

SOCIALIST ACTION

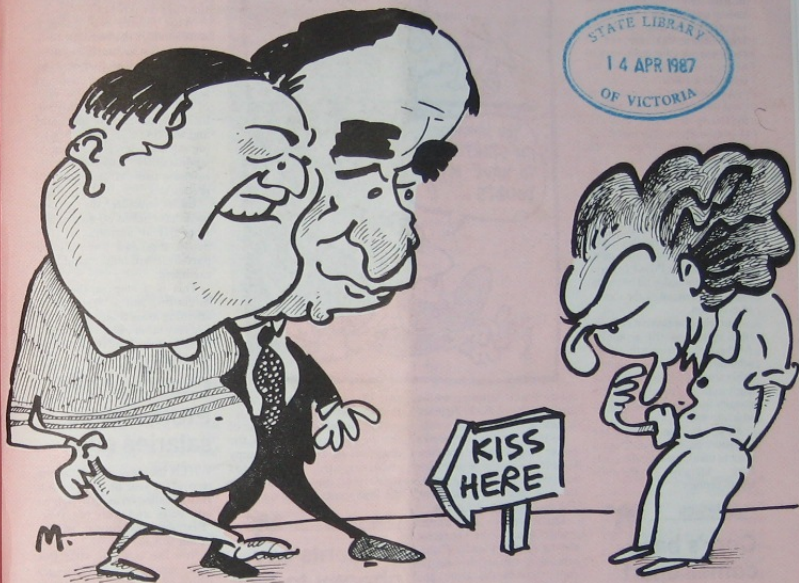


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LABOR'S CRAWL TO THE PRESS BARONS

- Repression in Joh's jails
- Contragate and Reagan
- Poland under the iron fist

CAT'S EYE

QUEENSLAND 

Minister for Creationism?


FROM time to time, you still hear the right complaining about radical teachers using the schools to push their own subversive ideas. These days the radical ideas worrying the right seem to be logic, clear thinking and the scientific method.

A prominent figure at a recent Creation Science Conference in Brisbane was Lin Powell, Queensland's minister for education. Mr Powell, like most of the others at this Conference, believes in the literal truth of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. He believes that the world was created in six days about 6000 years ago, that the dinosaurs were wiped out in Noah's flood, and that women must obey men.

Worse still, Mr Powell believes that the schools should be teaching all this instead of the theory of evolution.

Already, Queensland's education system is the worst in Australia. There are fewer schools per student than in any other state and fewer kids finish high school (partly because conditions are so bad and courses so irrelevant).

Now Lin Powell and the Creation Science Foundation want to take Queensland schools back — literally — to the nineteenth century.

PHILIPPINES 

Cory's base comes apart

AS WE go to press, Filipinos seem certain to vote for a new Constitution which will confirm Cory Aquino's rule.

Yet more and more, the forces on which Aquino's power rests are moving in opposite directions.

First there was the massacre on Mendiolra Bridge, which killed twelve peasant protesters and wounded 100 more. On opposite sides of the bridge were two of Aquino's most important allies: the KMP, the country's largest farmer organisation and a key part of the "people's power" movement, and the army, whose defection to Aquino was the last blow to Marcos.

The KMP was demanding the land reform promised a year ago by Aquino in her rise to power. The army was enforcing her insistence that the farmers must be patient; an insistence that comes

DID GOD CREATE THIS OR WAS HE JUST KIDDING?



easily from Aquino, whose family is one of the Philippines' biggest land-owners.

As the champion of "people's power", Aquino could not allow the army to barricade the bridge to stop the 10,000-strong march, the way Marcos would have.

The two groups met head on. Deliberately or in panic, the soldiers fired. Given the recent slaying of union leader Olalia, almost certainly by Enrile supporters in the army, the "panic" theory seems generous.

Aquino promised action. The Left, enraged, held an even bigger march. Possibly sensing Aquino's weakness, possibly to forestall the Left's growing momentum, possibly to disrupt the Constitutional vote, Marcos supporters then made their move.


Their uprising this time, while still weak, was more serious than last year's laughable "coup" at the plush Manila Hotel. It was isolated to Manila, Marcos' strongest base of support, but that is possibly because his supporters elsewhere were lying low until the strength of the Manila rising became clear.

Aquino's time has promised tougher retribution. Since soldiers in the Manila Hotel coup attempt were given 30 push-ups, that won't be hard.

But tougher retribution is not social reform. That is something that Aquino, a liberal but a

member of the ruling class nonetheless, cannot deliver.

And so, whatever the fate of the new Constitution, of the cease-fire, of the trigger-happy soldiers and the Marcos supporters, the polarisation in the Philippines will go on.

CAMPUSES 

Students say phooey to fees

AS THE start of the university year draws near, students on several major campuses are organising to oppose the government's new fee-for-education.

Hoping to tap the wave of anger mobilised late last year in the National Day of Action, student unions and other activists aim to produce a substantial boycott of the fee. In Brisbane, where last year's student march occupied the Eagle St government offices, Queensland University students representatives have been collecting responses from students willing to boycott the fee. They believe about 10% (some 2000 students) will participate.


As it stands, the \$250 fee is an indiscriminate ransacking of students' pockets. All enrolled students (including part-timers) will have to pay. Most of the tiny minority who qualify for the exemption will have to pay and

then wait for a refund. The government argues that the fee is a method of raising money for a much-needed increase in the number of tertiary places. Actually, the 1986 Budget spending on higher education, even including the income from the fee, is lower in real terms than in previous years.

What the fee really does is shift some of the cost of education onto students themselves, with the result that those who can't afford to pay will get squeezed out. Since the abolition of fees by the Whitlam government, the proportion of women and working class people studying at tertiary level has increased significantly. Inevitably, the introduction of the fee will reverse this.

Under pressure, the government has backed off somewhat. Recently it announced that pensioners and unemployed part-time students would be exempted.

This is a step in the right direction. But if it is to be anything more than a sweetener to a very bitter pill, strong action in the first weeks of the new term will be needed.

ECONOMY 

Profits, exec salaries soar

WHEN the steam ran out of the recovery a year or so ago, Bob Hawke called on us all to tighten our belts and pull together. "Restraint with equity" was to be our slogan.

Now we can see what this really meant. While real wages have gone on declining, company profits have just hit a five year high. From a low of 8% return on investors' funds in the wake of the 1981 recession, they are now bounced back to 11.7%. Not everyone is getting the finance sector's 13.5%, but none of them have too much cause to complain.

Even the *Financial Review* (the paper the bosses read) was moved to note that the figures "make nonsense of some of the politically motivated propaganda about business difficulties".

But it is not only the corporations and their generally faceless shareholders who are doing so well out of this crisis. So too are the men (and occasional women) who actually run the companies. Executive salaries are up an average 9.2% over the last year.

Considering that we are all supposed to be in the same boat, some people seem to be rowing rather less for rather better than the rest of us.

LAW'N'ORDER

Boggo Road: The revolt in Joh's jails

OVER a century ago, Karl Marx argued that "justice" under capitalism was mainly a matter of one class maintaining its oppression of another through brute force and "bodies of armed men".

In Queensland, the justice system does its best to bear out Marx's analysis. Conditions in the men's prison at Brisbane's Boggo Road, at which major unrest occurred again late last year, are literally Victorian. The centre of the riot, No 2 Division, was built in 1873 and has no toilets or running water. Nearly 500 prisoners are crammed into a jail designed for 250.

The system inside the jail reflects the barbaric surroundings. Parole procedures are secret and arbitrary. No work is available for three-quarters of the prisoners. The Prisoners' Discussion Group, set up to work for proper grievance procedures, has been forcibly disbanded.

Prisoners have been left with no recourse but to riot. On December 5, they smashed and set fire to the hovel-like cells that they live in.

Prisoners on the jail roof shouted out their demands to supporters below. Their faces were covered with towels because tear gas was spreading through the prison below.

When they came down, they were forced to run a gauntlet through a line of warders with batons. Several prisoners were hospitalised. Queensland's media reported their wounds as "injuries from broken glass".

STATE government Ministers announced that there would be no reforms of any kind in the jail.

Joh Bjelke-Petersen said tear gas should have been used earlier, and that prisoners would have to live in the burnt-out cells — a threat that was carried out, at least in the short term.

Ex-Prisons Minister Muntz declared from his new Tourism portfolio, "We'll keep the jails as full as the tourist hotels!"

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Rioting inmates on the jail roof, faces covered by towels

These declarations gave a green light to warders. Many prisoners have since been bashed, and had meagre possessions like photographs destroyed.

Warders wrote on the wall of one prisoner's cell, "My name is Troy O'Meara and I am a maggot." As well as giving the usual salute every time a warder passes, O'Meara must repeat this or be bashed.

For people already brutalised by an exploitative, alienating society, this kind of jail system makes a mockery of any liberal notion of "rehabilitation".

IN REALITY, "justice" functions in terms of who owns the wealth.

More than 25 per cent of the prisoners in Boggo Road are there because they cannot pay convictions. The percentage is even higher for blacks.

The state government boasts that its new Drugs Misuse Bill will produce 300 people doing mandatory life sentences by the year 2000. That estimate only confirms claims that the Bill is aimed at the moderate drug user, the addict and the small time dealer, rather than the millionaire drug baron.

Or take Judith Callaghan, wife of the Premier's recently-sacked press secretary Allan Callaghan. She was released after just three months in Boggo Road, after misappropriating tens of thousands of dollars of state funds.

New Prisons Minister Neal has kept a remarkably low profile since the jail disturbances. A farmer from Tara, he has probably been told to let Joh Bjelke-Petersen make the running on the issue, and has made no public comment. When demonstrators, organised mainly by the Queensland Coalition for Democratic Rights, went to his office, he was conveniently "out of town".

There have been several pickets outside the jail by prisoners' supporters since December 5.

At the first picket, plain clothes police grabbed a demonstrator Picketers surged after them up the jail drive. The jail entrance suddenly opened, and out poured 40 warders toward us in full riot gear — helmets, batons and guns. Those who saw this on the TV news got a chilling picture of what prisoners have to face.

TEAR gas has been used several times in the jail since December 5, and on Christmas Day, when we again picketed, there was another disturbance inside.

Prisoners and supporters used the same slogan on that day: "What do we want? Prisoners' rights! What do we get? Bashed!" Prisoners' solidarity has held up completely since December 5, and at Wacol prison there was an attempted hunger strike. Fifteen inmates at Boggo Road are likely to be charged, probably on internal disciplinary charges which can be heard inside the

jail, minimizing publicity. Some prisoners have been transferred, with no reason given, to the "homosexuals and deviants" security section at Wacol.

In 1985, the Longland Commission recommended sweeping changes to the Queensland prison system. Only a fraction of these have been implemented. The state government refuses to consider even minor reforms, and prisoners have no other option but organisation and not direct action to bring the disgraceful state of the jail into the public eye.

Middle class attitudes have been the main obstacle Prisoners' supporters have faced in building up the campaign on the outside. Some people we have ranging to come to the pickets have replied, "I'm not going out there to support all those murderers and rapists."

This is the way the system wants us to see the people inside. But "criminals" are made, not born, to capitalist society. A socialist society would remove the social factors that create most criminals, and anti-social actions could be dealt with far more sanely in a society based on the collective power of ordinary people.

Justice, then, will operate in the interests of the great majority. At Boggo Road, and at any number of other prisons like it, "justice" now is merely a charade. Or as Marx again put it, "the ideology glorified expression of the existing economic relations."

—Carole Ferrier





Reagan with advisers Poindexter, McFarlane and Regan

THEY CALL it "Contragate" or "Irrangate." And of course the parallels with the 1974 Watergate scandal which brought down Richard Nixon are irresistible.

Then as now there was a conservative Republican president who seemed to preside over a powerful rightwing political consensus. But then as now, a turnaround in events exposed the shallowness of his base of support.

The bulk of Americans are no more inherently rightwing than were the Australian voters who elected Malcolm Fraser three times. They had simply discovered by the end of the 1960s that the liberal "welfare state", which the Democratic Party had built up over several decades, had not solved their problems.

The Democrats had not abolished poverty or racism: in fact, the inner city ghettos were still there. The danger of war, in fact, it was Democrat Lyndon Johnson who had sent troops to Vietnam.

The fiascos of the later Johnson administration, and then of the Jimmy Carter regime, sent voters into the arms of rightwingers who claimed to offer a return to simple virtues and simple solutions.

The great tragedy is that the American left, though revitalised by the protest movement against the Vietnam War and the campus protests of the sixties, was not strong enough to convince most people that it represented a viable alternative. So we got Tricky Dick, and more recently we got Ronnie.

But most Americans have

Contragate: The President has no clothes

remained discontented through the Reagan presidency, as they did through that of Richard Nixon. And once Reagan came unseated, his popularity did a nosedive.

It should be said that the "Contragate" scandal probably will not destroy Reagan as it did Nixon. It is likely Reagan will limp through the remainder of his term, or even rebuild his position.

EVEN so, the affair has reminded millions of Americans about the realities of capitalism and its supposedly democratic forms of government.

We have seen how our rulers cynically disregard the law whenever it suits them, even while piously insisting that the rest of us abide by it. We have seen that despite the facade of elections and representative institutions, the day to day running of the system is in the hands of bureaucrats, adventurers and cynical operators who were elected by nobody.

These operators, in turn, work closely together with the private institutions of the capitalist class and with some of their leading figures to do their dirty deals. In the course of the complicated plots that sent weapons and

money flowing from Washington to Switzerland to Teheran to Israel to Central America, Colonel North and his mates found themselves dealing with some remarkable people out in the private sector.

There was the retired General John Singlaub, who is a fundraiser for the Nicaraguan Contras. There was the Sultan of Brunei, who kindly donated \$15 million. There was the Texas oil billionaire H. Ross Perot and the Saudi billionaire Adnan Kashoggi, not to mention the Iranian businessman Manucher Ghorbanifar, who claimed to be the head of Iranian intelligence operations in Europe.

This is the capitalist class in action. And it might seem at first glance that with such forces arrayed on the side of darkness in the world, the chances for enlightenment and progress, let alone socialism, might be pretty bleak. But fortunately, our enemies also have some telling weaknesses.

FOR one thing, there is no honour among thieves.

Not only did Ollie North manage to siphon some money out of the Iran arms deal, supposedly for the Contras, but then it seems to have gone

missing altogether. The Contras deny they ever got it.

Not that they deserve it. These brutal mercenaries, not being satisfied with the cruel destruction they visit on the Nicaraguan people month by month, planned to murder the US ambassador to Costa Rica and put the blame onto the Nicaraguan Sandinista government. They did this even though he had helped them set up a secret air field.

And all the conspiracies went on behind the back of Secretary of State, George Shultz.

For another thing, they are incompetent. The president, it appears, probably *didn't* know all of what was going on. This may be because he wasn't told. Just as likely, he wasn't paying attention at the time or just forgot!

One thing above all will be brought home to vast numbers of people by the current drama in Washington. The claim of the Reagans and Ollie North to be our natural rulers looks pretty silly. Just about anyone could run the world better than them, with the possible exception of their opposite numbers in the Kremlin.

Whether any significant number of people will translate that insight into leftwing, let alone revolutionary, politics is up to socialists. We must build organisations that can pose alternatives to the Tweedledum and Tweedledee represented by the Republicans and Democrats in America, and by Labor and Liberal here.

Otherwise, the discrediting of the latest rightwing warmonger in Washington will have no lasting value.

— Tom O'Lincoln

China's students learn a lesson about Deng's "reforms"

IN EARLY December 1986, Beijing *People's Daily* announced the discovery that, "The call for freedom and democracy has been greatly liberating for the human race."

Only one month later, the same newspaper warned:

"Bourgeois liberalism is poisoning our youth, harmful to our stability and unity, and disrupting our reform and modernisation drive."

Spot the difference? The change in attitude came about because a large group of Chinese took the December statement seriously. Mass demonstrations of Chinese students started calling for "freedom and democracy" in China. Naturally enough, this was not what the *People's Daily* editorialists and their backers in China's ruling class — had in mind at all. Steps had to be taken to stamp it out.

The student unrest began in September in the eastern provincial capital of Hefei. Several thousand students demanded changes in the selection procedures for local government candidates and marched under the slogan "No Democratization, No Modernisation".

Things took a more serious turn when the demonstrations spread to China's largest metropolis, Shanghai. There, students defied bans on marches and began a series of all-night vigils. By the fifth day, 30,000 were in the streets confronting the mostly confused authorities. Leaflets were distributed denouncing government bureaucracy and authoritarianism, and calling for "Democracy and Freedom".

It was Beijing's turn next. Students began demonstrating because of the lack of information in the official media about the Shanghai events. By this stage, the authorities had pulled themselves together somewhat and announced a ban on further demos. After intensive debate at Beijing university, students decided to defy the ban on January 1.

Two thousand of them marched on Tien An Mien square, in the centre of Beijing, singing the *Internationale* and the national anthem. Bringing aside the police lines, they poured into the square demand-



Empty promises: Peking students burn a government newspaper

ing democracy.

Demonstrations were eventually reported in eleven major cities.

CHINA'S ruling elite really had no-one to blame for these events but themselves.

For months, the press has been filled with high-sounding talk about political reform. Current top-dog Deng Hsiao Ping himself stated that "deep economic reform should be accompanied by corresponding political reform". The Ministry of Propaganda held a seminar for students on democracy, while the prime minister called for ideas on political reform for the forthcoming Communist Party congress.

But when talk turns to action, rulers reach for repression. Considering the official campaign, it is no wonder that local authorities were confused as to how to react to the demon-

assembly, much less organisation. They are interested in political reform *only* to the extent that it serves their plans to modernise China's economy.

THE WHOLE debate began with the limited aim of clearly separating the functions of managers and Communist Party secretaries in the factories.

It was slightly widened in the belief that in a more relaxed political atmosphere, the productivity of Chinese workers could be increased, and the widespread disenchantment with the economy could be overcome.

China's economic reforms have run into considerable difficulties. Foreign investment dropped some twenty percent in the first half of 1986, amidst complaints about labour productivity. While China wanted foreign investment in order to develop the economy, many foreign firms simply wanted to get a foot in the "open door" to exploit China's vast market.

Chinese workers have had to endure inflation, depressed wages and an attack on the bonus system, which many relied on for survival. There has been sporadic working class resistance — a go-slow on the buses at the end of 1985, for example.

At the same time, new interests are emerging. A managerial layer is taking shape as enterprise management is given more and more autonomy. The richest of the rich peasants are more assertive in their demands on the regime. Both these sectors have considerable representation in the Communist Party, and both have political interests which cannot be satisfied under the present system.

DEMANDS by the students were vague. Calls for "Freedom" and "Democracy" were the most common.

When questioned, students seemed to believe that they were asking for a system similar to that of the West — democratic liberties, choice of job, freedom to change. One of them remarked:

"We simply want to have the freedom to do what we want."

In 1905, when a mass demonstration petitioned the Russian Tsar for reform, the German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg wrote:

"It was the very modern class urge of a really serious and mature proletarian (continued on page 6)

(Continued on page 6)

"GREED is all right, by the way. I want you to know that I think greed is healthy. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself."

— Ivan F. Boesky, recently sprung for history's biggest insider trading scandal, to applauding Californian business school graduates in 1985.



THE America's Cup has proved a more gratifying spectacle than we imagined.

Alan Bond's boats both turned out to be lemons. The New Zealand stock exchange had one of its worst days ever when it became obvious their boat would miss the final.

And the event has proved a financial disaster for many of the speculators who descended on Fremantle. One shipping entrepreneur sent a pleasure boat over for the duration, expecting to carry over 1000 passengers each race. It spent the first round of heats sailing with just one spectator!

AT LEAST the Unsworth government has not lost sight of its reforming mission.

NSW Police Minister Patalito has introduced a new police bulletin. "These new bulletins expand in a controlled manner on impact," he says.

Nice to see Labor reining in the trigger-happy elements in the police force with such a firm hand.

RONALD Reagan's latest movie, *Holocaust of the Navy*, was filmed aboard a real submarine. Unfortunately, Reagan suffers from claustrophobia.

Whenever he felt himself starting to twitch, he would rush over to the periscope to look at the world outside, whether the script called for it or not.

Hmmm... maybe a few weeks in a fall-out shelter might give Reagan a new sense of urgency about nuclear disarmament.

MEANWHILE, even the *Wall Street Journal* is making jokes about Reagan over Contrace.

Its front page recently asked, "What's the difference between the National Security Council and a children's day-care centre?"

"A day-care centre has adult supervision."

ALAN BOND'S proposed private university on the Gold Coast will be taking no chances with student radicalism. Says Bond front-man Brian Orr, "We're hoping that a lot of parents will put their students into an

• FOR THE couple who own everything, *Prestige American* store Nieman Marcus. This *Xmas* recommended his-and-her California Spanglers, a new breed of leopard-like domestic cats. Each cat cost \$1400.

Times must be getting tough for the bourgeoisie. Last year, Nieman Marcus sold over a million each. Before that, it was his-and-her mini-submarines at \$18,700 apiece.

health, claims the money is for "scholarships at Oral Roberts University", a modestly named religious campus.

The death threat was "an idea suggested to me by God", says Oral. Let's hope that his followers choose to promote him to the ranks of the holy martyrs.



CHEAP SHOTS

CHILE'S horse-racing season is in full swing.

One of the highlights is the People's Republic of China Cup. The event honours 13 years unbroken friendship between the Pinochet dictatorship and China's "communist" regime, one of the first governments to recognise the coup that overthrew leftwing president Salvador Allende.

Meanwhile, General Pinochet appears to have created a new branch of medicine in Chile. The country now has 50 health professionals who specialise in the treatment of victims of torture.

LES, damned lies and statistics...

The Thatcher government has "refined" its method of counting the unemployed 13 times since 1979. Of these, 18 have resulted in lower unemployment counts.

GRIMME that of Time magazine! Communist preacher Oral Roberts has demanded \$6 million by March from his national TV audience, or he will die.

True believers should send \$100 immediately, says Oral, and more by March "to help extend my life". Roberts, who shows no signs of ill



Pinochet: new branch of medicine for Chile

WAS IT merely a coincidence that Russia pulled all of its ships out of Tripoli harbour two days before Reagan bombed the city last year?

Or did the world's "staunchest opponent of imperialism" simply forget to notify Gaddafi of the impending air raids, in the hope that he might be replaced by more pro-Moscow elements of Libya's army?

AND THERE is absolutely no truth to the rumour that on taking charge of the contras, the CIA's first project was to prepare an excuse as to why the Sandinistas won the war.

WOMEN'S role... The Brisbane City Mall last month hosted a contest for "Most Efficient Secretary 1987".

Contestants had to take down a letter, type it, make two cups of coffee, run the letter to the post office and register it.

FROM PAGE 5

China

fantastic whim of a colourful old wives' tale...

In China, we are not (as yet) dealing with the proletariat, but the situation is very similar. The students think they are struggling for a "Western" system, but their demands mean much more than that. How many young people in the West today have a real choice of job or the power to bring about change — let alone "the freedom to do what we want?"

That is why the students' demands — if they were granted — would threaten the system. And that is why their struggle is ours.

But they cannot do it on their



Deng Hsiao Ping: fears worker-student alliance

own. Students can irritate the regime, but they cannot overthrow it. There is one power in China that can do that — the Chinese workers, together with the poor peasants. The regime is more afraid of a link-up between

student and worker grievances than anything else.

In the same document detailing how to deal with the students, Deng Hsiao Ping pointed out that on December 18 and 19, twenty thousand workers walked off the job at the Luoyang tractor factory. We can be sure that in the face of increasing attacks on their living standards (such as they were), there has been other industrial action in China.

The implication of Deng's document was clear: students and workers must be kept apart at all costs. If they are not, a real threat could emerge.

WHEN a one-party dictatorship gets sufficiently nervous, it turns first of all on itself.

The student protests have set off quite a dust-up in the Communist Party, with general secretary Hu Yaobang being amongst the first to go. Which-ever faction emerges victorious, be it "reformist" or "conservative" (the labels mean very little), their main aim will still be the exploitation of the Chinese masses.

The Chinese ruling class has not been able to intimidate the students off the streets. It has not been able to frighten them with horror stories of the Cultural Revolution. Nor has it been able to prevent at least some worker support and involvement.

More protests can be expected. And the more protests there are, the more workers can become involved.

— David Lockwood

INTERNATIONAL



In 1980, millions of Polish workers formed the independent trade union movement Solidarity. The bureaucratic ruling class which dominates Poland declared martial law at the end of 1981 and smashed it. Since then, the struggle has continued underground. PHILLIP WHITEFIELD looks at recent developments.

Poland under the iron fist

Empty shelves in a Warsaw supermarket



AT THE tenth Congress of the Polish Communist Party last year, General Jaruzelski confidently asserted that the days of Solidarity were well and truly over. And in a sense he is right. An exact repeat of the events of 1980-81 is unlikely.

Yet a few months ago Lech Walesa, chairperson of the banned trade union movement, made a public announcement proclaiming the formation of an "above ground" Provincial Council of Solidarity. Following this, a number of "open" regional organizations sprang into existence.

It is clear that working class organization is still alive, and that one day the Polish workers will again challenge the regime. But that is some time away. What is the state of Polish society, and the class struggle, today?

THE ECONOMY is in a poor condition, and has been for some time. A siege economy prevailed immediately after the coup, as a result of western sanctions. There was a chronic scarcity of materials for production.

Production only revived, and with it an improvement in supplies of consumer goods, in 1983-85. The revival was partly boosted by the government's scabbing on the British miners' strike and doubling coal exports. Economic planning exists only in name. There is enormous waste in production, the quality of commodities is poor, and there is widespread corruption. The inefficient sectors of the economy are artificially kept going by being part of the "socialist" state sector. But in a state capitalist society located within a capitalist world market, that only means Polish industry cannot be rationalised the way western industry is — by allowing inefficient firms to go to the wall.

The result over time is stagnation. The country's foreign debt is also a major

burden. Nearly 50 per cent of Poland's export earnings are devoted to paying the interest on its \$30 billion debt to western governments and banks, and to the USSR.

Like western leaders, Jaruzelski has made the working class pay for the crisis. Prices have risen for food and clothing, some as much as 30 per cent. Residential housing is in an appalling state. Poles can wait between 20 and 30 years for their own apartment. In 1985 the government stopped subsidizing housing cooperatives, and consequently rents sky-rocketed.

Workers spend 60 per cent of their monthly wage buying food, and what they do get is limited. Meat supplies are controlled by ration card, and imported, expensive for the average worker. One morning, only sour milk was available in Warsaw because the distribution system could not cope with the warm weather.

COMPARED to 1980-81, the regime appears quite strong. It has been confident enough to remove martial law, and the social polarisation has considerably dissipated.

Even so, the government's social roots are very shallow, and it is torn between popular pressure for liberalisation, the need to modernize the economy and the various demands of the USSR.

The result is a curious mixture of policies. On the one hand, Jaruzelski persists with repression and continually attempts to uphold Solidarity activists. Worker militants are regularly sacked or imprisoned. In some cases, activists are murdered.

In July 1985 the government amended the Penal Code so that anyone found carrying or distributing illegal literature could be sentenced for participating in a meeting that discussed a 15 minute general strike, in response to price rises.

On the other hand, there have been three official amnesties since martial law was lifted. On September 11 last year Jaruzelski extended the third amnesty to include all "non-criminal" prisoners, including the recently captured leader Zbigniew Bujak. The state newspaper *Polityka* claimed that the country was "passing from the stage of trauma to the stage of understanding".

The liberalisation is only superficial, and is part of a cynical government strategy. Jaruzelski desperately needs to broaden the regime's base, which is still very weak. For example, after Solidarity was banned, the government launched a recruiting drive to rehabilitate the official state-sponsored enterprise workers. Yet even though they were repressured, in 1985 there had only 87 million members, of which a third were retired pensioners. In comparison, Solidarity had recruited twice that many members in less than a year.

Now the regime has announced the establishment of a Social Consultative Council and provincial Civil Assemblies. Councils include a "plurality of views". Of course, these will remain subordinated to

(Continued page 8)

INTERNATIONAL

the Council of State. Yet with their democratic pretensions, Jaruzelski hopes they will provide a cover for dissidents who desire to collaborate with the government.

The divisions inside the opposition are no secret, and Jaruzelski no doubt hopes to appeal to the "moderates" with such a package. Indeed, Walesa had been demanding the release of prisoners as a basis for establishing a dialogue.

In fact, Jaruzelski would probably also tolerate independent trade union activity on a strictly limited scale — if it further served to neutralize underground activity. But there are no guarantees that such arrangements would succeed, and his room to manoeuvre is limited as he does not have complete control of the state machine. When similar moves were made in 1984, a "hardline" section of the state provoked the opposition by murdering the pro-Solidarity priest Jery Popieluszko.

State-initiated reforms have been introduced gradually and balanced by coercive measures. When the release of prisoners was announced on September 11, Jaruzelski also declared the "dissolution of illegal groups" as an objective and proceeded to detain 3000 people.

POLAND'S Catholic Church has played a valuable role for the regime. It has used all its influence inside the working class to moderate conflict, and on occasions it has actively condemned strikes.

In exchange, the church has sought to extend reforms from the government that would enable it to operate with less state interference.

As a measure of its success, 600 churches are currently under construction compared with 538 built between 1945 and 1978. As well, the regime and the church are close to an agreement to provide a legal status for

the Catholic hierarchy for the first time.

The church is by no means a public agent of the government. It is rather a loyal opposition, and its popularity stems from the fact that it is the only independent institution that is tolerated. This makes it a rallying point for those who would challenge state repression, but that does not mean people accept its social policy. Recent surveys indicate that large numbers of urban Catholics do not follow its advice on questions such as alcohol, abortion, divorce and sexual relationships.

There have also been conflicts over political issues. Solidarity activists in Warsaw had to fight the episcopate with the threat of strike action to preserve Popieluszko's grave as a union shrine.

The traditional base of support for the church is in the peasantry and agricultural working class, and it has had to reflect their interests at times. In 1985 it succeeded in preventing the government from imposing a tax on imported farm machinery.

TODAY, Solidarity is very heterogeneous and fragmented. It covers the old leadership bodies, workplace groups in enterprises and mines, and some 600 underground publications. Of these, the most widely read is the weekly paper *Tygodnik Mazowiec*, with a print run of 20,000. Organizationaly, Solidarity consists of autonomous regional structures, under the national leadership of the Provisional Coordinating Committee. The basic workplace activity of the union is directed by clandestine factory commissions. The main function of these underground bodies has been to collect union dues and distribute literature.

There is also a host of underground political organizations, of both left and right wing politics. On the revolutionary left, the most notable groups is the Workers' Opposition Alliance (POR-S), representing the fusion of four organizations. It is based in Upper Silesia and publishes a monthly paper *Przełom* (The Breach).

The fragmentation of the underground has not just been a question of organization, but one of politics. Some sections are more radical than others. When announcing the advent of open work for Solidarity, Lech Walesa stated:

"There are obstacles on both sides to dialogue. Without abandoning what is necessary to achieve the ideals of Solidarity, we are ready to eliminate what the authorities see as a barrier erected by Solidarnosc. We want to demonstrate our good will."



Poland under a black light: a sit-in strike, with underground Solidarity press, Jaruzelski's wool miners

A large section of Solidarity's national and regional leaderships have embraced such conservative notions of change. An emphasis is placed on dialogue and intelligent discussion so that the union can become a partner with the regime in solving the country's crisis. Solidarity has toyed with ideas of introducing marketing mechanisms into the economy, as has been done in Hungary. But they seek no change which breaks with the logic of the system.

The rightward trajectory of the union's leaders has taken a number of forms. A Silesian miners' committee inside Solidarity was strongly condemned by the regional leadership for producing literature that supported the British miners' strike in 1984.

SOLIDARITY'S politics have degenerated in a right wing direction for two complementary reasons.

On the one hand, there is a heavy reliance on a layer of "consultative" intellectuals. On the other, the union is responding to a declining level of struggle at the grassroots.

After the psychological impact of the 1981 coup had faded, the movement's Provisional Coordinating Committee attempted to organize mass demonstrations. Big protests did occur, particularly in May 1982, but they were not the product of Solidarity's work. They were mainly locally



Poland under a black light: a sit-in strike, with underground Solidarity press, Jaruzelski's wool miners

organized or of a spontaneous character. The Committee's protest actions against price rises in 1984 brought only scattered responses.

Warsaw Solidarity leader Henryk Wujec explained the problem recently: "We had all observed that the movement was losing its momentum. The ranks were thinning and the losses were not compensated by new arrivals."

Most workers are not involved in oppositional activity today, and only about 10 per cent continue to pay their union dues. Strikes occur frequently, usually over questions of pay or working conditions, but they are usually isolated. An underground activist described the general condition last June:

"The most frequent strikes are short and spontaneous, lasting from half an hour to three or four hours. Longer strikes also occur, but they aren't typical, since the management usually gives in at once, or calls in some local party official, in which case it gives in. The biggest problem normally comes afterwards, since the factory involved automatically receives special attention from the security police, and anyone identified as playing a leading role in the strike is likely to be harassed."

The situation is very uneven between factories. In some, union dues are collected and illegal literature distributed. In others, practically nothing is done.

A number of "self-management councils" continue to operate inside enterprises. Both the government and Solidarity had gravitated toward self-management projects as a solution to the crisis of 1980-81. These councils do not represent real workers' control, though they do allow some workers a forum to express their views.

The government retains the councils because it hopes to use them to divert worker discontent into safe channels. But there are limits to how well this can work. Certain factories, such as the Ursus plant in Warsaw, are considered "unsafe" for self-management councils. A government-sponsored national rally of self-management activists had to be restricted to only 300 council representatives. And when the council at the Elana textile factory in Torun

independently attempted to organize a national meeting of activists, the government squashed it.

The subject of these self-management councils has been a contentious issue on the Polish left. As conditions vary from factory to factory, it has been hard to work out a uniform response. In better organized factories the boycotting of councils has been relatively successful, while in others the boycott precipitated a collapse of all shopfloor organization.

DEMORALIZATION and the decline in struggle have provided a fertile environment for all sorts of false ideas.

One of these is illusions about western "democracy". In 1984 at the militant Nowa Huta steel works in Krakow, the slogan "Reagan is with us" frequently appeared. Just as militant workers in Australia had illusions in East European "socialism" for many years (and some still do), Polish workers will need time to see through Reagan and his ilk.

Hopefully, the information published by the *Washington Post* last year will eventually reach them. The *Post* revealed that Reagan personally knew details of Jaruzelski's coup well before it took place. Naturally, Reagan made no attempt to warn Solidarity.

It is clear that conditions in Poland are difficult and will remain so for some time. But it is equally clear that the struggle continues. The Solidarity leaders are wrong to put their faith in dialogue with the regime rather than organising at the grassroots. For it is that sort of organisation that can lay the basis for further revolts.

This is, after all, the same Polish working class which rose up in 1956, and repeatedly in the 1970s. It is the same working class which built Solidarity itself in defiance of a police state. In the postwar years, this has been one of the most combative working classes anywhere. Or as the dissident Adam Mickiewicz once remarked:

"Here on a spring morning, one may wake up in a totally changed country. Here and not the one before, party buildings burned while the commissars escaped clad only in underwear."

SOCIALIST ACTION

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Socialism

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

Revolution, not Reformism

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

A Mass Workers' Party

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

Internationalism

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

Liberation from Oppression

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

Socialist Action

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



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THEY were told it was unwinnable. But Victoria's nurses kept their eyes on their central goal and won it — a wage rise for student and first year nurses. In doing so, they proved an important point to the whole workers' movement.

The nurses' victory proves a point

The RANF's determination, singleness of purpose and refusal to do deals was called industrial naivety. The problem, supposedly, was nurses' "industrial inexperience". Yet for years nurses' unions played the game by the rules of negotiation and official channels.

For 10 years, in fact, the RANF operated with a rule against strikes. A growing feeling that it should see itself as an industrial organisation and not just as a professional service association led to the removal of this rule. But the union's method of operation remained within the conventional framework. Wage gains came through the arbitration system, even in NSW where the Nurses Association had left-wingers like Jenny Haines in the leadership.

There were one or two strikes. But they were seen as a tactical application of pressure within the system, rather than a way of mobilising the membership to win.

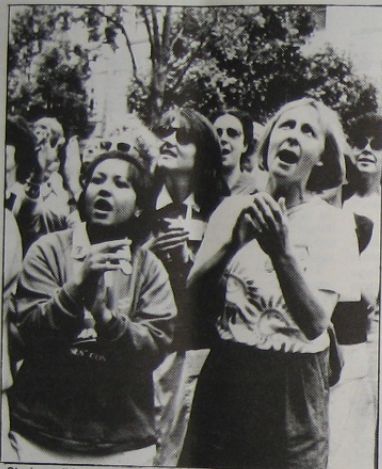
By 1985, years of operating within the rules had left Victorian nurses super-exploited by low wage rates, and overworked because of staff shortages and budget cuts.

The five day strike in October 1985 made a change possible. Having taken strike action before made it so much easier in 1986. As many on the picket line said. The 1985 strike also gave nurses experience of industrial realities. They had gone back to work believing in the government's promises. Not one was carried out.

By June 1986, nurses no longer trusted the government and the conventional channels. The impetus came from below for a new strategy, and a new leadership which would be more responsive to the rank and file. Irene Bolger's election as secretary was symptomatic.

NURSES' resulting militant spirit in the recent strike represented a real danger to the Victorian government.

Health minister David White was not primarily afraid of the financial cost of an RANF victory, as his ultimate peace offer showed. It was the political cost of any agreement reached by collective bargaining directly



Staying solid: nurses rally during their 50 day strike

between a striking union and the government as employer that impelled him to be so intransigent.

Labor was simply determined to uphold the authority of the arbitration process. To do otherwise would have opened the floodgates for similar actions by other workers in the public sector, whose real wages have steadily fallen.

This issue became central once it became obvious the strike was going to last for more than a week or two. The struggle came to represent more than a fight for decent wages and a career structure, important though these are.

It was at this point that the ACTU started their devious intervention. There was the possibility that the RANF would lead in breaking the Accord. The ACTU, experienced industrial freighters, aimed to contain the potentially explosive situation by arguing that nurses were a special case.

But workers all over the country fell inactively that the

nurses were not just a special case. There was an atmosphere of bated breath. As RANF industrial officer Ken Howard says, "A breakthrough by the nurses, or rather a breakout from the straitjacket of the arbitration system and the Accord, would have had tremendous significance for all workers".

IRENE Bolger and the RANF Leadership were certainly prepared to fight and win. In this, they were unlike most other union leaderships, whose sole aim upon entering a dispute is to settle with the minimum of mobilisation of membership.

So the union held daily meetings of picket line reps to run the strike. It put out strike bulletins, ran a daily radio show on 3CR, and held barbecues and fund-raisers to keep up nurses' involvement and morale. Strikers marched, rallied and met regularly. The RANF's organisation of its dispute was streets ahead of any other union's in recent years.

But given the strike's political

ramifications, a readiness to fight and to mobilise the rank and file was not enough. The issues went beyond nurses, and so a broader response was needed if the RANF was not to be ultimately forced back into court.

Most obvious was the need for more unity with the Hospital Employees' Federation (HEF). Relations between the two unions have been bitter in the past, with HEF members and nurses blaming each other for lack of support.

Here was a historic opportunity to overcome differences. Support for the nurses could only have strengthened the position of HEF members in relation to their common employers.

It didn't happen. The blame clearly lies with leadership of the HEF. Les Butler, the secretary, condoned the breaking of the picket lines by drivers who were HEF members. He publicly supported government moves to use nursing aides to do nurses' work. Butler is not industrially naive — he knows scabbing is against basic union principles.

Many rank and file members of the HEF were sympathetic to the nurses. At some hospitals, such as the Queen Vic, there was good cooperation.

At Prince Henry's, HEF members offered support from the beginning. They voted to blackban any delivery forced past picket lines.

Ches Taylor, chief HEF shop steward, stressed the importance of unity:

"The members here wanted to take more action than they did. If the RANF branch in the hospital had approached us, we would have taken direct action."

Support action at one hospital would have set an example for others. A basis was there to organise more active support amongst HEF members, and override the reactionary role of Les Butler.

SUPPORT action from nurses in other states could also have broadened the struggle.

A national nurses' strike was unlikely. But, according to Ken Howard, there was a lot of strong feeling which could have been mobilised in actions such as mass meetings and local bans. In the event, interstate nurses were not asked to do more than give money. The interstate stopwork meetings that did occur were inactively provoked by the Victorian government's plans for using nursing aides.

The widespread public support for the nurses was one of its great strengths. Individuals dropped in to picket lines to

show support and give money. People spontaneously distributed leaflets and collected donations in their workplaces. The BLF held a one day stoppage and marched through the city. Eight hundred public service delegates unanimously voted their support, while 1000 unionists braved monsoonal rain to attend a lunchtime solidarity rally.

Yet there too, more could have been done to transform the largely spontaneous and fragmented sympathy into organised and directed support. There was no official call from the RANF to other unions for support.

At many hospitals, such as the Queen Vic and Prince Henry's, hospital workers (not only HEF members) would have responded to locally called support rallies organised by the rank and file on the pickets.

Speakers touring workplaces would have helped counter the distortions of the media and raised more money.

THE STRIKE may be over, but most nurses are aware that it was only the first round.

It is likely that Labor will finance the pay rises by closing more beds and running hospitals with fewer nurses. Already there are over 4000 unfilled positions in the state.

Report vindicates BLF

WITH militant unions and "bloody-minded restrictive work practices" being blamed for the dismal state of Australian industry today, it is always useful when the employers admit such claims are nonsense.

That is the significance of a recent report commissioned by the building firm Civic and Civic.

Civil and Civic got NSW academic Vernon Ireland to do a study comparing building practices in the US with those of their own firm, and the results are very striking indeed. They tell us just where the current union-bashing in the building industry and elsewhere will lead if it is successful: more workers will die, working conditions will deteriorate... and the industry will be less efficient than usual.

The United States is usually held up as a model society by the New Right and other opponents of "union power". After all, there are many non-union contractors in the building industry over there. On the 22 projects Civic



RANF members march through Melbourne

The government has clearly made a political decision based on its estimation of the public's tolerance of waiting lists for elective surgery. This is consistent with their plans for cuts in the public health system while bolstering the private.

A deterioration in the health system, then, is on the cards. In the fight against it, the health unions will be very important. But the usual processes of

arbitration will be of no use in this fight. Rather, the "industrially naive" methods which were used in the nurses' strike will be essential: mass walk-outs, pickets and marches.

But also essential will be the ability to link up with other workers, to build support, to broaden the struggle. Otherwise, the recent victory will be very short-lived.

— June Stone

and Civic's study considered in the US, only one day was lost on one project in industrial disruption.

By contrast, more than 7 percent of total construction time was lost in disputes on Civic and Civic sites.

Australian building workers also get more days off, due to rostered days off, longer annual leave and prohibitions on working in wet weather.

American builders are subject to fewer environmental constraints. For instance, they can use footpaths and streets as part of their building site.

This saves them money, to the cost of local councils and inconvenience to the public.

So what are the consequences? The most glaring is in safety. Many Australian builders are indifferent to their employees' safety, but the unions have done a lot to keep them on their toes. American workers, less well unionised, often work without kickboards on the scaffolding, or work on slab edges without

harness or edge cable. No wonder 45 per cent of the US projects surveyed, fatalities occurred.

Official statistics show a fatality rate of nearly 2 workers per thousand each year in the US. This compares with one or less in that other free enterprise bastion, Thatcher's Britain, and a comparatively low level in Australia.

HOWEVER, since the deregistration of the BLF, fatality rates are rising in this country too.

You would think that with such a disregard for their workers, and facing weaker unions, American builders would get the job done much faster. But the survey shows that despite all their advantages, they are only 1 per cent quicker. That is only 1 per cent quicker, highly because the Australian building unionists are more efficient.

This is more efficient. This is partly a matter of better planning, but there is also another reason. "Union employees tend to do higher quality

and more productive than the non-unionised," says a Civil and Civic executive, Stuart Horny.

So it is just not true that trade unionists and their "bloody-mindedness" (in other words, their defence of working conditions) are to blame for the problems of Australian industry.

It is just as wrong to imagine that the wage gains won by the Australian unions are making the local building firms unprofitable.

Despite historic gains won over recent decades by the BLF, which has tended to flow on to other weaker unions, building workers here are still underpaid by US standards.

According to the Civil and Civic report, US builders' labourers earn between 30 and 300 per cent more than our local BLs. American carpenters earn 80 to 400 per cent more. Bricklayers, electricians and plumbers all do better over there, though how much better they depends on whether they work for a unionised contractor.

So what is left of the mythology according to which militant builders/labourers have been bringing the industry to its knees? According to a report commissioned by the bosses themselves, it is all rubbish.

Why then do they attack us? Their capitalist system is in crisis, and to keep it going they must force the burden of that crisis onto someone. In doing so, they generate an ideology of anti-union class lies. Their mass media and their "Labour" governments try to persuade us the crisis is all our fault.

Don't be fooled. The bosses know better, and they know their own documents, they say so.

— Richard Evers

Summer camp & conference

IN THE lush greenery of Melbourne's Dandenong Ranges, Socialist Action held its second summer camp and conference in early January.

Over 40 attended, listening to talks ranging from the cultural and historical (Simone De Beauvoir, Slave Revolutions) to substantial analyses of Industrial Democracy, Trade Unions, and Russia Today.

A Trivia Quiz was a roaring success. Organisers didn't know what they had let themselves in for when they asked how many left groups in Australia have "socialist" or "communist" in their name. (Fifteen at last count, though people are still arguing!) For a period of deliriums politically, there is still plenty for socialists to do, as our conference showed. Branches reported activity by members in industrial disputes, and steady work at campuses and in the social movements, with all their ups and downs.

The conference debated the merits of the current "Don't Vote" campaign, but decided instead to support a vote for left protest candidates.

The conference was skeptical about existing moves on the left for a new party. Naturally, everybody wants unity. But there is little real agreement on common politics amongst the existing groups.

Our main emphasis will be on arguing our politics in the activities in which we are involved. While we cannot seriously challenge the domination of reformist ideas in the labour movement as yet, we can continue to win a minority to revolutionary socialism through propaganda backed by action.

Canberra

CANBERRA branch is commencing a discussion series on "Marxism and Socialism" this month.

Discussions will be at the February 5 and 19 meetings. The February 12 and 26 meetings will feature talks on "Race Today", and on the Shining Path guerrillas of Peru. The branch is also holding a barbecue on February 8.

For further details of any of these, ring 31 3729.

New pamphlet

SOCIALIST Action has a new pamphlet out, called "Millitary Uprooted: Labour Economics 1974-1986".

David Kuhn looks critically at various economic strategies floated by the labour movement in the last decade, and their effect on the class struggle. Price is \$1, from any of our branches.

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE



ROUND two in the continuing saga of Robe River ended last month, when Peko Walsend's workers accepted an ACTU peace package and ended a five week strike.

Things came to a head in the Pilbara in December when Peko, continuing its vendetta against work practices which caused last August's dispute, tried to use one driver instead of two on the big shovels.

The shovel operators struck, Peko moved in staff scabs, the train drivers struck in sympathy, and Peko moved in more staff to scab on them too. After a week, the whole of Robe River was out on indefinite strike, although the vote was close — 160 to 110 at Cape Lambert.

Other workers in the Pilbara leved themselves for the strike fund. And in a vital move, the Seamen's Union black-banned Robe River ore, threatening exports to Japan.

As in the first Robe River dispute, and in accordance with New Right theory, Peko boss Charles Copeman threw law suits around like confetti. He tried to sue workers for breach of contract, then the unions under the Trade Practices Act, then individual unionists for "inciting, procuring and persuading others to break their work contracts". In all, 33 writs were issued.

But the battle was not just on the legal front. Now the ACTU's Simon Crean jawboned in negotiating sessions, the company advertised 32 workers' jobs and then broke a 100-strong picket at Cape Lambert with police.

Eventually, after throwing out

Round 2 ends at Robe River

Crean's first peace package (described by one worker as "achieving nothing for us"), the workers forced some concessions from Peko and returned to work. The concessions included preference for union labour, consultation before further changes, and withdrawal of all writs.

Simon Crean called it a victory for common sense, but AMWU convener Neil Flynn warned, "The strike is over but the dispute is not."

Indeed, it is not. While Peko has been forced back to the Industrial Relations Commission once more, their confrontations and the unions' earlier restraint has allowed them to rapidly dismantle work practices. As a result, they have forced up production from 100 tonnes per worker per shift before last July, to 200 tonnes by November.

Peko has also won on staff cuts. After 170 workers took the company's redundancy package in July, more quit by December, and 300 left during the latest strike. Peko has agreed to rely on natural wastage rather than retrenchments from now on, a move that will still run down staffing while saving on redundancy pay-outs.

The resistance of Peko's workers, however, means that the rest of the ruling class is not convinced about following its tactics.

Peko has shown that it can force the pace of change, but at the cost of jeopardising Australia's iron ore exports to Japan, which are vital to the economy, through industrial disruption.

For Peko, which is only Australia's third biggest producer, this is a risk worth taking. It aims to drive down production costs to undercut its competitors and increase its market share. It also wants to reorganise its resources for rapid expansion of ore production in the Pilbara.

For other iron producers with a bigger stake, the risks are not worth it. They want to maintain their share of the Japanese market by offering a more reliable source than their Brazilian and Indian competitors. This has become doubly crucial now that Japan is cutting orders by 15% and demanding up to a 10% price cut.

So it is not out of concern for workers, but for profits, that Hamersley Iron's Gordon Freeman says of Robe River's confrontations, "Gentlemen, there must be a better way."

For workers in an employers' system, however, there has only been one way to defend themselves. The Peko workers and their supporters in the Seamen's Union have just shown what that is.

— Liz Ross

WORKING CLASS HISTORY

Alexandra Kollontai's fight for the working woman

ACCORDING to some feminist critics of the Left, women have had little role to play in socialist revolutions, and even less to gain out of them.

Ironically, such comments only write out of history the contribution of some great women revolutionaries. One of the foremost of these was Alexandra Kollontai.

Kollontai was born into a ruling class Russian family in 1872. She first gained an insight into the condition of the working class when she visited her husband's factory.

Kollontai left her home and family to study overseas in 1898, but was never to return to them. For whilst overseas, she met with some of the great socialist thinkers of the time, notably Rosa Luxemburg. Her life was never to be the same again.

Kollontai started to speak at political meetings and wrote articles on the Finnish national question. Lenin saw these and in 1903 asked her to write for the newspaper *Vperyod*. Kollontai commenced an energetic program of propaganda work, speaking to workers' meetings across Europe in several languages. Her part in strike meetings and demonstrations often resulted in her deportation or arrest.

In Russia too, Kollontai was in the mainstream of political events. She took part in storming the Winter Palace in 1905, and fled the country to escape arrest in 1908. She returned in 1917, upon release from a Swedish prison, to take part in the Revolution and to become a member of the Bolshevik Central Committee.

IN EXILE, Kollontai had remained active in fighting for women's rights. Now, back in Russia, women's struggles were increasing as more and more women entered the workforce.

The February Revolution had been started by a march of women workers on International Women's Day, which Kollontai and Clara Zetkin had instigated in 1910.

When 8000 Petrograd landless went on strike for better wages and conditions, Kollontai took up their cause. She persuaded the Bolshevik Party to allocate strike funds,



Kollontai (centre) with Emma Goldman (left) in Moscow, 1921

and wrote an article for *Pravda* called "In the Front Line of Fire" stressing the importance of their struggle.

After the October Revolution, Kollontai became Commissar of Social Welfare. She awarded women the full civil rights they had been denied till then. Civil marriage and easy divorce were introduced, the rights of legitimate and illegitimate children were equalised by law, and women were awarded equal pay for equal work.

Kollontai introduced paid leave at childbirth, better working conditions during pregnancy, and post-natal centres. These were vital issues for women at a time when conditions in hospitals were unsanitary and surgical procedures akin to butchery.

KOLLONTAI was a prolific author, writing on Finland, on peace, and most notably on women's liberation and sexuality.

On sexuality, she was remarkably progressive for her time, particularly in contrast to Lenin, who was something of a prude by today's standards. Her pieces on love, for example, are still challenging 70 years after

class.

The Tenth Party Congress largely accepted this analysis, but fiercely attacked Kollontai's conclusions as anarcho-syndicalist.

Kollontai saw a widening gap between the leadership and the "creativity" of the masses. The solution was to immediately hand over power to the masses in what Kollontai described as a forced advance towards socialism. Some writers compare this idea to Rosa Luxemburg's "spontaneity of the masses", but Luxemburg was never drawn into the naive utopianism of Kollontai's follow-up idea that money and wages should immediately be abolished. This was at a time when production in Russia was down to 12.7% of the 1913 level!

THE Workers' Opposition also opposed the New Economic Policy, which Lenin saw as a necessary retreat into State capitalism in the economic circumstances.

Lenin had the ability to face up to reality, whereas Kollontai closed her eyes to immediate economic problems in pursuit of a solution to what she correctly saw as the degeneration of the party.

Kollontai lost her party position, and was sent overseas as an ambassador, a role which she played for the rest of her life. She became quite passive politically, and never again deviated from the party line right through the period of Stalinism and up to her death in 1956. She appears to have acknowledged her errors over the Workers' Opposition, but may have lost confidence in her political ideas and been too isolated from her comrades to remedy this.

Why Alexandra Kollontai escaped the Stalinist purges of the 1930s is not clear. Certainly, she failed to criticise Stalin, but this did not save other Bolsheviks, who similarly owed their loyalty to Stalin. Presumably Kollontai did not fight in the mid-to-late 1920s alongside others, like Trotsky, to preserve the revolutionary current which could have resisted the Stalinist machine.

But her political decline in her later life is in no way diminished by the part she played in the Russian Revolution and in the struggle for women's liberation. And a great revolutionary.

— Dorothy Morgan

SOCIALIST STANDPOINTS

REVOLUTION. To many, the word conjures up images of blood flowing in the streets. Which is, of course, just what our rulers want in their ideological war on socialism.

Yet capitalism, the system our rulers defend, is far more brutal and barbaric than any revolution could ever be.

Every day, capitalism condemns two-thirds of the world to hunger, despite being able to feed us all. Every day, it kills 50,000 humans through starvation, lack of sanitation and appalling living standards. In the third world, it keeps 100 million people homeless.

From the Middle East to the Falklands, there are bloody squabbles between national ruling classes. In the Iran-Iraq war, over one million Iranians have died in the senseless slaughter.

Even in Australia, capitalism is a violent system. It established itself here by murdering thousands of Aborigines. Each year, the system kills hundreds of workers and maims thousands through unsafe working conditions. One fifth of children live below the poverty line.

Socialists want to replace this inherently violent system with one in which everybody's basic needs will be satisfied, where war is a thing of the past, and where we can all work happily and safely.

YET TO achieve this new society, the working class will need to take up arms.

There may well be some bloodshed. This bloodshed arises because of the reaction of the ruling class to mass movements for social change. The ruling class may be a small minority, but it controls the army and will never give up its position in society without a fight unless the forces ranged against it are totally overwhelming.

Working class revolutions of the past have been relatively peaceful affairs in themselves.

The Paris Commune in 1871, Russia in 1917, Spain in 1936, Hungary in 1956 and Portugal in 1974 all involved almost no loss of life until the ruling class launched its counter-revolution. In the Russian Revolution, only 17 people lost their lives when the Bolshevik-led workers seized power. The ruling class response was to mount a civil war, backed by intervention from 19 Western armies including Australia's, in which millions died.

The reason for the relatively peaceful nature of working class



20,000 were shot after the Paris Commune was crushed in 1871: counter-revolution is the real killer

Come the bloody revolution?

revolution itself is the pre-eminence of workers in capitalist production, which gives them immense social power, and the discipline the working class has to have to seize factories and set up workers' councils — two key steps of most workers' revolutions.

By contrast, recent struggles for national liberation in Zimbabwe and Nicaragua were prolonged and bloody civil wars. The fighting was done by guerrillas based on the peasantry, a scattered and relatively weak class socially. In Nicaragua, the fighting only ended when the urban working class and the city poor took up the struggle.

SOCIAL democrats argue that gradual parliamentary



Mossadegh's arrest in 1953: 25 years of the Shah's brutality ensued

they have also made it more vulnerable — and not just to individual "computer hackers" or spies like Christopher Boyce. The new technologies have given whole new layers of strategically placed workers — like bank workers — the ability to throw the system into chaos.

As for weaponry, a small standing army like Australia's, no matter how well-armed, would be easily brushed aside by any genuinely mass revolutionary movement.

Larger armies invariably rely on conscripts, to avoid ruinous cost to the state. A number of great workers' revolutions in the past have involved worker and peasant conscripts joining the working class movement.

THE GREAT German Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg, did not imagine the revolution to be a frontal attack on the armed forces of the state.

In her opinion, the prerequisite for an uprising was a deep demoralisation among the troops. Agitation would pave the way, and any fighting would merely complete the process. Victory depended on the defection of strong sections of the military to the revolution.

Portugal in 1974 was a good case in point. Tired of its ruinous colonial wars in Africa, a reform group in the army overthrew the fascist dictatorship. Workers responded by taking over their factories and marching in the streets. The only people killed were secret police.

Likewise, the Shah of Iran crumbled in 1979. His army was the fourth largest in the world, armed by the US and backed by the vicious SAVAK secret police. But it was useless to him when it split in the face of a mass anti-imperialist uprising in the cities.

Nor, since Vietnam, has it been so easy for imperialism to intervene to put down rebellions to invade Nicaragua. So anti-imperialist activity is an important insurance policy for the socialist movement worldwide.

The power and the discipline of the working class in an advanced capitalist country means that revolution need not be bloody. If the workers, the great bulk of society, are able to split the army, or to confront it with their own militia and social power, they may well find that the ruling class gives up without a fight.

And the longer we put off that revolution, the more people capitalism will kill in its own "non-violent" ways.

— John Pasant

REVIEWS

Youth with bark and no bite

EVERY generation of rebellious youth gets its own movie . . . *Blackboard Jungle, Rebel Without A Cause, Easy Rider.*

Sooner or later someone had to make *Dogs In Space*, Richard Lowenstein's look at Australian youth of the late 1970s.

Like the dogs who went up in the early space probes, that generation was trapped in circumstances beyond its control. The prosperity and radical optimism of the late sixties were gone. Instead we had mass unemployment and the demise of the student and women's movements.

On the campuses, students put their heads down to work and get a job. Elsewhere, youth turned to the apolitical ritziness of disco, or to the more rebellious nihilism of punk. Communal living became less a political statement, and more an economic necessity if you wanted to get out of home.

Dogs In Space looks at the passing parade through such a nominally communal house, based on one in which Lowenstein himself lived. The film loosely hangs on an affair between Sam, a monosyllabic, self-centred punk singer, and Anna, a downwardly mobile nurse.

Sam introduces Anna to drugs, and eventually she overdoses. This aspect has caused most debate about the film, which is a shame, as it is rather trite.

The Sam-Anna affair is really quite secondary. The strength of *Dogs In Space* is the way it captures the spirit — or perhaps lack of spirit — of the times.

A quietly manic despair is everywhere. From the squallor of the house, to the spaced-out figures watching static on TV, to the rolling of a crowded Volkswagen, to Sam's apellike grunts, to the drunken parties, to the burning of a TV in the street, to Anna's eventual death, this is youth going nowhere, albeit with a certain grunge style.

The radical postures on the wall are just a passing nod to a lost sense of political purpose. Two brilliant scenes, with Sam's and then Anna's middle-class mothers, bring home the schism with the older generation.

But like so many films of its kind, *Dogs In Space* perfectly captures the problem, yet suggests no answers.

The three political figures who bob up are ridiculed out of sight;

a jargon-babbling girl from the Socialist Youth Alliance, a man-bating lesbian and a hectoring black activist. Coming from the same film-maker, who made *Strikebound*, about an inspiring coalminers' strike in the Depression, these clichés are disappointing. Idealizing the Left of the past and mocking it today is easy, but a cop-out all the same.

If *Dogs In Space* does have a success story, it is Luchio, the engineering student in the front room. He is the exact counterpoint to Anna — male, non-Anglo, upwardly mobile, and determined to stay on the straight and narrow.

Luchio eventually passes his exams, by heroically ignoring all distractions. (Including his fat ex-girlfriend, who moves in to provide Lowenstein with a source of very cheap and sexist laughs.)

And that, if you want it, is the message of *Dogs In Space*. Rebels without a cause are doomed; you may as well go back into the system and, like Luchio, play by the rules.

But rebels with a cause? That movie remains to be made. Will the youth of the late 1980s be the ones to inspire it? Here's hoping . . .

— Alec Kahn

SCIFI



Voyage to socialism

IN THE year 2080, the spaceship Mayflower II arrives from Earth to "liberate" the socialist planet Chiron. The Mayflower represents the capitalist American New Order. It is armed to the teeth.

The clash between the two systems is the subject of James P. Hogan's *Voyage From Yesterday*, a thrilling cross between an underdog Western, *Star Wars* and the *Communist Manifesto*. James Hogan shows us the promise of socialism. On Chiron, everything is free. There is no money. Robots and automated factories and mines produce an abundance of wealth.

The nature of work has changed completely. There is no wage slavery. People work voluntarily to gain respect and to contribute to the common good. Work is flexible. One woman teaches English, works with electronics and installs plant



Headed nowhere: Sam and Anna in *Dogs In Space*

wiring.

The Chironians have the time to produce high quality goods and to develop technology far in advance of Earth. They are free of greed, sex stereotypes, restrictive moral codes and religious hangups. There are lots of kids.

On this planet of wealth, the capitalist system displays all its faults.

At one stage, the Earthpeople set up a small capitalist enclave. They create their own currency, introduce passports and impose import duty on from Chiron. The Earth manufacturers now have a captive market for their inferior goods. Free services are declared illegal. The Chironians cheerfully continue to fix taps, teach classes and polish teeth for nothing, and then line up to be arrested.

Most people soon realise that the enclave is "at war with a prison and a hell a self-proclaimed lunatic asylum." They leave in droves. This is the subtle method of warfare of the Earthpeople. They mix with the Chironians, give them houses and offer them work appropriate to their interests. When faced with a choice between a low-paid job where you are bossed around

like an idiot, and the freedom and wealth of the Chironians, what would you choose?

But some Earthpeople want to retain their positions of privilege, to be rulers of Chiron, to have power. They control the weapons on the Mayflower II. Do the Chironians have any weapons to defend themselves? Will they fight back? What happens next is a bit too cutesy for my taste, but you will have to read the book to find the answers.

Sadly, *Voyage From Yesterday* makes no useful suggestions on the problem of how to get to a capitalist to a socialist society. James Hogan's answer is to colonise other planets and start again. Socialist Action's answer, a revolution, by the working class, is a little too down-to-earth for his brand of science fiction.

Still, *Voyage From Yesterday* is a great book. Read it.

— Patricia Langenacker

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SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 15

Freedom of the press barons

LIKE reptiles trying to swallow each other, the media take-over barons battle on.

The Goanna has already disappeared. But we, the reading and viewing public, will suffer the indignation.

The problem, as liberal commentators tell us, is "media concentration". It is hard enough to get the truth from three newspaper networks. It will be even harder getting it from two.

Yet capitalist competition, which these same liberal commentators praise, always produces "concentration". Karl Marx observed last century that "One capitalist destroys many". Indeed, the Herald & Weekly Times itself has gobbled up 48% of the national newspaper market. Liberal concern about concentration is a touch hypocritical and late.

Labor's planned change to media laws is behind the take-over fever. Instead of the old limit of two TV stations, press barons will be able to control up to 75% of the national TV or newspaper market, provided they don't have major holdings of both in a city.

Ostensibly, this will encourage TV networking, while still preventing a media monopoly in any one city. Networking will produce "more economic, imaginative investment in programs", claims Bob Hawke.

In reality, networking already exists. Owners have clubbed together into the Seven, Nine and Ten networks. Labor's legislation will merely allow one owner to take over a whole network.

Labor's hidden aim seems to have been to help Kerry Packer, whom Hawke and Keating regard as a mate, at the expense of the Herald & Weekly Times, whom they see as hostile. The new law would have let Packer expand his TV empire from 40% of the national audience, while forcing the H&WT to sell some holdings. This made the H&WT deal take-over material, since its flagship, the Melbourne Herald, is in decline and it is unable to break Fairfax's stranglehold on classified advertising.

Since Packer's Channel Nine slants its news to the right, just as much as other stations, Labor's desire to help him was stupid. It was also futile, as Packer values Hawke's mentorship at somewhat less than the billion dollars Alan Bond offered him. Keating is now wooing Bond, being a regular guest on his boat during the America's Cup.

Bond will manipulate his new



Rupert Murdoch with his Fleet Street lieutenants on *The Times*

TV network, which will have 59% of the national audience to suit himself. Last year he withdrew \$5 million worth of advertising from the Fairfax press, after the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported a WA investigation into Bond's tax-dodging family trusts. Don't count on too much fearless reporting of the alcohol problem from the Nine network from now on.

RUPERT Murdoch looks like the other big winner, if he can get around his citizenship problems.

Bill Hayden's complaint that the is now a "foreigner" taking over the H&WT is just chauvinist doublethink. No-one objected when, as a dinkum Aussie, Murdoch took over other countries' newspapers.

There are much sounder reasons for disliking Murdoch. His *New York Post* was so biased in backing New York mayor Ed Koch's election that 50 of its 60 reporters signed a protest petition. Reagan supporters held a thank-you dinner in gratitude for Murdoch's backing in 1980. Congressman Jack Kemp told the guests:

"Mr Rupert Murdoch used the editorial page, the front page and every page necessary to elect Mr Reagan President."

Little wonder that both Labor and the Libs said they would accept "market forces", rather than oppose Murdoch's take-over bid. They did not want to offend a man who might control 60% of newspapers sold in Australia.

Seeing
Red!
with Alec Kahn

Capital is one problem, printing presses and TV stations cost millions. Income is another, newspapers need advertising to survive, since sales alone do not cover costs. And while advertisers cannot dictate to press barons — Bond hurt himself more than Fairfax when he withdrew his advertising — they can certainly blackmail smaller operations. For example, the *Australian Jewish Herald* was shut down some time back by a Zionist-called advertising boycott over an article mildly critical of Israel.

Distribution is a third problem. When millionaire Gordon Barton began the left-liberal *Nation Review*, newsgasts would not touch it; they were in the big companies' pockets. Barton eventually got it out through milk bars, but a radical newspaper would have trouble even with that. Labor Party members could, in theory, sell an ALP paper, but the party is simply not built around rank-and-file activism.

Finally, the labour movement itself is so bureaucratized that any newspaper it produced would inevitably reflect this in style and content. Just wade through the ALP's tedious internal newspapers to see what I mean.

For all their weaknesses, the papers of the revolutionary left are more impressive than anything the ALP has produced. In the long run, that is where any genuinely alternative mass newspaper is likely to come from.

Because at least the revolutionary left has the vision of involving thousands of ordinary working-class people in contributing news, selling and raising money for such a newspaper. Not merely as a liberal exercise in providing alternative information, but as a weapon in campaigning for their interests — much as Rupert Murdoch's papers campaign for his.

Organising around such a newspaper, we might one day be able to make our own take-over bid. One where we seize the bosses' printing presses and TV stations, and create a media open to all workers' viewpoints in proportion to their following. Such a media could be a cornerstone of a socialist workers' democracy.

Now that would be a take-over bid really worth investing in!

SOCIALIST ACTION



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JOH'S UGLY GRAB FOR POWER



Don't wait for Labor to stop him...



• The crisis, Kremlin style

• Land rights in Qld?

THE LAW

Equal rights to scab?

THE NEW Right has had another win with a recent decision in Victoria against compulsory unionism.

The state Equal Opportunity Board (EOB) decided that when Frank Hein was sacked for refusing to join the Metal Workers Union, he was a victim of political discrimination. He was awarded nearly \$10,000 compensation.

The decision was greeted by an immediate chorus of praise from New Right heavy Andrew Hay and Liberal shadow minister Neil Brown.

This is a bit odd really. In the first place, these gentlemen have been stern critics of the very existence of the equal opportunity legislation. Secondly, although they claim to want workplace agreements to replace state intervention, they happily ignored the fact that workers and management in this case support the closed shop arrangement and opposed Hein in the EOB.

Although it may seem a matter of individual choice whether or not to join a union, there are issues that override this. The right of workers to defend their wages and conditions depends on their ability to stand united against management. That is what unions are all about.

To do that, they need strong unions which are able at the workplace level to resist all

I CAN WORK. YOU CAN STRIKE.



I CAN WORK WHILE YOU STRIKE



NOW THAT'S OPPORTUNITY!



Hein: win for New Right

attacks. The closed shop is simply the logical extension of this.

Nor is it any solution to argue, as some people do, that workers who refuse to join unions should be denied wage rises and other conditions won by unionists. This would simply create a serious division at the very heart of the workforce and give management the tool it needed to undercut conditions — only hiring those prepared to work outside union conditions.

NAURU

Imperialism, Aussie style

BOB HAWKE and Bill Hayden are fond of criticising the French for their appalling behaviour in the Pacific — and rightly so. But there is more than a touch of hypocrisy in their stand.

Take the case of Nauru, a tiny island republic, formerly ruled by Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Its sole redeeming feature as far as these countries were concerned was its bird shit — tonnes and tonnes of it, deposited over thousands of years and calcified into a rich fertiliser.

The three nations set up a Commission to mine and sell the superphosphate, paying the islanders a pittance of three cents a tonne. As the island is made of nothing but phosphate, every tonne removed left that much less of the island to live on until long after the United Nations was suggesting that the 6000 inhabitants should move to an island off Queensland. They refused, choosing instead to import soil to reconstruct their ravaged homeland.

Now the supply of phosphate is just about exhausted and the Commission is being wound up. The three countries have a cosy little arrangement to divide up its treasury of \$50 million among themselves.

Not surprisingly, the Nauruans are not too keen on this. The profits of the Commission were

made from Nauru and should remain there.

The governments argue that as Nauru was given a trust fund when it became independent in 1968, the islanders should shut up. The fund is currently worth \$160 million — little compensation for a land so savagely looted and left with no alternative source of income by the outgoing colonial masters.

The Nauru government is appealing to other Pacific states and the United Nations for support.

Next time you see Hawke pontificating about the horrible French, give a thought to the victims of our grubby imperialism.

GAY RIGHTS

Don't care, says Howe

ROLF ZUBER is dying of AIDS. He could be in hospital. Instead, his lover of four years, David Zuber, decided to care for him as long as possible at home.

Australia's social security system provides for just this sort of situation through a carer's pension. This is paid to people who cannot work because they are looking after a spouse (married or defacto) who needs constant attention.

But there is a problem. Rolf and David Zuber are a gay couple and the Department of Social Security doesn't recognise gay relationships.

Nor is it about to if the minister, ALP "leftwinger" Brian Howe, has his way. He has raised the frightful prospect that if gay defacto could claim a pension, then it would be hard to exclude "aunts and uncles and second cousins and next-door neighbours and so on".

Now actually, this doesn't make any sense. Either there is a defacto relationship (be it with a boyfriend, aunt, cousin) or there is not. What he really means is that gay relationships are not on a par with heterosexual relationships — they are, at best, secondary.

And his government is certainly not about to start throwing its dollars into "deviant" lifestyles. Not with an election coming up.

PHILIPPINES

Investing in Cory

WONDERING what Kerry Packer will do with the squillions he got for selling his TV empire



Aquino: business likes her

to Alan Bond?

Maybe he'll invest them in the Philippines.

The Manila stock exchange has risen 240% since Ferdinand Marcos took up residence in Hawaii. No foreign company has been forced to close through Cory Aquino's "peace power", and New Zealand trade secretary John Waugh says, "I think it's one of the safest places to trade in Asia."

For a long time, the Philippines under Marcos was a good place to invest because of its low wages, lack of effective trade unions, forced removals of peasants from their land, and the monopoly enjoyed by Marcos cronies over the economy.

But in recent years, rising resistance to Marcos put a dampener on investment. Growth fell by a disastrous 9.3% in 1984 and 1985.

Confidence recovered somewhat when the military coup and associated demonstrations brought Aquino to power. The 1986 growth rate edged out of negative figures to 0.13%.

Whether Aquino can build this up depends on her keeping a lid on worker and peasant struggles without the bloodshed we saw recently at Mendiola. Bridge clashes which only heighten the sense of instability.

It also depends on whether she can prevent a resurgence of corruption and cronyism. It didn't help that in January, supporters of former Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile released telephone taps which had Aquino expressing regret that her conferees had not bought shares in anticipation of the stockmarket rise after her speech to the US Congress.

Land rights in Qld? Blacks wait for the catch

"I'VE never done other than try to help these people," said Joh Bjelke-Petersen piously when, to general surprise, it was leaked last month that the Queensland cabinet proposed to offer some freehold land rights to Aborigines.

The land in question is 7.5 million acres of former reserve land in 27 areas. Until now, under the state's Deeds of Grant in Trust, Aboriginal and Islander Community Councils have had no real control over the land.

No-one has yet seen anything but get alone the small print. Given Bjelke-Petersen's past record, much of the black community is justifiably suspicious. One black community services worker in Brisbane summed up a widespread feeling:

"He's never done anything good for us in his life. It's not that long since the '60s when we were working like slaves for no wages on his peanut farm at Kingaroy."

Past gains forced from the state government have always invariably gone with one hand and taken with the other.

Black workers on reserves won minimum award wages in January, following Cherbourg crane driver Warren Fisher's test case. But the response of Community Services Minister Katter was simple:

"I am funding part of that pay increase by cutting back on the number of executive jobs that exist in a number of communities through a policy of non-replacement."

And the \$4 million owing in back pay to 1130 Aboriginal workers will not be forthcoming.

Black activist Bob Weatherall suggests that Expo 88 and the Bicentennial are possible motives in the government's tack on land rights.

Cabinet will not want a repeat of the black anger that boiled over into demonstrations during the Commonwealth games, he believes. "They'll want to appear a just state before the international media."

Certainly, the official response given by Katter for the switch reeks of cynicism. The proposed freehold title "puts us in a formidable moral position for the next election", he says. Voters who recall Joh's history of racism and repression may tend to disagree.

The state government probably also hopes to open the way for tourist and mining development of some former reserve lands, courtesy of a few pliant Community Council leaders.

As Bob Weatherall comments: "People anywhere who live in conditions of squalor only want to have the best. There are individuals on reserves who have their own self interest at heart and not the Community's."

Mining is already ravaging sacred sites on non-reserve lands. South African mining company Consolidated Rutile is plundering Stradbroke Island off Brisbane to the tune of a \$10 million profit last year. Brian Coghill, who lives on Stradbroke, said:

"The Blue Lake on Stradbroke is the most sacred place and when we were kids we weren't allowed to go near it. It was crystal clear, but now they are mining just over the top and the water is changing."

What gives Con Rutile the whip hand on Stradbroke is that mining is the only employment apart from Council work available on the island. Blacks make up 70% of the mining workforce. "But a lot of people aren't thinking what they'll do, or what it will be like, when the mining's finished," says Brian.

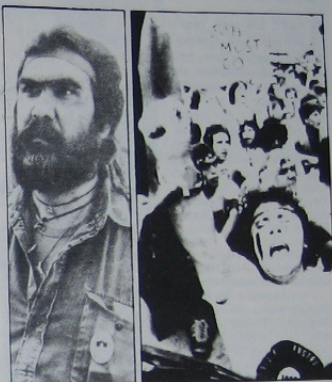
No Aborigines live on nearby Moreton Island, subject of Democrat Senator Macklin's recent Private Member's Bill aimed at stopping mining by Renison Goldfields Consolidated.

They were all forcibly removed from their own land in reserves. Despite the Chamber of Mines' assertion that greenies are "manipulating" the Aborigines, many blacks are deeply worried about the preservation of the island and its sacred sites.

The state of justice for Aborigines in Queensland is a further comment on the government's real attitude to blacks.

Blacks have got no satisfaction following the police invasion of a peaceful dance at Rosalie last year, when 60 Aborigines were arrested and hundreds bashed. They are now trying for a Federal inquiry.

Following recent clashes in Goondiwindi, the 17 blacks charged are fighting in Boggabilla (NSW) not to be extradited for trial in one of the most racist towns in Queensland.



Bob Weatherall, black marchers for land rights: is Cabinet putting on a good face for Expo 88?

The white mayor of Goondiwindi went on TV after the clashes to refer to Aborigines as "boongs" and "abos", and the local mission had six shots fired into it.

"Moral" gestures from Joh's cabinet notwithstanding, racism is alive and well in Queensland.

— Carolé Ferrier

suburbs are still waiting for decent services.

At a meeting on February 18, residents, travellers and transport workers heard from South Melbourne councillor Ann Fahey why Labor is so keen to introduce light rail in their neighbourhood, in spite of the \$40 million cost.

Fahey pointed to planned development projects on the south bank of the Yarra and in Port Melbourne as the key. With LRV's — which can run in street tracks — replacing trams, the station land and river bridge currently occupied by the lines could be used by freeways serving these developments.

Happily, those at the meeting had the right idea of how to fight this issue. A railway worker who spoke told us not to place too much hope in letters to politicians or in rail union bureaucracies. He called instead for direct action — particularly by transport workers — to save the lines.

Labor's repeated attacks have left these workers demoralised. Their union leaders' mistrust of rank and file action has prevented real resistance.

But the light rail issue could mobilise enough community support to let them break out of this straitjacket, and provide us with a model of how to fight government attacks and wins.

— Robert Stainby

MELBOURNE

Light rail on wrong track

TRIPLED journey times, no access for disabled passengers, lost transport jobs and parks replaced by freeways.

All this and more awaits users of Melbourne's Port Melbourne and St Kilda railway lines if Victoria's Labor government goes ahead with plans to replace these services with big trams, or "light rail vehicles" (LRV's).

During the previous Liberal government's attacks on public transport, the ALP wood voters went with promises of light rail being used to service Melbourne's transport-starved outer suburbs.

In office, however, Labor has proved almost as ruthless as the Liberals. Fares have continued to skyrocket, transport workers have repeatedly found themselves under attack, and the outer

Colonialism and cronies: PNG's double burden

LATE last year, two of Papua New Guinea's leading politicians were accused of corruption and faced calls for their resignation or dismissal.

The Minister for Primary Industry, Sir Iambakei Okuk, was accused of consorting with Australian criminal identities and of using stand-over tactics against political opponents. Opposition calls for his dismissal petered out when it became known that he was dying of cancer. His death in mid-November triggered off rioting in the capital, Port Moresby, and numerous provincial towns.

Then it was revealed that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Planning, Sir Julius Chan, had organised the purchase of more than 800,000 shares for himself, his family, his businesses and his People's Progress Party in Placer Pacific, an Australian mining company.

The share float was meant to benefit the average Papua New Guinean. Needless to say it didn't. His opponents alleged a clear conflict of interest. Chan had been the minister responsible for negotiating the terms of the share float with Placer.

The refusal of the Prime Minister, Paia Wingti, to act against Chan, and the revelation that numerous politicians, judges and senior public servants had broken the law in buying shares for themselves led to a mass student-led demonstration outside Parliament.

The demonstration came to the little. Despite calls for the dissolution of Parliament and the sacking of all leaders who had broken the law, the Prime Minister was loudly cheered when he appeared on Parliament's steps to tell the assembled crowd that the matter was far more complex than they realised and so it would be better if they all went home. They did.

A *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial said that the Chan allegations summed up the attitude of many Australians. PNG is a Third World country, it said, and what is unacceptable in Collins St or Pitt St is not necessarily unacceptable in Port Moresby. Considering recent share-scandal revelations about Ivan



Electioneering, Okuk style: 25-kina notes to buy votes

Boesky in the US and Guinness in the UK, virtually anything is acceptable behaviour anywhere in the financial world. One rule is constant: Thou shalt not get caught.

ALTHOUGH Chan remains Deputy Prime Minister, the affair has seriously damaged his credibility and has apparently worsened his already fragile relations with the Prime Minister.

Similarly, the allegations against Okuk, combined with his inability to deal with the coffee rust crisis (by 1990 up to 70 per cent of PNG's coffee crop may have been wiped out by the rust), may have led to his sacking had he not died.

Okuk's funeral gained more coverage in the Australia media than the allegations. When his body was taken to Parliament House for people to pay their respects, it was met by thousands of mourners. Completely inexperienced in handling mass demonstrations, the police adopted too aggressive a stance, and were attacked, with vehicles set ablaze.

In other parts of Moresby, shops still trading were stoned and looted, and people who continued to work were attacked. Most of the "rioters" were genuinely grieved that

people were working during a period of mourning. Some of the rioters were "raskols": disaffected unemployed youths who used the opportunity to attack the police.

Again, many Australians saw the rioting as proof that Papua New Guineans really weren't ready to run their own affairs. This is a constant theme running through Australia-PNG relations.

Yet much of Papua New Guinea's "instability" is a direct product of Australian colonialism. Australian companies ripped off PNG's mineral resources and continue to do so. Others, notably Burns Philp and Adelaide Steamship, dominate the rest of the economy.

The Australian colonial administration left PNG with a woefully inadequate education system (under 50% of children get primary schooling), no proper transportation, an unwieldy bureaucracy and a parliamentary system irrelevant to the needs of a Third World nation.

POSSIBILITIES of real change seem remote at present.

The party system in PNG is so fragmented that all future governments will probably be

multi-party coalitions: the Wingti Government is a six-party coalition. Parties are mainly Moresby-based, with very little contact with the grassroots, and none have any effective links to trade unions.

Union activity is minimal to nil, largely because industry is so small-scale. Over 70% of production is done by work-places employing fewer than twenty people.

PNG politicians talk endlessly of mass participation in the democratic process, but the reality is otherwise.

Fifty per cent of politicians lose their seats at election time. When election to Parliament is seen as a surefire way to make a lot of money, most MPs spend their five years gathering wealth rather than tending to the needs of their constituents — and "greasemen" (corrupt businessmen) from overseas are only too aware of this.

A recent issue of *Australian Business* carried a cover story on PNG:

"It's got gold. It's got oil. It's got Australian investors. It's Papua New Guinea and it's ready to boom."

