailors, who had not had a rise for 150 years, were not to be left out.

The big Channel Fleet was strategically placed for strike action, as the navy was being reared for renewed war with France. Flying pickets roved from ship to ship. Ships' delegates formed a Fleet committee to run the strike, flying the red flag to call meetings.

Tens of thousands of sailors occupied the ships, blockaded London, and joined the monster demonstrations and riots on shore over wages, war taxes and the price of bread. When the strikers were considering an offer of a 20 per cent wage rise, but without an amnesty, Valentine Joyce (an Irish revolutionary and leader of the mutiny) reminded the delegates of the *Callidon*.

The strikers rejected the offer. Within 48 hours, an Act of Parliament had been passed guaranteeing amnesty. The strikers won all their demands, in the biggest workers' victory until the famous London dock strike of 1889.

Samuel Leech wrote that every sailor yearned for "liberty on the free hills of a happier clime". They fought heroically for it. And they were the first to fly the red flag. — Phil Shannon

**AT LAST** even the ACTU has noticed that there's a crisis in Australian trade unionism.

The membership figures are bad enough. In 1976, 51 per cent of workers were in unions. In 1982, after all Fraser's attacks, the figure was 49 per cent. Now, under Labor, the slide has accelerated rapidly: today, unionisation is estimated to be 42 per cent.

On top of that, among those who have stayed loyal there is widespread apathy and demoralisation.

Why has this happened? And more importantly, what can be done about it?

The trendy left of the labour bureaucracy has just produced a pamphlet dealing with these questions, called *Can Unions Survive?* Its author is Peter Berry, secretary of the Building Workers' Industrial Union in the ACT.

Berry argues that the main reason for the decline in membership is the explosion of new jobs in the private services sector, in areas like wholesale and retail trade. Jobs in these sectors are mainly white-collar, part-time or casual, and filled by women. They have always been poorly organised.

To overcome the problem, Berry suggests that unions should campaign around issues that are likely to appeal to these workers, like job permanency, superannuation, child care and so on. These are all sensible proposals, though it is disturbing that Berry doesn't mention equal pay.

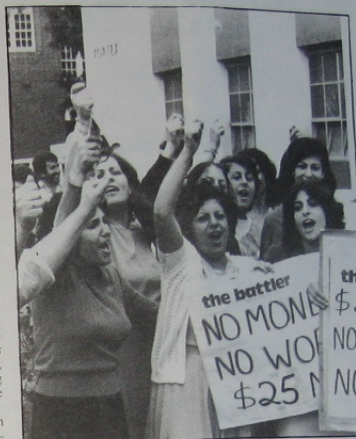
But if he has some good ideas about the issues, he doesn't deal with how we are going to campaign for these objectives. Employers don't hand over child care, permanency or better super out of the goodness of their hearts. As always, industrial action will be a necessary part of this fight.

**Yet Berry frowns on industrial action, and calls for the "minimisation" of the disruption that strikes cause. So the objectives he outlines for unions**

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Textile strikers on the picket line. Without this sort of action, workers start to lose interest in unions.

# How can our unions bounce back?

**to improve the position of women workers remain but empty words.**

Berry's problem is that he is bogged down in the logic of the ALP/ACTU Accord. He is bewildered by the fact that union membership has plummeted at the very time that the Accord is going strong. He seems unwilling or unable to comprehend that Thatcher has actually contributed to the drop in unionisation.

Workers join unions in order to defend their wages and conditions. The Accord has proved the arena where these issues are decided far away from the work place, and into the rarefied realms of the ACTU. Worse, it has locked the officials into implementing cuts to jobs, wages and conditions. It is hardly surprising that fewer workers now see any point in joining, or staying in, unions.

It doesn't have to be this way. The history of the labour movement in Australia and overseas has shown that workers join unions in large numbers precisely

when those unions are fighting to defend or improve wages and conditions.

The best recent example is in Britain, where unions have been in decline for most of the Thatcher period. One of the reasons (which Berry does not mention) is the capitulation of every Trade Union Congress to legislation piece of anti-union legislation that Thatcher has thrown at them, and its failure to support workers' struggles like the miners' strike.

1989 has seen a wave of strikes over pay that have smashed through 7 per cent pay awards. In the course of these struggles previously unorganised workers have rushed to sign up. **There is a lesson here for the Australian labour movement. The chances of Peter Berry grasping it are nil. But if other unionists take it seriously, Australian unions can survive.**

— John Pussant  
● *Can Unions Survive* is available from PO Box 490, Dickson, ACT 2602 for \$5.

## The Empire's flower power

**ON A recent visit to London I went to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.**

The Gardens, writes scientific historian Lucille Brockway, are "a delight to the senses and a stimulus to the mind." But she adds that if you don't go to the scientific laboratories you've missed what the gardens are about. Kew Gardens were part of the scientific arsenal of British imperialism.

Kew Gardens' research and practical activities — including plant smuggling — played a major part in the development of several highly profitable and strategically important plant-based industries in Britain's tropical colonies.

Kew had far-reaching effects on colonial expansion. The botanists could suggest where to find a plant that would fill a current demand, how to improve it through species selection and hybridisation, where to cultivate it in Britain's cheap labour colonies, and how to process the product for the world market.

For example, the Malaysian rubber plantations were made possible by the work botanists at Kew did on developing the seeds of wild rubber, stolen from Brazil.

The rubber industry was not only profitable, but also a vital strategic resource, for the industrial growth and political power of western imperialism. And the plantations made it possible for the British to divert some of India's "excess labour" (victims of the destruction of the peasant economy by the colonisers to Malaysia, as a safety valve against mass unrest).

Chichona, the Andean fever bark tree from which quinine was made, was similarly developed under Kew's leadership. The colonial penetration of Africa was only accomplished after a cheap and reliable anti-malaria drug was available, and quinine was imported on tropical imperialist wars during British colonial period, and its limit. In the course of these struggles previously unorganised workers have rushed to sign up.

**There is a lesson here for the Australian labour movement. The chances of Peter Berry grasping it are nil. But if other unionists take it seriously, Australian unions can survive.**

— Liz Ross  
● *Can Unions Survive* is available from PO Box 490, Dickson, ACT 2602 for \$5.



**H**OW apt that the eighties, the decade of the greed-heads, should end with the imminent collapse of Alan Bond, Christopher Skase and Bob Ansett, three men who personified its worst aspects.

Bob Ansett came here when Barry Goldwater lost in 1964 because he felt America had moved too far to the left. He raised self-aggrandisement through the media to an art form, pontificating endlessly on "the business view." He led the commercialization of sport in Victoria, even floating North Melbourne Football Club on the stock exchange to buy it more premierships.

Christopher Skase was Australia's No.1 yuppie, rising from financial journalist to media baron and redefining "conspicuous consumption" with parties that would make Imelda Marcos blush. He had a \$6 million yacht for entertaining, fitted with three kitchens, barbecue, 14th century antiques and getaway speedboats in case of pirate attack!

On moving his empire to Queensland, he threw a party to honour job, flying in hundreds of business mates, housing them at the Sheraton, chaffing them in a fleet of 40 Hols Royces, holding a banquet in a chilton tent complete with \$25,000 fireworks display, and sending them home with gifts worth over \$100 each.

To finance his lifestyle now that the media boom has gone bust, Skase has set aside \$42 million for the top four directors of Qintex, half for himself. He omitted to ask the shareholders about this, a fact which interests the National Companies and Securities Commission intensely.

But Alan Bond has been the biggest wipe-out. If the Aussie capitalist of the eighties had a role model, Bond was it. Yet as I write, his future is in the hands of his bankers.

**B**OTH Bond's rise and fall disprove every myth that capitalists spread about themselves.

General Pinochet's favourite Aussie has always claimed himself as proof that any battler can make it by hard work. But while Bond began as an apprentice



Skase: downwardly mobile



## Tough times for parasites

signwriter, there was no real work involved in making his fortune.