Gold and oil finds, it is said, may make the people of PNG among the richest in the Third World. Some chance!

YET THE Australian Business readers who are rushing to invest in PNG may unwittingly be aiding a genuine democratic transformation of the country's politics.

For gold and oil fields mean gold and oil miners. And eleven years ago, it was the miners of PNG's other major mineral resource, the copper on Bougainville Island, who waged the country's greatest worker revolt when they struck and rioted against exploitation by CRA.

That revolt was crushed when the Somare government sent in riot police to arrest 1000 miners and jail their entire union executive. Apart from a nationwide hospital strike in 1979, PNG unionism has been quiescent ever since.

Now, with gold and oil development imminent, PNG may just see the emergence of a new, strategically-placed workforce that can once again place working class militancy on the political agenda.

And what a refreshing change that will be from the cronism and wheeler-dealing that dominate PNG politics today.

— David Greason

SOUTH Africa's white minority has plenty of problems to consider in their coming whites-only election, even apart from the still-rumbling black insurgency.

South Africa's economy is on the skids. From 1981 to 1985 there was a one percent fall in economic growth each year. Unemployment, which stood at one million at the onset of the present crisis, is now at least four million and rising.

There is an ongoing slaughter of jobs in the motor, metals and construction industries. Many white capitalists are showing their lack of faith in the system by refusing to invest.

In the black township of Soweto, present population two million, each dwelling contains from twelve to eighteen inhabitants.

But the white election will not address itself to any of these issues. One issue, and one alone, will be up for consideration: how to maintain the privileged status of the white community.

A variety of options is on offer. The ruling Nationalist party promises more of the same. On the one hand: partial "reforms" like the removal of the ban on "mixed" marriages, modifications of influx control regulations, and the coloured and Indian houses of parliament. Nothing too threatening — and certainly nothing approaching one person one vote in an undivided South Africa.

On the other hand: savage repression. Two states of emergency so far, and a new set of press regulations which make reporting the crisis almost impossible.

YET DESPITE Botha's crackdown, South Africa's whites are not happy with his government.

This is especially true of those sections of the white population who are least secure in their privileged status — the white workers and lower middle-class. The economic crisis has affected them too. White, coloured and Indian unemployment was up by 130% in 1985. There have been cutbacks in the white workforce. Unions in government transport accepted cutbacks of 50,000 jobs as necessary — and further 25,000 would be cut.

Any concession to blacks is a further threat to these people. Botha's reforms, while meaningless to the black majority, have created a considerable white backlash. The Nationalists are being challenged by various "ultra-right" political forces.



AWB members: building stormtrooper units

South Africa's ugly Right lines up for election

In 1969, a collection of right-wing Nationalists split away to form the HNP, or "True" Nationalist party. The HNP is certainly the most extreme parliamentary force of the ultra-right. Its appeals to the Afrikaner farmers, lower middle class and workers against the Nationalist "traitors" are mixed with near-fascist rhetoric on the virtues of Afrikaner nationalism and the plots of monopoly capitalism.

The HNP demands a permanent curfew on all blacks, with curfew breakers to be shot on sight. It calls for undivided apartheid, no rights for blacks outside the so-called "homelands", and an end to representation for coloureds and Indians. Its philosophy was summed up by one of its MPs:

"If, from a policy of racial separation, you first begin to place your foot on the slippery slope to reform, you will slide on your behind right into Black majority rule."

IN 1982, a rather more staid Nationalist grouping broke off to form the Conservative party.

Less fiery than the HNP, and without the trappings of Afrikaner nationalism, the Conservatives represent agrarian capital (under threat from economic crisis and black revolt), as

assault on the white state. Yet that will not stop white workers taking up the AWB's simple solutions if they feel sufficiently threatened by economic crisis and the demands of the black population.

NOT ALL opposition to the Nationalists comes from the right. On the other side is South Africa's loyal opposition, the Progressive Federal Party (PFP). Based itself on the inevitability of reform, the PFP wants negotiations with the African National Congress with a view to neutralising its influence. Its leader, Colin Eglin, said in April last year:

"We must recognise that the ANC does enjoy widespread support... I believe it is necessary to explore tactics which we can use to counter the activities of the ANC."

It condemns all violence, whether from the state or the liberation forces, and calls for "tough action" against

"anarchists and terrorists who attempt to impose their ideology or to satisfy their lust for power"

The PFP's opposition to the system is in reality no opposition at all. It does not support universal franchise in an undivided South Africa, and is fundamentally on the lookout for a coalition with the "enlightened" (read: not totally bestial) wing of the Nationalist party.

The result of the election will probably be an erosion of the Nationalist majority from the right. Botha's post-election options are limited. Reform has not worked except to infuriate the whites, while repression can only keep the lid on for a limited period.

For the vast majority, who is not involved in this election at all, the struggle continues.

— David Lockwood



Conservatives boss Treurnicht main force on ultra-right

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 5

More Robes in closet

It was great to read Carol Ferner's article about life in Joh's gaols. At a time when Tropical Cyclone Joh seems about to hit Canberra in a blaze of favourable publicity, it was good to be reminded that the old bastard is still a raving reactionary who hates poofers, dykes, aborigines, unmarried mothers, children and anyone to the left of Charles Gopeman. The article provided plenty of ammunition to argue with people about the "Joh"

phenomenon.

I also want to take issue with Liz Ross's analysis of the impact of the Robe River dispute on the Australian ruling class.

It seems to me that in their saner moments, the gurus of the "New Right" understand the labour theory of value and the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. Peko was able to increase productivity from 100 tonnes

worker/shift to 200 tonnes because they were able to drive down the working conditions of the mine workers — thus saving themselves money and temporarily increasing their profits at the expense of other iron ore miners.

It seems to me then that the laws of capitalism apply in this case, and that other mining companies will be forced to

adopt Peko's tactics to try and claw back the competitive advantage.

In which case I think I'll be seeing more Robe River type disputes and more bosses jumping into bed with H.R. Nicholls and John Stone.

The disputes within the ruling class are more over timing than tactics, and it won't be long before those that recently disassociated themselves from Peko's strategy adopt it themselves.

— Martin Hirst, Sydney

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



Reagan shows off his policy towards the poor

ORIGINS of Reaganomics... In the 1951 B-grade movie *Hong Kong*, Rhonda Fleming pleads with co-star Ronald Reagan that "The homeless, the old, the children — they'll need more help than ever!"

"They've always been kicked around," he shrugs, "they're used to it." Hasn't changed a bit.

Will marijuana appear in the "common catalogue" of plants that anyone can legally grow? And if not, which tobacco company will be first to the Patents Office to copyright it?

WITH Labor's impending Plant Variety Rights legisla-

FEMALE stereotypes... A Barbie Doll, blown up to life size, would have a figure of 39-21-33.

SAYINGS of the people who rule us...
 • Chinese leader Deng Hsiao Ping on demos: "We can afford to shed some blood. Just try as much as possible not to kill anyone."
 • US House of Reps speaker Tip O'Neill on Reagan: "The truth is, he knows less than any President I've ever met."
 • Chairman of Directors Sir Keith MacPherson: "The Herald and Weekly Times is not for sale at any price."
 • The man he sold it to, Rupert Murdoch: "I think I would be a pity if I grew any bigger in Australia."
 • British social services minister Norman Fowler: "What exactly is oral sex?"
 • British education bureaucrat David Joseph: "The whole question of supplying condoms to school children has been greatly blown up."



Rupert Murdoch

• Two stories from the *London Independent*. Spot the difference if you can.

STORY ONE: Sir Jack Lyons, a financial adviser and company director, recently lost his job. One of his companies illicitly received 300,000 pounds from the brewers Guinness for supporting their takeover bid for Disillers (makers of Thalidomide and other fine products). This is illegal, and the recent revelation that Guinness has been greasing companies left, right and centre has led to a massive scandal. Sir Jack is a member of the conservative Carlton Club and a close friend of one M. Thatcher (Mrs). Criminal charges are not expected to be laid.

STORY TWO: Thomas O'Connell, a down-and-out alcoholic, stole a bust worth 250,000 pounds from a London church and sold it for 200 pounds to buy drink. He was jailed for four years at the Old Bailey.

Tough luck, Tommy. Cheers, Sir Jack, and have another one on us! You've had quite a few on us already.

DURING World War II, Aristotle Onassis used to sell oil to Germany, getting his payment in advance.

Next he would sell the location of his tankers to the British Navy, which would insure them. He would collect the insurance on the ships from Lloyds of London.

That gave Onassis triple profits on every voyage, and no need to pay the crew.

WEMENTION this in view of the jailing of James Saleam, leader of the arch-racist group National Action, for two

years for fraud. Saleam is definitely no Onassis. A Sydney court heard that he persuaded a reluctant housemate to include her valuable jewellery in an insurance policy on the group's HQ, where they both lived.

While she was out, Saleam was involved in stealing the jewellery and later selling it to raise funds for the group. Saleam then lodged a false insurance claim for the same purpose. The plot came unstuck when the housemate overheard a conversation about sharing out the insurance money.



Deng Hsiao Ping



CHEAP SHOTS

She went to the police, despite Saleam's threats against her children, and to "rearrange" her face. Now Saleam is going to have to "stop the Asian invasion" from behind bars. We wish him a long and enjoyable stay there.

A NEW dance called the Reform Shuffle is sweeping South Africa.

It consists of one step forward, two steps back and a quick hop to the right.

DID YOU know that Rupert Murdoch's latest company re-structure was his eighth in order to get around government controls on media ownership?

Some controls, huh?

NEW RIGHT theorist, Michael Porter, is hopping mad.

His New Right "think tank", the Centre of Policy Studies at Monash University, has just had its government grant slashed. It's totally unjustified, says Porter. Ah, the same old martyr's burning. But, Michael, we thought the New Right was all for cuts to government spending.

Mikhail Gorbachev's latest reforms have aroused the enthusiasm of many on the Left. The Communist Party of Australia has even sent him a congratulatory telegram. GRAHAM WILLETT casts a more critical eye over developments in Russia.

The crisis, Kremlin style



Gorbachev faces deep economic malaise

PRIVATISATION, deregulation, cuts to living standards... these are the policies of Reagan, Thatcher, Hawke — and now, in Russia, of Mikhail Gorbachev.

And in Russia, as elsewhere, these policies are a response to the crisis that has plagued the world economy since the early 1970s.

Today, the Kremlin itself admits the economic malaise. The recent Communist Party Congress pointed to

"the difficulties and the negative processes in socio-economic development, which made themselves felt in the 1970s and the early 1980s."

It noted declining growth and productivity, a slowdown in scientific progress, and economic imbalances.

New prime minister Nikolai Ryzhkov told the Congress that production targets in the latest Five Year Plan had not been met in oil, coal, consumer goods, chemicals, timber construction and agriculture.

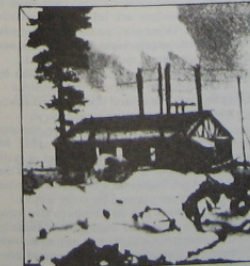
If that wasn't bad enough, he added:

"The unfavourable trends which were manifested in the development of the economy in the seventies, far from being alleviated, actually intensified in the early 1980s."

An economy in trouble, and getting worse. With that, as in the West, growing "social problems" — drug abuse, prostitution, official corruption, gangs of youth brawling in the streets...

BUT WHY? Surely Russia has not fallen victim to the world capitalist crisis — not after having supposedly abolished capitalism.

Certainly, that is not the Kremlin's explanation. It points to several, more-or-



Siberian prison camp: 200 dissidents freed, but most remain in jail

less coincidental recent developments.

Most important of these is the exhaustion of the extensive growth that once drove the economy forward. The economy can no longer be expanded just by building factories and filling them with surplus rural workers. In the 1930s and 40s, this simple process achieved up to 4% industrial growth. Today, population growth and the drift to the cities has dwindled. The rural economy actually needs the labour of 15 million city people at harvest time.

Secondly, many of the most accessible raw materials in the south and west have been used up. This means a greater reliance on the wealth of Siberia, which requires expensive new techniques and equipment, wage bonuses and high transport costs.

Thirdly, there is the escalating cost of the arms race, now some 10-12% of national product. Worse, unlike in the West, the technological breakthroughs in the arms industry do not flow on to other more backward sectors, so great is the gap in sophistication between them.

Finally, and this is not yet openly discussed, there is the cost of maintaining Russia's "allies". Handouts to Cuba and Vietnam are staggering. There is a vast, costly army in Eastern Europe, directed against the West and against the threat of national risings as have occurred in East Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. There is the hidden cost, too, of buying thirsty East European industrial products and expensive Cuban sugar when cheaper, better products are freely available on the world market.

All this is made worse, according to current thinking, by Party and government officials being slow to react to the problems due to increasing bureaucracy and a decline in dynamism.

EACH of these factors is important. But even together, they do not explain why the crisis has hit Russia now and in its particular present form.

To explain that, we must understand that despite the propaganda from both super-powers about Russian "socialism" Russia is actually a state capitalist economy.

It is a capitalism without factory owners and landlords. In their place a class of bureaucrats playing exactly the same role, drawing power and material privilege from their absolute control over the state which owns almost all productive property.

Russia's workers have a status no better than those in a giant factory in the West.

This is not the place for an extended discussion of the theory of state capitalism.

(Readers interested in that should see the Socialist Action pamphlet *State Capitalism and Marxist Theory*.) It is enough to point out here that as in Western capitalism, too Russia has suffered a sharp decline in its ruling class has been unable to arrest.

The government itself has provided figures showing a decline in the rate of return on investment (or the rate of profit) from 83% in 1960 to 63% in 1972. A more recent Western estimate says that the rate of return in Russia has declined by half between 1970 and 1985.

While these figures use different measures and are not directly comparable, they reveal the same grim trend. Profit rates are declining.

As in the West, this means a declining rate of growth in the economy as a whole. In the early 1980s, growth rates were about 11% a year. By 1980 they were down to 2-3%.

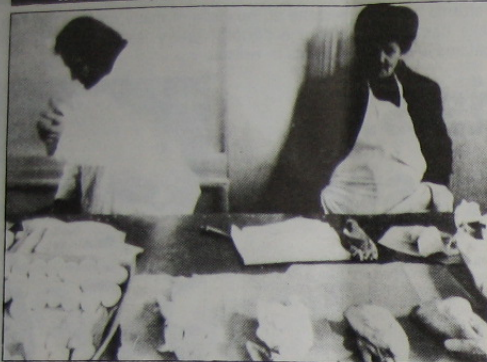
If Russia were the rational planned economy that its supporters claim, this would not matter. If production was according to what people want and need, declining profit rates would be irrelevant. Investment would continue, and there would be no decline in growth.

IN A PURE market economy, unprofitable businesses collapse.

With the growth of near-monopolies, Western capitalism has long since ceased to operate this way. Whole national economies are threatened by the collapse of major

(Continued page 8)

INTERNATIONAL



The private-sector market is being legally expanded; a Moscow family watches Gorbachev on the box



companies and sectors, and governments intervene more and more to prop up endangered enterprises.

Such propping up of inefficient industries is even more prevalent in Russia, where the state bureaucracy controls almost all investment.

Eventually, in Russia as in the West, the cost of maintaining weak sectors and enterprises drags down the economy as a whole. The pressure for "reform" and "rationalization" grows.

In Russia, these pressures have been mounting since the seventies. Not until Leonid Brezhnev, leader since 1965, died in 1982 did the first real attempts at reform begin.

Arms deal with Iran? I thought I was signing my sub to Socialist Action...



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Brezhnev was succeeded by former KGB head Yuri Andropov, who presented himself as the man to make the necessary changes. To show how serious he was, he launched a shake-up of the state railway system.

Andropov pointed out that railway inefficiencies were a problem for the whole system. Fully 3% of coal production was lost along the rail-tracks due to slack handling and holes in rail-tracks. He sacked the minister, poured in money for repairs, and offered 30-50% pay rises to encourage work discipline.

This was Andropov's model for future reform. It addressed specific problems, but ignored the underlying causes.

We will never know how far Andropov might have gone. Within a few months of his election, he fell ill, withdrew from active leadership, and died.

His replacement was Konstantin Chernenko, an old Brezhnev man — hopelessly addicted to the old methods of work discipline, centralisation and exhortations to work harder. A furious debate began between supporters and opponents of change that was only resolved when Chernenko died, bringing Gorbachev to power.

GORBACHEV was young by recent standards, and had a reputation as a dynamic administrator, unafraid of change. His lifelong association with agriculture, the sickest part of the ailing economy, did not seem to hurt him.

With a declining economy and a rising panic in the ruling class, Gorbachev has a head start in getting support for change. In contrast to Andropov's sector-by-sector approach, Gorbachev obviously wants to get at what he sees as the root of the problem — the need to unleash the initiative of managers, to rid the economy of unprofitable enterprises, and to lift (a little) the dead hand of the bureaucracy to let things sort themselves out.

In a quite short time, he has made a start. Most dramatically, he has legalised the small-scale private sector. For years, a vast, informal and illegal trade in services has gone on. Apartments could be renovated,

appliance fixed, hair styled — all for cash (no questions asked) or similar services in return. Now all this will happen legally, through state-licensed co-operatives.

Foreign trade will be freed up. Till now, dealings with foreigners have been the strict monopoly of the Ministry for Foreign Trade. Now, 21 ministries and 70 large industrial enterprises will be able to set up joint ventures and do other deals direct with foreign bodies.

Gorbachev has also started streamlining the bureaucracy and the Plan.

THE PLAN, supposedly a great feature of Russia's socialist economy, is actually one of its enduring problems.

Not one of the eleven Plans to date has come remotely close to being fulfilled. Some targets (especially consumer goods) are consistently underfulfilled, others consistently overfulfilled. Still others vary wildly.

The abject failure of the Plans is a sure indication of the alienation of Russia's workers, and the rigidity, remoteness and unaccountability of the bureaucracy.

Every factory and state farm is given a detailed plan which dictates its production. Any attempt to vary this to cope with delays in supplies or changes in demand is sternly resisted. Any attempt to experiment with work organisation or new techniques is crushed unless all relevant ministries approve. Otherwise, production might be disrupted, targets might be unfulfilled, and some bureaucrat might be disgraced!

Gorbachev wants to get around this by reallocating the powers of the ministries — upwards to the central planners, and downwards to the enterprise managers.

He first tried this in agriculture, the area he knows best. In November 1985 he amalgamated five ministries and a state committee into a "superministry" called the State Agro-Industrial Committee. Similar shake-ups are planned for other sectors.

At the other end, he intends to give more power to individual managers. Eventually each enterprise will have to pay all its own expenses (including any expansion of production capacity) rather than being given its budget each year from its ministry.

Accumulation of profit will shift from the industry as a whole to individual workplaces. It will result in bankruptcy for unprofitable enterprises, shutdowns and unemployment.

A factory will hand over a fixed tax to the state, instead of all its surplus as at present. This will increase pressure on managers to screw their workers harder.

MOST attention in the West has focussed on Gorbachev's slight loosening up of the regime's authoritarianism — his so-called "glasnost" (openness).

We should not get too excited. He is not about to unleash a multi-party democracy, freedom of speech, or free unions, even on the Western model, much less turn over real power to the workers.

The "liberalisation" has two motives. Gorbachev wants to appeal to Western opinion. Hence the freeing of a couple of hundred dissidents (out of 1,000 to 10,000 in jail). Hence too the unjamming of BBC broadcasts.

More importantly, he wants to hurry along his economic reforms. By allowing the media more freedom and pushing for democratic elections within the party, he hopes to allay new weaknesses to be identified and new reforms to be proposed and debated. Also, of course, he hopes to harness the regime's critics against his party

opponents. Gorbachev's reforms had enemies in the ruling class before they began. They have found others since.

The secret police and the propaganda apparatus have always opposed any change that may upset the status quo they struggle to maintain. The secret police attacked unapproved peace demonstrators in Red Square, almost certainly to discredit Gorbachev and to pressure him to slow down his changes.

The Central Committee produced a very vague statement that went nowhere near Gorbachev's proposed party election reforms.

Undermining ministry powers and shifting investment from heavy industry and arms towards light industry and consumer goods will create further ill-will amongst the losers.

On balance, though, Russia's crisis is now so serious that supporters of change will probably override their opponents, despite some resistance.

IT IS the working class that will really decide the fate of Gorbachev's reforms.

It must either accept the attacks that they ultimately involve — the speed-ups and layoffs — or it must make use of the slight loosening-up to resist them.

If it resists, it will either become a tool in the hands of the conservatives, or it will struggle for its own separate interests.

This last option is by no means out of the question. Since the end of Stalin's terror in the 1950s, Russian workers have time and again shown a readiness to fight their masters. Wildcat strikes, three clear waves of struggle in the early 1960s, 70s, and 80s, and various attempts to set up free trade unions — this is not the history of a class likely to passively accept cuts in living standards and unemployment.

It may be some time before workers are ready to stick their necks out. But when they do, the whole world will know about it.

We cannot predict events in Russia with any certainty from now on. Gorbachev is doing nothing that has not been done more thoroughly elsewhere. But unlike Hungary in the 1960s, there is no longer an expanding world economy to tap into. Unlike China today, the urban industrial working class is the real force in society.

Those facts make Gorbachev's strategy so risky and open up possibilities of working class revolt. That, and not the window-dressing of "glasnost", is what in the West should get excited about.

SOCIALIST ACTION

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for details

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ANU UNION

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 link 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 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.

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. Wherever people are movements and wherever people are fighting for a better world, socialists are in the thick of the fight. It's there where you want to be. **Join us today!**

Campus activity

WITH the university year beginning, Socialist Action branches are holding bookstalls and talks on various campuses to argue socialist ideas to students. At Queensland University, we are setting up a campus club for interested students. The club is featuring two interlate speakers during March, Eric Petersen on "Justice under Capitalism" and Graham Willett on "Russia Today".

At Monash and LaTrobe Universities, Socialist action speakers are talking on "Capitalism versus Socialism", a look at issues like democracy, initiative, efficiency, and human nature under the two systems.

CUB picket

MEMBERS in Melbourne branch have been busy supporting the picket by CUB drivers sacked by the brewery.

Members have been visiting the picket lines frequently to help keep up morale and discuss the issues of the struggle with the workers. Two sacked drivers addressed our branch meeting, and we took up a collection afterwards for the strike fund.

IWD pamphlet

FOR International Women's Day this month, Socialist Action has published a new pamphlet called *Breaking The Chains*.

The pamphlet contains articles which first appeared in this magazine on various aspects of sexual politics, women's liberation, gay liberation, equal pay, child care, patriarchy, and the radicalizing of women in the British miners' strike.

Priced at \$1.00 (\$1.50 posted), *Breaking The Chains* makes an ideal introduction to the socialist position on sexual liberation.

Canberra

CANBERRA branch has shifted its meetings to the Board Room of the ANU Union. Meetings are still at 6 pm on Thursdays.

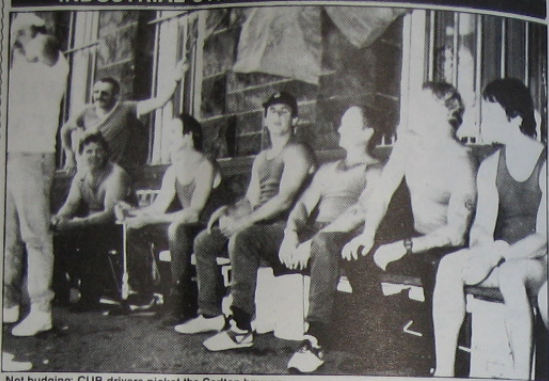
Meetings on March 5 and 19 will look at the pamphlet *Why the World Economy is in Crisis*. The meeting on March 12 features a talk on Slipping the Arms Race, and on March 26, AIDS and Gay Liberation.

Russia talk

NEXT in Melbourne branch's popular "Spaghetti" and "Socialism" dinner-discussions is "What About Russia?", a look at the decline of a Russia from a workers state into a bureaucratic dictatorship.

The date is Friday 27 March, at 7.30 pm, Ring 380 2227 for further details. All readers welcome.

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE



Not budging: CUB drivers picket the Carlton brewery

CUB drivers refuse to be out-Foxed

"I DON'T care how long we have to stay here — they're not getting any beer out of the brewery."

So says Chris Kelly, shop steward of Melbourne's Carlton and United Brewery drivers, whose 24 hour picket has been running for over three weeks.

The dispute started when the drivers found through a leak on a radio station that CUB were selling their trucking fleet to Linfox. With no warning, the men found themselves out of a job, with a very poor redundancy package, and an offer of an "interview" with Linfox.

At stake is the linfox drivers' award, one of the best in the state. A move to Linfox would mean an increase from 35 to 38 hours in their working week, and a large drop in pay. Not surprisingly, this issue has, Chris says, "zabunised the men like no issue before".

The industrial action has so far produced improved offers from Linfox. "The greatest way to squeeze a capitalist is to deprive him of his profit", as Chris puts it. But the drivers want to remain with CUB.

Linfox has a reputation that does not make working for them attractive. Following their takeover of dairy drivers, the workforce was reduced by about half. There would be no guarantee that the brewery drivers wouldn't be shunted off onto other driving. It is predictable that

workers are watching this dispute. We aren't just fighting for our own sakes."

Chris Kelly sums up "One people like Fox and Elliott break the backs of the drivers, then they'll move on to other workers, and they'll be an example for other bosses."

"They think they can buy anybody. But we're fighting for a principle."

— Janey Stone

STUDENTS

UQ votes to boycott fee

UNIVERSITY of Queensland students have voted for a fees boycott.

As part of its Orientation Week anti-fees activities, the student union held an Extraordinary Student Council meeting open to all students.

Students passed motions calling for a boycott of payment of the new \$250 fee, and asking for the support of other student unions and trade unions in this action.

As fundraising for the campaign, the students are selling three T-shirts with "How will You raise the \$250?" and answers. Reagan's answer is "I sold arms to the Contras". Hawke's is "I sold uranium to France", and Keating's is "I got my tax return back".

Student union organisers expect about 2000 to participate in the boycott.

— Stephen Boyce

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

Police admit it: the BLF is back in town!

THE NEW year in the Melbourne building industry started in an unexpected way. To their surprise, BLF organisers found they were no longer being arrested on building sites. Police suddenly declared that it was up to the employer to remove them.

While this only lasted for a few days, it shows the effect that the war of attrition is having. BLF organiser John Cummins told *Socialist Action* that the police freely acknowledge the BLF is on the way back on the sites. Builders that were calling them last year are no longer doing so.

Probably the short lived truce was due to what the police see as critical staffing problems. There has been talk of closing police stations while the 100 strong BLF squad stand by.

Renewed arrests have not deterred organisers, nor hindered rank and file activism. The reality is that the carve-up of the BLF was a forerunner to the carve-up of wages and conditions. As a result, some sites which had previously been comparatively quiet have leapt into action.

At the Costain William St job, there were "more pedigre jobs for blokes to get jobs than for satitors to the Royal Family", according to Cummins. But a recent safety issue sparked bans, a broken concrete pour, and finally an indefinite walk-off. At the time of writing, the job is still closed.

Safety has also been highlighted following the settlement of the long-running pickets against Costain last year. In the aftermath a black-listed picketer, Jim "Killer" Kane, was forced to take the only work he could find



Cain: paid up

— a demolition job. After a serious accident he is now in hospital with multiple broken bones.

In Canberra, too, health and safety have taken a beating. Five employees of a now defunct contractor on the Parliament House site have had their compensation payments stopped. The BWIU, which nominally covers the labourers, could offer nothing better than that all workers pass the hat.

After protracted struggles some years ago, it has become the standard that the major contractor is responsible for employees of sub-contractors, and that insurance companies should pay compensation on time.

To try and prevent this hard-won reform going down the drain, Canberra BLF held a picket outside the Parliament House site. They effectively turned trucks away for several hours. Management then recognised the BLF by calling them in to negotiate.

Largely, ordinary building workers are paying the price for the carve-up. But it is also rebounding on the BWIU itself. At the official level, they have had a taste of their own medicine. An organiser was recently arrested in the Victorian country town of Sale on trespass charges, exactly the same charge used against the BLF.

At the rank and file level, dissatisfied carpenters are challenging the leadership. A recent shop stewards meeting unanimously rejected the secretary's report and instead called for a campaign for a \$50 plus 4% wage rise and 36 hours a week. The meeting ended unceremoniously with accusations of officials taking money off jobs.

What the Victorian government plans next is not yet clear. Publicly, the BLF is declared dead; it has died so many times it must have some feature of reincarnation. But behind the scenes, Cain is highly pragmatic. For instance, at the recently reopened Remand Centre site, workers laid off when it closed down over a year ago are receiving substantial lost time payments, despite it being a government job.

Building workers are facing a fundamental choice in 1987. As John Cummins says, "The days of the magic wand, with the organiser coming on the job and fixing things with a flick of his



BLF picketers at Canberra's Parliament House site

finger are gone. The only way the blokes are going to stop the slide is by standing up and fighting. We'll be on hand to assist them."

— Janey Stone

SYDNEY

Pickets damn Nile

TWO HUNDRED and eighty sacked textile workers at Nile Industries are maintaining an effective 24 hour picket of the company's Campbelltown factory.

Last year, they were frequently assured of their long term future. On January 28 this year they were sacked.

In Campbelltown, a declining satellite city of Sydney, Nile dismissed notices are a one way ticket to the dole queue. The picketers are therefore demanding a decent redundancy deal.

Until Nile offer at least four weeks' pay for each year of service, the picketers — mostly women — intend to blockade the factory's remaining stocks and machinery.

Nile are owned by JGL Investments, who also own Christian Dior, Kolotex, Satec, and Nimbus, as well as having substantial interests in Volksswagen, Subaru and Honda. They are not a small company going bust, as the bosses' press has claimed.

JGL are, however, hiding

behind legal fiction and claim it has nothing to do with them. Some of the sacked workers have worked at Nile for over 20 years. One said, "They let you spend all your holiday pay, then you come back to find you're sacked. Just see you. No notice, nothing."

Although they were given different finishing dates, the workers have ignored these and have loyally stuck together.

Another worker, who jokingly gave her name as "Norma Rae" to avoid victimization, said, "A lot of people are under the impression that Nile is going broke. But it hasn't. It is moving to Melbourne. JGL own Nile and JGL are millionaires. All we are asking for is a decent redundancy deal. Right up to the last day we were told the place wasn't closing down. We will sit here until we get what we want!"

— Trevor Payne



Birthrate trauma for Europe's politicians

GASTON Thorn, former Prime Minister of Luxembourg, says, "Europe is committing collective suicide." French ex-PM Michele Debré agrees, saying, "We have destroyed marriage and the family as social values. We have created greed and self-indulgence as our idols."

The reason for such breast-beating is that Europe's birthrate has been declining since 1964.

In response, governments east and west have variously induced, bludgeoned, threatened and appealed to women and men to have more children. At the same time, their food aid to Third World countries has usually been tied to demands for population control.

A contradiction? Indeed, The world population is still growing and, from a working class viewpoint, it doesn't matter whether one country's population is growing or not. As Karl Marx put it, the workers have no country. A recent *Newsweek* article gave the ruling class viewpoint, and it is a breath-takingly cynical one.

Firstly, labour shortages will develop by the 1990's and European countries will, as *Newsweek* puts it, be forced to encourage immigration from the Third World. It warns that immigration leads to race riots not, of course, the fact that most immigrants get the worst jobs, worst pay and worst living conditions.

Secondly, as the existing population ages and there are fewer younger working people, the pension bill will increase "disproportionately." Having screwed what they can out of people when they are younger, the ruling class find it a nuisance to have to provide social security benefits for them in old age.

Thirdly, and most absurdly of all, *Newsweek* frets that by the mid-1990's, all of America's allies except Turkey will be hard-pressed to find the "manpower" to fulfill their NATO commitments. The only comforting thought it seems, is that the birthrate of the Warsaw Pact countries is falling as well.

Newsweek's agonising would be laughable, were it not for the various subtle and not-so-subtle attempts being made to push women back into the child-

breeding role.

The French government has posters suggesting that to couple just for sex rather than for procreation is selfish. Princess Di is held up internationally as a role model of the happy mother. Both Liberal and Labor parties in Australia have launched pro-family policies which reinforce a message of women's primary role being at home.

At another level, we are now seeing great government interest in reproductive technologies such as In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF). If, as in Europe, the fertile members of society cannot be persuaded to have more children, highly motivated infertile couples are an obvious solution.

Having for years ignored the problem of infertility, governments are now pouring millions into the new IVF technology. Private enterprise is following. As one researcher comments,

"Reproductive technology is where the smart money is being placed. There is nothing patentable about preventive medicine. Lifestyles cannot be sold in the same way as reproductive technology."

The point is a valid one. Infertility is often caused by undiagnosed or mistreated infections, botched operations and hazardous working conditions. Attacking these causes, however, would mean attacking powerful professions and vested interests.

We should welcome any new technology, like IVF, which gives women the choice of not having children or not. For socialists, however, the criterion is human need, not the needs of profit.

And for the same reasons, we should oppose the pro-birth campaigns which seek to press women back into the child-rearing role.

— Liz Ross

ECOLOGY



Plenty wrong in plant rights

A DISASTER for the world's food and plant supply. That is how scientists from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization grimly describe the effects of the Plant Variety Rights (PVR) laws which exist

Il n'y a pas
que le sexe dans la vie.



Le nombre des naissances diminue



French poster suggests sex just for pleasure is unprofitable; a 1966 alarm about birthrates

result from a lack of diversity in a food crop.

Throughout the world, a multitude of natural varieties have been lost already. They have been replaced by a tiny number of "hybrids", which have been pushed by seed companies.

While these hybrids give better yields, they are more vulnerable to pests and diseases, are heavily dependent on chemical fertilisers, and don't produce fertile seeds. The cost of chemicals and new seeds each year bankrupts many smaller farmers.

None of this should surprise anyone. Companies like Shell and ICI, which control the seed trade, can hardly be expected to market plants which would make their agricultural chemicals obsolete, or to worry about the welfare of small farmers.

Seed patenting is one aspect of PVR. The developers of a new plant variety will be able to claim exclusive rights to its sale and propagation.

But PVR doesn't stop there. It actually makes it illegal to sell — even to give away — varieties not listed in a so-called "common catalogue".

Because the vast diversity of plant varieties found in nature cannot possibly be included in such a listing, many will become extinct. Others will survive only in "seed banks" of the giant petrochemical companies which control the seed trade.

Both in the lab and in nature, the diversity of natural plant types provides the raw material for the development of plants with new characteristics. The loss of this diversity removes the ability of plants to adapt to cope with pests and diseases. The infamous Irish Potato Famine provides an example of the type of disaster that can

occur for the rest of us, however. **Plant Variety Rights laws are just one more ecological threat. If we want to be rid of such threats, we need to rid ourselves first of the economic system that makes them so "logical".**

— Robert Stainby

WORKING CLASS HISTORY

MANY Labor voters bemoan how the party has lost sight of the interests of its traditional supporters.

In reality, it is an old, old problem. Indeed, it dates back to the very formation of the party late last century.

Labor parties first contested elections in Australia in the 1890s. It was a period when workers' consciousness of their special interests as a class was growing.

Unions and Trades and Labor Councils (TLCs) had sprung up in the previous two decades. In the 1880s, several TLC candidates stood in elections, and in 1886 an Intercolonial Trade Union Congress decided that labour should seek direct representation in Parliament rather than lobby conservative politicians.

It was only after the defeat of the maritime strike of 1890, and of the Queensland shearers' strike the next year, that workers took the parliamentary project seriously, however.

Both strikes were historic confrontations between capital and labour. Both were defeated when employers refused to negotiate with the unions, and governments openly sided with the employers.

Unionists were arrested and imprisoned. The NSW police employed 3000 extra constables to "keep order" on the picket lines. The army was sent to the coalfields. Free rail transport was provided for scab labour.

The Sydney Defence Committee concluded:

"A still more important lesson, learnt in the hour of defeat, is this, that whilst we must go on ever increasing our capacity for fighting as we have fought before, the time has now come when trade unionists must use the Parliamentary machine."

Unions which had been lukewarm to the Labor Party idea now provided the drive, organisers and finance to put Labor into Parliament to support trade unionism and workers' interests.

But while the Defence Committee saw parliamentary representation as a complement to militant strike action, others wanted Labor in power as an alternative to strikes. The General Secretary of the Australasian Shearers' Union said:

"With a Labor Government in power, there would be an end to the stoppage of work which acts so inimically to our interests."

SORRIT! From the start, an essential problem of the ALP emerged. Although it re-



The impetus for the ALP: police attack the maritime strike

Labor's early years were just as unhappy

presented workers and unions, it discouraged them from taking industrial action. It even attacked strikers and unions.

Liberal method of preventing strikes — compulsory arbitration. Before the maritime strike, most unions had opposed arbitration, rightly distrusting upper-class judges. But when employers refused to talk to the unions during the strike, and eventually defeated them, the unions decided to force employers to negotiate by accepting compulsory arbitration. It was a weakness that Labor quickly seized on.

In Victoria, Labor supported wages boards, even though they made unions unnecessary by stopping them from appearing directly before them.

Labor placed more importance on industrial peace than on improving workers' wages. In the rising market of 1900, Labor leaders W. M. Hughes and W. G. Spence admitted that workers could obtain more by strike action than by arbitration. Yet they still

Yet Labor did not see itself as a party of the working class. The Victorian party paper *Commonwealth* declared in 1892 that it sought "promote democratic legislation in the interests of all classes".

Labor policies were short-term, moderate and aimed at ameliorating the capitalist system for workers rather than getting rid of it.

The first Labor programmes called for electoral reforms such as one adult one vote, an eight hour day, protective factory legislation, free education, mining reforms, better pay for politicians and increased land taxes. They also supported the White Australia policy. (The socialisation objective was only adopted in the 1920s after the formation of the Communist Party.)

The conservatism of Labor's policies was underlined in Victoria, where Labor saw itself as a wing of the Liberal Party.

THE UNION bureaucracy established its influence in the party from the outset, an influence that it retains to this day.

In NSW and WA, the TLC was entitled to a fixed number of positions on the central committee. In NSW, the TLC even had a right of veto over the party platform.

The main battles within the party, however, were over control of the politicians, a problem that persists to modern times. Politicians had to pledge to abide by the party platform and caucus decisions. In most states, the branches had the power to force their representatives to resign.

Politicians often refused to sign the pledge, or defected. In NSW in 1894, most sitting members refused to sign the pledge and stood as independent Labor candidates.

The early Labor Party was neither a socialist nor the champion of the working class, despite its origins, its union ties and its many working class candidates. Within two years of the election of the first Labor MPs, one of the first Labor leaders, W. M. Hughes, was already describing it as "an aimless, spineless, legless, headless party."

From workers' point of view, much of that description still applies today.

— Patricia Langenakker

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FROM each according to their ability, to each according to their need.

This is the philosophy of the communism which Karl Marx envisaged. And since he developed his socialist theories, there has been no shortage of rightwing social theorists to tell us it's all a pipe dream.

Giving people all they need is a nice thought, they argue. But if you want people to roll up their sleeves and work to produce wealth, you need to reward actual performance. Material incentives, they say, are what motivate people.

Lots of people accept this argument. After all, if we look around us everyone seems to be motivated by the almighty dollar. Who would work if it wasn't for the money?

But people's attitudes today are the product of specific historical circumstances.

For most of human history, there hasn't been enough wealth to provide everyone with a decent life. So inevitably, a dog-eat-dog struggle developed for what resources did exist. Over time, the most ruthless people cornered enough to lift themselves above the common herd. They became a ruling class.

This was not only an inevitable but also a necessary process. Only through the rise of class society could a small surplus be gathered in a few hands. The ruling class did use part of this surplus for its personal consumption, but it also used part of it to develop production.

Capitalism is the highest form of class society, because it is the most efficient at centralising an economic surplus in the hands of the ruling class and then pumping it back into expanding production.

BRUTAL and oppressive as this process is, it has nevertheless given rise to the tremendous wealth-creating power of modern industry. Today, for the first time in history, the means exist to create enough wealth to give everyone a decent life.

Capitalism doesn't use its productive forces that way, of course. Our rulers would rather use them to stockpile atomic weapons, while letting millions starve. That is why a socialist revolution is required. But the potential is there.

In class society, most people have to struggle to survive. Most work is unpleasant at best, and at times has been horrendous, as during the industrial revolution when children worked up to 16 hours a day.

Under capitalism, what's more, we have no control over the products of our labour. What we make goes to enrich someone else. Is it any wonder that people have a cynical attitude toward work? Is it any wonder that



“People won't work without incentive”

we only do it if someone offers us enough material reward?

Yet even in today's society, life is full of examples showing that, if given half a chance, people will behave quite differently.

Consider the charity workers who put in long hours for no pay, or the officers of our sporting and social clubs who give freely of their leisure time.

Much more importantly from our point of view, there are the thousands of activists who work devotedly for social and political causes, from organising peace demonstrations to selling *Socialist Action* on the street corner.

THIS capacity for selfless hard work manifests itself on a mass scale among the working class in times of revolutionary struggle. In Lenin's Russia, workers voluntarily worked extra days without pay in order to keep the economy going in the face of imperialist blockade.

Successful revolutionary movements have also created a new enthusiasm for transforming productive techniques. Take the uprisings in Spain at the start of the great civil war. A fascist rising had devastated the local industry in Catalonia before the victorious workers took power into their own hands. The workers went on to establish workers' control of industry.

They then set about re-building the economy. The difficult conditions meant they could be offered little material reward. But they were motivated because they themselves were in control of production. One observer wrote:

“Experts were truly astounded at the expertise of the workers in building new machinery. In a short time, 200 different hydraulic presses of up to 250 tonnes pressure, 178 revolving lathes, and hundreds of milling machines and boring machines were built.”

I had a similar experience during a visit to Nicaragua two years ago. The United States blockade of the country means Nicaraguan industry is desperately short of American-

made machinery and parts. The workers have responded with an “innovator's movement”. They think up ways of making replacements themselves.

I attended an exhibition of medical equipment which the “innovators” of the health sector had made. They had shown remarkable ingenuity, and they were certainly not doing it for money. Because of the difficult economic conditions, wages in Nicaragua are falling all the time. You can make more by trading on the black market.

Yet the health workers not only stayed on the job, but put their brains to work in impressive fashion. Their motivation was political: defending the Sandinista revolution.

UNDER capitalism, this sort of thing is the exception.

But give people some basic economic security so that they are not constantly worried about their future and that of their children, place them in control of the productive process so that they see some point to what they're doing, and the whole experience of work can be transformed.

This is the very core of the socialist perspective. When workers have a new relationship to production — one where they control industry rather than being mere cogs in it — then their creativity will be unleashed. The wonderful ingenuity of the Spanish workers and the Nicaraguan innovators will cease to be an exception.

The production of wealth will soar. Working hours can be reduced and reduced again, and workplaces made into pleasant places fit for human beings. Improved training and freedom on the job will mean we get far more variety and stimulation out of what we do.

And our children will look at us with pitying disbelief, when we tell them how once the mass of human beings spent their lives just trying to make a quid.

— Richard Emerson

Watery reformers who bailed out the system

LAST YEAR a group of Australian activists put together a collection of essays on the socialist movement, dubiously entitled *Moving Left*.

While the authors probably believed their ideas were exciting and maybe even new, unfortunately they were not. The various forms of broad, social democratic organization they proposed have all been tried, and all have failed to transform society towards socialism. Ian Birchall's new book *Bailing Out The System* is a lucid account of this failure.

Birchall looks at reformist socialism in Western Europe since 1944. He presents a good deal of data on the appalling political records of the French, Italian, British, West German and other “eurocommunist” and social democratic parties. It is a record that has culminated in, for example, a French racist anti-immigrant march, and support for cuts to living standards by almost every mainstream “socialist” party in Europe.

But Bailing Out The System is far more than a mere chronicle of disappointments and sell-outs. Birchall looks at how the strategies of social democrats actually mesh in with the interests of the system.

For example, the British Labour government of the mid-1940s had two main features. Firstly, it “channelled the expectations and demands for reform which were being made by the working class”. So it introduced major welfare reforms such as the National Health Service, not as commitments to socialism, but to demobilise working class opposition.

Such reforms redistributed wealth between workers, not classes. In 1936-38, the richest 5% of the population owned 19% of national wealth in Britain; in 1960, they owned 75%.

Secondly, Labour restructured the economy. Its nationalisations in the rail, steel and coal industries shifted inefficient but vital sections of private capital to state control, rather than shift power from capital to labour. “Private profit,

socialised losses” occurred elsewhere too; there was nothing socialist in such nationalisations.

Birchall straddles several countries, which means a frustrating sacrifice of detail. But the effect of his comparisons is striking, and challenges the old cliché that revolution is unrealistic:

“It may seem a paradox to say so, but reformist politics are essentially utopian. Social democrats, of course, flatter themselves on being ‘realists’... Yet they share with the utopians of the 19th century one essential feature — a failure to identify the agency of socialist transformation.”

For revolutionary Marxists, of course, that agency is the working class.

The longevity of social democracy is partly due to its power to gradually co-opt its left opponents “while at the same time maintaining an air of respectable moderation”.

adaptation of the women's and disarmament movements to pallid reformism is a recent example.

Yet this process is not simply one of deception or betrayal, as Birchall notes:

“Social democracy's ability to keep an ideological grip on its rank and file is a major part of its ability to survive... the scenario is more subtle than a rank and file straining at the leash and being held back by a corrupt leadership.”

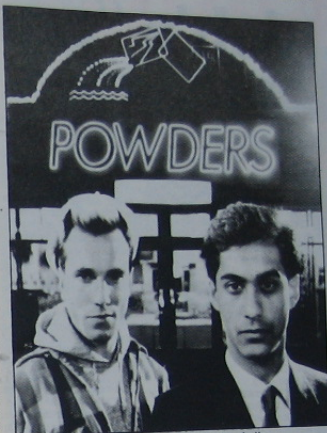
Within this argument, Birchall accounts for some interesting trends in parliamentary politics, such as the decreasing class identification in voting behaviour.

The Western European experience has its parallels in Australia. The European left's nationalistic economic policies — tariffs and import controls — sound awfully similar to John Halfpenny's. Labour parties displaying their leftwing colours in opposition and their rightwing policies in office are not unheard of here either.

Birchall has written a very useful critique of European reformism in practice. It has important implications for the Australian left too.

— Phillip Whitefield

• Ian Birchall's *Bailing Out The System* will soon be available through Socialist Action branches.



Johnny and Omar, heroes of *My Beautiful Laundry*

FILM

Humanity in the wringer

FANS of *Rambo* and *Top Gun* might disagree. But anyone else will find *My Beautiful Laundry* a strong movie.

Set in Thatcher's Britain, *My Beautiful Laundry* is powered by the racial tension between poor whites and rich Pakistanis, migrant Omar's drive to success, and the love between Omar and white punk Johnny.

Omar takes over his uncle's laundry. To make a profit, he needs money to put in new machines and to make it beautiful. To get the money, he swindles his Pakistani relatives and becomes a thief. He bosses around his lover, Johnny, and denies his own gayness by agreeing to marry his uncle's daughter.

It is not that Omar is evil, but capitalism forces him to exploit others and cheat so that he can stay in business. The profit motive brings out the worst in people.

As in real life, the film shows people cruelly bent and brutalised by the system. Racial violence flows from both white and Pakistani. Unemployed whites vent their anger through meaningless destruction. There is one-

upmanship and crawling amongst businessmen (and in this film they are deliberately all men). Women are locked away, traded like cows and dressed up like dolls. Omar's father, a disillusioned socialist who believes in the power of education, is reduced to drink and hardly leaves his bed.

Breaking through the racial barriers is the love between Omar and Johnny. The movie is honest and positive about their gayness. Omar smiles adoringly at Johnny. Johnny sensually draws Omar into a kiss. Neither of them are stereotyped gays.

The message of the movie is that if you are smart, have a rich uncle and work hard, you can succeed like Omar. But the cost is too high. Omar learns to be cruel and to deny his sexuality. And for every success story, there are many people who are destroyed by the system.

With all the fatuous pro-entrepreneurial propaganda we get these days, that message is a welcome reminder of reality. *My Beautiful Laundry* delivers it movingly and with fine acting.

The answer? The film doesn't tell us, but it hardly needs to. Instead of competing like capitalists and putting humanity through the wringer, we need a whole new system. One we could describe in a movie called *Our Beautiful Laundry*, perhaps.

— Patricia Langenkammer

The meaning of Joh's "crusade"

IN THE last few weeks, Bjelke Petersen has rewritten the political agenda in this country.

He has moved an already right-wing economic debate even further right. He has destabilised the Coalition, John Howard and Ian Sinclair, paving the way for himself and Andrew Peacock to grab for power. And on stating just one policy — a flat-rate tax that even Howard says will disadvantage 80% of Australians — he was seriously being touted as the next Prime Minister.

Some people are already talking of emigrating if Australians are "stupid enough to elect Joh". But what the Joh phenomenon really reveals is the bankruptcy of the existing political parties. Joh's arrogant ultimatums to the Coalition (he even says "These days, I am the National Party") are based on two things. One is the rural crisis, which has undermined Sinclair in the Nationals' branches and created fury at Howard's proposed consumption tax.

The other is the polls, which show a Joh-Peacock team could gain 8% more of the vote than Howard and Sinclair. A Joh Party alone could pull 24% of the vote, while reducing the Libs to 20% and the Nationals to 4%.

So whether Joh stays or splits, he wins according to the polls. As no-one is more covered by polls than politicians, Joh has run riot.

WHAT no-one has explained in the polls is Joh's strong showing in the rural areas.

Clearly, his base is amongst farmers and small business. But



Peacock: not a new ally

his edge lies in his appeal to a substantial minority of Labor voters that Howard and Sinclair cannot attract. One in eight ALP voters will swing over to a Joh Party or a Peacock-Joh-led coalition, say the polls.

They are obviously not the small-liberal swinging voters that Labor usually pursues. Nor is Peter Hob Hawke has huge appeal. (Bob Santamaria, ex-ideologist of the DLP, thinks Hawke is a great PM.)

The *Courier-Mail* ran 40 interviews with voters about Joh. Apart from his predictable small business supporters, he clearly appealed to a minority of workers who took little interest in politics, but (rightly) saw both parties in Canberra as dishonest, spineless, and having had their "go" and failed.

In a time of crisis, these people want "strength" and a new approach. The revolutionary left is too weak and the unions are too compromised to provide a left pole of attraction. So, just as last time a far more politicised Labor element voted NDP, Joh is providing a right-wing pole of attraction this time.

JOH'S tacit alliance with Andrew Peacock shows how punchy much of the wet/dry debate in the ruling class has been.

Peacock and Joh are old allies. When Papua New Guinea gained independence in 1975, it was Peacock who backed Joh in keeping the Queensland border along the PNG coastline, against Fraser's plan to split the Torres Strait 50-50.

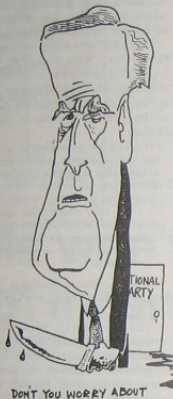
Peacock, supposed leader of the Liberal "wets", recently said, "We must cut out the big ticket items. When we take office, there will be howls of protest as we cut them after them." That sounds awfully like supposed "dry" Sir Joh, who will need a 17 1/2% cut to education, health, housing, veterans' affairs and most other spending to finance his flat-rate tax.

As Liberal leader, Peacock would mop up "wet" Liberal voters who would not support Joh, while Joh could take the hard right vote uncontested — something he could not do with Howard at the helm.

Peacock is important to Joh for another reason.

Opinion polls are one thing. But aspiring PMs also need backing from substantial sections of the ruling class, both to get elected and to rule.

Peacock can swing in support from the Melbourne establish-



DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT ME... IT'S JUST LIKE ANY WAR... IF THEY DON'T HANG YOU, THEY PUT A MEDAL ON YOUR CHEST !!

ment. At present, Joh has only "cowboy" bosses like Lindsay Fox and Lang Hancock backing him. The "white shoe brigade" has little real weight, despite its cash. Frontman Mike Gore is dismissed in the National Party as "all talk and no money". The property developer Brian Ray is currently on trial for conspiracy to defraud, while John Minuzzo, another suspected member, was jailed during the Victorian land scandals.

Ranged against Joh are the Confederation of Australian Industry, the Small Business Association, much of the New Right and the *Fairfax* press, all of whom distrust his sums and his record in Queensland. The National Farmers Federation is anti-Peacock, which is effectively anti-Joh, while the Murdoch press is hedging its bets, no doubt grateful for the two year monopoly of Queensland government advertising that Joh gave it.

But if Joh's populist bandwagon keeps rolling and Peacock climbs aboard, the ruling class may well get behind it. A Joh-Peacock alliance will not necessarily split over policy, as media pundits like Michelle Grattan of the *Age* predict. The "wets" and "dries" in Britain have held together in Britain under Margaret Thatcher, after all.

Seeing
Red!
with Alec Kahn

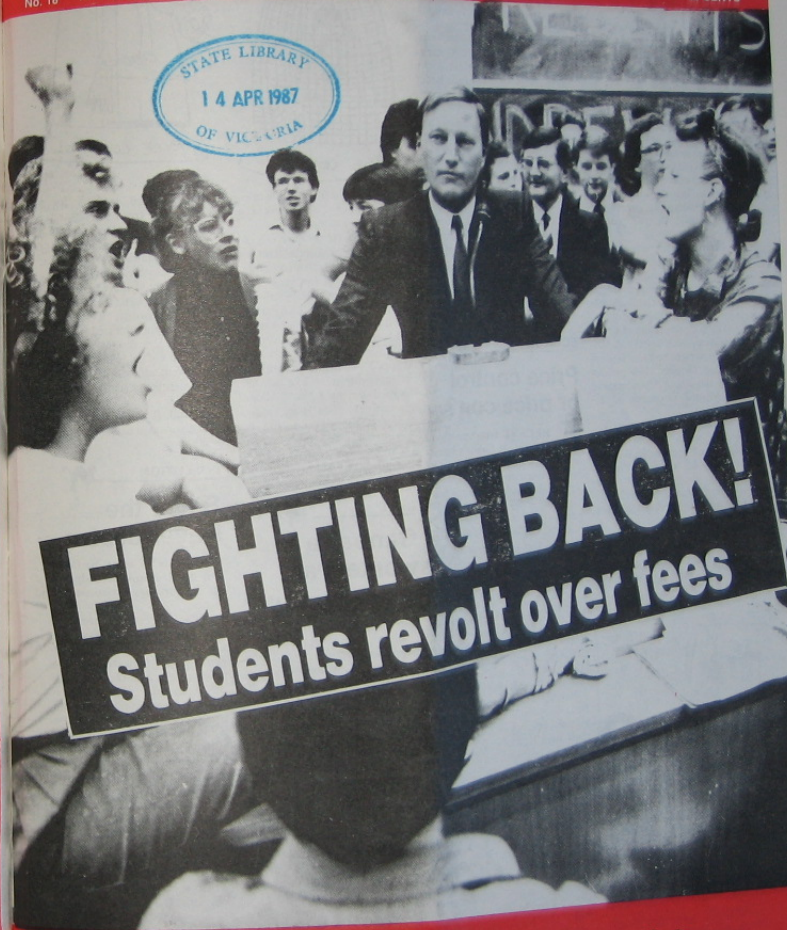
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ALL OF this poses immense threats to unionists and the Left.

Predictably, the ALP has been less than useless in stopping Joh. Its first response was to stop that he was dividing the Opposition, Senator Peter Walsh even had his staff fringing a TV poll non-stop to vote for Joh and encourage his push.

Queensland ALP president Ian McLean explained the folly of this:

"We used to laugh at Joh and the havoc he wreaked on the Libs in Queensland, thinking it could only be to our benefit, much as the federal ALP is doing. But the fact is Joh was able to set the agenda and grab the headlines and as a result the conservative vote actually increased."

Labor's glee has now turned to deep concern. But it can hardly attack Joh over policy. How, for example, can it criticise his SEEBE sackings when it did the same to the BLF?

So apart from Hawke's childish gibe that he lacks the "guts" to come to Canberra, Labor seems set to steal some of Joh's clothes with its May 14 mini-Budget cuts. Great!

If the Joh bandwagon does keep rolling, the only people we can rely on to stop it are the unionists, students, blacks, women and pensioners most threatened by it.

For Joh, despite his bluster, is far from invincible. He has been beaten before, by demonstrations against anti-abortion legislation for example. In 1982, a mass strike in Queensland forced him to reinstate 3500 suspended railway workers and lift a state of emergency.

Direct action can explode Joh's "strongman" campaign. In early April he will be guest of honour at Collingwood, Victoria's most working class football club, where his backers hope he will get a rousing reception prior to wooling various "new rich" businessmen. Unionist and left-wingers are planning a loud and militant demonstration against him.

Such actions every time Joh campaigns in public will make the bosses think twice about backing him. And a campaign that tackles Joh will also raise the questions: why should we accept Joh-type policies from the Labor Party either?

*** The case for closed shops**

*** How the Vietnam movement won**

CAT'S EYE

BIG BUSINESS

No Chias for Jack

SO JACK Chia, the billionaire Singapore building contractor, had to pull out of his massive South Yarra project in Melbourne because he was too strapped for funds.

He can't have been too hard up, though. He recently commissioned a statue for his Melbourne head office.

From the front, the statue is a model of conventional virtue — a mother, fully draped right down to her wedding ring, gazes fondly at her child. A true piece of kitsch.

From the rear, however, her bottom pokes out naked in the finest dirty postcard tradition, a comment on the snigger-snigger morality of Chia and his sculptor more than anything else.

The bare underside of Chia's operation includes the victimisation of eight builders' labourers last October. His pullout from the South Yarra project was blamed, of course, on the BLP.

In reality, mismanagement was responsible for much of the cost blow-out. For example, workers recently had to work overtime cutting through foot-thick concrete, when a lift shaft was built without leaving space for doors on one floor.

Graft may not be involved. Can it be only an unfounded rumour that Costain, the project managers, made a tidy sum ripping Chia off?



EAST EUROPE

Strike wave in Yugoslavia

A STRIKE wave has swept Yugoslavia in response to the "communist" government's latest austerity measures.

Prime Minister Mikulic announced a price freeze last month in response to the

country's runaway 130% inflation rate. Then just hours later, the government reneged and put up the price of petrol 16%, natural gas 25%, and bread 22%.

Mikulic's announcement itself was an attempt to pacify seething industrial unrest, especially in Croatia. Workers have had their wages frozen at early 1986 levels — a measure which cut some pay packets 50% — while basic foodstuffs all rose 25-60% early last month.

The government admitted to at least 70 strikes, involving thousands of workers, in the latest wave. Non-government sources say there are many more.

Mikulic himself felt the impact when he went to a winter resort when he wanted to go to watch ski-jumping. His entourage took an hour to round up hotel doormen and receptionists to serve them dinner, after discovering that the waiters at their hotel restaurant were on strike.

ECONOMY

Price control or price con?

THE RECENT ballyhoo over "price control" is Labor's latest attempt to contain growing worker discontent.

Half the adult workforce has not yet received last July's miserly CPI rise in their pay packets, while only 10% have received the much-vaunted 3% superannuation rise. So Hawke had to appear to be doing something.

Barry Jones is now "prices supreme". Yet Canberra has no constitutional power to peg prices, and unlike the Liberals, the ALP stands in awe of the constitution. So Jones will just "monitor" prices. Big deal!

Barrie Unsworth in NSW and Brian Burke in WA have no such excuse, yet they are doing no more than Hawke is.

Victoria's John Cain has made more of a showing. He proposes to keep track of 150 super-market items and to get retailers to co-operate in holding price rises to 6%. He will supposedly use legal sanctions as a "last resort". But on closer inspection, Cain's initiative is as phony as the rest.

Retail Traders Association leader Ken MacDonald said bluntly that his group was only co-operating because the same 150 items rose just 6.9% last year.

Cain is clearly relying on forecasts that this figure would fall to 6% in any case. If it doesn't, he has a loophole. Manufacturers



can exceed the 6% in "unforeseen circumstances", and retailers can pass such rises on.

The 150 items carefully exclude meat, seafoods, fruit and vegetables — which all rose much more than 6.9% last year.

Labor knows that real price control under capitalism produces either black markets or refusal by manufacturers to produce. Black markets can be stopped — by neighbourhood price committees like workers formed during Chile's Allende government. But there, manufacturers stopped producing, and workers started seizing factories...

And that's a can of worms Labor never wants to open.

CUTS

Canberra workers act

REVOLT against Labor's austerity program is reaching into the nation's capital itself.

Members of several unions — from bus workers to gardeners to librarians — who work for the Department of Territories in Canberra stopped work last month to protest against recent "efficiency and economy" measures.

To make up a \$2.5 million shortfall in the staffing budget, the Department stopped all Higher Duties Allowances overnight, and discontinued positions filled by contract workers when their contracts expired. It also restricted overtime.

These measures hit hundreds of workers, as the Territories Department is notoriously slow in filling positions on a permanent basis.

Yet in the Public Library, permanent staff were paid overtime to fill the shifts of a laid-off contract worker. Some efficiency!

As soon as there was a peep of protest from the unions, the

Department suddenly found half the money from Finance, and realised they could make up most of the rest from areas that would not affect staffing.

Very sensible, that. Footpaths can't go on strike when they're cut; workers can. Just to underline the point, Territories management admitted that they received the money from the Department of Finance when they were able to demonstrate the "disruption" caused by staff cuts.

Moral: If you cop a staff cut, make sure you cause disruption too.

POLLUTION

Bayer the slayer beaten

RESIDENTS near Sydney's Kurnell Peninsula recently won an important environmental victory.

They successfully pressured state Environment Minister Bob Carr into refusing Bayer Australia permission to build a pesticide plant on the peninsula.

Sydney already has high levels of toxic chemical pollution. But the residents could also have pointed to Bayer's record.

Bayer is descended from I.G. Farben, which built and operated a massive chemical plant at Auschwitz with slave labour. Some 300,000 concentration camp workers passed through it. At least 25,000 were worked to death.

I.G. Farben managers bargained with the Nazis over the cost of subjects for its drug testing program. One wrote:

"In contemplation of experiments with a new sporadic drug, we would appreciate your procuring for us a number of women. We consider the price of 200 marks a woman excessive. We propose to pay not more than 170 marks a head..."

All subjects died. We shall contact you shortly on a new lead."

NATIONAL POLITICS

In Canberra's circus, the clowns jostle for stage right

IT TOOK Bob Hawke a month of dithering to decide against a snap election in May.

But an election campaign could hardly reveal more about the parliamentary circus than last month's entertainment from Canberra.

It was apt that the ID card was Labor's pretext to go to the polls. The ID card debate typifies how far to the right Labor has moved in grabbing the "middle ground" from the Liberals.

The ID card is *not* about stopping big tax cheats and tax avoiders. It will not stop the rich using family trusts, nominee companies and so on to avoid tax with impunity. Nor will it stop sharks like Alan Bond and Robert Holmes a Court slashing their tax bill by writing off the cost of their takeaways against their incomes.

Indeed, Labor has given more to these people, reducing the top rate of income tax from 60% to 49%, and making dividends tax-free.

The ID card is about cracking down on the working class. It may snare a few small business operators, but mainly it aims at the "little fish" engaged in fiddles to get off the bottom of the pond.

The card's chief proponent, termed with "tax, health, welfare and immigration". He means that it targets workers with second jobs who dodge the rising tax bite by using false names. Its targets "welfare cheats" — pensioners and old recipients who supplement their miserable incomes by not declaring casual earnings and the like. And it targets illegal immigrants — economic refugees from poorer countries, mostly.

The price of this crackdown on mainly working-class people will be further invasion of our civil rights. The ID card system will centralise information currently held by diverse bureaucracies, making it easier to obtain. And despite Blewett's assurances, there is no safeguard against abuse by future governments.

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ments and bodies like ASIO, once the system is set up. In Britain, bosses use similar ID numbers on workers' "cards" to blacklist union militants.

John Howard has opposed the ID card, but not on any point of principle. In 1979, he supported a similar scheme in the Fraser Cabinet.

Howard's opposition arises from the extra bureaucracy they place on employers to check his flat tax proposal, and campaigned sharply against it. In a week, he fell 6% in the polls.

His backers' \$250,000 promotion of placing two million "Job for PM" bumper stickers in the daily papers was a debacle. Scarcely a sticker is visible in Sydney or Melbourne, and 2500 were reputedly sent back without postage.

On the one hand, the Liberal "wets" want to contest the middle ground with Labor. Hence the bust-up over the Equal Opportunity legislation, with Senator Peter Baume resigning from the front bench and arch-"wet" Ian MacPhee making sure he missed the vote.

On the other hand, Howard's "dries" want to take the party further right. To avoid the more spite we wish, to avoid the further the legislation, despite the obvious loss of women's votes — 5% according to one poll.

Much of the ruling class likes Howard's direction. His problem is his "image". Ironically, he is a victim of the TV electorate

that is meant to favour the parties of the rich.

Like Richard Nixon, Howard looks as though he was born with a briefcase in his hand. Worse, he appears weak. He has dithered over tax policy, and last month made a lame promise of a referendum to ban compulsory unionism (Right-wing employers don't mind the ban, it is the referendum they object to).

Howard has neither Reagan's folksiness nor Thatcher's arrogance, so useful for selling right-wing policies when you lack Labor's pull with the unions.

That alone makes Andrew Peacock look so good to Liberal supporters. He may be a Toorak fop, a "wet", a failure last time around, and a foulmouthed toady when Jeff Kennett rings him up to grumble. But in the absence of anything better, his vaguely patrician air appeals to the Liberal ranks. Little wonder that New Right heavies Andrew Hay and John Elliott are angling to get onto the Liberal front bench, with such a leadership vacuum.

CONTESTING the rightwing Howard has been John Bjelke Petersen, who has both folkiness and arrogance.

Fortunately, his campaign has run ground for the moment. The press was not convinced by his flat tax proposal, and campaigned sharply against it. In a week, he fell 6% in the polls.

His backers' \$250,000 promotion of placing two million "Job for PM" bumper stickers in the daily papers was a debacle. Scarcely a sticker is visible in Sydney or Melbourne, and 2500 were reputedly sent back without postage.

Genuine leftwing politics, however, does not revolve around personalities but around mass struggle. The posing of that radical alternative depends on the revolutionary left, and whether groups grow the Ugly Right does.

— Ken Stevens



INTERNATIONAL

SADISTS apart, television viewers must be getting tired of Lebanon.

For half a decade now we have seen endless scenes of strife from that country, and while sometimes you can understand it and take sides, at other times it seems sheer madness.

And certainly there is a lot of pointless bloodshed. Yet of the country's problems arise out of its history, and the main culprits are not the young militia fighters we see on TV.

Lebanon belongs to a region once known loosely as Greater Syria. After the first World War, Britain and France seized control of it. After the second World War, two entirely artificial states were carved out of the region along the Mediterranean.

The racist state of Israel was created through the expulsion of the Palestinians — with the backing of both US and Russian imperialism. And to Israel's north the state of Lebanon was created, a little country where the pro-western Maronite Christians could be set up as the ruling group. Maronite dominance was enshrined in the constitution, and the Muslim and Druze communities became subject populations.

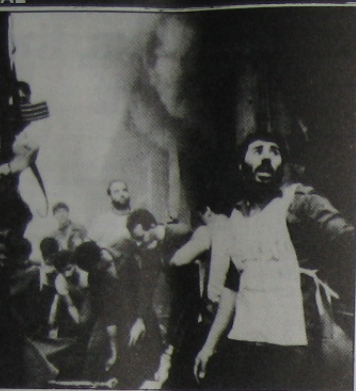
At the bottom of the heap were a mass of Palestinian refugees, whose numbers were swelled anew after the 1967 war between Israel and the Arab states.

When the Muslims and Druze fought to redress this situation in 1958, US president Eisenhower sent in the marines to keep them in their place.

But the Muslim population grew more rapidly than the Maronites, and pressure grew for political change. Then, after 1970 when the Palestinian guerrilla groups were driven out of Jordan during "Black September", the PLO rebuilt its base in Lebanon. Young people in the refugee camps of West Beirut, the southern towns and Tripoli flocked to join them.

BETWEEN the growing Muslim population and the leftwing Palestinians, it was clear that the Maronite rulers were in danger of losing power. They decided to launch a pre-emptive strike against their rivals.

The resulting civil war of 1975-76 led to significant defeats for the fascist Maronite militia known as the Phalange, with the PLO weighing in on the side of the Muslims and Druze, it seemed a radical government would be established. But at this point Syria sent its army into Lebanon and restored order.



Beirut chaos after another car-bombing

Lebanon: The meddlers in the madness

The Syrians' main objective was to contain the growing power of the Palestinians. Even so, through a policy of clever alliances, the Palestinian forces managed to establish a virtual government in West Beirut and South Lebanon with the Muslims and Druze as allies.

The situation was far from ideal. The country was fragmented, the fascist Phalange still controlled large areas, and the Palestinians themselves were guilty of some abuses against the Muslims — especially the Shi'ite Muslims. Still, for most people life was tolerable and there was some stability.

The country was plunged into the abyss by the Israeli invasion of 1982. Tel Aviv's troops moved in to drive the Palestinians from



Israel's 1982 invasion: a key cause of the turmoil

intention of fighting for it, they are beginning to turn to the pro-Iranian Party of God (Hezbollah).

Berri has been anxious to keep the Palestinians from regaining a foothold in the country. To suppress the PLO, he has sent his Amal fighters to lay siege to the Palestinian refugee camps in utterly ruthless fashion. However the PLO has thus far proved a match for Amal.

It also seems that Amal deserves less credit for driving the Israelis out of southern Lebanon than they have claimed. In fact, the larger part of the commanding actions which convinced Israel to get out were the work of the leftwing Communist factions and the Palestinians.

Most recently, militia of the Progressive Socialist Party, which is based mostly among the Druze, have dealt Amal some serious blows. Finally, when it seemed the balance of power was shifting dramatically against Amal, large contingents of Syrian troops came in to stabilise the situation.

ONCE again, Lebanon is relatively calm. But the country's agony is far from over, because the people who have caused all the problems are all still there.

The Israeli state is just as racist as ever, and it refuses to allow the Palestinian refugees to return to their own land. What's more, it keeps on sending its forces into Lebanon to attack them. The Palestinians quite rightly continue to resist. Until this problem is solved, Lebanon will inevitably remain a theatre of war.

The Syrians have their own designs to control Lebanon, and they in their own way are just as eager to crush the Palestinians. Both the Israelis and, less directly, the Syrians are backed by the United States and Western Europe.

A solution to the Lebanese nightmare could only become possible if at least one of these reactionary forces were smashed. Yet it should be obvious now that none of the various militias is anywhere near capable of defeating the Syrians or the Israelis.

The only force that could do that is the working class of the region. Syria has faced more than one internal revolt, and the weight of Arab workers is steadily growing within Israel's borders.

Unfortunately there is no significant force in Lebanon, Syria or Israel which is serious about organising the working class for socialist revolution.

— Richard Emerson

COVER STORY

Students go into battle against the fee

LABOR'S reintroduction of fees for tertiary education has prompted the reaction it deserves, with a wave of protests last month on campuses around Australia.

Students on several campuses are refusing to pay the \$250 "administration fee", with the boycott being strongest at Curtin (formerly WA Institute of Technology), where 1,000 students have joined it.

Simultaneous marches occurred in Sydney and Brisbane, with a total of 18 arrests. Education Minister Susan Ryan, in a bizarre attack on the marchers, blamed Liberal students for the demonstrations. First she brings in Liberal-style policies to roll back Gough Whitlam's one lasting reform; now she says that the people fighting back must be Liberals. Incredible!

• **From SYDNEY**, scene of the most dramatic action, Martin Hirst reports:

The Sydney rally was estimated at 6,000 by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and I didn't see one Liberal banner among them.

What I did see was a lot of angry students who were fed up with the way Labor has re-introduced the class-biased principle of "no pay, no play" to education.

Organisers had worked hard to get the big turn-out, and it was an inspiring display of what a small group of activists can achieve when the mood is right.

The rally was large and noisy, and a four hour occupation by hundreds of students from the rally of four floors of the Education Department offices finally forced Susan Ryan to respond. By telephone, she offered to meet a delegation five days later.

Then the police moved in to clear the building, several of them kicking and punching. One student was taken off to a paddy wagon with blood pouring from a head wound.

Late in the evening, the police pushed and shoved the crowd 50 metres up a steep narrow laneway prior to moving out the paddy wagon. This was quite unnecessary, as the van was able to move forward without going near the demonstrators. The police were clearly spoiling for a fight, and



Melbourne Uni students harangue New Rightist Andrew Hay over fees

took the opportunity to make five more arrests. They did not hesitate to take off their numbers and weigh in with a few blows to heads and bodies.

• **In BRISBANE**, the march came a week after Queensland University students held a sit-in in their administration building, demanding non-collection of the fee. Carole Ferrier reports:

Chanting "Education for all, not just the rich!", several hundred marchers occupied the Commonwealth Education building. Inside, we demanded to see the Director, and told him we wanted repeal of the legislation, return of students' \$250, and payment to universities of what was deducted from their budgets.

Socialist Action members argued for extending the occupation, but the vote was to go down again and march through the city. The mood was still militant, and marchers took over the street a couple of times. Four were arrested, and three more of us given summons (a police tactic to play down harassment in front of the cameras).

At Queensland University, Registrar Douglas Porter says \$3 million of the expected \$4 million in fees has been paid so far. The remaining \$1 million is partly fees not paid by boycotting students, and partly fees expected from many part-time, mature age or women students whose financial problems have stopped them enrolling this year. So much for Labor's claim that the fee is only being levied on those who can afford it.

The Administration is waving the big stick, saying that students not paid up by March 27 will be excluded. This is despite an undertaking to the student union president and secretary that the deadline would be extended at least two weeks.

But this concession came when we were threatening a second occupation of the administration building — which was then called off. Readers can draw the moral for themselves.

Some staff are moving (slowly) to support the students. The Academic Staff Association is asking the Queensland University Senate for boycotting students to get a "result withheld" rather than a "fail" mark.

The state government, for its own cynical reasons, has not yet gazetted the legislation necessary for the fee. So legally, no student should have had to pay yet.

• **In CANBERRA**, almost 400 angry students rallied against Senator Susan Ryan when she reneged on her agreement with Sydney students to meet a delegation.

Two hundreds of students had travelled from Sydney to meet Ryan. But she refused to meet them, claiming they had changed the size and the agenda of the meeting. The Sydney students had joined a rally of Canberra students that had been called to coincide with their meeting.

• **In MELBOURNE**, a rally of 500 anti-fee students at Melbourne University marched into a lecture being given by New

Right figure Andrew Hay. Hay, a guest of the Liberal Club, is a well-known supporter of privatisation. Challenged by demonstrators, he advocated private universities run for profit, full fees, and token government "scholarships" for the needy. He still regards the most elite working-class students as a good investment, it seems.)

When angry demonstrators howled him down for a good ten minutes, 100 Liberals present began chanting "Free speech" (evidently unaware that it has already been privatised by Rupert Murdoch).

The protesters drowned them out with a counter-chant of "Free education", and the lecture ended in chaos. An obviously-rattled Hay adjourned to soothe his nerves under heavy guard at the University Club.

At Latrobe University, students boycotted a proposal by Socialist Action members which should lead to a sit-in early this month.

The administration has been refusing to accept the general services fee, a student union from students unless it is accompanied by the \$250. Students intend to end the administration building demanding to pay the general services fee alone, and to remain in there until the university accepts their money.

The wave of student protest around Australia has already forced Labor to deny rumours that it intends doubling the \$250 fee next year. With sustained direct action, the fee can be defeated altogether.

READERS WRITE

No benefits for scabs

How should the organised working class handle non-unionists? Your comment on the Hein discrimination case (Cat's Eye March) gives a partly misleading answer. It is "no solution", you say, to argue that non-unionists should be denied union benefits because this would create a "serious division" in the working class and encourage the growth of non-union "contract" employment.

It may be plausible to oppose the strategy of denial of union gains to non-unionists where this would create widespread division or a large, reluctant, press-ganged union membership. However, where non-unionists are few, the tactic is more effective than damaging in building union membership.

In all cases, the moral argument of the denial principle is justifiable. As one militant union colleague put it, "If scabs want to paddle their own canoe, why should we provide the oars?". Unions are about producing and sharing benefits for the many — a type of elementary, paid-holidays-and-compo communism. This moral appeal is strong and occasionally effective.

Supporting the non-division

of the working class does not automatically take precedence over union defence of the organised majority of it. It has been argued by some that supporting the "right" of non-unionists to union gains should be extended to representing them over their workplace grievances and even supporting their "right" to work during a strike. But there should be no (union) rights without (union membership) duties.

The best answer to the problem of union-non-union division is, as you say, strong unions. It is easier to isolate scabs if unions promote united, militant action, under democratic control of the rank and file, to win substantial benefits. This also develops the taste for the robust flavour of workers' power instead of the "contract" junk food that the bosses would feed the scab.

PHIL SHEANON
Narrabundah, ACT

Robe uncool for bosses

Martin Hirst's comments (Readers Write, March) on Robe River suggest that there is only one option for the ruling class in facing Australia's economic crisis, that of the New Right. He adds that it is only a matter of time before all

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employers adopt their confrontational methods.

However he ignores two important facts.

Firstly, there are economic costs in confrontation. Not all companies have the financial resources to take the risk of confrontation where they are not guaranteed success. If you look at previous New Right "successes" like SEQEB or Mugdenberri, then you are looking at either the backing of the State or fundraising to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Secondly, the ALP-ACTU Accord (and two-tier system) is working — in the bosses' interests. The agreement has held down wages and cut conditions while restoring profit levels, allowing restructuring and rationalisation, with little fightback from the unions.

And because it is working in their interests, the majority of the ruling class support this option. There is no need for them to adopt the tactics of the New Right.

Turning to something less important, female stereotypes...

My first reaction to Cheap Shots' comment on Barbie Doll measurements was "So what did you expect?" Stereotypes only work because they approximate reality. So why should we be surprised that the Barbie Doll figure does just that?

My second reaction was "What is the point of this?" Are you saying dolls shouldn't reflect reality? After all, there are women with those measurements, just as there are women who don't fit that configuration. Or are you saying women shouldn't have this sort of figure?

The fact is that the comment says nothing.

The issue is not the Barbie Doll measurements but the fact that her sort of figure is promoted as the only one acceptable, i.e. hers is the stereotype that most women are socialised into striving for. And it's this socialisation that socialists should be aiming to combat, not the production of a doll that actually looks like some women do.

LIZ ROSS,
Brunswick, Vic.

Pick the picket no. 1



Can you identify this US picket line? (Answer p.12)

MR POPULARITY... Bob Hawke's best was unveiled last month in his birthplace of Bordertown, on the SA-Victorian border.

It lasted less than a week before being defaced by rate locals. As Sir Les Patterson sagely observes, Bob Hawke is living proof of what happens to charisms when you leave it out of the fridge too long.

USEFUL gifts department... Among the emergency relief supplies airlifted to Vanuatu after February's devastating cyclone were 1000 bibles.

At least they'll know who to blame now. **QUEENSLAND'S** state government motto is "A Stronger State: A Better Life". But subversive elements disagree. Two

GREAT explanations...

- Of how to solve juvenile crime, by NSW Liberal spokesman on police Ted Pickering: "We'd like to see a jail about 100 miles west of Broken Hill... a prisoner-of-war style jail with no air-conditioning and if they get out they die of thirst."
- Of the Russian naval threat in the Pacific, by NSW premier Barrie Unsworth: "Take a look at Fort Denison. Our forefathers built it to protect us from the Tsarist fleet."
- Of capitalist ethics, by Roger Turner, a trustee of British Vegetarian Society caught selling beefburgers: "Business is business. You've got to give the public what it wants."
- Of the process of reform in South Africa, by the "Butcher of Soweto" Brigadier Theuns Swanepoel to Desmond Tutu: "I got you once and I'll get you again. This time they will carry you out feet first."
- Of how the "nuclear winter" effect can be minimised, by US professor George Rathjens: "Start World War Three in the cold months, as temperatures will be low then anyway."
- Of Reagan's long alliance over Contragate, by press aide Marlin Fitzwater: "He does not have laryngitis. He is in excellent health. That's just his personal style."

strokes of a pen, and they are altering it to a Stranger State: A Bitter Life."

THE MASTER Builders Association of Victoria had WWII veteran Colonel Sir

Edward Dunlop address them on "The Burma Railway Revisited" last month.

The building bosses couldn't be contemplating a similar slave labour project for BLF members, could they?



CHEAP SHOTS

RESTRAINT, Pentagon-style. The US Air Force spent \$US42,000 last year keeping George Bush's jet stocked with playing cards bearing the vice-presidential seal.

LATEST Contragate joke: How many White House aides does it take to change a light bulb?

Answer: None. Ronald Reagan prefers to be kept in the dark.

FEATURE

Palm Sunday, April 12, sees another round of mass anti-nuclear marches throughout Australia. GRAHAM WILLETT recalls Australia's most successful anti-war movement, the Vietnam War movement, and its implications for today.

Vietnam: The anti-war campaign that won

NOVEMBER 11 seems to be a fatal date in Australian politics.

On that day in 1964, Liberal PM Robert Menzies reintroduced conscription for military service. Six months later, he sent Australian troops to Vietnam. Those two decisions reshaped the face of Australian politics, possibly forever.

The struggle against conscription and the war in Vietnam mobilized hundreds of thousands of people over its seven years into the biggest political movement in Australia since the 1930s. It rewrote the rules of political protest in this country. And it spawned a whole new generation of political activists to revive the revolutionary left, which had been all but destroyed during the Cold War years.

This movement did not spring up spontaneously or fully-fledged. Nor, contrary to this's mythology, did it eventually win just by mobilising middle-class opinion into ever-larger and more respectable peace marches. It was built by activists who were prepared to swim against the tide and, in the case of many, adopt revolutionary politics.



Early defiance: Sydney protestors block President Lyndon Johnson's car

WITHIN two weeks of Menzies' announcing conscription, activists from the Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament, an established peace group, drew 600 people to a meeting at Sydney Town Hall.