Far from being a battler, he went into land speculation while still a teenager and made his first million by age 21. An early deal took down three women who had inherited a large estate. Bond paid them \$3.4 million for it, with only \$700,000 up front. It was really worth \$4.6 million. Not much hard work needed there.

Capitalists say that they benefit the public through the taxes they pay. As "Four Corners" showed, Bond is a past master at avoiding tax. His Cook Island profit shifts let Bond Corp pay less than 9 cents in the dollar in 1986-87.

Indeed, Bond has siphoned considerable wealth out of the public purse. He profited handsomely from the corrupt land deals of the Victorian Hamer Government's Housing Commission.

In 1973 Bond bought the Delacombe estate in Ballarat for \$72,000. It was an old mullock heap with a mine shaft, totally unsuitable for housing. Bond spent \$509,000 flattening it and sold it to the Housing Commission for \$990,000, pocketing a \$408,000 windfall.

Bosses who do corrupt deals allegedly get punished. Yet when on his own TV network, Bond admitted paying \$400,000 to Joh Bjelke-Petersen in order to do business in Queensland, the Federal Court managed to get him off the hook. The real issue, which was not just what Bond said but the use of lavish out-of-court "libel settlements" to pay off politicians, was swept under the carpet. And



when Channel Ten went bust, Bond's backers suddenly saw that he was taking them down the gurgler with the fortune he'd paid for Channel Nine.

**M**EN like Bond cite this risk of ruin as the ultimate excuse for their wealth. But as Bond's fortunes plummet, we will now see his greatest talent, which is getting the rest of us to pay for his problems.

Back in his successful 1983 America's Cup campaign, his syndicate's \$3 million budget ran out after the challengers series. Rather than spend any more himself, Bond (who had put up just half and then hogged the publicity) launched a \$1 million public appeal "to buy new sails".

The donors weren't the only ones Bond screwed. Just before the campaign, the half-yearly profit of his Waltons retail chain fell to "only" \$1.4 million. Bond promptly sacked 700 Waltons workers.

"It was a great personal tragedy to me, as well as to them, that had to put them off," said Bond. So upset was he that he went out and bought a portrait of Captain Cook for his collection, paying a record \$506,000 for an Australian painting.

Even today, Bond expects workers to pay for his failures. His lawyers are trying to extract \$450 million from the WA government over the Kwinana petrochemical debacle.

For Bond, Skase and Ansett, "ruin" merely means retirement to the Gold Coast with the millions squirreled out of creditors' reach, at worst via a brief prison term in the Harry M. Miller luxury suite.

The rest of us are left to find new jobs and pay off the debts.

And despite the sacrifices that we have been forced to make so that such creeps can "restructure the economy", what is their collective legacy to society? A monopolistic press and breweries, luxury resorts for the rich and hire cars to get them there.

So much for the "free market". Now that the decade of the greed-heads is over, we would be mad to put up with it any longer.

When Channel Ten went bust, Bond's backers suddenly saw that he was taking them down the gurgler with the fortune he'd paid for Channel Nine.

# SOCIALIST ACTION



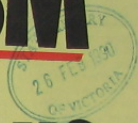
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## Apartheid's still there

IT WAS a thrill to see Nelson Mandela freed, but that is no justification for Bob Hawke's suggestion sanctions against the apartheid regime could be lifted.

The Labor government's policy has been to beat South Africa with a feather since it came to power. In fact, for all the sanctions, Australia's trade with South Africa has actually increased in the last few years.

Sanctions should be increased, not lifted, until all political prisoners in South Africa are free and apartheid is ended.

Pretoria's latest concessions are a response to economic crisis. Growth has become less than two percent annually for the last few years. International sanctions have cut the country off from some sources of investment, and it will have to pay off over \$10 billion in debt by 1992.

By releasing Nelson Mandela, and lifting the ban on the African National Congress, the white regime hopes to defuse



South African demonstrators: still a long way to go

black resistance. The plan is then to negotiate a constitutional settlement which leaves the basics of apartheid untouched.

Meanwhile the violence and repression continue. The State of Emergency remains in force. On the same week that president De Klerk announced his reforms, police attacked a peaceful demonstration, tearing gas the crowd and arresting 60.

The demand for one person one vote remains anathema to the government.

## SOCIALIST ACTION

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91 Cardigan St Carlton
- Sydney**  
Wednesdays 7.00  
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Bridge & George St City
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Star Room  
Morrison Civic, Civic

# Hawke and Peacock: birds of a feather

**IN THIS year's election** we'll be tossing up which political party we hate the most.

It's a tough choice because the policies are pretty much the same. Take the game of musical chairs over wage fixing. The Confederation of Australian Industry's Ian Spicer announced on 5 February that employers wanted the Government to continue with award restructuring, and endorsed the provisions for enterprise agreements provided in the current system.

Labor Party ministers seized on this as a crushing blow to the Liberals. Yet within days the employers had also endorsed the Labor policy. After all, it too contained provisions for enterprise agreements!

Both parties are for higher profits and for wage "restraint" and both are deterred by the unemployed to scramble for jobs.

What of the party leaders? A new Labor government will probably see Hawke pass the reins to the more ruthless Paul Keating. But then a Peacock government will be a prisoner of the more ruthless rightwingers like Charles Copeman and Ian McLachlan.



Bob Hawke: tops in hypocrisy stakes

**THEN THERE is** the hypocrisy stakes. Hawke recalls the "three Rs that I personally put into the thrust of the 1983 campaign: reconciliation, recovery and reconstruction."

Ask the Builders Labourers and the pilots about reconciliation. Ask the unemployed, or the homeowners paying 17 percent

mortgage rates, about recovery. And the main beneficiaries of "reconstruction" are the cynical speculators in the money and property markets.

When Neil Blewett says he won't lift the Medicare levy, this reminds us that the ALP made the same promise in 1984, only to boost it from 1 to 1.25 percent in 1986.

But what then of Andrew Peacock, posing as the champion of child care and the defender of the poor? While he rightly points to Hawke's business mates, Peacock is really full of it when he says: "I will come unanswering to any clique or group."

Peacock, like any Liberal leader, is answerable to the capitalist establishment. That's why he's talking about establishing a "super business department".

The other parties are not better. In a desperate attempt to survive after the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the National Party has hit on a novel strategy to win the seat of Mt Isa by appealing to

Labor's working class base — pointing out how Labor supported the bosses in the pilots' dispute! Does anybody believe the Nats have suddenly discovered the virtues of industrial action?

On the other hand, what an indictment of Labor! Mt Isa voters will have a dandy choice in front of them.

### MEANWHILE the Democrats' hopes are rising. In the recent Thomastown by-election, they came second because voters wanted to show their disgust with both major parties, and their resentment at the Cain government's transport cuts.

But while the Democrats opposed the cuts, they didn't support the striking tramway workers. And the flow of preferences shows an interesting pattern.

The size of the swing against the ALP means a large proportion of the Democrat votes came from disaffected Labor voters. These people then went one step further: they gave their second preference to the Liberals. In other words, much of the shift from Labor to the right.

While they are far from government, the Democrats sometimes put on a progressive face. But their original social base is middle class, and if it is to be forced by rightward moving de-



Andrew Peacock: full of it

factors from the ALP, the party will inevitably move rightward in its politics.

No nothing will be gained by voting for the Democrats.

Despite all their appalling behaviour we will be voting for the return of a Labor government, for two reasons.

The first is that having them in office allows us to prove in practice that the ALP is a party of capitalism.

If they return to opposition they will use the likes of Gerry Hand and John Halfpenny to give them a left face, and people will start to develop illusions in them again.

The second is that to some degree, the size of the Labor

vote is still a measure of the class awareness of Australian workers. In the absence of any credible left alternative, a fall in the Labor vote is an invitation to the openly reactionary forces in this country to do their worst.

**BUT THE key question** is not how we vote. Whether the relatively small number of people who read publications like Socialist Action vote ALP, or Democrat, or for some protest candidate will not affect the price of eggs.

What matters is where we put our energies. When Labor was in opposition, far too much of left activists' precious time went into working to elect the ALP. A lot of good it did us.

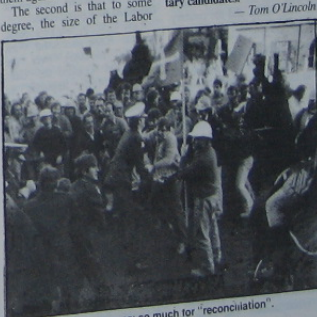
Nowadays much time and energy often goes into electoral protest campaigns, like tramway unionist Monica Harte's candidacy in Thomastown. In the middle of a major strike, this was a wasteful diversion of resources away from the industrial struggle.

No matter how the votes shape up on election night, our lives can only be improved in the long run by building the strength of the working class — and the organisation of oppressed people — on the ground.

That means strengthening your union on the job, building community struggles, and arguing for others to do the same.

In the long run, we can only change this society by building a movement that fights for power outside parliament. To this end, every socialist magazine or newspaper sold is incomparably more important than any number of votes for parliamentary candidates.

— Tom O'Lincoln



BLF members battle cops: so much for "reconciliation".

# Out of the frying pan . . . now the fire

FROM BERLIN to Bucharest, the last few months of 1989 transformed the face of Eastern Europe.

Brushing aside politicians and generals, millions of people have pushed their way onto the political stage demanding — and winning — democratic reform.

One after the other the Eastern European dictatorships have cracked under the pressure. First Poland, then East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Rumania. Even Bulgaria's ruling bureaucrats, who tried to ride out the storm by making concessions early on, are having a hard time.

This revolution has been brewing for some time. Most immediately the events of late 1989 have their roots in the working class upsurge in Poland in the previous year. In May and August 1988 workers struck back against the attacks of the government, demanding better pay and conditions and the legalisation of the Solidarity trade union.

These actions convinced the more intelligent sections of the Polish ruling class that half measures would no longer do. The choice was either full-scale bloody repression or a new tack: drawing Solidarity and its working class base into co-operation with the government and its project of restructuring the Polish economy.

In January 1989 General Jaruzelski convinced the Central Committee to open negotiations with Solidarity, and as a result Solidarity won legality, the rigid controls over social and political life were ended and the country moved to semi-free elections.

## FOR THE Communist Party the elections were a disaster.

In many cases it was unable to get itself elected even to seats that were uncontested. A sharp political crisis followed and in August a Solidarity member was sworn in as Eastern Europe's first non-Communist prime minister in forty years.

In the rest of the bloc the effect was electric.

Those governments that had already begun a political and economic reform program accelerated the pace. In Hungary, the ruling party threw open the political floodgates by legalising opposition parties and independent trade unions. The right to



Invading secret police headquarters in East Germany

publish, demonstrate and strike, strengthened the opposition many fold.

The party threw out its name, its constitution, its leaders and set out on the road to West European-style reformism.

In the less liberal countries, dissidents outside the communist parties drew heart from these events. More and more the tiny bands of academics and artists who had soldiered on through the seventies and eighties found themselves with an audience, and were able to organise demonstrations and protests of a size that only months before they could only have dreamed of.

**I**N EAST Berlin, the Honecker dictatorship tried to hold the line. Although its economy was in deep trouble, the regime was afraid to reform because it feared its own population.

East German workers could see the more successful West German economy over the border and regarded the "German Democratic Republic" as an artificial state.

Similarly, the Czech regime feared its people because it was viewed by them as a puppet of the Russians, imposed by Soviet tanks in 1968.

These two governments tried to buy the passivity of the population by subsidising living standards with borrowed money. Yet in the end the tide of change still engulfed them.

After Hungary opened its borders with West Germany, allowing thousands of East Germans to flee across, the pressure for change became uncontrollable. In every major city in East

Germany, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia millions of protesters marched for weeks on end. The regimes fell like dominoes.

Reformers from within the ruling party took over in Berlin. In Prague they moved too slowly and by year's end a non-Communist president was in power. In January the party's power was eroded further as the prime minister and some of his leading colleagues in the Cabinet quit the party.

In Rumania, where the vile dictator Ceausescu had his own reasons to fear the people, an uprising among the oppressed ethnic Hungarian minority sparked mass struggles that forced the army and most of the ruling party and the army to turn against their leader.

**T**HE RULING classes in these countries are now desperately trying to keep ahead of



Bulgarian demonstrator hails the new freedom

the mass movement. They are allowing the link between party and state to be severed, in the hope that the party can be made the scapegoat while the state survives.

For while the East European masses have won democratic rights, the police and army are intact. The courts, the bureaucracy, even the old hand-picked parliaments remain untouched in many places. In the factories the old managers rule as before.

And many of the ideas of the old ruling class are as strong as ever. The priority of economic development over the needs of the people, the belief for purely national solutions, the purity that all citizens have a common interest in these things — these ideas persist.

Now, however, the market is being held up as the way to achieve them. The mass rallies last year did not chant demands for market mechanisms. But without exception the regimes are now pushing for them, in the hope that the democratic revolution can be deflected while the ruling bureaucrats form partnerships with western capital to exploit the workers in new ways.

Whether they can succeed will depend on the battle of class forces.

**T**HE WORKING class has provided the shock troops of the revolution. In Rumania this was clearest, with workers taking up arms and occupying factories. In other countries they made up the mass of the huge demonstrations and held occasional political strikes.

The struggle for democratic rights, and the freedom that has been won, represents a chance for the working classes of Eastern Europe to organise independent unions, to shift the balance in economic decision-making towards improving living standards and to emerge as an independent political force.

The workers of Eastern Europe have proved time and again that they know how to fight. The great strikes in East Germany in 1953, the Hungarian revolt of 1956, the mass reform movements in Poland in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 were all led or supported by the working class. The defeat of the stalinist regime in Poland was a triumph for independent workers' organisation.

And in 1989 the democratic mass movement would not have existed, much less triumphed without the working class.

The ruling bureaucracy for its part has splintered in the face of economic and political crisis.

While there is widespread agreement that the stagnation and decay of the past twenty years must end, this is by no means universal.

**H**ARDLINERS at the top have fought the reformers all along the line and are continuing to do so, most dramatically in Bulgaria where they are whipping up a racist campaign against the Turkish population, and in Rumania where the old CP is using its base in the factories to defend the National Salvation Front against popular hostility.



Cops grab a demonstrator: many of the old power structures are intact



By and large these conservative forces represent those sections of the bureaucracy which will perish if the reformers get their way. They range from planning bodies through the secret police, to the backward industries which will go to the wall if faced with market competition.

The reformers generally are tied to those sections of the economy which are being held back by state planning and want to throw off the fetters. Unlike the conservatives, who are desperately trying to stave off change, the reformers see it as inevitable and are desperately racing to keep control of it.

Between the two main social classes — workers and bureaucrats — stand the middle classes. These are a patchwork of different groupings.

There are the intellectuals — academics, artists, writers, professionals — who cry out for the

will go. Market mechanisms will put every productive unit under constant pressure.

Inevitably, workers will resist. Already in Poland strikes by miners against the Solidarity government give a hint of what is to come. In Bulgaria, bus workers have struck and won major pay rises. In East Germany political "warning strikes" against the regime's slow pace of reform are becoming tangled up with strikes over wages and conditions.

**P**O TENTIALLY, these class struggles could begin to point toward a genuine socialist solution to the crisis.

Workers who despise the ruling bureaucrats, yet fear the pressures of the free market, are certainly open to ideas of a "third way" that would avoid the exploitative features of both.