This meeting set up the Youth Campaign Against Conscription (YCAC) to fight the draft. During 1965 and 1966, YCAC activists participated in all major protest events, and many had had political experience in the ALP or the Eureka Youth League, the Communist Party's youth wing.

In these initial years, YCAC remained closely tied to ALP policy and tactics.

Policy was not a serious problem. Labor

leader Arthur Calwell was bitterly hostile to the war and conscription, and promised to bring the conscripts home as soon as he was PM. Regular troops, he said, would come back after consultation with the US. Labor held to this policy right up to the November 1966 election.

Being tied to ALP tactics, though, was a problem. YCAC was essentially a protest organisation. It believed that if it demonstrated and argued loudly enough, it could rally existing opposition, convert the unsure and turn all this feeling into votes for Labor.

In reality, Cold War ideology still dominated Australia. Most voters (who were over 21 and not liable to be conscripted) supported the war and the draft, even if a majority opposed sending conscripts to fight overseas. This became clear with the Liberals' landslide victory in November 1966, and had a cataclysmic effect on the movement.



A draft resister burns his call-up notice

troops shipped out in May 1965.

In February 1966, YCAC members burned draft papers. In March, they disrupted Melbourne's Moomba with a sit-in. Every call-up had its protest. During the election campaign, hecklers showed down Liberal PM Harold Holt repeatedly.

The point of all this was to win votes for Labor, and in that it was a dismal failure. Labor lost the 1966 election by a record margin.

Labor's right wing drew the obvious conclusion and, when Gough Whitlam replaced Calwell, junked the anti-war policy. Whitlam would not even promise to bring home the conscripts.

Defeated at the polls and within the ALP, many YCAC activists were demoralised. Some gave up entirely, some followed Labor to the right. Others wanted to fight on, but were uncertain how to do so.

AS IN 1964, it was a relatively small group of leftwing activists who found the way forward.

In July 1967, the Monash Labour Club decided to collect money on campus and send it to the National Liberation Front (NLF) in Vietnam — to "the enemy".

The RSL, the Young Liberals and Gough Whitlam were outraged. The university administration tried to intervene, but was stopped by 1000 students who met to defend the club's right to collect.

The Labour Club, a group of 50-80 students and even thousands of other activists, mostly aligned to Maoism, had

FEATURE

succeeded not only in reviving the debate around the war, but in shifting it dramatically to the left.

For the first time, a group was not merely arguing the essentially pacifist position of "Troops Out", but taking the revolutionary stance of campaigning for the defeat of its own ruling class's imperialism. Suddenly, the "Troops Out" position seemed almost moderate.

This shift did not occur in a vacuum. The wave of activity in 1964-66 did not only mobilise thousands, it radicalised many of them. Only a month before the election, when the ALP was calling for calm, thousands protested against US President Lyndon Johnson's visit, and were brutally attacked by police for their trouble.

The call-up, the war, the continual attacks by police and the press on protestors — all of these drove a substantial minority in the movement towards a very radical idea. The institutions of capitalist society were not neutral, they had to be challenged, even overthrown. When the ALP abandoned the movement, these people were ready to take up the way forward offered by the left.

THE AID to the NLF Campaign replaced the old idea of merely protesting about the war with a new, more revolutionary strategy.

As one Labour Club activist wrote: "We felt it was vital to make people turn away from holding demonstrations to convince each other about how bad the war is and towards effective action to end it."

The Aid to the NLF Campaign could not end the war, of course. But its politics broke the logjam for those who opposed it, yet were paralysed by the ALP's retreat and the seemingly unshakable hostility of public opinion.

The war and conscription, the left argued, could be stopped outside parliament and against the existing will of the majority, if a movement could be built to *disrupt* the



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government's ability to wage the war.

Such a strategy was to prove far from crazy. Draft resistors had some real successes in disrupting conscription. Militant sections of the working class — the group in society that had the power to really wreck the war effort — took up the struggle. And the social disruption stemming from the war was enormous: the campuses were in constant revolt, and movements for women's liberation and gay liberation grew rapidly out of the radical ferment.

DRAFT resistance began, more or less spontaneously, in 1967, following the example of Bill White, who was jailed just before the 1966 election.

At first, it involved a scattered handful of men opposed to conscription for various reasons: moral and pacifist as well as anti-imperialist.

In early 1968, the Draft Resisters Movement formed in Melbourne. It saw itself as part of the anti-war movement's radical wing, less concerned with protesting about the war and conscription than with stopping them. It wrote:

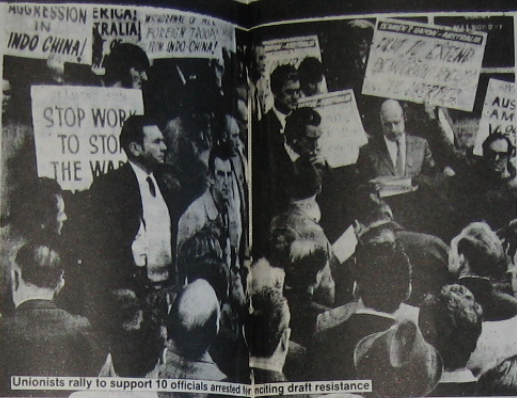
"The Draft Resisters Movement has not been formed to oppose conscription, it has been formed to wreck it. We are opposed to the war in Vietnam [and will resist by all available means]."

Its first task was to build its numbers and influence. In February 1968, four members chained themselves to the gates of Melbourne's Swan St Barracks, surrounded by 50 supporters.

By 1969, the left's anti-war movement was right behind them. Conscription intakes were confronted by big rallies, pickets and sit-ins. Demonstrators ransacked the National Service office in Adelaide, occupied Defence offices in Newcastle, and sat in at Sydney University's regimental parade.

Hundreds were arrested, and still the movement grew. By 1970, Draft Resisters Unions operated in all states. They aimed at "setting up an effective underground and sufficient draft sanctuaries". They wanted to challenge not only the government's right to conscript, but its ability to do so, through mass draft resistance and evasion.

BY LATE 1970, a network of contacts and safe houses was organised. Only a small minority of the hundreds of draft resistors actually went underground — just 14 by the end of 1972 — but they caused the government enormous embarrassment by making daring public appearances and defying arrest.



Four resistors appeared at the 1970 Moratorium march to address the crowd of 80,000. Five thousand people marched with them to Melbourne University where they slipped away from the police.

In 1971, Federal Attorney-General Ivar Greenwood was humiliated by being brought face-to-face (via interstate TV monitor) with a draft resister on the ABC's *This Day Tonight* for a surprise debate. The next year, when Mike Matteson was arrested in Sydney, students surrounded him and the police, cut his handcuffs with bolt-cutters, and spirited him away.

Such acts, and the police's inability to crack the underground, encouraged mass defiance of the draft. By 1972, an estimated 14,000 men had quietly refused to register, and there were 500 public non-compliers. The government offered "civilian" service instead of military, to no avail.

By the time the ALP was elected, there was no question of maintaining the draft or keeping resistors in jail. The draft resistance campaign had seen to that.

BUT if the draft resistors had undermined conscription, it was only the mass, organised power of the working class that could have wrecked it. The production of war materials, the shipping of troops and supplies to Vietnam, the processing of draft registrations — all these were carried out by workers.

encourage those young men already conscripted to refuse to accept orders against their conscience and those in Vietnam to lay down their arms in mutiny against the heinous barbarism perpetuated in our name."

The ACTU, under its new "leftwing" president Bob Hawke, was furious.

The divisions in the union movement opened up over the 1970 Moratorium. Many unions fell in behind it, with stop-work, marches to the rally and collections. In Brisbane, the Trades & Labour Council set up a committee to "foster support" and authorised stopworks. A minority of unions worked against this policy.

In Melbourne, the situation was reversed. The Trades Hall criticised the Moratorium, while about 30 "rebel unions" held stop-work and their own defiant march to the mass rally.

UNIONISTS' role in the anti-war movement was important, but the working class never actually took the lead. That remained divided between campus-based radicals, and more moderate middle-class elements around the ALP.

So the movement never had the social weight to carry out the left's aim of wrecking the war effort. What, then, was its precise contribution when the Liberals began withdrawing troops along with their American mentors?

Certainly, the NLF and North Vietnam had fought the US allies to a standstill on the battlefield. But a vocal faction in the US ruling class wanted to break the stalemate by using "limited" nuclear weapons. And it was not fear of Russian retaliation that stopped Washington doing this. Russia had already accepted years of massive conventional bombing of North Vietnam; indeed, had embarked on the process of detente meanwhile.

The anti-war movement in the US and Australia can take much of the credit for the decision to scale down rather than escalate. It had caused so much social disruption that nuclear escalation simply was not worth the price that Washington and Canberra would pay at home. Its militancy and persistence, far from alienating people, had turned a popular war into an unpopular one.

The key to the movement's success was not, as so many believe today, just its big but, as so many believe today, just its big but, as so many believe today, just its big but, relatively moderate Moratorium marches. Recent peace marches in Australia have been twice the size of the biggest Moratoriums. But their low political content has allowed governments to ignore them.

What made the Vietnam movement so threatening to the system was its revolutionary content. Not only was it drawing people in, but there was a sizeable revolutionary current, that was shifting them leftwards. Even Dr Jim Cairns, the one ALP politician who successfully rode the movement, felt the need to make threats that "to next Moratorium march will have to consist occupying company offices" to maintain his credentials.

This revolutionary current, which looked to defiance of the ruling class, mass disruption and workers' power rather than mere protest, was the vital difference between the Vietnam movement and today's peace movement. Until that current can be recreated, today's peace marches will remain blocked at the same logjam that Vietnam activists faced precisely 20 years ago.

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 'link' 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. We need to organise too. Today we work to build a stronger revolutionary movement out of the struggles being waged on the job and around social protest issues. Tomorrow we must create a mass workers' party to lead the struggle for socialism.

Internationalism

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

Liberation from Oppression

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

Socialist Action

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

SOCIALIST ACTION

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ACT 2614.

WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne
Mondays 7.30
Lincoln Hotel
87 Cardigan St, Carlton

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

Brisbane
Thursdays 7.30 pm
Phone 371 7114
for location

Canberra
Thursdays 6.00
Board Room,
ANU UNION

Action on the campuses

WITH universities resuming last month, Socialist Action's student members have been active in the campus upsurge against fees.

At Queensland Uni, our members were heavily involved in the occupation of the administration building, and the subsequent march through Brisbane and sit-in at the Education Department offices.

Our newly-formed student club also put on well-attended talks by interstate activists on "Gay Liberation" and "Justice Under Capitalism".

In Melbourne, our student club at Latrobe Uni has been taking part in the fees boycott. Our members have successfully proposed sit-in action for early this month.

At both Latrobe and Monash, we held a lunchtime talk on the basic arguments for socialism, entitled "Socialism Versus Capitalism". We got an especially good response at Monash, with five students signing up for our new club there.

This month, both campus clubs are planning talks on "Women's Liberation and Socialism", while at Melbourne University we will debate the "Liberal Club on 'The Future: Capitalism or Socialism?'"

At ANU in Canberra, Socialist Action members participated in the rally against Susan Ryan, and published a leaflet campaigning against the fee.

Palm Sunday

SOCIALIST Action members will be marching in the Palm Sunday demonstrations on April 12. If you support a militant, socialist stand on disarmament, come and march with us.

- Melbourne — Youth rally, 12 noon, Parliament House. Main rally, 1 pm, opposite Prince Henry's Hospital.
- Canberra — Youth rally, 1 pm, Regatta Youth Cafe. Main rally, 2 pm, Civic Point.
- Sydney — 1.30 pm, Hyde Park.
- Brisbane — 11 am, Roma St Forum.

Canberra

CANBERRA branch meetings this month feature talks on "Korosa: Two Sides of the Same Coin" (April 8), "The Iran-ira Gulf War" (April 15), and "Russia: State Capitalism and Marxist Theory" (April 23).

Meetings are 6 pm in the ANU Union Board Room. Socialist Action readers are welcome.

Melbourne

MELBOURNE branch now meets in the Lincoln Hotel, corner Queensberry St and Cardigan St in Carlton. Meetings are still at 7.30 pm on Mondays.

Pay battles erupt in building industry

The 4000-strong Sydney rally at Arbitration

THE VICTORIAN Employers Federation has called it an "industrial bar-room brawl". This is an exaggeration, but the number of different wage campaigns going on in the building industry is a sign of the times.

The plumbers' eight month campaign for a \$70 wage rise and a 36 hour week has mainly involved selective (but effective) bans, and short stoppages in Perth and the ACT.

Until now, the plumbers' union has felt strong enough to go it alone. But the situation has changed. Employers are planning to invoke the penal powers of the arbitration system, not used since the near-general strike following the jailing of Clarke O'Shea in 1969.

Officials of other unions now recognise a threat to all, and have made public statements of support for the plumbers. More importantly, rank and file building workers are increasingly ready to respond. As one carpenter shop steward told Socialist Action, "The plumbers are showing the way. I think if any of them end up in jail we should go on strike".

Quite separately, the BWIU and FEDFA have recently lodged a claim for \$52 which includes \$20 severance pay. In an industry dominated by casual labour, severance pay could be important as a way of tiding workers over unavoidable periods of unemployment. But rank and files point out that it must be with no strings attached: "Severance pay can be used like a good behaviour bond. The boss can say, 'If you're not good little boys I don't have to give you your severance pay.'"

The claim does not include the 36 hour week, a major issue for workers, shorter hours are more important than a pay rise.

Perth building workers and Melbourne crane drivers have started bans. But so far this appears to have been largely a Clayton's campaign, with federal details making impressive sounding but largely rhetorical threats to go outside the centralised wage fixing system.

Probably the industrial relations director of the Master Builders Federation is correct when he says that the industrial



action is intended to "tenderise the steak". Essentially it is aimed at softening up the employers before the serious work of back-room dealing begins. This could be through trade-offs connected with so-called work practices, which are allowed for under the second tier of the recent national wage decision.

Meanwhile, rank and file have been conducting a real campaign, led by the BLF and officials of other unions. Significantly, the rank and file of the BWIU have on many sites preferred to support this campaign.

The BLF log of claims includes an \$80 pay rise, 36 hour week, and improved superannuation. Shorter hours have already been won on some jobs.

Given the success of this and the plumbers' actions, it is not surprising that BWIU shop stewards have twice now refused to endorse their own union's much weaker demands. Relations, despite attempts by shop stewards voted for a \$70 rise and 36 hour week. As a

young carpenter said, "The older workers fought for the conditions we now have. It's up to us younger workers now to defend them."

Following the announcement of the national wage decision, building workers in Melbourne invaded ACTU House, led by the BLF. In Sydney, several thousand rallied outside the Arbitration Commission.

Issues like these are foremost in building workers' minds right now. Gone are the days, in Melbourne at least, when mere survival of the BLF was paramount. April 1, the day when union ticket renewal was due, did not see last year's confrontations between police and workers.

Instead, it was "just a normal working day", say BLF organisers. On at least one site, labourers worked on BLF tickets alone. On others, employers paid for BLF members' BWIU tickets.

A building boom is going on, and profit increases are regularly announced. Workers feel in a strong position, and increasingly their mood is combative.

—Janey Stone

Workers, residents derail Labor's plans

THE FIGHT is on in Melbourne over the planned replacement of the Port Melbourne and St Kilda railway lines with "light rail vehicles", or trams.

As we reported last month, the project will mean tripled times for travellers, no access for disabled passengers, lost transport jobs, and parks replaced by freeways built to gobble up the vacated railway land.

Government attempts to begin the project have been thwarted by pickets of local residents, transport workers and rail users at the three work sites. These have led to a blackban on the work by the Australian Railways Union.

The ARU has, on paper, opposed light rail for some time. Officials from the union have attended public meetings on the issue, and kept in regular contact with the pickets and the work crews one work began.

But it took scuffles with police and arrests on the picket lines to prod the union leaders into calling a mass meeting on the issue — the first step towards actually stopping work on light rail.

Until then, they had confined themselves to urging the work crews not to cross the picket lines, and to walk off if police were present on site.

Twenty labourers did refuse to cross a picket line on the first day of work. Management responded by standing them down for an hour, and threatened more stand-downs — or even sackings — if they took further action. In the absence of concrete support from the ARU leaders, the workers could not be blamed when they continued the work.

At the mass meeting, the union leaders showed no intention of giving such support. They put a motion containing rhetoric but little else. It took an amendment from the floor — which they vigorously attacked — to put the blackban on.

Railway workers have provided a big boost to the campaign by this decision. A large majority at the meeting voted for the blackban. Meetings of the ARU metropolitan shunters' and guards' sections have voted for industrial action to stop light rail, the guards promising to act if police were used against resident pickets in future.



The heavies behind light rail: police break up a resident picket

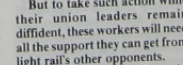
There are signs, too, that tramways workers are beginning to see through claims from the government and their union leaders that light rail will mean more jobs for them. South Melbourne tram depot has narrowly passed a motion opposing light rail. Both South Melbourne and Kew depots have called for resident speakers to address depot meetings to give their side of the story.

The success of this struggle will depend upon links being built between different groups of police to clear residents' picket lines. It will be much harder for the government to deal with decisive industrial action by transport workers.

But to take such action while their union leaders remain diffident, these workers need all the support they can get from light rail's other opponents.

—Robert Stainby

BREWERIES



CUB pickets outfox Lindsay

WHEN Carlton and United Breweries sold their trucking interests to Linfox in February, their drivers responded with a three week picket of CUB's two Melbourne breweries.

Although the 170 drivers did not achieve their prime demand (to remain with CUB), their action produced significant gains last month.

The drivers won a better redundancy payment, guaranteed jobs with Linfox, and maintenance of their own driver, workers, who at first were offered nothing, were given the same terms.

The brewery drivers faced a united front of employers and the media. The New Right friends of CUB boss John Elliott threatened crippling court actions. Lindsay Fox visited the picket line repeating words directly out of the Age editorial.

Rank punters faithfully parroted CUB claims that the average driver had been offered a \$30,000-plus redundancy package, when in fact the vast bulk of that figure was superannuation due to the workers anyway.

In today's grim climate for industrial struggle, such attacks could have been fatal. Instead, the drivers showed that significant gains can be made — if the rank and file actively mobilises to fight back.

The 24 hour pickets became the focal point of the struggle. Unionists and other supporters were welcomed at all times, and a family day helped involve wives and children. A barbecue organised by the Food Preservers Union raised a substantial sum.

The picket line was absolutely vital in maintaining morale and a sense of common purpose. As one picketer, Kevin, says: "Even if I was away from it for a day I'd notice it. But after spending about an hour on the line, everything was the same again."

During the three weeks, many of the drivers found their ideas about the society we live in changing. For example, as Hamish remarked, "One good thing about the media attacks

was that a lot of blokes realised you can't trust the papers".

And according to Don, "Before I didn't really appreciate it when workers set up picket lines. For instance, I never went to the nurses' picket. Now I'm going to go down and support picket lines when they're set up."

This rank and file activity is in sharp contrast to what the TWU leaders had on offer. The organisers spent very little time on the line. They refused to pay for a caravan because "then they'd have to do it for all pickets". At the end of the dispute they worked just as hard as the bosses to get the men to settle.

Ultimately only a minority of the drivers were able to withstand the united pressure from the management, media and the union leadership. The defensive framework of much industrial action today means that most workers lack the confidence to act independently of conservative union bureaucrats in taking on powerful employers.

The labour movement overall is weaker than it was 10 years ago. But it is far from destroyed. There remain pockets of militants, such as that minority of brewery drivers who wanted to continue the fight. When the larger movement revives, it will be able to build on the experience and networks established by such groups. Their fighting spirit will be essential.

As Patrick, another picketer, put it, "Before I started working in the brewery I was completely apolitical. I didn't even register to vote. Now I'm a revolutionary!"

—Janey Stone



Family day on the CUB picket

Pick the picket no. 2



Who are these German picketers? (Answer at right)

OUR hearts really bled for Andrew Peacock and Jeff Kennett when their illegally taped carphone conversation was splashed all over the media.

After all, Andrew Peacock never exploited any illegal ASIS phototaps in South East Asia when he was Foreign Affairs minister, did he? And Jeff Kennett was never in a Liberal cabinet than ran the notorious Victorian police special branch to keep tabs on political activists, was he?

RESTRAINT, Labor style...

The Aboriginal Affairs Department sponsored 30 top state and Federal bureaucrats on a junket to Central Australia to "consult" with the Piltjanjara people recently.

Not a single black person was present at the meeting. The Piltjanjara were so angry at the extravagance of the junket that they boycotted it.

BRITAIN'S rich are getting richer... A broom cupboard measuring 3.3m x 1.6m opposite Harrods in Knightsbridge has just been sold as a "studio flat" for \$485,000.

ADVICE on how Britain's rich can become richer still comes from The Tailor, London's high society magazine.

It advised boyfriends: "When giving flowers to your girlfriend, do not waste money on filling the coffers of the florist. You will find freshly cut flowers in many a central London cemetery which

can be removed without inconvenience."

BRASIL'S economic crisis must be serious. McDonalds has closed its 16 hamburger outlets in the country.

With typical sensitivity, McDonalds ordered all its kitchen employees to stand out on the pavement and explain its \$750,000 a month losses to customers, before letting them go.

THE GLORY of privatised medicine... Sandy Wallace of Cessnock (NSW) look her son Donald with her on a dental appointment recently.

As it was his first time in a dental surgery, she asked if he could sit in the chair for a couple of minutes. When they left, the dentist's bill was \$28 for her fillings...and



CHEAP SHOTS

another \$20 for Donald's seat.

PICK THE PICKET: Picket 1 (p.6) is of CIA agents demanding more pay. Picket 2 is of German businessmen demanding tax cuts. Suddenly everybody's doing it!

QUEENSLAND Health Minister Mike Ahern recently went on TV to brand a former male prostitute, diagnosed as AIDS positive, as "a walking time bomb".

The man had stopped soliciting as soon as he heard that he might be carrying AIDS. But Ahern portrayed him as knowingly spreading the disease, and ordered police to search for and arrest him.

Such victimisation, along with Queensland's move in making AIDS a notifiable disease, only creates a climate of fear which discourages possible AIDS sufferers from identifying themselves by taking tests. It typifies the reactionary thinking that is holding back so much of the battle against AIDS.

Australia today has around 50,000 people who are antibody positive, it have come into contact with the disease. US trends suggest half of them will develop Category A AIDS.

It has the second highest rate of increase (after the US) in AIDS cases per capita, out of any country recording such figures.

For the business community, this human tragedy is first and foremost a way to turn a fast buck. Peter Walker, managing director of Private Blood Bank, says, "It's simply the biggest business around."

Private Blood Bank is one of several stocks in what brokers call the "AIDS sector" of the market, which is a speculative's paradise. Share prices in Private Blood Bank began at \$1 last December, soared to over \$15 in February, and then plummeted to around \$5.

How capitalism is hampering the AIDS fight



AIDS research: secrecy rather than co-operation

finds a cure, so research is being carried out in a climate of jealous secrecy as teams compete with each other rather than cooperate.

The first move upon making a breakthrough is to obtain legal rights over practical applications. Medical Research Limited, a Perth-based company, is presently entering an agreement with a US firm to gain sole Australian and South East Asian rights over a "medical treatment process" known to be related to AIDS.

At the government level, AIDS is likely to be the major public health issue for the next decade. Yet here, too, capitalist policies are obstructing the battle.

The risk of spreading AIDS through sexual contact can be avoided by "safe sex" — exchange "risky" body fluids like semen, vaginal fluids or blood. (Saliva is not regarded as risky.)

In Australia, the average age at which adolescents begin sexual relationships is 14 years. Frank, "safe sex" education about an essential part of combatting AIDS.

Predictably, the Queensland government has already rejected

such proposals. Joh Bjelke Petersen says, "The government made its mind on that. That's not in my opinion the system or method of getting rid of AIDS."

Federally, the Hawke government has spent \$2 million in the last two years on community education against AIDS, and promoting "safe sex".

Compared with the Thatcher government, this sounds quite good. Only in recent months has Britain embarked on a national education campaign, and much of that has been "scarce tactics". (Judging by past anti-smoking campaigns, these are unlikely to succeed; but they may well produce more anti-gay sentiment.)

But compared with the \$100 million that the Hawke government spent on the "drug offensive" (which virtually ignored the major killers, alcohol and tobacco), \$2 million on an education campaign against a potentially much bigger killer is pathetic. It is another example of "restraint" designed to boost business profitability at the expense of the public good.

Also restrained is Canberra's spending on AIDS research. At 8 cents per person per year, it is a token effort, especially compared with the US and UK, which both outlay about \$1 per person per year.

Both in the private and public sector, the battle against AIDS is being hampered by capitalist economics. With tens of thousands likely to die in this country alone, the system truly is putting dollars before people's lives.

— Steve Boyce

SOCIALIST STANDPOINTS

ANYONE who wants social change must come to terms with the state.

Even the most limited struggles for reform or better wages and working conditions often bring workers up against the machinery of government. If demonstrations become radical or combative enough, they soon encounter the power of the police. Australian workers on picket lines face the cops and the Arbitration Commission, and the courts if they're arrested.

Australian history is full of examples where the state has played a decisive role in attacking workers' movements. In 1948, the Queensland Labor government passed repressive legislation against railway workers striking over pay rates and safety conditions. In the following year, a national coal miners' strike was defeated after the federal Labor government froze union funds, jailed union leaders, and sent troops into the mines.

More recently, the Queensland government used parliament, the police and the courts when power workers fought back against management moves to introduce contracts. In 1986, the courts imposed massive fines against meatworkers and their union picketing at the Mudgeberrri abattoir in the Northern Territory and police were used extensively in a drive to smash the BLF in NSW, Victoria and the ACT.

This happens under Liberal and Labor governments alike. While the state is supposedly neutral, in reality it will intervene in every major class struggle on the side of the employer and other vested interests.

The story is much the same when it comes to people fighting for social reforms. During 1985, police raided an abortion clinic in Brisbane and prosecuted the resident doctor. (Meanwhile, for years in North Queensland, young black women have been sterilized without their consent.)

The state plays this role because it is the product of class divisions in society. As Frederick Engels once wrote, class divisions lead to:

"the establishment of a public power which no longer directly coincides with the population organising itself as an armed force. This public power exists in every state. It consists not merely of armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons and institutions of coercion of all kinds."

SUBSCRIBE to Socialist Action

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, SOME BEEN THERE TO REMIND THE REST OF US...



The state behind the status quo

The state does not mechanically reflect the desires of the ruling social class, but by its nature it works to preserve the existing social order. At times it will make concessions to workers and oppressed people, but only those concessions that are compatible with maintaining the status quo. When circumstances change, governments will just as easily reverse past reforms.

THERE have always been people in the labour movement who thought it was possible to change the state by getting control of parliament.

History, sadly, has proved them wrong over and over. For example, in Chile in 1973, when the Allende labour government attempted mild reforms, the military simply staged a coup and executed thousands of left activists and trade unionists.

Closer to home, the elected Governor General sacked reformist Whitlam's vaguely reformist government in 1975.

The nature of the state does not pivot on the politics of the parliamentary majority. The army, police and courts are controlled by an entrenched elite, which will mobilise against any government that comes near to threatening the existing social system.

For this reason, Marxists have traditionally argued that the capitalist state has to be smashed

During that year strikes, or workers' councils, sprang up throughout the country, based on delegates democratically elected in the factories. Workers' control spread in the workplaces themselves.

In October 1917, a Conference of Factory and Shop Committees passed a motion declaring that "the workers are more interested than the owners in the correct and uninterrupted operation of the plants", and that workers' control was "in the interest of the whole country."

The soviets became the basis of the new workers' state which emerged from the October revolution. Unfortunately, because the revolution was isolated in a backward country, the new regime could not realise its socialist potential. The soviets decayed and a new conservative bureaucracy inherited power.

HAD the revolution spread to the rest of Europe, development in the direction of genuine socialism could have ensued.

The creation of democratic workers' states could have been the first step towards ending the role of the state as a separate body above society.

Since workers would be producing for themselves, and not for a minority of exploiters, the coercive functions of the state would quickly be replaced by administrative functions, which would not need a special armed force of cops or soldiers.

The state, in Marx's phrase, would begin to "wither away".

The question of a democratic workers' government, or the need to smash the existing state machine, might seem like mere theoretical issues dealing with possibilities which are somewhat distant today. Yet the ideas which left activists have about them impinge on today's political practice.

The state is with us here and now. And how far we can get in our day to day struggles for higher wages or social reforms depends greatly on whether we rely on Labor MPs and the supposedly neutral arbitration commission, or whether we mobilise ourselves and our fellow workers for grassroots struggle. The first step of approach leads naturally to building a movement which relies on working through the existing power structure.

The second leads to building a movement which threatens that power structure, and bids to replace it with a democratic and socialist society.

— Jeff Rickert and Richard Emerson



The British miners' strike: the state is not neutral

FOR MANY Australians, Czechoslovakia is an enigma — a secretive, uninviting country that produces flamboyant tennis players.

But in 1968, Czechoslovakia exploded onto the world stage, as workers, students and writers sought to overthrow an oppressive apparatus that ruled in their name.

It was a revolt that, for many Western leftists, finally buried the myth that the Russian bloc was in any way socialist.

Until then, Czechoslovakia seemed an unlikely place for rebellion. It was one of the most oppressive Stalinist states, generally resisting the post-Stalin liberalisation of the fifties and sixties, and rarely tolerating the independent views of writers and intellectuals.

And it was economically stable. Unlike Poland and Hungary, Czechoslovakia kept up high postwar growth, producing heavy industrial goods for eastern bloc consumption.

This abruptly changed in the early sixties. In 1963 alone, national income fell nearly 3%. Pressure for economic reform introduced a faction within the ruling Communist Party that sought a political solution to the crisis.

IN EARLY 1968, after half a decade of stagnation, the old regime finally cracked. Party secretary Antonin Novotny was replaced by Alexander Dubcek, a reform-minded Slovak.

Dubcek began a major overhaul of the system, promising "socialism with a human face". His "action programme" transformed the media into a source of divergent opinion, and genuine debate began to flourish. Leading bureaucrats were publicly criticised and forced to resign. Some even committed suicide.

A movement developed, first among intellectuals and later in the working class, that was not simply an orchestrated chorus for the new leadership. Pressure for "democratization" soon developed its own momentum.

Some groups demanded permanent abolition of censorship. Others developed a broader critique of society. The journal *Literary Listy* published the "manifesto of 2000 words", which urged a mass mobilisation to purge the bureaucracy.

"We should find ways and means of persuading them to resign, through resolutions, demonstrations, demonstrative work brigades, collections for retirement gifts for them, strikes and picketing their houses."

Uneasy with developments, Russia organised Warsaw Pact



Prague '68: A sweet taste of freedom

exercises within the Czech Republic. It withdrew only after Dubcek agreed to "normalise" the country.

But the Kremlin feared that the reform movement would ultimately challenge its political dominance. On August 20, with four reliable Warsaw Pact armies, Russia invaded with tanks and over half a million troops. The airports, cities and frontier posts were under their control within 3-4 hours.

DUBCEK'S reform group had only ever sought a "revelation from above", and made no move to organise resistance to the invasion.

The Russians arrested the party leadership, and set about restructuring the government and party apparatus. Dubcek had completely misread the Kremlin's intentions. Historian Francois Fejo quotes him as saying:

"How is it possible? How can I do this to me? I have devoted my life to cooperation with the

USSR. This is a personal tragedy."

The people responded to the occupation in a novel way. Instead of armed resistance, they applied mass non-cooperation. Even with the overwhelming military presence, the state machine continued to operate as under Dubcek, and anti-Kremlin propaganda was prolific. Russia soon realised it could not stabilise the country with force, as it did in Hungary 12 years earlier.

Six days after the invasion, Dubcek was reinstated as party secretary in Prague. Once installed, however, he proceeded to collaborate, as did other reformers, to impose the "normalisation" on Czech society.

Unlike in other eastern bloc revolts, workers were slow to respond to events. The changes had come from pressure by ideologues and intellectuals. Workers' initial response was to focus on economic grievances, as the trade union daily *Prace* noted:

"Shortly after January 1968 a multitude of demands for settlement of wages and social problems arose... Workers in the factories seemed far less disturbed over political questions. Only in the following weeks did enterprises and party and trade union organisations begin, with growing intensity, to express their opinions."

In factories, "Workers' committees for the defence of the freedom of the press" were formed, involving thousands of workers. After the invasion, hundreds of thousands of workers demonstrated in November, January and March. They opposed the abolition of the reform programme, and organised factory meetings and trade union action committees.

THE WORKERS promoted solidarity with other disident groups in society.

In Prague, railway workers threatened that if the government acted against student protests, "not a single train will move out of any Prague station". Printworkers refused to print the conservative party paper *Tribuna* when it attacked the reform movement.

But the workers lacked any serious "horizontal" organisation between the various workplace groupings. Workers' councils did emerge, but they tended to be dominated by technocrats, who sought to use them for economic reform rather than as instruments through which workers could impose their own democratic rule.

In the absence of any party or workers' councils that could coordinate the struggle, opposition to the occupation dissipated. In January 1969, the self-immolation of student Jan Palach inspired a sympathy demonstration of 80,000. Similar protests followed when Czechoslovakia defeated the USSR in an ice hockey match in March.

But the regime succeeded in reimposing many pre-1968 measures, closing papers and purging the army and the party, including Dubcek. When huge protests marked the anniversary of the invasion in August, the police arrested 3,000.

The "Prague Spring" and the revolt it spawned, however, had shattered the Kremlin's ideological hegemony.

Today, Dubcek's successor in 1969, Gustav Husak, is pledging economic reform once more. Who knows what penitence forces this may release?

Let us hope that Czechoslovakia's workers, students and intellectuals can rise up again to grasp for genuine socialism and to inspire us.

— Phillip Whitefield

Nice songs, shame about the politics

"It says here that The unions will never learn It says here that The economy is on the upturn... If this does not reflect your Views you should understand That those who own these papers Also own this land."

His unglamorous, grubby love songs, rooted so firmly in Thatcher's depressed Britain, nevertheless touched his Sydney audience, and he also made them laugh. Bragg said that he sometimes referred to masturbation in his songs to prevent Cliff Richard doing cover versions of them. So despite the political contradictions, it was a highly enjoyable concert.

Paul Weller has recently been under fire for appearing on *Top Of The Pops* while BBC electricians were picketing it. I hope he, Billy Bragg and the rest of *Red Wedge* manage to sort out their politics.

As *Red Wedge* functions as a publicity machine for the Labour Party rather than as a musical medium for socialist ideas, don't hold your breath though.

— Trevor Payne

TV EVANGELISM



Serving God and Mammon

THE CURRENTISTS by US TV evangelists Jimmy Bakker, Oral Roberts and Jimmy Swaggart are all terribly amusing. But they are nothing new.

America's money-grubbing right-wing TV fundamentalists have long been surrounded by hypocrisy and scandal. Most famous was Herbert W. Armstrong, who had to excommunicate his preacher son Garner Ted from their *Radio Church of God* for hanky panky with female followers. Herbert's own \$70 million a year empire nosedived as his apocalyptic prophecies failed to eventuate, and insiders revealed massive financial irregularities.

Then there was the Reverend Hargis of the *Crusade for Christian Morality*. Hargis was sprung after marrying two of his followers who discovered that their honeymoon that he had had sexual relations with each of them.

TV evangelist Leroy Jenkins has been serving a 12-year jail sentence in South Carolina, for attempting arson on the home of a State trooper and assault on a



Billy Bragg. Red Wedge or pink? journalist investigating him.

Currently ripping off Australian audiences is Dr Robert Schuller, of the *Hour of Power*. Schuller was due to tour last month, giving four lectures at \$45 a ticket on fulfilling one's potential. The only potential Schuller fulfilled was his own.

He pocketed 60% of an undisclosed fee, then cancelled the tour because promoters did not pay the final 40% on time. Schuller's lawyers claim no responsibility for refunding the \$45 to ticket-buyers.

The message of these charlatans is uniformly reactionary: in Jerry Falwell's call to register all communists ("We should stamp it on their forehead") down.

The punchline is that they have become established in Australia. TV for almost nothing, thanks to archaic religious provisions in the Broadcasting and Television Act giving them cheap air time.

Separation of church and state? Political neutrality of the media? Don't you believe it!

Ken Stevens

FILM



The color of capitalism

AS ANY socialist can tell you, *The Color of Money* is workers' blood red.

Paul Newman's latest romp takes the viewer on a romp through every low dive and sleazy

pool hall on the way to Atlantic City. Two hustlers, Paul Newman as Fast Eddie and Tom Cruise as Vince, make their living through deceit. Carmen, played by Mastrantonio, lives off this deceit.

Carmen and Fast Eddie strike a deal with Vince, commencing, talking of him as a commodity. They use Vince, they use each other, and they use the innocents they meet in pool halls.

The people in this film pass money around like it's going out of fashion, but they're glimpses of the world outside show street dwellers standing around tin drums, there are only victims.

If all this sounds like a comment on the immorality of the system, it is — though whether it was meant that way is another question.

If you enjoy a good game of pool, if you love *Pot Black*, don't see this movie. We never see a game right through, but there are many scenes of Vince vamping his cue.

I'm not sure I liked *The Color of Money*, but I certainly enjoyed it. The great thing held me right through.

When we arrive at Atlantic City a voice announces, "The key to success on the casino floor is knowing how to play the game." And the key to "success" in this system is knowing how to outthrust your friends and your class.

— Mary Gorman



Cruise and Newman hustle up

The case for the "closed shop"

ASCREED from the Liberal Party landed on my desk the other day.

Entitled *Choice in Your Workplace*, it vowed that the Liberals would "ensure that union membership is voluntary" upon coming to power.

Intrigued, I read on. What other choices in the workplace did the Liberals have in store for us? The right to veto management decisions, for example? The choice of whether or not shareholders take fat profits from our labour, perhaps? Even (gasp) the right to elect our own bosses and sack them?

Readers will probably not be shocked to learn that the Liberals' conception of "choice in your workplace" does not reach quite that far. Indeed the right not to join a union seems to be the sole extent of it.

No hum. Liberal promises to abolish compulsory unionism are not new. Malcolm Fraser made them back in 1975 and then did nothing.

Two things, however, make John Howard's promise a little more serious. The Liberals are determined not to be as "soft" as Fraser was, now that unions are weaker than they were in the mid-70s. And the New Right is making the pace for them, with their ruling from the Equal Opportunity Board that the sackings of non-unionist boilermaker Frank Hein from a "union shop" in Melbourne was "discrimination".

DESPITE the claptrap from the Equal Opportunity Board, the case for compulsory unionism is a profoundly democratic one.

Fundamentally, it is a means to ensure that "majority rules", that the majority of workers in a workplace or industry can make a decision to strike, to reject a management measure or whatever, without a non-unionist minority undermining it.

And undermine them most certainly do. Public servants and teachers, two groups who do not have compulsory unionism, have long been sabotaged by minorities who stay at work and run skeleton services during industrial action.

As is often noted, non-unionists enjoy the conditions established by unionists without contributing to the cost of winning them, either in union dues or in the sacrifices involved in union struggle.

New Right-style opponents of compulsory unionism, like Frank Hein, argue that they are prepared to negotiate their own conditions, and will take their

chances. This is dishonest on two counts.

Firstly, unions have established the going rates that employers are prepared to offer. Frank Hein will not have to go back and talk to his bosses about the 60-hour week that existed last century, because unions have forced hours down since then. Secondly, Frank Hein will, if he accepts worse than union rates, hurt others by helping to drag standards back down in the industry.

FACED with these arguments, more sophisticated opponents of compulsory unionism, like New Right figure Andrew Hay, have another comeback.

Unionisation of Australia's workforce, says Hay, is only so high (about 55%) because of compulsory unionism. In America where "union shops" are banned, he argues, it is down below 20% — proof that most workers don't want unions.

Let's leave aside Hay's misleading statistics. (Most US states have not banned "union shops", unionism is low there for historical reasons, from McCarthyism through to Reagan's smashing of the air traffic controllers.) Hay has the cart before the horse — compulsory unionism is common here because of high union consciousness.

If Hay was right, and most unionists had only joined because they were conscripted, we would see widescale support inside union ranks whenever non-unionists like Hein chose to take a stand.

The last decade has revealed the opposite. While Malcolm Fraser did not ban compulsory unionism, several rightwing workers took him at his word and tried to break "union shops" during his regime. Paul Krutulis and Barbara Biggs in the Melbourne tramways, and council workers Noel Latham in Broken Hill and Frank Kane in Melbourne all created front page headlines when they refused to join unions.

In each case, their workmates almost unanimously voted not to work with them. Hardly evidence of a reluctant, conscripted membership, is it?

Nor did union leaders whip up workers against them to protect their employes. On the contrary, in Barbara Biggs' case, Tramways Union officials argued to contain the dispute to her depot at Brunswick. The entire tramways said no and voted to strike for a week to have her sacked.



Defending the union: Trammies bar non-unionist Barbara Biggs

When rightwingers demand the "right to choose" not to join a union, they can hardly be surprised when unionists exercise their right to choose not to work with them.

OPponents of compulsory unionism really don't have leg to stand on. Their real motive is to undermine workers' ability to fight.

However, we must add a warning or two. Compulsory unionism can also work in favour of the bosses.

Few large employers really want to negotiate conditions in- dividually with every employee if they can help it. Many prefer to do "sweetheart" deals with tame rightwing unions, giving them full coverage of their workforce. The Federated Clerks Union, in particular, has grown fat over the years through such agreements. Such deals are very convenient for employers. They ensure that militants cannot introduce the disruptive influence of a leftwing union into the workplace.

A nasty illustration of this

Seeing
Red!
with Alec Kahn

SOCIALIST ACTION

No. 19 MAY 1987

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CHERNOBYL

Clean-up not so clean

RUSSIAN authorities have boasted about their clean-up efforts after the Chernobyl disaster a year ago.

Soldiers forced to do the clean-up might have a different story — if they are still alive to tell the tale.

Noorie Haal, an Estonian newspaper, reported a strike last June by 300 army conscripts sent to clean up the area. When the conscripts, already disoriented about being "dragooned" often in the middle of the night, were told that their two month stint had been extended to six months, they mutinied.

One official "was grabbed by the collar", and there was "some jabbing of knees into buttocks and throwing of sand".

"The news about the extension ruined the men's willingness to work, creating a psychologically explosive situation. For a while some men simply stood about idle, having worked like oxen before. The normal work rhythm was destroyed bit by bit."

Elsewhere a man can choose to teach his brutaliser a lesson or simply leave. At Chernobyl he has nowhere to go and can only choose to swallow his bitter fate."

The remarkably frank report appeared in Noorie Haal, the writer admitted, to put down "stories of larger fights" circulating in Estonia.

"The uprising or strike or whatever else it was being called at home, based on information in men's letters, was extremely exaggerated."

Dissent sources claim that normal work was restored by executing 12 of the strikers.

Another newspaper, Tartu Edasi, carried an interview with a worker just back from Chernobyl, revealing grim working conditions and high radiation doses. The man had received a week's holiday and a watch in return for his services.

MELBOURNE

Rush review OKs light rail

IF THE Guinness Book of Records had an entry for the most rushed government enquiry, the Victorian government's recent light rail review would be a strong contender.

The two-week review — with just one week for submissions — was conducted by a single person — ex County Roads Board chair Tom Russell!



Fuel-rod check in the Chernobyl clean-up: conscripts mutinied

Russell's experience in pushing freeways through against residents' wishes certainly qualified him for this job.

Surprise, surprise, his review came out in favour of the government's scheme to replace trains on the St Kilda and Port Melbourne rail lines with trams. Meanwhile, opposition to the plans remains strong. A one-day survey, run by rail unions, of 1166 travellers on the lines, showed that 96% want to keep the trains.

Community groups and transport workers opposing light rail have continued organising public meetings and demonstrations on the issue, and are preparing to picket work sites again if necessary.

Union blackbans were placed on the work as a result of previous pickets. Whether the bans will remain, or light rail will be added to the long list of union officials' sellouts, remains to be seen.

It may soon be up to the picketers once more to give the lead in this campaign.

Fiji

New PM, old dilemma

IN FIJI, a new government has taken over following recent elections.

After seventeen years, the conservative and increasingly corrupt rule of Kamisee Mara's Alliance Party has been rejected in favour of a coalition led by the Fiji Labour Party.

This result is all the more impressive given that the Labour Party has only existed for two years. Its base among the trade unions, (which are both Fijian and Indian in origin) has enabled the party to achieve in a very

short time what the coalition's junior party, the National Federation Party, has only been able to talk about — a truly multicultural government.

Outside Fiji, most interest has focused on the new government's foreign policy. Much has been made of Labour's policy of non-alignment, support for national liberation movements in Iran, Java, East Timor and New Caledonia, and its proposed ban on US nuclear warships.

In the course of the election campaign, new Prime Minister Timoci Bavadra showed the usual politician's concern to play down the more controversial elements of the party platform. The US and Australian governments will be more than eager to encourage this trend.

There is a serious internal conflict in Labour's policy that may prove to be its real undoing. On the one hand, there is the quest for national independence; on the other, there is the determination to attract foreign capital to restore Fiji's ravaged economy.

The obvious sources of investment are Australia, the US and New Zealand. Neither the governments of those countries nor private investors are likely to be generous if Bavadra and his government are unwilling to toe the line.

CHANNEL 7

Fairfax pulls plug on jobs

MEDIA barons Alan Bond, Rupert Murdoch and John Fairfax have settled their differences over who will own what, for the time being.

And 78 sacked production workers at Fairfax's Channel 7 in Melbourne are the first to pay the price.

Members of the Theatrical

Employees Association (ATAEA) were already on strike when the mass sacking occurred, having walked out the previous day over management refusal to discuss staffing plans.

The workers set up a picket line, and gained support from other media unions and the Trades Hall Council. Australian Journalists Association members refused to cross the picket line, and production workers at the Fairfax-owned Age banned the weekly TV guide in support.

The ATAETA points out in leaflets that Fairfax is legally prohibited from owning more than two TV stations, and will also be in contravention of proposed laws. But what capitalist has ever let the law stand in the way of a good takeover?

Although most fears during the recent takeover battles were centred on Murdoch, the first to move has been the "liberal" Fairfax empire. Like Murdoch, Fairfax has experience of industrial disputes. It used police and staff scabers to break a six week printers' strike in Sydney in 1976, and cops recently roughed up journalists picketing its Melbourne Age office.

Behind the sackings is Channel 7's "networking", which union members, and public sentiment in general, oppose as removing any Melbourne identity in programs. There is an element of state chauvinism in this. Nonetheless, advertisers are reported to be worried, and a loss of Melbourne audience will mean a loss of advertising revenue and possibly even more sackings.

The Channel 7 sackings are only a taste of things to come. It appears that Rupert Murdoch has plans to set up a Wapping-style printing plant in Darwin, presumably as a pilot run. If that succeeds, we can expect to see the same in Melbourne, with Herald workers on the chopping block.



Police break up a light rail picket in Melbourne

Behind Botha's black-out, revolt seethes on

SOUTH Africa may appear a little quieter these days. Because of the restrictions on reporting, the most news we've had in the press lately has been about the whites-only election.

Intense struggle is continuing in South Africa, however, especially among black unionists.

In February, workers held a mass meeting to mark the end of the National Union of Miners conference. They could not have flouted more emergency laws if they had tried. The stadium was ringed with pictures of Nelson Mandela — and it has been an offence to display his picture since the 1960s.

They listened to speeches calling for the union to build links with political organisations and to lead the struggle for socialism.

The union intends to lodge a 55 percent pay claim, and to bring about the destruction of the hostel and migrant labour system in the mines. NUM president James Motlatsi warned:

"Either negotiations start with the NUM to begin the process of dismantling the migrant labour system and establishing workers control of the hostels, or the mineworkers seize control without their involvement."

The miners' conference was held at the end of a ten week strike by 11,000 workers in the OK Bazaars retail chain. Police attempts to smash the strike came to nothing. It is estimated that 60 percent of black consumers boycotted the shops.

UP TO 18,000 workers at 80 South African Transport Service (SATS) depots around Witwatersrand, the industrial heartland of the country, have been on strike.

Originally they went out to demand the unconditional reinstatement of a worker at City Deep depot, who was sacked after being accused of mishandling a paltry sum of company money. He was eventually reinstated, but fined. The strike continues to remove the fine — but also for recognition of the strikers' union and for the scrapping of racist barriers on the railways.

The railways are a bastion of white job reservation. They employ more whites than blacks, which is unusual for South Africa. Even so, during the strike,

white school kids on holiday have had to be drafted in to keep the system going.

Containers piled up in the depots and passengers rode for free as there were no ticket collectors. SATS losses have been \$4 million a day.

As if that were not enough, over thirty trains have been burnt out in Soweto. Durban dockers are reported to have downed tools in solidarity.

Previous rail strikes have been smashed by mass dismissals. The government has sacked all the strikers, and killed at least six of them, with no sign of breaking this one as we go to press.

Meanwhile, 7000 black postal workers in the Johannesburg area have struck against victimisations after two workers were dismissed and union activists posted to remote areas. Strikes and independent unions are illegal in the postal service.

10,000 members of the Food and Allied Workers Union staged a one day strike in mid-April against detentions.

All this adds up to the fact that black workers are still fighting and winning, despite the arrest and detention of many of their leaders and fellow workers. It is estimated that twenty five thousand people have been detained since the latest clampdown. Yet South Africa's industrial problems are worsening if anything.

THE REGIME has reacted with its usual mixture of "reform" (when backed against a wall) and heavy repression.

Last month, President Botha announced that the first Friday of every May will be "Workers Day". The main union federation (COSATU) has been agitating for May 1 as a public holiday for some time.

Botha's announcement was no act of goodwill. The regime feared a repeat of last May's 1.5 million strong stay-away, which would give a tremendous boost to the union movement.

It has not satisfied the unions. COSATU insists "May Day, May 1st is workers day, not the first Friday in May." They intend to call a stay-away every year on May 1 until they win the proper holiday. This year they were expecting up to three million workers to respond to the stay-away call.



Moses Mayekiso is arrested in 1985: capital charges this time

Botha's move is sneakier than it first looks. This year, May 1 is on a Sunday. The real test will not come until 1989.

AT THE same time, repression continues. At this moment, one of South Africa's top trade union leaders is threatened with execution.

Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union, and four others have been charged with capital crimes of high treason and sedition. They are accused of trying to "overthrow, usurp or endanger the authority of the state". If convicted, they could be hanged.

Mayekiso, like his fellow defendants, is a leader of the Alexandra Action Committee. In February 1986, the black township of Alexandra erupted in an uprising that forced the security forces out for four days. It began when police attacked a funeral and sixty thousand residents were involved.

Ever since then, the regime has singled out Alexandra for attack. In the massacre that followed,

eighty people were killed. Mayekiso was detained, and beaten up for five days.

More was to follow. A year ago, right wing vigilantes followed by the army were let loose on the Action Committee. Mayekiso's house was fire-bombed.

He has been in continuous detention since June last year. Most of that time he has been held incommunicado. Against background of strikes, stay-aways and continuing confrontation with the state, the government's intention is clear. If they can get away with disposing of such a key leader, they will feel more confident in carrying out further attacks.

It is a desperate gamble. The most repressive emergency laws in the world today have not quelled the union revolt. Creating another Steve Biko may just fan the flames even higher.

But faced with the awesome potential power of the black working class, desperate gambles are increasingly all that Botha has left.

— Anna Wolkenhaar

TIMES are tough. Sacrifices are vital. So we pass on the stern of Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar to his countrymen:

"If you go to the toilet, don't sit there too long. That is not necessary. That kind of attitude is not what Indonesia wants."

COSY Arrangements Department... The Queensland government has sent out 1600 unsolicited political booklets by New Right businessman John Leard to its school libraries.

The very same week, by a remarkable coincidence, John Leard took out full-page newspaper ads praising guess-which-Premier's economic policies.

Leard must be awfully confident about the John Fairfax campaign. His booklet is called Australia: The Worst Is Yet To Come.

DEMOCRACY, South Korean style...

Opposition leader Kim Dae Jung was placed under house arrest 30 times last year by the government. And he's only a moderate!

HAVE we finally found why so many Americans idolize their Constitution?

In a recent survey, nearly half of those interviewed thought it included the words "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Karl Marx's famous description of communism.

• ALL those Papal tours are taking their toll. The Vatican had a deficit of \$56.3 million last year. The 13 cardinals on the Vatican finance committee are desperately discussing ways of pushing up the St Peter's Pence collection in June. But a similar call to Catholics around the world last October failed miserably.

Maybe they'd do better if they handed over Vatican Bank chairman, Archbishop Marcinkus. Marcinkus has been sheltering in the Vatican since February to avoid Italian arrest warrants charging him with being an accessory to fraud. "You can't run the Church on Hall Marks," says Marcinkus.



SYLVESTER "Rambo" Stallone has cancelled a trip to Europe...for fear of terrorism.

RESTRAINT of the rich, part 1... In case you wonder why there is a housing shortage, Robert Holmes a Court has just bought his third home in Melbourne.

He paid \$5 million for a Toorak mansion, sight unseen, to add to his flat in Spring Street and his country property just out of town. Holmes a Court (or is that Holmes a

RESTRAINT of the rich, part 2... Brisbane TV magnate and Job-backer, Clive Skase, has spent \$6 million on a super-luxury 110 foot yacht.

The yacht is stocked with Christofle silver, 18th century French mirrors, 14th century Chinese urns, a sauna and spa, three kitchens, a barbecue, and baby blue marble and leather fittings. But uneasy lies the head... in case of piracy, the yacht also has radar, satellite communications, an armory, and getaway speedboats.

"It's all right, just like everybody else's boat," moans Skase's designer, who fell out with him over the paintwork.

STANDARDS are slipping everywhere, it seems.

The Philadelphia Stock Market has doubled its fines from \$50 to \$100 for stockbrokers caught carrying guns or wearing denim jeans on the floor of the exchange.

RESTRAINT of the rich, part 3... New York's high society has a new indulgence.

To go with the \$800 spring outfits they put on their pet poodles, they now have doggie perfume. Cologne costs \$50 a bottle. Lady dogs (please, not bitches) and promptly vomited the ring overboard.

• CHAUVINIST Coker... British Education secretary Kenneth Baker on why schools need word processors.

"These days, many graduates have to submit typewritten theses. This can be a problem unless, of course, their girlfriends can type."



CHEAP SHOTS

Loving wife Rose has made a movie about her husband called "The Hancock Legacy".

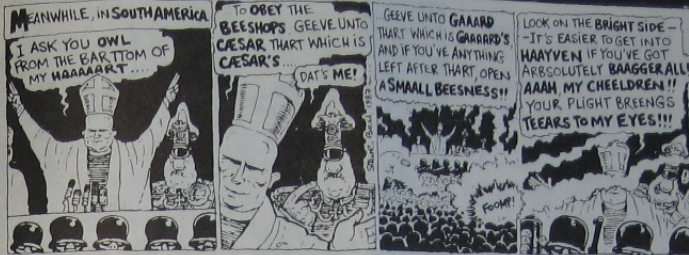
Cheap Shots has not yet been invited to see it. But we bet it's not about for stockbrokers caught carrying guns or wearing denim jeans on the floor of the exchange.

Nor, we bet, does it mention Hancock's legacy to Rose, the \$50,000 diamond ring he gave her. On a harbour cruise in Sydney, she put her fingers down her throat to make herself throw up after over-indulging... and promptly vomited the ring overboard.

• CHAUVINIST Coker... British Education secretary Kenneth Baker on why schools need word processors.

"These days, many graduates have to submit typewritten theses. This can be a problem unless, of course, their girlfriends can type."

INTERNATIONAL



IT IS nearly forty years since a Coup delivered Chile into the hands of a military dictatorship.

In those years, the military junta has proved itself to be one of the most resilient and vicious on the Latin American continent. It has at no stage loosened its grasp. Last year, deaths from political violence, reported cases of torture and political arrests all rose substantially.

Yet the people of Chile still fight. Women demonstrators face down the regime's riot police, safe behind their batons, their tear gas and their water cannon. Workers go on strike. Armed guerrillas threaten the life of Augusto Pinochet, the ageing dictator.

It has taken a long time, but once again the lines are being drawn. The workers and peasants, the urban poor, on one side; the rich and their overseas backers, surrounded by the military, on the other.

Last month, Pope John Paul II landed in the midst of this struggle. The Pope's constant globe-trotting took him to Latin America, and once his visit to Chile had been announced, questions immediately arose. Was he conferring legitimacy on one of the world's most repressive regimes? Or was he there to lend a hand (spiritually speaking) to the right against it?

It is difficult to know who thought they would get the most out of the Pope's visit. For the Roman Catholic church, it was an attempt to brush up the Vatican's image as a champion of the oppressed. This has taken something of a beating lately, with the Pope's reactionary announcements on birth control, divorce, liberation theology, political involvement etc.

So before his arrival, John Paul II described the regime as "dictatorial" and urged the Church to play a similar role to that which it had played in the Philippines. It sounded good — until we remember that the Church played a significant *restraining*, as well as mobilising, role in the overthrow of Marcos.

ONCE in Chile, the Pope found the going more difficult.

The Church's problem is that it is all very well supporting the oppressed — but there is always the danger that they might get out of hand. Once they do, the Church has to draw back. The Catholic hierarchy want above all to preserve the capitalist status quo — a nicer, less violent, more friendly status quo perhaps, but the status quo nevertheless.

When the riots around John Paul's visit started, he was left on the sidelines, preach-

Chile: The fire burns again

ing "the victory of pardon, mercy and reconciliation" . . . to no-one in particular.

If he was addressing the junta, his message fell on deaf ears. Pinochet replied, "It would be better if they (the bishops) spent ninety percent of their time praying."

The Chilean generals thought they could enlist the Pope's support in their struggle against "atheist ideology", their fourteen year crusade against "communism" (General Pinochet does the communist case a great deal of good by constantly declaring that there are two choices for Chile: communism or him).

The junta did not do very well here. Despite the fact that the Pope had the pleasure of meeting three generations of his regime was forthcoming.

The leftist opposition undoubtedly bene-

fitted the most. From the moment the Pope arrived, they were out in force, unfurling anti-regime banners, chanting slogans and attacking the hated police. True to form, the police showed no restraint, weighing in with batons and tear-gas in full view of the international media.

Only hours after the Pope had addressed thousands of workers in a Santiago slum, the police moved in to eject fifteen hundred squatters. And when rioting broke out during the Pope's "youth rally" (what did he expect) at the National Stadium, they unleashed such a massive counter-attack that even the church marshals and the Pope himself were affected by the tear-gas.

THESSE experiences have not brightened up the junta's image, either in Chile or abroad, despite all the praise of presidential "elections" and suchlike. The Pope's visit served to highlight the stakes in Chile today.

If the Chilean faithful thought that the visit would bring change, their hopes were cruelly dashed.

Papal bandwagons do not bring social change — and the Pope had no intention of doing so. He even managed to forge "common ground" between human rights opposition leaders. True, John Paul met opposition groups around the Christian Democrats.

But what was that common ground? Democratic rights, free trade unions, redistribution of wealth? Nothing of the sort. It was much more concerned with the "ethical basis" of society (read: power of the church), respect for Christianity (read: power of the church) and opening up a "climate of dialogue".

In Chile today, it is patently absurd to advocate dialogue with a regime that issues policy statements from the wrong end of a water cannon, or worse. If there is to be dialogue in Chile today, it must be on the basis of the destruction of the junta and all its works: the restoration of democratic rights; the restriction of the power of the rich; and fundamental changes in Chilean



The fire this time: police arrest a student

FROM PAGE 5

Black deaths

hold an inquest into the Yarrabrah deaths. Matt Davies says this is likely to be "an absolute joke," as it will be conducted by a circuit magistrate — assisted by the Yarrabrah police!

There may not even be inquests into the other three deaths, as an inquest is not compulsory under Queensland law for people who die in custody.

The six Queensland deaths, one in Perth Central lock-up in February and another in the Northern Territory last month, are the latest in a long sequence of black deaths in custody. Australian Institute of Criminology studies show that in 1980-85, Aborigines had a death rate in prisons 50% higher than

non-Aborigines. The John Pat case in 1983 was the most famous. John Pat was beaten to death by five police officers at Roebourne, WA. There were several witnesses and overwhelming evidence, yet the police were acquitted and reinstated.

The CDBR says John Pat's death came at a time when the mining lobby was playing up whites' fears that they would lose their land to black land rights claims. In a climate hostile to blacks, WA Premier Brian Burke has ignored repeated calls to reopen the Pat case, or that of Robert Walker who died in Fremantle Prison in 1984.

Five prison officers beat Walker senseless and then administered a large dose of the drug Largactil, supposedly to sedate him. The authorities found no evidence of culpability on the part of prison staff, despite

40 witnesses to the murder. The WA prison department issued three different versions of Walker's death. First it was "suicide", then a "Largactil overdose" (no mention that the prison's medical officer administered it), and then a "mystery illness".

In response to growing pressure from the CDBR, Federal Minister Clyde Holding has announced a parliamentary inquiry. But CDBR leaders are sceptical. Chairperson Helen Boyle says that Holding fears that a Royal Commission, as the CDBR wants, will uncover even more deaths. There are estimates that as many as 40 blacks have died in custody in the last five years.

The terms of reference of Holding's inquiry already accept that the Queensland deaths were "suicides", says Matt Davies. The inquiry is also structured to

look into Aboriginal Legal Service funding — something that Holding's Department of Aboriginal Affairs has wanted to slash for some time.

The CDBR accepts that a Royal Commission won't get rid of the legalised racism that allows these murders to occur in the first place. For that reason, it also demands black land rights, the black community being allowed to run its own affairs, and access to jobs, housing and health for Aborigines.

It seeks support from trade unionists, academics and lawyers, to fight initially against black deaths in custody, and then to build support for the general campaign for black rights.

— Martin Hirst

• The Committee to Defend Black Rights can be contacted at PO Box 498, Broadway, NSW 2007.

society.
It cannot take place with those who collaborated with the junta's crimes. The class parties like the Christian Democrats, who supported the coup in the first place and took posts in Pinochet's early cabinets.

FOURTEEN years ago, the very stadium which was used for the Pope's "youth rally" was the central concentration camp and killing ground in the disastrous days following the coup.

Fourteen years ago, many Chileans believed that the government of Salvador Allende was leading them to socialism. It had been elected in September 1970. It was a coalition, led by the Chilean Socialist Party. And it promised to fundamentally restructure society.

The victory of the coalition — called Popular Unity — unleashed enormous enthusiasm amongst the workers and peasants of Chile. It was hailed around the world as the opening of a "new road" for socialists — a peaceful, parliamentary road that could legislate socialism into existence. Yet only three years later, it was destroyed in a matter of days. How did it happen?

While in power, Popular Unity achieved a number of important reforms. Free milk for children cut infant mortality by more than ten percent in 1971. All wage and salary earners got a pay increase of about twenty percent, and unemployment was cut by more than four percent.

Government measures also included the full nationalisation of the US-owned copper mines, partial nationalisation of other US and Chilean owned businesses, and some division of land among the landless peasants.

But the real privileges of the rich were to be left untouched. Popular Unity's programme guaranteed that most businesses would remain in private hands and be led by the government. A real attack on the rich would have necessitated a huge mobilisation



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The fire last time: Allende, gun in hand, fights the coup; striking workers march against coup thugs; peasant guards an occupied estate

of the workers and peasants — which in turn could have directly threatened the power of the landowners and capitalists. This wasn't part of Popular Unity's programme at all.

SUCH A process began, however, whether Popular Unity supported it or not.

Workers began seizing factories. Immediately they were met with government calls to respect "legality" and contribute to "the battle of production". In the first year of his government, Allende denounced absenteeism and the "exorbitant" wage demands of the workers.

Peasants seizing the land met with a similar reaction. A Communist party senator declared:

"We have stopped urging people to go out and take sites themselves... These invasions must now cease."

In February 1971, the government announced special legislation to punish those who instigated land seizures.

Meanwhile, Popular Unity's other opponents were far from idle. Chile's capitalists, backed by their US allies, began systematic sabotage of the economy. Capital fled the country and production was slowed to create unemployment. At the same time, the US sought to strangle Chile through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Again, the masses responded in the best

way they knew how — with militant struggle. Workers occupied factories to prevent their closure, setting up *cordones* (workers' councils) to run them. To overcome food shortages, neighbourhood councils sprung up in working class areas to distribute rations and prevent black marketing. Million-strong demonstrations marched through Santiago against coup thugs.

The first signs of independent workers' power were appearing. Now was the time to take the offensive, but the Allende government held the movement back.

BEFORE his election, Allende had agreed to constitutional amendments (demanded by the Christian Democrats) designed to strengthen capitalist institutions.

First, no military officers could be appointed who had not attended the special academies for officers. Second, no changes could be made in the size of the armed forces by the president. Third, no "private" militias (armed workers) would be allowed. Fourth, Allende agreed not to tinker with the press, radio, schools, trade unions, judiciary and so on. Lastly, Allende promised not to remove Christian Democrat appointees to the public service.

So Popular Unity inherited a state machine which was by no means neutral. It bureaucracy was stuffed full of right wingers, while its armed wing was deeply reactionary and traditionalist. It had been designed to

defend capitalism, and defend capitalism it did — through increasingly open confrontation with the masses, which eventually led to the unleashing of the military hordes.

Revolutionary socialists argue that the capitalist state cannot be "modified" or "used" for socialist purposes. It is structured for an entirely different operation. For that reason, in situations of mass mobilisation, we encourage workers and peasants to organise their own independent sources of power — workers' councils and workers' militias.

Popular Unity did the exact opposite. It allied on the masses to place their faith in the Chilean armed forces. Despite the fact that the army was receiving more aid from the US than almost any other South American country, and that it has a long record of shedding workers' blood, Allende maintained to the end that it was loyal to the government.

"I have absolute confidence in the loyalty of the armed forces. Our forces are professional forces at the service of the state, of the people..."

Popular Unity therefore refused to arm the working class. A huge shipment of arms, supplied by Cuba for just such a purpose, remained undistributed in the basement of the Presidential Palace. Communist Party leader Luis Corvalan denounced calls to arm the masses as "equivalent to showing distrust in the army".

It was the independent mobilisation of workers and peasants — and the ruling class's fear that Popular Unity could no longer control them — that caused the coup.

In September 1973, it happened. Allende died heroically, fighting gun in hand against the army assault on the Presidential Palace. Tragically, having refused to support the workers and peasants in action, having politically and physically disarmed them, and having asked them to respect capitalist "legality", there was almost no-one to defend him when the army made its move. In the following weeks, 12,000 leading unionists and activists were rounded up and executed in the National Stadium.

ALL-ROUND'S overthrow did not halt the collapse of Chile's economy.

Pinochet, on the advice of his American "free market" mentors, decided to apply "shock treatment". This consisted of a drastic cut in public expenditure in order to bring about mass unemployment, wage cuts, bankruptcies, widespread deprivation — in other words, a real shake-out. The American advisors, headed up by Milton Friedman, were confident that an economic boom would follow.

The gross national product fell by 16.6 percent. Industrial production was devastated, with some industries simply disappearing. Wages plummeted.

The social costs were catastrophic. By the beginning of 1976, unemployment was at least 20 percent and probably more. The social security service broke down completely. Only the Church, through its soup kitchens, helped keep the poor alive.

But for the most powerful Chilean capitalists, the treatment seemed to work. State expenditure was curtailed (except, of course, to the military and police). The workers' movement was severely weakened. Growth rates shot up. Pinochet promised that every Chilean would soon own a car.

This phoney "boom", however, was short-lived. It was not based on productive investment. In fact, foreign investors showed remarkably little interest in Chile, except in its minerals. The size of the local market was too small to offer any real incentive, and investors had a choice of a dozen or so better-situated countries offering labour just as cheap.

What Chile did attract was huge speculative loans from the Western banks. At its peak, money was flowing in at the rate of US\$3 million a day. It was spent, not in productive areas, but in buying up state enterprises at bargain prices, creating a land and construction boom, and fuelling a consumer spending spree on imported luxury goods.

WHEN world recession hit the price of Chilean copper and other minerals, the economic "miracle" cracked up.

More loans were needed, and only too willingly supplied. By the end of 1981, repayments were taking 81 percent of Chile's export earnings. Companies moved into bankruptcy; the banking system virtually collapsed at the beginning of 1983.

It was in this context that resistance was reborn. In 1983, copper workers took the initiative in forming a new trade union confederation, the National Workers' Command (NWC). The copper workers' congress issued a call for an indefinite national strike, declaring:

"It is a question of a complete economic, social, cultural and political system which is surrounding and crushing us. The time has come to stand up and say, enough!"

In the last three years, resistance has not ceased. It has forced Pinochet into calling severely limited and stringently controlled elections in 1989. It has shown, above all, that the strong men of the military are not so strong.

It has taken fourteen years — and if my take more — but the workers and peasants of Chile will crack the dictatorship one way or another. Those who rule now may not be able to shelter behind their riot shields for much longer.

— David Lockwood

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

We 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 need a stronger revolutionary movement out of the struggles being waged on the job and around social protest issues. Tomorrow we must create a mass workers' party to lead the struggle for socialism.

Internationalism

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

Liberation from Oppression

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

Socialist Action

We are for Socialist Action. It's no good just talking about the world: it's not so change it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only meaningful if they are a guide to action. In whatever people are movements for a better world, socialists are fighting for it. That's where you want to be, join us today!

Come to our Winter School

DOING anything on the Queen's Birthday weekend?

The Socialist Action Winter School, on the long weekend of June 6-7-8 at Austimmer just south of Sydney, may be just what you're looking for.

It will cover Australia and the South East Asian region, with topics including China, Asian Immigration, Indonesia, the Philippines, Protectionism, Australian Imperialism, Papua New Guinea, Labor and the Unions, and is Socialist Action Possible!

Cost is \$40, including accommodation and three course breakfast and dinner on the Saturday and Sunday, and breakfast and lunch on Monday. Concessions are available for non-wage earners, and child-care can be arranged. We can also assist with lifts from Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne.

Interested? Ring your local branch of Socialist Action to book a place and find out more.

Campaigns

SOCIALIST ACTION members have been active in numerous campaigns around the country in the last month.

Our student members have been heavily involved in the anti-fees all-ins at Queensland and Latrobe Uni. Our club at Queensland also held a forum for unionists to speak out against the state's new anti-strike law, and Brisbane members are active in the Fightback Committee which is organising solidarity for unions confronting the law.

In Canberra, members have been supporting workers in dispute with the ANU Union Board. We put out a leaflet to students arguing why they should back the workers' campaign against contracts.

In Melbourne, our members in the inner southern suburbs have been busy in the light rail dispute.

New pamphlet

SOCIALIST ACTION has a new pamphlet out, entitled *Industrial Democracy or Workers Control?* It is by Liz Ross looks at recent developments in worker participation schemes, and why socialists counterpose the demand for workers' control.

The pamphlet costs 30 cents (60 cents posted) from your local Socialist Action branch.

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INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE



Building unionists march against the plumbers' \$280,000 fine

The ins and outs of an on-off wages campaign

"NO-ONE'S free under 45D" read one huge banner, as 5000 workers from all building unions marched in Melbourne last month.

They were protesting against the \$280,000 fine imposed on the plumbers under Section 45D of the Trade Practices Act, which outlaws secondary boycotts.

The spirit of the marchers was high as they surged down the hill towards the Master Builders Association. But unfortunately, the plumbers' union wanted only token action. Officials hosed down the spirit of the crowd with rhetoric, and told them to go back to work.

The plumbers are central to the wages struggle, having fought for over nine months. By refusing to pay the fine, they could have rallied the whole building industry. They lifted their bans on 14 Sydney sites, and chose to pay. Many building unionists feel this was a mistake.

The Master Builders Federation warned that the case was only a "curtain raiser" to a concerted legal assault, which could cost the plumbers tens of millions of dollars. Only mass industrial action, as used to free Clarrie O'Shea in 1969, can defeat such legal powers.

Switch on, switch off has characterised the whole building industry wages campaign to date. The BWIU/FEDFA campaign for \$52, which they hope Arbitration will ratify, is far from being the "biggest blue ever", as the BWIU's Tom McDonald has claimed. Bans are widespread, but they are very unevenly applied.

Many rank and filers feel that the demands are not strong enough, and Melbourne shop stewards have twice voted for a higher claim. Several militant sites refused to stop for a one day national stoppage, saying that the claim wasn't worth it.

Militants are also worried about the "work practices" being traded off under the second tier. Employers are pushing hardest over "homers" — short stoppages for which workers are paid lost time. These usually occur over breaches of safety and other accepted conditions (such as no ticket, no start), and are viewed as a punishment of the bosses. With so few government inspectors of workplaces, workers must themselves police the award.

Other trade offs being considered are on inclement weather provisions, no ticket no start, and rostered days off.

Officials are not widely publicising these negotiations among their members. One FEDFA militant, who had not heard of the proposals until I told him, said "We're not going to tolerate any trade offs of conditions."

A small number of major Victorian contractors have agreed to a limited settlement. Unions hope this will lead to a national rise. State Industrial Relations Minister Crabb backed it because an agreement outside government control could jeopardise his "code of conduct" for employers.

Meanwhile, with less publicity, workers following the lead of the BLF are making gains.

Some militant sites have won a large pay rise and a nine day fortnight. Victorian scaffolders

struck, and after about two weeks most companies gave in and are now paying \$72.

Other local disputes are being coloured by these national issues and the BLF's deregistration. At the White Industries site in Canberra, workers won a partial victory after a two week strike against the sacking of 14 men directly employed by the major contractor. This followed a series of bans over numerous issues, the final straw being one in support of the \$52 claim.

But as one worker said, "They've been trying to do this since August. It's just a good excuse for them." It seems that by reducing their direct employees from 180 to 24, the major contractors may be better placed to invoke secondary boycott provisions against sub-contractors.

In Melbourne, workers at Costain's Market St site have been out for several weeks over the sacking of the BWIU safety officer and the ASC&J shop steward. In one of their grossest displays yet, BWIU officials seem to have connived in the bosses' weeding out of militants. Their failure to defend a legitimate member (Paul Duncan is a candidate, not a BLF concept) will certainly be remembered in the coming union election.

Finally for some good news. BLF members working for the Tramways in Melbourne have won a year-long battle to work openly on their BLF tickets. Expediency over principle seems yet again to be a hallmark of Labor governments.

— Jane Stono

EDUCATION

EDUCATION Minister Susan Ryan has novel advice for students too poor to pay her new tertiary fee: Get a job!

The same day she handed out this scholarly advice, Bob Hawke was heckled and chased by angry students from Wollongong University. They disrupted his speech at Wollongong High, and held a soup kitchen outside his reception at the Fraternity Club.

Back in Canberra, Susan Ryan told a delegation she was surprised that the \$250 fee had caused so much protest. When the delegation gave her the figures for accommodation, living expenses and other costs students face, she was shocked and said her Department would look into it.

Don't hold your breath, though. When NSW delegates questioned her on the deportation of "JIS", an overseas student who cannot pay the crippling visa tax, Ryan refused to allow any appeal.

A week later, Bob Hawke handed out some advice of his own to students from a sit-in at Latrobe who confronted him at a shopping centre. They were being selfish and should talk to pensioners, who all supported his austerity measures. And get some weekend work to pay the fee.

That afternoon, Bill Otley, president of the NSW Combined Pensioners Association (the country's largest pensioner group) denied Hawke had pensioner support. He'd broken promises made to them, and delayed their CPI increase.

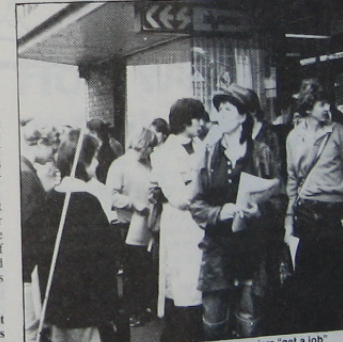
Angry Latrobe students went to Coburg CES to register for weekend work and demand the dole, underlining the scarcity of such work. Many students had to work anyhow to make ends meet, they pointed out.

THE WAVE of militancy went on, with 5000 students marching noisily through Melbourne, and a section of the crowd clashing with police at parliament. Hawke was the target of more protests (and a well-aimed egg) when he held an honorary degree at UNSW.

Susan Ryan, at least, felt the pressure. She cancelled appearances at Latrobe and Queensland, where, it seems, she recalls the reception John Bjelke Petersen got when he received an honorary degree. How telling is she expects the same response!

Where the militancy has been aimed at local administrations as well, it has paid off. On April 6, a sit-in of 400 students persuaded Queensland Uni's Senate to give fee boycotters "a results withheld"

Hawke, Ryan jibe as anti-fee action spreads



Students march in Melbourne, Latrobe occupiers "get a job"

status until the end of the semester, rather than expel them.

A ten day sit-in at Latrobe, first proposed by Socialist Action members, forced the administration to let students pay their union fee without the \$250 fee, and won several concessions which effectively allow boycotters to remain enrolled until October.

Significantly, Latrobe has now received its government grant of \$5000 per student, less \$250 for each collected fee. So it is now collecting for its own coffers. It will undoubtedly rely on the usual decline in student organisation before exams to break the boycott in October. So

pending. Four of those years were under Labor.

Gough Whitlam introduced free and expanded tertiary education, and for the first time working class kids went to University in serious numbers. CAE and TAFF courses also expanded.

The class bias in education never ended, in course — that starts in the schools. It was only ameliorated. So Labor is now using that as a pseudo-egalitarian excuse to bring back fees, and exclude working class and mature age students once more!

The fee for overseas students has gone up \$1400, forcing 2500 overseas students in NSW alone into hardship. Part timers must pay the fee, often while in poorly paid part time work.

Aboriginal students are also angry over the new "Abstudy" scheme. Its grants have become taxable and means tested, and allowances for books, fees and establishment will be scrapped.

SO THE \$250 fee is part of a national day of action against it.

The timing is good, being a week before the May 14 mini-budget. But the action planned, at least in Sydney, is uninspiring. Some campuses are on holiday, so instead of a rally there will be a March Gras.

At Sydney University, this apolitical carnival has drawn some criticism. And SRC leaders and the Broad Left groups want to keep it a "students only" event, saying they fear "outsiders" taking over. This is plain silly, and the whole idea of the anti-fees campaign is to allow more "outsiders" into the universities, anyhow.

The press is backing Labor's "rich selfish students" line. Rightwing mouthpiece John Laws talks of our "insidious welfare mentality". We won't win by trying to impress such media figures with respectable lobbying and actions like a March Gras. Groups like the pensioners support students because they see not "self interest" but common interest, and we should look to these allies.

A good place to start is with campus workers and their unions. Queensland has defended cartoon workers' jobs, while NSW and Monash students have fought library sackings. In return, students now need their unions' support.

Following the examples of Queensland and Latrobe, we need direct action against our own university councils to stop them doing Susan Ryan's dirty work.

— Martin Hirst, UNSW

Trade war threatens Keating's tightrope act

AUSTRALIA'S economy seems to be "on track" as far as the Government is concerned. For the moment.

But the most important factor if Australia is to pull out of its balance of trade problems, the state of international trade, looks far from promising. Paul Keating's strategy is to walk a tightrope of economic policy held up by expanding exports.

The latest balance of payments figures show a decrease in the trade deficit to about \$722 million. Exports are growing compared to imports. This is a considerable improvement.

At the same time, the Australian dollar is looking pretty strong. This is largely because the balance of trade is one of the indicators money market speculators look to when they decide to buy or sell Australian dollars.

They are also influenced by the interest their money can earn in Australia. If the dollar is strong then it is possible for the Government, through the Reserve Bank, to ease interest rates a little.

The lower Australian dollar has made Australian goods much cheaper on the world market. Most of our trade is measured in US dollars. A devaluation against the US dollar means that an Australian exporter will get fewer US dollars, but the same amount in Australian dollars for his or her sales.

But as the balance of trade improves, there is a tendency for the Australian dollar to move up. And that makes it harder for exporters. So the Government juggles interest rates to keep the dollar down, and at the same time hopes that it will be able to reduce interest rates in the longer term, so that borrowing for home loans gets cheaper.

If the dollar gets too low, then there are other problems. In particular, higher import prices lead to inflation and an initial deterioration in the balance of trade — the J curve effect.

So far the Government's main anti-inflation tactic, holding down real wages, is working. But another big CPI increase, due to higher import prices, would put the two tier wages system under even more pressure. If unemployment does not grow or declines in these circumstances, then the growing acceptance of the system by most

union officials will come under more rank and file pressure.

The more the dollar hobbles about, the less confident bosses will be that the latest change shows the general trend and the more reluctant they will become to risk new investment.

Yet new investment is crucial to a long term improvement in Australia's export performance. Only through new investment will it be possible for manufacturing to play a larger role in exporting. Without an expansion in manufactured exports, Australia will remain dependent on agricultural and mining exports, with their falling international prices.

Still, Keating is happy about economic performance over the last year or so. The Government's balancing act on exchange rates, interest rates and wages is working — at workers' expense.

Keating's problem is that the far end of the tightrope is not securely anchored. It is tied to the state of international trade.

Early this year, the main threat to international trade seemed to be the possibility of an agricultural trade war between the USA and the Common Market.

Skirmishes over wheat exports, with both parties dumping their goods in "third markets", especially affected Australia.

Now the USA is trying to force Japan to accept more of its manufactured goods. After years of persuading the Japanese government to impose "voluntary" restrictions on exports to the USA, tariff barriers are now going up. The first are against Japanese exports of commodities containing computer chips.

The prospects for world trade are darkening. Keating's tightrope is fraying at a number of points.

— Rick Kuhn

The Japanese economy is already stagnating — and Japan is Australia's largest customer. The effects of a decline in the Japanese economy, due to the high value of the yen and US protectionism, will affect demand for Australian coal and iron ore. Even if a manufacturing trade war is avoided, it may be at Australia's expense. The Japanese government may make concessions by increasing the access of US primary producers to the Japanese market, at the expense of Australian exporters. This has already been happening to some extent over the past few years in the case of coal and beef. The US has also forced Korea and Taiwan to take more of its

goods.

The OECD (rich nations club), the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs organisation are all revising downwards their estimates for international growth over the next year. The IMF's estimate of 2.4 per cent is less than the 3 per cent necessary to prevent unemployment from growing.

ANU students were generally sympathetic to the Union workers. A Socialist Action leaflet pointed out that both groups faced the same problems. Labor has introduced fees and cut the real level of Austudy in the name of "the national interest" (read: profit rates).

Profit is the ANU Union's concern too. While attacking its employees, it is talking about spending \$1.5 million on changing the internal partitioning in the Union Building to make space for shops it wants to lease out. That money could go towards providing cheaper food for students and at least maintaining its workers' conditions.

As a result of the strike, management went to an Arbitration Commission Board of Reference. All employee rights have been restored while the case is being heard. So far, the Commission has already decided in the workers' favour on a number of questions.

— Rick Kuhn

CONTRACTS Junior New Right at ANU

THE BOARD and management of the ANU Union have tried to pull a "Robe River". But prompt strike action by the Union's workers has stalled their plans.

The ANU Union wants to "privatise" its operations. It planned to contract out cleaning of the Union Building as a first step, at the expense of the jobs of both permanent and casual workers.

Management also decided to

withdraw workers' long-standing rights to meals and drinks at the end of their shifts, and to kick their reps off the Union Board. Not surprisingly, the workers decided to strike for 24 hours and then at peak times every day.

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— Rick Kuhn

THE MILESTONE disputes at Robe River have been portrayed as setbacks for the New Right. But were they?

Graeme Haynes, Electrical Trades Union shop steward from Peko Wallsend's Cape Lambert site, paints a different picture.

"Conditions at Robe River have never been worse. Instead of getting rid of 185 people, the company's got rid of 400 by simple attrition and they haven't paid a zae out. Blokes have gone to jail, there have been police raids initiated by the company, wives and kids have been harassed. And a lot of trade union officials have the temerity to suggest there was some sort of victory."

Graeme, who addressed last month's National Left Fight Back Conference in Melbourne, dismisses press stories of past Robe River walkouts over lack of ice cream and peanut butter as sheer propaganda. "I've been there 12 years and I've never heard of that happening." The reports served as a smokescreen, however, for Peko to set new precedents in wrecking work conditions and breaking a closed union shop.

"Despite agreeing 'not to unreasonably deny access to shop stewards', the ability to organise on the job is all but gone. Shop stewards can't move from shop to shop."

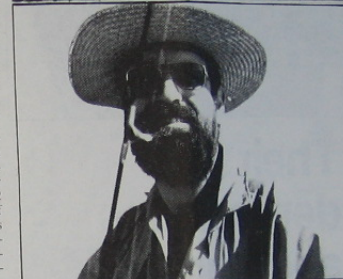
Written warnings, which can result in the sack, are given to anyone out of their normal work area, or even for calling strike-breakers "scab". "One bloke was sacked because he called a scab a scab in the pub!" says Graeme.

Union noticeboards have disappeared. And because Peko owns all the halls in the town, "Now our meetings have to be in carpools, in people's houses or the sporting club. New workers are screened and intimidated into not joining the union. Some are even hired on seven day contracts. We don't even know if they are getting award conditions."

UNIONS once had a say in joint committees with management. Now, despite "industrial democracy" being part of the new agreement, only the safety committee has union input.

Even that is only nominal, says Graeme. "There are a number of cases now that could only be described as the walking wounded on the site."

The housing committee was crucial, as remoteness forces Peko workers to rely on company houses. "The unions used



Robe River meeting, Graeme Haynes: Pilbara strike call blocked

How we lost at Robe River — and why

to make sure there was no queue jumping, that accommodation was suitable for families moving in, and so on.

"Now all new employees have to sign a 31 clause tenancy agreement, which is tied to the industrial agreement, and breaches of that could mean being evicted. People are refusing to join the union for fear of losing their house if the union takes strike action."

"There was also what I call industrial conditioning," says Graeme. "Unionists were sent off on government sponsored tours to Brazil to see the 'competition'."

This paid-off committee wouldn't let the ore ship leave the dock, the AMWU's Jack Marks and an entourage of miners gave a lecture on how we were re-employed, not reinstated, after the lockout. So many people were reclassified into lower paying jobs, and we lost a lot of accrued rights and payments."

if we let the ship go, he said.

"About 11 of us delegates left fly then, but we were denounced as company plants and saboteurs, and because the members still had faith in the officials, they let the ship go."

Graeme believes the dispute should have been broadened to stop all iron ore leaving the Pilbara. Instead, union leaders isolated it to Wickham and Pananawica, and merely sought financial support from the rest of the region.

THE WORKERS' dispute committee had other ideas. "We set up finance, food and welfare and PR committees, and organised radio contact throughout the region. We resolved to hold a tour of the Pilbara calling for industrial action."

"The union leaders had to stop this and they did, by cancelling the tour and making it impossible for us to get on the sites.

They told us we were living in cloud cuckoo land for thinking we could organise a walkout of the Pilbara.

"If they'd talked to them like we did before the dispute, they would have found that other workers were behind us, many in fact were chomping on the bit to take action. Instead they were called on to levy themselves, a very unpopular move, and there was some difficulty enforcing the levy.

"When the Scamen were hit with 45TD (Trade Practices Act) threats, their leadership packed it in. But the rank and file said bugger you, we're still not crossing the picket line. So we then got Green and Marks saying to us that we would be responsible for the scamen suffering."

The strike committees were vital in building unity in the towns, especially the food and welfare committee, which drew in many workers' wives.

"This committee, which had women and men working together, was the hardest working of the lot and had a terrific effect on morale. In fact, women played a key role all the way through the dispute. From shop stewards to the food and welfare committees," says Graeme.

"Despite all our efforts, we lost. We lost because we couldn't win on our own. We needed the support of the rest of the union movement. I believe union support on work practices is insufficient."

Indeed it is. And now all workers are to pay for the Robe River defeat, in the trade-off of work conditions for CPI rises under the new "two tier" wages system.

— Liz Ross

Seeing
Red!

with Alec Kahn

THE VISIT of "Red Ken" Livingstone to Australia has aroused a bit of press curiosity.

And why not? It's so rare to see a leftwing Labour politician these days, especially one who will come out in public for the rights of gays, blacks and other minorities.

Still, that should not blind us to the very real flaws in Livingstone's politics.

His rise to power in the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1981 was a sign of the weakness, not strength, of British radical politics at the time.

The student, gay, and women's movements of the early seventies had all collapsed as society moved right under the impact of the recession. They left behind many activists with a taste for campaign politics, but not for the hard, patient task of building working class struggle that is crucial for socialism.

These activists, deprived of their original base and prone to seeking a "short cut" to socialism, drifted into the Labour Party, which had actually shrunk during the radical early seventies. Tony Benn's unsuccessful push for the deputy leadership of the party was the first sign of their arrival. Livingstone's gaining the leadership of the Labour majority on the GLC was the next.

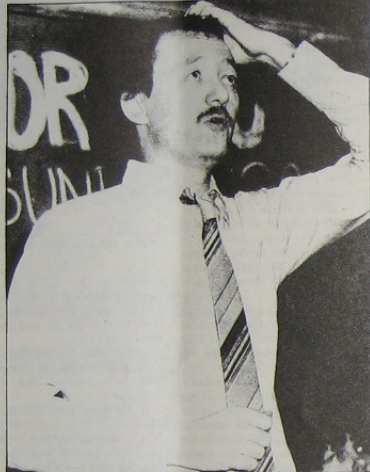
But because Livingstone's control was based on the numbers in the local Labour Party rather than on any militant mass organising in London's working class, he actually achieved very little. London's decay went on, despite his good intentions.

Sure, there were plenty of token gestures which pleased middle class activists (and employed them on juicy salaries) — Women's and Ethnic Minorities Committees, women's centres, women's buses and the like.

Yet the GLC was a head without a body. Its Women's Unit, for example, drastically underspent its £3 million budget in 1982 because there was simply no mass women's movement out in the real world to use the money on offer.

One campaign of Livingstone's which did have a genuine impact was his "Fares Fair" policy. Elected on a promise of cutting London Transport fares by 25%,

Red Ken and Baby M



"Red Ken" Livingstone in GLC days: bump me into parliament...

he drew enough people back onto public transport to employ 600 extra staff.

When the Law Lords outlawed the policy in a blatantly political decision, however, the GLC had no clue how to fight them.

Transport workers in London struck for a day, crippling the Tube and the buses. But the GLC focussed on the passengers, rather than the workers who had real power and organisation, and their "Can't Pay, Won't Pay" campaign fizzled out. It ended in debate with Dave Wetzel, the GLC's leader of the campaign, being voted off a bus by the other passengers when he refused to pay his fare.

"Red Ken" would not even support the fare refusal campaign, and had the campaign office's phones cut off!

Nor was the GLC a particularly "socialist" employer. Its Women's Unit boss was getting £18,000 while her clerks got as low as £6,000. Faced with a rightwing union amongst his white collar staff, Livingstone's response was to dismiss them as "on the other side of the class barrier" to blue collar workers.

Last year, the inevitable happened. Maggie Thatcher legislated the GLC out of existence.

Unwilling and unable to organise workers' struggle from on high during its five years, the GLC folded with a whimper more than a bang.

New "Red Ken" is headed for parliament to fight on a new electoral plane. Again, it is to be for "socialism" handed down from above by the Labour Party. Some people, alas, just will not learn...

WAS going to comment on America's Baby M verdict, which met with predictable acceptance from the capitalist press. But this piece by Lorraine Huddle, abridged from Britain's *Socialist Worker*, really says it all:

Judge Harvey Sorkow of Hackensack, New Jersey, has certainly come up trumps for money and all it can buy in the Baby M case. This is the most recent in a spate of cases concerning women's rights over their own fertility and now their legal claim to their own children.

Elizabeth Stern, like her husband William, is a well paid doctor. They are true members of the "yuppie" class barrier

to blue collar workers. She didn't want to have children. She has self-diagnosed herself as having a mild form of

multiple sclerosis and this, it was claimed in court, would have led to a problematic pregnancy.

The well off Sterns paid \$25,000 for a surrogate mother. That woman was Mary Beth Whitehead, a working class mother of two who desperately needed the money to pay her rent.

"I don't have an education. I don't have a skill," Whitehead told the court. "The only thing I do well is being a mother."

For agreeing to be artificially inseminated, she was to receive \$10,000 when she handed the baby over to the Sterns. She owed \$8000 on her house.

In the last seven years many such deals have been made. But Mary Beth changed her mind. After the birth she decided she wanted to keep her baby.

She refused to take the money, but money, power and influence ensured that she lost her claim to her own child.

Judge Sorkow ruled that the original contract was legally binding and has terminated all further contact between mother and daughter, now one year old.

The judge made his decision purely on the grounds of class.

He sees the Sterns as cultured people, who would "show sensitivity to the child's needs" educationally. An important factor, in his eyes, was the PhDs both Sterns boast.

On the other hand, the mother suffers from a "narcissistic personality disorder" because she lints her hair!

Basically, the Sterns are rich and Mary Beth Whitehead isn't.

There is a lot of money riding on the case. The Hollywood vultures are willing to pay vast amounts for the film rights.

But the person most overjoyed at the outcome is Noel Kane, lawyer and surrogate mother publicist who owns the infertility centre the Sterns used.

His fat profits are guaranteed if Judge Sorkow's ruling is upheld. It will mean natural mothers will have no claim to their own children. Usually working class women, their role is to have babies for a rich elite.

None of this helps infertile people without money. In Britain, only one NHS IVF centre exists. The other 24 centres are private and charge £1000 to £2500 per attempt (pregnancy rarely ever occurs until after the first few attempts).

Legal precedents in a variety of cases constantly threaten to overturn any control women have over their bodies. Worse still, profits are being made out of people's desire for children.

In a society where property relations are all-important and human relations count for little, no matter what misery it may cause.

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YUK... WHAT A CHOICE!!



Inside: To Vote or Not To Vote?

SOUTH KOREA 


Chun on the run

SOUTH KOREA has been in turmoil as students and workers have demonstrated over the last weeks to mark two anniversaries. Remembered were the 1961 student rising which toppled strongman Syngman Rhee, and the 1981 worker uprising which seized the city of Kwangju for three days.

Student marchers fought off attacks by quasi-military combat police with petrol bombs and stones. Several of the mobilisations were around the death of student leader Park Chong-chol, and have forced President Chun Doo Hwan to sack six cabinet ministers. Park Chong-chol was choked to death when police crushed his throat against the rim of a bath to try to make him reveal the whereabouts of another leftwing activist. Two members of the elite anti-communist police squad were charged soon after the murder, and after details of a top-level cover-up became known, Chun had three more cops arrested. But protests just gathered momentum.

Despite arresting 1350 demonstrators in one day, Chun was forced to sack his PM and five other ministers two days later. The national police chief resigned soon after. Chun seems to see weakness as strength in his subordinates. His new PM is Lee Han-key, 69, a former academic whose only government post has been as chairman of the Board of Audit and Inspection.

Most notable victim of the shakeout was Chong Le-dong, National Security Planning Agency chief and a likely successor to Chun.

PUBLIC SERVICE 

Fat cats get a visit

THE fat cat bureaucrats of the Public Service Board (PSB) in Sydney got a rude surprise last month.

After a picket of Australia House which turned away delivery trucks and people, federal public servants held a

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Korea. A woman mourns a student killed in the Kwangju uprising


rowdy march on the PSB offices and occupied them.

There, they confronted board members over attacks on flextime provisions. The occupation ended with a rousing chorus of *Solidarity Forever*.

In other states, the response of public servants was more muted. In Canberra, a motion to extend union bans to match those put on by Federated Clerks Union members in Tax was headed off by ACOA officials.

In Melbourne, ACOA leaders talked down a rank and file motion for a 24 hour strike in solidarity with NSW members at a poorly attended meeting. But in both Canberra and Melbourne, motions from the floor to take industrial action if anyone was stood down were passed overwhelmingly, despite officials' opposition.

The lack of militancy overall was not surprising. Union membership in the public service is declining. Officials are squabbling over union amalgamation, and except for a few brief displays of defiance, have allowed wages and conditions to be eroded. The events in Sydney were a much-needed tonic for public servants who want a union with more spunk.

DISARMAMENT 

More missiles after N-pact!

DON'T hold your breath for any arms reductions in Europe, even if Russia and the US do come to an agreement.

In fact, an arms deal may mean more nuclear missiles! A senior US arms control


official last month admitted, "It may be necessary to add more nuclear missiles than are removed, depending on the details of the new agreement."

If a deal eliminates all medium range (1600 to 5000 km) missiles from Europe, NATO countries intend to replace them with sea-launched cruise missiles on ships. West Germany will also want more nuclear-armed aircraft that can penetrate Russian air defences, according to a West German official. (Maybe 19-year-old Mathias Rust's Cessna, for example?)

If a deal also eliminates shorter-range missiles (500 to 1600 km), more "battlefield nuclear missiles" (up to 500 km range), and improved nuclear artillery and bombs, will be employed instead.

Like previous arms deals between the two superpowers, it looks like this one is just going to take the arms race one further twist up the spiral.

Thanks, Ronnie. Thanks, Gorbly.

MELBOURNE 

Dark outlook for light rail

AFTER a delay of nearly three months, work is under way on the Victorian government's project to convert the Port Melbourne and St Kilda rail lines to trams ("light rail").


The major obstacle to the work — a blackban by the Australian Railways Union — was removed at a mass meeting called after threats by the ALP state government to deregister the ARU, or to deregulate its award.

So much for the BLP deregistration being a one-off! A large number of ARU members at the meeting wanted the bans kept on anyway. The union executive had to use a few dirty tricks of meeting procedure to get them removed.

Opponents of the scheme are still fighting, however. Work has only been able to proceed because railway and state police have been used to break the picket lines set up by residents, travellers, and rank and file transport workers.

Police have been especially vicious at the St Kilda worksite. Bones have been broken, and some protesters have had police take advantage of their disabilities to intimidate them.

The big developers who will gain land from this project certainly have, in the ALP, a government that ruthlessly protects their interests.

COMPO FIGHT 

Labor expels NSW MP

LEFTWING Labor MP George Peltew was expelled from the ALP, as the battle over workers' compensation intensified in NSW last month.

The state now has Australia's worst system of comp. After the Unsworth government legislated the old system out of existence on May 27.

Under the new system, benefits to injured workers have been cut drastically. Employers can no longer be sued for negligence. And workers have lost their right to legal representation when the extent of their injuries is assessed.

In the Lower House, Labor member for Illawarra George Petersen denounced the legislation as "the most massive attack on NSW workers by any government, Liberal or Labor, in my 19 years in this parliament." He was expelled for voting against the legislation.

Petersen said he was not acting alone, but as part of a movement of workers in defence of their compo rights. BHP has sacked 60 maintenance workers at Pt Kembla steelworks for striking in defence of compensation. Forty thousand South Coast miners, ironworkers and metalworkers went out on May 26 in their defence.

Numerous groups of workers will be demanding that employers produce a decent workplace-based scheme for safety, and compensation to cover the holes in the government scheme.

A bosses' election, no matter who wins

THE 1987 election will be a bosses' election, no matter how it turns out.

Not one of the electorally significant parties makes any pretence of representing the interests of workers, the oppressed, or the poor. Except that they all argue for rightwing policies which are supposed to benefit "all Australians" ... eventually.

On the (increasingly ultra) right, the conservative parties have been a shambles for months. The Bjelke-Petersen push has established both the Nationals and the Liberals, without giving Joh the centre stage he sought.

The week in which the election was called typified their disarray. Shadow treasurer Jim Carlton contradicted himself on tax.

John Howard had to disavow Neil Brown for backing the Fiji coup too openly. Liberal Party president John Valder openly canvassed the prospect of a leadership change after the election was announced.

It was all fun to watch. But the reasons for the conservatives' disarray are not so amusing.

Labor is likely to win this election because it has seized not only the middle ground but a lot of the ground to the right of it. Bob Hawke can sell capitalist Howard better than John Howard and Keating has the confidence of the financial markets.

The joke about the "Hawke conservative government" is already an old one. Yet the first events of the election campaign hammered the message home. Westpac's New York currency trading chief said a change of government would be a "disaster". Westpac head office felt obligated to tone this

comment down, but confirmed that they preferred Hawke.

The Murdoch press is campaigning for Hawke and Keating. The *Australian* reported that the sharemarkets were "backing Labor to win". The *Fairfax Financial Review* remarked that "business support for the Hawke Government ... has a semi-permanent air about it."

Most telling, perhaps, was the response of that reactionary crank, John Singleton. "Singo" has long been as far to the right as most people go without donning a uniform. His short-lived "Workers Party" described its program as "pushing selfishness". Yet he now declares himself "converted" to supporting Labor, and is running their ad campaign.

IN REALITY, employer mouthpieces like Murdoch and Singleton have not been converted to anything. Labor has simply proved it can do a better job for them than the Liberals.

What Labor offers the working class in this election was summed up by one press columnist. The ALP machine was used to pork-barrelling, he said, but was having trouble with new anti-union laws.

Despite electoral hostilities, Hawke and Petersen complement each other perfectly. They merely represent alternative anti-union strategies. Petersen's recent campaigning, by pulling the centre of political debate further to the right, has cemented the hold of Hawke's own rightwing policies in the political mainstream.

BETWEEN Petersen and Sinclair, desperately seeking yet another version of reactionary policy to campaign around.

Ironically, if Howard does so in this election, it will be because he is able to hypocritically pose to the left of Hawke on some issues.

Howard argues, quite truthfully, that living standards have fallen sharply under Hawke. He argues that Labor's tax cuts are a fraud — that for example, 72% of women workers will get no tax cut from July 1. Again, given the "tax creep" that comes with inflation, this claim is substantially true.

Of course, what Howard will do about these things is another



John Singleton: look who's backing Labor now!

The bitter reality has well welfare cuts which are now assuming that repetitive, budget-after-budget Malcolm Fraser quality.

Labor promised a new era of peace between employers and workers, then set about attacking unions. It reviled the Food Preservers, deregistered the BLP, and lately the Plumbers have been in the firing line. Bjelke-Petersen, who once led the anti-union assault, now seems to be racing to catch up with new anti-union laws.

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Of course, what Howard will do about these things is another

matter. His tax cuts, like Keating's and Petersen's, will grossly favour the rich. To finance them, the *Times on Sunday* reports that Liberal strategists plan a Horror Budget in late September, much as is expected from Labor in August. Howard's attacks on "union power" will aim to ensure we cannot resist.

Nonetheless, Howard may well pick up votes from workers who figure that things could not be any worse under a Liberal-National regime.

NO WONDER many people now wonder whether voting at all is worth the bother.

Most socialists, including Socialist Action members, will end up voting Labor. There are a few protest candidates, as well as vote for them first and put Labor second. This is a purely tactical vote, for lack of any serious socialist alternative. This question is discussed on page 9-11.

Given the existing alternatives, it probably doesn't matter much how we vote. It is important that we don't put our energies into campaigning for Labor candidates. Protest candidates should not be primarily oriented to winning votes either, but to making the arguments for struggle.

Our energies must go into strengthening grassroots organisation at work and in the community, so that we are ready to fight against whatever government is elected on July 11.

— Richard Emerson

•Vote or not to vote? — p9
•Labor's mini-budget — p12



John Valder: comments typified Liberals' disarray

READERS WRITE

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

Hit Squad hits

I am unemployed and studying part time at Queensland University. This puts me into the SS's — sorry, Social Security's — "high risk" (of what?) category, so I recently got a letter from their "review team", commonly known as the Hit Squad.

The letter informed me that the SS was not satisfied that I was making "sufficient attempts" to obtain work. Also enclosed were four forms that I was to fill out and have signed by employers as proof I had applied for jobs.

When I lodge my usual fortnightly form, I must now include two of these forms, and be interviewed by a member of the Hit Squad.

My last interview went like this.

The review officer began, after "formalities", by telling me she wasn't satisfied with my attempts to obtain work, so I asked what guidelines she was using. She stated that she wasn't satisfied, and launched into a tirade on the "evils" of being dependent on the government, and wasn't I unhappy about this? I should "be spending all day, every day" looking for work. She implied that personally was responsible for not having a job and so, by extension, was every other person my age on unemployment benefit.

When I reminded her that in Queensland at present the CES has 50 unemployed registered for

every job vacancy, she said that I was seriously considering "terminating" me.

I tried to discuss this with her (not knowing if she was basically fascist, or if her consciousness had been tugged by directives from the Big Boys in Canberra), and tried to get her back to the question of what guidelines she was using. Finally, after 15 minutes I got a direct response.

"I'm not going to tell you what guidelines I'm using, because then you'd simply come back and show me you'd satisfied them!"

Well, I wasn't getting far. I tried to say that I thought it quite unfair to blame the unemployed for unemployment after all, we're not the ones who sack workers and close factories because they're not "profitable" enough. All she'd say was: "That's your opinion and it's not your opinion that counts, it's my opinion that does." She opened the door and repeated that she was seriously considering "terminating" my "benefit".

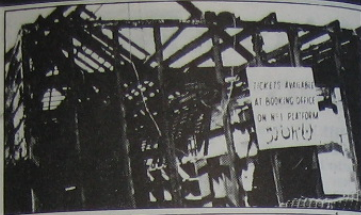
What's the best way to deal with the bastardry like this? Fiveously yours,

STEPHEN ANDREWS,
Brisbane.

Stations or casinos?

The two photos with this letter represent two ends of the spectrum in New South Wales in the political handling of the State by an ALP government.

The first photo shows what the Government does for the



workers. The Lakemba railway station burnt down some time ago, but no attempt has been made to repair the damage. The burnt out ruin is a dangerous state, is unsightly and is an insult to the users of the State Rail Authority train service.

The second photo shows what the parasites are having done for them, clearing the decks for the biggest casino in Australia. The amount of money being spent on the development of Darling Harbour could be used in development projects for the workers, and in other areas of government where funding is being reduced or withdrawn.

The development of Darling Harbour, as being carried out on

present plans, is a disaster in terms of urban renewal and urban planning, but the main consideration is what it will do for the rich at the expense of the poor.

Who cares about the workers who live in Lakemba? Isn't it interesting that no voices are raised in protest at the disgusting state of the station. You can be sure that if the station was at Edgely or Bondi Junction, it would have been rebuilt immediately.

When the workers control the state, Darling Harbour will not have the profile it has now, and Lakemba station will not have the profile it has now.

MAANIE DE SADE,
Sydney.



CHEAP SHOTS

ference entitled "Beijing '87 — The Third World Advertising Congress".

It is with considerable regret that we learn that **Rambo III** has been postponed almost a year. Originally, it was to be shot in Mexico because

of its similarity to Afghanistan. But all-American hero Sylvester Stallone didn't trust the security in Mexico, and demanded Las Vegas as the location. The film company suggested Morocco. Stallone knocked that back too, and they eventually compromised on Israel.

Stallone already refuses to visit Europe for fear of terrorists. He has also declined calls to stand for the US presidency. Very wise — just think of all those goddamn foreigners he'd have to meet if he was elected.

DEMOCRACY, Chilean Junta style... Ball has been set for the soldier accused of incinerating a demonstrator last July. It was \$25

INTERNATIONAL



Indians and Fijians march against the coup

Fiji's coup last month was a devastating reminder that under capitalist democracy, it is the ruling class's state machine, not the government that we elect, that holds ultimate power through its monopoly of armed force.

The remarkable thing about Colonel Rabuka's coup was its lack of an even halfway credible pretext. There was no breakdown of public order, no crimes or blunders by the government, no wave of class struggle to be crushed.

Rabuka initially referred to some dark plot to destabilise the government. He did not explain why he arrested the government rather than the plotters.

Next he referred to pro-Russian and pro-Libyan elements in the military. Again, he offered no names.

Finally, he settled on the danger of racial unrest between Fijians and Indians. Certainly, after the election in April of Fiji's first truly multiracial government, some people did try to excite fear amongst Fijians. Equally certainly, they were failing.

On April 24, ethnic Fijians demonstrated, at the urging of their chiefs and former Alliance Party government MPs. In the capital Suva, 5500 marched. They wanted guarantees ensuring Fijians' special status.

As this status was enshrined in the Constitution — and as Fiji had neither the power nor the desire to amend that document, the fear began to subside. When the new



Rabuka: correctly assessed the Governor-General

Fiji's coup: So much for "democracy"!

parliament met, only 1000 Fijians could be found to demonstrate against it.

With racial tension on the wane, those fomenting it turned to desperate measures. One ex-government member was arrested for firebombing the Attorney-General's office, another for sedition. This coup may well have been a further desperate measure.

REALISTIC explanations of the coup are not difficult.

The Bavadra government was looking into corruption in the previous ministry. Several ex-ministers, including ex-PM Ratu Mara, had good reason to fear what might be revealed.

And by past standards, Bavadra's program looked quite radical. Free medical services, radical free transport, non-free public utilities, a possible ban on US warships — conservative Fijians found this unsettling.

Inevitably, the CIA has come under suspicion. Its involvement is by no means impossible, but early evidence for it has been thin. The coup suited the US. "We're kinda delighted," a Pentagon staffer told the *Sydney Morning Herald*, but we should not overestimate the threat that Bavadra posed to US interests.

Ros should we underestimate the viciousness of sections of Fiji's own ruling class.

On balance, the coup was probably the result of a narrow conspiracy between Alliance Party elements fearful of corruption charges, and sections

of the army motivated by anti-communism and Fijian racism.

The narrowness of the conspiracy explains its initial lack of support from the ruling class. The Governor-General, the judges, the media, and much of business condemned it, while the chiefs were silent for several days.

But its narrow social base did not make the coup unviable. Rabuka correctly assessed the Governor-General and the chiefs, and provoked a race riot to polarise Fijian opinion behind him. The military is reported to have transported the 30-40 Fijians who attacked the prayer meeting to Sukana Park.

The rioting they began subsided within a day, further suggesting that it was instigated rather than spontaneous.

RABUKA'S coup hung in the balance for six days from Thursday May 14. Partly, this was due to the ruling class reaction, but just as important was the opposition of workers and others across the country.

The shock of the coup initially paralysed opposition. For two days, the only demonstration was a vigil by the wives of the kidnapped MPs. But in Fiji's second city, Lautoka, shops began shutting immediately, and after three days, petrol was running out.

Over the weekend of May 16-17, up to two thousand people (a third of them Fijian) marched in protest. Leaflets appeared signed by the People's

Democratic Movement and Fiji Freedom Fighters. One said:

"We have to act now. Don't go to work. Close your shops. Stop your buses and taxis. Get together and show your strength."

This call caught the mood exactly. By Monday, Fiji was grinding to a halt. The main cities outside Suva — Lautoka, Sigatoka and Nadi — shut down entirely. Bomb threats closed shops and banks that tried to open, and a department store was set alight. Taxis seen on the streets were stoned.

In Suva, 80% of shops closed, public transport stopped, and half the city's taxis were off the road. The Fiji Teachers Union struck, and academics and students at the University of the South Pacific boycotted classes. In the public service and banks, absenteeism disrupted operations.

CRUCIALLY, farmers and the swaggers refused to begin their harvest set for the Monday.

Crushing scheduled for the Wednesday was banned. One cane farmer said, "Farmers are prepared to go without money if it will bankrupt this regime."

Saboteurs burned canefields and timber plantations.

Along the west coast, Bavadra's stronghold, villagers posted placards calling for Labour's restoration.

Rabuka arrested Labour Party officials, activists and union leaders, to no avail. The commander of the Police Mobile Force was arrested. The head of the YWCA spoke out and was seized. Yet the demonstration on the Monday was bigger still.

Unions did not openly call for a general strike. It may be that agitation was done in secret to minimise arrests; it may be that union leaders trusted the Governor-General, and workers acted on their own.

Bavadra's message, smuggled

AT LAST, an answer to the question that has been tormenting us. Why do Prince Charles and Princess Di need separate bedrooms?

It's quite simple, says a Buckingham Palace aide. "The Prince doesn't want the Princess's maid there when he is putting on his underpants."

Times must be getting tough at the Palace. Since when does the Prince not have an aide to put on his underpants for him?

THE RIGHT hand doesn't know what the extreme right hand is doing.

Two days after the mini-budget, Bob Hawke issued a glossy report of his electorate of Wills. It boasted of his achievements for youth, and declared that "the arch-

conservative philosophies of the New Right would spell disaster for young Australians". Philosophies like "tertiary fees" and "removal of unemployment benefits for under-18-year-olds".

Well, Bob, how do you spell disaster?

PROGRESS... the Reagan Administration has budgeted \$620 million this year for destroying chemical weapons.

It has also budgeted \$159 million for producing more of them.

• **CHAUVINIST Corner**... John MacBean, NSW Labour Council secretary and managing director of "human radio" station 2KY, has declared that Sydney "may not be ready" for women radio announcers. Question: has Sydney ever been ready for John MacBean?

THE CONSUMER society...

American Express sent a letter to a Sydney-sider recently it had seventeen different unsolicited brochures in it.

PROGRESS (continued)... The CIA, in advertisements asking US citizens under 35 living in Australia to become agents, now describes itself as "an equal opportunity employer".

And China's Great Hall of the People this month hosts a five day con-

INTERNATIONAL

from detention, appealed to Australia and New Zealand and made no call to his own people.

IF BAVADRA was counting on Bob Hawke and David Lange for help, he was sadly mistaken.

Despite a direct appeal from Erna Drauwesi, a Fijian Labour Party vice-president under house arrest, for "the complete sanctioning of everything that comes into Fiji," Hawke refused. His posturing against the coup was for Australian consumption; he accepted the fait accompli.

Bavadra, and many Fijians in Australia, wanted military intervention by Hawke. They overlooked two things.

Firstly, a government that can only survive when propped up by another quickly becomes its puppet. Secondly, Australia is no force for progress in this region. Labor has betrayed Freilind and the OPM, and fawned on the US and Indonesia, in pursuit of Canberra's own third-rate imperialist goals. The slightest pressure from the US, and a



Bavadra: planned no moves against Fijians' status

Hawke-led army intervention would betray Bavadra too.

Class solidarity was needed. Fijian union leaders called on Australian and New Zealand unions for help, requesting "complete bans" and "the harshest measures necessary to isolate the regime." Bavadra's own union, the Public Service Association, called on its overseas equivalents to ban Customs clearance in order to stop trade.

The ACTU's Simon Green responded contemptibly. He

declared that "the most effective way of returning the elected government to power was through Federal Government pressure," and fretted publicly about union bans disrupting the holidays of tourists.

The Waterside Workers and Seamen's Unions, to their credit, took immediate action to ban all shipping. The Airline Attendants banned flights briefly after the Nadi airport hijack.

IN THE end, the coup succeeded. On Tuesday 19 May, the Governor-General capitulated totally to Rabuka, making him head of a Council of Advisors and dismissing the Bavadra government.

Even the Governor-General's original "compromise" was a cave-in to Rabuka, since it involved fresh elections. Bavadra would almost certainly have lost these; voters rarely rally behind parties that cannot keep themselves in office, as Whitlam found in 1975.

Extracting total capitulation by the Governor-General,

Rabuka may have overplayed his hand. Bavadra was prepared to accede to the Governor-General's fresh elections. Rabuka's heavily-stacked Council of Advisors, which is rewriting the Constitution to make it impossible for Labour to win, left him no option but to fight.

After flirting with the militarily unviable idea of a West Fijian breakaway state, Bavadra called for mass civil disobedience, including general strikes for two days each week.

In its first week, at least, this call produced a huge response from workers. Every city outside Suva was shut down.

This latest news as we go to press produces new possibilities in Fiji's crisis. For while Bavadra will use the general strikes merely to try to extract a better deal on the Council of Advisors, his working class supporters, once they feel their power, may set their sights much higher.

Colonel Rabuka has sown the wind. He may yet reap the whirlwind.

— Graham Willett

Behind the race divide

FUJI was never the South Sea paradise that the tourist brochures claim. It has deep-seated economic and social problems.

Its economy rests on sugar exports and tourism. Both are suffering from the current world recession. The economic problems have brought unemployment, crime and disaffection.

But the most enduring social relations is race. For 60 years, problems between Indians and indigenous Fijians have been at the centre of colonial and national politics.

Fiji's Indians were originally brought there by Britain to work the cane fields. Immigration ended in 1917, and today's Indians are third and fourth generation Fijian-born. Unlike the French settlers in New Caledonia, they are neither recent arrivals nor loyal to any colonial power.

Racial problems arise from the social structure the British set up. The Empire gave the two groups quite distinct economic roles.

Fijians own 83% of the land through village-based groups called *matangali*. This land cannot be bought or sold, and



Fijians wait as the Council of Chiefs meets: Rabuka won't help them

most Fijians live in villages, growing their own food and some copra for cash. Because the Fijians have more land than they can work, they lease much of it to Indians to produce cash crops, mostly sugar.

For decades, the British banned Fijians from commerce, and this area remains totally Indian-dominated. Conversely, Indians refused to enlist in the army during the War because Britain would not give them white rates of pay, so the army is a Fijian stronghold. The public sector, staffed by both Fijians and Indians, is the main means of social mobility.

The economic divide has reinforced the separation of the two communities, which have different religions, cultures and mother tongues. Intermarriage is almost non-existent, and even social mixing is rare.

Since the 1940s, Indians have

outnumbered ethnic Fijians. The Fijian sense of being a 45% minority in their own land is deep-rooted.

The political structure reinforces the separate-but-equal status of the communities. By a complex process, each community gets 24 seats in parliament. Another 8 seats are effectively "up for grabs".

THE Fijian-dominated Alliance Party for 17 years won most of these through its appeal to the minority communities (Europeans, Chinese etc).

A comfortable division persisted. The Fijians controlled the state, the Indians the economy.

In 1985, things came unstuck. The Indian business-based opposition, the National Federation Party, disintegrated, and out of the ruins emerged the

Fiji Labour Party (FLP).

The FLP was based on the unions, especially the white collar unions, and like them it was a multiracial force. In the west of the main island, many poorer Fijians worked at least part of the year as cane-cutters alongside Indians. There, and in the public service, the FLP won ethnic Fijian as well as Indian working class support.

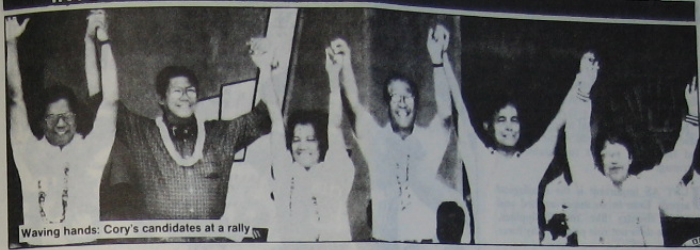
A two-year government-imposed wage freeze in 1985-86 was the last straw for many workers, while educated middle class Fijians were fed up with the Alliance's corruption. In last April's election, the Alliance vote amongst Fijians dropped from 82% to 77%, and amongst minority race voters from 89% to 80%.

This was no landslide, but it gave Bavadra a 28-24 majority. Of these 28, 19 were Indian, 7 Fijian and 2 minority race. Bavadra reduced the imbalance in his inner Cabinet, appointing 7 Indians, 6 Fijians and 2 minority race.

So claims by Rabuka that the government was a threat to Fijians were clearly untrue. And if ordinary Fijians believe that they will benefit from Rabuka's rule, they are about to be disillusioned.

The powers that he has taken to himself to keep down the Indian majority will be turned out too willingly against Fijian workers and villagers if they start making trouble.

INTERNATIONAL



Waving hands: Cory's candidates at a rally

Manila: A tale of two rallies

EARLY MAY saw two big rallies in Manila. On May Day, over 100,000 workers marched through the streets under red flags. Nine days later, some 30,000 people flocked to the final election rally for Cory Aquino's Senate candidates. The events symbolized two very different kinds of politics.

The May Day march was spirited, despite 40 degree heat. Vast numbers of young workers, including tens of thousands of women, poured through town, sporting t-shirts emblazoned with the name and slogans of the militant KMU union movement. The march culminated in a rally where speakers addressed issues like poverty, unemployment, and the right to strike. Cory's labour minister was booed.

By contrast, the Aquino election meeting was the perfect affair. Speakers divided the their time between phrases about everyone "working together" and attacks on yesterday's tyrant, Ferdinand Marcos. While we were mercifully spared the song-and-dance acts the candidates had been offering previous audiences, there was no hint of actual politics.

May Day showed that a powerful movement the Filipino left has built in the factories and poor neighbourhoods. Yet election day showed that the capitalist class still has an iron grip on the parliamentary system. Left candidates of the Partido ng Bayan (People's Party) got nowhere near election into the Senate.

Workers and peasants who will accept the leadership of militant left organisations in the day-to-day struggle clearly still have faith in Cory Aquino when it comes to national politics, and her local electoral machines are still able to deliver an overwhelming vote.

FOUNDED in 1980 with 50,000 members, the Kilalang Mayo Uno (May Day Movement) or KMU now represents 700,000 of the 2 million or so unionised workers. It competes for influence with the "yellow" unions who are pro-employer, and it seems increasingly to be influencing the "bread and butter" unions who stand between the two extremes.

This is a young movement, for whom a May Day march is still a new and exciting experience. It is also determined. After visiting a range of picket lines in Manila and two provincial areas, I came away with a

sense that the KMU fights to win.

At Globe Steel in East Rizal province, we met workers who had been on strike for three years. They now live in shanties on the picket line. But they also told stories of other local strikers who had won quickly "because they have KMU support". The contrast with our own ACTU is a telling and painful one.

Allied to the KMU are the organisations of the urban poor. We visited the Navotas slum area, where tireless activists move around the neighbourhoods building solidarity where otherwise there would be only despair. It is testimony to the impact they are having that the right wing must resort to murder in an attempt to intimidate them. Local Navotas leader Gaudensio Cinco was gunned down in the street a week before our visit.

The grassroots organisations of the workers and the urban poor are matched by the peasant movement KMP in the countryside. There are the "cause-oriented groups" like No Nukes, various radical Christians, and the striving for autonomy among the Muslims of the South and the mountain peoples of the north. Then again, there is the New People's Army whose guerrilla forces enjoy widespread sympathy in the provinces — so much so that the government is encouraging the formation of semi-fascist vigilante groups to try to counter them.



Waving fists: Pepsi-Cola picketers

All these movements face growing repression from the same government that was supposed to be renewing democracy. "Progress under Aquino?" snorted one union activist in Bataan province. "Of course. Under Marcos we only had killings. Now we have massacres."

Massacres indeed. Two hundred workers at the Bataan Export Processing Zone were fired on by troops on 31 January, and two killed. Nine days earlier, 18 peasants had been killed outside the presidential palace in Manila.

With the masses increasingly organised and combative, and the government showing it can be as repressive as Marcos, the opportunity should have been there for a left electoral force to do well. Or so it must have seemed when the Partido ng Bayan (PNB) was formed.

THE LEFT's electoral failure in May needs some explanation. It is not enough to point to repression and dirty tricks by the government, as the KMU did in a full page newspaper ad on election day.

Certainly the repression was fierce, with 27 left activists being killed. At least 2837 families were displaced and thus effectively disenfranchised by conveniently-timed operations by the military.

And there was certainly vote-buying and ballot-rigging used against both the right and left opposition. Filipino elections are a rough business, and Aquino played to win. But the repression and the fraud were to be expected. Yet even well into the campaign, the PNB was confidently expected to elect seven senators. Some spoke of getting 20 per cent of the vote and electing all their seven candidates.

These hopes proved unrealistic and it seems clear the PNB underestimated the extent to which the capitalist electoral process always favours the status quo.

These hopes proved unrealistic and it seems clear the PNB underestimated the extent to which the capitalist electoral process always favours the status quo. There are several aspects to this. To begin with, there is the power of money and institutions. A single 30-second TV ad costs \$3-4000, and the country's highest-circulation newspaper charges twice that for a full page advertisement. Such extravaganzas are far beyond the resources of left candidates. By contrast, Aquino's final election rally was broadcast on TV — all four hours of it.

A range of conservative institutions, weighed in on the side of traditional politics. Most notably, the Catholic Church

described PnB candidates as "lepers". In the localities, Aquino had the services of politically appointed government officials, the "Officers-in-Charge," who campaigned full time for her candidates. "The OICs have delivered," she remarked on hearing the poll results.

Most of the traditional ruling class clans have regrouped under the Aquino banner, and these still possess formidable local patronage networks.

JUST AS important is the ideological aspect. Even in an impoverished and unstable country like the Philippines, capitalism does not rule primarily by force of arms.

Rather it is organised so that many of the experiences of daily life — the media, Sunday mass, popular jokes, and also the complete lack of power that people so often feel — breed a conservative mentality. Capitalism rules by the "consent of the governed", and most elections demonstrate the fact.

I was taken to visit Smoky Mountain, where 5,000 people live atop and around a gigantic rubbish tip. The place is shrouded in smoke from the spontaneous combustion of organic garbage. Illness and malnutrition are rife.

After Marcos fell, leftwing community activists moved to strengthen their organisation here, but ran into some resistance. Many local people were influenced by charges that the activists were "communists". Needless to say, the residents of Smoky Mountain have little to fear from communism — or any other radical change. But they imagine they do.

A different but related case is the membership of the left's mass organisations. PnB expectations of a large vote relied heavily on adding up the numbers of these members, and arriving at several millions. These would then influence their families to vote PnB, and the left would have the numbers. In reality the left vote did not reflect these calculations.

SOME activists explain the discrepancy in terms of poll fraud. But surely there is more to it.

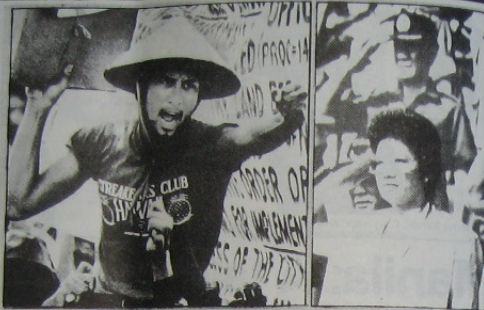
Just as Australian trade unionists will elect a communist as their union secretary, but never vote communist in elections, so in the Philippines there is a gulf for some workers between trade union consciousness and political awareness.

KMU members are courageous and thoughtful people, but clearly a lot of them still have illusions in Cory. The same goes for the KMP peasant movement, whose popular left leader, Jaime Tadeo, did not come close to getting elected.

This is not grounds for despair. The situation is still very fluid. Elections are held once every few years, but the struggles of workers and peasants go on every day. In these struggles, people's ideas can change rapidly. Just as the apolitical worker of yesterday could become the KMU fighter of today, so he or she can learn through experience tomorrow that the Aquino government is just another government of the exploiters.

That is why it is the politics of May Day, not those of election day, which really matter for the Filipino left.

— Tom O'Lincoln



Demanding land reform; Aquino and her troops

With an economy on the rocks, Cory hits the poor

MAY WAS a relatively bright month for the Philippines economy, according to the Chamber of Commerce. The reason was **the stimulating effect of an estimated \$555 million spent on election campaigning!**

But hopes for a slogan-led recovery would be misplaced, for the country's economic problems run very deep.

The Marcos regime is clearly a major culprit. Not only did Ferdinand and Imelda take some \$10 billion out of the country, but they left it saddled with a crushing foreign debt. The Philippines is now the seventh largest third world borrower, and its debt accounts for 70 per cent of the gross national product.

Aquino's international prestige was such that she could undoubtedly have got away with at least selective repudiation of debts inherited from the past. She chose not to do so.

The case of the Bataan nuclear reactor was particularly revealing. After the Chernobyl disaster, the government finally bowed to the outcry from Bataan residents and decided not to operate it. But she insisted on paying the \$2.1 billion bill for it. This despite a memorandum from her own advisors pointing out that the contract for the project was "void from the start because of fraud", and despite the fact that Westinghouse had provided an old, unsafe reactor.

Filipino workers officially are entitled to a minimum wage of about \$4 a day, though many actually earn less. In response to union calls for a 70 cents increase, the president announced on May Day that workers would be granted the princely sum of ten cents. Union leaders rightly denounced this as a "small change" and walked out of the meeting.

Whatever Aquino's personal sympathies might or might not be, she is operating on the basis of brutal capitalist realities. She holds down wages and fawns over bankers because her government is desperate to attract investment to an economy that has

been depressed since 1983.

Wealthy Filipinos are still depositing their profits abroad, and one bank official complained to the media that potential foreign investors "are saying to us: why should we invest in your country? You don't."

The government may take some satisfaction in the fact that the American Shakey's Pizza chain plans to base its Pacific rim operations in Manila. But overall, US investment in the March 1987 quarter was only 76 per cent of the 1986 figure, and the fall in Japanese investment was sharper still.

The Bataan Export Processing Zone, which offers generous tax concessions to multinational corporations, today boasts only 29 factories compared with 56 in 1979, and closures appear to be continuing.

No wonder Cory seeks to hold wages down. No wonder workers are shot down by the army when they fight for higher pay. If investors are to be attracted back, the price of the economic crisis must be forced onto the backs of long-suffering Filipino workers.

LAND reform is one area where the government will have to make some concessions soon.

A majority of families living below the poverty line are to be found in the countryside. The government has reached an agreement with the KMP on a minimum land reform program.

Even so, land won't just be handed out for the most part. While idle and abandoned lands will be distributed free, sequestered and foreclosed areas will be leased and sold, respectively. Liberal credits will be available, but the peasants will pay.

It is not yet clear how far the Aquino land reform program will go in practice. It may only stop, or perhaps just slow the growth in land hunger. In rice lands today, the average land holding is 0.5 to 1.5 hectares, well below the 3-5 hectares considered economically viable under Marcos.

Left union leader Crispin Beltran summed up many Filipinos' doubts about the government's plans very well:

"Under Marcos, 28 million hectares were promised the landless, but only 1484 changed hands. If the Aquino government is as slow, it will take 2000 years for the landless to own their land."

Traditionally, the Left in Australia has advocated a vote for Labor at election time. But in this election, many leftwingers are considering not voting at all. In Melbourne, for example, a small Don't Vote campaign has begun, while anti-nuclear groups have called for a vote to neither main party.

Below, Socialist Action members present two sides of the debate: the case for not voting, and the case for voting for left "protest" candidates, with preferences to Labor. Our organisation's majority position is for the second alternative.

To vote or not to vote?

The case for not voting

REVOLUTIONARY socialists in Australia have traditionally supported the ALP at election time.

Tradition, however, can become a bad habit. At this Federal Election, the 90 year old habit should be discarded.

Let's examine why. First of all, is there anything attractive about a third term of ALP government?

The first two terms have been successful beyond Fraser's wildest dreams.

The 1983 wage freeze plus three years of partial, delayed and discounted indexation have cut real wages by around 13%. When workers resist, the ALP applies the big stick used so brutally on the BLF.

The social wage has also been reduced by budget cutbacks in health, welfare and education. Living standards have fallen so markedly that even the Libs are hoping to hypocritically exploit this fact at this election.

Not all living standards, though. Company profits have risen in the same period from 8% return on investors' funds to 11.7% return. The profit dividends are doing very nicely, thank you.

The ALP proudly promotes more of the same. And they are standing proudly on their record which includes uranium exports to Mururoa via France, student fees, the strengthening of ANZUS, billions spent on submarines and F-18 fighter-bombers, the renege on land rights, and so on.

For voters not yet convinced, the ALP promises ID cards, and has begun an assault on unemployed and pension recipients, particularly single parents and under-18s.

Labor, then, does not in any way deserve a vote.

The traditional position replies, however, that the ALP should be supported not because of its record in office, but in spite of its record.

Workers should vote ALP — goes the argument — because this is a vote for a union-based party, and it is a rejection of the

blatant pro-boss parties. Furthermore, only the experience of the ALP's uselessness in government will finally convince workers in favour of revolutionary as opposed to parliamentary politics.

The first argument does not apply in 1987. The ALP's parliamentary leaders are blatantly and proudly pro-boss and pro-profit. And they run the party, not its rank and file or its affiliated unions.

IT MAY have been possible once to argue that the ALP was in some sense a workers' party because of the major role played in it by union officials. But this furry notion has lost so much hair over the decades that it is now baldly false. The role of the union officials has been reduced to one of well-paid governing subservience.

The last hair probably fell out in 1982 when an ACTU Congress dutifully accepted Hawke's orders and voted near-unanimously for the proposed Accord.

This election offers workers only a choice of blatantly pro-boss parties. They cannot reject the bosses by siding with Tweedledum against Tweedledee.

The second argument has more going for it. It is completely true that Labor governments provide a powerful argument for revolutionary socialism. The ALP's occasional socialist rhetoric is expressed as



hot air. We can see that before the ALP can pursue its stated goal of reforming capitalism, it must first preserve it. And while the ALP plays the role of capitalism's nursemaid, we have to pay the doctor's bill.

Revolutionaries, then, do benefit in the long run from the ALP's electoral victories. It does not follow, however, that revolutionaries should actively advocate these victories. Revolutionaries also benefit in the long run from capitalist slumps, yet they do not actively campaign for them.

The argument that the ALP should be supported in spite of itself is so subtle it is downright illogical. This "critical" support of the ALP, particularly when it is surrounded by a chorus of uncritical support, runs the risk of promoting the very illusions it tries to dispel. It conveys the impression that the ALP is somehow worth voting for.

In any case, the voice of revolutionaries is too small to affect the result of the election. The ALP will win or lose the next few



Filipino election boycott: do we need one here?

SOCIALIST STANDPOINTS

AUSTRALIANS are too conservative to ever have a revolution, we are told. Too affluent, too interested in beer and foxy.

It's a familiar argument, and a plausible one. After all, most people anywhere accept the status quo most of the time. That status quo seems particularly strong in Australia, one of the countries that did best out of the postwar boom.

But that boom is now over. And Marxists understand that other forces besides the status quo are at work inside capitalism, creating impulses for change. When sufficient of these forces come together, revolution is possible anywhere — even here.

The most basic force is the habit of co-operation that capitalism itself has instilled into workers, as over the last 200 years it has drawn them off the land to work in its factories and offices.

Combined with the daily contest with employers over working conditions, this co-operation produced the trade unions. Australia, as one of the most urbanised countries (88% dwell in the cities), is also one of the most unionised, with 48% of employees in unions, compared with about 40% in Britain and just 16% in the US.

Our workforce is also one of the most militant. From 1962-81, the average worker here struck for 497 days a year. The median figure for other OECD nations was 195 days a year.

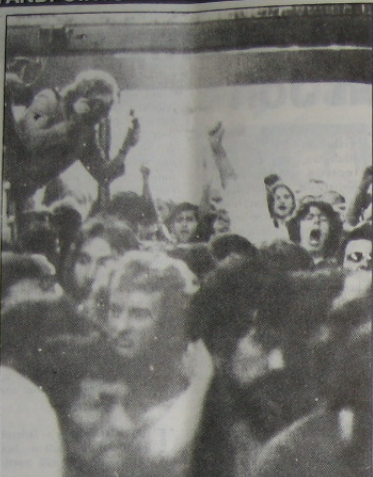
Australian unionism is highly politicised. It produced the world's first mass labour party, and first labor government. In World War One, a union campaign made Australia the only country apart from Ireland to reject conscription.

This tradition continues. The maritime unions banned pig-iron to Japan when it invaded China, Dutch shipping when Holland denied Indonesian independence, arms shipments during the Vietnam War, and Fijian cargo last month.

In the 1970s, Australian unionists imposed the world's first "green bans", and held the first-ever strike over nuclear hazards.

SUCH politicisation is a great strength of Australia's working class.

Unlike America, which has never yet had a mass party of labour, workers here are relatively conscious of their separate political interests. Elections here are decided by 5% or less of swinging voters, a sign



Kerri Coup invasion of Stock Exchange: it could go further

"A revolution? Here? In Australia?"

of the polarisation of politics.

Yet the Labor Party and unions also form a safety valve for dissent in the system. America, which has no such safety valve, saw students riot and blacks burn their ghettos in the sixties. Dissent here was far less explosive.

We shall return to this point. But first let us ask, does Australian political life throw up crises which are capable of turning into revolutions?

The answer is undoubtedly yes. Australia's ruling class is as crisis-prone as any.

At home, it is divided and weak. It has never yet united properly behind one party. Rogue state governments often create confrontations, even when the centre is stable.

This weakness shows in its panicky response to various challenges. In 1891, it sent in troops against strikers, provoking armed training in the shearers' camps and open talk of revolution.

In the Depression, a governor sacked NSW premier Jack Lang for delaying overseas loan

repayments. In 1975, John Kerr sacked Gough Whitlam for no crime at all. Both acts aroused furious responses from the working class which, had a revolutionary party of any weight existed, could have become full-scale insurrection.

Internationally, Australia is one of the world's most warmongering nations, as diplomat Alan Renouf recently observed. It has fought in nine wars in the last century, in only one was its own territory even briefly threatened.

Wars have been a prime cause of revolution overseas (and radicalisation here, as we shall see). But our ruling class needs to fight in them, to maintain alliances with large powers in order to protect its own "junior imperialist" interests in this region.

CAN revolutionary organisation in Australia grow, then, despite the safety valve of the Labor Party, to take advantage of such crises?

History suggests it can. Three times this century, revolutionary

politics have gained a significant audience here.

Each time, war has been a factor. In World War One, the Industrial Workers of the World gained up to 10,000 members as they preached class war rather than imperialist war. After World War Two, the Communist Party reached 25,000 members as thousands resolved not to return to the misery of the Depression. During the Vietnam War, the revolutionary left resurrected itself from almost nothing to a formal and informal membership of several thousands.

Such figures are not huge — still far less than 1% of the population. But each time, the Left reached "critical mass". It could set its own agenda of struggle, and attract people who previously dismissed it as marginal.

Each time, the Left ultimately failed, not due to Australian "conservatism", but due to its own weaknesses and objective circumstances. The IWW made no preparations for operating illegally when the government used the cover of war to suppress it, the Communist Party was a victim of its own Stalinism and the postwar boom; and the Vietnam radicals never developed any clear line which allowed them to withstand the election of Whitlam.

Nonetheless, such episodes show that revolutionaries can build to significant size here. Then in a political crisis, they could well win a mass following in an already politicised working class.

When this might happen, no one can predict. We can say two things, however.

Britain, Italy and Greece are all much further down the road of capitalist decline, and have much stronger Lefts than Australia. With their big migrant populations here, a revolution in any of those places would sharply increase the Left's following here.

And revolutionary crisis can erupt at the most unexpected times. Who predicted the revolt in France in May 1968, when rightwinger Charles DeGaulle had been entrenched in office for ten years?

Even Lenin, just eight months before the Russian Revolution, told a Swiss audience that he did not expect to see a revolution in his lifetime.

Revolutionary possibilities can erupt anywhere, from Fiji to France and including Australia. What comes of them depends on how we, and you, build the revolutionary left beforehand.

— Ken Stevens

WORKING CLASS HISTORY

storming the gates of Heaven

IN PARIS in 1871, workers took power for the first time in history.

Their revolution was ill-planned, with thousands dying in the bloody aftermath. Yet it was also heroic and brilliantly creative. In Karl Marx's words, the Paris Commune "stormed the very gates of Heaven".

Like so many revolutions, the Paris Commune resulted from a corrupt regime's military debacles. Louis Bonaparte's government had started a territorial war with Prussia. After Bonaparte's capture, a bourgeois "Government of National Defence" seized power in September 1870, with little improvement in the military situation.

The working class, increasingly active in the trade unions since the recession of 1864, became even more restive. It held massive demonstrations. The government became less interested in defending Paris against Prussia than in keeping the workers quiet.

It staged a number of obviously cosmetic sorties and raids, all poorly planned and executed. Then it declared that it had no option but to surrender to Bismarck. An Assembly, headed by Louis Adolphe Thiers, was elected to negotiate terms.

Thiers regarded the working class as the "vile multitude". He wanted to get rid of the National Guard, a force composed of working people set up during the war.

The National Guard was poorly trained and despised by the regular army, and it had a rebellious streak. Early in 1871, it decided to recognise only its own elected leaders, and not the generals. It set up a Central Committee of delegates elected by the districts of Paris, each immediately replaceable.

THIERs feared the National Guard far more than he feared the Prussians. His moves against it triggered the revolution.

First, he cut its pay, causing further privation in Paris, where the workers had already suffered a long siege. Then he attempted to seize 250 cannons, paid for by subscription and long recognised as the property of the National Guard.

The attempt failed. The people of Paris came out in force and stood up to the regular army, which disobeyed its orders to fire on them. Instead, two



1871: the working class seizes Paris

generals were taken prisoner and later shot.

The government fled Paris. The Central Committee of the National Guard was now in power. It thanked the army for its support, lifted martial law, released political prisoners, and called new elections for Paris. Meanwhile, its own representatives ran the various ministries whose officials had deserted.

On March 29, after elections, the Central Committee handed over power to the Paris Commune.

The Commune was an odd mixture of established leftists, pseudo-leftists, and virtual unknowns. Only 17 of its 92 members were in Marx's International Working Men's Association, and while some of Marx's followers, notably Eugene Varlin, acquitted themselves well, a group had no real political programme. Marx himself wrote, accurately as it turned out, that revolution at that time was folly, and that more organising needed to be done.

Unfortunately, the time to organise was lacking. Even as the Commune passed its first laws, Thiers was preparing a new army to retake Paris.

THE COMMUNE lasted just two months. In that short time, though, it achieved much through various Commissions which it set up.

To help the poor, the Commune permitted all rent payments due in the previous six months, and prevented the sale of pawned articles. It brought in food rations for injured guardsmen, and extended pension rights to de facto wives

and children. It abolished grants to religious organisations, and confiscated property held in perpetuity, particularly by the Church.

Workers' rights increased dramatically. Fines were abolished in workshops, nightwork was abolished for bakers, and workers' cooperatives were set up to run abandoned factories. Magistrates and judges were elected by the citizens, officials' salaries were reduced to those of skilled workers, and the standing army was replaced by the armed citizenry.

Debt obligations were postponed in support from small business, and the rural sector was delivered from heavy war taxes and allowed to elect local officials.

The Commune laid the groundwork for the forms by which the working class could govern. Its major lesson, argued Marx, was that workers could not seize the machinery of the state for their own purposes; just to have to destroy it and reconstruct new forms of decision-making. The Commissions which achieved most, like Education, were those where Labour, were total and reform was maximised.

Participation was maximised. Those which achieved least, like Education, were those which made minor reforms within the existing framework.

IN THE end, however, the Commune could not shed its desire for legitimacy. It failed to see the threat it constituted to the ruling classes by its very existence.

So it did not seize vital institutions like the Bank, or

make thorough preparations for defence. It did not spread the message of revolution, for example by supporting brick uprisings in other French cities as much as it could.

Commune leaders often squabbled over trivia, while major problems such as defence grew more urgent. Women — at the forefront in the beginning of the revolution and again at the end — were not allowed to vote; prejudice was rife.

The Commune leaders also failed to realise that Bismarck would happily free 60,000 POWs to allow Thiers to destroy them. Lissagaray, a journalist who fought with the Commune, wrote:

"These men could never understand that the Commune was a barricade, not a government."

Driven to the barricades at last, the Commune was brutally crushed. The slaughter continued long after Paris fell; over 20,000 were executed and thousands more deported.

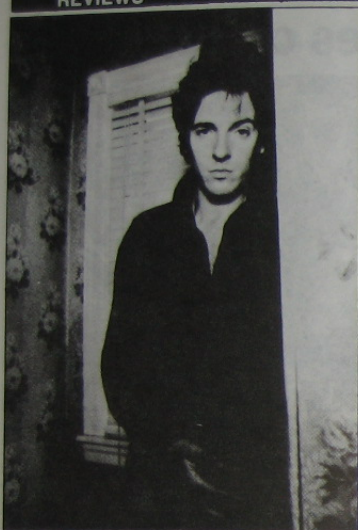
But the spirit of the Communards was unbroken. Louise Michel said at her trial: "I don't wish to defend myself. Our only goal was the triumph of the principles of the Revolution. I swear that by my martyrs — I honour them today and somebody they will be avenged."

Trotsky wrote in March 1917, just after Russia overthrew the Tsar, that "We cherished the memory of the Commune".

Despite its faults and its naivety, the Commune stood then, as it still stands today, as the first hold step of the socialist revolution onto the stage of world politics.

— Eric Harrison

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 17



Springsteen: Is the dream a lie . . . ?

"I HAVE seen the future of rock and roll and it's name is Bruce Springsteen."

It was with this statement of John Landau, a writer with *Rolling Stone*, that a singer of only regional significance entered the rock legend in 1975.

His third album, *Born to Run*, is world famous and each new album has increased that fame. Springsteen's recent five-record album, recorded live, spans a career from the humble Roxy Club of Los Angeles ten years ago to huge audiences in giant football stadiums today. One and a half million copies of his latest were sold in the US the same day they came on the market, and his songs have been at the top of the world hit parades for many months.

In the fantasy world of rock millionaires, Springsteen appears a happy exception. While his colleagues content themselves with 45 minute presentations, pre-recorded and

regulated to the millimetre, he rocks for three hours in a live concert overflowing with energy and passion.

In a milieu where everyone avoids definite statements or takes a position which might lose sales, and where the engagement of the artist doesn't go beyond spectacular humanitarian causes (Live Aid, for example), Springsteen has never hidden his opinions.

He has given large donations to the striking British miners, to unemployed groups, and to projects to aid the poor throughout his tours. Even more astonishing in show-biz, he said that he has remained a member of the American metal workers' union.

With Little Steve, one of his old musicians, he was one of the initiators of the campaign against apartheid and the South African regime, launched with dozens of American singers and rock groups after the success of the record *Stan City*.

If the bottom of the American flag appears on the cover of *Born in the USA*, it is not a rallying call to a patriotic campaign headed up by Rocky and Rambo. Rather, it indicates a faith in the original ideas of the founders of the US: liberty, independence, tolerance, solidarity.

When Ronald Reagan expressed his admiration for Springsteen, the latter replied that it wasn't reciprocated, and he has never accepted invitations to White House receptions.

SPRINGSTEEN is perhaps a leader in rock, but his music is not particularly innovative. His mixture of vibrant rock and moving ballads is only a reflection of thirty years of popular American music.

But it expresses an energy, a conviction and a sincerity which makes it different to so many others.

He is not a genius. His lyrics are not immortal works, they do not explore the profundities of the soul, and they do not show any tendency for introspection. His universe, however, is not limited to the drag of Friday Night, or to the choice of swimming pool and high fashion clothes, or to emotional problems with his girlfriend — as is the case with the majority of rock singers.

His songs derive their force from their simplicity, from a comprehension and a deep sympathy for ordinary people and their daily struggle for survival in a hard world.

Some of his lyrics picture workers crushed by the system, driven to despair and violence by social forces over which they have no control. In *Johnny 99*, a car worker is sacked, can't find work, and one drunken night rolls over a shopkeeper. He explains to the judge that he has debts that any honest person wouldn't be able to pay, that the bank had mortgaged his house and that now they wanted to take it from him. It is this that "put a gun in his hand".

Factory shows life on the assembly line without any gloss: Through the mansions of fear / Through the mansions of pain / Use my daddy walking through / Them factory gates in the rain. / Factory takes his hearing / Factory gives him life / The working, the working / Just the working life.

Born in the USA tells of the life of young Americans destroyed by their time in Vietnam.

HOW TO escape this oppressive reality?

Springsteen's first and most frequent response is escape by road. The young worker who each evening gets into his old Chevrolet and roars down Thunder Road. The unemployed worker who travels across the highways of Nebraska by motor bike. The old American myth resurfaces — of wide open spaces, of escape on the trail, of the "rebel without a cause" a la James Dean.

With the double album *The River*, Springsteen began an evolution. The title song is a love story of a young couple whose relationship degenerates as they try to bring up their kids even though they can't find work. Escape by road is replaced by the daily heroism of those who try to keep going and keep their heads high.

The force of Springsteen is that he offers young people who come to hear him not the usual pap of an imaginary existence, but a vision of their own lives. The fact that this vision is romanticised is vital. It is this element of fantasy that allows his public to run away while listening.

At the end of the concert, very few of them will really charge off in an old Chevy to travel the US and start a new life. Tomorrow they will find themselves back at work, but with the memory of someone who gave them an evening's escape — and an escape with which they could identify.

It is there that Springsteen's limits appear most clearly. A worker's life is a struggle for survival. Springsteen's heroes either escape, or endure without cracking. Nowhere appears the perspective of changing things — of a collective struggle to put an end to the old world.

In the face of pop music's religious moralism, or the "philosophy" of someone like Boy George (*"war is stupid, Springsteen is a real breath of fresh air. In *The River* he asks: 'Is a dream a lie if it doesn't come true, or is it something worse'?"*)

The honest answer is that the dream of escaping the desolation of Reaganism in an old Chevrolet is worse than a lie. It is not simply false, it obscures the real situation.

Because Springsteen raises the difficulties and despair of workers' lives, we have to be more critical about his solutions than about those of other rock stars. On the rock scale, Springsteen is basically at the top end of average — the trouble is that the average is so low.

— Jean Pelier (from *Socialisme International*)

Monocle, mutiny and a 70 year myth

OVER eight million soldiers died in the battle for imperialist supremacy that was World War One.

The popular view is that men marched off cheerfully to die. Last month's brilliant BBC mini-series *The Monocled Mutineer* gave the other side of the story.

The series told of the 100,000 strong mutiny of British and ANZAC troops at a training camp at Etaples in Northern France in September 1917.

This mutiny has been written out of history for 70 years. William Allison and John Fairley (authors of the book *The Monocled Mutineer*) interviewed scores of ordinary soldiers and civilians to get the true story. They demolished the cover-up started by the camp commandant, Brigadier-General Thomson, who ridiculously underplayed the size and seriousness of the mutiny in his war diary.

At Etaples brutal instructors — called canaries because of their yellow arm bands — bullied the troops and treated them like animals. Victor Sylvester, later to achieve fame as a band leader, recounted that Etaples "turned out to be a protracted exercise in calculated cruelty".

Breakfast was one 'dog biscuit' followed by a ten-hour stint in the Bull Ring (Etaples' training ground and assault course) before another meal. Punishment, supervised by the 'red caps' (military police), often meant being tied to a stake for hours on end.

Being sent to the trenches was often a relief from the barbarism of the Bull Ring. Another way out was to desert, and join up with soldiers of many nationalities in the surrounding forests.

But mutiny, fighting back against the army, is what the Etaples soldiers did.

When the red caps killed a soldier, the troops stormed out of the camp into the townships, previously off-limits to non-officers. The officers were powerless to stop a riot. One, from behind a machine gun, read the Riot Act. "Bollocks to you", cried the troops, cheerfully ignoring him. Other officers, canaries and red caps were attacked.

Lady Angela Forbes was doing "charity" work at the camp.



Paul McGann as Percy Topsis

Though she often spoke up against its brutality and couldn't see why "the lower classes would allow themselves to die", she had to be assured that what was going on was not a revolution, but only a riot.

For in France in 1917, "revolution" was no mere theoretical concept. Socialist ideas had poured out of Russia since the February revolution. Two French regiments, armed to the teeth, marched to Paris in flag and singing *The Internationale*. Ten thousand Russian troops, serving in Champagne, overthrew their officers and set up soviets.

Sadly, the Etaples mutineers weren't interested in soviets or revolution. Their demands to Thomson were reformist, like closing the Bull Ring and improving conditions.

Even so, their mutiny was impressive and was vividly portrayed on TV. Camp lock-

ups were demolished, prisoners released. Thomson and his staff were thrown in the river.

The scary side of the mutiny was not forgotten by dramatist Alan Bleasdale — the rape of women by marauding soldiers and the terrorising of Etaples. In the book, Private Percy Topsis rebuffs the mutineers to remember who their real enemies are.

Topsis is portrayed as the leader of the mutiny. He is an enigma, often shallow and uncaring. He wants the officers' privileges, so he disguises himself as a captain uniform, monocle, upper class accent — and leaves the camp at will. When the mutineers are destroying Etaples, he is playing cards in the Grande Hotel.

He is, however, a natural leader, able to tune into the wavelength of the troops, size up the situation and make decisions. He knows the shallowness of any compromises agreed to by the military brass.

Whether the portrayal of Topsis, who was eventually murdered by the police in 1920, is true or not doesn't really matter. What is important is that thousands of soldiers started to question the right of ruling class incompetents to send them to their death in the trenches.

But questioning authority is not enough. The point is to get rid of it. Thomson met the mutineers' demands, and the officers turned on the troops, hunted out the deserters, and probably hung some mutineers.

The number of British troops who killed in British orders will probably never be known, as it's still a war secret. But their French counterparts ordered the

execution of every tenth soldier in mutinous regiments, and sent a battalion into no-man's land to be shelled by their own artillery.

How dare you call yourselves soldiers! Thomson thundered to the mutineers. He meant by soldiers, officers who give orders and troops who obey them. *The Monocled Mutineer* shows that there is another type of soldier — one who questions the officer corps and fights against it.

Jeff Goldhar

FILM

Fascism, Aussie style

WHEN D.H. Lawrence visited Australia in 1923, he stumbled on a secret fascist army of ex-gidgers called the King and Empire Alliance, led by a Sydney Jewish architect named General Roshental.

The experience inspired Lawrence to write *Kangaroo*, now adapted to the screen by Tim Burstall in a movie of the same name. The film is a fascinating portrayal of the political polarisation of those days.

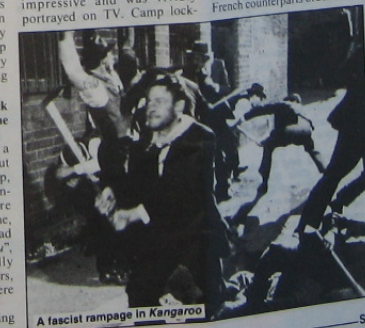
Colin Friels gives a fine brooding performance as "Somers" — actually Lawrence himself — who is torn between his working class background and his disdain for the "common herd". This conflict comes up elsewhere in Lawrence's writing, but it gains special sharpness when the choice is between socialism and fascism, and Somers flirts gingerly with both.

Hugh Keays-Byrne is a little too oily as "Kangaroo", the head of the secret army. But he conveys the hint of repressed sexuality that underlies much of the fascist personality.

Judy Faye is typically strong as Somers' wife "Harriet", distrustful of the fascists' "little boys' games" and resentful of the fascination they hold for her husband.

But John Walton steals the show as Jack Galtett, the neighbour who introduces Lawrence to the matey, impulsive, nationalistic Ocker legend, twists it gently to the right, and gives a masterly portrayal of how Australian fascism might look — quite different to the German boot-clacking cliché, but murderous all the same.

— Anna Wilkenhaar



A fascist rampage in Kangaroo

Who are the real terrorists?

IS IT my imagination, or has the tedious smear campaign against Libya suddenly got worse in the last month or two?

It seems you can't hear a TV or radio comment about Libya these days without the word "terrorist" being used in the same sentence. Very handy for establishing a mood for closing down an embassy, I suppose. Bob Hawke's move to expel the Libyans stinks of hypocrisy. It is based on the charge that Libya is seeking to destabilise the Pacific, and that it is somehow a world terrorist centre.

Well, just how terrorist is Libya? It was supposed to have carried out the West Berlin disco bombing, for which the Americans retaliated against Tripoli. But the world later learned that Israeli intelligence had told the US that if anyone was responsible it was Syria, not Libya. Syria is a close ally of Russia, so Reagan bombed Tripoli anyhow.

In the period prior to the West Berlin disco bombing, the only major terrorist acts blamed on Gaddafi were the Rome and Vienna airport bombings. European governments, however, did not believe that Libya supported either of them.

Since the disco bombing, with no new terrorist acts that can credibly be blamed on Gaddafi, the accusation has shifted. He now "supports terrorists", namely the PLO and IRA.

Well, big deal. So do we — and hundreds of other leftwing and anti-imperialist groups around the world. We understand that they are waging a just struggle against oppression, and that their occasional resort to terrorism, while wrong-headed, is a desperate response to decades of continuing misery.

NEITHER of these things can be said for the proven terrorists in the shape of the US and French governments, with whom Bob Hawke is quite happy to deal.

Consider: We now sell uranium to the country which pollutes the Pacific with its bomb tests, which sinks a protest vessel in a New Zealand port for trying to stop such bomb tests, and which organises the tests and which prominent Kanaks like Eloi Machoro in New Caledonia.

And we provide military spy bases to the government that deliberately mined Nicaragua's harbours, and still funds the butchery of teachers and doctors in border areas by the Contras,



Malcolm

despite laws passed in its own Congress.

That, apparently, is Bob Hawke's idea of taking a strong stand against terrorism.

As for Hawke's charge that Libya is destabilising the Pacific, that rebounded on him immediately when Lieutenant-Colonel Rabuka echoed it as one of his excuses for toppling Fiji's Labour Party government.

The reality is that the people the Libyans are charged with supporting the OPM in West Papua, Frelim in East Timor and the Kanaks in New Caledonia — are precisely the people Labor should have been supporting. Instead, it has preferred to play "realpolitik" with the generals in Indonesia (quite talented terrorists themselves, we hear) and the French. And now that Libya comes along with something more to offer than cheap sympathy, Canberra suddenly fears it might be outflanked on the left and lose influence. Good!

HAVING said that, let us be quite clear that Muammar Gaddafi is far from the consistent foe of oppression and racism that he makes himself out to be. He is certainly no "socialist", despite what he calls himself.

He has, it is true, used Libya's newfound oil wealth to raise living standards. But he runs a

light bureaucratic regime. His handpicked leaders are the only organisation allowed in his "revolutionary committees", ensuring that theirs is the only coherent political voice.

When he saw a chance to improve relations with the reactionary monarchy in Morocco, Gaddafi ditched his support for the Polisario Front, which was fighting King Hassan for independence of the Western Sahara. In 1985, he expelled 30,000 Tunisian workers from Libya.

His support to liberation groups is given less out of a sense of solidarity than to promote Libya's own national image in the Third World. His recent Asia-Pacific solidarity conference in Tripoli, from all accounts, was little more than a windy talkfest for him to grandstand at.

Nonetheless, Michael Mansell has every right to go there, and blacks are perfectly justified in seeking funds from Libya. Labor has sold them out on land rights abysmally, and Canberra funds are tied purely to band-aid projects.

Clyde Holding's denunciations of Mansell are on a par for hypocrisy with everything else Labor has said about Libya. It is evidently okay for Australian farmers to sell \$30 million worth of live sheep there, but as soon as



with Alec Kahn

Mansell seeks money from the same source, that is giving comfort to terrorism.

WHILE I'm on the subject of Michael Mansell, a brief comment about his reported calls for a separate black nation.

What he has actually said is more ambiguous. "The next stage is for the Aboriginal movement itself to start developing to a stage where rhetoric becomes reality — eg sovereignty, nationhood, the rights to go and negotiate in international forums."

Mansell's calls for sovereignty and the right to negotiate in international forums are excellent ones. Blacks' demands for land rights, for genuine equality, and for community self-determination inside current Australian society are a real challenge to white racism.

Calls for black "nationhood", however, are more problematic. Nationhood usually means having your own national state. And that would be far less of a challenge to white racism than blacks' current demands.

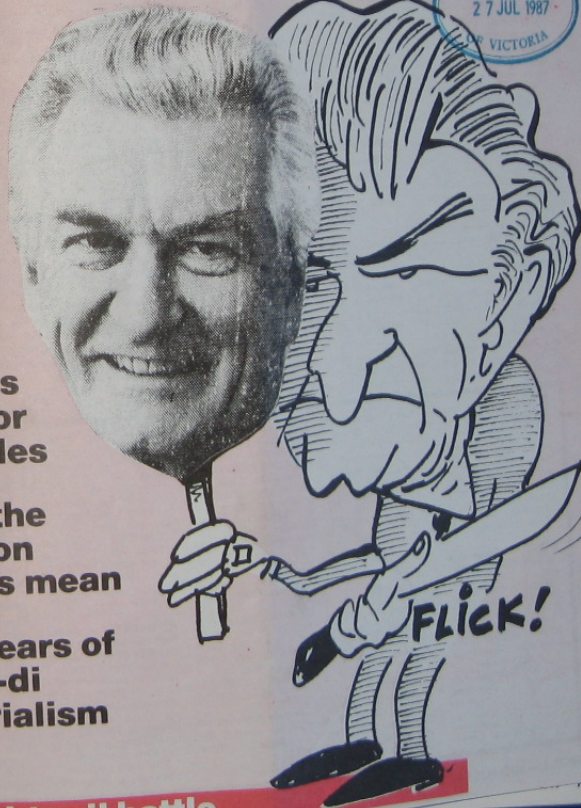
Why? Because any separate Aboriginal nation-state would inevitably be little more than a South African-style bantustan, economically and militarily dominated by white Australia. Which is precisely why racist groups like the Nazi Party and the National Front have supported such proposals from time to time.

If the black movement generally was to demand such a separate nation-state, we would support it critically, consistent with our stance of self-determination for oppressed peoples. We would say they were making a mistake, but we would defend their right to make that mistake. Current black demands, however, are much stronger politically.

Of course, Mansell may well have been arguing for "nationhood" in some hazier sense, or merely as a propaganda ploy. But given its implications, I think that's an unwise tactic.

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HAWKE'S BACK... POISED TO ATTACK!



- Korea's dictator trembles
- What the election results mean
- 200 years of dinky-di imperialism
- The light rail battle

READERS WRITE

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

Kelty's gall

Bill Kelly of the ACTU has recently published a document on the future of Australia's trade union movement. In it, he has the unmitigated gall to try to use the experiences at Robe River to bolster some very dubious arguments. His comments range from misleading statements to outright lies.

For instance, it is totally incorrect to say, as Kelty does, that Peko Wallsend backed down and re-instated its workers. It re-employed them. Workers were reclassified, lost entitlements and, in some cases, lost between \$8000 and \$10,000 a year in wages. (Not to mention coping punishment squads, multi-skilling, non-union labor, seabs, police harassment, etc.)

Kelty points to the company being unable to export ore because of the "supportive action by tug crews". Actually, the metalworkers and other union officials ensured no interruption of ore supply to Japan from the other ore companies and simply requested levies from the other sites.

Kelty says the dispute was eventually resolved in late January, and gives Simon Crean a pat on the back for it. In fact, the dispute was never resolved. The company had won a reduction of 400 workers when their target was only 185. Negotiations between Crean and Peko boss Copeman were never sanctioned by the rank and file. The withdrawal of court

action, which Kelty claims as a victory, proves nothing: the writs had never been part of the industrial dispute, only a consequence of it.

The whole experience shows how little the rank and file can rely on the industrial relations system. To suggest, as Kelty does, that this well-resourced opponent was defeated by the system is ludicrous. The fact that an emasculated trade union bureaucracy survived could be seen by some as a victory. But I think that when they examine their tills next financial year, they will discover some wounds as membership falls.

Kelty's whole approach to dealing with New Right employers like Peko Wallsend is doomed to failure. Only educating and mobilising rank and file workers can win.

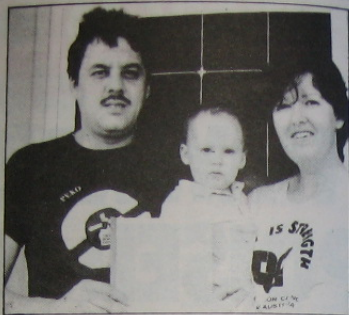
GRAEME HAYNES,
Wickham, Pilbara.

Labor pains

On Tuesday 23 June, the ALP launched its official election campaign at the Opera House. Inside the Concerti Hall, the party faithful gathered, by invitation only.

Outside was a small group made up mostly of the media, and later, environmentalists who arrived to stage a small demonstration.

What has happened to the thousands who gathered for the great Hawke launch of 1983, when so many people were desperate to remove Fraser from office after seven years? So



Mining family with a Peko writ: was its withdrawal a "victory"?

crowded was the Opera House that loudspeakers were set up facing the Botanic Gardens for the thousands outside. Promise after promise was made, which sounded as if the Messiah was arriving. What has happened to all those promises?

It was all a nasty joke. The ALP has stolen the Coalition ground, so that the Coalition is floundering, looking for policies to replace those which were theirs, and moving further to the right to accommodate a rightwing Labor Government.