It is not socialism that has failed in Eastern Europe, but capitalism. What exists there is a peculiar form of capitalism, in which the state bureaucracy has replaced the private property owning bourgeoisie, but it is still a society where workers trade their labour for wages, and where they are exploited.

The socialism that Marx and Lenin fought for was to be based on the priority of human needs over all other factors in social, economic and political life. For socialists, the profitability of enterprises is far less important than whether they are producing goods and services that people want or need.

Socialist society must therefore be profoundly democratic, not only in politics but in the economy, so that the mass of people can express, debate and decide upon their priorities.

How far all this is from the reality of Eastern Europe! Here the parasitic ruling class, backed by its army and bureaucracy, has its goal higher than the ever-greater accumulation of factory-greater accumulation of factories and mines and other means by which labour can be put to work to create a surplus.

But of course this is not how most people see it, either in the west or in Eastern Europe. The belief that the old stalinist regime was "socialist" is too pervasive. While there are genuine socialist organisations in Poland, East Germany, the Soviet Union and Hungary they are small and often confused.

For that reason a new struggle is needed in Eastern Europe, the struggle to build a genuine socialist movement on the ruins of the old stalinist "Communism".

— Graham Willett

# Hopes for change are on the

## Wayne

**M**ANY OF us have had letters from our friends down south over the last couple of months saying: what's it like living in a socialist state? Most are joking.

The answer is, it's not much different. Sure, the atmosphere has changed but the substance of capitalist politics endures. And compared to the expectations even many people on the far left had, Labor has been downright timid where it has acted at all.

They now say they were elected simply on a platform of "eliminating corruption" and not initiating rapid or radical change. This allows them to justify backing away from the repeal of Essential Services Legislation, which the National Party brought in to stifle strikes in 1981.

Unfortunately Goss is aided here by the Cooke Inquiry into unions, which was set up earlier by the Nats and which is turning up a few rather sordid ripoffs by officials. The corruption among labor bureaucrats makes it harder to defend trade unionism.

But the ALP's backoffs on strike legislation are part of a pattern. Take gay rights. Before the election, Labor's policy was to legalise homosexual relationships between consenting adults in private. But under pressure from the Nationals, they retreated to saying that they would hold an enquiry into possible changes.

Similarly, ALP policy is supposed to favour decriminalisation of abortion. But Wayne Goss recently told a meeting of Labor women that his private position was to oppose it. So we can expect the notorious Conscience Vote to rear its ugly head.

**D**ESPITE their image of favouring prison reform, the Labor leaders have said there will be no condoms or exchange needles in the prisons. And they are in doubt about whether the privatised Boronia Prison branch of the Nationals and the Corrective Services Corporation should become a state prison.

They have even come up with a proposal for a kind of leper colony in the jails for people

with AIDS, child molesters, etc where they can be kept away from anyone they might "corrupt".

Underlying the reactionary attitudes on social issues is the fact that Labor governments have an essentially positive relationship with the capitalists and their system. Certainly the Goss government won't have a dramatically different attitude to business than the Nats. As Treasurer Keith De Lacy put in on 14 December:

*"Some sections of the labour movement expected the Labor Party to tax business in order to redistribute wealth. We see our role as clearing the way for the private sector to create that wealth. Profit is not a dirty word."*

Along with Goss, De Lacy believes that: "If you don't know who to back, back self-interest, because you know it is always trying."

With friends like these, do workers need enemies?

**S**TILL, employers are usually nervous about new Labor governments. But with the gross excesses of the Nationals being exposed by the Fitzgerald Inquiry, and the hopeless witness of the Liberals, they didn't have much alternative by the time of the election. Even the *Courier Mail* came out for a Labor victory.

Since then, the ALP's performance on the issue of Special Branch files has served to remove any remaining doubts amongst the establishment.

The new Police Commissioner and the new Criminal Justice Commission head were both National Party appointees. After the election, there seemed to be no question of their appointments not continuing, though



Goss can kiss babies with the best of them, but will he change Queensland for the better?

many other public service heads were sacked.

There is a reason. While Terry Mackenroth has dissolved the Special Branch, it's clear that Labor still wants to maintain surveillance of activists through their new "Clayton's" special branch, Criminal Investigations.

Mackenroth made election promises about "open and accountable" government, but the issue of Special Branch files has shown just how hollow this promise is.

### THE ISSUE of the files arose well before the election.

After a demonstration about the issue, we met with one unfortunately named Inspector Buckley. We found out that there were 30,000 files, one for every 100 Queenslanders. Supposedly half of these were still in existence, but there would only be 2000 left by the time of the election.

So we launched a campaign to demand that the files be preserved, and for the right to see them. 156 activists issued writs against the Police Commissioner. An orgy of shredding ensued, with 8500 paper files supposedly going in one hit.

**PITY the Queensland coppers. After Fitzgerald left their reputation in tatters, they've resorted to sad songs. Constables Mark Gliori and Shane Mallory are recording a rock and roll track called "Faded Suits of Blue" in which they sing that they're "reaching out for reasons that would warrant being proud". Try quitting the force, boys.**

We wanted the files preserved as evidence of the highly politicised use of the police force. But Terry Mackenroth's only concern was whether they had really been destroyed.

As the campaign grew, and the files turned into an election issue, Labor decided they couldn't ignore the problem. Instead, Wayne Goss told a Press Club luncheon that people were "entitled to know what was recorded on them, and if they were disadvantaged in any way, particularly in their careers."

Fine words. But since the election, only one of the 156 people who put in writs has been offered a look at their file. On this issue as on so many others, we will have to fight the new Labor regime just as hard as we fought old Joh.

— Carolle Ferrier



Strikers on the picket line and in the streets.

# How a tram strike got derailed

**THE TRAMS** that stood for a month in Melbourne's streets as a monument to a union's defiant defence of jobs are moving once again.

The new MetTicket system is in place. Some trams already have no conductors, and the way is clear to getting rid of them altogether.

It is a tragic end to a magnificent struggle, but we can learn from the experience. At the root of the dispute was Labor's determination to cut staffing of public transport. Productivity is increasing throughout the economy, so the argument goes, and it must also increase in transport.

You might think increased productivity overall should mean services like conductors on public transport. But capitalism doesn't work like that — the aim is profit, not people's needs.

Struggles like the trammies' represent a partial challenge to this capitalist logic. They offer a chance for workers to begin to feel the power they have to change society, and to run it so that human need comes before productivity gains or political careers.

**THE WORKERS** made the depots a base for organising. At some they continued to keep management out.

Left activists set up passenger support groups and assisted in fundraising and providing food. The trammies welcomed their help and, short of giving them a

vote, let them participate fully in meetings, planning strategies and actions.

After such a good start, why did they lose? A lot of the blame lies with the politics of the union's leaders and many members, who focused on public opinion as the key to winning.

From the time of the first announcement that the MetTicket was on the way, they opposed transport stoppages on the grounds that they would get the public offside without really hurting the government.

In fact, the shutdown of the tram system did more to hurt the government than public opinion ever could.

As Robert Haupt wrote in the *Age*, "State governments are essentially managers" for the bosses and "with every tramless day these elections are looking up with 'peace plans' which give away the essential demand to retain conductors on all trams."

This inspiring example of workers' control in action lasted only a day, before Transport Minister Kennan cut the power. But trammies got wind this beforehand, and drove as many trams as they could into city centre before he turned the switch.

But the government and the ruling class could live with the train system out of action, so long as buses and trams were still running. So to force the go-slow to its knees, it was essential to their transport essential to strike in solidarity.

Government bus drivers, up part of the trammies' union, had already stopped work on

January 1. Many of them were reluctant to lose pay for this dispute, having lost their own conductors in previous years.