The ALP will probably win again, but as revolutionaries should not be voting for them. We have to vote, it is compulsory by law, but that does not mean that we should be seen in any way to be supporting such a corrupt and useless system. At best we should vote informal and write on the ballot paper that we are doing so, and at worst we should vote for all

sorts of fringe groups if we feel it necessary to vote formal.

Either way it won't make any difference. Bond, Holmes & Court, Elliott, Murdoch, Packer, the USA, multi-nationals, investment, disinvestment, dollar manipulating — these are the real controllers of parliament, not the members you or I might fill in on a piece of paper once every two years on average.

If the ALP is re-elected, we will be getting more of the same. For this reason we need to work harder persuading people to understand our politics and endeavouring to draw them into our activities to strengthen our organisation. It is an uphill battle, but we must continue fighting until circumstances force a change and we can be successful.

MANNIE DE SAXE,
Sydney.



CHEAP SHOTS

suggesting that it had misinterpreted the contents of the infamous "Age Tapes".

The very next Saturday, the Age was carrying a paid advertisement for — you guessed it — Lionel Murphy. A Radical Judge. Seems that every principle has its price: Melbourne's Unmasked Crusader.

SWEDEN'S economic critics will have to go on a little longer, it seems. A business consultant spent 13 years writing a book on how Swedish companies could solve all their economic problems. Then he gave his 250 page manuscript to a shop to photocopy.

The shop assistant — obviously a communist

— mistook the paper shredder for the photocopier. The business consultant is now trying to glue 50,000 strips of paper back together again.

COVER STORY

Hawke's back — and planning new attacks

NOW THAT John Singleton and Alan Bond have got Bob Hawke back into power, we can expect the new government to put the boot into us as never before.

While the Opposition engages in a little ritual blood-letting, Paul Keating will be framing another austerity budget, jobs will be slashed in the public sector, and our civil liberties will come under renewed attack.

Given the problems with Australian trade abroad, the country's overall living standards are set to fall. The government, which for nostalgic reasons is called "labor", will make sure it is workers, and not the rich, who tighten their belts. Budget cutbacks will be the starting point.

The next pay rise under the "first tier" will probably be postponed till late in the year, or even into 1989 — the politicians have already begun to soften up the public on that one.

A reorganisation of the public service is certain once David Block's efficiency review makes its report. Part of the process will be a reduction in PS numbers, which in turn means worsening working conditions for those who remain. Union leader Peter Paramore was right to say that a "bloody battle" will be necessary to prevent this happening.

Moves are already afoot to divide Telecom into sections, and make each one respond to market pressures. The next step will be to privatise or deregulate the more profitable functions, and the result will be higher prices and lousy service, if the American experience is anything to go on. At the same time, jobs and workers' rights in Telecom will be under threat.

BECAUSE most union leaders have failed to resist Hawke and Keating's attacks so far, the government thinks it has tamed the union movement. Keating has signalled that a process of "fine tuning" the industrial scene will follow.

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Q. WHICH SECTION OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IS MOST EXCITED ABOUT THE ELECTION RESULT?

A. YES. JOHN SINGLETON!



This will mean continuing attacks on "restrictive work practices" — that is, on hard-work working conditions. They will keep demanding we trade off our conditions in exchange for every measly pay rise.

Meanwhile, Bill Kelly of the ACTU has a plan to reorganise the union movement into fewer, larger unions. On the surface this might just seem a sensible way to foster unity and avoid destructive demarcation disputes.

But Kelly has other objectives. His strategic document on the subject, which has been praised so highly by the media, aims to create a stronger, slicker union apparatus where power rests entirely with suit-and-tie professionals. These people are to be "better educated" — in the Crean-Keating school of class collaboration. They are unlikely to resist the government's attacks on us.

Any talk of unity will be exposed as hollow as soon as anyone dares to disagree with the scheme. Dissenters will be hounded as the BLF has been.

The Australia Labor will be introduced, now that Labor has the prerequisites for a joint

Senate-Reps sitting. Even if the most dire predictions of its opponents about government spying on people prove unfounded, at the very least the card will bring about a crackdown on petty evasions, which poor people need to survive, while the crimes of the rich will continue unhindered.

WHO IS going to lead the resistance to these attacks? You will look in vain to most of the traditional Labor left.

The left parliamentarians were as silent as the grave during the election, and now they will have the bait of greater cabinet representation to keep them quiet. It has been rightwingers like Graham Richardson and Robert Ray who have advocated giving them a greater ministerial role. They know it is an effective way to neutralise them.

In the past four years we have seen Stewart West take responsibility for attacks on overseas students and for squalid deals with the banks over home loan interest rates. We have seen Brian Howe preside over social security cuts. In the coming years, we will see similar performances from the likes of Gerry Hand and Bruce Childs.

The best known left union officials won't be giving much of a lead either. John Halpin may as well be hoping to find a "more serene existence" in the Senate. Laurie Carmichael, that rabid Communist, told a union conference in April that he was "not in any way... seeking to supercede the market" in economic policy. At the rate he's going, he'll be in the H.R. Nicholls Society by Christmas.

Even the key officials in the more militant Workers' Campaign Council union group in Melbourne have done little to mobilise their members in recent times. Offer the opportunity to back a stopwork and rally prior to the election, they shied away, making various lame excuses.

SO IT will continue to be a minority of rank and file militants and socialists who carry the fight against the Hawke government in the coming months.

That might seem a rather bleak prospect. Even so, there

will be opportunities to wage that struggle effectively.

Stung by his electoral fiasco, Joh Bjelke Petersen can be relied upon to take on the unions or make some other equally reactionary move. Yet he will do so from a position of relative weakness after his recent humiliations. A determined mobilisation in support of the FEDFA strikers at Bjelke Petersen Dam, the Queensland miners, or whatever other group he targets, could be important for the militant left in Australia.

There is also scope for widespread resistance to the Australia Card. Anti-ID number groups have prepared various plans to disrupt the scheme, such as mass burnings and forgeries of the card.

What is more, increasing numbers of workers are recognising the reactionary nature of this government. As yet they lack the confidence and the political understanding to translate their resentment into struggle.

At some point that could change, with dramatic results. The struggles we wage today and tomorrow always have the potential to detonate a larger explosion.

—Richard Emerson

HOW ABOUT JOH'S COMMENT ON THE ELECTION RESULT?



I DIDN'T WIN, BUT I DIDN'T LOSE.

Reprinted in the week before Billy Graham.

EVEN in the air, they have to remind you that it's a class society.

Gantas played three movies on its flights last month. The Color of Money screened in first class, Children of a Lesser God in business class, and Little Shop of Horrors in economy.

GREAT Moments in Journalism, part one...

The International Federation of Agricultural Journalists held their Congress in England recently, under the slogan "More Food — Yet More Starve"

To do their bit towards the problem, they flew over a French chef specially to prepare the seaford hors d'oeuvre The British Beet

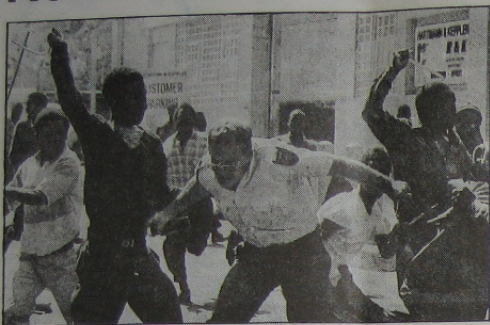
Company kindly donated mountains of roast sirloin for all to pig into.

ALL THIS TALK OF STARVATION MAKES ME HUNGRY!



• CHAUVINIST CORNER... Female reporter to Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen on his search for candidates at the start of the campaign: "Have you had any knockbacks yet?" JB: "No, but I bet you've had a few."

New threat to Botha's fortress



Rail strikers clash with police

THE RECENT sham election in South Africa showed a major swing to the right by whites. The ultra-right Conservative Party became the official Opposition, displacing the "liberal" Progressive Federal Party.

President Botha and the National Party have to follow this mood among their base — the armed white population. That partly explains the State of Emergency, the 30,000 arrests and the attacks on the peak black trade union organisation, COSATU. Botha cannot appear to his supporters to be going soft.

Yet while the State of Emergency has quietened down the townships, it has forced the unions to take up the major role, both economically and politically, in the struggle for liberation.

On election day, over one million black workers stayed away from work. On the anniversary of the Soweto uprising, the number of workers on strike reached over one and a half million.

The black working class is beginning to stir. 1986 was a record year for strikes. The first four months of 1987 saw that record broken!

The recent black transport workers' strike is a good example. Strikes and independent unions are illegal on public utilities. Yet the 16,000 members of the unrecognised South African Railways and Harbour Workers Union went on strike over the suspension of Andrew Nendzanda for "cash irregularities."

The state responded with brutal repression as part of its attempts to win rightwing votes before the election. It sacked the 16,000 workers.

The army shot dead six strikers and arrested 33 members of the union negotiating team. They blew up the headquarters of COSATU and occupied the burnt-out remains.

Yet despite all of this repression, the railway workers won a magnificent victory. The South African Transport System (SATS) agreed to reinstate all the strikers without loss of benefits.

Most importantly, SATS agreed to give black workers permanent status after two years work — exactly the same as white workers. This may well mean the end of the migrant labour system on the railways.

The story does not end there. At the end of May, the Metal and Allied Workers Union merged with two major motor unions and three smaller unions to form the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa with 120,000 members.

The new union unanimously adopted Moses Mayekiso, currently on trumped up charges of treason, as General Secretary. And they rejected the Freedom Charter of the African National Congress. The Charter is a liberal document aimed at national liberation rather than socialism. In contrast, the union congress stressed workers' control.

Botha has little room to manoeuvre, caught as he is between the demands of the privileged whites and the power of the black working class.

The difference between today and Sharpeville in 1960, or even

Soweto in 1976, is that there now exists a skilled and organised black working class which has kept the movement against apartheid alive. Repression alone cannot crush this force, as the railway workers' victory shows.

Botha will need to make reforms as well. Ultimately his aim must be to establish a prosperous black middle class to act as a buffer against black workers. The problem for Botha is that South Africa is in an economic crisis. There is not much money to provide for reforms.

The events of the last few months in South Africa show that black workers are beginning to realise their strength and to use it. These workers have the power to sweep apartheid away.

— John Passant

FJI



Rabuka's grip tightens

FJI's military-backed dictatorship has strengthened its position in recent weeks. But it is too soon yet to say that it has finally won.

Despite the supposed transfer of power to the Governor-General and his Council of Advisors, the army remains in real control. Having called up reserves, it now has 7000 men. It has taken over key economic sectors like the Fiji Sugar Corporation and the Electricity Authority, and is using its emergency powers to the full.

Opposition to the coup is being firmly stifled. On June 4,

army road blocks stopped 500 ethnic Fijians as they tried to petition their paramount chief to oppose Colonel Rabuka's takeover. Soldiers have raided prayer meetings, and have ransacked video libraries seeking "subversive materials."

Union leaders and activists have been hit especially hard. Detentions and interrogations occur daily.

The Fiji Labour Party (FLP) seems to have done little to organise resistance to all this. Deposed Prime Minister Bavadra spent weeks out of the country, seeking support from "friends" who suddenly became difficult to find. The leaders of Britain, the US and Australia refused to see him at all. David Lange told him to go home and talk to the Governor-General.

In Fiji, the FLP has launched a Supreme Court challenge, arguing that the Governor-General's administration is illegal. Given that it was Fiji's judges who urged the Governor-General to take power into his own hands, the chances of success in the Court are not great.

All of this has had one effect on the regime's opponents.

At a recent executive meeting of the Fiji Trade Union Congress, only 35 of the 80 delegates turned up. Of the others, some had been arrested; many were intimidated. As a result, a motion calling on a Australian and New Zealand unions to lift their bans on Fijian trade was narrowly carried.

Among workers, the mood is less clear. By mid-June, mill workers and cane cutters seemed ready to work, and only the cane farmers were sticking by the strike. By late June, enough farmers had given in to allow some harvesting to start under the army's watchful eye.

But on June 30, the government-owned Sugar Corporation cancelled all crushing work for a month. Mill workers' sabotage had twice inflicted serious damage to machinery, and repeated walkouts had slowed work so that little sugar the farmers had provided.

Things are not all going Colonel Rabuka's way. The ruling class is deeply divided over how best to restore political normality, and the economy is in acute crisis.

In this environment, the activity of the working class may yet have a real impact on events. — Graham Willitt

THE SPECTRE OF revolution haunted South Korea last month, and a dictator trembled in its path.

Weeks of savage confrontation in the streets forced major concessions from the Chun regime — direct presidential elections, freedom of the press, and freedom of political association. Eighty thousand riot police, mainly conscripts, are to be diverted to traffic duty.

The protest movement won by sheer numbers and baffling mobility. Over 70,000 students took to the streets, joined by thousands of workers, especially after offices closed. Student activists avoided sleeping in their own beds to thwart the overnight mass arrests that now precede mobilisations.

buoyed by open support from the middle class, protesters fought the police with astounding ferocity. They hurled firebombs in answer to the police's pepper gas, a gas so toxic it was rejected by the Filipino military. They tore the shields from cornered groups of police, burned their equipment and beat them up.

Chun's riot police were as brutal as ever. But Chun dared not order the conscripts to fire on protesters, for fear of mutiny. And such a measure would widen cracks in the military between Chun's supporters, centred on the Military Academy class of 1955, and rivals from the 1961 class.

Worried by Chun's vacillation, the 141 MPs of the ruling National Democratic Party helped US emissary Gaston Sigur pressure Chun to rescind his April 13 order. This postponed debate on democratic reform until after next year's Olympics.

In a crunch, the 40,000 US troops in Korea would back Chun, as they did in the 1980 Kwangju uprising. But the ironic threat of a struggle for democracy disrupting the Olympics, and in America's main Asian buffer against "communism", cannot have escaped even Ronald Reagan.

IT CERTAINLY did not escape Chun's designated heir, his former Military Academy classmate Roh Tae Woo. Roh elevated himself from the old regime by supporting reforms.

Roh is well aware that the Olympics, on which \$13 billion has already been spent, are to act as a potent symbol of maturity for South Korean capitalism, just as the 1964 Tokyo Games



A student aims a flying kick at riot police: astounding ferocity

South Korea: A dictatorship trembles

ushered in Japan as a world power.

Roh has just as heavy an iron fist as Chun, hastily concealed in a velvet glove. Roh promised to free hundreds of detainees from recent marches — but not the 2000 political prisoners. He promised autonomy for labour activists and provinces — but universities and workers and students are tortured or detained without trial. Some political prisoners whose sentences ran out in 1979 are still waiting to be released.

Roh is simply window dressing. The stadiums, the subway system, the trappings of the Games are ready. But the streets need to be cleared of demonstrators and pavement hawkers, and the searing pepper gas got out of the air.

WHAT OF the opposition? The Western press praises South Korea's economic miracle. The workers who produced it seem to count for nothing.

Korean workers have an average 54 hour week, and the unsafe working conditions in

"You have to tackle the radicalisation of the students and the workers in a fundamental way. Their voices have grown a lot over the years and the only method of dealing with them is to present a strong legitimacy to the government."

But Kim is not the man to swing an Aquino-style coup. Nor does the army have the slightest sympathy for him.

In the streets, students, their parents, religious groups and businessmen united in a movement loosely translated as People United for Constitutional Change and Against Dictatorship. It is a legal, nationalist organisation, largely led by moderates in the absence of radical student leaders jailed after last year's Seoul and Inchon riots.

Movement supporters are finding that students are not the puppets of Kim Il Sung, as caricatured by the regime. Indeed, any ideological similarities are only due to the censorship that has stifled political growth in South Korea, and absurd government propaganda that has merely served to glamourize Kim Il Sung to some radicals.

ON the left, ideas are in a state of flux.

Radical students, who became labour activists after expulsion from university, are now concentrating on broadening the mass movement. The traditional May wages push was largely sacrificed to this goal. Last year, some workers criticised the students as too "vanguardist" and ignoring workers' needs. This criticism, and the realisation that workplace politicisation was not really happening, seems only to have prompted students to reorientate to the action in the streets.

If the factories were quiet, that has changed. Workers who joined the marches are taking the mood back onto the job. Sit-ins and strikes are erupting. Union in action has effected more consensus in the student movement, too. The Chaminto faction has fused with Minintoo, the other major student group, and Chamintoo's anti-US stance has become more influential, gaining some respect in the wider mass movement.

Roh and Chun's concessions aim to split the moderates away from the radicals. It is a desperate game. South Koreans have found that rebellion gets results. The workers and students may well decide they want more.

— Chris Rose

COMMUNITY STRUGGLE

After months of local protest, Melbourne's "light rail" project is going ahead. Socialist Action member and St Kilda resident, ROBERT STAINSBY, reviews a dramatic community struggle.

Light rail: How Labor railroaded us

A light rail opponent tells off local MP Bonna Walsh



THE ACTION has died down, but the anger and bitterness go on.

While work ploughs ahead on converting the Port Melbourne and St Kilda railway lines to "light rail" tramways, police are trying to deprive one anti-project activist of his child. Incredibly, they claim the father endangered the child by taking him to the pickets.

At the official level, South Melbourne Council is considering risking up to \$60,000 in Supreme Court action which might delay the governments' plans. Meanwhile, a case in the Commission for Equal Opportunity claiming that light rail will discriminate against people in wheelchairs has been rejected on a technicality.

So the skirmishing continues. But it is unlikely to do more than embarrass Transport Minister Tom Roper. He is getting his way: light rail is being built.

LIGHT rail could feasibly have been stopped in two ways.

Large numbers of residents and train-users, picketing and occupying the worksites, could have forced Tom Roper to choose between mass arrests and abandoning the project. And union blackbans, backed up by effective action to prevent scabbing, would also have done the job.

Neither of these was an immediate prospect in these times when struggle generally is low. Yet steps in each direction were taken.

The campaign organisers — local residents in the Bayside Public Transport Committee, and a few rank and file transport workers — put most energy into the first strategy. South Melbourne councillor Anne Fahy, a long-time opponent of light rail, said at one stage, "I've said all along that if the

unions want to be in it, that's fine. But we're not relying on them."

As it turned out, though, union involvement was the campaign's greatest strength.

We tried hard to mobilise residents. The feeling was certainly there. People recognised that light rail would be slower, less convenient, and inaccessible for people in wheelchairs; that it would threaten other tram and bus services and pave the way for redevelopment of the area which would destroy the existing communities.

We printed frequent newsletters which we distributed at stations and in letterboxes. Hundreds turned up to our many public meetings, and 8000 signed our protest petition.

At the meetings, we gave everyone a form to fill in, saying how they could help. We built up sizable lists of activists this way. Yet in the crunch, our picket lines could never muster more than about 30 people.

Of course, this was not like a strike, with a pool of people temporarily free to work fulltime on the struggle, and we had three worksites to cover. But the turnout, and talking to commuters at the stations, made it clear that most saw little point in fighting. "They've made up their minds. You'll never stop them," people said sadly as they signed our petition.

SMALL as they were, the pickets did delay the work.

Our morale was high. We invented the "driving picket", by having a carload of picketers, doors locked against the police, driving continually over the worksite to stop work.

The pickets' greatest victory was to get the unions involved. The threat to rail workers' jobs had prompted the Australian Railways Union leaders to oppose light rail in words. But arrests and standdowns at the worksites forced them to call a

mass stopwork meeting.

There, ARU member Geoff Love moved a blackban motion from the floor. It passed, despite frantic opposition from ARU organiser George Zangalis. Geoff warned a public meeting afterwards, "You'll need to keep the pressure on, or you might find we'll sell you out."

Looking back, this was the ideal time to keep the heat on the government and the ARU leaders with a large, well-advertised rally, held when light rail opponents who worked during the day could attend. At the time, we were taking a breather after the effort of picketing. We came close to such a rally with a late afternoon demonstration at the office of local MP Bonna Walsh, which attracted 200 people.

I don't want to give the impression that the residents ignored the union completely. Quite a few attended the first mass meeting, and subsequent mass meetings were leafleted. But the idea that the residents could do it alone still prevailed.

CHANCES for union support remained, even when ARU president Frank Lacey manipulated a mass meeting to remove the bans.

Station staff at St Kilda strongly supported our picket there, and walked out for the day when a resident was arrested after Lacey had the bans lifted. Infuriated with the sell-out,

suburban guards elected their own disputes committee. Unfortunately, this committee opted to wait for an official guards' section meeting before taking any action. By the time ARU officials called one, work was well under way and the momentum was lost. "We didn't take the initiative early enough. We should have called our own meeting," said one guard. "The guards should have just walked out and stayed out," said another.

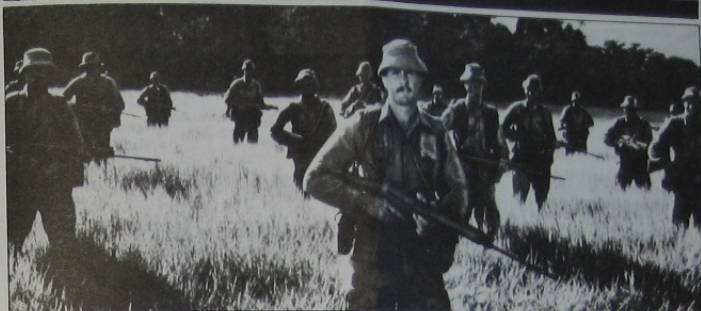
A PENI invasion of the Transport Ministry kept media interest alive, as did small-scale actions throughout the campaign. But with the union ban lifted, spirits fell. Police thuggery and arrests rendered the worksite pickets useless, and they vanished.

The government had the police, the PR team and the money to fight hard on all fronts. Our tactics of direct action and community involvement held them up considerably, however.

If the guards had had the experience then that they have now, they could have outmanoeuvred the ARU. The union-resident alliance would have held up, and the campaign could have gone much further.

Still, at least we fought. As a train driver who spent time on the pickets says, "We really held them up. That's something to be proud about."

BICENTENARY



200 years of dinky-di imperialism

TWO NAVAL fleets are headed toward Australia. Each symbolises what the Bicentenary is all about.

One fleet consists of sailing ships and is sailing from Portsmouth to Australia to reenact the voyage of the "First Fleet".

This fleet promotes a lie — the lie that Britain "settled" Australia. In reality, Britain had to conquer Australia from the aborigines.

The other fleet consists of six high-tech submarines and is travelling from Sweden to Australia in bits and pieces. It will be assembled in South Australia and added to the Australian Navy.

This fleet also promotes a lie — the lie that Australia's armed forces are for "defence". In reality, they are for attack.

Truth, as they say, is the first casualty of war. White Australia is about to celebrate 200 years of fighting wars. Small wonder that a few fibs are being told.

WHITE Australia has always featured in international military manoeuvres.

In the sixteenth century the European seafaring nations had carved up the Atlantic ocean. By the eighteenth century they were pushing farther afield.

Britain was a late starter in the race to carve up the Pacific. Spain already had South America and the Philippines, and the Holland had the Dutch East Indies and the southern tip of Africa. France had bases in Mauritius and Madagascar, and was threatening the sole British naval base in the region, in India.

The story that Captain Cook "discovered" this continent would have surprised the Dutch and Portuguese, who already knew its coastline well. But Britain's ambitions led it to grab Australia before someone else did.

The First Fleet was sent to establish a naval and trading base. The convicts went

along as slave labourers, to work in farming and construction for the naval garrison.

Cook's "discovery" would also have been news to the aborigines, numbering about 1,000,000, who had been the real discoverers of Australia some 40,000 years before.

Aborigines at first paid a few cordial visits to the First Fleeters who arrived in 1788. However, they soon learnt, to their surprise and annoyance, that the white visitors intended to stay. In 1791 the colonial administration began establishing "government farms" of 80 to 120 acres. These were mainly along the riverbanks that the tribes of Port Jackson relied upon for food gathering.

A war of conquest and a war of resistance began: flintlock rifles against spears, muskets against clubs.

In many battles the aborigines gave as good as they got. Gradually, however, they were driven back. European military technology was reinforced by imported diseases such as smallpox. Bullets, disease and poisoning reduced NSW's aboriginal population from about 100,000 in 1788 to about 6,000 in 1850.

This was the first war of White Australia. It proved to be the longest, lasting over a century.

THE COLONISTS also commenced hostilities against other peoples of the region.

They kidnapped Melanesian slaves from New Caledonia and the New Hebrides (Vanuatu). They sent troops to New Zealand to join in the white settlers' war against the Maoris. They lynched Chinese in riots on the goldfields in the 1850s.

All these battles, like the battles fought by the settlers of South Africa, were justified by theories of the settlers' racial superiority. This racism was the starting point of a developing Australian

nationalism, which was pushed along by subsequent international military manoeuvres.

The colonists were a long way from home. They were less far from several imaginary potential enemies — mainly the Asian "hordes" and the dreaded Russian bear. The Crimean war of 1853 and the Russo-Japanese conflict produced a war panic in the colonies. Even today the coastline of NSW is dotted with rusty cannon which were installed to deter a possible Russian Armada.

The colonists had assurances of protection from the British homeland, but they wanted more. They wanted the actual presence of big brother's troops in the region. Hence the colonists were enthusiastic about every foreign expedition by British troops.

When Britain attacked the Mahdi's uprising in Sudan in 1885, NSW joined in by sending an unsolicited contribution of 770 troops. 3,000 volunteers had applied to join the contingent.

Australian troops joined in the suppression of the Boxer rebellion in China. 15,000 Australian troops joined the British in the Boer War of 1899-1902.

Often the colonists were more gung-ho about British expansionism than was Britain itself. In 1883 the Queensland Government tried to annex the eastern half of New Guinea. It proclaimed it was doing so not on its own behalf but on Britain's behalf. It wanted to drag Britain into New Guinea and keep it there.

In 1903 Germany was negotiating with Portugal to buy its Timor colony. The Legislative Assembly of NSW sent an urgent appeal to Britain to intervene to prevent any sale.

WHEN Britain and Germany went to war in 1914, Australia contributed 350,000 troops.

As in 1885, Australia was not "dragged into" this conflict. The new Australian federation had its own international interests, and its own reasons for joining

foreign wars. Britain had been the world's most advanced capitalist nation. It had planted advanced industrial and military technology in Australia. From this base, Australian capitalism soon extended its tentacles into the region in search of markets, supplies and fields for investment.

Typical pioneering companies included Burns Philp and CSR. Burns Philp was originally called the "Australian New Hebrides Company". In the nineteenth century it made a mint by trading in Kanak slaves. It also invested in transport, retailing and farming in Papua, New Guinea and many other islands in the region.

CSR was also a patron of the slave trade, and at one stage controlled all sugar cane production in Fiji. (It helped create the racial divisions that contributed to Fiji's recent coup.)

The new Australian nation needed military forces not just for protection of its own territory, but also for protection of its markets, investments and trade routes. The Australian Navy was set up in 1911 because the British Navy wouldn't guarantee to do the job.

Left the world have any doubts about Australian belligerence, Prime Minister Fisher vowed to fight World War One "to the last man and the last shell". Indeed, Australian troops fired the first shots after war was declared (at an unfortunate German steamer in Port Phillip Bay), Australia's first military venture was to seize the German colony of New Guinea, a prize that it kept in the postwar carve-up of booty.

THE CARVE-UP also left the two newest imperialist powers, Japan and the US, squaring up at opposite ends of the Pacific. Japan replaced Germany as the latest bogeyman, and Australian racism became primarily anti-Japanese.

The Japanese conquest of Singapore was probably the greatest trauma ever suffered by the racist mentality in Australia. British

naval power in South East Asia was destroyed.

Prime Minister Curtin enlisted the US as Australia's new big brother, a role it has retained until today.

Australia continued, however, to fight in pursuit of its own independent interests. In the final years of the Pacific war, while US forces were island-hopping toward Japan, Australian troops were repeatedly sent to attack pockets of Japanese troops left behind by Japan's retreat.

These Japanese troops had no air or naval support and were, in effect, self-supporting prisoners of war. Hundreds of Australian soldiers and thousands of Japanese soldiers were killed in sideshow battles in Borneo, northern New Guinea, and Bougainville.

These battles were militarily useless. Their real value was political and economic. Australia was staking out a claim, like a dog pissing on its territory.

AFTER World War Two, the ANZUS treaty cemented the new alliance of American and Australian imperialism.

As in an earlier era, Australian strategy was to encourage big brother involvement in the Pacific region as an umbrella for its own interests. Only the ally's flag had changed.

Australian troops joined American GIs in the postwar occupation of Japan, and then in the US invasion of Korea. In the 1960s, they joined the US war effort in Vietnam. Modern mythology has it that Australia was somehow drawn into Vietnam by a sense of obligation. The reality was that Australian governments and defence chiefs were as willing as anyone to fight the pro-imperialism forces in Vietnam.

As early as 1950, ex-PM Chifley had sympathised with French colonialism for "bleeding itself white in the expenditure of money for the purpose of upholding western civilisation in Indo-China".

After the French defeat and the intervention of the first American troops, Australia's Department of External Affairs repeatedly offered to contribute Australian "advisors".

In May 1962, at a meeting of the ANZUS council, PM Menzies' offer of advisors was accepted. South Vietnamese PM Diem was informed of this decision later. In the meantime, the Australian population were informed that the advisors had been sent "at the invitation of the government of Viet Nam".

This level of involvement, however, was not satisfactory for Australian hawks. While the USA was happy to receive non-combat military assistance, Australia's foreign minister Hasluck and embassy staff in Washington lobbied furiously for five months to get a "request" for Australian troops.

The "request" finally came in late 1964. By this time, the USA was escalating its military presence, but to the delight of Australian military chiefs.

ANZUS, the anti-Japanese alliance of 1950, was now paraded like a binding business contract requiring the dispatch of Australian troops to foreign shores. Curiously, not a single clause actually mentioned this.

More recently, ANZUS mutated to



A proud day for Aussie militarism: the Empire's first salvo in WWI is fired in Pt Phillip Bay

Morning Herald summed up the strategy:

"Asia's newly-industrialising countries are offering Australia a chance to climb out of a 30 year old rut which has seen Australia's share of world trade cut in half. Australia's total trade with them could double over the course of the 1980s."

Such a strategy requires safe trade routes and compliant regimes in the region. That means that the Timorese and Kanak agitation for independence must be ignored. It also means that the policeman of the region, the US Navy, must be guaranteed freedom of the seas.

AUSTRALIA'S navy also has a role to play, if it can increase its mobility and striking power. So the aircraft carrier Melbourne is being scrapped as too slow. Instead, the navy is buying long range corvettes.

The six new Australian submarines are being built to this end. They are to patrol the sealanes, torpedo the vessels of any uppity regimes, and blockade their ports.

35 FA-18 fighter-bombers are also being bought at a cost of \$5 billion for similar purposes. They are being stationed in

northern Australia and backed up with in-flight refueling, in case they have to do to Jakarta what Reagan's F-111s did to Tripoli.

This is a very well-known possibility in military circles. Australia's F-111 fleet was first ordered in 1963 when PM Menzies was worried about the nationalistic Sukarno regime in Indonesia. Sukarno was overthrown in 1965, but is Suharto's regime going to last forever? What might succeed it?

In case a more economically nationalist regime follows, Australia is gearing up for war. Australia already fights military exercises and computer games against an archipelago-nation of 100 million to our north, a thinly-disguised Indonesia under "Communist" (ie nationalist) leadership.

And white Australia's 200 year history shows that it does mean business. Australian troops have fought overseas on 11 occasions. Australia's military capacity might look small in comparison to that of the US or USSR, but it is enormous in the context of South East Asia.

Australia's military budget is larger than that of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines combined. It is bigger than the budget of the new bogeyman Libya, and it is also bigger than the budget of a similarly warlike nation, South Africa.

In brief, it is the thirteenth largest military budget in the world. To keep it that way, both major parties insist that "we" have to make sacrifices.

IN CASE you are not convinced, you are about to get twelve months of Bicentennial jingoism rammed down your throat.

If you thought the America's Cup was bad, you ain't seen nothing yet.

Fortunately, black Australians are already beginning to cut through the humbug by campaigning for land rights. Their campaign against the first invasion should be a reminder of white Australia's subsequent invasions.

The world is dominated by the twin imperialism of the US and USSR. Australia must be described as a junior imperialist in the American camp. It is a hindrance to all peoples of the region, including Australian workers, whose fight for a decent life pits them against warmongers and profit bullheads.

As the Bicentenary approaches, Australian nationalism is not part of the solution but part of the problem.

— Eric Perleisen

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 be spread to other countries or will fail. For these reasons we are for building a world-wide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against others.

Liberation from Oppression

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

Socialist Action

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

SOCIALIST ACTION

WEEKLY MEETINGS

MELBOURNE
 Mondays, 7.30
 Lincoln Hotel
 91 Cardigan St, Carlton

SYDNEY
 Wednesdays, 7.00
 Merrig Hotel (upstairs)
 Bridge & George St, City

Brisbane
 Thursdays, 7.30 pm
 Phone 371 7114
 for location

Canberra
 Thursdays, 8.00
 Board Room
 ANU Union

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Winter school

SOCIALIST Action's Winter School, held on the spectacular beachfront at Austlinmer south of Sydney, provided a stimulating Queensland Birthday weekend for 35 members and supporters.

Speakers examined the latest developments in Fiji, the Philippines, China, Kampuchea and Indonesia. Australia's relations with the region were looked at in talks on Asian immigration, protectionism, and Australian imperialism. And in a stirring talk on the revolutionary experiences of the last two decades, David Lockwood answered the question "Is Socialist Action Possible?" (In the affirmative, of course!)

Between talks, there was table tennis, beach walks and much carousing. Unfortunately, it was a bit too cool to go swimming! All of the talks provided interesting discussion, and several will provide the basis for feature articles in coming issues of Socialist Action.

Price rise

REGULAR readers will notice that we have raised the cover price of Socialist Action from 40 to 50 cents this issue.

This has been forced upon us by rising costs for typesetting and printing. With rising postal costs for registered publications, we have also had to raise our subscription price from \$5 to \$7.

However, as a special inducement for regular readers to subscribe (and existing subscribers to extend their subscriptions), we are offering subscriptions at the old rate of \$5 for ten issues and \$10 for twenty issues until August 30.

Since our small print run means that each copy of Socialist Action costs over \$1 to produce, that represents outstanding value. So subscribe now...just fill in the subscription form in the centre pages.

Cover a hit

OUR pre-election front cover "Yuk...What A Choice!" was a big hit last issue. Sales were up in all cities, with our print run of 1200 almost selling out.

One public servant liked the cover so much that he photocopied it and stuck it up in his office, as his own personal election statement.

It also caught the eye of the Times On Sunday, who pictured one of our sellers with it over the caption "The thing that sells".

We appreciated the exposure, but why was the Times On Sunday so careful to crop the Socialist Action meshhead out of the photo? Surely they know that socialists don't believe in copyright...

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

Building sites battle on, despite the BWIU

THE WAGES campaign in the building industry keeps bursting into the headlines, despite everything the Arbitration Commission, the employers, and even certain union officials do to try and bury it.

Lately, the focus has been on the BWIU and their \$52 "victory". The BWIU claims a major breakthrough in their agreement with employers.

Building workers who have relied on the BWIU agreement have seen only the \$10 that all workers got in March. Discussions are still going on about the details of trade-offs planned under the "second tier". But the terms seem clear.

The BWIU has agreed to "flexibility" on rostered days off and the Xmas shutdown. Previously, unions have insisted that these be observed industry-wide, as they are otherwise impossible to monitor.

The BWIU has also agreed to do away with "homers", short stoppages for which workers are nonetheless paid. Homers usually occur in two types of situation. One is when employers break agreements, for example by allowing contractors onto a site without a union ticket. The other is as an immediate penalty when a safety breach is discovered.

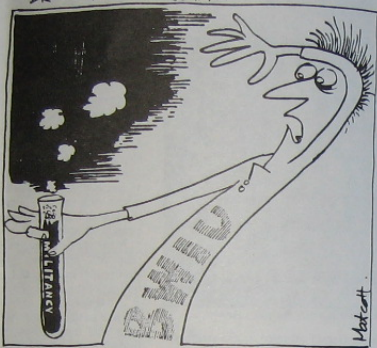
Clearly, both could be easily avoided by employers sticking to agreements. Instead, the BWIU deal will limit workers' ability to defend themselves with an immediate walk-off. Payment for lost time would only be decided by the Building Industry Disputes Board. Workers on the job would lose any control.

Whether the BWIU can actually reduce the number of homers is another matter. That seems unlikely in Victoria, where many building workers have not acted on the negotiations, and relied on themselves. Their success continues to inspire other sites to do likewise.

During May and June, for example, two building sites in Geelong won rises of \$32 and \$52 with direct action, including a strike. Other Geelong sites are now agitating for similar.

At the Melbourne Tennis Centre site, building unions found that the metal trades were getting \$100 over the award as an incentive to finish the job in time

DR JEKYLL GETS JUMPY...



for the Bicentenary celebrations. A fairly short campaign of bans produced a \$65 rise for building workers, negotiated under the approving eye of labour minister Steve Crabb.

This deal having been rushed through, workers at the Centre are continuing to agitate to re-establish relativity with the metal workers. Other building workers in the city are saying "Why not us too?"

Independent militant action is a threat to the BWIU. Their federal secretary Tom McDonald says their strategy is "constructive militancy". Mostly, this means showing their "constructive" side to employers. In one case, BWIU organisers approached a subcontractor and threatened him if he did not stop paying his workers a \$52 rise!

Recently, however, the BWIU has felt the need to show some results, to avoid being outflanked by the BLF. Thus the agreement at the Tennis Centre.

The BWIU is also claiming the credit for BLF successes where they can. The recent BWIU journal claims credit for the scaffolders' pay rise, without mentioning their two week strike or the fact that the most militant scaffolders are BLF members.

In NSW, they have sent around a circular about industrial safety. They have claimed to be in the forefront of recent action against changes to the state's workers' compensation system.

George Petersen, the state MP who was expelled from the ALP over the issue, refutes such claims in a letter to the BWIU. He points instead to the leading role of the BLF among building unions, despite its organisational weakness in NSW.

Ironically, the BWIU's efforts on behalf of the employers have evoked little gratitude. The Adelaide Advertiser goes so far as to talk about "local terrorism", and says the BWIU has "proved national here to the thuggish spirit of the BLF".

—Janey Stone

QUEENSLAND

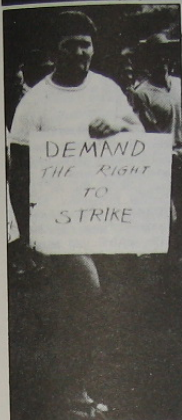
Damn your dam, 23 tell Joh

AFTER 12 weeks on strike, workers at the Bjelke-Petersen Dam site near Murgon in Queensland are locked in a bitter struggle with the state government as we go to press.

According to striker Ron Rolfe, "The Queensland government has tried to ruin our lives by giving us criminal records and large fines."

The struggle broke out when workers served the usual claim for a site allowance on the employer, White Industries, after the job commenced. Contrary to normal practice, White Industries refused to negotiate. Their contract with the government did not allow it. Bjelke-Petersen introduced

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE



Miners march against Bjelke

his new anti-strike laws just as the strike began. Ron Rolfe says, "Petersen has decided that he's going to cut wages and he's going to make a stand on his own dam."

Hoping to screen out militants, White Industries had handpicked 23 out of 600 applicants. But these 23 have withstood attacks from all quarters. They have received court orders late at night, and

faced heavy fines. Their union, FEDFA, has publicly disowned them to avoid de-registration. But they have had wide support, particularly from Queensland miners, who themselves have been holding marches and meetings over the new laws.

Following failures in court, the company brought in scabs who were also FEDFA members, creating a very tense situation. The strikers want national industrial action against the company, and a black ban on the site.

They are no longer fighting for themselves. Ron Rolfe believes, but for the rights of every worker.

Donations for the strike fund should be sent to Box 78, Crows Nest, Qld 4355.

—Ruth Wood

BREWERY JOBS

Another round for drivers

CARLTON and United Brewery drivers won a short but significant struggle in Melbourne recently.

Following their three week strike in February, they were forced to accept the brewery's sale of its trucking section to Linfox, but retained all their jobs and most of their conditions. Since then, it's been a war of nerves, with the new

bosses looking for opportunities to pick off militants.

They probably thought they had come up with a winner in May. The police were set up to greet one of the drivers' shop stewards on his return to work from the pub at lunch time. The breathalyser showed over .05 and Linfox promptly fired him.

They had reckoned without the organisation of the brewery drivers, who have an experience of militancy unpossessed by most of Linfox's other drivers.

The strike lasted five days, during which an effective picket line turned back sub-contractor drivers from the brewery gates. Finally Linfox gave in, and the sacked man is on yard duty till the court case. If he retains his licence after the hearing, he will keep his job.

On the day of settlement, Linfox was very anxious to get the drivers back to work by noon. The workers readily agreed. But they pointed out that unfortunately they had been in the pub that morning. "Sorry, but we can't drive — we're over .05!" they said.

The militants knew that this incident will not be the last. Linfox has about 40 more drivers on its books than it budgeted for. From the employer's point of view, winter is a good time for a dispute, and most Melbourne brewers have large stockpiles. The brewery drivers can expect more trouble soon.

'May We Quote You?' Department...

● I couldn't possibly believe that while I'm out of the country they make an announcement like this.

—John Bjelke-Petersen in Disneyland when the election was called.

● It's not my fault if the party still happens to have the old hand of calling it Communist.

—Guido Rossi, ex-chairman of Milan Stock Exchange, elected to parliament for the Italian Communist Party.

● A much bigger proportion of people who are unemployed in the big council blocks of flats. It must be because there is some sort of different culture there.

—British social worker, Margaret Thatcher.

● As a professional soldier there is no other explanation. It was an act of treason.

—Colonel Habuku on his coup in Fiji.

● Fear of an epidemic of world peace inhibits investing in defence stocks.

—Headline in Britain's Defence News

FOR those people who still believe the Fairfax press is "nicer" than Bond's or Murdoch's Melbourne's HSV7 traditionally turns itself over to charity each year.

Q: What's the difference between a Texas oil millionaire and a pigeon?

A: The pigeon can still make a deposit on a Mercedes.

UNION VOTE

Dirty tricks fail in ARU

THE pseudo-leftwing leadership of the Australian Railways Union in Victoria got a shock last month.

A militant rank-and-file group election candidate Geoff Love, got 43% of the vote against the leadership's candidate, Graham Bertrand.

The rank-and-file group scored the excellent vote despite a dirty tricks campaign by the officials. Two bogus letters were circulated during the election. The first, supposedly written by Geoff Love himself, portrayed him as a racist who slashes car tyres, harasses women and children, and wants the ARU to go on a ten week strike.

The second letter attacked Geoff Love's family, and red-baited him as being linked with the Socialist Workers Party. If anything, the two letters backfired on the leadership. The rank-and-file group newsletter commented:

"ARU members who know Geoff know these attacks (or the lies they are. Although these leaflets caused some confusion at the time they appeared, most members saw them for the rubbish they were, and drew their own conclusions about where they came from."



CHEAP SUITS

almost all day on it. So this year, HSV7 is the only TV station with Appeal organisers for the time that they used news staff and equipment so charitably. It seems to begin at everybody else's home but John Fairfax's.

S O ITALIAN pornstar "Ciccio" sells her body and gets into parliament.

As a public pundit observed that's better than the Labor Party, which sells its soul for the same purpose.



BLUE BLOOD-YELLOW SPINE

ON the coat-tails of the New Right, a quality-named "Entrepreneurs' Club" has formed at Melbourne University. A minority split-off from the campus Liberal Club, it began in true entrepreneurial fashion. It stole the Liberal Club's membership list. Its first activities included a firm outing to see The Color of Money (what else?), a guided tour of the stock

"AREN'T you worried about the sexism?" asked a friend, as I set off to visit a picket line on behalf of Socialist Action.

She was expressing a common view, that sexism is somehow worse among the working class, and that little can be done about it.

It is true that in passing a pub of blue collar workers, you still get looks and comments of a sort that are no longer acceptable in more middle class circles. And yes, sexist attitudes among individuals are still common. For example, in the brewery drivers' strike in Melbourne earlier this year, one wife who spent hours supporting the picket was abused by her husband and son for her "disturbing" actions.

More formally, there are numerous historical examples of discriminatory attitudes, such as trade unionists blaming women for male unemployment.

If this was the whole story, I would have given up years ago. But it isn't. There are just as many historical examples of the reverse.

For example, Australia's Militant Minority Movement in the thirties included in their program demands against the dismissal of married women and for equal unemployment relief. In the early 1970's, the BLF in NSW supported women who wanted to become builders' labourers. At a strike of migrant women textile workers at Kortex in Melbourne in 1981, the men took over child care and housework to free the women to attend the pickets for long hours.

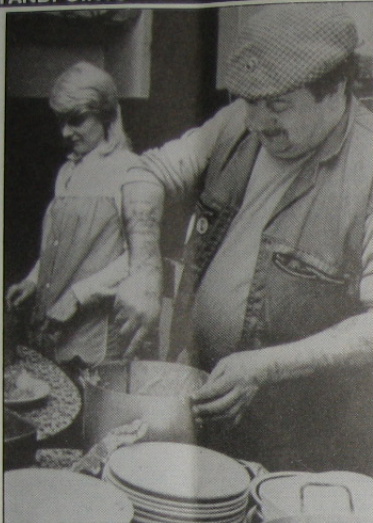
The fact is that the dirty, rough, macho, blue collar male image is no closer to the full reality than the sweet little fairy who stays in her place is.

SEXISM, or more particularly sexist behaviour, appears less common among certain sections of the middle class for particular reasons.

In the last two decades, a new consciousness of women's oppression and sexism has led to many changes. These have had greatest effect among middle class and white collar workers.

At the same time, there has been a new development at upper levels. Forward-looking managements now feel that they have only to gain from bringing in the previously untapped and ambitious women. Hence equal opportunity programs in private enterprise as well as the public sector.

In these circumstances, it is



British miners' strike kitchen: "women's work" became men's too

Sexism and the working class

comparatively easy for women to demand new standards of behaviour from their peers. Certain sorts of jokes and language are definite no-nos, and lists of non-sexist language proliferate.

This doesn't mean that underlying attitudes have changed that much. Sleeping with the right man can still be an effective way of advancement in many offices. A woman boss I know is very keen on equal opportunity, continues to call the typists "girls".

On the other hand, while sexist attitudes persist more openly among working class men, they are often overturned in a practical situation.

A cherished experience of mine concerns a semi-skilled die setter who explained to me that women couldn't do his job because they wouldn't be able to turn the nuts tightly enough to hold the die in place, and the dies were too heavy for them to lift. I asked him whether he lifted

is another story.

How then do we achieve this elusive thing, unity? How is it possible to overcome centuries of ingrained prejudice and habits, among women as well as among men?

Getting more women into leading positions is no answer in itself. More women on the ACTU executive won't fundamentally alter the main social role of the ACTU as industrial firefighters, holding back struggles of women equally with those of men. Irene Bolger of the RANF had to defeat rightwing and conservative female leadership.

We need to overcome sexism at the grassroots level, so that women can break out of their conditioned passivity, and men can transcend their traditional beliefs of superiority. This can only come about in one way — through struggle.

THE BEST recent example of sexist attitudes changing through struggle comes from the British miners' strike of 1984-85.

The overwhelming need for solidarity during the year-long strike impelled the women of the mining villages into activity and militancy they had never believed they were capable of. "I just can't believe I'm the same person," said one. "Now there's nothing I can't do, absolutely nothing!"

At the same time, the struggle compelled the men to take a new responsibility within their families and develop a new attitude toward political activity by women.

Large numbers of men learnt to look after their children and do the housework when their wives went away on speaking tours and to demonstrations. Many helped in strike kitchens and did work they would previously have thought beneath them. And when the women took up issues such as sexist language, while things didn't change overnight, there was significant progress made.

It was the struggle itself which forced these women to confront the female role. And it was the needs of the struggle which led the men to respond.

As one British miner's wife said, "It has also given us the strength to stand side by side with our men, fighting with them and in some cases fighting against them for the right to stand on picket lines with them." So I answer my friend, with those doubts I began this article, that yes, I am worried about the sexism. And the way to combat it is to support picket lines and other struggles.

—Janey Stone

1919: Britain on the brink

AS THE mainstream parties perform their ritual post-election jigs, it is a welcome antidote to recall a time when politics was rudely taken from the polling booths and the ad agencies by workers, in and out of uniform, in a country politically similar to Australia.

Britain in 1919 was awash with a torrent of working class struggle. Workers waged massive and militant strikes that would make a Simon Crean cringe. British soldiers and police mutinied and struck.

Worker's discontent had blurted up from the carnage of the war, inflation and lousy post-war housing and jobs. From Russia, the hot breath of workers' power fanned the embers of discontent.

Most spectacularly, British servicemen rebelled against plans to send them to fight against Soviet Russia. They wanted demobilisation, and in January and February scores of thousands of them engaged in over fifty mutinies and strikes.

The rebels refused to sail for France. They formed "Soldiers' Unions" and strike committees to run their camps. They marched on Cabinet meetings demanding better conditions. Sailors mutinied over pay and hoisted the Red Flag on Her Majesty's ships.

The police also gave the government a headache. The government had made the mistake of expecting their unquestioning loyalty without the pay-offs of favourable wages and hours. Having already developed the feel for trade union methods of struggle in 1918, the police struck again in July for the right to unionise.

HAVING an army and police in rebellion split danger, because it reduced the state to all head and no muscle for putting down the real threat from the organised working class.

Unionists clocked up 35 million strike days lost, an impressive average of over 100,000 workers on strike every day for the whole of 1919.

Glasgow metalworkers kicked off with a January strike for the 40 hour week, led by the Clyde Workers' Committee, a powerful shop stewards' body under direct control of a militant rank and file. In June 300,000 cotton workers struck over



1919: Rail strikers rout scabs, Belfast general strikers engulf the Lord Mayor's car

'Are you ready to take power?'

British miners' union leader Robert Smillie recounted this meeting with Lloyd George in 1919 to Labour politician Nye Bevan:

"He said to us: 'Gentlemen, you have fashioned, in the Triple Alliance of the unions represented by you, a most powerful instrument. I feel bound to tell you that in our opinion we are at your mercy. The Army is ill-equipped and cannot be relied upon... In these circumstances, if you carry out your threat and strike, then you will defeat us.'

"But if you do so," went on Mr Lloyd George, 'have you weighed the consequences? The strike will be in defiance of the Government of the country and by its very success will precipitate a constitutional crisis of the first importance. For, if a force arises in the State which is stronger than the State itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the State, or withdraw and accept the authority of the State. Gentlemen,' asked the Prime Minister quietly, 'have you considered, and if you have, are you ready?' From that moment on, we were beaten and we knew we were."

wages and hours. So did the railworkers in September. The miners were simmering with strike threats all year.

The magnitude of the turbulence is reflected in the pithy language of Cabinet documents of the time. Phrases abounded about the "spread" of the "bacillus of Bolshevism", soviets and revolution.

The situation was indeed semi-revolutionary. The ruling class' ability to govern was weakened. "We are at your mercy," said Prime Minister Lloyd George to union leaders.

Missing, however, was a revolutionary party able to unite the workers in a challenge for state power. In Trotsky's words, "Without agitating organisation, the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston-boat."

The British workers' steam was not harnessed. The '40 Hours' strike on the Clyde, for example, was defeated by troops

because it remained isolated. The Clyde shop stewards saw the need to spread the fight and thus stretch the forces of an unreliable army. They thought socialism could be won by trade union struggle alone in one city. They were wrong.

The other struggles remained fragmented between different groups, issues, times and places. Lloyd George became the skilled General of his class in exploiting this weakness.

Unlike ruling class hotheads such as Winston Churchill, he knew how to be generous when the pressure was on, conceding enough to prevent a combined political offensive.

FOR HIS strategy to work, however, Lloyd George needed assistance from within the labour movement. He found it in the trade union officials, in the Right or "Left".

Whether Right or Left, union leaders urged moderation and separate struggles for economic, not political,

demands. Preferring to lead from the rear, they held back the militants and kept the strikers passive. When forced to lead a rank and file surge from the front, they expended much hot air and sabre-rattling in order to control it.

Unions exist to improve the terms of exploitation within capitalism, not to overthrow it. Though essential preparatory schools of struggle, they are not the workplace, for if there is no capitalist class to negotiate with, there is no need for union negotiators.

In Britain in 1919, the union officials filled the gap left by the absence of a revolutionary party. Propagandist socialist groups abstained from "economic" strikes. Syndicalist groups based themselves on strikes, but kept politics out of them. The struggle that could have combined workers' immediate struggles with a political challenge to the state, the Communist Party of Great Britain, came too late in 1920-21.

The upsurge of 1919, although defeated, did show that even the most stable capitalist society is crisis-prone. Armies can crumble, and working classes can explode into struggle even amidst the euphoria of military victory.

What was lacking in 1919 was a mass revolutionary party to give direction to the energy. With it, who knows what Britain's workers might have achieved?

— Phil Shannon

RARE INDEED is it to have a commercially released film set the record straight on the life and ideas of a revolutionary.

Margarethe Von Trotta's *Rosa Luxemburg* attempts just that — and largely succeeds.

Few great marxists are more misunderstood today than Luxemburg. Anti-communists and Stalinists have distorted her criticisms of Lenin, the former to co-opt her and the latter to bury her. Even the press kit for Von Trotta's film variously describes Luxemburg as a pacifist, an anti-"Leninist", a believer in "spontaneous revolution" (whatever that is), and a savage critic of the Russian revolution.

Von Trotta's film stands witness against these claims. More than that, it avoids the movie clichés. Luxemburg's Tragic Love Affairs do not dominate the screenplay. She is not portrayed as a feminist. Her deep love of humanity is not turned into a soppy humanism to comfort liberal audiences.

Luxemburg remained a revolutionary until her murder in 1919. She was one of that rare breed who could use marxism's insights to break out of marxist orthodoxy. For that reason, she withstood three great crises in the marxist movement which left many lesser souls by the wayside.

THE FIRST crisis was Russia's 1905 revolution, which transformed the whole idea of revolution in Europe.

It produced the mass strike and the workers' council, and shattered the orthodoxy that each succeeding revolution would look like the Paris commune of 1871. It also changed the direction of Luxemburg's life.

In 1905, she was making a career for herself in Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD). But for the next year, she thundered out one fiery article after another on Russia, saying to German workers: this is the future.

She received much criticism on the Left for this. One "socialist" scoffed at her:

"We have always wondered why our experts on the general strike theory don't take themselves off speedily to Russia, to get practical experience... Off with you to the Russian front, you class war theoreticians!"

Luxemburg took no advice. She entered Russian-occupied Poland in early 1906. She wrote on arriving, "The revolution is magnificent and everything else is bilge."

She had arrived just in time



Rosa Luxemburg (Barbara Sukowa) in prison

"A world must be turned upside down"

Margarethe Von Trotta's feature film *Rosa Luxemburg* has begun screening in Australia this month. DAVID LOCKWOOD looks at the achievements of the woman it portrays.

for the Tsarist counter-offensive. After a period of underground work, she was arrested. Undaunted, she wrote to a friend, "I have learnt much from this, and all of it more encouraging than you can imagine."

What she had learnt she published in *The Mass Strike*, a pamphlet which turned German socialist thinking on its ears. She threw out the idea that only the German SPD, with its mighty organisation and ancient tradition, was worth learning from, and proceeded to teach the Germans from the Russian experience. And she analysed the relationship between work place and political struggle,

stressing that they were not separate but intertwined.

True, Luxemburg probably over-emphasized the spontaneous elements of the 1905 revolution. She did so to combat the increasingly dead hand of the SPD leadership — to show that significant mass action came from below and was not decreed from above. The film's coverage of the ensuing debate is particularly authentic, since much of Luxemburg's dialogue is taken from her writings.

A SECOND great crisis came with the outbreak of imperialist war in 1914. Like most other socialist parties, the SPD supported its own

government's war effort. This betrayal was no shock to Luxemburg. On returning to Germany, she had written to Clara Zetkin:

"Since my return from Russia I feel rather isolated... I feel the pettiness and hesitancy of our Party regime more clearly and more painfully than ever before."

When mass marches and strikes broke out against restrictive voting laws in 1909, the SPD leaders backed away like frightened rabbits. For Luxemburg, the whole mystique of the SPD fell to pieces.

In July 1914, days before the outbreak of war, the SPD trumpeted:

"The class conscious German proletariat raises a flaming protest against the criminal machinations of the warmongers. Not a drop of any German soldier's blood must be sacrificed to the imperialist profiteers!"

Yet it then voted for a war budget. Luxemburg suffered a nervous collapse and was near suicide. Efforts to organise resistance in the SPD petered out. By year's end, she was in hospital.

Now was the time to break from the SPD. But Luxemburg did not do so. "Flight is flight," she wrote. "For us it is a betrayal of the masses." While maintaining its principles, socialism had to keep its links with the mass movement, and for Luxemburg, that meant staying with the SPD: "We cannot stand outside the organisation, outside contact with the masses. The worst working class party is better than none."

Luxemburg wrote in the absence of an idea which is fundamental to us today: that revolutionaries can avoid becoming an isolated sect if their principles are linked to the struggle of the workplace and the streets. If that link is maintained, then revolutionaries can stand outside a mass reformist party and still, in times of heightened class war, build a mass revolutionary party.

Only after the experience of the Russian revolution, and in the crucible of the German events of 1919, did these ideas become part of the revolutionary tradition.

Trapped inside the SPD, the group around Luxemburg, called "Spartakus", remained small until the war's end. When the German state began to collapse in 1918, its organisation was rudimentary, to say the least.

RUSSIA'S revolution in 1917 produced a third crisis in socialism.

Luxemburg, again in prison, hailed the event. She wrote in a letter:

"Of course the marvels in Russia are like a new lease of life for me... I only fear that you all do not appreciate them enough, do not recognise sufficiently that it is our own cause which is winning there."

When the Bolsheviks took power, she said they had "saved the honour of international socialism."

She criticised the Bolsheviks, particularly over their suppression of other political tendencies and for their use of terror. But she wrote her pamphlet on the Russian revolution for Germans — to

emphasize the positive nature of the revolution, and to say that in advanced industrial Germany, those mistakes could be avoided.

Her most incisive criticism was of Europeans who failed to follow the Russian example:

"The German workers continue to watch the spectacle good-naturedly, continue to be mere spectators... And so Soviet rule in Russia cannot find a fate different from that of the Paris Commune."

When Germany's military began disintegrating and sued for peace in late 1918, Spartakus was small. It remained so even after it became the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) early

in 1919. It was in no position to take power, even if power was there to be taken. Luxemburg and other leaders stressed the need for mass agitation and education, the need for time to build the KPD.

The now vicious rightwing SPD was in power. With the military, it attacked the workers' movement and the Left. The KPD was provoked into an ill-prepared but defensive "uprising" — and was crushed.

If Von Trotta's film has a fault, it is here. We are given no hint as to why Luxemburg's group was so small, why the events of 1918-19 overwhelmed it, and why an "uprising" broke

out with which Luxemburg deeply disagreed.

Luxemburg was arrested on January 15, 1919, and murdered. But her great faith in humanity's ability to liberate itself and fulfil the joy of life through socialism lives on in her writings — and in part in Margarethe Von Trotta's film. "Revolutionary activity and profound humanitarianism — they alone are the true breath of socialism. A world must be turned upside down. But each tear that flows, when it could have been spared, is an accusation; and he commits a crime who with brutal inactivity crushes a poor earthworm."

Death of an American Dream

"A MAN is not a piece of fruit!"

Willy Loman first raged against the system that spits him out like an orange pit in 1949. But *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller's savage play about "free enterprise" and the American Dream, is just as powerful as a movie almost 40 years later.

The latest film version of Miller's classic features brilliant acting, particularly from Dustin Hoffman as Loman and John Malkovich as his elder son Biff. It is the universality of Loman's plight, however, that makes *Death of a Salesman* such a moving experience.

For the American Dream is also the Australian Dream. Here too, men are raised on sport and the myth of the "fair go". Here too, the untamed country is seen as a symbol of the Australian way, despite most of us crowding into polluted cities. Here too, people believe that anyone can be a success.

Willy Loman is an ordinary man seduced by the dream. Too late, he discovers that it is destroying him and his family.

For Willy Loman has little control over his own life or environment. His neighbourhood has been ruined by pollution and tall buildings. He can only rage. "The way they boxed us in here... the grass don't grow any more."

Willy's older brother represents capitalist success. More a vision than reality, he strides in and out of the film in a white suit with a matching umbrella. He beguiles Willy and his two sons with tales of easy money. "When I was 17 I walked into the jungle and when I was 21 I walked out. And by God, I was rich."

He seems benign enough. Then, in a playful sparring session with Biff, he trips him up and threatens to blind him with the point of his umbrella. "Never fight fair with a stranger, boy. You'll never get out of the jungle that way."

Willy cannot absorb this basic axiom of capitalist morality. He raises his sons to believe that they will get on if they are honest and strong and "well liked".

His two sons are soon disillusioned by the dishonesty they meet. Biff reacts with defeatism, while Happy, the younger, becomes cynical and selfish. "Everybody around me is so false that I'm constantly lowering my ideals."

Willy only discovers the truth late in life. His health in decline, he asks to be transferred from his job as a travelling salesman to a less demanding desk job.

The film does this scene brilliantly. A frail man in front of a huge map of the company's interests dotted across America, Willy has no chance. He is fired.

His boss is more interested in a new tape recorder he has bought. So removed is he from Willy's plight, that he advises him to buy one too (despite it costing three weeks' wages) so costing "the maid" can tape Willy's favourite radio shows when he is out!

The system destroys relationships as well as individuals. Willy can only respect people who are financially successful in a system which fails the majority. Biff is a failure in these terms, and his relationship with Willy is ruined because of it. This picture of a father's twisted relationship with his son is so typical and convincing that I saw several men in the foyer afterwards with



Willy Loman (Dustin Hoffman) and family. Twisted relationships

tears in their eyes. *Death of a Salesman* does not suggest how to change the system that it so damningly describes. It does something else as valuable, though it answers workers as "stupid" for dismissing the system's crazy swallowing the destroys them, ideas even as it destroys them. As Arthur Miller said recently of his creation:

"Willy is foolish and even ridiculous sometimes... But I

want you to see that the impulses behind him are not foolish at all. He cannot bear reality, and since he can't do much to change it, he keeps changing his ideas of it. When the Willy Lomans get a chance to change reality itself, their ideas may well change again, in a socialist direction.

In the meantime, *Death of a Salesman* is one of the most moving films of the dilemma ever made."

Trevor Payne

At the margins, a telling result

IF 1984 was the Informal Election, 1987 will be remembered as the Marginal Election.

Labor lost votes, yet won seats. Bob Hawke bluntly admitted the reason was that the ALP had targeted marginal (ie middle-class) seats for special attention, and ignored safe (ie working-class) seats. Hawke was talking about his campaign, but the comment applies equally to his government's priorities.

Like last time, Labor lost votes in the cities, especially Sydney and Melbourne's blue-collar suburbs, where ruinous mortgage rates and falling living standards have hit workers hard. Like last time, its vote improved in rural areas and in parts of Tasmania, consolidating its appeal in the more rightwing regions.

The bonus for Labor this time was its improved vote in Queensland. But it can claim little credit for its gains in either Queensland or Tasmania. Local hostilities towards Joh Bjelke-Petersen and Robin Gray were the real cause.

UNLIKE 1984, this time it was the Democrats who took primary votes from Labor, just as much as the Libs.

The Democrats posed to the left of Labor on conservation, social welfare and taxation. They were even prepared to shed John Siddons and David Vigor to maintain this stance. As a result, they attracted protest votes from those Labor voters who look at politics in terms of 'issues' rather than class.

In class terms, the Democrats remain a thoroughly bourgeois party. Janine Haines carefully played down their anti-union policies. The Democrats support 'shop agreements' in small business, which will inevitably run down workers' conditions there. They helped the Liberals block repeal of Sections 45D and E of the Trade Practices Act, which outlaw a wide range of union bans. And they have long been hostile to poverty rates in industries like tourism, where there is much shift work.

BOTH Labor and the Democrats gained votes in the Senate, due to the collapse of the NDP vote.

Only in WA, where Jo Vallentine was sitting senator, and in Canberra, where the NDP has retained some organisation and polled close to 10% last time, did the anti-nuclear vote tally even 5%. Elsewhere, it was under



1.5%.

The absence of a 'star' like Peter Garrett made publicity hard to get for the NDP this time. Yet well-researched Gallup polls as recently as April and May were giving it a 5% Senate vote in NSW and Victoria.

The problem is that the NDP has never got beyond its electoralist strategy. With the general decline of the peace movement, this means that it has never provided on-going and the meaningful activity to hold the hundreds of young people originally drawn to it.

So while the Gallup poll showed a good NDP vote at the time of the Palm Sunday mass marches, awareness of the nuclear issue fell away afterwards. With neither 'stars', nor activists, nor mass action to revive it, the NDP was swamped in the election campaign.

OTHER protest candidates had mixed fortunes.

Jack Munday, standing for the Greens, polled the biggest left protest vote in years, with over 13% in Sydney. The Greens recorded 9% last time in Sydney, and with Munday's reputation and long-running resentments over the monorial, that vote increased even further.

Other protest candidates polled in the respectable 4-6% range by addressing local audiences and grievances. Environmentalist John McGlynn did well in Eden-Monaro, while black activist Alan Brown successfully linked his campaign

against Aboriginal Affairs minister Clyde Holding in Melbourne Ports to local anger over the 'light rail' scheme and nuclear warship visits.

Gurtin Student Guild president Georgina Motion polled well on the student fees issue in Swan, which covers Perth's Curtin University campus. And youth worker Danielle Dixon got a good vote protesting against youth unemployment in Corio, which covers the industrial centre of Geelong.

THE RESULTS of other protest candidates standing on more general leftwing platforms, or trying to address a broad audience in the Senate, were poor.

No explicitly socialist candidate got more than 2.7% in any seat, and most got much less. That compares badly with past elections.

Despite Ian Cohen's headline-making attempts to disrupt the Hawke and Howard campaign launches, the Greens too did poorly in the Senate.

Bill Hartley's Industrial Labor party campaigned badly in Victoria, getting drawn by the Electoral Office into a politically futile court battle over their how-to-vote card. The Don't Vote Campaign, which started out intending to denounce the parliamentary fraud, was also trapped by the Electoral Office into lengthy debates in court on the niceties of electoral law and had no noticeable impact.

Of course, low votes for



with Alec Kahn

socialist campaigns simply reflect reality. There is much disillusionment with Labor over specific issues, and people are prepared to express this via the Democrats, single-issue candidates or voting informal.

But few, as yet, have turned this into a broader socialist analysis, or drawn revolutionary conclusions. Indeed, the current low level of working class militancy makes socialism seem more remote than ever to most people.

ONE MIGHT conclude from all this that the left needs more 'name' candidates like Jack Munday and Peter Garrett, and more single-issue electoral campaigns.

The NDP experience, however, shows that such electoral shortcuts lead nowhere, not even to moderating Bob Hawke's sell-outs, and certainly not to the holy Grail of 50-50% of the vote.

Nor are 'more united' left electoral campaigns the answer. That was tried in 1984 by the three biggest left groups in South Australia in the Senate, with embarrassingly poor results.

No, at best we can use election campaigns to make propaganda—to attract the small numbers who do want to fight the system, and win them to revolutionary ideas. Given the left's scarce resources, it is even debatable whether standing candidates assists that process at present. The leftwing groups that do so seem to show little lasting benefit from it.

It is quite unrealistic to think, as did sections of Melbourne's Don't Vote Campaign, that the left in its current state can actually influence the outcome of elections.

On election day, people basically choose which of two capitalist parties they want to run the system for the next three years. In that frame of reference, socialists scarcely get a look in.

In their day-to-day lives, however, people are far less inclined to accept the message choices which are dealt out to them. Which is why socialists place far more emphasis on workplace and community struggle than on the ballot box. It is there that socialists can build. Election campaigns are the major parties home ground. The class struggle and direct action are ours.

SOCIALIST ACTION



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REAGAN'S DEADLY GAME

Playing cowboy in the Gulf



- The coal crisis
- AIDS: Anti-gay agitation flops

GAY RIGHTS

Lesbians
Browned off

OH LORD. Protect us from left-wing MPs with delusions in their own power of manoeuvre.

We have in mind last month's follies by Tasmanian wilderness campaigner Bob Brown. An openly gay MP, Brown initiated a move which has criminalised lesbianism in his state.

The Tasmanian government introduced changes to the Sexual Offences Act to make it "gender neutral", removing distinctions between male and female victims and offenders. But it wanted to exempt Section 123, which makes it "illegal for males to engage in indecent sexual acts in public or in private".

Brown wanted Section 123 repealed altogether. Fair enough.

Both Liberals and Labor opposed this. So Brown got over by half. He moved to make the section "gender neutral", aiming to render it "so wide as to be inoperative". The government promptly passed Brown's amendment. Tasmania is now the first state in the British legal system to criminalise lesbianism.

The Melbourne gay newsletter *Gazette* comments with admirable understatement:

"On the face of it, Bob Brown has made an error of judgement. All our experience suggests that anti-gay laws are far from unenforceable. They can be enforced at the whim of a homophobic police officer and as such are a potent weapon for victimisation.

Strategically too, it is hard to see any justification for creating additional criminal penalties for consensual sexual behaviour, even if you have in mind the longer term goal of repeal of those penalties."

ROBE RIVER

All work, no
play at Peko

ROBE RIVER, the scene of bitter industrial conflict in the West last year, has been transformed, according to the *Perth Daily News*.

A recent article enthused: "We were treated to a happy and dedicated group of workers who looked too busy smiling and enjoying their work to even contemplate industrial action."

Peko Walland was happy to fund this media tour. Not so lucky was a theatre group



Bob Brown: banning lesbianism is a way of gaining gay rights???

performing a play about mine workers. They have been banned from the company towns.

"We are not in the game of censorship," says the general manager. But no play — it would be too provocative.

And provocation is something that Peko knows all about.

LOCAL GOVT

ALP councils
of despair

COUNCIL politics have always been a bugbear for the Victorian ALP.

Their control of traditional Labor areas has been declining, with old ALP machines being challenged by Independents (usually closest Liberals) and community activists and groups (usually to the left of the ALP).

The latest round of council elections on August 1 was no exception.

In Collingwood, ALP councillors nearly had their wings clipped by a team protesting about the council's disgusting role in industrial disputes involving child care workers and garbos.

In Port Melbourne, light rail opponents got 40% of the vote in an attempt to scuttle the ALP.

In Brunswick, Socialist Left candidates won ALP preselection in all four wards. Even the mayor got the shove.

The Labor right were rotable. They had originally even opposed running open ALP candidates because the ALP was so unpopular there. They enlisted ALP heavies — including state president Gerry Hand — in an attempt to undermine the campaign, arguing that the ALP, especially the Socialist Left, could not possibly win, and standing under the ALP banner would give the anti-ALP forces a council majority.

The right also boycotted the election campaign, not getting involved in letterboxing and staying away from fundraisers and other activities.

But three out of the four Socialist Left candidates did win. Theoretically, the left now has a caucus majority.

The victory may be a hollow one. The ALP right does not accept the legitimacy of left victories, and it is not the least hesitant about splitting the ALP. They are all for unity, but only on their terms.

Caucus control did not mean much in Sydney Council a couple of years ago. The ALP right, after losing in caucus, went ahead and voted with the Liberals against selected left candidates for committee positions.

Socialist Action members are often asked why we don't join the ALP to bolster up the left's numbers. One answer to that question is simple. Winning votes for the left in the ALP does not necessarily mean that the right will accept the majority decision. And therefore winning does not mean a thing.

STUDENTS

Fee showdown
at UQ

PAY UP or get out! Fee boycotters at University of Queensland were given that message last month.

As we go to print, 1300 students have not paid Labor's \$250 fee. August 11 is the deadline by which they must pay or have their enrolments cancelled.

In response, students are calling an occupation of the Admin building for August 10. They want a guarantee that boycotters and those who simply cannot afford to pay will not be victimized.

In April, the university senate,

with several hundred students noisily protesting outside, agreed not to cancel boycotters' enrolments during first semester.

The showdown on August 10 may well be decisive. If the turnout is poor and concessions are not won, the campaign could die until next year. If the occupation is successful, collecting the fee next year will be very difficult.

LABOUR LAWS

Contract out
on Qld unions

A GIRL of 15 in a Queensland country town was illegally contracted by a motel owner last November to work seven days a week.

Under the contract, the girl gets just \$240, and no overtime, sick pay, annual leave or long-service leave.

The Queensland Trades and Labour Council exposed the scandalous contract this month. It is just the sort of exploitation that will be made legal by Joh Bjelke Petersen's proposed contract labour legislation.

Yet incredibly, the TLC has decided not to wage an industrial campaign against the legislation, which fines unions \$250,000 and individuals \$50,000 if they attempt to induce workers not to enter into a "voluntary employment agreement". TLC campaign coordinator Denis Jones claims that Bjelke has built a cage around unions with his anti-strike laws.

Instead, the TLC has produced a kit for lobbying Liberal and National Party MLAs.

The kit will not have MLAs quaking in their boots. Provided the meeting is civil, union delegations are told to "show some form of appreciation". Then they are to give the MLAs free publicity in a press release which attempts to quote anything positive they may say.

This farce of a campaign is not surprising. As secretary of the Queensland nurses' union, Denis Jones refused to support solidarity strike action during Victoria's nurses' strike last year. Until 1983, he was a member of the Liberal Party.

At a TLC women's meeting on contracts on August 1, one woman summed up the feeling of many workers. She presented a packet of "Gumption" to the TLC executive, and explained that a little on a wet rag goes a long way.

Reagan's deadly Gulf game

THINGS are getting pretty crowded in the Persian Gulf.

The USA has a huge battle fleet careered around the area. The Soviet Union has a more modest presence. Britain and France, not to mention the Gulf countries themselves, are all making their contribution to the general congestion with battleships and mine sweepers. Strangely, everyone seems to be taking a sudden interest in the war between Iran and Iraq. It had only been grinding murderously along for seven years when the Big Five on the UN Security Council "demanded" that it be stopped.

Even more strangely, Russia and America and their junior partners have found something they can all agree on: Iran must be crushed.

The events in the Gulf over the past few weeks have been a series of provocations against Iran. If Iran retaliates then the US can do to Iran what it has already done to Libya (or even Grenada) — and most of the world's ruling classes will look on with approval.

The warped logic of imperialism is in full flight here. Remember how the latest crisis started. A few months ago, a US ship was fired on in the Gulf and sank, with considerable loss of life. It wasn't Iran that sank the ship. It was Iraq, as part of its attempt to knock out Iran's oil. Remember. In fact, Iran has offered to withdraw its threats to Gulf shipping if Iraq calls off the campaign against the oil terminals. That offer has been lost in the general hysteria.

Iraq is an ally of the Americans. The fact that they had sunk an American ship was briskly brushed under the carpet as Reagan came sabre-rattling out of the White House threatening to "get tough" in the Gulf — tough with Iran and anyone who supports them, that is.

The US response — giving Kuwaiti oil vessels American flags and promising them the full

Business as usual

TWO TRADERS died of heart attacks almost simultaneously at the Chicago Stock Exchange recently.

Dealing, however, did not stop. Indeed, doctors could not get at them on the crowded floor. When the dead traders were finally carried by other traders.

Next day, a two minute silence was announced in their memory. But no-one turned the machines off. A minute or 70 seconds passed with figures flashing. Finally, after an agonizing minute and a half, the floor erupted again in frenzied trading.



"Here, use ours": Kuwaiti officials get a US flag

force of US protection — had nothing to do with keeping the Gulf open for vital shipping. After all, it's Iran that uses the Gulf to export its oil. It had everything to do with reasserting the US presence in the region, demonstrating that Reagan's administration isn't "soft" on terrorists — and as a by-product, it was nicely timed to coincide with the Iran/Contra scandal hearings.

SADLY for Reagan, the whole
thing turned into a messy
farce.

The very first ragged Kuwaiti ship struck an Iranian mine which blasted a hole the size of a truck in its hull. Then a US helicopter crashed. To make matters worse, America's allies — Britain, West Germany, Holland and Italy — refused to help, which is not surprising when you consider that Iran's major trading partners are West Germany, Japan, Britain and Italy.

Now it seems that Kuwait is also accepting "relagging" help from the Russians, who are taking out Kuwaiti tankers more efficiently, and certainly more quietly, than the USA.

Don't smile too much at the American dilemma, however. If they are frustrated in their Gulf manoeuvres, they may try something more dangerous.

They are continuing to expand their military presence in the area, sending a squadron of F16 bombers to Jordan and steaming the USS Missouri up and down the Iranian coast. They are daring the Iranians to have a go. A Democrat aide remarked after a White House briefing:

"The one thing we feared the most — a confrontation with Iran — was what seemed most attractive to the administration."

WHY ALL the commotion
about Iran?

Iran under the Shah was a stable dictatorship, a loyal ally of the West, and an effective policeman of the area. The Shah's overthrow deprived the US and other Western powers of military support in the Gulf. It deprived the Russians of cheap Iranian gas and the prestige steelworks they were building.

The Americans feared that the radical Islamic doctrine which eventually came to power in Teheran might destabilise their allies in the region. Russia feared the same thing, not only in Afghanistan but also among the Moslem population within its own borders.

So the outbreak of the war with Iraq in 1980 was godsend for the imperialist powers. The Iraqi rulers feared the spread of Iran-type Islam and hoped to take advantage of the confusion of the revolution to finish off Iran and enhance their own power.

It didn't work out that way. The Iraqi invasion gave Khomeini just the excuse he needed to consolidate the rule of the reactionary Islamic clergy.

Until the war, they were still struggling to defeat the remnants of workers' power, the factory committees formed during the

revolution. The invasion let them finish off their opponents. Anyone who opposed them was a traitor, betraying the revolution to the invaders. The left and the workers' movement were crushed in a torrent of fanatical nationalism.

The superpowers' hope that Iraq would tidy up the Iranian situation for them turned into a seven year bloodbath recalling the horrors of World War One trench warfare.

East and West arm both sides, just enough to ensure that no-one emerges as a powerful victor who can deny them what they want in the region. If he ever ends, the broken economies of Iran and Iraq will make them even more dependent on the major powers.

IRAN'S response as we go to
press has been relatively
restrained.

Despite American actions, Iran has confined itself to a few military exercises. Even when hundreds of its citizens were killed in Mecca — for reasons we will probably never know — its retaliation has so far been verbal.

This may not be all. If the US keeps up the pressure, Iran may retaliate in kind, or by proxy terrorist actions. This, almost inevitably, would provoke a further US response.

None of the imperialist powers have any right to impose their will in the Gulf. It is up to them to solve their problems with the murderous cliques which rule them, in Teheran, in Baghdad and the rest.

All the Gulf powers should get out of it now.

— David Lockwood

Defend Moses Mayekiso

CANBERRA branch of Socialist Action has initiated a "Friends of Moses Mayekiso" committee in the ACT.

Moses Mayekiso is a black trade union leader in South Africa who faces trial this month for treason. He headed the Alexandra Action Committee, which led 60,000 blacks in seizing Alexandra township from white troops for several days in February 1986. Mayekiso is also a prominent revolutionary socialist. If found guilty, he may well hang.

Mayekiso's union, NUMSA, has asked for international solidarity to gain his release, and British socialists have strongly taken up his cause. To join the Canberra committee, contact John Passant on 31 3729 (ah).

Ruxton picket

MELBOURNE branch of Socialist Action initiated a noisy picket against RSL racist Bruce Ruxton on August 10.

The picket was well-supported by other leftwingers, and drew 100 people.

Ruxton was speaking on his favourite topic of immigration to an Australian Civil Liberties Union dinner. The ACLU is a front for John Bennett, the bizarre "civil libertarian" who claims that the Nazi Holocaust did not happen and that Asian immigration infringes the civil liberties of whites.

Ballarat talk

SOCIALIST ACTION's second discussion meeting in Ballarat got a good turn-out of 20 people. Held in conjunction with Ballarat CAE's Politics Group, it looked at the hypocrisy of capitalism's arguments against socialism.

Two hours of vigorous discussion followed a talk by Socialist Action's Alec Kahn. Four people bought subscriptions to our magazine afterwards.

Our next discussion meeting in late August will look at "What is Revolution?", a question arising from last month's talk.

Our logo

READERS sometimes ask us the origin of our logo.

The scratching cat was a symbol used by the Industrial Workers of the World, Australia's first major revolutionary socialist group at the time of World War One. The "sab-cat" represented on-the-job sabotage—collective action like go-slows and more surreptitious acts to slow the work down, in line with the WW slogan "A bad day's work for a bad day's pay."

Socialist Action uses the "sab-cat" as a proud reminder of our fighting revolutionary heritage.

BLACK RIGHTS

Behind the ugly face of Goondiwindi's racism

ABORIGINAL children from the Toomelah mission, just south of the Queensland-NSW border, recently boycotted Goondiwindi High School because of the racism there.

This follows a violent confrontation between mission blacks and Goondiwindi whites in January, which left ten people injured and \$20,000 damage.

"The teachers didn't try to teach us. We were called boongs or niggers. I left after six months — that was the end of formal education for me," says Madeline McGrady, an ex-pupil of Goondiwindi High.

The riot, the school boycott, and now the Human Rights Commission hearings have marked Goondiwindi as the ugly face of Australian racism. But to leave it at that is to miss the real problem.

A casual primary teacher at nearby Bogabilla confirms that Goondiwindi is a racist town and that Aborigines attending Goondiwindi High were insulted and discriminated against.

But racist attitudes are fostered by a system that is far bigger than just one town where prejudice is particularly bad.

The reserve and mission system and unemployment keep blacks at the bottom of the rural pecking order. Reserves were set up specifically to control and isolate blacks, when their labour was no longer needed by rural employers. Over 80% of some Aboriginal communities are now out of work.

Funding for reserves is minimal. "Can you imagine the reaction of people in Sydney or Melbourne if water shortages prevented their toilets being flushed for two weeks?" asks Justice Marcus Einfield of the Human Rights Commission, in a comment that sums up the state of Toomelah Reserve.

Reserve blacks encounter white society from a position of poverty and isolation, making them an easy target first for alienated white workers, and then for white governments

Toll justice?

THE UNSWORTH government has exempted one needy group from its new \$1 toll for the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Pensioners and unemployed still have to pay the full amount, but over 100 of the state's judges have been given special passes to flash at toll attendants.



Coat.

seeking to explain away racism. Ian Cameron, National Party member for the Goondiwindi area, claims that government "handouts" to blacks are a major cause of racial disharmony.

Despite the glaring evidence to the contrary, the idea of Toomelah blacks leading privileged lives is strong in Goondiwindi. One hundred whites applauded when resident Michelle Stigwood told the Human Rights Commission, "I can't see white society ever truly accepting Aboriginal people as long as they are separate and heavily government subsidized."

For black kids, their very lack of privileges discriminates against them when they enter the white education system. One Goondiwindi teacher told me,

"The central problem is that they come to us with educational problems that we can't cope with. And for them, the school is their first major contact with a society they have little respect for."

The children respond by playing truant, or dropping out altogether. In 1981, 73.6% of Toomelah pupils left school at age 15, compared to 49.1% of the general population.

Even non-racist teachers,

overworked and operating with little knowledge of blacks' educational needs, find the situation overwhelming. "There is racism," says this teacher. "But in many cases, racism is confused with sheer frustration."

The blame lies with state authorities, who isolate black kids on reserves and missions and neglect their education.

The Queensland government provides no resources or trained staff to integrate Aborigines into the school system.

But Education Minister Lin Powell wipes his hands of responsibility for the polarization between blacks and teachers. "As far as we are concerned, it's not really our business. We have made places available at the school and it's up to them as to whether they want to use them."

While boycotting is an effective protest weapon, demanding separate schools will not provide the solution. It will only reinforce the division between black and white, and black schools will suffer the same funding restrictions that reserves do.

The demand for resources for Aboriginal education must be taken up by teacher unions, and directed against education departments and governments.

As the Bicentenary approaches, that is the lesson of Goondiwindi High for the working class movement.

— Jeff Rickert

INDUSTRIAL ANALYSIS

COAL MINERS and their union are under siege.

After Bob Hawke's coal summit in July, they called off their national strike action in return for a one month moratorium on sackings. While Labor paid out \$600,000 to prevent sackings at two mines, another four companies started retrenchments anyhow.

The coal crisis has been brewing for some time now. Senator Gareth Evans said in February that "the coal mining industry is teetering right on the brink". By June, union leader John Maitland was warning that the industry was on the "verge of destruction".

The industry blames two major changes in the world market for its peril. Japan's steel industry has slumped, reducing demand for coal. And new coalmines in South America and Indonesia, and increased output from China, have produced a world oversupply.

So Japan can demand, and get, up to 25% lower prices for coal, and this becomes the market standard. It all sounds like a typical capitalist "crisis of overproduction".

BUT the picture is neither so simple nor as gloomy as the employers make out.

The Financial Review quoted the mine owners' association, the ACA, soon after Evans' "on the brink" statement. The ACA said that overall steel consumption worldwide was stable, despite production falls in Europe and Japan.

"What then of coal's prospects? Not rosy, but not a cause for great gloom either, if Australia is careful ... In fact (steel) consumption is growing very slightly so if Australia can get into these other markets ..."

Australian coking coal miners will maintain their tonnage and be able to keep operating."

The ACA added that tonnage mattered more than price, and "companies can still manage to operate even at lower prices if they can keep their tonnage up".

In fact, they achieved this. Production in the March quarter was up 20% on the March quarter last year.

The latest price slump has heralded an industry shake-out. But again, the situation is neither simple nor uniformly

Reagan still a hit?

IN RONALD Reagan's early years in office, 100 tourists a day paid \$5 each to be photographed next to a cardboard cutout of the President outside the White House.

Now, after Photogate, the fee has dropped to a dollar a time. But there are few takers.

Those still buying usually want to be photographed punching Reagan in the stomach!



Miners' wives hand back dismissal notices during a 1982 sit-in

The coal's ours, the sack's yours — mine-owners

gloomy.

A *Business Review Weekly* headline recently declared: "Bargain hunters eye coal mine shake out". It argued that some companies wanted to get out, but "other resources companies can see a good opportunity to get into the industry at bargain prices". They wouldn't do that if it was unviable.

One company director explained that "a change in ownership might present an opportunity for reassessing work practices or cutting costs". That is what the sackings and attacks on the union are all about.

Talk of a life-or-death crisis has created a climate where the employers and Labor hope to force through changes to the industry at workers' expense. The latest estimate is for 21 mines to close, and 3000 jobs to go.

SO FOR miners, it is a life-or-death crisis. Naturally they look to their union.

The Miners' Federation has traditionally been a combative union, winning gains outside the

family per year. In NSW, Labor has frozen royalty payments by the coal industry since 1981, and it cut a further \$48.3 million from royalty and freight charges in July.

Now the Miners' Federation wants workers to subsidise more handouts to the exploiters who messed up the industry in the first place, despite coal miners here having some of the world's highest productivity levels.

THE PROPOSED marketing authority might help the industry. It might bring some planning into it, and force the companies to put up a common front when negotiating contracts abroad, which could mean higher prices.

It would only do this at the expense of foreign steel producers, which might cause problems for steel workers overseas. One can understand, though, why miners feel they must start by defending their own jobs however they can.

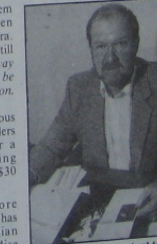
But whatever benefit comes from a national marketing authority and subsidies would be gained many times over by nationalising the whole industry. Why should people who sack workers for the sake of profit keep running it, while we subsidise them?

Nationalisation, of course, is no cure-all. The British miners, working in a nationalised industry, know that. In the end, it always comes back to workers' ability to fight. And fighting has yielded results.

In 1983 and again 1987, Coal and Alised threatened sackings in the Hunter Valley. In 1983, the miners occupied the mine for 50 days before forcing the company to back down. In 1987, they've been out since early July, and with mass support they can win again.

Miners will need that kind of action, and not talks with Bob Hawke, if they are to weather the present crisis.

— Liz Ross



John Maitland: reluctant to be photographed

The demand for more subsidies for the coal owners has real problems. Australian taxpayers already subsidise business to the tune of \$1400 per

Has Russia become more democratic?

"THE MORE things change, the more they remain the same." The old cynics' credo aptly describes the upshot of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms involving elections and factory management.

Russia's main ruling body — the Central Committee of the Communist Party — has accepted the Law on State Enterprises, which is supposed to shake off the dead hand of the bureaucracy and turn control of the factories over to their managers.

Within a couple of years, factories must stop living on handouts from the central planners, and instead generate their own funds from sales and profits. They will get greater control over what they produce, and how they produce it. Unprofitable factories will be closed.

The other big change has been an experiment that gave voters a choice of candidates in local government elections. In a few carefully selected areas, mostly well away from the big cities, the number of candidates was actually greater than the number of seats available.

This was on top of the normal right to vote against the single candidate presented. Sections of the Western media seemed particularly impressed that a few such candidates were defeated

in this way. This is not unusual, however. Since the 1960s, anything up to a couple of hundred candidates have been "not selected" at each round of local elections.

(Such a figure is not as high as it seems. Ten thousand positions may be up for election at a time. Under Russia's version of the "secret ballot", though, it takes real courage or hostility to vote against the official candidate. To vote for, you just drop your ballot in the box; to vote against, you must go to a booth to "secretly" mark your paper.)

Outside Russia, Gorbachev's changes have been hailed.

Rightwingers have crowed that market forces and liberal democracy have shown their superiority. They ignore the mirror images of Russian poverty, inefficiency, apathy and alienation that are rife in the West.

Sections of the left have joined the applause for Gorbachev. Yet the "democratisation" is entirely superficial, and the economic reforms are positively anti-working class in their effects.

Russian elections (assuming the experiment has proved satisfactory to the Kremlin and will be extended) will not be free in any sense. Voters will have a choice of candidates, but these will be carefully vetted beforehand by "responsible citizens". Many candidates will not be party members (this is already the case), but they will be individuals only, strictly forbidden to organise around any alternative political program, or to challenge one-party rule in word or deed.

This is light years from the sort of democracy that a real workers' state involves. That *did* exist after the Russian Revolution, in the soviets — the workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils that the working classes created, in which they could freely elect all managers, judges, officers, and local and national representatives. These soviets have long since been turned into empty shells by the Russian bureaucracy.

In a real workers' state, there would be no restriction on the right of individuals to stand or to

Gorbachev at car plant: new freedoms for managers, not for workers

organise pressure groups or parties inside such a soviet system. They would have full access to media resources to put their case. And representatives would be recallable by a simple majority vote of their electors.

The electoral reforms in Russia have nothing in common with any of this, and show no sign of moving towards it.

If the "democratisation" is a meaningless charade, the economic reforms are a positive threat to Russia's workers.

Gorbachev has junked the idea that a few thousand faceless bureaucrats know best how to develop the economy (a horrible parody of the socialist idea of a planned economy with democratically decided priorities). But he has replaced it with the idea that profitability is the best measure of success and failure.

That can only mean what it means in the West — speed-ups, lay-offs and wage cuts. Where is the great goal that Marx proclaimed, of production planned to meet human needs and desires?

Gorbachev's reforms are not aimed to build a fairer society, much less a socialist one. They merely aim to make Russian state capitalism more internally competitive, so that it is better placed to compete with the West.

— Graham Willett

PHILIPPINES

Aquino backs vigilantes

PRESIDENT Cory Aquino's smile is revealing a savage set of teeth.

In April, Aquino endorsed the Nakasaka vigilante group, formed by Local Government Minister Jaime Ferrer and Colonel Jesus Magno, as a model to organise similar vigilante groups nationwide, supposedly to fight New

People's Army rebels.

This was after the murderous abuses of the Alsa Masa, another rightwing vigilante group, hit the front pages of the Philippine newspapers after the collapse of peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front in February.

There are now no less than 37 different vigilante groups, mostly armed, being organised and supported by civil and military officials in different parts of the Philippines.

The Alsa Masa now claims to control the majority of the depressed districts in Davao City, capital of Davao province in the south. It conducts surveillance operations, participates in raids, and forces people to sign surrender papers and to join.

A recent visit to Davao City by Sr Mariari, member of the now-defunct Philippine Commission on Human Rights, has confirmed human rights abuses and the unwarranted killings of civilians alleged to be New People's Army rebels or sympathisers.

The proliferation of vigilante groups, especially in Mindanao, is creating a reign of terror. According to Sr Mariari, 32,000 refugees are in temporary evacuation centres in Davao province. Many are living on meagre food rations and bananas, and congestion and poor sanitation have resulted in a measles epidemic amongst children in some centres. These civilian victims of "counter-insurgency measures" get little or no assistance from the government.

The government's policy of forming vigilante groups of the Alsa Masa type is very similar to Alsa Masa type in Central America, which has fostered groups such as Orden in El Salvador. The seeds of rightwing death squads have been planted in the Philippines.

— Noone Doronilo

Haiti: The misery turns to rage

NEWS ITEM: At least 20 people, including a nine month old baby, died when security forces fired into a crowd of protesters in Haiti yesterday. Another 100 people were wounded during the protest, which came during a general strike called by 57 political and social groups. Anger ran high after the shootings and several soldiers were killed in retaliation.

NEWS ITEM: Opposition groups have lifted the eight-day-old general strike which has paralysed Haiti. This follows a decision by the nation's military-backed Governing Council to revoke decrees banning labour unions, and taking control of elections from an independent Electoral Council.

THE MISERY has turned to rage in Haiti.

Once the world's most brutally ruled nation — and still the most undernourished — Haiti has seethed with revolt for 18 months now. The above news reports, from last month, would scarcely have been thinkable even five years ago. For 29 years, Haitians wept tears of blood under the merciless family dictatorship of "Papa Doc" Duvalier and son Jean-Claude.

Even the cold statistics make staggering reading. Infant mortality is 13%, and one-third of all children die before the age of five. Eighty percent of children under six have malaria, and ninety percent of all children suffer from malnutrition. In 1974, out of 129 developing countries, Haiti came 129th in protein intake.

In the countryside, voodoo and illiteracy are rife, and there is just one doctor to 20,000 people. In the cities, unemployment is over 50%.

Soil erosion due to deforestation is a national disaster. Up to 40% of Haiti's topsoil is washed away each year, causing the siltting up of the Peligre hydro-electric plant, which in turn has caused blackouts. Haiti has also suffered severe droughts in the last fifteen years.

Yet in the midst of this misery, a tiny upper class — 30,000 people in a population of six million — has thrived. Jean-Claude Duvalier's wedding alone cost \$2 million in 1980.

HAITI'S revolutionary ferment is all the more remarkable, given the care the Duvaliers took to crush dissent.

"Papa Doc" spent his first years in power neutralising all possible sources of opposition: the army, the trade unions, the business elite, and even the Catholic Church. By 1966, for example, having effectively destroyed the Church hierarchy, Duvalier had extracted an agreement from the Vatican giving him the major say in appointing bishops.



Haitians demonstrate: 18 months of revolt

Duvalier's main weapon in his reign of terror was his dreaded Tonton Macoutes. Only the officers of this secret police force were paid salaries. The ranks were expected to live by extortion and by seizing the land of troublesome peasants. This not only saved the Treasury a wages bill — it ensured the Tonton Macoutes were corrupt and utterly ruthless.

Apart from a brief flirtation with Russia in the early sixties, Duvalier was devoutly anti-communist. He declared himself for the "defence of Christian civilisation against atheistic materialism and the ideological intolerance of a levelling and inhuman communism".

Duvalier put forward a self-glorifying ideology that was almost mystical. His 1964 Constitution made him President for life and gave him such titles as Sublime and Maquisard, Uncontested Leader of the Revolution, Apostle of National Unity, and Renovator of the Fatherland.

He even had a Duvalierist version of the Lord's Prayer:

"Our Doc who art in the National Palace for life, hallowed be thy name by present and future generations. Thy will be done at Port-au-Prince and in the provinces. Give us this day our new Haiti and never forgive the trespasses of the anti-patriots who spit every day on our country."

In 1971, three months before he died, Duvalier announced that he wanted his son Jean-Claude to succeed him. As the Constitution stipulated 40 as the minimum

age for the presidency and Jean-Claude, or "Baby Doc", was only 19 at the time, a referendum was held. The vote was one of the most rigged in history — 2,391,916 for changing the Constitution, and 1 against.

WITH Jean-Claude's inauguration, a split opened up in Haiti's ruling class between the old guard Duvalierists and the modernisers.

The balance in this struggle shifted in 1980, when Baby Doc married mulatto heiress, Michele Bennett. The marriage shifted Jean-Claude's power base from the black middle class to the mulatto to business elite. This was much more acceptable to the US, which provides aid to the Haitian government.

The seventies also saw Haiti's working class grow. Taking advantage of the abundant cheap labour, about 240 companies (mainly US-owned) set up assembly plants in Port-au-Prince, the capital.

These plants employ 60,000 people, mainly women, and have swelled the working class to 200,000 — still small, but beginning to have real social weight.

In 1985, the legal minimum wage for these workers was \$3 a day, although many got less. Meanwhile, their employers got less. In 1971, for example, they had 15 days of ten to fifteen years, and no restriction on profit repatriation.

Unrest against the regime grew in the eighties, encouraged by sections of the Catholic church. Although the bishops were

Elect Managers?

What are you... some kind of Socialist nut?



OH, WE HAVE SOME GREAT PSYCHIATRISTS IN SIBERIA, GUJARAT.

INTERNATIONAL

Duvalier's puppets, the lower clergy and lay activists were heavily influenced by liberation theology, and organised groups to fight for the poor.

Even some employers were tiring of Duvalier. They were frustrated by a government that refused to provide the basics for a healthy industrial sector — schools, roads, adequate food and water and reliable power.

BABY DOC proved incapable of stemming the growing tide of dissent.

Under pressure from Jimmy Carter, he began a period of mild liberalisation in 1977. But in 1980, just three weeks after the election of Ronald Reagan, the government cracked down on its critics. It arrested over 100 of them, including most leading journalists and independent politicians. Many were deported.

It was not to avail. Dissent continued to grow, and in May 1984, protests broke out in Gonaïves against army brutality. These protests spread to other cities and the countryside, angry crowds ransacking food warehouses and government buildings. In February 1985, tens of thousands of young people took part in marches organised by the Church as part of International Youth Year. In some cities, the marchers called for Duvalier's overthrow.

The murder by soldiers of three students at a rally that November unleashed the wave of protests and anger that finally forced Duvalier to flee the country. On February 7, 1986, the US air force flew Baby Doc to exile in France, a week after the White House had broken his grip on power by announcing that he had already come.

Before leaving, Duvalier appointed a six member, army-dominated National Council of Government. All but one were known Duvalierists.

Strikes and demonstrations in virtually

every town in Haiti have continued unabated since. They have had some successes. Several Duvalierist cabinet ministers have been sacked and others have been forced to resign. All prisoners, including children, were released from Haiti's largest jail.

Following a phone call from an airport worker to a radio station, two hated Duvalierists were prevented from fleeing the country by thousands of people. The army had to intervene to save them from the crowd. Many Duvalierist officials simply stopped turning up for work after reading their names in blacklists sold on the streets of Port-au-Prince.

IN LATE March 1986, the army announced a new 3-member governing council, headed by army chief Lt. General Henri Namphy. But even this council is unstable.

Protests and strikes continue to rock the



The Duvaliers: Papa and Baby Doc

country. Last month's general strike was planned to last 24 hours, and went over a week. Even after it was lifted, 10,000 unemployed marched through the capital in defiance of a government decree requiring two days' notice of protests. Soldiers fired in the air to disperse them.

The people of Haiti are up against considerable odds. The Reagan administration has sent Namphy, large amounts of military aid and is considering sending military trainers to teach the army "internal security techniques."

Literally hundreds of new organisations have sprung up since Duvalier fled, but none have national coverage. Under Duvalier, unions were illegal and being a communist was punishable by death (this law is still on the books).

There are now many unions, and three union federations. What they lack in tradition (their May Day rally last year attracted just 2000 people) they make up for

The cruel legacy of imperialism

IN 1787 Haiti, then called St Domingue, was regarded as France's jewel of the Caribbean. Lush, fertile and well-irrigated, it was the wealthiest colony on Earth.

Today, 200 years later, Haiti is one of the world's poorest nations. It has 80% illiteracy, the lowest protein consumption anywhere, and one third of all children die before age five.

There is a reason for Haiti's cruel suffering — the stranglehold of imperialism. Ironically, the negroes of Haiti were the first blacks of any nation to overthrow slavery and their white colonial masters. But they were never able to escape the economic and military yoke of the world imperialist system.

The French inherited Haiti from the Spanish, who had killed the native Indians. France brought in African slaves to work the sugar plantations. In 1791, the slaves rose up in revolution against the whites, whom they outnumbered 10:1.

Over the next decade or so, the blacks defeated the Spanish, the British and finally the armies of Napoleon. This was Napoleon's first defeat anywhere.

But the newly-liberated nation's leaders — Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Henry Christophe — faced a dilemma. They knew that a country run by ex-slaves, who had killed their white

in amazing solidarity. Mass strikes broke out continually, as workers and unemployed poured into the streets on hearing that one group of unionists have gone on strike over a grievance.

The future of Haiti's revolution is still in the balance. Some democratic reforms will undoubtedly be won, but these will not help the vast majority of Haitians living in abject poverty.

The working class is small, and the peasants must play an important role if real change is to be made. Given Haiti's strategic importance to the US, however, it is debatable whether real change will be allowed.

So Haiti's future is inextricably intertwined with the future of the Central American revolution. And that revolution can only ultimately succeed, as Che Guevara observed, if it reaches into "the belly of the monster" — the US itself.

— Chris Clifford



The hated Tonton Macoutes

Late last century, the great powers saw the chance of preying on Haiti's weakness. French, British, German and American warships would threaten the ports the moment Haitian courts resisted the claims of businessmen from those countries. The US alone sent warships into Haitian harbours 20 times between 1860 and 1915.

In 1914 a detachment of US Marines seized the government's gold deposits from the Banque Nationale at gunpoint. Then in 1915, the US occupied Haiti. They remained for almost 20 years. The US disbanded the army, replacing it with a national gendarmerie under US officers. It established a customs receivership, effectively taking control of the national finances, and rewrote the constitution to permit foreign ownership of property.

There was opposition to the US occupation, mainly from the peasants. The US called in reinforcements and thousands of Haitians were killed.

AMERICA left Haiti in 1934, but it ensured that Haiti would remain firmly within the US orbit. The US administration had favoured the mulattoes because of their lighter skin, and it left the mulatto elite in control of the government.

Denied a say in government, the black urban middle class developed a theory of *noirisme*, a black cultural doctrine which emphasised Haiti's African links and reaffirmed voodoo as a key feature of Haitian life.

After 12 years of mulatto rule, a student strike and mass demonstrations against corruption forced first elections. But corruption alone could not solve Haiti's problems, and a succession of increasingly unstable and corrupt regimes took power over the next decade until the country collapsed into a one-day civil war in 1957.

By the time elections were held in September 1957, there were only two candidates: Dejoie, a mulatto, and Francois Duvalier, a black doctor and *noiriste* politician.

Duvalier, supported by the army, won the elections easily. He mobilised not only the middle class as well.

Over two centuries of imperialism, however, had left their legacy — a black/mulatto division, corruption and chaos, a small urban elite who controlled the country's trade and finances, a brutal military and an impoverished countryside.

The stage was set for one of the most hated dictatorships in history.

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 the 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, and the struggle against 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

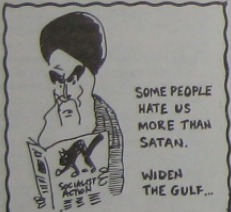
We are internationalists. The working class exists in all countries, and the struggle for socialism knows no national barriers. A socialist revolution cannot spread within a single country. It must be spread to other countries or it will fail. For these reasons we are for building a world-wide movement,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

Liberation from Oppression

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

Socialist Action

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



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Wednesdays 7.00
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Bridge & George St, City

Brisbane
Thursdays 7.30 pm
Phone 371 7114
for location

Canberra
Mondays 6.00
Board Room,
ANU Union

INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

TOWARDS the end of July, the powers-that-be had a little outbreak of hysteria about the building industry.

In the Arbitration Commission, Justice Ludeke accused employers and unions of cooking up "sweetheart deals" and expecting him to rubber stamp them. He then announced he'd be taking a hard look at site allowances.

Almost immediately, industrial relations minister Ralph Willis and the ACTU began to talk about a special wage-fixing system for the industry, and the ABC's 7.30 Report ran aphony "expose" of rip-offs on the Parliament House site.

What is all this about? It is indeed, but very compelling evidence that state and federal Labor governments and their employer allies have run into big trouble on an important industrial front.

The ALP and the most far-sighted employers have big plans for Australian capitalism. Part of them is disciplining the workforce, so workers will accept declining living standards and work harder, and settle any grievances we have "through channels" instead of taking industrial action.

One way of doing this is to get us into 20 or so "super-unions" dominated by professional bureaucrats who've never done a day's real work in their life. A host of Simon Creans are meant to manage our affairs.

In the building industry, the deregulation of the BLF was supposed to do the job, along



Building boom set to bust Labor's plans

with the Code of Conduct which prohibited employers from making agreements with the unions outside the official wage fixing system. The BWIU and FEDFA were to carve up the BLF's membership, then amalgamate into the beginnings of a "super union".

It has not worked out like that. Deregistration of the BLF,

and the brutal police assaults and victimisations which were along with it, certainly put building industry militants on the defensive in 1986. Wages growth was held way down, as was the level of industrial action. But this year, things have been different. There has been a wages catch-up, which the industry's own experts see as lifting workers' pay by about ten per cent this year. And that's based only on the gains that are publicly known. In Melbourne, at least, the real figures would be higher.

In Melbourne, the BLF is also clearly on the road to recovery, its membership gradually rising and its organisers continuing to operate on sites all over town.

NO WONDER that Justice Ludeke and Ralph Willis and the 7.30 Report are getting nervous. Building workers now pose a major threat to their whole new industrial system. This is possible because the building industry is going through a dramatic expansion.

While the rest of the economy is pretty flat, the market for office buildings has been remarkably buoyant. The prices being paid for them have risen by about 150 per cent in Melbourne over the last five years. The reasons include the growth of superannuation

funds, the growth of the finance industry since it was deregulated, and the growth of information technology which means more space is needed. All of these trends are set to continue for the rest of the decade.

So despite several years of frantic building, the demand for office space is still desperately tight, and developers keep launching new projects. And while sale prices for buildings soar, builders' costs are relatively modest.

Let's compare this boom with the last one, which took place in the early seventies. Once again the figures are for Melbourne, but they would be similar in Sydney. Industry analysts tell us that from 1972 to 1974, the cost of building materials went up 44 per cent. The cost of labour soared by 97 per cent, as workers took the offensive.

From 1985 through to the end of 1987, by contrast, materials prices are expected to have risen by only 26 per cent. Labour costs are expected to have gone up less than 19 per cent. So any claims by employers that greedy workers are bleeding the industry dry are so much crap. On the contrary, there is plenty more money to be had if workers fight.

No, the building bosses' main concerns are not building costs. They worry mostly about getting the job done as fast as possible, both to minimise their "holding charges" (interest rates on finance, crane hire and the like) and to get their buildings onto the market before their competitors. For this reason, they are vulnerable to industrial pressure.

That is why the BLF's methods work. That is why the efforts of the BWIU and FEDFA to get a few bucks through arbitration are so pathetic. It is also why militancy has survived in the building industry, giving Ralph Willis and Justice Ludeke so much heartburn.

New efforts will be made in the coming months and years to get the industry onto the road to "consensus" and wage-cutting. And since the building industry traditionally swings from runaway boom to spectacular bust, there is every possibility that the 1990s may see a depression of the industry, which would put workers on the defensive.

But for the moment, the BLF and other militants are knocking a big, gaping hole in Labor's program for Australian capitalism. And socialists are cheering them on.

— Richard Emerson

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Australia reconstructed, workers reconstricted

WHENEVER a capitalist economy gets into a mess, the traditional leaders of the labour movement come up with solutions — at workers' expense.

That is what the new ACTU document, *Australia Reconstructed*, is all about.

Some of the document is predictable. Take the proposed amalgamation of unions, which Bill Kelly has already floated in a number of documents. The establishment press has welcomed this idea.

Our rulers used to be nervous about such amalgamations, fearing bigger unions would mean increased worker power. Nowadays, Simon Crean has convinced them that the official union structures can hold down the rank and file. So the establishment suddenly likes the idea of big, professional, efficient unions whose leaders are remote from the workers.

Or take the section dealing with the labour force. Most of this is already government policy. It calls for placing people in jobs or training, and treating the dole as a last resort. This sounds sensible, but in practice it has meant that the long-term hard-core unemployed are forgotten. People being trained might receive Austudy (formerly TEAS), which is less than the dole. But not all trainees are even eligible for that.

THE Australia Reconstructed document is more original when it tackles one of the most devastating weaknesses of Australian capitalism today, and that is the problem of investment.

For years now, under the Accord, we have been told that if we accepted "wage restraint", the bosses would take the extra cash and invest. More investment would mean more jobs. But it has not worked out like that.

The bosses have taken the money and used it for take-over bids, or sent it overseas, but have not been willing to invest it productively in Australia.

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Kelly: plan for 20 "super-unions"

Current projections suggest that in the next decade, there may only be enough productive investment to allow 2 per cent economic growth a year. A growth rate that low means unemployment will rise and rise.

This situation is a big embarrassment to Bill Kelly and Simon Crean. In the new document, they have a stab at a solution. They propose setting up a National Development Fund based on using 20 per cent of superannuation funds.

This money is to be invested in Australian industry, on very generous terms. In other words, they want to take our super-funds — our security in our old age — and hand them over at special rates to the same bosses who have stuffed up the economy to begin with!

What's more, the money is to be invested "counter-cyclically". This means that it will be invested in times of economic downturn, when investment is least profitable! What mighty champions the Australian workers have in the ACTU.

WHERE did these union bureaucrats get such ideas? They learned them in Sweden, and much of *Australia Reconstructed's* appeal will come from the view that Sweden is a rich and successful country, a good model to follow.

Sweden is comparatively affluent, but not because it allows trade union leaders to implement clever little plans. On

the contrary, Sweden can afford these gimmicks because it is affluent by being rich.

It is affluent because its economy has been in the right place at the right time. First it exported machinery and materials to Hitler when he was rearming Germany. Then it exported to a war-devastated Europe engaged in reconstruction. Next its manufacturing sector thrived around a strong armaments industry, which could boom because of postwar capitalism's continuing hunger for arms.

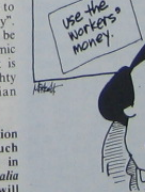
Even so, the country has seen its share of bitter industrial strife, as workers found that the employers were getting the lion's share of the prosperity. As recently as 1985, there was a major strike by white collar workers following three years of wage cutting.

NO, SWEDEN is not the model for solving Australian capitalism's problems. Those problems go deep. Take the investment drought.

Australia Reconstructed calls for a national enquiry to figure out why the bosses won't invest. But an ACTU-sponsored study by the National Institute for Economic and Industry Research has already identified the core of the problem. It is a low rate of profit.

This might sound odd, since

OLD SOLUTION TO CAPITALIST CRISIS
Use the workers' money.



First with the latest
YUGOSLAV daily newspaper Borba has begun serialising the full speech by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956, denouncing Stalin's policy in "liberal" Yugoslavia, but Borba says the full text is now a "historical necessity".

we are forever reading about "record profits" under Labor. But while profits have risen in quantity, that is not the main thing which concerns investors. They are interested in the rate of return: how much they get back for each dollar invested. This rate has been depressed for some time now. The wage cutting under Labor has lifted it a bit, but not nearly enough.

The ACTU has played down this problem, because to face it squarely would mean abandoning its dreams about solving the country's economic problems by reform. The tendency for the rate of profit to fall, which Karl Marx identified as a core feature of capitalist crisis, is inseparable from capitalism itself. Only socialist solutions can solve this problem, and that is the last thing Simon Crean and Bill Kelly want to know about.

Despite all the criticisms we have made, there are still a number of things in *Australia Reconstructed* which are worthwhile. Greater equality for women, for example. And the call for legislation to guarantee the rights of union workplace delegates. And the call for a continuing superannuation campaign.

If the ACTU were prepared to organise a fight around these issues, their new document might not be a total disaster. But *Australia Reconstructed* is conceived as an alternative to struggle. It will make it harder for us to fight against all the attacks we face. No trade union activist should have anything to do with this miserable document.

— Richard Emerson



SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 11

Regular feature

MANAGEMENT of the Scottish newspaper *The Scotsman* produced their own tabloid editions after locking out their journalists in early June. Copy was a little hard to come by, however. One reader wrote to them: "Sir — I note with interest that you have published my letter of 13 June three times (so far) this week. I'm pleased that you like it so much, but if the letter is to become a regular feature I'd appreciate a small fee." "May I add that I approve of your use of different headings each time the letter is published. This helps to prevent it becoming too stale."

Soccer hooligan

BRITAIN'S *Crews Chronicle* has reported a recent court case involving football violence. Having failed to get into a game, a 14-year-old Crews supporter was sheltering from the rain in the social club doorway, when police dog handler PC Paul Britton passed by. PC Britton dragged the boy out, the court was told, punched him in the face, and his mouth and nose bleeding, told him to move on. Seeing the boy later in the centre of town, PC Britton threatened him, "If you mess me about, I will mess you about." Sentencing PC Britton to 28 days jail, Justice Michael Davies told him, "There is no suggestion you are a bully!"

Phoney business

FOR the business person who wants to impress on the cheap, Dick Smith Electronics now sells a "Gar Phoney" take cellular car phone for \$39.95. Sounds like the ideal gift for Andrew Peacock and Jeff Kennett!

"BUT WE'll always need someone to tell us what to do."

The idea that bosses are somehow indispensable is one of the oldest myths trotted out against socialism.

In most workplaces, we have to do what someone else lays down for us. Bosses appear to take all the important decisions. No wonder most workers feel incapable of running production themselves.

But let's look behind the superficial appearances. Most big bosses actually do no useful work whatsoever.

Some are smart enough to recognise this fact and enjoy themselves. Perth property magnate Lloyd Perron (fortune \$120 million) openly admits, "I work a three day week." The rest of the time, he is on his yacht or playing golf.

Others put in long hours being actively useless. They shuffle between A to B, stab each other in the back over three hour lunches, and devise new methods of avoiding tax. In any rational society with a planned economy, all of this activity would instantly become obsolete.

Meanwhile, the day-to-day work of actually creating material wealth is performed by workers on the job.

WHAT OF the small bosses in the workplace — the supervisors, managers and so on?

By and large, they are not there to tell workers *how* to work. The training of new workers, for example, is invariably left up to other workers alongside them. The Volvo car company does just fine letting work groups decide how to organise their own tasks.

The small bosses are there mainly to make sure that we do work. After all, even those workers who do feel that bosses are necessary rarely show much enthusiasm for working for them.

Better-organised workplaces often recognise the uselessness of supervisors. Union rules ban them from doing any work.

These workplaces are most "harmonious" when the supervisors rarely leave their office. And production goes smoothly without them.

Bosses contribute little to the development of industry and technology. They have to hire engineers, scientists and designers to do their technical thinking.

Even then, much of the drive for technical innovation comes



Bosses: Who really needs them anyhow?

from the shop floor. At ICI, while I worked there, the company made numerous innovations, which saved it thousands, from suggestions it got in the suggestion box. (Workers were paid the princely sum of \$50 for these.)

Even the tiny minority of bosses, like Ralph Sanich, who make technical breakthroughs of their own, do so based on a vast body of knowledge already built up by other scientific, technical and manual workers.

IF MANAGEMENT does perform one useful role in the work process, it is in the tasks of co-ordination, and of taking an overview of a whole enterprise.

The ability to perform such tasks, however, is not the preserve of a small elite. Millions of workers are now capable of them, thanks to the higher levels of education that capitalist industry itself has demanded.

Employers like John Siddons tacitly admit this fact, with their "worker participation" schemes which invite worker reps to join

lay-offs, they seized the plant, made their own watches, and organised their own distribution to get around an employer boycott. Without the bosses, efficiency shot up 25%! Only a police invasion ended the bold venture after the best part of a year.

In *Homage to Catalonia*, George Orwell records similar experiences in revolutionary Spain in the 1930s. Workers elected their supervisors, and ran industry more safely and more efficiently than under the old regime.

In the early 1970s, the Chilean workers' *cordones* (committees) took over production and distribution in entire districts when the middle classes went on strike against the Allende government.

Numerous workers' co-operatives have also shown workers' ability to run their own affairs. But by trying to exist indefinitely in a capitalist market, most revert to capitalist methods under pressure of competition.

THE MOST successful example of workers' control in history was the Russian soviets of 1917-1921.

Not only did they take over the running of production, but in October 1917, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, they abolished the entire bosses' state and replaced it with their own.

The soviets were workers' councils, composed of workers' delegates and based in the workplace. Each delegate was recallable at short notice, and they received no privileges above the workers who elected them.

The workplace soviets in turn sent delegates to citywide soviets and the all-Russian soviet.

The soviets were soon destroyed, as Russia's small working class was itself destroyed by war and economic blockade. But their short life remains the most outstanding example of a society without bosses.

And if a society without bosses, a society in which all authority was immediately responsible to those below it, was attainable in 1917, how much more attainable, with our higher standards of education, must it be today?

Eric Peetersen

Now he screws up the US

Donald Reagan was a stinky, distant father, according to the just-written autobiography of his adopted son Michael.

Reagan neglected Michael so badly that at age 7, he looked to a day-camp leader as a substitute father figure. The day-camp leader then sexually abused him for a year, claims Michael.

Sci fi and socialism

IT WAS that old futurologist Karl Marx who said that the choice for humanity was socialism or barbarism.

As a breed, science fiction writers seem to agree. Many have dealt with barbarism, and a few have even raised the banner of socialism.

Much science fiction concentrates on nuclear destruction (state-of-the-art barbarism) and the post-apocalyptic society. A classic is Walter Miller's *A Canticle For Leibowitz*, which fuses the post-atomic war theme with the older subject of reversion to the middle ages. The Catholic Church, with its history of survival against the Goths and Vandals, is the only institution to survive the nuclear holocaust.

The trouble is that Miller's view of history is cyclical. At the end of his novel, a new civilization, possessing spaceships and 20-lane highways, succumbs to another nuclear war. For Miller and many other sci-fi writers, history does indeed repeat itself, the first time as tragedy and the second time as farce. That is hardly a new observation, nor, on its own, a very useful one.

Rather more polemical are those writers who have taken certain tendencies in our society to their logical but obscene conclusion. So we have the book-burning thought police of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and the *Brave New World* of Aldous Huxley.

The best-known description of a future tyranny is George Orwell's classic, *1984*. This is more daring than other novels in this genre, in that it suggests a way of avoiding the new barbarism, a way that lies "with the proles" overthrowing the oppressive state.

On the whole, however, both the cyclical and polemical schools are profoundly pessimistic. Well they might be, too, given the society in which they are written.

But because science fiction is based, however loosely, on science, many science fiction writers are "technological utopians". Robert Heinlein, in his earlier work, is one example. They believe technology has given humanity the tools with which to remedy the ills of society and advance it towards perfection.

Such optimism is admirable. And indeed, it contains the germ

of a truth. Technology could provide us with a society of abundance if properly used. But such writers duck the not-insignificant question of which class controls this technology at present, and to what end. It's a piece of political evasiveness that I find particularly irritating from writers who are suggesting that technology is the solution for humanity.

Perhaps most challenging are those writers who have depicted a socialist utopia, or similar.

Ursula LeGuin's novel *The Dispossessed* (subtitled *An Ambiguous Utopia*) compares the anarcho-socialist society of Anarres, a resource-poor planet, with that of the much richer planet of Urras, a world whose major nations are satires on Russia and America.

LeGuin's is a hopeful prophecy embodied in the pro-vice underground that exists on Urras. She is arguing that we on Earth can combine abundance (Urras) with freedom and equality (Anarres).

Marge Piercy in *Women on the Edge of Time* paints a particularly vivid picture of a future socialist society. But she leaves open the vexing question of whether the main female protagonist mad, or does she really travel to this future society?

My favourite is James Hogan's *Voyage From Yesterday*, a novel which brilliantly contrasts the socialist planet Chiron with a space-age full of interlopers from Earth, who arrive to restore the capitalist order.

The Chironians show us the full promise of the future. They have abolished money, and created an abundance of wealth through automation. People work at what they like, to gain respect and contribute to the common good. Religious hangups, guilt-ridden moral codes, sex stereotypes and greed have become curiosities of the past. When the Earthlings try to colonise them, the Chironians subvert their rank-and-file by the power of example.

Yet in the works of these utopians, there is no conception of how to get to the new society. Even Hogan's answer seems to be to colonise other planets and start again. Still, I love it.

Paradoxically, for most science fiction writers (and readers), utopian sci-fi seems fundamentally irrational. It's

just too far beyond the pale.

In our system today, barbarism seems a much more convincing likelihood. What a hideous stunting of our imagination and our dreams that is.

— John Passant



Yosi Berger in 1938

ART

Painting the town

TREES, trees, bloody trees. You see them in every art show — rows of paintings, all with trees.

In pre-war Melbourne, various artists rebelled against the "gum tree in every painting". The story of one, Yosi Berger, has just been filmed. Called *Painting the Town*, it recalls the "social realist" school: painters who painted life as it really was,

— Jeff Goldhar



Berger's Pumpkins: refused to succumb to fake-heroin

The Democrats: Are they better?

I KNOW the July 11 Federal Election is old hat by now.

But one thing still ranks: That is, the degree to which the Democrats have conned disillusioned ALP voters, and even sections of the Left, that they are "better" than Labor.

Numerous protest candidates, including George Georges in Queensland and Bill Hartley in Victoria, directed preferences to the Democrats ahead of Labor. The Socialist Workers Party called for a vote for the Democrats wherever protest candidates were unavailable.

Well, are the Democrats better? No, they are not. Even a brief look at their record and their platform makes this plain.

AT THE election, the Democrats emphasized a range of policies to the left of Labor's — on nuclear disarmament, social welfare, taxation, ID cards and conservation.

This marked the end of a long-running internal battle over how the Democrats would expand from their narrow base in the trendier sections of small-to-medium-sized business and the middle class, especially after the retirement of Don Chipp.

Some wanted to expand to the left. Victorian president Sid Spindler made overtures to the NDP for amalgamation, while Senator Norm Sanders openly called for leftwingers to "take the party over". Others wanted to expand to the right. John Siddons demanded policies of economic "sanity" while dissident members in South Australia publicly attacked their "left" leadership before the 1985 state election.

Janine Haines' election resolved this battle, and senators John Siddons and David Vigor soon departed. But the battle had been far more over emphasis than principle.

This was confirmed by internal strategy documents late last year, which argued that the party had to target disillusioned ALP voters. So the party played up its more progressive social policies during the election, while we heard scarcely a peep on its industrial platform, which is to the right of Labor's.

It is well known that the Democrats blocked ALP attempts to repeal parts of the Trade Practices Act which outlaw "secondary boycotts" — bans by unionists on other employers than their own. This attitude has changed little under Haines. In May, party industrial



Janine Haines: still to Labor's right on unions, just quieter about it

spokesperson Colin Mason described secondary boycotts as "abhorrent".

In May, the Democrats forced amendments to Labor's Industrial Relations Bill, giving employers quicker access to injunctions and fines against unions. In April 1986, the seven Democrat senators decided to amend the IRLF's deregistration from three to five years, to ensure that the union was broken up entirely.

UNDER the Democrats' industrial policy, workers do not even necessarily have the right to hold union meetings in private.

Employer reps will get "appropriate access by law" to address union meetings. In return, union officials will get similar rights to address board of directors' meetings. Big deal.

This trade-off is at one with Democrat support for "worker participation" and profit-sharing. The consistent thrust is to undermine independent workers' organisation and struggle.

So the Democrats also support productivity deals, which have a notorious record in Britain. They oppose collective bargaining, and want a "Fair and Just Wages Commission" — a beeted-up Arbitration Commission — which will fix wage relativities to prevent union leap-frogging tactics.

The Democrats oppose compulsory unionism. Instead, they want a "Fee for Service" which unions can levy on non-unionists who enjoy union rates.

This ploy might buy off union bureaucrats, who will still get their union dues, but it ensures that a non-unionist minority in a workplace can undermine a majority decision to strike.

Most ominously, the Democrats want individual no-strike contracts "in essential industries", with "pay at above award rates" as the pay-off. They want to undermine existing awards by cutting week-end penalty rates, by introducing "flexible" wage agreements for small business, and by "developing a special classification of 'community work' at below normal award rates" for "those who wish to opt out of the normal wage system and adopt a different lifestyle".

John Ejelke Petersen would have no problem with any of those propositions.

NOT ONLY on union issues are the Democrats to the right of Labor.

In South Australia, they tried to amend Labor's compensation bill to reduce workers' payouts from 85% to 75% of the average wage. They tried to reduce the period that badly injured workers could continue to get their full wage from three to two years. Party leader Ian Gilliland, who is on their "left", openly admitted the motive was to reduce employers' insurance premiums.

Such meanness does not extend to the middle class. Democrat policy is full of hand-outs to small business, while they amended the Trade Practices Act to exclude architects and

Seeing
Red!
with Alec Kahn

engineers from having to give an implied warranty on their services.

The Democrats helped defeat Labor's moves against bottom-of-the-harbour tax evaders. In the Lionel Murphy case, they eagerly joined in the Liberals' initial hounding of a progressive judge.

On defence, while they oppose nuclear arms, the Democrats are far from anti-militarist. Senator Michael Macklin has called for more "self-reliance" with defence installations to be built in the north and west, and the deployment of small hydrofoil missile craft. With Australia's long record of overseas meddling and the increased instability of our own region, Macklin's call merely echo the military's desire to build up their clout locally.

On internal party democracy, the Democrats are all over the place. Members vote by postal ballot on every policy issue. But MPs can ignore party policy even more easily than in the ALP, since they have a "conscience vote".

Even when they are to the left of Labor, the Democrats are wedded to parliamentary "correct channels" rather than direct action. At Melbourne University in March, Senator Janet Powell assured a big student anti-fee rally that the Democrats were with them "all the way". Ten minutes later, when they marched off to confront New Right heavy Andrew Hay over the issue in a lecture theatre, she was nowhere to be seen.

There is nothing to be gained by leftwingers helping to elect Democrats. Their radicalism on social issues is entirely superficial; it would evaporate in an instant if they ever came to power. And with just 2000 members nationally, they have no mass base that can be won over to the left if the Democrats' bankruptcy is exposed in Parliament.

On the contrary, by helping to elect them, leftwingers only create a new diversion from socialist politics to replace the ALP. One that, unlike Labor, doesn't even represent an elementary form of working-class consciousness.

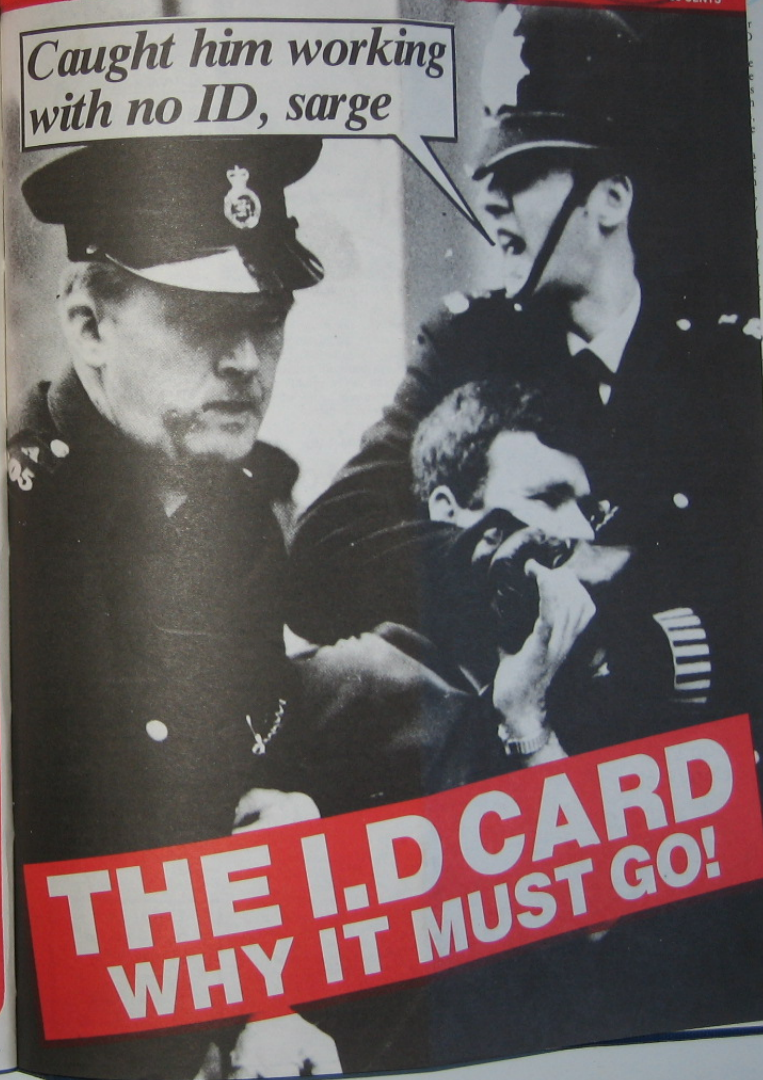
So why bother?

SOCIALIST ACTION

SEPTEMBER 1987 No. 23 Registered by Australia Post — publication no. VB07361

50 GENTS

Caught him working with no ID, sarge



CAT'S EYE

ARMS TALKS

Missile deal no big deal

AT LAST, after twenty-odd years, American and Russian arms negotiators seem to have achieved something.

If all goes well, later this year the two superpowers will sign a treaty banning all medium-range nuclear missiles.

This is something. For Europeans, especially, the main target of these weapons — it represents a chance to breathe a little easier.

But only a little. In the first place, the effect of this treaty may actually be to increase the number of nuclear missiles. In order to make up for lost firepower, the NATO countries may simply beef up their other systems — more submarine and air-based missiles, for example.

As one US official admitted, "It may be necessary to add more nuclear missiles than are removed."

Secondly, beyond the medium-range missiles the superpowers have vast stockpiles of short and long-range missiles that they will still be free to produce and deploy.

Indeed, in recent years these have been the areas of most feverish development. In the past five years alone the Americans have spent \$200 billion modernizing their arsenal — Star Wars, the B1 bomber, MX and Cruise missiles and the Trident submarine. Within the limits imposed by their much weaker economy, the Russians have managed to keep up.

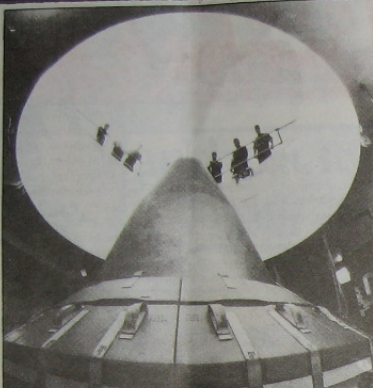
Given all that, the treaty, if it happens, is proposing only very limited cuts and will hardly have advanced us all towards the great goal of a nuclear-free world.

PRINT STRIKE

Cop that, Copy Cat

A DISPUTE at an instant printing shop in Brisbane has shown what solidarity can do, even in tiny workshops.

When tradesman Jack Cotter started work at the Copy Cat printing shop he was appalled by the conditions. While boss Dave Dornan sat in his comfortable offices, the workers had a squalid work room softened only by walls decorated with the New Right propaganda that Dornan printed.



US long range missile silo: the arms deal just means more

Cotter ignored the conventional wisdom that small shops with few tradesmen can't be unionized because of lack of confidential opportunities to confer with union organizers. He had no trouble convincing his unskilled workmates to join the Printing and Kindred Industries Union.

The union advised the Copy Cat employees to bide their time until it could enforce award conditions. But after months without even a kettle or something to sit down on, Cotter finally confronted Dornan. He was sacked on the spot. Despite their lack of experience of disputation, his six workmates immediately struck in protest and they too were sacked.

The workers mounted a picket that had wide repercussions. The Transport Workers would not cross the picket with paper supplies, and the seabs that replaced the sacked workers were showing signs of being won over to the strike when they too experienced the working conditions. Workers from other instant printing shops in the area risked reprisals by joining the picket line.

Unfortunately, the union rushed an unprepared case to the arbitration court. "We lost the battle in court before the fight even started," said Cotter. "The union apologized to us for the way they handled it. They underestimated how strong half a dozen people could be. We were ready to fight all the way."

But the union probably knew just what it was doing when it moved quickly to find the workers other jobs and end the

charge from boxes after the raid as a gesture of defiance. But the student unions' main strategy is legalistic, calling on campuses interstate to help fund a court challenge.

Such strategies in the past have cost plenty, achieved little, and only discouraged alternative direct action. Continued defiance back up by mass action would be a much better idea.

ALP WALK-OUT

Right about the right

LAST issue we ran an item on the Victorian local government elections. We reported that in Brunswick, ALP Socialist Left candidates won three out of the four seats contested, giving the left a majority in the ALP caucus.

We commented that this victory may be a hollow one, as the ALP right does not accept the legitimacy of the left winning, is not the least hesitant about splitting the ALP, and is only for unity on its terms.

We were right! Straight after the elections, right-wing councillor Graham Walker resigned from the ALP because he did not accept the caucus decision to support a Socialist Left mayoral candidate. "I am fed up with the party machine that directs me how to cast my vote," he complained to the local paper.

Of course he never complained about the party machine that helped him win his seat. The real reason is that he did not accept a majority decision he disagreed with.

The ALP parades the concept of caucus solidarity as one of its distinguishing features. In reality, it is a device used by the right to discipline the left.

The ALP right wing under Hawke and the Labor premier can disregard ALP policies hitherto. But woe betide any leftist who defies caucus.

George Georges voted against BLF deregistration and the Australia Card in the Senate, and had to resign from the ALP. And when George Petersen in NSW voted against Unsworth's vicious cuts to workers' compensation, he was expelled.

RALLY

Oppose the big business Budget!

Thurs Sept 17
5 pm Sydney Town Hall Square

Called by Sydney Fightback Committee

conflict. With the struggle over there are now no guarantees that the union's promise to blacken Copy Cat until it unionizes and grants award conditions can be carried out. And what about other small shops?

CONDOM RAID

AIDS? Go blow, says Joh

QUEENSLAND'S ugliest street gang struck at two universities on September 1.

Welding iron crowbars, police caused \$2500 damage during a raid on Queensland Uni toilets. Arriving just before dawn, they forced doors and prised condom vending machines off walls.

At Griffith Uni, police arrived late at night while toilets were still open, and so damage was less severe. At James Cook Uni in Townsville, students foiled a raid by removing condoms from their vending machine just before Health Department officials arrived, making it legal.

Condom vending machines are illegal in Queensland, as condoms are classified under poisons and drugs in the Health Act. When student unions defiantly installed them as an anti-AIDS measure, Cabinet's response was divided. Eventually, Joh Bjelke Petersen forced the issue under the banner of Cabinet solidarity, as a test of personal allegiance aimed against Health Minister Mike Ahern.

Queensland Uni Union distributed condoms free of

COVER STORY

The ID Card: Why it must go

THE AUSTRALIA Card barely got a mention at election time. Now it is Labor's biggest headache.

A Willesse show phone-in on the issue got the biggest response ever — 280,000 calls, of which 85% were anti-card. A remarkable array of groups is opposing the card, from the Liberals and New Rightist Small Business Association, through the Democrats and civil libertarians, to the BLF, the Victorian ALP, several South Australian unions, unemployment and peace activists, and the radical left.

Mass rallies are scheduled for Sydney and Melbourne in early October, as opinion polls show that 50% of voters now oppose the ID card.

Little wonder that Labor is nervously commissioning new opinion polls, and looking at a \$2 million advertising campaign.

The right, of course, has its own reasons for opposing the card. It wants to scrap it, along with the social services it will police, in the name of smaller government. It doesn't like the \$20,000 fines that employers will face for not policing the card. It doesn't believe the ID system will cut the deficit by \$500 million a year as Labor claims.

Some rightwingers make valid civil liberties points too. The Private Doctors Association, for example, notes that the ID system will be run by the same Health Insurance Commission that flagrantly abused teenage girls' medical records to prosecute Dr Ian McGoldrick over abortions he performed for them.

Labor has tried to silence the left by pointing to the card's rightwing opponents, but without success. After all, if capitalists do not trust their own state with such a card, why should we?

MORE importantly, there are good working-class reasons to oppose an ID system.

An ID card will make it harder to work under a false name, so employers will find it easier to blacklist union militants, just as they use the numbers on workers' "cards" in Britain to do.

ID numbers will not cut tax evasion by the rich. Alan Bond did not use false names to pay no tax a couple of years ago. Indeed, Labor has given tax

handouts to the rich, making dividends tax-free and cutting the top rate of income tax from 60% to 49%.

Nor will ID numbers stop businesses understating income to avoid tax, as claimed. Businesses mostly do this by collusion which involves no records. Sweden's companies get around the ID system with bartering and a huge cash economy.

The ID card will, though, hurt single mothers and other pensioners who boost their miserable benefits by not declaring casual income. It will stop workers with savings who do not declare the puny interest they get. It will crack down on workers with two jobs who lower the rising tax bite by using false names.

Such working class tax evasion is not big. In late 1985, Paul Keating's figures put it at \$110 million at most. But as long as workers are ripped off by capitalism, we are for them being able to pull such fiddles, even if they are a feeble way of fighting back.

AN IDENTITY card will supposedly cut down welfare fraud involving use of false names.

Again, this is a minor abuse. The Department of Social Security has found that it accounts for less than 2% of overpayments.

The card's main advocate, Neal Blewett, also boasts that it will deter "illegal immigrants by making it much more difficult for them to get a job or claim benefits".

Great. Illegal immigrants are mostly economic refugees from poor countries. Their only real



Neal Blewett: Big Brother?

crime is to disregard the stupid borders that mark out each national ruling class's patch of territory. In reality, Blewett is boasting that he will drive these victims of the system further into the hands of shady employers operating right outside the law.

The civil liberties question has had ample attention elsewhere, so we will make three general comments.

Firstly, workers have no interest in seeing the messy bureaucracies of the capitalist state improve their policing of us

by pooling their computer records, which is what ID numbers will allow.

Secondly, controls on abuse of the system will become meaningless in no time. Just as Myers once used Special Branch records to vet its new employees, so the ID system will become widely abused.

Finally, Labor is creating a dangerous tool for future, more repressive governments. South Africa uses its identity system, the pass laws, with deadly ruthlessness.

Little wonder that Liberal president John Elliott wants only the poor to get ID cards. The pig-who-would-be-PM understands the real purpose of the exercise, even if some Labor apologists don't.

HOW, THEN, can the ID Card be stopped?

Predictably, the right wing of the emerging movement is saying, "Let's do it legally, through parliament and the courts." But they blantly admit that at most they can delay it a few months.

The left is coming up with more worthwhile strategies. They involve civil disobedience style direct action — boycotting the cards, mass producing false ones, and mass disruption of the registration period (in which 46,000 people must be registered per day) by means of fill-in-false campaigns and the like.

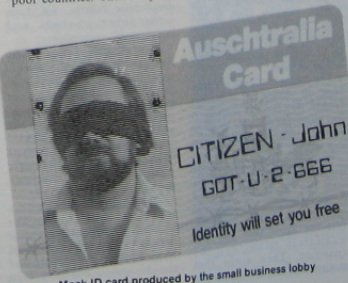
Whether this, and the more usual marches and rallies, are enough to get the cards to be seen. The most deadly weapon against the card is still a ban by the unions involved in making and using it — especially the public service unions. Given the state of those unions' leaderships, considerable agitation will have to be done at the rank-and-file level to get such a ban put on.

One encouraging note is that an Australian government has been stopped from setting up an ID system once before. Then too, direct action and mass defiance was the key.

The "National Register" of 1939 was boycotted en masse, with unions leading a campaign against signing up at post offices. When the registration period ended, just one-third of the population had signed the papers.

We will similar defiance, Labor's Australia Card can be brought down today.

— Ken Stevens



Mock ID card produced by the small business lobby

AFTER a 20 year ban on strikes, South Korean workers are testing presidential pretender Roh Tae Woo's new industrial freedoms.

As we go to press, 500 strikers are still simmering. Police have arrested 70 people for inciting labour disputes, and America's *Newsweek* magazine is plaintively asking, "Can South Korea afford democracy?"

Everyone is wondering which way born-again liberal Roh Tae Woo will jump when school holidays are over and the run-up starts to the presidential elections expected in December.

But while Roh hunts out his baby-kissing garb, Hyundai workers have discovered that their emperor has no clothes. Chung Yu Yung, "emperor" of South Korea's largest conglomerate, dug his heels in when his workers formed a new union in opposition to Hyundai's existing yellow unions. He loathed, "I will never endorse the extremely radical union... even if we are forced to suspend operations for a month or more."

When push came to shove, Chung didn't last half that long. Forty thousand Hyundai workers voting with their feet was enough to pressure the government to intervene to guarantee workers' demands by September 1. Chung is one of the heads of family-owned conglomerates (chaebol) who are being forced by the government to sell off shares in their companies to the public. Like many, Chung is dragging his feet, appointing his brothers and sons to the top jobs to keep control.

STRIKES have occurred almost across the board in basic industry. Car plants, coal mines, shipyards, electronics, public transport and textile factories have all been out.

The death of Daewoo naval shipyard worker Lee Suk Kyu from fragments of a police gas grenade on August 22 was a vexing but powerful rallying point for the movement.

Lee was among 3000 workers who marched to a hotel near the shipyard to take up their demands in person with Daewoo president Yun Yang Sok. So panic-stricken was the management that among the injured was a Mr Shimamura, a Japanese technical adviser who was hospitalised after leaping from the third storey hotel window when strikers burst in demanding to see Mr Yun.

Hundreds of Daewoo

South Korea's workers move into battle



Hyundai strikers rally: their "emperor" had no clothes

workers later fought with police after a rally protesting at Lee's death. The strikers hurled rocks and firebombs at police, who blocked their way out of the shipyard and fired teargas.

Until now, South Korea's workers have had the longest hours, most dangerous conditions, and lowest pay rates in the industrialised world. The average working week is 54.4 hours, and wages average \$1.55 an hour, compared with Japan's \$9.50 an hour and the USA's \$13.09 an hour.

The current strike wave may begin to change all that. But despite *Newsweek's* fretting, it still has some distance to go to seriously threaten South Korean capitalism.

Some firms in the textile industry are likely to go to the wall as a result of the democratization of industrial relations. But most economic theorists agree that this will ultimately strengthen the economy. They argue that modern working conditions will

bolster the Korean system if industrial relations continue to evolve along the Japanese model (without, of course, this being made explicit to the workers).

MEANWHILE the student led strike wave with its dramatic street protests for democratic reform, has been undergoing changes and considerable repression.

It threw up Sodeahyp (The Association of Seoul Universities) a couple of months ago. Sodeahyp claims to speak for most student activists in the Seoul area and is philosophically akin to the now-disbanded Chamintu (Self Reliant Democratization Struggle Against the US and Fascism), though distinct from it.

The Chamintu fused with a rival radical group, the Minmintu (National Democratic Struggle Committee Against Imperialism and Fascism), and the Minmintu has now been driven underground.

The government does not seem to have compromised on the hard-liners at all. On July 20, twelve activists were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 17 months to seven years on charges of trying to overthrow the government and establish a revolutionary people's assembly to draft a new constitution.

The police Anti-Communist Bureau and the Agency for National Security Planning are actively searching out the 400 dissidents on the current wanted lists. At least 17 students have been arrested since the ruling Democratic Justice Party chairman Roh Tae Woo's eight-point democratisation package on June 29.

The ruling class finds the Minmintu threatening. It is anti-US, and demands a constituent assembly aimed at introducing more thorough reforms for oppressed classes. Minmintu's similarities to the North Korean line make it the ultimate bogey for Seoul. Ironically, these similarities probably result from Seoul's heavy censorship, which gave North Korea hegemony over the leftwing ideas getting into the country.

THOUGH vague on their own political stand, Sodeahyp leaders dismiss official opposition leaders Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung as "products of the existing structure" who do not deserve the presidency.

The two Kims appear to be shaping up for their own showdown over the opposition candidacy for President. Aides to Kim Dae Jung stated on August 29 that he must be the Reunification Democratic Party's candidate, and party vice-president Lee Choog Jaeh called for rank and file support.

This appears to undermine an agreement between the two men to choose a candidate.

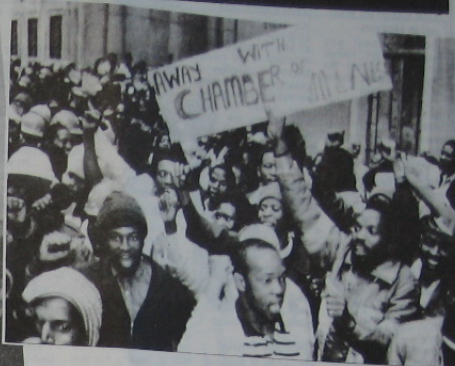
In the end it will be the one seen as able to come up with the goods... which is really reunification with North Korea. As one Sodeahyp leader put it,

"*Unification has to be the ultimate goal, beyond ideology, beyond religion, beyond everything. It should be based on a feeling of togetherness*"... a very tall order.

The goal line looks a very long way off, and many Korean workers and students seen in Koh Tae Woo only the spectre of the 1981 Kwangju massacre, and the prospect of military redistribution once the coast is clear of next year's Olympics.

The present strike wave may be the first chance they have of setting a whole new agenda.

— Chris Rose



Black mine accident victim, striking miners march: the revolt has shifted to the unions

The new challenge to apartheid

SOUTH Africa's white regime must have thought they had things just about under control.

With the leadership of the main anti-apartheid organisation, the United Democratic Front (UDF), in goal, the township revolt crushed, and huge support for these (and further) measures expressed in the whites-only elections, they may even have become complacent. They were certainly planning their next move: an all-out attack on the black trade unions.

It was not to be. No sooner had the township struggle died down than the organised black working class stepped into the fray. It is now shaking the apartheid system to its foundations.

Shop workers, food workers and postal workers have all taken action. Sixteen thousand railway workers went out for union recognition. In late April they were all sacked and subjected to the onslaughts of the security forces. They stayed out and they won.

At its congress in August, the black trade union federation, COSATU, took on the responsibility to lead the anti-apartheid forces — to lead them to liberation and socialism. It accepted the need to link political and shopfloor issues.

Most important and impressive of all has been the miners' strike. On August 9, the National Union of Miners

(NUM) called out 200,000 of its members on an indefinite stoppage. They were demanding a 30% wage rise, improved working conditions, thirty days paid leave per year and danger money — which until now has been only paid to white workers.

There has been no equal pay in South Africa's coal and gold mines and the wage demand was an attempt to enforce it. Miners have to work under outrageously unsafe conditions. In 1986, 800 miners were killed in pit collapses and explosions.

Mining is a vital part of the South African economy — gold and coal account for over half the country's export earnings. The miners were in a position to hit the system hard.

THE STRIKE got off to a good start when, instead of 200,000 coming out, some 340,000 miners walked off the job. This meant that at least 60,000 un-unionised miners were on strike as well.

The NUM ordered its members to leave the mines and return to their "homelands" in order to minimise the prospects for violence. There was resistance to this instruction, as some miners believed that if they left, they would never be allowed back.

Violence broke out soon after the strike began, and steadily escalated from then on. Mine-owners' security personnel attempted to force workers down the shafts at gunpoint. There were numerous clashes with scabs and open battles with

the security forces.

It wasn't long before the owners started "dismissing" the strikers. As we go to press, some 30,000 miners remain 'sacked'. The owners appealed to the state to intervene, and the police made a start by arresting an entire regional strike committee in Klerksdorp.

Naturally enough, this only strengthened the resolve of the strikers and was not repeated. The regime has already found to its cost that when trade union leaders are arrested, they are generally replaced with those of a more radical persuasion.

The strike lasted three weeks despite all of this, and despite an offer by the employers to raise wages between 15 and 24%.

MINERS' demands at this stage are purely 'economic' — for wages, conditions and so forth. They do not take up political issues of apartheid and the white regime. Yet the strike was part of the struggle against apartheid and South African capitalism.

The fluctuation of a movement between political and economic concerns is not historically unique. Surveying the 1905 revolution in Russia, Rosa Luxemburg said that a mass political movement, once it has reached its furthest point, breaks up into a host of economic strikes.

"Every new onset and every fresh victory of the political struggle transformed into a powerful impetus for the economic struggle... After every

foaming wave of political action a fruitful deposit remains behind from which a thousand stalks of economic struggle shoot forth."

It can also work the other way.

"The workers' condition of ceaseless economic struggle with the capitalists keeps their fighting energy alive in every political interval; it forms, so to speak, the permanent fresh reservoir of the strength of the proletarian classes, from which the political fight ever renews its strength."

The backbone of the political movement in South Africa — the township revolt — was dealt a severe repressive blow by the white state. It is estimated that fully four fifths of the police force was sent into the townships.

But that wasn't the end of the matter. The courage and determination of the township rebels, as well as their tactics, were an inspiration to the black unions who then moved into battle. If they can win it will be a spur to the movement in the townships — and there is much that that movement can learn from the black workers.

What took place in the miners' strike was not the spontaneous undirected anger of the townships. It was the organised, deliberate, and essentially unbreakable power of the working class. Its confidence, organisation and leadership will filter back into the political movements.

Together, they can sweep South African capitalism away.

— David Lockwood

Our Exploiter Who art in Heaven

DON'T expect any souvenirs from friends and relatives visiting the Roman Catholic shrine in Knock, Ireland.

Religious souvenir sellers have gone on strike demanding 50p an hour increase in pay. Of course you may get a photo of their placards.

Peace is hell

PEACE is positively dangerous, according to *Business* magazine.

It reports that, "Top US missile manufacturers are nervous. So is Wall Street. If peace breaks out across the negotiating table, billions of dollars of business in strategic nuclear missiles will be wiped out."

But we can't afford a wareither—not with the current staff ceilings at Volstrans Affairs.

Maggie's Mailbag

It's a bit much of my attitudes on that role model that is you. Be going to be brave and be happy. (signed) Evita Bezuidenhout, MP for Laagerfontein, the only Independent woman of our parliament.

So ended a letter congratulating Margaret Thatcher on her recent election victory. But it was a hoax, written by South Africa's answer to Dame Edna Everage, anti-apartheid campaigner Peter-Dirk Lys. Maggie's hand written reply read: "Thank you Evita for your message... I did appreciate it. It was vital for the government to be returned... majority... confidence overseas, etc."

Talk about believing your own election propaganda!

That's gratitude

WE WONDER what the 42 British print workers at McCorquodale's Printery think about Thatcher's promises of prosperity. They were sacked just after having been asked to stay on, to print the Tory election manifesto!



Currie: Let 'em freeze!

Tasteful Currie

OH TO be in England. Health minister Edwina

Lifestyles of the rich and famous...

It's true hard work never killed anybody, but I figure why take a risk.

— Ronald Reagan

It eliminated parole and reduced the amount of time off for good behavior that could be granted to the president... er, a prisoner.

— Ronald again, commenting on the US Crime Control Act

The little lass appealed to me because she never smokes or swears and if anyone tells a smutty story, she'll walk out of the room.

— \$360,000 a year man Russ Hinze on the doctor he married

A Sydney doctor is having nine diamonds embedded into each buckle of a pair of shoes.

Death styles of the rich and famous...

You don't have to leave your car to view the body at a Florida "funeral home": the bereaved can drive alongside specially designed windows, view the body and sign the condolences book, which conveniently pulls out on a special tray.

And for around \$250 a US firm will freeze-dry your favourite pet — after it is dead, of course.



CHEAP SHOTS

The Wedding Frogmarch

IF ONLY the band had played *Waltzing Matilda*... *Volare*... *Have Nagila*.

A Palestinian bridegroom didn't make it to his honeymoon, Israeli police arrested him and four friends at his wedding in a West Bank refugee camp, when they caught them singing Palestinian nationalist songs.

side, not ours," complained James Schlesinger, former US Secretary for Defence.

Why worry, Jimmy? Both sides are kicking the same way anyhow... against us!

NATIONAL POLITICS

OH, GO ON — TASTES GREAT!



Privatisation: The real issues

"WE CAN'T let them sell off the people's assets!" said an anti-privatisation demonstrator to me recently.

An understandable sentiment. Public bodies like Telecom or Australian Airlines were established with taxpayers' money, and built by workers. Why should some rich blunderer get to buy and exploit them?

Yet that is just what Bob Hawke wants, it seems. Following the example of Margaret Thatcher, he plans to hand large chunks of government industry over to private enterprise at bargain basement prices. And such schemes make the government look good. They make the CES look good by increasing its placement rate. Everybody's happy — except those who remain unemployed. But then it'll be their own fault, won't it? — Anna Wolkenhaar

But are these really "our" assets anyway? They should be, but so should BHP, for it was the workers who built BHP too. In reality, none of these things is really ours, not even "public" enterprise. Telecom technicians have no say in management decisions. Commonwealth tatters don't control investment policy. And after four years of Bob Hawke's broken promises, no one can really imagine we control them through our elected MPs.

While some government bodies represent reforms which workers' struggles have

forced our rulers to grant, for the most part they simply provide services to the bosses or for the bosses. So when politicians today speak of "privatising" industries, they are not selling our assets. They are just rearranging the way the capitalist class controls the economy.

It is still correct to oppose the privatisation plans, for they are closely linked to attacks on our wages, working conditions, and union rights. But to fight through these attacks effectively, we need to understand the real role played by the capitalist state and its economic agencies.

THE STATE has loomed large in twentieth century capitalism. The crises and wars which engulfed the world from 1914 through to 1945 shattered the credibility of "free enterprise" and greatly weakened the capitalist class itself in many places.

Japan had begun early to use the state to build its economy. In the wake of the Great Depression, the United States set up major public works projects and began to closely regulate banks. Hitler used the German state to create a booming command economy based on military expansion.

Meanwhile in Russia, Stalin built his own repressive machinery over the ruins of an exhausted workers' revolution, and launched a five-year plan to industrialise the

country. This plan rapidly intensified the exploitation of workers and peasants.

So while western capitalism began to use elements of "socialism" to reshape itself and meet new challenges, Stalin's Russia reproduced the exploitative methods of capitalism in a new form, with state bureaucrats replacing the traditional private capitalists.

After World War 2, the trend accelerated. In Eastern Europe the local bourgeoisie had been all but wiped out when Germany seized their industries. The national state had to step in and fill the vacuum. At the same time, various third world countries were throwing off the yoke of colonialism. In the absence of a strong local capitalist class, these countries' economies were spurred on by the state also. New ruling elites cohered by the state also, and a variety of around the state machine, and a variety of "socialist" banners were unfurled from China to Vietnam, from Algeria to Egypt.

Even in the west the role of the public sector grew. From the Swedish "welfare state" to America with its arms-dominated economy, state planning and expenditure underpinned the whole post war boom.

COMPARED with the rest of the world, Australia does not have a large public sector. While government spending accounts for 64% of gross domestic product in Sweden, 53% in France and 38% in America, the Australian figure is a modest 36.4%.

So Liberal Party complaints about "big government" are rubbish. Still, this country does have an interesting history of public enterprise. With a backward and divided

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 7

Clubbing the jobless

ALTHOUGH the election is over, unemployment remains a politically sensitive issue. The government, having dropped its program of job creation schemes, needs other ways of appearing to do something for those with no jobs.

Two new schemes are on the drawing board. Job Search training courses are aimed mainly at young people. They are supposed to teach those who are considered to have "skills marketable in the current labour market" how to better compete for already existing jobs.

The CES will pay a fee for service (\$500) for each course to community groups, CYSS groups and colleges to run them. They are clearly aimed at people who easily fit into the labour market, and will be of little use to the long term unemployed.

Job Clubs are based on programs which have been tried in England and Canada. Unemployed people do an intensive period of looking for work under close supervision.

Each person in the "Club" of about 10 must follow at least 10 job leads a day. As well as the usual methods, they go through the yellow pages of the phone book, contact friends, and generally sell themselves as though they were a used car.

Everything is planned down to the last detail. In the Canadian scheme, they start out making a call to a friend. The instructions include setting time aside for small talk, before getting down to the business of asking whether they know of any jobs.

This has proved very "successful" in Canada. Almost every participant in a Job Club has found work within quite a short period of time.

In the north of England, with

its higher unemployment rate, the "success" of Job Clubs is less. It takes approximately 150 "leads" to find a job there.

The Canadian scheme also teaches members how to keep and advance in a job. The advice includes plain grovelling:

- Do a little more than is expected of you and do it cheerfully.
- Be nice to everybody.
- Be business like and keep out of controversy.
- Volunteer for extra duties.

IT'S NICE TO KNOW ONE IS HELPING...



NATIONAL POLITICS

ruling class, wide open spaces and sparse capital resources, Australian capitalism has needed the state to provide a range of services and infrastructure.

It is often imagined there was something socialist about these, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The idea of a Commonwealth Bank, for example, was first popularised by King O'Malley, described by one journalist as an "anti-socialist hot gospeller who made personal loans at usurious interest rates". Labor Prime Minister Andrew Fisher saw it as an alternative to bank nationalisation. To ensure it wouldn't threaten private enterprise, he handed control to Denison Miller of the private Bank of NSW.

The railways, and later Qantas and TAA, were created by the state because private industry was unable or unwilling to build transport systems for its own needs. Here too, the intent was often to head off more radical proposals rather than to move toward socialism.

NEVERTHELESS, much of the Australian left has traditionally seen public sector growth as a sign of progress toward a better world.

The ALP left has imagined that a new society could be introduced gradually, through government enterprise and regulation encroaching on the capitalists' private domain. The Communist Party and its offshoots have looked to the state-run economies of Russia or China as models.

The unpleasant realities of squalid Australian public housing or Russian concentration camps were either denied, or

explained away as "errors" and "growing pains". Wise planners would simply hand down liberation from above.

Basing its hopes on the power of state machines was tremendously attractive to the left for decades, because the growth of the public sector seemed to be a ceaseless, worldwide process. The left could persuade itself that the tide of history was on its side.

Now the tide has turned. The creation of very large conglomerations of capital around the state means that individual enterprises are artificially protected. Some become inefficient and sluggish, and begin to drag down the rest.

To take a simple example, Australian textiles are protected by government tariffs. Consequently they are an inefficient industry, and their products are overpriced. What if an Australian firm just buy these textiles — say Telecom, to make uniforms for its staff? The extra costs make it just that much harder to compete with foreign airlines.

Similar problems afflict the huge state sectors of Russia and China, and their rulers are sick of seeing the nation's competitiveness dragged down by inefficient enterprises. So the world's ruling classes are looking for ways to put more enterprises under direct competitive pressures.

Hence the "Gorbachev reforms". Hence privatisation and deregulation in the west.

There are limits to this. Gorbachev will not dismantle the state which is the basis for his power, and Bob Hawke is using government money to help reconstruct Australia's steel industry. The recent trends do not herald the disappearance of the state from the economic stage. Rather the state is intervening in new ways, to reshape capitalism for new challenges.

As the *Financial Review* editorial puts it, privatisation means

"not a total dismantling of government concern for key structural functions but a restructuring of responsibility... The national supervisory and accountability functions need to be more direct, capable and expert than ever before."

MUCH OF THE debate about public sector versus free market reflects vested interests, and is pretty shallow.

Rightwing theorists 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. It's not hard to knock a few holes in these arguments.

Certainly the lash of competition will



The wealthy queue to buy shares in British Telecom. Hawke's new Labor vision?

drive people to produce efficiently and some achieve great rewards. But efficient at producing what? and for whom? At present the big success stories are the stockmarket takeover specialists. It makes them rich, but what use is it to ordinary Australians if Robert Holmes a Court takes over BHP?

And while individual enterprises may be efficient, competition makes them operate at cross purposes. You need only look at the pesticide-loaded meat that was shipped to North America recently. Somebody somewhere was responding "efficiently" to the pressure of competition and cut corners. Now a whole industry is in big trouble, and if it weren't for the government regulation they whinge about, it would probably be in worse.

One of the most dishonest arguments of the free-marketeers is that they are against government "monopolies." In reality, capitalism is a system of monopolies however you look at it.

A tiny minority has a monopoly control of finance, of the means of production, of access to elite schools and of access to key government functions, and no amount of selling off state assets will change that.

Margaret Thatcher has tried to evade this point — and sugar the pill of privatisation

— by setting aside a small percentage of shares for the workers in privatised industries. Bob Hawke is thinking of doing the same.

But many workers have pressing financial problems and have to sell their shares quickly. The myth of a new "popular capitalism" under Thatcher was exploded



Hawke's new Labor vision?

last month by a report that showed more Britons own shares now, the vast bulk are in fewer hands than ever. The rest are spread "almost as thinly as is possible".

WHAT OF THE public sector? The left is generally much less critical here. Consider a paper produced by the public service union ACOA last year, which listed "five good reasons to support a strong public sector".

"It provides essential services such as water, electricity, telecommunications" says the paper. But in the United States, these have all been provided by private companies for years, and not always less efficiently.

The paper goes on to say the government sector "makes the economy more stable" through its demand for goods and services, public spending to stimulate the economy during recessions, and its role as "independent arbitrator and regulator". But government buying and spending have not prevented a decade and a half of high unemployment and inflation.

As for the role of "independent arbitrator", any aware trade unionist knows the government takes sides when worker and employer interests clash. You only have to watch the police attack a picket line to see whose.

"The public sector provides employment" and "provides training", says the paper. So does BHP through its recruiting and training programs. So do the Master Builders Association. And are we really so keen to sponsor the hiring and training activities of government bodies like ASIO and the army?

Finally the paper tells us that the public sector "puts people before profits". Here I really wonder whether the ACOA leaders are joking. As I write, the public service is trying to absorb 3000 jobs, government aircraft factory workers have been sacked in a union-busting exercise, and the NSW government is pushing ahead with its environmentally destructive monorail.

Some might respond that the public sector at least provides better services than private enterprise, and sometimes this is true. Despite lousy funding, public hospitals do a better job than private ones in dealing with serious illness and injury. Telecom, Australian Airlines and the Commonwealth Bank are pretty efficient and successful — in fact, that's why private interests want to buy

them.

Yet other government agencies are notoriously inefficient and bureaucratic. You only need to apply for a passport or try to get meaningful information under the Freedom of Information Act to see how ponderously the wheels of the capitalist state can turn.

So it is pointless to argue the merits of one sector against the other. In the long run, it's all capitalism and how it's arranged may or may not make much difference. A 1985 OECD study put it in a nutshell.

"There is no relationship between public sector size and economic performance, (and) little clear evidence of relationship between either the size or growth of government expenditure and economic performance or its deterioration."

THERE are three pressing reasons to fight the current privatisation proposals.

The first is that they go hand in hand with attacks on wages, working conditions and unions. Where unions have been able to use the greater economic stability of government enterprises to protect their members, transferring these enterprises to the private sector will make them more vulnerable. Workers will be told the company must perform or their jobs will be at risk.

Alternately, the threat of privatisation will be used to frighten government employees into making sacrifices or going quiet about important issues. This threat can only be removed by stopping the proposed sell-off.

The second is that once the privatised firms are operating in the free market, they will not maintain services that aren't profitable. Either they'll be cut out or charges will rise. In America, de-regulation of the telephone system led to soaring charges.

The third is that our taxes will go up. Many of the bodies likely to be sold, such as Telecom, make profits and contribute to consolidated revenue. That money will be lost to the government, and you can guess who'll end up paying.

Theoretically, the same amount of money might be raised by sensible investment of the cash gained from the sale. In practice, the government is almost certain to give in to pressure from big business to sell its assets off cheap. (Just as Margaret Thatcher sold off British Telecom at a third of its market value.)