Nonetheless they had an interest in helping the tramway workers, as a victory for the government could only make it more confident in attacking all transport workers. But the officials made no attempt to convince them to stay out, and they returned to work early in the dispute.

Without a strategy for taking the dispute forward on the ground, the emphasis naturally turned to the negotiations between the union and Kennan.

John Halfpeny and other Trades Hall and ALP bureaucrats, who have long made a career of trying to settle disputes for the workers, spent their time coming up with "peace plans" which gave away the essential demand to retain conductors on all trams.

**D**IGREGORIO and his team were under pressure from them on the one hand to accept these plans, and from the members on the other to stick to the original position.

On 19 January, a mass meeting overwhelmingly rejected Trades Hall's proposals and voted to continue the fight. Premier Cain probably thought this resolve with outrageous part-time made to introduce part-time and contract workers, eliminate all

continued on page 8

### Don't mansion it

WHAT'S wrong with this county? Why can't we support our troubled entrepreneurs in the style to which they've become accustomed?

First, poor Laurie Connell had to sell his palace on the Swan River for a meagre \$9 million after demolishing six waterfront properties to build it. Then Pat Burke of Hartigan Energy had to unload his North Shore estate with its garage for 22 cars.

Christopher Skase almost gave his Hamilton mansion away for \$5 million and is slumming it in a luxury villa at the Mirage resort (where else?) Now Eileen Bond's modest 36-bedroom dream home at Gladstone's Harbour in Sydney Harbour is on the market for \$6 million.



At least failed Hooker boss George Herscu won't be sleeping on park benches. No, he hasn't moved into a Hooker home. Herscu couldn't shift his mansion Tara to his wife's name (since FAI also sued her), so he simply sold it to good buddy Dickie Dorr of Visyboard in return for lifetime tenure at a peppercorn rent. What are friends for if not to help you cheat your creditors?

### Missed their que

TO MAKE newly independent Namibia a little less independent, South Africa got 10,000 whites to register for the elections over the border.

But the South Africans plans to blend in with the rest of the voters at the polls went haywire. They gave themselves away when they demanded the formation of a whites only queue!

### Silly bugger

ALAN Bond's botched bawdropping on his opponents is now before the courts, but one question keeps bugging us (sorry). How can he spend two years running the Chilean Telephone Corporation, and still not know how to do it right?

### Cleaning up

LATEST loopy business lard in the States is the "Clutter Buster" or "desk organiser". Companies are paying up to \$1250 for four hours for an efficiency expert to tell executives how to clean up their desks!

"I can transform a desk which looks like a toxic waste dump into one that resembles the flight deck of an aircraft carrier," boasts one such expert, Jeffrey Mayer, who has actually written a book on the subject. "All we are left with is a telephone, a pad of paper and a very efficient workspace."

Business is booming for this new breed of expert. The National Association of Professional Organisers now has 300 members instructing US bosses in the obvious.

### Tasteless

BRITAIN'S Sunday Correspondent reports a dinner attended by Saleway's chief meat-buyer, at which chicken was served "I certainly hope it's not one of yours," teased a guest. "I, of course, have absolutely no taste."

"That's a positive decision on our part," replied the Saleway man. "The public wouldn't like the taste of chicken."

### Copping out

WHENEVER the police demand more recruits, we recall ex-London top cop Robert Mark's saying that a good police force is one that catches more criminals than it employs.

We also recall that in 1986 NSW had 98 murders, while 247 people died from industrial accidents, and diseases.

Yet NSW police out-purchase more factory inspectors by at least 100 to one. Is this because workers' lives are less important than anyone else's? Or do we need all those extra cops just to keep an eye on each other?



### Hustling slowly

TAKE note, all those government smarties who want to run down public transport. A study of central London's traffic has found that it now moves at just 8 miles per hour, 1.5 mph slower than in 1986.

In another six years traffic speed will be down to that of the horse and buggy back in 1912.



## CHEAP SHOTS

### Gory Tory

BRITAIN'S Tory Graduates Association has produced a charming calendar for 1990 with dates for the hip young conservative to celebrate.

The date that the Tolidude Martyrs were sentenced for organising the union, March 19, is listed. So is the day that anti-Nazi demonstrator Blair Peach was killed by police in London, and the day that France sunk the

### Rainbow Warrior

It's an amusing calendar for Conservatives who are fairly sound, says the president of the graduates' association.

### Public gets the flick

REMEMBER the Hoyts strike last year? And how the company said its new work practices would keep admission prices down?



The strike was lost, and so, it seems, were Hoyts promises. Just before Christmas it put up ticket prices another 7 percent.

Maybe Hoyts needs the money to pay the security guards it hired for the strike. Or maybe it's for the \$1.6 million "management fees" Hoyts has shelled out to a company owned by its four directors.

### May we quote you?

"THEIR Christmas bonus is still being employed here in January."

— *Omni Advertising boss Simon Reynolds*

"IT is not in the interests of the United States to set instability in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union."

— *US Secretary of state James Baker*

"THE list of children enrolled here is classified."

— *Clare Taylor, founder of the CIA's day care centre*

"BUOYED by an unexpected increase in unemployment for September and a sharp decline in factory jobs, bluechip stocks rose to another record."

— *New York Times*

"THE loss of life will be irreplaceable."

— *Vice-President Dan Quayle on the San Francisco earthquake*

### FROM PAGE 7

conductors immediately, and end promotion by seniority.

But there was constant pressure on the executive to do a deal, and it wasn't long before they began to argue that nothing else was possible. Meanwhile the rank and file was feeling the pinch of weeks without pay.

Members occupying the depot felt the need to take the dispute forward, and became more open to the idea of spreading the action. On 29 January they set up a wildcat picket at North Fitzroy bus depot, with another one at Footscray the following day. Unfortunately, while bus drivers respected the pickets, they wouldn't stop work indefinitely.

The media, the government and the public were all in one. — *SOB* — SOCIALIST ACTION

and the union leaders used these actions as a chance to slander the minority who still wanted to fight. Public Transport Corporation bosses produced metal spikes they claimed the militants had placed under bus tyres, while Di Gregorio denounced picketers as "ratbags" who had been "brainwashed" by socialist activists.

This does not mean the picketers were a mistake. They offered the only alternative to the officials. But with a sellout being stitched up and another mass meeting looming, top priority for the militants was to reach other members and to convince them it was worth staying out and spreading the action.

So when the militants held a third picket at the Jolimont rail-

yards, it was probably a mistake in use of limited resources.

In any case, the argument to stay out was lost at the mass meeting and the officials' agreement to go back to work won the day.

It is not lost even now. People with disabilities are continuing to fight in the courts against the discriminatory MerTicket system, though past experience shows we cannot place much faith in the courts to protect us in the long run. And although it's poor consolation, the trammies at least have pay rises to show for their trouble.



Demonstrating solidarity

Skirmishing continues, with Brunswick Depot workers voting to work to rule, and to respect any pickets set up by rail workers when the cuts hit them. And many workers will have learnt lessons about the need for rank and file organising and solidarity, which can stand us all in good stead.

— *Robert Stainsby*

## FEATURE

# How can we save the planet?

Liz Ross outlines the socialist point of view

ONE OF my fellow workers who's active around environmental issues shrugged his shoulders in despair.

"We've known how to run cars on far less petrol for years. And what have we done about it? Nothing. Instead in only 90 years we've used up about 75 per cent of the world's oil resources. Sure we come up with the bright ideas to save the environment, but we don't use them."

It's not hard to be pessimistic about people and the environment. The whole planet is threatened by nuclear war, pollution, the greenhouse effect, depletion of the ozone layer and other results of human activity. Environmental activist Helen Caldicott seems to have a point when she describes the human race as "a plague upon the planet".

On the other hand, as the campaigns around environmental issues here and overseas show, thousands of people are prepared to take militant action to protect the world against wholesale destruction.