In the struggle against these immediate threats, we need to keep the bigger picture in mind. To solve the economic problems facing capitalism, we need alternatives that point beyond both the free market and the existing state structures.

Only by taking control of the industries we work in can we rebuild the economy and society so that production is democratically planned to meet real human needs. When workers labour for the good of themselves and their families, free of the tyranny of the boss, productivity will skyrocket in a way that neither the lash of competition nor bureaucratic regulation could ever ensure.

That will take a revolutionary change in society. As we fight for that change, the private capitalists and the institutions of their state will be united against us, as always.

— Richard Emerson

SOCIALIST ACTION

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Socialism

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

Revolution, not Reformism

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

A Mass Workers' Party

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

Internationalism

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

Liberation from Oppression

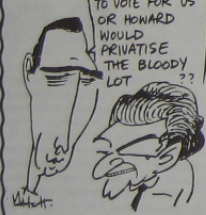
We fight for liberation and against the oppression of women, blacks, migrants and gays. All of these forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. The fight against them is an essential part of building a united revolutionary movement. They can only be ended through ending capitalism and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

Socialist Action

We are for Socialist Action. It's no good just talking about the world; the point is to change it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only useful if they are an essential part of the struggle. In the unions, social guides to activists are movements and wherever people are fighting for a better world, socialists are fighting for the better, the fight. If that's where you think of be, join us today!

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 9

REMEMBER WHEN WE TOLD 'EM TO VOTE FOR US OR HOWARD WOULD PRIVATISE THE BLOODY LOT ??



FOR PRIVATE JOKES...

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Thursdays: 7.30 pm
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for location

Canberra
Mondays: 6.00
Board Room,
ANU Union

DISABILITY RIGHTS

THEY'VE occupied offices, sat in front of trams, picketed beauty contests and appeared in the media more times than you can count.

The struggles of PENI (People for Equality Not Institutionalisation) have drawn a lot of attention to issues concerning people with disabilities. PENI has taken on sheltered workshops paying \$40 or less a week for work in atrocious conditions, institutions shutting people off from the outside world to live a regimented life, lack of access to transport and other facilities, and a general attitude from society that people with disabilities are "not like us".

"PENI's about the first strong example of disability rights people being involved in a full-on struggle with the administration and the system, certainly in Australia," according to member Mark Manchev. "We knew the issues were there — it's just no-one had the guts to follow them through, and finally someone said 'Let's fight!'"

PENI began two years ago with a two-week picket of a sheltered workshop run by the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB).

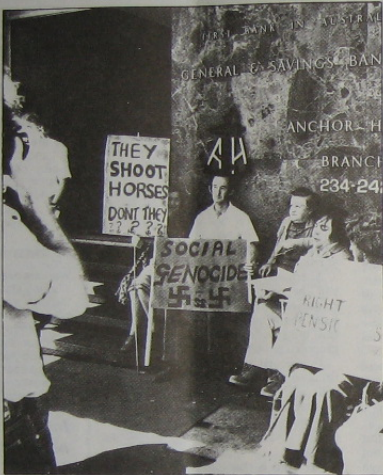
"The pay was really low, the conditions in the factory were really poor — it was a fire hazard — the administration were being quite oppressive towards the people working in the place, and also we wanted a public enquiry into how the RVIB's school at Burwood was being run," says Mark Manchev.

There had been reports of mistreatment, sexual harassment, and interference by staff in pupils' friendships at the school. The picketers were also concerned about the advertising used by the RVIB.

The "Blind Workers Union" already existed in the factory, but it was worse than useless. Anybody that joined the picket line was expelled from this "union". PENI was formed as a "human rights, anti-institutional organisation", says Mark, to carry on the fight when the BWU wouldn't.

With a one day picket of 90 people in November, which saw six arrests, this first PENI campaign won CPI increases for the RVIB workers, as well as an enquiry into the RVIB which found in PENI's favour.

This PENI is for more than small change



Disability rights picketers: "We're people too!"

INSTITUTIONS for people with disabilities grew up along with the industrial revolution last century.

They provided an opportunity for the wealthy to do "good works" for the "less fortunate" — and at the same time gain a source of cheap labour. It was supposed to be a great act of generosity to provide work for these people, even if you did make a profit from it.

While other workers have managed to better their conditions since last century, this "doing them a favour" mentality has largely prevented their gains being passed on to those in sheltered workshops.

At the same time, the daily life of people with disabilities in institutions has bred a dependence that has left them ill-equipped to fight for themselves.

As their name indicates, this "institutionalisation" is PENI's biggest hate. Their message is that people with disabilities are

'deaf' or 'blinds' walking around," says Mark.

PENI members were arrested last year when they picketed the Spastic Society's Miss Victoria Quest for "using people with beautiful bodies to raise money for people who have so-called 'ugly' bodies". It was a prime example of how institutions' advertising promotes stereotypes, in this case sexual ones as well.

"What PENI's all about is making sure people become educated," says Mark. "Protests are going to educate people because they're going to get on the media." PENI offers the media "a fairly spectacular show of force and strength" with its protests, and "once they've filmed the action they'll listen to what we're saying, basically because it's novel to them."

Mark acknowledges the limitations of this approach. "I don't know how long it's going to last, because sooner or later we may not be a phenomenon any more to be taken any notice of."

Mark also sees very real impediments to integration, in particular the pressure on governments to cut spending, that even the best program of education can't remove. A change in the system is needed to do that.

ONE of PENI's strengths is this growing realisation that struggling on disability issues alone is not enough.

"PENI's trying now to broaden its horizons into issues like the Aboriginal Rights Solidarity campaign, women's rights, unionism, anti-nuclear and environment movements. It's not just a matter of fighting our issues because all the issues are linked into the same system," says Mark.

So PENI members have been attending meetings on these issues, going to demos and visiting picket lines.

The next step is activity aimed specifically at getting rid of the system itself. Several PENI members are now starting to take that step, attending meetings of Socialist Action and other socialist groups.

According to Mark, people with disabilities "have got a very poor public image — an image of not being able to do anything for ourselves, an image of not being able to cope, of having help all the time".

PENI has done a lot to dispel that image. We can only hope the solidarity that PENI has shown to other groups is well understood as they continue their struggle.

— Robert Stainsby

BLACK RIGHTS



Black anger rises over deaths

"BLACK people are being arrested, tried and executed in one night. Being arrested can be a death sentence!"

Those angry words came from Rose Wanganecan of the Committee to Defend Black Rights at a public meeting in Brisbane on August 23. They were echoed the very next day as several hundred demonstrators chanted "No more hangings!" marched on the Brisbane CIB.

On average, one Aborigine has been reported dead in police or prison custody every fortnight this year. More than half of the deaths have been in Queensland.

Now, it seems not even the belated announcement of a Royal Commission can stem the anger that blacks rightly feel about the continual deaths at police hands.

The Brisbane marchers wanted to confront the Police Commissioner himself about the constant harassment and bashings of blacks. Speakers at the rally beforehand said that it was now "payback time". The day before, occupiers had taken over the Department of Aboriginal Affairs office to demand funding for after-hours Aboriginal legal service workers.

On Monday 31 August, the Rosalie dance cases began to be heard. Early this year, large numbers of police invaded an orderly black social at Rosalie with guns, batons and dogs. Close to 70 people were arrested, many being subsequently charged with offences of the "Bringing your head into violent contact with a policeman's boot" variety.

Much of the demonstrators' anger came from a repeat performance on August 22, when eleven carloads of police bashed people clearing up after a 21st birthday party at the Annerley RSL Hall.

The police were obviously feeling on the defensive after that incident. About 150 officers stood by lamely as the marchers chanted and sat in the road. At the meeting with the police we were told, for what it's worth, that there will be no more harassment of blacks at social functions.

POLICE violence against blacks has been around for a long time.

The Committee to Defend Black Rights (CDBR) is focussing attention on recent deaths. But Rose Wanganecan says, "People have been coming to us about deaths they know of in the 'fifties and sixties."

The coming Royal Commission is unlikely to change things much. Helen Boyle of the CDBR says, "The Australian government wants to wash its hands clean quickly of the Aboriginal blood that has been shed as a result of the colonial system that it administers."

The Commission is odd in its constitution in being a joint Federal/State one. It will only cover the period from January 1980 to July 1988, during which there have been 45 reported deaths in custody to date, and has a time limit of ten months.

(Helen Boyle believes the true figure is 78 deaths.)

It is quite unclear whether any of the Commission's recommendations over that ten months will be implemented, whether coronial inquiries will be held in states like Queensland where they are not compulsory, or whether cases will be reopened. Rose Wanganecan

reminded the Brisbane public meeting of the notorious case of John Pat, who "was brutally beaten to death four years ago in W.A. and the five police involved were acquitted" by an all-white jury.

Bob Hawke's main response so far has been that he "doesn't want it to be an unnecessarily expensive exercise". The recent Royal Commission into the Azaria Chamberlain case cost \$26 million, so it will be interesting to see how much Hawke thinks should be allocated to investigating 45 black deaths.

Even if, as seems unlikely, funds are made available for proper consultation with communities and relatives and the terms of reference are broadened, as the CDBR wants, to include "what led up to the deaths in custody, the brutality, what happens before a person is imprisoned", the Commission may well turn out to be the whitewash that many blacks fear.

Other Royal Commissions have a history of their findings being ignored. A notable example was the National Hotel Royal Commission which found corruption and involvement in gambling and prostitution.

CAMPAIGNERS against police brutality and harassment are building up a momentum that will not be broken by the Royal Commission anyway.

There will be a National Day of Action on September 28, the anniversary of John Pat's death. In Brisbane, there will be a march to the Windmill in Wickham Terrace, from which Aborigines were publicly hung last century.

Charles Perkins spoke after

the Brisbane march of the need for changes in race relations before Expo 88 in Brisbane. He was expressing the black movement's power to hit back at the economic showpiece of the Queensland government, which has fostered racism as part of the process of appropriating black land and selling it off to whites.

But it is not just Queensland racism that black anger is aimed at. During next year's Bicentenary, the issue of racial oppression will be posed throughout Australia by an increasingly militant black population. We are just seeing the first rumblings at the moment in Gundawindi, in Brewarrina and in Brisbane.

The red on the land rights flag symbolises 200 years of Aboriginal blood that has sunk into the soil.

Black demands next year for self-determination will be backed by every serious socialist. The key initial demands are for genuine land rights, compensation, more adequate services, and initiatives to combat institutionalised racism.

Workers sickened by the continuing deaths of Aborigines in custody can help in hitting back by taking up these issues in their unions.

The power is there to throw off the murderous grip of racist oppression, if we want to use it.

— Carole Ferrer

MY SON GOT LITE FOR DEATH AND MURDER

MY SON GOT DEATH FOR LITING AND DISORDERLY



CHARLES PERKINS SPOKE AFTER

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Defend Moses Mayekiso

SYDNEY branch of Socialist Action has been active in the Free Moses Mayekiso Committee, which is part of a worldwide campaign to free the jailed black South African union leader.

Filly opponents of apartheid picketed South African Airways on August 22 in support of Mayekiso, who is facing a possible death penalty on charges arising out of the Alexandra township rebellion in 1985.

Mayekiso's trial has now been postponed till late September, and another picket is scheduled for the Town Hall steps at 10 am on Saturday 12 September.

SEQEB film

AT QUEENSLAND University Socialist Action, along with the student union and the Democratic Rights Activists Club, is holding the Brisbane premiere of Tom Zubrick's film on the SEQEB strike, *Friends Or Enemies*.

Those looking for serious socialist analysis may be disappointed. But there is plenty of good footage.

Friends Or Enemies will screen at the Schoneil Theatre at 7:30 pm on Thursday 24 September. There will be wine and coffee afterwards, and a discussion with Tom Zubrick, George Georges and SEQEB striker Bernie Neville.

Day School

CANBERRA branch of Socialist Action will be holding a Day School on Sunday October 4 at Dickson Community Centre.

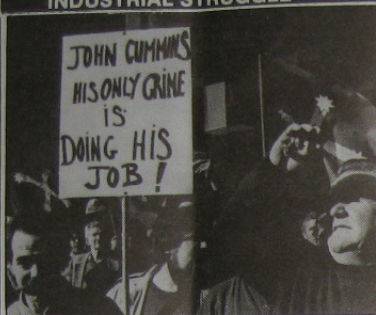
Talks will give a good all-round introduction to Socialist Action's politics, and there will be plenty of opportunity for discussion. All readers in the Canberra area are welcome — for further details phone 31 3729 (ah).

New Pamphlet

SOCIALIST ACTION has a new pamphlet out on the epic Victorian nurses' strike of last year.

The pamphlet is entitled *Dedication Doesn't Pay the Rent*, and in Liz Ross examines the growing militancy of nurses and the experiences of the strike. Cost is \$1.95 (\$2 posted).

Also recently out by Liz Ross is *Industrial Democracy Or Workers' Control*, a pamphlet examining recent "worker participation" schemes and why socialist reject them. In the light of recent attempted mass sackings at the Melbourne's Government Aircraft Factory, one held up as a model of such schemes, it is timely reading. Cost is 30c (60c posted).



BLF rally over Cummins' jailing last year

Employers jail BLF organiser

LEADING Melbourne BLF organiser John Cummins has spent two weeks in gaol on contempt of court charges, and faces the prospect of more.

His crime? Doing his job by visiting members on building sites.

Two big construction firms, Lewis and Costain, got a court writ banning him from their sites. This writ was never actually served on Cummins, and he was tried in his absence.

Faced with the option of going underground, and so still being unable to carry out his duties as an organiser, Cummins gave himself up to police at Riverside Quay, a Costain site, in front of a rally of 500 BLF members and supporters.

The BLF has been a thorn in the side of Costain and Lewis for ages. Last year, Costain's victimisation of militants led to crane occupations on two sites, followed by pickets for most of the year. In this year's wage campaign, workers at Costain and Lewis sites preferred to follow the BLF's lead and take industrial action, rather than rely on the BWIU and arbitration.

So the employers want to get rid of Cummins. Since deregistration has failed to kill the BLF, they are now trying to luff off one of its main leaders.

Cummins has received formal support from the state ALP conference and Trades Hall Council, who called for immediate action. What form that might take is yet to be seen.

GAF that their own good would be served by giving the jobs back. Within minutes of getting the notices, the workers were out on strike. They stayed out for 14 days, until the bosses agreed to reinstate everyone and negotiate about redundancies.

The workers got no warning of what was coming. While the shop committee was wondering why management was late for a meeting to discuss future plans, the bosses were handing out dismissal slips with one hour's grace. "Pack up your things and get out now," was the instruction.

Labor's May economic statement slated GAF, renamed Aerospace Technologies of Australia (ATA), for privatisation. According to Beazley, ATA — now totally government owned but with plans to sell off 30% of its shares — was "set up to operate on market lines".

A new management was brought in at the end of July, a management report commissioned, and on August 14 the axe fell. Fully 90% of the shop stewards and other militants were among those sacked.

Workers on the picket lines said that the sackings did not even make management sense. Sections which were already understaffed and unable to meet orders were being pruned further. Since most of GAF's work uses the world's most modern equipment, the motive could not be to introduce new technology either.

GAF, along with Williams-ton Naval Dockyard where workers were similarly attacked in 1986, was once meant to be a model of "industrial democracy". This trendy notion of workers' control and the workers' getting together in their common interest is now a bad joke at GAF.

A shop steward commented that for workers, the real issue was their rights. "When you've got that, you can start talking about industrial democracy or anything else." But his members had a long way to go to get their rights first.

The Naval Dockyards and the Ordnance Factory went out for a day in sympathy, and the wharves, nearby factories and other government workers backed the strikers financially.

Now the task is to maintain the initial victory. Management is bound to keep the pressure on. When I went down to the picket line on the last day and congratulated them on winning, one of the picketers replied, "Don't ever be afraid of going out for workers' rights. But if we don't consolidate on this backdown, you'll be next."

Liz Ross

SACKINGS



GAF bosses' big gaffe

NOT ONLY are wage cuts in our interest — it seems that getting the sack is too!

Or so Defence Minister Kim Beazley would have us believe.

"It's for your own good," he told negotiators for 2000 workers at the Government Aircraft Factory (GAF) in Port Melbourne, who were hit with 514 sackings last month.

The workers showed Beazley's new management at

When Chile's bosses went on strike

IN OCTOBER 1972, Chile was paralysed by a great strike movement. The shops were closed, factories were idle, transport did not run.

One thing was unusual about this. It was Chile's bosses who were on strike — the shop and factory owners, not the workers; the lorry owners, not the drivers. It was a strike by right-wing forces against the reforming Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende, elected two years before. It was an attack, not only on the government and its policies but on the growing strength and confidence of the working class movement.

But far from cowering the workers, the strike opened up a period of struggle in which the Chilean working class glimpsed — briefly and at a distance — its own power and the possibility of a real socialist revolution.

Closed shops meant no food and the workers' first task was to prevent themselves starving. Angry crowds forced many shops to stay open. GAF and opened the shops themselves. Fair prices were set and rationing was imposed where necessary.

In the factories, the bosses' offers to pay workers for the duration of the close-down were fiercely rejected. Managers who would not manage were removed and the workers took over, electing committees to co-ordinate production. Where the bank accounts were frozen and the factories had no cash, workers arranged to trade for raw materials and spare parts to keep operations going.

A worker in a Santiago packing plant described it this way: "The bosses aren't going to tell us what to do... So we opened the stores, took out the raw materials, and just kept on producing — production didn't stop here for a single moment... You can see people working with real joy."

Teams of workers seized whatever trucks they could find and delivered food and other essentials to the shops and materials to the factories. Defence squads protected shops, workplaces and neighbourhoods from sabotage and violence by gangs of right-wing thugs.

When the doctors joined the strike, medical students and



Taking over: Chilean workers meet to run their factory during the 1972 crisis

hospital workers set up health clinics, often in the hospitals, to maintain services. They proudly claimed that the quality of service was better than was usually provided.

ALL THIS activity needed to be co-ordinated, and it was the workers themselves who took up this task.

Government price-watch committees (JAPs) had been set up some months before. They suddenly became the focus for all sorts of activists. Housewives' committees, squatters' and tenants' unions, student groups gathered together around the JAPs arguing, experimenting, and making decisions.

In the factories more and more decisions fell to the workers' committees — not just how to maintain production but what to produce, how much to sell it for, whether the boss should be allowed to return at the end of the strike.

In the course of the month-long crisis the local committees began to come together, uniting in district-wide bodies called *comandos* or *cordones*. These bodies took on the task of co-ordinating activities that went beyond the individual factory or neighbourhood.

A woman activist described how her *sluim's comando* worked:

"We hold general assemblies on the smallest questions [for there are fronts for printing and propaganda, health, defence,

and provisions. Delegates from each group of dwellings take part in all the fronts."

There were ten interfactory *cordones* in Santiago alone, and dozens of community *comandos*. Outside the capital, the main cities and many rural areas had the same sort of bodies.

THE STRENGTH of this inspired, the loyalty it inspired, and the numbers who got involved grew day by day.

Among the working class the effect was electric. People who had passively accepted poverty, homelessness, and the orders of bosses and petty officials suddenly began to run their own workplaces, their communities and their lives. Women, especially, showed their real strength, playing a leading role in the *comandos* and often being the most militant section of the workforce.

The ruling class began to panic. Their strike had not weakened the working class but strengthened it. Workers were starting to move towards a defensive measures towards a real challenge for power. The bosses called off the strike, accepting a compromise from the government. For many, this signalled the end of the need for the *comandos* and the *cordones*. The emergency was over and things could return to normal.

But for large numbers of workers, the lesson learnt was quite different. It was they who

had defeated the strike, not the government.

"If we had not been prepared, if we had not been ready, our comrade president would have had to pack his bags... But we were there, producing, transporting, guarding, distributing, organising so the country wouldn't shut down. We were there for the twenty-seven days of the crisis... it was the physical presence of millions of workers that kept him in power."

Many *comandos* and *cordones* went into decline until a new ruling class offensive the following May. Then they returned at an even higher level of organisation.

TRAGICALLY, while many *comandos* and *cordones* saw the need to arm themselves, they were not able to convince this, or of the need to take state power for itself.

Meanwhile, Allende kept shipments of arms sent over by Cuba undistributed in the basement of the presidential palace. In September, the ruling class played its last and most deadly card.

This time, the generals and not the bosses took action. The *comandos* and *cordones* were not able to convince thousands of union activists were shot in Santiago stadium. Unarmed, the working class was helpless.

Chile was placed under a brutal military dictatorship which has survived to this day.

—Graham Willet

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 13

LAST MONTH this column argued that bosses, as a class, were dispensible.

Work would be much better if workers ran it themselves, and could elect (and recall) their supervisors.

But what about outside the workplace? There are plenty of political leaders, not to mention judges, generals and bureaucrats, equally prepared to boss us around.

From warmongers like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher down to local "public figures" of the ilk of Job Bjelke Petersen and Bruce Ruxton, they are a pretty unappealing lot. So are their pseudo-left alternatives, from sell-outs like Bob Hawke and Simon Crean to mass murderers like Pol Pot.

Little wonder that there is widespread cynicism about leaders of every description.

You hear it even in pop songs nowadays, starting with The Who's bitter *Won't Get Fooled Again* and Bob Dylan's cryptic warning, "Don't follow leaders, watch the parking meters."

A vocal anarchist section of the Left has long opposed having any leaders, or even a political party that might throw leaders up.



BUT THERE IS one sort of leader that is crucial to the working class movement.

I'll never forget a strike in a municipal depot of about 70 workers that I once reported for a now-defunct leftwing newspaper. Leading the strike was a garbo whom I interviewed in a pub.

After I'd turned off my tape recorder, he grinned and said, "You know, there's only three of them that I'd call the militants. The rest of them call us the commos. But whenever there's any trouble, guess who they come running to for advice."

At every union meeting, in every works canteen, there are a few such militants who understand that there is a class war, that bosses will concede just as much as the workers are prepared to fight back.

Sometimes, like our garbo, they are elected shop steward — often by default. Sometimes they are quite isolated until their advice suddenly makes sense in a crisis. Their day-to-day leadership in a million flareups over safety, overtime break times, or whatever, does more to defend workers' living standards than all the ACTU documents ever published.

Such militants often have quite a leftwing outlook already.

"Don't follow leaders, watch parking meters"

Our garbo, for example, was in the Socialist Left of the ALP.

The ambition of Marxists is to unite these real shopfloor leaders of the working class into a revolutionary party, along with activists fighting a similar fight on the campuses, in the communities, and amongst oppressed groups.

MARXISTS sometimes call this strategy "building a vanguard party".

Such jargon is often misunderstood as implying an elitist notion of leadership. When I first joined a socialist group, an anarchist acquaintance came up and sneered, "How's the vanguard of the working class today?" (He's now a union bureaucrat, by the way.)

Some deluded leftwing groupies foster this misunderstanding. They declare

themselves, with all of 50 or 100 members, to be "the revolutionary vanguard" or to be "building the party from the top down".

In reality, the term "vanguard party" is a recognition of two things. Firstly, that there is a vanguard of the working class already in existence — the scattered militants and activists we have mentioned who already lead in a fragmented way from time to time.

Secondly, that united into a party with a revolutionary goal, these militants — with their roots throughout society — could have an impact not just in their own small arenas, but on the consciousness of the entire working class. A total impact far greater than the sum of the individual parts at present.

So while the ALP's left once dreamed of capturing 50.1% of

the vote for socialism at the next election, revolutionaries have a much more patient approach. Our aim is to organise the militant minority of on-the-ground working-class leaders and potential leaders into a fighting, campaigning party first.

WOULDN'T such a party then tend to throw up its own leaders, as our anarchist friends fear?

Of course it would. And we would welcome the fact. Leaders like Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, James Connolly have made enormous contributions to socialist ideas and struggle.

Even our local anarchists have had their leaders, after all — people like Wendy Bacon, now a prominent journalist, and Brisbane's Brian Laver. The point is neither to make a cult of leaders, nor, like the anarchists, to pretend they don't exist, but to submit them to democratic control so that they cannot lead by mere sway of personality or clique following. We are for a party that elects its leaders, tests out their ideas in practice, and allows them to be fully and democratically challenged.

So, unlike many stalinised Communist parties, we also fully support the right of minorities to form factions.

Democratic rules alone, though, are not enough. The ALP is formally democratic, even allowing its left to publish its own newspapers. But because it hopes for reform to be handed down by a few MPs, the bulk of the party is hopelessly inactive except at election time. The MPs can do what they like.

That is why the best guarantee against bureaucratic leaders is having an active membership that is fully involved in grassroots struggle.

It is also no accident that dictatorial "leftwing" leaders like Castro, Pol Pot and Mao came to power with a passive working class, basing themselves instead on guerrilla armies raised among the more backward peasantry. Stalin only took power in Russia after the working class had been invaded by civil war and invasion.

That is why a fighting working class must be at the centre of our politics.

After all, the bureaucrats who lead our unions always get our most torrid time from workers who are on strike. Workers who hardly stand for being led by the nose by party bureaucrats at night either.

— Ken Stevens

Working hard for the money

BROTHEL keepers have had a good press lately.

We've had self-indulgent reminiscences from the madam at Sydney's "Touch Of Class", and a movie based on a British madam's story. Brothels, it seems, are just good, clean, dirty fun.

Lizzie Borden's new movie *Working Girls* disagrees. It takes the prostitute's point of view, following Molly (Louise Smith) through a day in a Manhattan brothel. Inspired by the argument of prostitutes' unions that prostitutes are workers too, *Working Girls* is a sensitive and witty attack on their exploitation.

Molly's day begins like any other worker's — alarm clock, breakfast, and the dash to work. Only when we meet her workmates do we realise what she does.

Working Girls immediately dispels the rightwing notion of prostitutes as Fallen Women. Molly has two degrees, Gina is saving to buy a boutique, and Mary wants to send her boy to a private school. Even Dawn the one "brazen hussy" amongst them, is doing a college course. All have their dignity, yet all are eminently believable as prostitutes.

So why do they do it? As a recent Victorian inquiry found, prostitution is not just a way out for pariahs and the poor, but, paradoxically, a way up for women who have few other career paths open to them in a sexist society. As Mary says, "I just thought this would be better than typing."

Lucy, the avaricious madam, is out shopping, so the women start work without her. They set their own limits. Dawn won't comply with one client's demands, and when he turns snaky, they collectively see him out. Together, they fiddle the books to reduce Lucy's 50% take.

So much for another myth, that of prostitutes as mere victims. (A myth as common as the left, even last month, I read a leftwing newspaper which put prostitution on a par with rape.) Street prostitutes, working alone, are vulnerable to violent clients, pimps, police, disease and the drug trade.

Before she turns up, a double shift. Before she turns up, the johns as equals. Afterwards, she peddles them as merchandise. After her long day, Molly works out the profit. Lucy has minority work, the streets (just 5% in Melbourne, for example). In brothels, *Working Girls* shows, conditions are different and solidarity is possible.

The job is still oppressive. But, *Working Girls* argues, in much the same way as many other "women's jobs".

Molly is able to disconnect herself from the physical indignities. She takes a very view of the men, and a business-like approach to nudity. This ability to disconnect emotionally is necessary for her to survive in the job. A friend of mine who worked in a massage parlour could not master it; she quit after a month because she could not bear to touch her boyfriend after touching her clients.

What makes the job oppressive for Molly is having to humour the men who are pigs. Like a receptionist or air hostess, she must remain doe-eyed and sweet no matter how tired she is and how crass they are.

The beauty of *Working Girls* is that Borden conveys this without making it an anti-male tirade. The "johns" (clients) have standard male hang-ups, and Borden seems to agree with Gina Steinem: sex roles imprison them too, the only difference is that their cells have wall-to-wall carpets.

We meet Neil, who is too shy and insecure to play the male aggressor in the real world. Molly is his escape from inadequacy. We meet Bongo, who often sees every woman in the place but never comes. The brothel is his way of coping with the incompatible male roles of stud and loyal husband. Some women brag to try and impress the johns with their wealth. Others plead with Molly to see them on the outside — they want their pliant fantasy woman to replace reality, not just to coexist with it.

But Borden stays with the women. Because Lucy, the gashly madam (and the spark of the whole movie), is the cause of most of their problems.

Lucy is a human cash register, coated in treacle. Smarmy to the clients, her greeting of "Hi, what's new and different?" makes "Have a nice day" sound positively sincere. Manipulative to her workers, she snaps her fingers like castanets at Dawn and a browbeats Molly into a double shift.

Before she turns up, the johns as equals. Afterwards, she peddles them as merchandise. After her long day, Molly works out the profit. Lucy has minority work, the streets (just 5% in Melbourne, for example). In brothels, *Working Girls* shows, conditions are different and solidarity is possible.



A *Working Girls* day (clockwise from top left): Gina works on her forehead, Dawn takes five, Molly lizes up, Dawn tells off the boys

relief, but we suspect she will be back.

This is a complex and subtle movie. It suggests what is really wrong with prostitution, but above all defends prostitutes. That is as it should be, for until we remove the social causes of prostitution, attacks on it often feed into attacks on its practitioners.

In aspects — script, acting, direction and politics *Working Girls* is an admirable advance on Lizzie Borden's first film, a crude anti-male sneer at a future socialist America entitled *Born In Flames*.

Working Girls works. It deserves to be seen.

— Alec Kahn

TELEVISION

Callan's callous world

THE fossilised bones of Callan are rattling across our screens once more.

But behind its 1960s sidburns and miniskirts lies a contemporary relevance. Callan reveals that, far from being relevant keystone cops, the clownish private police of any class society

are a vital and dangerous staple.

The human and moral meatgrinder of Callan suggests why Whitehall is trying to suppress the memoirs of ex-MI5 agent Peter Wright. It is not the "national interest" that might be exposed, but the role of British spooks in preserving a fundamentally undemocratic society.

In Callan's Cold War field of espionage, innocent Britons who know too much are killed or "persuaded" to keep quiet.

Callan, unlike his callous boss Hunter and arrogant sidekick Cross, has some human touches. He genuinely abhors cold-blooded killing, and even falls in love with an upper-class female victim he must silence. But he pulls the trigger when it comes to the political test, and he treats the petty criminal Lonely as just a tool of the trade, though rather more roughly than his Magnum.

Callan is an anti-hero. He has not been through the Hollywood whitewash that FBI has. His job perverts what it is supposed to defend. In the final clashes to defend. In the final clashes to defend, there are no moral winners, there are no overt ruling classes they work for.

— Phil Shannon

After Clifton Hill, the cop-out

PARDON a tortured metaphor. But when the media gets into a flap, it means the chickens are coming home to roost.

So it is with the Clifton Hill and Hungerford massacres. The usual non-solutions to crime have been aired, while the underlying social causes are ignored.

Inevitably, we've had calls to bring back hanging. Just why this would have prevented either massacre, no-one has yet explained.

Anyone who goes on a shooting spree probably has a death wish themselves, since most mass killers are shot by police. Indeed, Michael Ryan, the Hungerford killer, saved police the trouble by shooting himself. So hanging will hardly deter them.

Nor is there evidence that hanging deters more common criminals. Pseudo-socialist China executes thousands of them, yet crime is rising there too. Social conditions are the key, not the severity of the penalty.

Some studies even suggest that hanging may produce more murders. After all, if you commit a crime that will earn you the death penalty, your best bet is to kill witnesses too.

There is the problem, too, of which class administers the death penalty and to what end. Delbert Tibbs, a US negro who spent three years on Death Row for a murder for which he was framed, put it in a nutshell:

"If you have the death penalty you cannot help but use it capriciously, because judges are capricious and often illogical and highly prejudiced. They cannot be trusted with such an ultimate sanction."

MORE liberal circles reject hanging. Some prefer gun control. Victoria is already tightening gun laws in the wake of Clifton Hill.

Yet everyone admits that Michael Ryan at Hungerford and Julian Knight, the man accused of the Clifton Hill massacre, would have passed any gun control test.

Victoria tightened up its gun laws four years ago, with no apparent impact on the murder rate. Britain has Europe's toughest gun laws, but they did not stop Michael Ryan. And Britain is hardly a less murderous society as a result — as European soccer fans will testify.

So gun control is no solution. One aspect of it is even quite dangerous to the working class.



Hungerford massacre survivor: more state power won't help.

Effectively enforced, it gives the army and police a monopoly on arms in any revolutionary crisis. As Chile's workers found to their cost in 1973, you then get mass murder on a grand scale.

The other liberal nostrum being proposed is a crackdown on "video violence". Advocates point to Michael Ryan's "Flambo" gear, and argue that our diet of violence in the media is brutalising us.

Now I would not mourn the passing of rightwing rubbish like *Flambo*. But the contribution that "video violence" makes to crime is still far from proven. Even advocates of a ban admit that a person must first be susceptible for other reasons, which a ban will hardly remove.

On the other hand, such measures give the state dangerous new powers of censorship. What is to then stop a government banning film of the system's own crimes — say, news footage of South African police whipping blacks or documentaries on the Holocaust? Such images are as brutal as any fiction. And don't think they would not do it. Remember how factual sex manuals were once banned under the "obscenity" laws?

LIBERALS clutch at such non-solutions to avoid confronting the fundamental institutions of the system.

One is the military. Four of the five most recent publicized mass murders have involved men with military training.

Julian Knight, arrested at Clifton Hill, had been at Duntroon. Michael Ryan, had served in a paratroop regiment. Pat Sherrill, the US postal worker who killed 15 workmates, was a Vietnam veteran. So was the ex-

paratrooper who killed 28 people in Bogota, Columbia.

Military training teaches you to kill lots of people in a hurry and without remorse. It is brutalising in other ways too. Julian Knight, it seems, was picked on relentlessly at Duntroon until he tried to knife an officer and was thrown out.

But liberals cannot question the existence of the military. The ruling class needs its brutalising young men to fight other ruling classes, and if necessary, its own workers.

Then there is unemployment. Again, it is a common thread amongst recent mass killers. Michael Ryan had been mostly unemployed for several years. Pat Sherrill had just been sacked from his job. So had James Huberty, the Californian security guard who killed 21 people in a McDonald's restaurant. Julian Knight, of course, had been sacked from Duntroon.

More generally, a Victorian study of 1000 recent court cases found that 20% of defendants were unemployed, when unemployment was 8%. Unemployment is long recognised as a cause of crime, but it goes into the "too hard" basket for liberals, because it is essential to the system.

EVEN MORE basic is the problem of alienation.

Marx long ago described the alienation of workers from control over their labour. That alienation extends to every facet of life under capitalism.

Public life is impoverished. For most of us, it means marking a ballot paper every three years and having politicians lie to us in between. Not only work is hateful, but increasingly, even getting there and back. Public



with Alec Kahn

transport is overcrowded and so are the freeways — Los Angeles citizens have now started shooting each other in traffic jams.

For adults, the only relief is home and the TV. There, at least, they have power over children and over things. Juveniles do not have even that, unless they form gangs or take to burglary. And so the burglary rate is soaring, much faster than the murder rate, and the prime factor is juvenile burglary.

The most obvious expression of alienation is drugs. Here we get the ultimate madness — to defend the work ethic, capitalism criminalises drug addicts. Outlawing drugs does not stop their use, it only raises their price, and drives young addicts to crime to feed their habits.

The nuclear family was supposed to hold crime in check, by instilling respect for authority. Today it is in decline, with single parent families increasing. So the Moralistic Right wants the family rehabilitated.

But the nuclear family is a lousy barrier against crime. It places too much pressure on two individuals to raise a child properly. If either parent is disturbed, the odds are that the child will be too. It also serves as a cover for the unspoken crimes — incest, child abuse and wife-bashing. It is the main site of all murders.

So socialists aim to tackle crime on all fronts. It will overthrow militarism, abolish unemployment with a planned economy, and end the alienation of work and public life as ordinary people take democratic control of their own affairs. Gradually, it will move towards communal rather than family raising of children.

Until then, the Clifton Hills and Hungerfords will go on, created by a system that is itself a crime.

THEY OUGHTA BRING BACK FLAGG, AND HANGING AND MAKE AUSTRALIA A SAFE COUNTRY TO LIVE IN... YOU KNOW... LIKE IRAN



SOCIALIST ACTION



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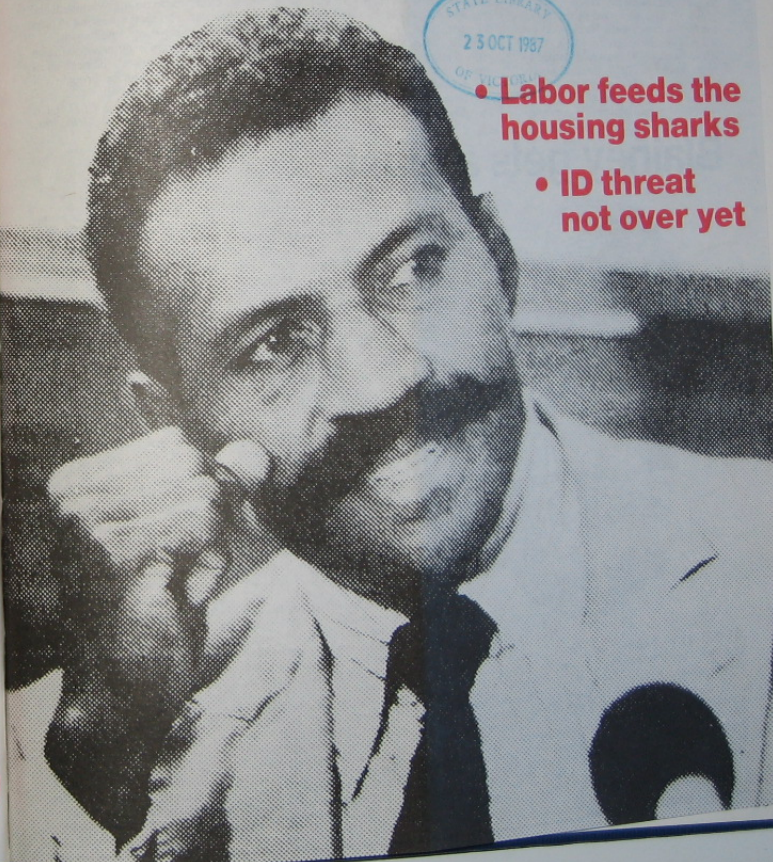
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FIJI'S BULLY BOY TIGHTENS HIS GRIP



• Labor feeds the housing sharks

• ID threat not over yet



Show some solidarity

In last month's Socialist Action we reviewed *Working Girls*, a film about prostitution.

It is a film that at last takes about the prostitutes as workers, with none of the social work rhetoric about providing a service for "unfortunate" men. And none of the crap about "hearts of gold" or fallen women.

It's a film about workers who have the same problems with the boss, pay and conditions as other workers do. As the review rightly points out, *Working Girls* takes the prostitutes view in a "sensitive and with attack on their exploitation."

And importantly, the film shows the camaraderie that develops in any job. But what both the film and the review leave out is any suggestion of how that camaraderie can develop into workers' solidarity and organisation against the boss.

When Dawn is attacked by the madam for her "attitude", when Molly works out just how much she gets ripped off, they're left on their own. Dawn is told to shape up or get another job. Molly threatens to quit.

While the other prostitutes might sympathise, there's no attempt to organise support, no suggestion that everyone should

SOCIALIST ACTION welcomes letters from readers. Please try to keep them under 300 words. We reserve all copyright in letters. P.O. Box 974, Brisbane, VIC 3056.

walk out.

Instead the film seems to imply that if the boss isn't around, the workers can exercise some real control over their job. And our review by Alec Kahn seems to agree.

But the problem for workers isn't whether the boss is physically present or not. Although the individual boss may be your immediate target, it's the capitalist relations of production that workers are really up against.

These can only be defeated in struggle. The film is supposed to be inspired by the prostitutes' unions, but it doesn't build on the unions' examples of workers' action. It's a shame that Alec doesn't address this point either.

Prostitutes have been organising in unions since the early seventies in the US and Europe. In 1975 prostitutes in Lyons occupied the church, with the support of the priest, to protest against police harassment, corruption and the brutal murders of brothel workers. And they got a lot of support from the local community.

There have been lots of other examples of

this kind of workers' militancy from the prostitutes' unions. Now a film that was inspired by this sort of action would really be a film that worked — in the interests of all workers!

LIZ ROSS,
Melbourne

Privatise Parliament

Why is the current "privatisation" debate limited to public utilities that serve some useful purpose? Why not privatise Parliament?

This institution seems to do little to further the public good and could, if privatised, become a great money-spinner for the country's ailing economy. Positions of power could be auctioned off to the highest bidder, and the funds used to offset the budget deficit.

Think of the massive cost-savings through elections becoming redundant, and the public purse no longer needing to meet self-determined payraises of politicians.

Why is the Government pussyfooting on this issue? Let's privatise Parliament, so its big business interests can be brought out into the open once and for all.

EVELYN FLITMAN,
Melbourne

Blainey gets a blast



GEOFFREY Blainey is peddling his "respectable" racism again.

On September 21, soon after losing the deanship of the Melbourne University history department, Blainey gave a public lecture at the University of Queensland. He argued to a rather small audience that

"Australians" must cultivate a militarist nationalism to ward off a supposed cultural and military threat from Aborigines and non-Europeans.

Since then, Blainey has made more racist rants under the pretext of commenting on the Constitutional Committee's proposed Bill of Rights for Migrants. Emerging as an

improbable champion of women's rights, he says he is concerned about female circumcision.

Blainey's public pronouncements provided an organizing focus for the far right. The publicity for the Queensland University lecture was a propaganda campaign in its own right. Reams of posters were pasted around the campus and Brisbane twice daily to replace those defaced by anti-racists.

On the day after the lecture, racist stickers suddenly appeared around town while the Brisbane press dutifully printed a synopsis of Blainey's speech. The stickers near construction sites featured the Eureka flag and read "Big Business wants cheap Asian labour. Oppose the New Right attack on Australian jobs." Another called for a boycott of companies that use Asians in their advertising. They were signed "National Action."

At the lecture itself, Blainey had to sneak in by a back entrance to avoid 50 angry demonstrators who were called together by Socialist Action and the Democratic Rights Activists Club.

The lecture organisers, St Leo's College, hastily locked the front door. An aboriginal P.D. student was refused admittance even though he was not part of the demonstration.

The demonstrators, a group of blacks, Asians, academics and activists, occasionally disrupted

the lecture by banging on windows and chanting " Asians in Blainey out!"

Security guards were overheard to be more concerned about the likely behaviour of Blainey's supporters than of his enemies. Sure enough, a large group of junior "brown-shirts" from St Leo's soon began to physically menace the demonstrators.

Pimpily racists like these sometimes grow up to be parliamentary ones. The federal government has moved to ban foreign ownership of houses. Paul Keating says that this is to take buying pressure out of the market and so reduce prices, even though estate agents are confident that local buyers will "take up the slack" and "maintain sales levels."

This is not about solving housing problems, but helping a privileged fraction of capital to profit from those problems. If acting in conjunction with racial prejudices can achieve that goal, he makes himself out to be Labor at the same time, then so much the better for Keating.

Guidelines for accepting immigrants as refugees have been tightened recently too. Geoffrey Blainey, it seems, is not the lonely voice in the wilderness that he makes himself out to be.

He may not be writing Labor's policies on race, culture and immigration. But his influence is starting to show.

Allan Gardiner

The ID threat: It's not over yet!

"THE IDENTITY card is dead. Long live the identity number."

So seems to be the result of John Stone and Ewart Smith's revelation of the hitch in the Australia Card legislation, despite all the press headlines declaring the card "Stone dead."

The lesser threat of having to carry and produce an ID card has receded. The greater threat of having each citizen tied irrevocably to a computer number, under which the state can assemble all data on them for any easy access, remains.

Arch-conservative John Stone's moment of glory in revealing the legislative hitch with the Australia Card was undeserved. In fact, as Melbourne left-winger and anti-ID activist Albert Langer pointed out, Stone performed a service to Hawke by exposing the hitch so hastily.

Once the Opposition knew about it, the need for a Senate approval for the card's starting date was always going to trip Labor up. By rushing to blurt this out and take the credit, Stone merely killed off the growing mass movement against the card before it could become aware of the wider danger of identity numbers.

This has played right into Hawke's hands. It has given him an easy retreat on the ID card on purely technical grounds, when he could never have won it politically anyway. The luncheon march of 40,000 people in Perth, which rocked premier Brian Burke's car and pelted it with tomatoes, was ample evidence of that. So was the swing in the polls to 50% opposition to the card.

Instead, Labor can now regroup around the proposal for an "upgraded tax file number". This proposal was very kindly provided to them by the Liberals and Democrats on the parliamentary joint select committee as an "alternative" to the Australia Card.

FROM a working class standpoint, an upgraded tax file number is just as insidious as Labor's original proposal.

At present, the tax file number is fairly innocuous, because it is just what it says — a number used only by the Tax Office to designate each taxpayer's records.

Upgrading the tax file number involves two things. The first is giving it "higher integrity" —



making sure that each taxpayer has one, and only one. The second is legislating to share it around. Or, in the words of the Opposition members of the joint select committee, ensuring

"that the use of the tax file number be extended to cover all the financial transactions proposed in the Government submission for use of the Australia Card made by the Australian Taxation Office, as well as for social security purposes."

In other words, you will have to give your tax file number to employers, banks, credit unions, government departments and so on.

One immediate consequence is that it will become almost impossible to work under a false name. Currently, it is legal to do this in Australia provided you do not do so for fraudulent purposes.

A considerable number of union activists rely on false names to get around employer blacklists. They will no longer be able to do so if they have to show a tax file number to get a job, unless they illegally obtain a second tax file number.

Another consequence is that working class tax dodging will become almost impossible.

John Elliott's Elders IXL can quite legally pay just 10 cents in the dollar tax on a \$40 million profit, and Robert Holmes a Court's Bell Group paid *nothing* on \$380 million profit. But no working class people will no longer be able to use false names to reduce 44% tax rates on their bank interest or second jobs, or the effective 50% tax rate on casual earnings while they are on miserable social security benefits.

Notwithstanding Labor's

morralizing about "fraud", socialists support the right of workers to take back what the system robs from their labour.

AN UPGRADED tax file number also has dire civil liberties implications. It will encourage the centralisation of data on individuals, and the sharing of that data, just as the Australia Card system would have done.

So the Liberals and Democrats, having climbed aboard the civil liberties bandwagon, have jettisoned some of the now-embarrassing baggage of their joint select committee recommendations.

They have not jettisoned the underlying politics, however. They are still happy to see Labor extract every last possible tax dollar from workers.

So their retreat from their previous position has been a retrograde one. The Liberals still support a higher integrity tax file number, with more rigorous checking of identity before you get one. They just don't want the number shared around too widely.

The Democrats, for their part,



Stone: deserves no credit

seem prepared to have the Tax Office and Social Security share tax file numbers to crack down on "fraud". But the very same argument can be used to extend the number's use to departments like Education (which pays out student allowances), and ultimately to employers (who pay out wages). Then — bingo! — you have an ID numbering system. The Democrats also seem prepared to accept a national birth, deaths and marriages register, something Labor has only proposed as a building block for a national ID system.

WITH allies like these, it is no surprise that the anti-ID movement has all but collapsed now. For all its success in arousing civil libertarian feeling against the Australia Card, its reliance on the Democrats, Liberals and other assorted rightwingers made it quite unable to put the class arguments against Labor's deeper motives.

As a result, Hawke has played on workers' resentment of tax dodging by the rich, when he has tax dodging by the poor. Two in three Labor voters are deceived enough to support the ID scheme as a means toward it.

Labor seems likely to revise the tax file number issue in the new year. Next time around, the anti-ID movement — or at least its left wing — cannot afford to rely on the Democrats, Liberals and other rightwing opportunists as allies.

It must strike at the heart of Hawke's support by highlighting the anti-working class intent of his scheme.

— Alec Kahn

Can Aquino survive?

DESPITE coup, desertion and assassination, the Aquino government staggers on in Manila.

Its survival is not due to its popularity, which is steadily waning, nor to its "firmness" in dealing with opponents. Mrs Aquino remains in the presidential palace because her administration is supported by powerful sections of the Filipino ruling class — for the moment.

The forces around Aquino came to power with the support of students, the poor, the educated middle class and the leaders of urban business. The capitalists in and around Manila were sick of the Marcos administration — its corruption and inefficiency, its sloppy attempts at state intervention (monopolising areas of the economy), its squandering of national resources.

They wanted a government which would support urban capital, build up an efficient infrastructure and provide them with a skilled, educated and voluntarily compliant workforce.

Sofar, Aquino has given them what they wanted. Her government has laid down the foundation for private investment. It has dismantled the government monopolies in many export areas. It has attempted privatisation. In the first half of this year there has been increased investment, higher prices for sugar and copra, and a construction boom. The number of strikes went down.

The government itself has moved satisfyingly to the right. The latest purge took out the last remaining "leftist" (in the military's terms) and brought in a couple of army officers.

But Aquino has not satisfied everyone in the ruling class.

Under Marcos, state enterprises produced a powerful layer of bureaucrats who run them. These people will not allow themselves to be "privatised" and lose their positions. They have ensured that the Philippines National Oil Company has been removed from the privatisation list. Others are sure to follow.

In the countryside, the major landowners are reaping the rewards of higher prices. But the Filipino Congress is considering a land reform bill which will dramatically reduce the size of their land-holdings. At the same



Aquino: taking care of the leaders

time, they are under increasing threat from the Communist Party-led New Peoples Army.

It is these land-owners who will fight to the death against land reform, and who are the main support behind continuing military attempts to destabilise Aquino.

If the government can continue wooing business, and if the land reform bill can be watered down, Aquino will probably remain in office. If the workers' movement resurfaces, and if agitation around land reform increases, the various sections of the ruling class may yet unite — around the military option.

— David Lockwood

SOUTH AFRICA

Omens in the miners' strike

THE UNPRECEDENTED strike by South Africa's black miners may have collapsed last month. But it contained significant omens for the future of the anti-apartheid struggle.

The South African Chamber of Mines, in its arrogance, thought that the strike would last only a day, and that fewer than 200,000 miners would go out.

Instead, 340,000 miners — 140,000 more than the membership of the miners' workers' union, the NUM — stayed on strike for three weeks in demand of a 30% pay increase and better holiday pay and death benefits. Put another way, the black

workforce waged over twenty times as much fight as the Chamber of Mines budgeted for.

Two weeks into the strike, the miners overwhelmingly rejected the employers' pay offer of 17-23% with slightly improved holiday pay and death benefits. A week later, the NUM leadership accepted the same offer and ordered a return to work on the pretext that scabbing was threatening the strike. It wasn't.

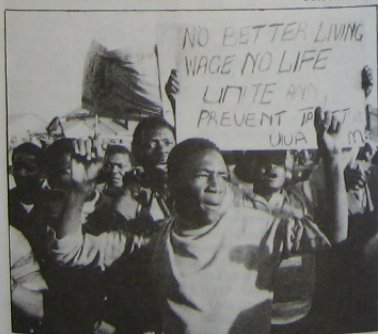
The strike, and its demise, showed that the black union movement in South Africa is developing a bureaucracy. Like union bureaucrats elsewhere,

the NUM leaders were concerned to keep the strike totally legal, while COSATU, the peak trade union body, avoided calling (necessarily illegal) solidarity action.

Tensions emerged between the rank and file and the NUM leadership. The officials ordered the strikers to return to their homelands. If they had followed this order, strikers could not have organised other workers to join the struggle, and maintained their own morale in doing so. Fortunately, staff stewards defied the order and stayed at the mines.

Workers in other industries agitated for solidarity action. Organised widely, this could have beaten the Chamber of Mines. But COSATU, with its strategy of staying within the law, would not take that step.

A number of more general points come out of the strike. The miners and other workers



Striking miners: dress rehearsal for a future showdown?

continue to pose the major political threat to the regime because of the economic power they hold.

The State of Emergency has not crushed dissent — 340,000 workers on strike for 3 weeks is ample proof of that. The focus of the struggle has merely shifted, and has been doing so for some time, from the townships to the unions.

The image of so-called 'liberal' employers like Anglo-American as a force for change came crashing down amid the welter of tear gas and bullets the giant mining house used on its employees.

The miners' struggle threatened export earnings. It contained the potential to draw in other workers. These two conditions meant that workers' power in South Africa is back on the agenda. The ANC's "stages" approach — democracy now, socialism (much) later — is in tatters.

The major contradiction in South African capitalism — between the need for cheap black labour and the development of a strong black working class as a result — continues. Ominously for the Chamber of Mines, wage negotiations take place nearly every year in the mines.

The bosses may well have won this battle. They have not won the war. Cyril Ramaphosa, head of the NUM, described the strike as a "dress rehearsal" for the future. If black miners have drawn the lessons from this strike, he may well be right.

— John Pansani

IN MANY ways, Colonel Rabuka's latest coup in Fiji looked like a re-run of his first effort in May.

He arrested political leaders, shut down newspapers, put the radio station under military control, and had troops patrolling the streets.

But in important ways, this coup was quite different.

For all his apparent indecision — the week of negotiations, the delays in declaring the republic — Rabuka is far more powerfully placed this time around.

Most of Fiji's ruling class greeted the first coup with hostility. After a week of uncertainty, Rabuka was forced to hand over power to the Governor General and a Council of Advisors. He learnt his lesson from this and has spent the last four months strengthening his hand.

The army is now twice as big as it was in May, retrained and full of specially recruited recruits. It has spent the last months arresting and harassing political activists, Indian shopkeepers and foreign journalists. It is now a highly politicised body.

Rabuka has also had a part in the growth of the Taukei Movement. This vicious racist group wants to totally exclude the 55% of the population who are not ethnic Fijians from the political process. Its bands of thugs have beaten up Indians and firebombed their shops and homes.

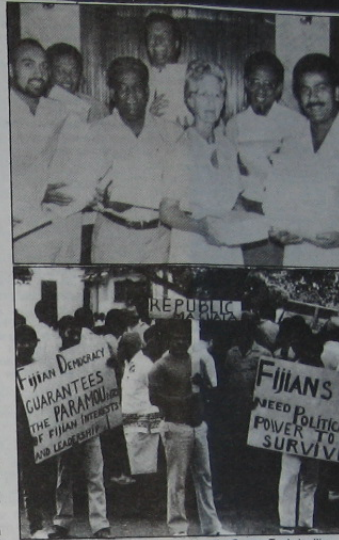
While Rabuka's own politics are less extreme than Taukei's, his army has barely lifted a finger against it.

BOTH Rabuka and Taukei claim to be standing up for the rights of ethnic Fijians, whom they argue are becoming a dispossessed minority in their own land.

They have drawn analogies with the Kanaks in New Caledonia, and Rabuka has appealed directly to Australian racism, asking how we would make whites a minority here. (Actually, we couldn't care less.)

Such chauvinist demagoguery has drawn support from both Libya and Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen. It is, however, false.

Unlike the French in New Caledonia, Fiji's Indians are not mostly recent arrivals. Nor do they owe allegiance to any colonial power. On the contrary, Fijian Indians boycotted the army in World War Two when Britain refused to give non-whites white rates of pay, and that is one reason for the ethnic



The two sides: Labour voters petition the Crown, Taukei rallies

Fiji's bully boy tightens his grip

Fiji's stranglehold on the military today

Unlike the Kanaks, ethnic Fijians' rights are securely protected. In the House of Representatives, Fijians elect as many members as Indians. In the Senate, the Council of Chiefs has an effective veto through its eight nominees.

As any constitutional change needs 75% approval in both Houses, change is impossible against Fijian interests.

MORE fundamentally, Fijians own 83% of all land in the country, through their villages. The constitution guarantees this ownership, and forbids any sale.

This is a source of real power, greater than the Labour Party's votes, for ethnic Fijians — or rather, some of them. Because the bulk of the rent from each village's land goes to the ratu, or chief. The ratu are a deeply conservative group who resent the modernisation of Fiji, and the effect this has had on rural

Alliance Party, and men like the Governor General and the Supreme Court judges. They believe in the old compromise politics of each community having its own role in the ruling class — Fijians owning the land and Indians running commerce.

Alliance has gone along with the coups. It is prepared to accept a greater share of power passing to Fijians, but does not want the ratu in total control. Unlike the ratu, Alliance is in favour of national development and parliamentary politics.

ALSO standing against the Labour Party, which represents much of the urban middle class (for whom race is increasingly a secondary issue) and the union movement (which is multiracial in make-up and politics).

Properly mobilised, these forces could have prevented the second coup. For six weeks after the first coup, farmers, farmers and shopkeepers fought back. The sugar cane crop was neither harvested nor milled. Strikes and go-slows disrupted shops, banks, the public service, the docks and transport.

The army reacted with a heavy hand. It broke up rallies, blocked marches, and forced shops to open. But it wasn't until posed PM Bavadra sat down in the Constitutional Review Committee, with the very people against whom the struggle was directed, that the movement went into decline.

Bavadra's role in demobilising the anti-coup movement explains the second great difference between May and September — the lack of resistance to this time around.

Even now, all is not lost. Just before the coup, the Labour Party held public meetings in western Fiji. These were generally well-attended and gave Labour a fair picture of where it can rely on support.

Similarly, the Back to Early May Movement organised a petition in support of the overthrown parliament. It gathered 108,000 signatures — one-third of all voters.

Out of these forces, and above all the working class, opponents can yet build a fighting movement against the military, the ratu and the reactionary trend to race-based politics.

That will mean, however, rejecting Labour's illusions in the proper channels — the Governor General, the Alliance Party and foreign friends — and looking to the people of Fiji instead.

— Graham Willett

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 5

Now hear this . . .
IN THE English seaside resort of Blackpool last month, a crowd of deaf people was celebrating the end of the British Deaf Association conference by dancing in the town square.

Local police disapproved and decided to clear the crowd using a loud hailer. This was pretty stupid, considering that the dancers were communicating in sign language.

Undeterred at the lack of response, police waded in and started making arrests. This worked wonders in keeping the peace. About 1000 deaf people flocked in to help resist, and the ensuing fighting lasted for over 90 minutes.

Cain off target

SO THE Cain government is to toughen up gun laws in the wake of the Clifton Hills shootings. A predictable move, but it overlooks two points.

Point one. Statistically, the occupational groups most prone to crimes of violence are police and soldiers. Will they be barred access to guns? Point two. Switzerland, where every adult male is required by law to keep an automatic rifle at home, has one of the world's lowest homicide rates.

The moral seems

The Devil made me do it

WHEN the Pope visited the Lucky Country last year, he made a widely reported speech at Sydney's Transfield factory.

In it, he said that workers were more important than profits or machines, and shouldn't be made redundant even if the economics of industry demanded it. For once, we had to agree with him.

It seems his hosts weren't listening, however. Last month, Transfield's directors sacked 100 workers from one of their companies. No doubt they'll be given several laps of the rosary beads as penance.

obvious. Disarm the state, and arm the people, and we'd all be a hell of a lot safer.

From the people who brought you Pinocchio



A US Senator asked: "If the President is telling the truth, why do they keep chopping bits off his nose?"

There is strength in the union

SO ACTU president Simon Crean wants to reduce the number of unions.

Maybe he could start with the bosses' unions. The NSW Growers' Association has two members. We wonder where they have their mass meetings — in a phone box?

Can't buy me love

WHAT Charles Copeman giveth, Charles Copeman taketh away. Which is why no-one goes to his parties any more.

Having at various stages sacked his entire Robe River workforce, issued writs against two dozen of them, and monstered their working conditions, Peko's New Right knuckler has decided to prove he was really a nice guy after all.

He threw a turn with free beer and invited all his workers (or at least those who haven't left).

But there must be a crowded social calendar down Robe River way. Only three of nearly 1000 blue collar workers showed up. Of those, our little birdy tells us, one was curious and two were politically motivated, though not in Charlie's direction. Last seen, Charles Copeman was crying into his beer, gallons and gallons of it.

Natural wastage

ALL governments are out to cut staff, but the Victorian government is more gung-ho than most.

Earlier this year, Property and Services circulated guidelines for Emergency Procedures, in which staff members were directed to search for bombs in the event of a bomb scare.

Actually, that sort of job should be reserved for management.

This efficiency we don't mind

FREEDOM of Information is supposed to open up government. It is, in fact, a management ploy for more efficiency

and better record keeping.

But it doesn't always work like that. In the US, the file on American nuclear aid to India was released in response to an FOI request. It contained, by mistake, documents revealing that the CIA believed that Israel had produced nuclear weapons.

We aren't think what was in the Italy and Ireland files.

Traffic snarls

A NEW bumper sticker has appeared on Los Angeles' overcrowded freeways. "Don't shoot, I'll move over."

The ruling class have no history books

HAVE YOU seen the ad for Swan lager on TV? The one with the shot of the landing at Gallipoli, with the stirring words, "You said we'd never make it, when we stormed Gallipoli!"

"Oh yeah! 'We' made it at Gallipoli? Wait for the next ad showing how 'we' captured Hanoi."

The ruling class have no country

APPARENTLY Prisoner is Alan Bond's favourite TV show. We don't know if he'll be exporting it to his mates in Chile. Probably be a kid's show there.

Or perhaps Bondy will import Pinochet to Australia to give the Freak a few clues on how to handle Wentworth jail.

Diplomatic Immunity

BOB HAWKE, who said he'd bring the country together and did — over opposition to the ID card — wasn't too happy about Bond's remarks over Chile.

Unlike everything else, though, he can't blame this one on the Fraser government. Gough was the PM who recognised the Chilean dictatorship in 1974.

Bundy meets the general . . .



CHEAP SHOTS

WORKING CLASS HISTORY



Russia in revolution: Red Guards fire from an armoured vehicle, Lenin talks with workers

This month is the 70th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, an event that still inspires the Left around the globe. RICHARD EMERSON looks at its significance for socialists.

Ten days that shook the world

AT THE START OF 1917, the world was a grim place for socialists.

Throughout Europe, the great Socialist parties had deserted their avowed anti-war aims, and had sent their working class rank and file off to the carnage of World War I, and to be used as cannon fodder for the ruling class. Those who stood up for international solidarity principles, for internationalism against war, were driven underground or imprisoned. Even in faraway Australia, the militant Industrial Workers of the World faced brutal repression.

The recent movie *Rosa Luxemburg* gives some idea of just how bleak things seemed. Yet by the end of the year, the situation was starting to look very different. By 1920, several reactionary governments had been swept away, and a vast international working class army — the Communist International — was on the march.

The turning point was the Russian revolution.

From our vantage point just 70 years later, it is easy to look back on the revolution as a largely Russian event. It was the starting point for that country's transformation from a backward to a modern society, and the ultimate heir to the

revolution was Stalin, who stood for a policy of Russian national development and, later, Russian imperialism.

But at the time the Russian revolutionaries saw their seizure of power as being largely international in its significance. And for a time they were proved right.

Stalin himself, who in 1917 held very different views to the ones he is known for today, explained the difference between the viewpoint of the revolutionaries and that of more cautious socialists as follows:

"There are two lines. One sets the course for the victory of the revolution and relies on Europe. The second does not believe in the revolution and counts only on being an opposition."

For Stalin in those days, and for Lenin, believing in the Russian revolution meant relying on Europe, and on the international working class generally. They had good reasons for this attitude.

RUSSIA was a desperately poor country, which had been further impoverished by war. For Lenin the prospects for creating a socialist society under such circumstances were nil.

For Lenin, as for Marx, socialism meant the liberation of humanity from the exploitation of class society. This was only possible in conditions of economic abundance, because without these conditions a dog-eat-dog struggle for scarce resources would lead to the re-emergence of a ruling elite.

As Marx put it, without economic abundance any attempt at equality and at sharing would simply mean "only want is generalised" and sooner or later "all the old crap must revive."

It was for these reasons that all the great Marxists assumed socialism would follow capitalism, once capitalism with its "industrial revolutions" had created the material conditions for a world without economic scarcity. Lenin assumed for most of his career that the revolution he was fighting for in Russia would only be a "democratic" one, opening the way for capitalism to turn Russia into a modern society.

But in the course of 1917 Lenin rapidly realised that the struggles of the workers and while socialism might not be possible in backward Russia taken in isolation, the prospects looked very different when a considered the picture in Europe taken as a

Mayekiso trial postponed again

THE TREASON trial of jailed socialist and union leader, Moses Mayekiso, has been postponed yet again by the apartheid regime in South Africa. It is now scheduled to begin on October 19.

The delay gives supporters of the "Free Moses Mayekiso Campaign" more time to organise in his defence. Already a full page advertisement has appeared in the *Guardian* newspaper in Britain, sponsored by numerous labour activists including Arthur Scargill.

Moses Mayekiso was in

Britain during the miners' dispute and returned to South Africa agitating for solidarity with the British miners. It is now our job to organise solidarity with this internationalist, who is facing the death penalty over the Alexandra township uprising last year.

The Sydney campaign has so far had endorsements and donations from the following unions: UPT, PSA (NSW), BWU, ACOA, ASWU, AMWU, TAFETA and BLF. The BWU have written a letter to Bill Hayden asking him to

raise the issue with the South African government. The AMWU have run an article in their union magazine.

Sydney campaigners have lobbied the Labour Council with leaflets and petitions and hope that more unions will assist the campaign with donations, information sheets for their members and representations to the government. The petition has so far gained about 1000 signatures.

Trade unionists are urged to raise the issue in their workplace using the petition and leaflets

supplied by the "Free Moses Mayekiso Campaign". For more information contact Ian Jordan 287 7888 or Ross Mackenzie 660 1006.

Movement Against Uranium Mining
MELBOURNE XMAS FAIR
Saturday December 5
10am-4pm Church of All Nations
Palmerston St, Carlton
(near Lygon St.)
Bargains, music, food, fun for kids
Enquiries & donations of goods, phone
MALUM 950 2292 or Val MacIntyre
555 5625

WORKING CLASS HISTORY

while.

The war had disillusioned vast numbers of workers in the capitalist system, and also in the conservative leaders of the old Socialist parties. The example of workers taking power in Russia could galvanise struggles by the working class in France, Italy, Britain, and above all in Germany.

THE RUSSIAN revolution had a lot to offer western Europe. It was, first of all, the act of masses of workers taking power for themselves.

A moderate socialist named Martov, not much more radical than Bill Hayden or Gough Whitlam, said that the October insurrection:

"Understand, please, what we have before us is a victorious uprising of the proletariat. Almost the entire proletariat supports Lenin and expects its social liberation from the uprising."

True, the uprising was led by a political party, the Bolsheviks. But contrary to myth, this wasn't some phone box minority faction. It contained in its ranks a big chunk of the ordinary workers. By September 1917 it had over 200,000 members out of an urban working class of 3 million. These party activists in turn had their networks of supporters in the workplaces.

Bolshevik rule was embodied in the soviets, or workers' councils. These were democratically elected by the rank and file in the factories. Unlike our parliaments, the delegates could be removed at any time by new elections. This meant that the soviets reflected the changing political views of the workers from day to day.

American journalist John Reed, author of *Ten Days that Shook the World*, gave a



The building block of the new order: factory workers meet to take decisions

striking example of how soviet democracy worked. Some Red Guards had fired on a demonstration:

"The reaction to this stupid violence was immediate. Within twelve hours, the complexion of the Petrograd soviets changed. More than a dozen Bolshevik deputies were withdrawn and replaced by Mensheviks (moderate socialists). And it was three weeks before public sentiment subsided — before the Mensheviks were one by one retired and the Bolsheviks sent back."

In addition to being democratic, the revolution was internationalist. It sought to educate the working class in its responsibilities to fellow workers. This applied to the oppressed peoples in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It applied equally to the workers in western Europe. At a time when the Red Army was under siege by invading British troops, its leader Leon Trotsky issued this command to his fighters:

"But even today, when we are engaged in a bitter fight with Yudenich, the hiring of England, I demand that you never forget that there are two Englands. Besides the England of profits, of violence, bribery and bloodthirstiness, there is the England of labour, of spiritual power, of high ideals of international solidarity. It is the base and dishonest England of the stock exchange manipulators that is fighting us. The England of labour and the people is with us."

The revolution also promised a new world for women. They gained the right to choose their own domicile, name and citizenship. Marriage became a matter of simple registration, divorce was freely granted on request by either partner, and property rights within marriage were abolished.

On the one hand, the Russian revolution had much to offer the workers of the world. On the other hand, it depended desperately

on them. For while the Russians had created an impressive proletarian democracy, the workers were a small minority in a nation consisting largely of peasants. They were soon faced with the threat of imperialist invasion and blockade. And they faced economic crisis and depression from the combined impact of war, invasion, and civil war.

No wonder Lenin remarked continually before, during and after 1917 that building socialism in isolated Russia was impossible. "The final victory of socialism in a single country is of course impossible. It is the absolute truth that without a German revolution we are doomed."

RUSSIA'S spark was not slow in spreading to the German speaking countries.

An Austrian and Hungarian workers went on strike on 14 August 1918, and those in Vienna elected workers' councils which demanded the eight hour day, the abolition of censorship, the end of martial law and the release of imprisoned socialists.

Almost immediately, a group of revolutionaries in Berlin put out a leaflet announcing that "the *Vieremse workers have elected councils on the Russian model*" and called for a general strike. Within days, 500,000 workers were on strike in Berlin and other cities. Four hundred and fourteen delegates met and elected a central strike committee.

This wave of struggle was deflected, but it was followed by others. In November sailors refused to go into battle. They marched in the streets and were joined by thousands of workers. After the first demonstration in Kiel, 20,000 sailors elected a sailors' council. By mid-December a national council of workers' and sailors' delegates was held in Berlin.

The impact of the Russian revolution

continued to ripple through Europe. In 1919 soviet republics were formed in Bavaria and Hungary. In response to the Bolsheviks' call for a new international movement, Communist parties were formed. In a range of countries, from Germany to Italy and from France to Bulgaria, they became powerful mass movements.

In Italy in 1919-20, the workers of Turin seized their factories and established councils which came close to soviet-style organisation. In Bulgaria, the Communists were the second strongest party in the country. In China, there were the beginnings of a workers' movement which was to reach insurrectionary proportions by the mid-twenties.

No wonder that the ruling classes of the great powers were worried. British Prime Minister Lloyd George wrote to his French counterpart:

"The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution. There is a deep sense not only of discontent but of anger and revolt amongst the workmen against pre-war conditions. The whole existing order in its political, social and economic aspects is questioned by the masses of the population from one end of Europe to the other."

INDISTANT Australia, the impact of the Russian workers' triumph was felt more slowly. But it was substantial all the same.

The Australian labour movement had been radicalised by the war, and was fresh from the triumph of twice defeating attempts to introduce conscription. Upon hearing about events in Russia, labour activists were intensely interested. wrote one of them in 1918:

"Never before had a revolution such close scrutiny, such deep study... from all angles, from all viewpoints, the inquiry proceeds."

Even the ALP was infected. At its 1921 conference, a proposal to make socialisation of industry a fighting plank in its program got 11 votes out of 31. The following year, a union congress called for the nationalisation of industry, and set up a Council of Action to see that it was fought for. R. J. Heffron, later Premier of NSW, wrote:

"By supplanting capitalist dictatorship with proletarian dictatorship, we will be reaching the goal of our dreams, on the road to which Russia is the greatest milestone passed."

An Australian Communist Party was formed in the early twenties, though it had to struggle to survive. True to the internationalist orientation of the movement sparked by the Russian revolution, it participated in important international movements such as the Pan

Pacific Trade Union Secretariat. At this time working with Asian unions, it required them to confront the racism of the Australian working class. Similarly the early Communists opposed Australian nationalism, declaring that the "yippee Eureka" was a "meaningless feat", and calling for workers of all countries to unite on a class basis.

UNDER Russian leadership, the world-wide movement was drawn together into the Third, or Communist, International.

The Bolsheviks hoped they would not be the leaders for long. As Lenin remarked:

"Soon after the victory of the proletarian revolution in at least one of the advanced countries, a sharp change will probably come about: Russia will cease to be the model and will once again become a backward country."

Also, this hope was to be cruelly disappointed. Despite impressive struggles, the workers' movements outside Russia were defeated, and began to ebb away. The most important single reason was that revolutionaries outside Russia had not set about building coherent revolutionary organisations before the revolutionary wave arose. It is a mistake today's socialists should not repeat.

Given the failure of revolutions abroad, especially in Germany, Russian leadership of the international movement became permanent. In time this was to have baleful consequences. Remaining isolated, plagued with economic problems and exhausted by war, the Russian workers gradually lost their hold on political power. A new ruling class, in the form of the state bureaucracy with Joseph Stalin at its head, consolidated its hold. The Communist International was transformed into an instrument of an increasingly cynical Russian foreign policy.

But the eventual defeat of the Russian revolution and of the movements it inspired should not blind us to the potential that once was there, and which could be rekindled by a working class revolution today — in South Africa, say, or South Korea. It should teach us that the success of workers' power in one country can only be consolidated if we build an international movement, in the Bolshevik tradition.

This was well put by Rosa Luxemburg not long before her murder:

"There is the immortal historical service of having marched at the head of the international proletariat... In Russia the problem could only be posed. It could not be solved in Russia. And in this sense, the future everywhere belongs to Bolshevism!"

SOCIALIST ACTION

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WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne
Mondays, 30
Lincolns Hotel
91 Cardigan St, Carlton

Sydney
Wednesdays, 7:00
Metros Hotel (Lapins)
Bridge & George St, City

Brisbane
Mondays, 7:30 pm
Phone 371 7114
for location

Canberra
Thursdays, 6:00
Youth Cafe
Cooyong St, Civic

SOCIALIST ACTION

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Socialism

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

Revolution, not Reformism

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

A Mass Workers' Party

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

Internationalism

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

Liberation from Oppression

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

Socialist Action

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



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Leave our leave alone, Joh!

EVEN Joh Bjelke Petersen's sacred police force is not escaping the latest round of employer attacks on working conditions in Queensland. Bjelke Petersen has decided to halve the overtime performed by cops.

That's the good news. Now for the bad. Six hundred thousand workers employed under Queensland state awards may lose their annual leave loading in a few weeks.

The attack has been mounted by the Queensland Confederation of Industry following the state government's successful abolition of crown employees' flexible and leave loadings.

The Trades and Labour Council and dozens of unions called a mass meeting on September 15 to protest at the government's decision. 5000 workers were told at the meeting that the tourism industry would suffer! Another campaign of sending postcards to lobby local MPs was launched as a way that workers could "help" beat the move.

Workers were also encouraged to "expose the gross misuse of public funds and mismanagement of the Queensland economy by the Government." That sounds fine, until you consider how the government would use such information. Already since the meeting, the State Works Department has sacked some 70 blue collar workers, and another 180 are likely to get their marching orders as we go to press.

Queensland government workers cannot rely on a postcard campaign and parliamentarians to save their leave loadings.

The last postcard campaign was in response to contract labour legislation originally proposed in April. Modified but similar legislation will be passed in Queensland parliament this month.

Holiday leave loadings and penalty rates are not protected under this legislation, opening the door for a general employer offensive against them, and half of a worker's annual leave can be cashed.

The State Industrial Commission can rule void those contracts which it deems "against the public interest" or "unfair, harsh or unreasonable." Presumably, this means they won't allow legions



steward, Hamish Weir, for having one beer at the end of the day. The drivers met the next day and voted to go on strike in his defence. They were immediately dismissed.

Later the company offered them the chance to reapply for their jobs individually, with the aim of weeding out the militants. The TWU officials have tried to order the drivers back to work. Given this lack of support, it is understandable that some drivers applied for jobs, but the majority are still out the gate.

There is a daily picket outside the brewery in Abbotsford, and the workers are keeping the pressure both on the TWU leaders and the company, touring other Linfox yards and demanding reinstatement for all drivers.

MELBOURNE



Fox bares his claws at CUB

MELBOURNE'S brewery drivers are in the wars again.

Lindsay Fox, a self-made tycoon who worships his creator, has been trying to smash their on-the-job organisation ever since he bought the trucking contract for Carlton breweries.

It took a three and a half week strike last year to ensure that the drivers would retain their award conditions and job security after the changeover, a strike made harder by the foot dragging of the Transport Workers' Union leaders. Since then, Linfox management has unsuccessfully tried to sack shop steward Aldo Renda.

On 17 September the company sacked another

steward, Hamish Weir, for having one beer at the end of the day. The drivers met the next day and voted to go on strike in his defence. They were immediately dismissed.

Later the company offered them the chance to reapply for their jobs individually, with the aim of weeding out the militants. The TWU officials have tried to order the drivers back to work. Given this lack of support, it is understandable that some drivers applied for jobs, but the majority are still out the gate.

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CANNBERRA



Nurses need Health bosses

WITH protest marches, bans, strikes and picket lines, Canberra nurses are shaping up for a major struggle over the refusal of the ACT Health Authority to implement a new career structure for nursing.

Back in May, the Arbitration Commission ordered the Authority to introduce a new career structure based, with "minimal deviation", on the RANF's proposed model. The union's model improved opportunity for research, education and promotion. But the Authority bosses have refused to concede anything.

In response, angry nurses have marched on Parliament House, where they roundly jeered local ALP member John Langmore when he called for "compromise on both sides". Nurses have banned paperwork and non-nursing duties, picketed the Authority's head office, and staged short walkouts at Canberra's two public hospitals.

Senator Richardson has accused the nurses of endangering patients' lives. Nurses reply that they will not cop cosy conditions because of their caring role. In any case, they are giving one hour's notice to cover absences (including a 2 am phone call to the Authority's chief executive at his home for a 3 am stoppage).

Rank and file involvement in the symbolic actions has been high. But strike action needs to be stepped up. At the moment, the RANF executive controls the calling of the limited stoppages, and they are also relying on ACTU intervention.

Unfortunately, so are most of the rank and file, as some picketers have told Socialist Action members who have visited the pickets. Fireman Kelly will apply buckets, hose and sand as assiduously to the nurses' industrial fire as he does to other workers.

The nurses have not yet exercised their full strength. Nor have they tapped the support of other workers. A collection from just one Tax Department office by Socialist Action members raised over \$90.

So far, the nurses have given the Health bosses a needle. Now a knock-out shot is required.

— Phil Shannon

"BEING done like a dinner" or "running hard to stay in the one spot" are the two options we've had under the two tier wages system.

Now, as this system limps through its last months, the ACTU is planning a "more mature" wage cutting deal.

According to Bill Kelly, the planned system will be more complete opposition to flow-ons, and every wage rise will be tied rigidly to "higher productivity". (Translation: screwing more work from workers.) Kelly and Simon Crean have also signalled that the new system will be based on restructuring award conditions.

This new system, however, has its roots in the two tier system, which was itself rooted in the Accord's wage cutting. So it is time to weigh up what the two tier system has achieved.

For most workers, the two tier wage deal has meant a miserable \$10 (before tax) under the first tier, with little prospect of anything else.

For example, the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Union (SDA) has complained that they couldn't even use the trade-off principles of the two tier system because the retail industry was so "lean, mean and miserable" that there wasn't anything to trade off.

Even if, unlike SDA members, you had work conditions to bargain with, you faced employer delaying tactics as well as the Arbitration Commission. As Melbourne's Age commented, the second tier was explicitly designed to increase the delay.

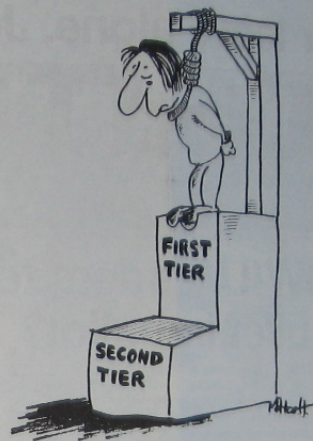
"Arbitration... will lock unions into a timetable for gaining rises that stretch into 1989".

At the end of the first five months of the agreement, less than 5% of the Australian workforce had received a second tier increase.

HOWEVER the two tier system had two more important functions.

Firstly it aimed (successfully) to quarantine any wage rises that did occur, by completely breaking with the flow-on principle. Secondly it aimed to ensure a rising productivity, which union officials agreed to enforce on the employers' behalf.

Not all unions have had to make the trade-offs or suffer long delays. That's only because some workers have used their muscle on the job to force concessions from the boss.



And now, for the ACTU's next trick ...

Building workers and some AMWU members already have their rises under the second tier, often greater than the allowed 4%.

In all these cases, success has come on sites where there are deadlines to meet, such as the Victorian Tennis Centre and some city building sites, or in metal workshops where skilled labour is short. Melbourne's Naval Dockyards, for example, are 100 electricians short, so the workers have put in for a \$100 pay rise.

But by tying everyone else in the industry who hasn't got the muscle to arbitrated agreements, the system has effectively quarantined the rises won and stopped the flow-ons that used to occur. You only have to look at the recent metal trades agreement to see this.

Increased productivity is central to the system. Labor Minister Ralph Willis explained:

"It is very important in our present circumstances — more important than it has been in any time of our economic history —

to have our wages based on productivity improvements. That is the system we have now in the second tier and it is something that has never applied before in our history."

Union leaders have thrown themselves heart and soul into making sure of this happens. The most enthusiastic has been the AMWU, the union that played a major role in creating the Accord, the two tier system and *Australia Reconstructed*. The *Financial Review* smugly observed last month:

"Most unions officials are understood to be insisting that no 'shonky' agreements have been allowed through. Where incomplete agreements have been presented, they have been sent back to the originators for further information."

AMWU officials even recognise the job they are doing for the employers. One official, for the article goes on,

"... has found that much of his work has been as a de facto management consultant in his determination to ensure that real productivity increases flow on from the two tiered system."

IN OTHER words, the two tier system is more of the Accord medicine. Workers' wages and conditions are being cut for the sake of employers' profits.

The Australian states this quite openly.

"Despite employers' complaints there can be no doubt that the two tier wages system has treated employers remarkably kindly, especially the second tier arrangement."

So kindly, in fact, that the metal trades employers group, the MTIA, welcomed the recent Arbitration Commission decision on the AMWU 4% claim. Bob Herbert from the MTIA said that the Association had been working since December 1986 to make any decision "cost neutral" and the Commission's decision had done that.

For some employers, there has been an even better deal than that. In Australia Post, under the guise of talking about "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay", management will be saving \$31.7m by 1989-90 because of greater work efficiency. All it is costing them is just over \$2m in wage rises. Telecom workers got their 4% (\$36.05m in wages), but the trade-offs mean savings of \$34.08m over the next two years for the government.