In the 70's we had the BLF green bans, and marches and union bans against uranium. All round Europe today there are demonstrations against pollution. In Australia militant activists have confronted the logging companies with occupations and barricades. Tribal communities from Papua New Guinea and Malaysia to the Americas have taken on the mighty multinationals to protect their forests and livelihood.

The green movement is right to see people's action as the first step towards changing the world. They're also spot on when they say that there has to be a fundamental rethinking about the way society is run. But they tend to blame "industrialism", overpopulation, and high living standards—the "consumer society"—for the world's environmental plight.

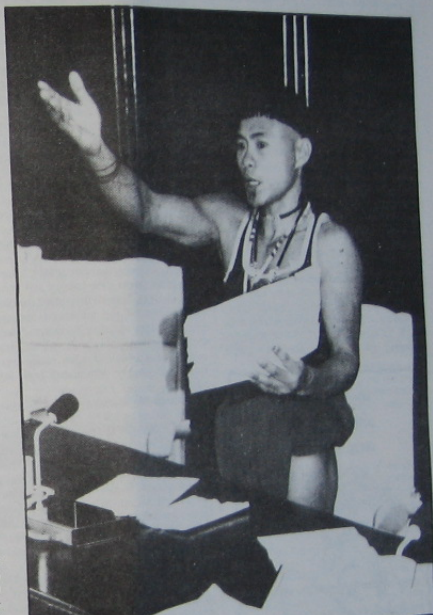
Because they don't see the problem as capitalism, the system in which profit rather than human need determines what is produced, their solutions often stop far short of what is needed for permanent change and could actually work against it.

**THEIR DO seem to be grounds for blaming industry as just for fouling up the environment. Just go smack any industrial region and you can see the smoke belching into the air.**

In Melbourne's western suburbs residents have become so concerned about the frequent chemical spills and stinking air that they've formed their own action group to take on the companies.

And close to the central business district in Melbourne, BP so polluted one block of land that they were forced to spend thousands of dollars cleaning it up before they could sell it.

It's not just the West. At Chernobyl in the USSR, a single accident led to waves of radio-



A rainforest dweller speaks out in Malaysia. His fight is also ours.

A rainforest dweller speaks out in Malaysia. His fight is also ours. harnessed the limitless supply of pollution-free solar and wind energy to run our factories.

Scientists are working now on micro machinery that fits on a pin head, runs on incredibly small amounts of energy, and could use any surrounding atoms as their raw material. Developments such as these can make the whole issue of resource and energy shortage a thing of the past.

This proposed solution of modern technology, such as increased food production, medical advances, better education and transportation. Advances like these have given us the potential to reduce these: have the time people need to work, to gain a living, to enjoy life and not just earn a free living. Do we really want to throw that away?

To begin with, it ignores ways in which modern technology can help solve environmental problems. Technology could help us

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## FEATURE

**O**F COURSE, not all technological developments can be useful or safe. Just think of most pesticides, or nuclear reactors. But modern societies use harmful technologies like these because decisions are taken on the basis of capitalist competition, not human need.

Mars commented that capitalism represents "accumulation for its own sake". The humble light bulb is a classic example -- the original one is still working! But companies can't make a profit out of something that lasts for ever. So they make light bulbs that wear out, and you have to keep buying more. Resources are wasted on advertising and armaments, but technically feasible pollution controls aren't used, because the latter would eat into profits while the former help increase them.

By picking and choosing from current technology we could have safe, environmentally sound production. In a society where the majority decide what is needed, helpful and ecologically sustainable technology would become the norm.

A return to small-scale production would do nothing to take us toward such a society. Competition would remain the motor of the system. Small business would become bigger or go bust, and we'd end up back where we started.

Another major argument of the greens is that the world is headed for disaster because of over population and over consumption. These represent two sides of the same argument. They are based on the idea that we have fixed resources which limit the amount available to each individual. Over population theories conclude that we need fewer people,

while over consumptionists argue for each person to consume less.

According to the over population theories the world will simply run out of food and space before too long. Already things are grim. Just look at the starvation in Ethiopia, or the "teeming millions" in India. If they keep reproducing at their current rate, so the argument goes, we'll be standing shoulder to shoulder in no time at all.

**T**HE IDEA that over population causes crises, and that a reduction in population can establish an equilibrium, is not new.

Thomas Malthus raised it in 1798, saying that since large numbers of people meant disaster, the largest group in society had to have its population controlled. So Malthus argued workers' living conditions should be kept low to keep their numbers down.

Such ideas are essentially reactionary. They have led writers like Paul Ehrlich to argue against sending food aid for the starving in countries where food production is low and population high. Other writers have suggested that we should welcome the spread of AIDS as a natural means of population control. Not unexpectedly, some oppose immigration, wanting to keep "their" country free from the "population bomb".

Over consumption theories at least have the virtue of not blaming the hungry and poor in Asia and Africa. Instead they place the blame on all people of the advanced industrial countries. Their solution is encapsulated in the catchcry, "live simply so that all may simply live". But a look at what really causes famine and poverty demolishes both arguments.

All through human history, societies' ability to feed their populations have been determined by two things: the methods available to produce the food, and the way the society was organised to produce and distribute it.

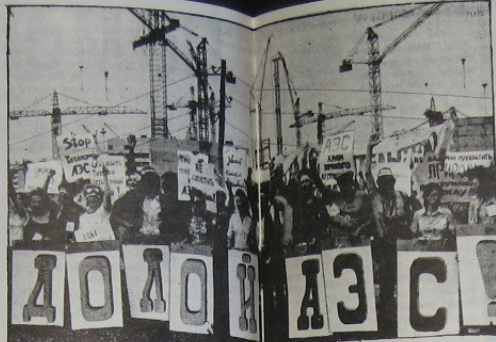
Capitalism brought about a truly revolutionary change to the feudal society it overthrew. For the first time in history the productive forces were there that could provide enough food and shelter for all. And right now there is enough food to feed everyone, without ploughing one more hectare of land.

But in Poland people go hungry because, although the country grows enough food for all, the farmers can't store it and it rots before it gets to the shops. While Polish industrial workers, the surrounding EEC countries are dumping 500 oranges every minute, Poles are now being told that their living standards will have to drop even further, so that state and private enterprise can become profitable.

India produced more grain than it could sell profitably on the world market in 1987. But instead of feeding its 300 million starving poor, the government paid \$360 million to store the grain. Then because the country had "too much" grain, the peasants couldn't sell what they produced, went broke and starved just like the poor anywhere. They couldn't afford to buy the food they produced, not because of a food shortage, but because there was "too much"!

**S**O IT'S not the case that there are too many people and not enough food. Or that the solution is to live very simply.

There's nothing simpler in living style than being homeless and hungry. These examples show that the cause of poverty and starvation



Soviet protest against nuclear energy

is the irrationality of the capitalist system, not some fundamental "limits to growth".

A society run for human needs could feed everyone tomorrow, with food that already exists. And if we stopped spending money on waste like arms and advertising (estimated to comprise 60 per cent of all production), the entire population could be housed and fed with plenty left over, even without new developments in productivity.

To get to such a society, however, we need to get rid of the system we have. Socialists argue that only the working class has the power to do this. Workers actually produce the goods that provide the ruling class's profits. And they can organise collectively where they perform that production. As a result they hold the key both to hitting profits and turning production over to human needs. It is true that we sometimes see unions arguing for ecological disasters like the Wesley Vale pulp mill. This has led some environmentalists to believe that workers have an economic interest in environmental destruction.

But actually the strongest union stands in defense of the environment -- like the BLE's green bans or the closure of a polluting aluminium smelter in Poland while Solidarity was flourishing -- have occurred when they been at their most militant in "economic struggles".

That is because victories in the economic sphere make them feel strong and confident, which in turn makes them more willing to think about creating a better world to live in. But the greens tend not to distinguish between the various classes in the society. As a result, ordinary workers -- the only people who can actually win an environmental case world-wide -- often become their target, while they side in effect with attacks on workers by the ruling class that got us into this mess in the first place.

For example, over consumptionists reason that while everyone should consume less, there are only a few thousand rich people. So they attack workers fighting for increased wages and living conditions.

The German greens were approached in the mid 1980s by the metalworkers' union for support in their campaign for the 35 hour week. Some agreed, but many insisted that they could only give their backing if the

shorter week was accompanied by a cut in pay, which they considered to be an ecological necessity.

**B**LAMING industry as such, rather than capitalist industry, has also led the green movement to pit itself against the unions, forming alliances with the most narrow small business interests. The Tasmanian greens argue that large destructive companies have been shedding labour and are "automating people out of work". Small business, they say, creates more jobs and should be encouraged.

But small business is much more likely to mean non-union "business. And non-union workplaces have a truly shocking history of unsafe working conditions, coupled with disregard for the rest of the environment. So while they argue for radical change, many greens pit themselves against the workers who can win it. Many see parliament, rather than workers' action, as an option for reform.

Parliaments around the world have indeed legislated for change, and many political parties go into office with grand programs for reform. The ALP went into government with an anti-union policy, determined by members of the party and supported by the mass of the Australian population. And the Tasmanian greens forced an Accord between themselves and the ALP to save the environment.

But look at what happened to ALP policy on uranium. Without miners refusing to mine the



Uranium piles up on the Darwin docks in 1982 as wharfies picket: workers have the power to save the environment.

## 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 linker 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 through to other countries or it will fail. For these to other countries we are for building a worldwide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against others. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

#### 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. 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 not. In the unions, social movements and wherever people are fighting for a better world, socialists are the thick of the fight. If that's where you want to be, join us today!

While Bob ponders whether he will make it through another round...

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## WOMEN'S LIBERATION

### It was a striking new insight.

There is no private domain of a person's life that is not political and there is no political issue that is not ultimately personal. This idea — commonly shortened to "the personal is political" — was a basic argument of the early Women's Liberation Movement.

The movement had grown up in the USA out of the New Left and white involvement in the black civil rights movement. Ideas of egalitarianism and freedom of the personal nature of political action were widespread. Women applied them to their own conditions, and gained an insight which challenged both mainstream ideas and the traditional left.

The slogan had great mobilising potential because it argued against individual solutions. If your apparently personal problems are ultimately political, then social change is needed for any permanent solution. It also argued that apparently personal problems ultimately affect us all. Capitalism encourages us to see our personal lives as separate from public events.

In pre-capitalist societies, when production was based on peasant agriculture, there was no distinction between home and work. There was division of labour between the sexes, but the work that women did was seen as productive.

With the industrial revolution this all changed. People went out to work and events in the home came to be regarded as private, concerning only family members. Since the female role is tied up with the family, many issues concerning women appeared as individual problems.

**THE WOMEN'S Liberation Movement helped us to see that problems of sexuality, housework, or childcare really are social.**



Fighting cops: struggle politicises personal life



A 1913 advertisement: society divides work and "private life", and women suffer the consequences

## When the personal is really political

Even outside the home, capitalism emphasises individualism because it is a system based on competition. This is quite useful for apologists trying to justify society as it is. For example, it allows them to blame the victim: if you can't get a job it must be because you didn't dress right, not because there aren't enough jobs to go around.

But if the slogan "the personal is political" presented a radical challenge to capitalist ideas, it also challenged the traditions of the old left.

The Communist Party did pay attention to women's issues such as abortion and equal pay. But the practice of male party members was often very sexist. For example a woman who came to a CP meeting in Sydney in the 1940's was most impressed, and said she thought her husband ought to be a member. It turned out he was, but had

never told her!

The CP was like this because its idea of "socialism" meant subordination of the needs and rights of the individual to the interests of the state. During the Soviet industrialisation drive of the 1930s, this idea was used to justify immense suffering and sacrifice.

**WITH STATE control dominating the left's conception of socialism, questions of personal liberation were often ridiculed. So the slogan "the personal is political" was important in pointing to a conception of socialism based on human needs.**

Today many ideas of the Women's Liberation Movement are widely accepted, including "the personal is political". But this slogan has lost its radical cutting edge. Once a call to political action, it has become lar-

gely a justification for personalised activity.

Take the issue of violence. Many activists concentrate on the need to help victims, on rape crisis centres and so on. While these are necessary they do nothing about the social causes of violence. All too often the focus on individual victims leads to calls for more police. The problem is that increased policing can lead to more violence.

The social dimension has been lost in other ways. The work oppression has lost much of its political content, and often simply means the way individuals behave.

We should not be surprised. For the career oriented professional women who tend to set the tone of today's feminism, looking at issues individually makes sense. Middle class "feminists" are mainly concerned with obstacles to their own advancement, even when they seem to be looking at the wider picture.

**FOR INSTANCE "affirmative action" the idea that employers should compensate for past discrimination, seems to be a social strategy.**

But the result is affirmative action programs, apart from a lot of rhetoric, is a small number of women with careers as bosses. So, although it appears to be social, it has a strong individual dimension.

So what should our attitude be? First, we are for a society which does take individual needs and aspirations into account, not the soulless world of "state socialism".

The early movement was right to say that many apparently personal issues are political. For example sexual repression may be the result of conditioning, with girls being brought up to believe that sexual assertiveness is not "feminine".

But this doesn't mean that everything an individual does is equally political. To have an effect on the world, activity needs to be collectively organised and directed towards political goals. Participating in a movement to demand government provision of child care will be more effective in the long run than simply setting up your own centre.

Finally, personal behaviour does matter, and socialists have to avoid sexist behaviour. But we can't create the socialist individual in a capitalist world.

**In behaving in a non-sexist manner we are not pre-figuring a future world, but building a more effective movement today, for sexism is an obstacle to the struggle.**

— Janey Stone

## PERSPECTIVES

This article summarises a discussion at our recent conference.

# Taking a hard look at today's world

**THE MIDDLE and late 1980s saw sustained economic growth around the world.**

This growth phase had two parts. An initial recovery from a 1982 recession was followed by a sharp slowdown in 1986. After that, business investment in the major countries jumped in 1987 and 1988.

The strength of capitalism in recent years is probably due to a sustained revival in profit rates. This revival began after the 1982 recession, which wiped out inefficient capitals and disciplined the organised working class. But because the rate of profit had to revive from a disastrous low, it was not until 1987 that increased profitability led to important new investments.

Governments have so far successfully coped with the balance of trade problems between the USA and its rivals, and with the third world debt crisis. The trade gap is no longer widening and strong commodity prices have allowed the indebted third world nations to keep afloat.

Yet there are big areas of uncertainty. Firstly, a full scale recession cannot be ruled out. The investment surge of the last couple of years could undermine profit rates or lead to overproduction of goods. This could bring about a sharper slowdown of activity, and give a new bite to the debt crisis and trade imbalances.

Secondly, the decline of American power means world capitalism is less centralised, so management of crises is difficult. Thirdly, the upheavals in Eastern Europe open up opportunities and dangers for western capitalists, who may salivate at the prospect of new markets and cheap labour, but are very wor-

Senator  
Button's  
plans  
can't  
get  
industry  
out of  
the  
doldrums



ried about the destabilising potential of economic collapse or continued social upheaval in Eastern Europe.

**IN AUSTRALIA the economy is also slowing, and unemployment is set to rise. The most immediate cause for the slowdown is the sharp hikes in interest rates imposed by Paul Keating last year.**

Keating was driven to these measures by an overheated domestic economy. After forcing down wages and restoring profitability, the government waited throughout the middle 1980s for investment to revive. When it finally did revive, it came in a rush, and at levels too high for the domestic industry to meet the demand for goods. The result was a rapidly mounting current account deficit.

Having committed itself to tax cuts, and reluctant to tackle the unions frontally over wages at a time when skilled labour was in short supply, the government was forced to rely largely on forcing up interest rates to slow the growth surge.

Keating has found this to be a slow process, because deregulation makes it easier for lenders and borrowers to make arrangements to cushion the impact. Home mortgage rates began to bite from June, but in the wider economy we have only begun to see convincing signs of a slowdown in the few months.

Now these signs have appeared. Keating has begun to ease interest rates and with commodity prices still fairly strong the government has some chance of avoiding an actual recession ("negative growth"). However most economists expect growth to fall sharply.

In the longer term, the prospects for Australian capitalism look grim. Without the commodity boom in the latter part of the 1980s, the economy would never have recovered from the "banana republic" crisis of 1986. And it seems clear the commodity boom is set to end.

While mineral prices are expected to remain fairly flat, those for rural commodities are expected to fall by about 20 percent over the next five years. Wool sales have already slumped.

**The industry plans which were to lift Australia's export performance, and which began promisingly with big productivity gains from the steel plant, have become increasingly bogged down.**

Numerous studies warn that Australian managers are not serious enough about learning to export, and that local firms are slow to introduce new systems and technologies. And even their best efforts only allow them to

keep pace with the rest of the world, not to catch up.

**INTERNATIONAL POLITICS** is dominated by the crisis of the stalinist regimes (dealt with elsewhere in this issue). For us, its practical consequences are rather muted.

The Chinese events were relatively easy for us to deal with. The students were clearly not pro-capitalist, and the Beijing massacre was only partly associated in the public mind with "socialism". However in Eastern Europe the ongoing revolts have taken on a much more "anti-communist" flavour. It is becoming more common for our members, selling the magazine, to be baited with the "collapse of socialism".

Naturally, rightwing ideologists are making the most of this climate. It is important we keep on pointing to those genuine socialist movements that do exist in Eastern Europe and the USSR: Russia's new socialist party, the Polish Socialist Party/Democratic Revolution in Poland, the United Left in East Germany.

In the industrialised west, the downturn in class struggle continues largely unabated. Skills shortages together with the financial decline of the Thatcher regime have made increased struggle possible in Britain, but elsewhere the labour movement remains fairly quiescent. The most important political environments are those around environmental issues (these are growing in eastern Europe too), against racism and for abortion rights.

Outside the established industrial societies, there have been

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 13









# Go 'riddance to 'barracks socialism'

**N**IKITA Krushchev once boasted that "shrimps will whistle" before the Kremlin ever loosened its grip.

The shrimps are in full chorus today as Eastern Europe rid itself of its hated stalinist regimes. And the Left everywhere must face up to the consequences.

For the Western press it is simple: capitalism has triumphed over socialism. Said old stalinists, like the leaders of Australia's Moscow-line Socialist Party interviewed recently, have to agree, since their sterile concept of socialism only ever amounted to a state-run economy. And indeed, the popular perception that "Marxism equals bureaucratic state ownership equals a failed system" is making life harder for the whole Left, even those of us who never believed that Russia's miserable "barracks socialism" had anything to do with human liberation.

Of course, the West has a real gall in claiming victory. The main rights that Eastern European workers are demanding are free association and the vote, for which Western workers had to struggle for over a century. How nice that our rulers regard them as intrinsic to capitalism now that it suits them!

Yet not all of our rulers are gloating. "It is not in the interests of the United States to see instability in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union," says US secretary of state James Baker. Whatever propaganda their press may make from it, Western ruling classes have a lot to lose from stalinism's collapse.

For all the rivalry between the two superpowers in the last 40 years, the Cold War provided the perfect excuse for America to dominate its half of the world militarily. How will the Pentagon justify the next Vietnam or Grenada adventure now that it has no Russian bear to scare the children with?

**B**UT that is just one problem. For all the trumpeting, the market cannot solve Eastern Europe's crisis.



Ukrainian miners: socialist potential

East Germany, already an industrialized economy, may gain market next door just as South Korea and Taiwan did from Japan. But the rest of Eastern Europe will get no more joy from market capitalism than Turkey, Brazil or other semi-developed nations do.

And as Poland's workers have found, the thrill of electing your own MPs soon wears off when they take their orders from the International Monetary Fund.

Yet East European workers have caught the nasty habit of taking the law into their own hands to solve problems. That is the "instability" that so worries James Baker. While their first response is to embrace social democrats like Czechoslovakia's Havel who are pushing a mixed economy, when these leaders disappoint them many will seek other solutions.

With the grim "barracks socialism" of Stalin's heirs swept aside, real socialist currents will then have a new chance. Already small parties are emerging that want neither the repression of the past nor the exploitation of the West, but a socialist planned economy run by a genuine workers' democracy.

# Seeing Red!

WITH ALEC KAHN

lowing by other means. From Ceaucescu to Mao to Tito to Castro, they have relied on primary military organisation, and bureaucratic control over mass institutions like trade unions, in stepping to power.

In theory, the later "socialist" stage of the revolution should set this right. In reality, having a bloody showdown with former bourgeois allies for state power forces stalinist parties to rely even more on their existing strength ... which means building up their repressive and bureaucratic apparatus even more, since they have downgraded workers' self-organisation. That is why Ceaucescu could begin as an anti-fascist fighter and end up just like his old enemies.

The stalinist states were not produced by good socialists who became corrupted in power. They arose from revolutionary strategies that were themselves rotten, substituting military takeovers by an armed party for genuine working class self-emancipation.

They have proved nothing about the planned economy except that, run by a bureaucratic ruling class in a one-party state, it is almost as alienating and inefficient as any Marcos-style capitalist regime. But a socialist planned economy, one where competing parties can freely promote different national plans and policies for workers' councils to decide on, still has to be tried.

**O**UR right-wing critics have been wrong on that. Marxism has had a century to get it right, they say, and it still hasn't produced such a system.

They are correct. But before we write off socialist revolution, let's recall that the first century of capitalism's revolutions were just as unpromising.

The French revolution degenerated so fast that France spent most of the next eighty years under an emperor. The American revolution allowed slavery to flourish for another century. And England's Mother of Parliaments did not allow workers or women to vote for two centuries after Cromwell established its rule.

Marxism has not lost yet. It has taken 60 years to spit out the poison of stalinism, but the working class has at last done it, and Marxism is the healthier for it. The next 60 years will see its true test.

**T**HE collapse of stalinism lifts a great albatross from the neck of the Western left too.

No longer will generations of radicals be sucked into defending the crimes of petty dictators, compromising their own socialist vision and appealing the workers they seek to attract. No longer, that is, if they can absorb what was wrong with the stalinist method rather than just superficially rejecting the Ceaucescu and Honeckers as "corrupt" and "undemocratic".

Sadly, not all can. The Socialist Workers Party here in Australia, for example, has renamed itself the Democratic Socialist Party to latch onto the new anti-stalinist mood. But it still regards Cuba as a model, despite Castro being just as much a dictator as Ceaucescu was, if more benevolent.

The fundamental flaw of stalinism, for all its apparent ruthless extremism, is that it compromises with sections of capitalism in order to carry out a "revolution by stages". Stalinist parties invariably push an anti-fascist or anti-imperialist alliance with "progressive" bosses against the rest. The socialist part of the revolution is deferred until this national stage is complete.

In theory this sounds fine ... the old trick of "divide and rule" turned against the bosses, and the workers mobilized around the nationalistic ideas capitalism has taught them. In practice, though, it means playing down the most powerful and liberating part of any socialist movement ... ordinary people seizing their workplaces and neighbourhoods, running them themselves, and defending them with democratic armed militias ... because this threatens "progressive" bosses as well as the others.

So stalinist leaders win their fol-