According to the Confederation of Australian Industry, workers have handed back something else as well. In July it commented:

"In a very real sense a degree of control over industrial relations matters has been handed back to individual employers."

RANK and file discontent with the two tier system has started to filter up to the official level. So much so that union leaders, left and right, have been saying that it couldn't last, that it was only a one-off experiment.

Unfortunately for us, they have left the field wide open for Kelly and Crean to design an even more restrictive system.

For unionists, only the kind of action taken by the building and metal trades workers will make a real difference to their pay packets.

We have to throw off the union officials' ideas of making more sacrifices to live the bosses' pockets.

In a rare moment of frankness, Tom McDonald of the BWU summed up the situation when he heard of management salaries going up 12-14%:

"They like to talk about the workers being greedy. But the figures show it's actually management who are the pigs with their snouts in the trough."

— Liz Ross

Busy month in Brisbane

SOCIALIST Action's Brisbane branch has had a hectic month, doing much of the organising for two very successful events.

One was the premiere showing of Tom Zubrycki's documentary on the SEQEB strike, *Friends and Enemies*. Five hundred people packed out the Schornell Theatre, including a large number of ex-SEQEB workers sacked in the dispute. About 150 stayed on for a discussion of this controversial film (see review page 15).

The other was the picket of Geoffrey Blainey's guest lecture at Queensland University. Socialist Action members and other anti-racists, numbering about 50 in all, set up a barrage of chanting after being barred from the hall. The militant picket made Blainey almost insoluble at times, according to sources inside the hall.

Mayekiso

SYDNEY branch of Socialist Action is continuing to publicize the case of South African socialist and trade union leader Moses Mayekiso, currently facing a treason trial for his role in the black uprising last year at Alexandra township.

Sydney members and other anti-apartheid activists have been collecting signatures to petitions demanding Mayekiso's release. A Saturday morning spruiking session outside the Town Hall was particularly successful for this. Our members also took part in a lobby of the Labour Council, seeking trade union support.

For contact numbers for the solidarity campaign, see article page 6.

Day school

A DAY school held by our Canberra branch on Sunday October 4 proved to be a very stimulating event.

Sixteen members and supporters heard an excellent talk on Sylvia Pankhurst, the most radical member of the famous suffragette family; had a provocative discussion on the environment and socialism; looked at the ACTU's economic program in *Australian Reconstruction*; and delved into revolutionary history with a talk on the Paris Commune.

Victorian readers who like the sound of this event may be interested. Melbourne branch will hold a similar day school in November. For details, phone 380 2227.

Canberra

CANBERRA branch of Socialist Action is sponsoring a new meeting place. It now meets at the upstairs Café in Cooyong St, Civic, still at 6 pm on Thursdays.



Picketers at the Barclay Flour Mill site: ignored by BWIU leaders

BWIU leaders to get the bullet in ballot?

ELECTION campaigning is underway in the Building Workers' Industrial Union, and the BWIU's sell-out leadership is being challenged by militant opposition candidates. In Victoria the opposition is strong enough to have the employers and the government dead worried.

After the BLF was deregistered in 1986, thousands of builders, labourers were conscripted into the BWIU. Now they will be voting. And plenty of tradesmen who dislike the BWIU officials' continuing collaboration with the cops and employers will also have a chance to make their vote count.

Prompted by frightened employers and politicians, the media have begun a scare campaign, claiming that the opposition Reform Group are a Trojan Horse for Norm Gallagher, who is supposedly scheming to "take over" the BWIU.

This is plain rubbish. The BLF could not take over the BWIU by conspiracy even if they wanted to. And as recent events have shown, they do not need to because their own union is alive and well, and it is gaining strength.

Militant labourers will naturally support the Reform Group campaign, and some of them are candidates, alongside tradesmen. But no matter which of the various membership figures you choose to believe, the labourers are no more than half of the BWIU membership.

Carpenters' votes will be needed to turf out the current leadership. This is especially true because there is an blatant gerrymander at work.

Because of a three-year membership requirement, labourers cannot stand for any of the top positions. The State Management Committee has been set up to consist of 6 labourers and 15 tradespeople. The State Conference will have 28 labourers out of 82 delegates. The delegates will be elected from various zones. These have been concocted arbitrarily by the leadership, and vary from a membership of thousands in Melbourne to hundreds in the country. Joh Bjelke Petersen would be impressed.

In addition there are strong rumours that Labor minister Steve Crabb is determined to shove off a Reform Group victory by fair means or foul. So it will be an uphill battle for the opposition to capture complete control of the union structures, though they are very likely to win at least a share of positions.

Alongside the BWIU militants there is the BLF, which won a notable victory in getting its organizer John Cummins out of gaol. Costain and Lewis have now backed away from all the legal actions they had taken against him, and the employers admit privately that they took a hiding through industrial action on the job.

Under these circumstances Norm Gallagher is simply telling the truth when he says he sympathises with the BWIU dissidents, but is not trying to manipulate the elections. He doesn't need to.

The case against the BWIU leaders was outlined starkly in September when management sacked 38 workers at the Barclay's Flour Mill site in Kensington, and effectively sacked more by cancelling

subbies' contracts.

Several unions sent organisers down, but not the BWIU. They sent the job organiser, Neil Morris, to the country! They had another organiser drive past but not call in at the site. Only after the workers had twice sat in at the BWIU offices was Neil Morris sent to the job.

Subsequently a massive police intervention at the site led to the arrest of two BLF organisers and four rank and file workers. The BWIU didn't lift a finger to help.

Barclay's workers have found Company records showing that the BWIU leaders are hand in glove with the boss. The foreman's site diary for 24 August states with regard to a safety dispute: "Neil Morris feels the issue is rubbish... that Barclay's should tell the workforce to get back to work and... sack anyone who refuses."

Three days later a similar diary entry noted that Morris "advised police action against [BLF organizer John] Seika."

No wonder there's a groundswell of support for the Reform Group in the elections. And no one really doubts that they'd win in a fair contest. Unfortunately the contest is far from fair.

The main thing is not votes, however. Rebuilding militant trade unionism in the industry has to start from the ground up, with action on the job.

Actions like the determined picket by Barclay's workers and the stoppages and demonstrations in support of John Cummins are the key to defeating Steve Crabb, the employers, and their stooges in the BWIU bureaucracy.

GREAT strikes can reproduce great films. *Harlan County and Salt of the Earth* are two all-time classics.

So Tom Zubrycki's documentary of the historic SEQEB dispute, *Friends and Enemies*, is a frustrating piece of work.

The film covers the seven month battle after Joh Bjelke Petersen sacked 1100 electricity workers in early 1985. In retrospect, the defeat of the SEQEB workers proved the trigger for the whole New Right shoot'em up that has followed.

That alone makes *Friends and Enemies* important and well worth seeing. But those who were involved have every right to be disappointed in it.

There are, of course, some wonderful moments, especially from Joyce Nugent, mother of a striker. Of Bjelke-Petersen, she comments, "You could kill the bastard, but that'd make him a martyr." Joh, Flo and their sidekick Vince Lester provide lashings of unconscious humour in various settings on their rural home territory. The deb's ball is a classic; also Lester telling wide-eyed primary school kids that you don't have to be that bright to be a Cabinet minister.

But as a serious political documentary, *Friends and Enemies* has drawn sharp criticism from Bernie Neville, a leading activist on the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) strike committee during the dispute.

"The two questions that should have been addressed from the start are: why was the dispute lost, and how could it have been won?" says Bernie.

"The film doesn't just ask these questions, it goes to great lengths to avoid them. It also puts a cover on for a lot of union officials and people in the ALP that could have come in for a lot of criticism had Zubrycki shown more of the footage he got. After all, he got at least 80 hours, but a great deal of what we see is from the local TV stations."

"There were interviews done with past and present officials, Bob Hendricks, Ray Perriam, Neil Kane, and with John Devereux, the national president. But Zubrycki hasn't shown these, hasn't exposed any weakness on their part. We don't see what arguments they put forward."

ZUBRYCKI shows almost none of the early solidarity action from other unions, nor the work of the Trade Union Solidarity Group.

All of this was quite strong in the first stages. Its omission is not entirely due to Zubrycki's



Police smash a picket line in a scene from *Friends and Enemies*

Friends and Enemies and a film in-between

late arrival on the scene, in Neville's view.

"He was here after about six weeks. But he's seen fit to put certain things up front and leave out others. From the rank and file, outside Brisbane as well, he's got material that probably contained the answers to how the dispute could have been won. But he's seen fit to put all that footage away."

"We had strike committees in Beenleigh, down the Gold Coast, in the Cleveland-Red Bay area and in Gympie. All taking militant action, and sending workers around to other states."

Yet the film gives the impression that a tiny strike committee was battling on in Brisbane, almost in a vacuum.

Towards the end, the film shifts to the women supporters and the wives.

"That women's movement could have been very effective," said Bernie Neville. "But what over on Neville is the real role of Louella Camp, the wife of an ETU official, John Camp, who

support, he doesn't show the meetings down south, he doesn't show the mass meetings of workers in other states.

"He makes out that it was an isolated struggle. But it was Australia-wide. Even as far away as the Fibra in WA, we got tremendous support. He could have got film of all that easily."

IT IS history now that the ACTU destroyed the campaign, first by calling a half-hearted "blockade" of Queensland that led nowhere, and then by holding out the fantasy of Federal legislation that would bring SEQEB under a Federal award and get the workers' jobs back.

The film suggests that ETU officials fought these sellouts. Bernie Neville denies this.

"Kane made a phone call to Perriam as early as February - we had a rank and file member there when he took it - and Kane told him, the dispute's over, finish it, you're an embarrassment down there, just wind it up. Whatever that dispute was going, it was the soft underbelly of the state ALP."

So has *Friends and Enemies* any value?

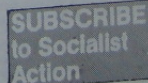
"There are lessons there. It depends what you're looking for," says Bernie. "I think people like the workers at the Bjelke-Petersen Dam, when they draw the similarities, they will be down on its limitations. You have to look hard for the lessons."

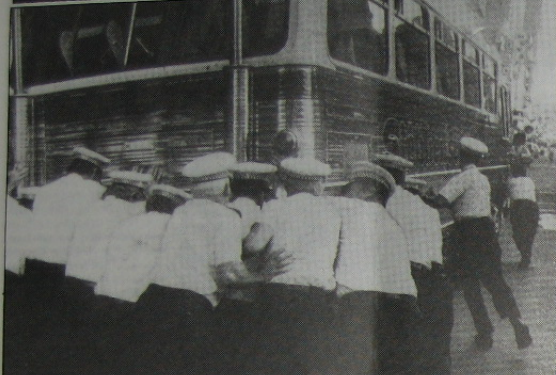
"What should have come across was to remove the weak leadership, to get back to the shop floor and build up the strength of the rank and file."

"But also, the *recovery* could have been highlighted. I don't know how he gave that title to the film. Because at the end of the day, he doesn't really show who the enemies were. In fact, he's done an excellent job for Crean and the ACTU and the ALP. They're missing a lot of credits but, in a sense, they've done more editing than he has." Film on the history of the ACTU, Bernie Neville wishes him luck.

"I only hope he can get the material he needs out of the archives. Because he may not get anything more than the more militant unions. He may not find many friends there, perhaps even some enemies, after this film."

—Carole Ferrier





Some cops will arrest anything — even a bus! Brisbane police hustle one off for failing to disperse

Pigs: Are they kosher?

The People's Force: A History of the Victoria Police, by Robert Haldane. Melb Uni Press. \$27.50.

FROM time to time, the newspapers entertain us with "scandals" about police corruption. The Fitzgerald inquiry in Queensland is the latest performance in a long-running road show.

The Queensland Police Minister, centre stage, got an early belly laugh by stating that Brisbane had no brothels. Within days we learnt of a top cop acting as bagman for other top cops who skimmed the cream from these "non-existent" brothels.

It's nothing new. In the 1850s, one of Melbourne's best known sly dog shops was the Police Hospital. "Patients, visitors, police and public, men and women alike, could all buy good liquor from the obliging Sergeant Wagsley," says policeman Robert Haldane's history of the Victorian police force.

We all know many police are corrupt. A better question is why do we have cops at all? History suggests an answer. In the early colonial days, especially in the gold rushes, some people made packets of dough. Were the now-idle rich idle enough to have time to personally guard their new property? Yes. But even the rich need their sleep. One of the earliest policing duties was as night watchmen.

The rich did not become complacent about these patrolling duties. In the famous Victorian police strike of 1923, a special constabulary force was cobbled together at lightning speed. Into its ranks streamed 5000 bank managers, civil servants, small businessmen, lawyers and so on, led by Lieutenant General Sir John Monash.

The police strike was a crisis for the propertied classes, and they hailed their own "heroism" in breaking the strike. The scab "specials" were so hated that they could only walk safely in groups of four.

Eventually they went back to their offices and hung up their badges. The strikers were sacked, and striking has been anathema to Australian police ever since.

THE COPS sell themselves to the ruling class as professionals, the only ones who should be trusted with a badge.

Just this year in Melbourne, a former deputy commissioner of police was moved in to take responsibility for policing trains away from the railway police division, who had developed a bad reputation for bashing and theft. *The Age* (April 15) reports, "A hundred man was kicked and hit by five ox-railway police and became unconscious."

A cynic might say that the police wanted to take over this line of policing because public gang bashes at a railway station

were for very bad press. "Character adjustment" is best performed out of the public eye. Of over 500 complaints against the Victorian police in 1983-4, half were allegations of assault.

Police in Australia jealously guard their monopoly of semi-police matters. Many other countries separate the functions of motor policing and motor registration. In Victoria, they are part of the police empire. Emergency services, search and rescue and so on are not strictly police matters, but keeping them under the police umbrella helps to corner the public hero market.

The police sell themselves as protectors of life and limb. But are they? They do little to protect women from rape or domestic violence, for example. If they intervene, it is after the damage has been done. Much is now made of police being more sensitive in handling rape victims. Insofar as their "sensitivity" has improved, it is due to non-police self-help groups creating the pressure to clean up their act.

IN REALITY, police can do little to prevent individual acts of violence, and they know it.

So their favourite argument for their own existence is as keepers of public order. Crazy football crowds, pub brawls, rioting at the Bathurst races — surely these events prove we need cops? The police use these dramas to justify their amazing arms acquisitions, including regular requests for sub-

machine guns.

But the batons and guns do not remove the underlying social causes of crime. Indeed, they prolong them. Because the police see movements for change, demonstrations and pickets as potential riots too. The hardware is meant to be used on us.

Two World Wars brought police and army intelligence together because the police were well-placed to gather information about the civilian population. Special Branches and ASIO have files on every kind of socialist, radical and reformer. The Counter Espionage Bureau, a forerunner of ASIO formed in 1916, targeted the Industrial Workers of the World and Irish Republican sympathisers for surveillance. It also chased military deserters, illegal immigrants and naturalisation fakers.

This choice of just who is a danger to society is 100% capitalist. The police, secret or otherwise, have consistently recruited those with conservative views.

IRONICALLY, their masters still treat the police as lickspittles.

In December 1970, the weekly pay of a Victorian constable was 21% below the average wage. For years, police had only one Sunday off each month. Haldane's book is a chronicle of the pathetic working conditions police willingly undertook. Compared to other workers, the police appear industrially cretinous.

Yet it is a mistake to see police as fellow workers. Police unions have openly and repeatedly stated that it is not appropriate for police to respect the picket lines of other workers. Police unions have no doubt about which side of the class line they are on.

Police are not the thin blue line that keeps society from teetering into chaos. As Haldane admits, they unfailingly side with the propertied against the propertiless. Their main role, whatever else they do that is useful, is to maintain the ruling order. Even on the earliest days in Australia, the job of chasing thieves came second to tracking down escaped convicts.

That is why past revolutions have usually seen the armed working class take over the task of policing itself, and with much greater justice and efficiency.

That is also why the best cops are the ones who have left, and the left cops never joined in the first place.

— Mark Matcok

SINCE the time of Karl Marx, socialists have been accused of wanting to do away with the family. And since that time, we have proudly pleaded guilty to the charge.

For well over a century now, the modern nuclear family has been a key element in the oppression of women and children.

If a family is poor — and even in affluent Australia this means 400,000 families — or if one of its members is ill or unhappy or violent, life can be a nightmare for all involved.

Domestic violence is more common than any other sort. Many more women are murdered by their husbands or lovers than by strangers. By a recent Canadian estimate, one wife in eight is beaten by her husband. The vast majority of physical and sexual abuse of children takes place at home. Untold emotional damage is done every day.

Even when family members are good and caring to each other, when the anger and frustration of daily life are confined to occasional outbursts, the family stunts and distorts the lives of those trapped within.

For all its pleasures and comforts — and for many people these are very real — family life is narrow and dull. For women who do not go out to work, and for children who have no escape other than a few hours a day at school or kindergarten, the tedium of being housebound is undeniable. The bored housewife popping in front of TV for endless hours are stereotypes drawn from reality.

If women and children have no independent means of support, and are cut off from any real participation in society, then they have no real autonomy and the best family is a mere gilded cage.

BUT SOCIALISTS do more than just criticize the family as an institution. We aim to explain it, and in doing so, to find a solution to the problem that the family represents. This is somewhat easier than it seems.

The family as we know it is not the ancient and venerable institution that its conservative fans make out. In its modern form, it is a product of 19th century industrial capitalism.

The misery and squallor of that period are now legendary. The danger of revolution was great. The ruling class, ably

Exploding the nuclear family



assisted by frightened middle class do-gooders, set out to strengthen itself by recasting society.

In particular, the family was promoted as a focus of working class life. Women and children were driven out of the workforce. Much of women's time was turned over to raising children — caring for their physical well-being and instilling proper values.

In the family, too, the elderly, the ill, the injured and the unemployed were expected to find comfort and care.

THE MODERN family is a product of the youthful stage of industrial capitalism's development. It has served it well, and continues to do so today.

As a unit of consumption, it is unrivalled. Millions of little households each buy their own house, car, TV, washing machine, video, microwave.

AGAINST the capitalist family, socialists point to an alternative future where women and children will be able to develop their full potential as human beings.

In a society where profit is not a consideration and human freedom is the aim, the burdens that currently fall most heavily on women could be removed.

Domestic tasks would become a social responsibility. Properly staffed local laundries and restaurants and professionally organised house cleaning services would replace much that is now housewives' work.

With a much shorter working week and proper workplace childcare centres, parents and children would spend more time — and much better time — together. Community childcare would allow parents and children to have free time apart, and allow children especially to expand their social horizons.

Already, many people do not live in family households. With economic pressures removed and religious taboos undermined, people will be truly free to find new ways of living. No longer will the more-or-less monogamous heterosexual couple and their children alone in a house be the norm.

Households will be set up and dissolved at the will of all participants. People will be free to live alone or together, permanently or for a time, with lovers or friends or workmates, with adults or children or both. Children will cease to be the property of their parents and begin to become full human beings, with control over their lives proportionate to their mental and physical growth.

If they choose to live with their parents, they will be able to do so. But with the nuclear family household being rarer than it is now, the "special bond" between parents and children will at least be supplemented by other close relationships that people enter throughout their lives.

The range of experiences and role models that growing children will have probably make our present child-rearing practices look primitive and narrow indeed.

None of this will come easy. It will need enormous economic resources, political will and mass action. It will need legal and educational work to support

young men and children in struggle against old prejudices.

Only a socialist society, which has broken with capitalism, its institutions and its ideologies, can even begin this process.

Graham Willott

The plague on all our houses

PAUL KEATING'S budget had lots of objectionable features, but one thing in particular got my back up. Under pressure from the NSW Labor machine, which has a state election coming up, he restored full "negative gearing" for rental property.

Negative gearing is a tax dodge. Investors borrow money to buy buildings, then write the repayments off on their tax. They end up owning the buildings, at our expense. The government quite rightly restricted this in 1985.

Ever since then, landlords and their estate agent cronies have been screaming about a "rental crisis". This year their protests climaxed in a masterly propaganda campaign. The media gave them a dream run, repeating over and over that we have a national crisis.

Keating gave in, even though he must know better, for the actual facts about the rental market are well documented.

The Real Estate Institute based its campaign on its own statistics for "vacancy rates". These are fairly low (supposedly meaning a tight rental market) in all capital cities, though especially low in Sydney. This was blamed on the limits on negative gearing, which had allegedly driven investors out of the rental market.

It's all rubbish. The Institute's statistics have been criticised by experts, but even if we accept them, what do they actually show? In the four years before the tax changes, average vacancy rates were actually lower in most capital cities. Since then, they've risen. On the statistics themselves, it seems that if anything the restrictions on negative gearing have improved the rental market!

The exceptions are Perth, where a shortage of rental accommodation has existed due to the America's Cup (the situation is now improving rapidly) and Sydney. Sydney does have real problems, as anyone who has had to choose between various cockroach-infested slums can testify.

So anything that actually increased the numbers of flats and units in Sydney would be a good thing. But what has Keating done? Has he made more money available for public housing? No, housing aid to the states has been cut back, although in NSW and elsewhere tens of thousands of people are on public housing waiting lists.

Has he offered tax incentives

THE AUSTRALIAN TELEGRAPH

Prices go through the roof

When to kiss goodbye to a rented home

Bonanza for some is despair for others

Prices leap amid panic

HOMES BUYING FRENZY



specifically for the building of new housing? No, he has cut the depreciation allowance on new buildings, at the same time as he resurrected negative gearing. The overall effect must be to encourage speculators to play games with existing housing stock rather than provide new homes.

As dwellings are snapped up by speculators, prices will rise, making it harder for workers to buy homes. And as the speculative bubble continues, properties will change hands over and over, causing increased insecurity for tenants.

I could say more about this disgraceful cave-in to parasites, but there are other aspects of housing in Australia worth a comment.

We all know this country is the home of the privately owned, three bedroom brick veneer. This is usually attributed to "Australian tradition", but it has little to do with that.

Until well after World War 2, only a little over half of dwellings were owned by their occupants. The proportion then rose to over 70% by the mid-sixties. This occurred at a time when the population of "traditional" Australians was being diluted by overseas immigrants. It was a product of deliberate government policy.

Creating vast outer suburban

estates of "dream homes" was supposed to enhance our quality of life, but it also brought major problems: long commuting to work, pollution from cars, the loneliness of the outer suburban housewife. And if for some workers it meant rescuing their children from the crime and dirt of the inner city, this begged the question of what happened to those unable to escape, particularly migrant workers.

Rather than creating a workers' paradise, the postwar housing boom simply recast social divisions, a fact most graphically illustrated by the plight of tenants in the squalid Housing Commission tower blocks.

THE PRIVATE house building industry is praised as a motor of economic growth. Through a series of economic "multipliers," we are told, it stimulates other industries, from bricks to whitegoods. But the reality is not so simple.

While it stimulates productive industries in some ways, the private housing system also drains capital from them in others. Each year, more money is poured into private housing than would be needed for a rental-based public housing system. This is because a large chunk of that capital is siphoned off into unproductive areas: into conveyancing, agents' fees, auctioneers' fees, newspaper

ads, financing costs and the like. And not only once, but each time you buy and sell.

This is one reason why all of the most successful economies in the industrialised west have an "owner-occupied" housing sector smaller than Australia. In the mid-seventies ours accounted for 67%. For Sweden the figure was 35% and for West Germany it was 33.5%. (Interestingly, 'socialist' Czechoslovakia had a relatively high 50%.)

Britain's postwar economic decline has been accompanied by a steady growth in its "owner-occupied" housing, rising from 26% in 1945 to 55% in 1977 and higher still today. This has been a drain on productive industry, as suggested by the head of National Westminster Bank who remarked that "there is little advantage in Britain having the best-housed unemployed in Europe."

A SOCIALIST housing sector would make some dramatic improvements even on Sweden.

A large public rental sector would be built, amply funded and placed under the control of the tenants. The large private rental properties would be taken over and integrated into it, and we would encourage private tenants to take the lead in this process by taking over their buildings. Small-scale private rental would continue for a while, but would be forced to maintain high standards by competition from the public sector.

Banks and building societies would be taken over, and mortgage repayments lowered. Over time, workers owning their own home would be given inducements to join the socialised housing system.

I could say much more, but space forbids. My comments on the socialist perspective do serve to show how mean and backward are the approaches of the Labor government. In fact, by comparison with other advanced capitalist societies, Keating's resurrection of negative gearing reveals a downright reactionary attitude: an affinity for the most parasitic elements in the capitalist system.

What clearer argument could there be for building a leftwing alternative to the ALP?



with Ken Stevens

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THE MADNESS OF THE MARKET

• The myth of Eureka
• Vanunu interview

Rabuka cracks down

WITH POWER securely in his hands, Fijian military dictator Colonel Rabuka is showing his true colours.

In late October he suspended all democratic rights. In contempt of the Hindu and Moslem majority of the population, he has declared Christianity the official religion.

He has attacked the trade unions, the last real protection that most Fijians of any race still have. Unionists were among the first victims of the military crackdown, with arrests, harassment, and even violence commonplace.

Little more than a week after the second coup, Rabuka sent his troops to close down and occupy the offices of the Fiji Trade Union Congress (FTUC) and the Public Service Association (PSA).

The PSA is the largest union in Fiji, with some 40,000 members, and has been the backbone of the union-based Fijian Labour Party. Deposed prime minister Bavadra and his

finance minister Mahendra Chaudhry are past and present PSA leaders. During the period between the coups, the PSA led resistance to the 15% wage cut imposed on all public servants.

Rabuka has banned all industrial action, strikes, bans, go-slows, demonstrations. Workers used all of these actions to resist the first coup in May.

Rabuka has not banned unions outright. He has talked instead of the "responsible unionism" of Singapore, where the government controls the officials.

It may not even come to that in Fiji. There is a layer of union officials prepared to collaborate with the dictatorship.

Rabuka's new minister for industrial relations is Tanielia Vietaia, head of the dockworkers' union. James Raman, general secretary of the FTUC, has already shown a willingness to make deals with Rabuka. In return for wage promises and minor concessions, Raman has done Rabuka's bidding in calling on Australian unions to lift their bans on Fijian trade.

To their discredit, the ACTU leaders have taken Raman's advice. They refused to even hear Noor Dean, who represents eight unions (and two-thirds of all unions) which are for imposing serious bans.

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RADIATION

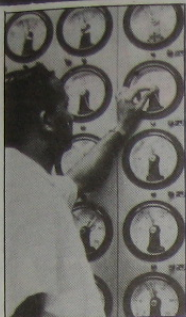
Last month not a beauty, Nuke

IF THERE WAS anyone anywhere who still believed that nuclear energy for peaceful purposes was a good idea, the events of the last month must have surely disillusioned them.

In Brazil, an abandoned cancer radiotherapy machine was broken up and distributed by a scrap metal dealer. It was full of highly radioactive caesium-137. Already four people are dead and 250 more have suffered contamination. Bodies are being buried in lead-lined coffins sealed with cement.

In India, scientists are grappling with the problem of how to do away with a crippled atomic power plant. The Canadian-built plant has been crippled by leaks since 1981, and although the reactor is no longer used and there is no immediate danger, an earthquake or human damage could unleash a disaster.

Following the Russian example at Chernobyl and encasing the whole plant in concrete is described as "difficult



A nuclear headache: Control room of India's leaky reactor

and complex" (read: expensive). Meanwhile, British journalists have identified Sudan as the centre of a worldwide trade in illegal nuclear energy and weapons components. So now we know where all those Non-Proliferation Pact breaches are non-proliferating from. Feel any better?

BICENTENARY

Blacks say no to Expo

A GROUP of Aborigines and white supporters picketed the Expo Planning meeting at the Parkroyal Hotel in Brisbane on October 29.

Director of Lew Edwards recently stated that blacks were supporting Expo. Most are not, and see it as an integral part of the 1988 celebration of the invasion.

A proposed drama spectacular is likely to collapse because black actors are refusing to participate. Only five of the two roles have been filled.

PRIVATISATION

SL snubs move to stop sell-off

FROM time to time, members of the ALP Left like to assure revolutionary socialists that the best way to fight Bob Hawke's sell-outs is from inside the Labor Party.

Which is, presumably, why Victoria's Socialist Left has just refused to support moves by Hawke's own Labor Unity faction to warn him to back off on privatisation plans.

The anti-privatisation moves came from the Storemen and Packers Union, one of the

powers inside Labor Unity. They are angry at Labor's decision to sell off parts of the Naval Dockyards and Government Aircraft Factory in Melbourne, moves that will reduce employment by 900 jobs. Many of the jobs being lost are those of storemen and packers.

So why wouldn't the Socialist Left support them? Well, it seems that John Hallpenny's Amalgamated Metal Workers Union got the inside running in negotiations on the sell-off with Canberra, and did rather better for itself. The AMWU is, of course, a big wheel inside the Socialist Left.

And the whole lousy deal has been done in consultation with the ACTU — and the Socialist Left wouldn't want to break an understanding with Simon Crean, would it? Not just for the sake of a lousy 900 jobs . . .

WAGE DEAL

Tech teachers cop a shocker

ANOTHER group of workers has fallen victim to the two tier wage system. This time, it's Victoria's teachers in tertiary technical colleges.

At the urging of their union officials, members of the Technical Teachers Union of Victoria (TTUV) have accepted a 4% wage rise in exchange for staggering productivity trade-offs.

These trade-offs include a 22% increase in annual teaching hours (from 614 to 754), and an hours per week from 18.5 to 26. After-hours teaching will be compulsory and the time-and-a-half penalty has been abolished.

Annual leave will be rostered to allow colleges to stay open 48 weeks a year, and the 10 weeks non-class time (which teachers use to plan courses and keep up to date) is not expected to last long.

Contract staff, 80% of whom are women, will soon be out of work.

The Cain government is ecstatic. By its calculations, the trade-offs are worth at least a 20% increase in productivity, and all for a miserly 4% pay rise.

Other state governments are watching enviously. Technical students in Victoria now cost \$4.70 an hour to train (down from \$5.04) — the cheapest education of its type in Australia.

A nasty precedent has been set. Teachers in other states will have to make sure it doesn't spread.

Fitzgerald finds pigs knee-deep in swill

QUEENSLAND'S Fitzgerald Inquiry is four months old and still going strong

What is the story so far? Most of the press are too jealous to admit it, but the inquiry was triggered by a *Four Corners* program on 11 May this year. The program was full of shock horror stuff about police corruption, but it did not actually reveal anything that residents of Brisbane didn't already know.

It simply said that Brisbane, like all cities, has a number of brothels and gambling houses, and that the cops take a share of the profits.

It was nothing particularly new, but it did expose the hypocritical depths of the criminal legal system. After all, we are told that the virtuous boys in blue merely uphold the law. They look decidedly less virtuous when they are revealed as beneficiaries of the profits from activities which are, after all, illegal.

The problem also made John Bjelke-Petersen's bible-thumping look a bit silly.

The Fitzgerald Inquiry was probably designed to obscure the simple facts behind a smokescreen of explanations about how incredibly difficult

the policeman's job is.

For the first few weeks, it went according to plan. Commissioner Lewis droned on about how difficult it is to stamp out prostitution.

Junior police complained that the laws on prostitution and illegal gaming made convictions very hard to obtain. The yellow press let off predictable outrage and called for stiffer laws.

Then in the next phase of evidence, police from internal security units were doing their jobs as best they could. Again, the press was more or less content. The virtuous could be expected to sniff out the bad apples.

BY THE time the actual controllers of the brothels and casinos were in the box, a very clear pattern had emerged.

The operators named, in terms of reference — Hapeta, the Bellinos, and Conte — would admit to more or less anything but one of *Four Corners*' charges. They steadfastly refused to admit they had anything to do with "police corruption".

Yes we run brothels, yes we run casinos, but give me money to police? No, never!

This picture was being painted quite nicely until a Detective Sergeant Harry Burgess had a fit of conscience, and admitted to receiving and passing on bribe money from the prostitution and gambling industry.

Burgess said that Commissioner Lewis knew about and tolerated this cash flow. As the lawyers say, this was mere hearsay. But for those in the know, it was enough. Assistant Commissioner Graeme Parker, a long-time associate of Lewis, admitted that he too had been corrupt, and offered to name names in return for immunity from prosecution. Lewis was suspended for the duration of the inquiry (on full pay, poor chap).

At the time of writing, another two policemen have decided to desert the sinking ship and admit to corruption in return for indemnities. With Russell Hinz the biggest name to be implicated so far, and more dirt coming out by the day, the inquiry promises to run for a few months yet.

THE NET result, then, is that the Four Corners allegations have been confirmed. Anyway, so what?



Commissioner Lewis urges the public to speak up against crime: now his cronies are, and naming him

form of licensing. An Inspector Bulger came fairly close to the truth when he said: "The main reason for prosecuting prostitutes rather than the owners is to exhibit some form of control over prostitution".

This control is the reason why some brothel-owners flourish, and others don't.

As the *Four Corners* program showed, Hapeta became the big noise in prostitution because he had police sponsorship. Rival brothels were prosecuted out of business.

Similarly, Antonio Bellino's casinos have a police-backed monopoly of the Brisbane market.

'CORRUPTION' arises simply because the police, seeing all the profits flowing under their supervisory noses, claim their share.

In fact, there is a good reason why the word "brothels" has been rarely spoken at the inquiry. "Bribery" implies that police work for crims. The reality is the opposite. The crims work for the police.

This particularly annoys some of the law and order brigade. They wish for a clean police force, that would refrain from skimming profits itself, and confine its activities to protecting the profit bladders.

Fitzgerald is unlikely to achieve this. Inquiries of this sort have been trying for decades to squeeze the corruption pus from the capitalist boil.

Yet the corruption goes on. As long as there is money to be made from drugs, gambling, or whatever, the cops will take a cut.

Of course, if drug-taking was decriminalised, the prices would fall, profits would shrivel, and so would corruption. But that simple idea never crosses the minds of the law and order brigade.

And no doubt, if drugs were decriminalised then the police would graft in other areas.

Therefore, the only way to prevent profit-making by police would be to abolish all profit-making. Or all police. Sounds downright illegal.

— Denis Alpo

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There will always be a few entrepreneurs willing to step in. The criminal laws are simply a

I have nothing to hide . . .!



Russell Hinz: named

Chauvinism, Chinese style

DOMINATION of one national group by another is a commonplace around the world. It is particularly offensive when carried out by a regime which calls itself 'socialist'.

Take China's relationship with Tibet, for example. In the last few weeks, Tibetans have been demonstrating against the Chinese hold on their country. In turn, the Chinese have opened fire, cracked down and virtually sealed off what they regard as their 'province'.

These were no ordinary demonstrations, either. They were organised by young Buddhist monks. The first of them, in late September, was fairly small, and only hit the headlines because it was the first in some thirty years. The second, on October 1 (China's national day), involved at least two thousand people. Demonstrators set vehicles and a police station alight. Police firing left an unknown number of people dead and injured.

A third demonstration was surrounded by the People's Armed Militia. About eighty protesters were arrested and apparently beaten up. The demonstrations all called for Tibetan independence, and for the Chinese to leave.

They produced a major reaction from the Beijing regime. Just like its counterpart in South Africa, one of its first actions was to chuck out all the foreign journalists. It loudly blamed the US for all the trouble

because the Congress had listened to a speech by the Dalai Lama (head of Tibetan buddhism). It poured troops and police into Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, and with their presence, plus much display of weaponry, it prevented any further 'disturbances'.

WORKING out where to stand on the Tibetan issue is no simple task.

It is true that the People's Republic of China forcibly invaded the country in 1950. But the situation which existed there beforehand was nothing to write home about.

Tibet was a theocracy (a religion-based society) in which powerful monasteries virtually owned not only the land, but the peasants who worked it. It was this society which the Dalai Lama headed, and presumably to which he and his monks wish



Angry Tibetans attack Lhasa police station

to return.

For 100 years before the Chinese invasion, Tibet had close links with Chinese regimes of every stripe. The call for Tibetan 'independence' came primarily from the representatives of British and American imperialism — from the former, to add to their Indian empire, and from the latter to make inroads in the regional markets.

So keen were the British on Tibetan independence that they invaded the place twice, in 1888 and 1904. On both occasions they extracted major commercial advantages.

Concern for Tibetan independence broke out again in the same quarters when victory for the Chinese Communist armies loomed in the late 1940s. The Americans in particular could now see the military significance of an 'independent' (read: pro-American) Tibet, given an impending communist China. Mao Zedong and his supporters could see the same thing. The invasion of Tibet was the last act of the 1949 revolution.

TIBETANS have suffered at the hands of the Chinese.

The dominant Han nationality of China has a tendency to regard other nationalities as inferior — especially Tibetans. Even today, Han officials drop remarks like "Tibetans have no culture".

Years of neglect by the central government were only ended with the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s, when rampaging Red Guards (many of whom were Tibetan) destroyed many thousands of monasteries.

Since then, Beijing has admitted "mistakes". Yet the situation has only improved marginally. Police brutality against Tibetans is routine. It is no surprise that in the recent demonstrations, there have been attacks on Han civilians and businesses.

WHAT THEN is the socialist position on this question?

To start with, we oppose national chauvinism of any sort. The Russian revolutionary Lenin attacked the Russian attitude towards minorities, and wrote of the need

"to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of the Great Russian Chauvinist, insubstance a racial and a tyrant such as the typical Russian bureaucrats."

No doubt this could be applied to many of the Han officials in Tibet.

But what of Tibetan independence?

We support the victory of the Tibetan movement for two reasons. Firstly, because any victory for that movement (whether partial or otherwise) would be a slap in the face to the repressive, state capitalist regime in Beijing. It would weaken that

regime, which is already facing significant discontent among workers, students and poor peasants.

Secondly, a Tibet freed from Han domination would then see its own class antagonisms come out into the open. When one country is dominated by another, its own class struggle is often veiled by the overriding need to get rid of foreign domination. The workers and poor peasants of Tibet will be better placed to assert their own interests — against those of the lamas and the landowners — in an independent country.

But they should not wait to do so. The fact is that an independent Tibet is extremely unlikely. Militarily, China is forced to hang on to it. Despite noises from the US Congress, neither the US nor any other power in the world recognises Tibet as anything but a province of China.

The real question for Tibetans is not so much formal "independence" as *liberation* — from the Chinese regime, from their own reactionary elements, and from the backward economic position into which the world market pushes them.

That can only be achieved if it is linked to the liberation of the rest of the exploited and oppressed in China — the other minorities, the poor peasants and the working class.

— David Lockwood

The madness of the market

THE STOCKMARKET crash of Monday 19 October has forced even the grossest apologists for capitalism to admit the depth of many international economic problems.

It has driven home that capitalism can only be understood as an international system. And the 20 to 40 percent drop in share prices on markets around the world has prompted governments to intensify efforts to force the burden of economic difficulties onto workers' backs.

In the USA and Australia, Reagan and Hawke will be slashing public spending that doesn't benefit the rich even further. On the wage-cutting front, the attempted postponement of the Australian national wage case was only the first pebble before the landslide.

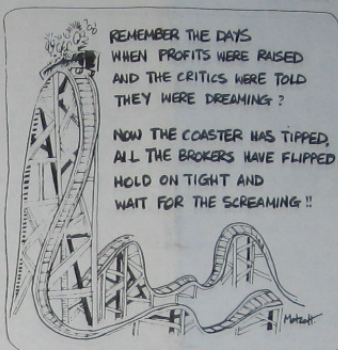
By itself, the stockmarket crash doesn't mean very much. A fair bit of wealth has been redistributed to those who got out of the market before the slump from those who sold up in the panic.

Because it is possible to borrow money using the value of shares as collateral, the decline in the market tends to tighten up the credit system. This and the higher returns (from share incomes, as share prices slip faster than dividends, will tend to push up interest rates. And if interest rates rise, that will make investment in productive activity more expensive and hence slow down the economy.

But the crash has not destroyed any real wealth that you can actually feel or see. Shares are a claim on real wealth — on factories, buildings, inventories, machinery, equipment. None of those items of real capital has been damaged by what happened on the stockmarket.

When profit rates in industry are low, however, the rich find it more attractive to try to expand their wealth through gambling that share prices will rise than to invest in building new capacity to produce commodities. That has been happening for the past five years or so on the stockmarkets of the world. As they gamble, share prices can expand out of all proportion to the real capital that they are claims on. So, as Karl Marx put it, they are a kind of "fictitious capital".

Sooner or later, speculators recognise that the gap between



REMEMBER THE DAYS
WHEN PROFITS WERE RAISED
AND THE CRITICS WERE TOLD
THEY WERE DREAMING?

NOW THE COASTER HAS TIPPED,
ALL THE BROKERS HAVE FLIPPED!
HOLD ON TIGHT AND
WAIT FOR THE SCREAMING!!

fictitious and real capital is unrealistic. The market falls. Or crashes. The "bull run" turns into a "bear run".

The point when the market shifts from boom to slump is related to what is happening in the real economy. The liberal historian of the crash of 1929, John Kenneth Galbraith, points out that

"The stock market is but a mirror which, perhaps as in this instance, provides an image of the underlying or fundamental economic situation. Cause and effect run from the economy to the stockmarket, never the reverse."

REAGAN and his Secretary for the Treasury Baker have argued, like the leaders of all other private capitalist countries including Australia, that the fundamentals in their economy are OK.

They are not. Many professional economic apologists for capitalism have been saying for years that the USA cannot continue to run huge balance of trade deficits (currently running at around \$US190 billion) and at around \$US150 billion budget deficits (about \$US150 billion) financed through borrowing, especially from the Japanese.

There is an underlying imbalance in world trade. The US is buying more imports than it is selling exports. The reverse is true of the European community and especially Japan. US politicians and economists usually blame Japanese and European protectionism for these problems. In Europe and Japan

the Philippines and Poland to western banks. But these are only expressions of the unevenness of the underlying problem. They are symptoms, not causes.

The measures treasurers and central bankers around the world are taking to stabilise the situation in the wake of the stockmarket crash are only treating the symptoms.

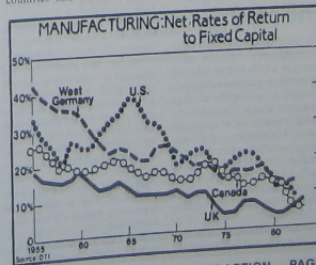
They have promised to keep interest rates down, to counteract the contractionary effects of the share slump. They say they will prop up the US dollar to maintain international monetary stability and to restore confidence in the US economy. This is because the US dollar is the main medium of international exchange; and despite the fact that the weakness of the US economy makes it less attractive to hold dollars or US assets and therefore the value of the dollar tends to decline.

IN THE medium term 'won't it be possible to prop up the US dollar or hold down interest rates.

The fundamental problem is one of profit rates. These have been lower in the 1970s and 1980s than the 1950s and 1960s for the western major economies, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The accompanying graph shows how serious the decline has been.

Trade imbalances between Japan and the USA, for example, are the result of the difference in profit rates between the two countries. Japanese capital is more profitable and competitive than US capital. But even in Japan, profit rates are significantly lower than they were twenty years ago.

Twofoldity with interest and exchange rates will not



Tea? I said tea!

AS PUBLIC servants know, Labor ministers make lousy bosses. Now the personal staff of Senator Gareth Evans is discovering the same thing.

Evans has a nasty habit of asking his staff to do something, then changing his mind without telling them. When they finish the task he bawls them out for getting it wrong.

So bad has it become, that he recently gave one secretary a furious blast for not producing coffee after he had asked for tea. To play safe, the secretary now brings both. Just in case his lordship changes his mind while the kettle is boiling!

Expo to expire?

THE SMELL of disaster is starting to hang over Brisbane's Expo 88.

Only one other state in Australia has enrolled in it, despite the deadline for enrolments being extended four times. And only three American states have enrolled in the white shoe brigade's version of a church fete.

Could be a fitting debate for Bjeke to bow out on?

A man of principle

MELBOURNE motor-mind and prize pig Dieryn Hinch has made much of his right to speak out of late, having just spent a couple of well-deserved weeks in prison for repeatedly using his Radio 3AW talkback show to prejudice the trial of a priest on sex charges.

Of course, Hinch's concern for free speech was a lot less evident when he started the three-year witch-hunt of

Jail's too good for some people!



teacher Alison Thorne for advocating the lowering of the age of consent.

So we weren't too shocked to see the great man of principle raise the art of brown-tonguing one's employer to new heights just before he trotted off to jail. 'She's a wonderfully clever and charming wife,' gushed Hinch about Janet Holmes a Court, as soon as hubby Robert had taken over 3AW.

Hinch, may we suggest, is a wonderfully clever and charming argument for life imprisonment in certain contempt-of-court cases!

The Right person for the job

KEN HENDERSON, Tory candidate for Rochdale council in England, is a former member of the neo-Nazi National Front and British National Party. He still supports the repatriation of non-white immigrants.

What does he do for a crust? Henderson is colour mixer for a textile firm!

Downwardly mobile

TIMES is tough for the rich. A group of Texan oilmen have formed the National Association of Formerly Wealthy Persons.

To qualify, you must answer questions such as 'Have you had the telephone removed from your personal vehicle in the past year?' And you must be able to prove that you're down to your last \$2 million!

Stockmarket turns leddy-bearish

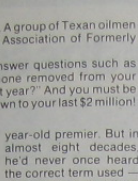
THE MOST incisive comment on the stockmarket crash came from a Melbourne University economist on the 7.30 Report.

He apologised that he couldn't properly analyse the antics of the players in the share game. Why? Because he had never completed his degree in child psychology.

Ignorance is bliss

WHEN the Queensland cabinet was considering its now-infamous raid on condom vending machines, Jgh Bjelke Petersen came up with one question that stopped discussion in its tracks.

'What is a condom?' No, his colleagues didn't have to explain the birds and bees to the 76-



CHEAP SHOTS

What's in a name?

THE BRITISH nuclear industry's PR geiger counter goes berserk at any mention of Chernobyl.

Sightseers at Sellfield nuclear power station are ferried around on a train. Each carriage has a woman's name. One is called Carol.

It used to be called Cheryl.

Cryptic comment

WORKING on the same principle, maybe Three Mile Island power station

should sack its safety officer. His name is Mr Paul Tomb.

Safety on the job

CONVENTIONAL power stations have their hazards as well.

A security guard putting up a flag at England's High Manham power station had his head badly bruised when the metal pulley broke and fell on him.

Management was putting up the flag to boast of 100 accident-free working days.

I told you not to eat so much!



Gimme that ol' time religion

• *Harpers Magazine* in the US reports the results of monitoring the unctuous Reverend Jerry Falwell on his *Old Time Gospel Hour* in July. In the average program, Falwell spent 26 minutes soliciting contributions!

• The stockmarket crash has produced a suitably reverential response from the Vatican. Said a Cardinal from the 15-member Pontifical Council for economic affairs, 'One must have confidence in Providence — on Monday we lost but on Tuesday we recovered a bit.'

• And we've just received the menu from *Shepherd One*, the Pope's private jet, on his tour of the US earlier this year. The Little Father with the Big Fortune was offered ham, lobster, coffee, steak, shrimps, cheese, a choice of nine wines, caviar, tea and brandy. No wonder he collapses on his belly whenever he hits the tarmac!

FEATURES



Artist's impression of the fighting at the Stockade

The myth of Eureka

EVER SINCE there has been a left wing movement in this country, sections of it have looked to radical Australian nationalism as a short cut to mass influence. Typically they argue that it can be anti-imperialist and lead to a political challenge to the system, and they point to the Eureka stockade as a classic example.

That's why the Eureka flag is so common at demonstrations.

A look at the real experience of the Eureka stockade refutes this mythology.

The stockade rebels originally gathered near Ballarat in Victoria not to make a rebellion but to dig for gold. Gold was discovered in NSW and Victoria in April 1851. The discoveries were publicised and produced a goldrush. By 1852 there were 22,000 men on the goldfields of Victoria — almost half the total male population of the colony. There were far fewer women.

The colonial state demanded a slice of the action. In 1851 they instructed miners to pay 30 shillings per month for a miner's licence. This made the miners an exploited class, exploited like peasants by tax.

Where there is exploitation, there tends to be resistance. That's why history is a saga of class struggle. In December 1851 Victorian Governor La Trobe doubled the licence fee. The Red Ribbon League organised demonstrations on the goldfields which forced La Trobe to withdraw the increase. Having achieved this, however, the League seems to have dissolved. After that the goldfields were relatively quiet until 1854.

In 1851 and 1852 the miners were mainly

working in creeks, extracting alluvial gold with pans and long toms. By 1854 the alluvial gold was much harder to find and most miners were working underground on the "leads" — the deposits of ancient river beds that were now 80 to 150 feet deep.

The underground miners worked in groups of two or more — one digging down the shaft, one at the top operating the bucket and winlass, maybe one or two others washing ore and cutting wood to brace the shaft. The physical mechanics of underground mining made the tax burden heavier. The shaft would take months to sink and might be barren, but still the tax had to be paid, gold or no gold.

MINERS also suffered systematic harassment from the armed forces of the colonial state.

The folksongs and TV scriptwriters do not understand the reason for this harassment. The gold rush had left a shortage of wage workers on the farms and in the cities. Real wages increased by 300 per cent. This was an intolerable situation for the graziers and urban merchants, and their state attempted to do something about it. The state attempted to drive the miners off the goldfields and back into the cities.

The miner's licence had to be carried at all times and produced on demand. The fine for non-possession was five pounds, of which the arresting trooper got half.

Given this punitive the troopers were straining to go with vigour and brutality whenever their superiors turned them loose, Miners would be hunted on horseback, arrested while bathing in a river, placed in

lawful custody by being chained to a log. The folksongs tell the story.

After the early success of the Red Ribbon League, the miners' resistance to taxes and harassment seems to have ebbed. This probably resulted from their conditions of labour. They were not united in work like wage labourers, but independent producers, after the quick buck. They were economic rivals and claim jumpers.

Like the French peasantry described by Karl Marx, the miners were collected together like potatoes in a sack. The potatoes might never have organised but for two factors. Firstly, the grower went on the offensive. Secondly, some of the potatoes had been uprooted from the British labour movement.

THE OFFENSIVE started in September 1854, when Victorian governor Hotham ordered that the digger hunts be increased in frequency, from twice a month to eight times a month.

Soon after this the tax collecting authorities, who doubled as coroners and magistrates, absolved Biny (a publican) from the killing of Scobie (a miner). The anger of the miners was given some coherence by former English Chartists. They had brought with them from England a simple recipe for organisation — leaflets and posters, then speakers and resolutions, then collections and membership tickets. They organised a meeting on 11 October, and collected two hundred pounds reward money to be offered for information leading to the conviction of Scobie's killer.

Because the miners already had their suspicions, they burnt Benty's pub to the

FROM PAGE 5



The crash

overcome this problem, though it might put off the next recession a little longer. The US government seems to have given the nod to a couple of large banks to lower interest rates while some state-owned financial institutions in France actually started to buy shares to stabilise markets during the crash. These steps probably did reduce the panic. But they don't deal with the underlying problem.

Since the current crisis started in the mid-1970s, state

interventions into various markets and areas of production have succeeded in preventing a downturn as sharp and deep as that of the 1930s. But this has been at the cost of prolonging some of the problems. The dramatic shakeout, with widespread bankruptcies and very high unemployment, that a deep slump would cause would have helped reduce wage-related and capital costs for the surviving companies.

WAGE restraint and wage may improve profit rates somewhat.

The cuts necessary to really restore profits would require

smashing working class organisations and dismantling the welfare state with a ferocity that even Thatcher and Reagan have not dared display. Such a fascist solution is not yet on the agenda in a developed country.

Since the late 1960s, money markets have been increasingly volatile, international and largely beyond the control of individual governments. The stockmarket crash demonstrated just how integrated world capitalism is on all levels. There are no longer several national stockmarkets but one world market, linked electronically and operating 24 hours a day.

This international casino only reflects the integration of the

real economy through trade and money — flows and the internationalisation of production. Many commodities are no longer produced in any identifiable country. A "Japanese" car may include components from half a dozen or more countries.

The tighter integration of the world economy emphasises the impossibility of achieving a solution to the problems of capitalism in any one country. Socialism has to take on the capitalism that exists — world capitalism — not the self-contained capitalism in one country, as left nationalists would like.

— Rick Kuhn

FEATURES

ground. The state attacked, the miners organised defensively. This pattern was repeated five times, up to the sixth and final attack on the stockade.

Miners were repeatedly arrested. A committee was set up to defend them, then on 11 November a mass meeting of miners on Bakery Hill founded the Ballarat Reform League. It adopted the demands of English Chartism, demanding also the removal of the licence tax. It elected three leaders: Humffray and Kennedy, former Chartists, and Frederick Vern, a participant in the 1848 revolution in Germany.

On 25 November three miners were convicted of arson. After a delegation failed to secure their release, a 10,000 strong mass meeting on 29 November moved that the miners burn their licences. They did so in a famous bonfire.

On the next day and state launched a digger hung. Shots were fired, stones were thrown at troopers, many were arrested and the Riot Act was read. When the miners headed for their traditional meeting place on Bakery Hill, the Chartists were hiding—they were "moral force" men who opposed violence. Peter Lalor stepped into the leadership vacuum and was elected Commander in Chief. The armed miners marched to Bakery Hill and built a stockade.

There were 1500 miners in the stockade that night, but by the early hours of the following Sunday the forces were much weaker. Three hundred troopers stormed the stockade, killing 24 of its defenders and arresting 150. Twelve were charged with treason.



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THAT WAS THE END of the Eureka stockade. Not much of an uprising, really.

But the miners were not broken. They went on an effective tax strike. Sympathy demonstrations in Melbourne led to acquittal for all those charged with treason. The government set up a Commission of Inquiry.

The Commission made an important discovery: the returns on underground mining were less per miner than wages, so economic distress would in time clear the goldfields more effectively than troopers. So the licence tax could be scrapped and replaced with a cheaper Miner's Right, legislative Council, Lalor and Humffray were elected to the Legislative Council as conservative politicians.

But if the Eureka struggle had its successes, it never had the nationalist or anti-imperialist implications imagined by many today.

Gorbachev reinterprets Trotsky

ONE OF THE problems of Gorbachev's glasnost policy is that there are so many skeletons in Russia's cupboard that opening the door even slightly on twentieth century Soviet history is likely to produce a very considerable rattle.

Among the biggest of these skeletons are the infamous Moscow trials of the mid-thirties, in which virtually the entire Bolshevik leadership of the revolution 1917—with the exception of Stalin, of course—was wiped out on the pretext that it consisted of saboteurs, traitors and foreign agents.

It has long been admitted—ever since Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956—that these trials were monstrous frame-ups.

But the question of officially rehabilitating the defendants has been of some symbolic importance in the whole reform process. In particular it raises the extremely vexed question for the Soviet bureaucracy of Leon Trotsky.

The majority of the defendants at the trials, men like Bukharin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, are socially historical figures—Stalin's innocent victims.

Even before the trials they had compromised, capitulated and debased themselves before Stalin.



I'M OKAY YOU'RE OKAY

Trotsky was defeated. He was the principal defendant in absentia—the alleged heart of all the alleged anti-Soviet conspiracies. But he never recanted or capitulated.

Rather he continued—right to the moment of his assassination in 1940—to subject the whole phenomenon of Stalinism to devastating attack.

He was, therefore, not primarily a victim but a political opponent who at every stage posed a concrete political alternative to Stalin. From 1933 onwards

Only one person connected with Eureka raised the slogan of "Australian independence"—the editor of the *Ballarat Times*. None of the Ballarat Reform League manifestos raised the slogan, and certainly fighting for it. The *Times* editor himself simply meant independence from British tax authorities. And that has existed since before Paul Keating's grandparen's drew breath. Our enemy today is the 100 per cent Australian tax authorities.

The miners cannot be portrayed as having any anti-imperialist qualities. By colonising aboriginal lands and converting them to capitalist private property, they were making a contribution to the imperialist domination of the continent.

NOR ARE they part of the labour movement's tradition, except in the very general sense that we look back at all struggles against oppression. The class of independent goldminers was extant by

he called on the Russian workers to rise in revolution against their bureaucratic oppressors.

The made the Trotskyist bureaucracy—of its crushing of workers' democracy, its gross privileges and arrogance, its reactionary social policies, its perversion of Marxist-Leninist doctrine and its counter-revolutionary role internationally—remains a valid critique of the Soviet power structure to this day, with or without glasnost.

Moreover, Trotsky in exile did not content himself with literary broadsides.

He organised a political movement which embodied his anti-Stalinism and linked it to the strategy of international socialist revolution which Stalin had decisively abandoned and which, though still small, remains in existence.

Thus, whereas the likes of Bukharin and Zinoviev could be rehabilitated relatively painlessly, Trotsky is an extremely hot potato.

Nevertheless, Gorbachev clearly wants to make possible something approximately as factual and as honest as a factual

And this cannot be done without coming to terms with the organiser of the October insurrection, the first leader of the Red Army and the head of the left opposition in the 1920s.

Consequently the bureaucracy has recently taken a few halting steps in

1860s. Their methods of revolt have died along with their class.

The labour movement, with its tradition of industrial action such as strikes and its much greater staying power, can learn far more from the experiences of the stonemasons who won the eight hour day in 1856, or from the Industrial Workers of the World who fought the class struggle in the early years of the last century. Or from the Communist-led Militant Minority movement of the thirties or from the Green Bans of more recent times.

The Eureka tradition isn't even consistently democratic. Peter Lalor's later political career as a conservative was no real surprise—his father had been an MP. Lalor became a landowner and a mining capitalist. One of his first acts as a parliamentarian was to vote for a bill which maintained a restricted franchise, saying he supported not manhood but freehold suffrage.

The Eureka flag itself was designed by a

Canadian. When the Australian bourgeoisie united the colonial states into one nation in 1900, they also put the southern cross into their flag. More recently, groups of fascists and racists have been as keen to use it as anyone on the left. And their claims are hard to dispute, for the Eureka flag is one of essentially middle class rather than working class revolt.

That does not mean we don't sympathise with the Eureka rebels. We admire their resistance as we admire the slave and peasant revolts of older times, without forgetting that all of them had important elements of political backwardness. They are symbolic of humanity's continual striving for a better life.

But the force that can bring that better life is a different one: it is the modern working class, whose true flag is not blue but deepest red.

—Eric Petersen



the direction of at least acknowledging Trotsky's existence.

In his speech at the latest party congress, Gorbachev attacked the idea of exporting revolution with bayonets as "the view of the left communists and the Trotskyists which the party firmly rejected".

Since then an official historical article has admitted that "Trotsky possessed great will and personal courage", while attacking him for "excessive ambition, selfishness and egotism".

The article goes on to claim that the defeat of Trotskyism was not the work of Stalin but that it "was decisively crushed during Lenin's lifetime and with Lenin's decisive participation in the struggle".

To anyone who knows the history of Trotsky's fight against Stalin it is clear these comments merely represent a retreat from the big lies of the thirties (Trotsky was a Nazi agent etc) to the small lies of the twenties.

In the 1920s when Stalin had to confront Trotsky as a direct political opponent and when his apparatus of police terror was not yet fully in place, he set about undermining Trotsky by a massive campaign of political and personal slander.

Key themes in this campaign were: ■ The raking over and inflation of every minor and major disagreement between Trotsky

and Lenin over the past 20 years so as to depict "Trotskyism" as a political trend counterposed to "Leninism".

■ The exploitation of fears about Trotsky's position as Commissar for War to suggest that he might use the army to back his personal ambitions.

■ A related suggestion that the Trotskyist opposition to the Stalinist doctrine of socialism in one country involved sending of the army to invade other countries.

■ The claim that opposition to socialism in one country signified lack of faith in the Russian Revolution.

The current observations are merely a rehash of these old slanders and none of them will stand the test of contact with the real historical record.

Trotsky's relations with Lenin from 1917 to Lenin's death were exceptionally close and it was Trotsky to whom Lenin turned for advice against the rising power of Stalin.

Trotsky never made the

slightest move to use the army.

He opposed the only (partial) attempt to export revolution by force—the march on Warsaw in 1920—and never subsequently suggested any such thing.

It was Trotsky who had "faith" in the socialist character of the Russian Revolution when Stalin, amongst other old Bolsheviks, had still not raised his sights above the achievement of bourgeois democracy.

But then access to the full historical record is precisely what Russian workers do not have and will not get.

Trotsky was the real defender and continuer of the Russian Revolution.

Recognition of that—the only rehabilitation that would have interested Trotsky—will come not from any general secretary of the party, present or future, but only from the working class when it once again takes the destiny of Russia into its own hands.

—John Molinsky (from Socialist Worker)

SOCIALIST ACTION

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Socialism

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

Revolution, not Reformism

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

A Mass Workers' Party

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

Internationalism

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

Liberation from Oppression

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

Socialist Action

We are for Socialist Action. It's no good just talking about the world; the point is to change it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only meaningless if they are not put to action. And wherever people are moving towards a better world, socialists 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!

Good news in Mayekiso trial

SOCIALIST Action members in Sydney who have been active in the defence campaign for Moses Mayekiso, the socialist trade union leader currently on trial in South Africa for treason, have been given a big boost by the news that the trial judge has ruled out hanging as a sentence. Originally, the state seemed likely to pin the deaths of soldiers in last year's Alexandra township uprising directly on Mayekiso and to obtain the death penalty. Now, like Nelson Mandela, Mayekiso is too well known and supported for the state to simply execute him. Life imprisonment is still a distinct possibility however. What that in mind, the international solidarity campaign continues. Socialist Action members have been collecting hundreds more trade unionist signatures to petitions demanding Mayekiso's release, and writing to left and centre-left ALP politicians explaining the case and calling for solidarity.

BLF picket

WHILE most of the action in response to the raid on the BLF has centred on Melbourne, Socialist Action members in Brisbane made sure the issue was not ignored there. They organised a lunchtime picket in Victoria. Victorian government officials, a tourism agency, to demand the return of the BLF's property seized in the raid. When picketers took these demands into the office, the manager panicked and called the police, who had earlier departed after harassing the picket about its placards breaching the Mall Act. It seems the Victorian government is happy to invade union offices, but is a little more touchy when its own offices get the same treatment.

Day school

SOCIALIST Action readers in Victoria have a chance to discuss basic Marxist politics in detail. Melbourne branch is holding a Day School in Ballarat on Sunday 29 November. Running from 10.30am to 4.30pm in the Mature Age Lounge of the Union Building at Ballarat CAE, it will feature talks and discussion on What is Capitalism? (10.30-12.00), The Working Class and the Struggle for Socialism (12.30-2.00), and Women's Liberation and Revolution (3.00-4.30). All sessions are free of charge, and lunch will be available for a nominal price. Lits from Melbourne and childcare are also available. Though notice is needed by 22 November. For further details, call (03) 380 2227.

SCIENCE

A NEW ZEALAND battle against hospital abuse of women has come to Australia.

In June 1987 Sandra Coney and Philida Bunkle published an article exposing the way women with cervical cancer had been used as guinea pigs at New Zealand's National Women's Hospital (NWH). Philida Bunkle is currently on a speaking tour to gather financial and moral support so they can attend the inquiry which the Government has set up into the treatment of women with cervical cancer at NWH. Sandra is not being paid to attend the inquiry, but the inquiry solicitor is being paid \$700 a day.

Philida spoke to a roomful of interested women on 15 October at the Nurses' Union Building in Brisbane.

She and Sandra wrote the article because of their opposition to in-vitro fertilization techniques. They felt IVF was not the answer to infertility in women. It costs too much for most women to afford, and there is only a 5% success rate.

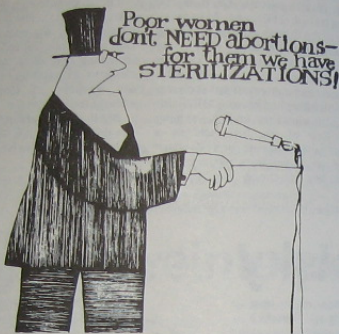
The damage to ovaries and tubes which leads to infertility is overwhelmingly caused by bad primary health care. When women present with pelvic pain, doctors tend to give them tranquilisers when they need antibiotics. Just one untreated case of pelvic infection has an 8% chance of making a woman infertile, and repeated infections raise the chances of this.

In 1966, seventy three women with carcinoma in situ were selected by Dr Herb Green for study in order to "observe the natural course of the disease". The women were never informed of what was happening to them, did not give their consent and weren't told they could seek treatment elsewhere.

Thirty six percent of these women went on to develop invasive cervical cancer, but they still remained untreated. Dr Green has been very active in anti-abortion campaigns, encouraging doctors and nurses to refuse to have anything to do with abortion operations.

The inquiry has brought out other abuses of women. For instance, medical students learn to examine women internally (without their consent) while they are anaesthetised for other operations. As many as fifteen students can turn up in an operating theatre to practise inserting and removing IUD's in anaesthetised women. This also occurs on a widespread scale in

NZ women fight hospital abuse



Australian hospitals.

Philida says that they hope to gain from the inquiry legislation that makes the doctors accountable for their actions; that makes sure that patients give informed consent to treatment, non-treatment or experimentation; and that makes medical records the property of the patient.

Sandra and Philida's continued battle in New Zealand is significant for us here in Australia, not just for possible legal precedents, but also in relation to the recently announced National Cervical Cancer program.

It raises questions we should be thinking about of medical education, practice and ethics in relation to our rights.

— Edla Ward

BRITAIN



Why the storm wasn't forecast

THE HURRICANE that struck England in October cost millions of pounds worth of damage and several lives. Had it been predicted, it's possible that the lives and the damage could have been saved.

But it wasn't. At least not publicly.

In the ritual scapegoating that ensued, much criticism was levelled at the British weather forecasting service, the Meteorological Office. Lost in the fine print was the fact that

the Met Office has been subject to considerable cost-cutting by the Thatcher government.

Add this to the modern TV phenomenon of weather forecasting as presentation rather than hard fact (where witty banter takes precedence over meteorological data), and perhaps the lack of prediction wasn't so surprising.

That wasn't enough for one intrepid radio journalist however. He decided that there must be some people — farmers, market gardeners and the like — for whom the flippantry minute TV "forecasts" were not enough. He asked the Met Office about it.

Quite right, he said. But in the Thatcherite "user pays" system, they had to pay for serious weather information. For £30 a month, they could get a secret Met Office phone number which would divulge all. For £80 a month, the Met Office would phone them.

Our radio reporter phoned the secret number. On the other end, he found a serious weather forecaster, a man genuinely concerned that his customers had all the information they needed in time to do something about it. How sorry he must have felt, said the journalist, that he wasn't able to warn them of the impending hurricane.

Not at all, came the reply. All the £80 a month customers were warned the night before.

The information wasn't made public. Because the public — and the dead — could not afford to pay.

NUCLEAR POLITICS

The trial of Mordecai Vanunu, the man who revealed details and photos of Israel's secret nuclear processing plants in the Negev Desert, resumes in December. At the same time Vanunu's brother Meir, who is campaigning in Mordecai's defence, will speak in Australia. JANEY STONE talks to Meir Vanunu in London about his brother's case.

The man who exposed Israel's nuclear secret

MORDECAI Vanunu's case has all the ingredients of a James Bond thriller.

Vanunu was a technician at the top secret Dimona nuclear processing plant in the Negev Desert for eight years. In 1985, he secretly took two rolls of photos inside the plant.

After being retrenched, Vanunu came to Australia in 1986. Here, he began negotiations with the British *Sunday Times*, who took him to England. By now, the Israeli security service, the Mossad, were involved.

In September 1986, Vanunu was lured by an attractive blonde Mossad agent to Rome, where he was kidnapped, drugged and chained, and taken back to Israel.

His trial so far has been marked by media-catching dramatics. The authorities are doing everything to prevent him from revealing details of his kidnapping. The car he travels in has whitewashed windows. Police sirens drown out his howls of protest at the full motorbike helmet he is forced to wear. The hearings are held entirely in camera.

The TV cameras lap it all up. But Meir points out that this is exactly what the Israeli authorities want.

"They want the press to deal with all these stupid things. How he was brought to Israel, how he is being held, how he is being brought to court, his personal story. They have succeeded in diverting attention and not talking about the main subject."

THE MAIN subject is of course nuclear arms. Israel has been playing a delicate game for over 25 years, never acknowledging its nuclear capacity.

It is no use having a nuclear deterrent unless it is known to those being deterred. But their official denial is useful in justifying such actions as the bombing of an Iraqi nuclear installation in 1981.

Through close censorship of the Israeli media, the government was able to

suppress not only the details of its nuclear weapons, but even debate of the topic itself. There has never been an opinion poll on the question, for example.

Vanunu's proof blew this whole set-up wide open. His information shows Israel to be the world's sixth-ranking nuclear power.

"The nuclear issue was a taboo until my brother broke it. It was a black hole in the minds of the Israelis. Now there is no way back from the situation that my brother has created."

Vanunu wanted to alert the Israeli population to the actions being taken by their government. He also wanted to warn the world of the risk of nuclearisation of the Middle East conflict. But his revelations have raised other significant issues.

ISRAEL enjoys considerable support from western governments. The public image used to justify this is now threatened.

"If Israel is known as a very strong military power, then the excuse that they are always giving, that we are a little nation surrounded by enemies, that we are in danger of being destroyed by the Arabs, these arguments won't work any more."

The role that Israel plays for western imperialism is too important to be permanently affected by a crack in its image. Instead, the US has played down the subject as much as possible. Meir points out, "If a similar kidnapping has been carried out by another country, there would be a terrible noise. And if Russia



Mordecai Vanunu

had similarly stifled critics, there would be talk of lack of democracy and suppression of dissidents."

The US is in a dilemma. Legislation prevents it giving aid to countries which produce or test nuclear weapons. Funds to Pakistan have been cut for this reason. But Israel is much more important than Pakistan in the American scheme of things, and it is a major recipient of American aid.

"They don't want in any way to cut Israel's aid. Because of this, the USA are trying to ignore the human rights question of my brother."

Vanunu was already a supporter of Palestinian rights before he took the photos. His treatment now reflects the

situation of Palestinians on the West Bank under occupation by Israel, says Meir.

Vanunu is being held in solitary confinement in a tiny cell with no windows. The fluorescent light and video monitor are on 24 hours a day. He had to go on hunger strike to be allowed visits from his family.

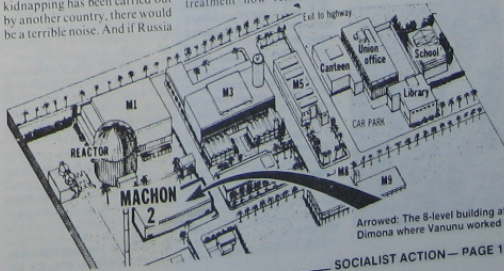
"What they are doing to my brother isn't new in Israel. They wouldn't do these things if they hadn't done it before. They are experienced and practised in them. The security service who are dealing with my brother are the same ones who are dealing out repression on the West Bank."

SO the issues raised in the Vanunu case go to the heart of Israel's role in the Middle East, and that is why Israeli authorities are so eager to silence him.

It is not just a matter of denying one person his democratic right to debate nuclear weapons, serious though this is. Israel's position as a colonial settler state and a representative of US imperialism in the region necessarily leads to militarisation and expansionism, of which the secret Dimona nuclear plant is one result.

Committees to campaign for Vanunu's release have been set up in a number of countries, and anti-war groups such as Greenpeace have become involved.

Meir Vanunu will be in Australia during December. Those interested should watch for announcements of public meetings and rallies.



Arrowed: The 8-level building at Dimona where Vanunu worked

THE STRUGGLE in Melbourne's building industry is at a major turning point.

On October 13, the police raid on the BLF headquarters signalled the desperation of state labour minister Steve Crabb in the face of the union's obvious ability to survive. This month, elections inside the BWIU will severely test whether Crabb's allies in the BWIU leadership can keep control of the ramshackle empire Labor handed them when it deregistered the BLF.

An army of 150 police, including the Special Operations Group, ransacked the BLF's Lygon Street offices, seizing union funds and files. Later in the day, Crabb presented a series of allegations that Norm Gallagher had supposedly misled union money.

In the aftermath, angry building workers took to the streets, supported by other unionists including a delegation of 100 healthworkers led by Irene Bolger. There was a further rally at the end of the week, with more planned for November. In Brisbane, Socialist Action members initiated a picket of the Victorian Tourist Bureau.

Crabb's case was feeble, as even the press was pointing out within two days. Sure, Gallagher had stashed union funds under a false name. But he was acting under members' instructions, and every cent had been accounted for to the union's auditors. Officials of other unions pointed out that any responsible union leader would do this when a government had foreshadowed seizing the money.

The charge of dodgy land deals was demolished by the purchasers. The claim of Libyan involvement became a joke, as it emerged that the supposed BLF "emissary to Gaddafi" spoke little English and less Arabic, had spent some of his alleged stay in Libya under detention in



Health workers join a protest rally against the raid on the BLF

After the BLF raid: an industry at flashpoint

Holland, and gave his address as the BWIU head office!

The Trades Hall Council demanded that BLF funds and assets be returned. Newspaper editors attacked Crabb, and the whole affair became a political fiasco for Labor.

Unfortunately, the government still has control of the funds, which they have handed over to a "custodian". Dr Ian Sharp. Supposedly impartial, Sharp has a long anti-union record. He was the man who brought on the historic jailing of Clarrie O'Shea, by ending the practice of allowing unions to pay off huge fines in instalments.

WHILE the BLF's leaders have radiated confidence, the seizure of funds is clearly a major blow.

The Order in Council giving Sharp control forces him to pay union staff and organisers, but not other major running expenses.

Contrary to media myth, the BLF has enough financial members to support its current running expenses. The next card re-issue is in March, however, and meanwhile the BLF will depend on donations from building workers and other supporters.

The Defend the Unions

Reform Group would be a spectacular achievement. Even gaining a reasonable number of positions would be a good win.

Either way, the national BWIU leaders and their cronies in the Labor Party would face a crisis. They will seek ways to disqualify Reform Group candidates from serving, and have already threatened federal intervention into the state branch if necessary.

It is a tense and potentially explosive situation for all concerned. The BLF is now fighting for financial survival. The rival forces in the BWIU are locked in a battle which will not end with the election, however it goes.

The BWIU officials have all the advantages of an entrenched union bureaucracy in an election.

The employers sympathise with the BWIU officials, but privately admit they are incompetent. Steve Crabb has taken the BLF's money, but has suffered a political shelling, and pressure could in the end force custodian Ian Sharp to hand back some or all of the funds.

Crabb and Cain obviously never expected to open such a Pandora's box. They must have believed their own rhetoric, which painted the BLF as a gangster union which bludgeoned workers into industrial action. They have found out the hard way that building industry militancy has deep roots, and that any unionists who appeal to that militancy will be hard to crush.

THE VICTORIAN building industry is tremendously important for Australian socialists.

Labor's crusade to hold wages down and put unionists in a straitjacket of Accord-type deals depends on crushing anyone who tries to show that militancy can work. In carrying out deregistration tolerably well, the BLF knocked a hole in that project.

By carrying out an impressive unofficial wage push around the sites earlier this year, militants in and out of the BLF knocked another hole in it. The current battles offer more chances to demonstrate that there is an alternative to the methods of Steve Crabb and Bob Hawk.

For socialists, who want to build a movement against capitalism rather than make sacrifices to help it oppress us more efficiently, these are struggles of historic importance. That is why we participate in them in whatever way we can.

— Richard Emerson

Committee, established at the time of deregistration and later involved in supporting the nurses, brewery drivers and other strikers, has undertaken a campaign for regular levies to keep the union going.

The BLF raid has polarised the industry against the BWIU. The industry against the BWIU, the electoral system is loaded to favour county voters over city voters, and tradespeople over labourers. Three years' membership is needed to stand for the top positions, so that labourers, who were conscripted into the union 18 months ago, are ineligible.

The BWIU officials are using union cars and campaigning all day long for their side. They display flash posters with expensive glue provided by joinery shop bosses.

They are throwing plenty of dirt, accusing the Reform Group of Libyan and "trotskyite" connections, and scaremongering about a "Gallagher takeover".

UNDER the circumstances, an outright win by the

Telephonists tell a tale of fight

IT IS STILL a widespread belief that women workers are not as militant as men.

One union which might beg to differ is the telephonists' union ATPOA, the Australian Telegram and Phonogram Officers Association.

Telephonist Jean Bowden has been an activist in the ATPOA in Queensland for many years, especially during the period in the late 1970s when an originally largely unorganised workforce of telephonists engaged in major struggles over computerisation and saved large numbers of jobs. She recalls many of the unrecognised battles by women workers in the last fifty years, since she began work as a telephonist in Gympie in 1937.

The ATPOA in Queensland functioned from its beginnings in the early 1900s without any paid full-time officials. Only in the mid-1970s did Joyce Williams become the one paid official for the whole of Queensland.

"No time off work was given for union organising," remembers Jean. "It was difficult for us even to collect dues."

"The union's affairs were conducted by non-paid officials, and they had to make a lot of sacrifices. But there were very significant gains made. "For example, we won a 34-hour week in 1924 in the capital cities. The general working hours at that period were 48 hours a week, but it was won largely on the basis that they were standing and stretching a lot."

When Jean married in the early 1950s, she was compulsorily retired from work. In the mid-1960s, however, arising out of the struggle for women to drink in public bars, the Equal Opportunities for Women Committee was set up, focussing on married women's right to work.

"In 1967," Jean remembers, "Hayden presented a private member's bill to the House, and to and behold it was carried. Married women were to be no longer discriminated against in the Commonwealth Public Service."

JEAN returned to work in 1969. The workforce was still largely un-organised, but the wave of struggles on the horizon was to change all that.

"At that time, less than 40% of



Telephonists at Brisbane GPO

our workforce were union members. In 1984, when I left, it was 97% — and that is voluntary unionism."

The big upsurge in activity and organisation for telephonists came in the 1970s, when Telecom suddenly announced a manual assistance centre plan to computerise and centralise exchanges.

"At that time we had 52, maybe more, exchanges in Queensland. We knew that to make any gains whatever, we had to fight back. But we also realised that to meet that onslaught with our small resources, we had to change our style. All our members had to be active and participate in the union affairs and the decision-making process."

"That led to stopping work. Every important issue we discussed, we brought our members out of the exchange, free from any feeling that they were being eyed upon by management. The first walkouts were extremely difficult because we were extremely difficult because the telephonists believed they would be sacked for it."

The bosses tried to intimidate the women, but they stood up to them.

"Management went to every switchboard and told them they couldn't stop," Jean recalls.

Joyce Williams, the secretary, and I followed them round and said 'Oh yes you can, they can't stop you', and they walked out and it was a wonderful feeling.

And from then on, they realised that they had the power to do that." Jean believes Joyce Williams played an outstanding role.

MAIN target of Telecom's restructuring was the jobs in the country exchanges. This led to an upsurge of organisation.

"We built branches in all the provincial centres from Cairns and Townsville, down to the Gold Coast and west to Roma, Longreach and St George."

"When we had important things to discuss, we'd connect up the mass meetings in all the areas on landline and then, when the reports had been given, cut it off so the branches could meet on their own decisions without any interference of heavyhandedness from Brisbane, which was the largest area."

Brisbane's strength was crucial, however. The most determined part of the struggle was the telephonists' refusal to go into the new Woolloongabba exchange.

"It had a radius of 650 kilometres," Jean explains, "so would have wiped out the jobs at the other exchanges. We kept banners on that exchange for 2½ years, and that was our main bargaining thing."

Support from other unions was also helpful.

"The ATEA began their big struggles in 1978," Jean recalls. "The technicians were in the ATEA, the Telecom Employees

Association. We needed the expertise of some officials in union affairs because most of our members had little knowledge or understanding of it. And they were very comradely about it. "But also, they used to tell us that we were coming of age! We felt that really we'd been handling our affairs quite successfully in our own way!"

TELEPHONISTS were also in the forefront of struggle over RSI, repetitive strain injury.

"In 1984, through struggle and stopworks in every state we won the recognition that it wasn't just a nervous or a neurotic complaint," says Jean. Conditions gained included ten minutes break every hour in addition to the usual fifteen minute break every three hours.

"We got the switchboard design modified, and some technology thrown out altogether. Research also showed that a lot of our equipment, like the chairs, was designed for male rather than female bodies."

"Struggles like those our union had in 1924 and then the big one in the 1970s have never really been recognised because we live in a male-dominated union era," Jean concludes.

"They've never been regarded as wins for our class, because we were a female-dominated union, and women's history of union organising has been neglected."

— Carole Ferner

WHAT WILL life be like after the revolution? What is the socialist blueprint?

These are commonly asked questions which we cannot answer exactly, because only people at that time can decide. Indeed, Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* were scathing about the arrogance of utopians who expected the future of humanity to conform to schemes spun out of their own heads.

However, we can get some idea of what might happen by looking at events during past revolutionary outbreaks.

In widely differing places — Russia, Italy, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Chile, Portugal — workers' councils have sprung up to run workplaces according to the wishes of the majority rather than the dictates of the boss. Soldiers, sailors and local areas have often established similar councils.

Some of these councils have sometimes elected representatives to run whole industries, regions and even the country itself. Such representatives were paid workers' wages and subjected to immediate recall if the people whom they represented disagreed with their actions.

Living standards have dramatically improved as wages were increased, rent and pawa agreements abolished and prices cut.

In Portugal's uncompleted revolution of 1974, food prices halved. The homeless moved into vacant housing. Communal nurseries, laundries and dining rooms were founded. The people's media flourished.

MARX PREDICTED that socialist society would go through two stages.

The first transitional stage would increase production to meet demand, prevent a counter-revolution and try to spread socialism throughout the world. During this stage, there would still be money and (more equal) wages. The people would be armed. A workers' state would exist.

But as the threat of counter-revolution passed, as production met demand, the need for the majority to compel people to work or do other things would be removed. The state would wither away. Wage slavery, and indeed money itself, would disappear. This would be communism.

The biggest task after the revolution will be for workers to organise production to satisfy

GOOD ARGUMENTS AGAINST SOCIALISM # 27

At least with capitalism, we know where we stand . . . !



"Okay, but where's your blueprint?"

human needs. We have the resources to do this. In 1974 Edgar Owens of the US Agency for International Development said:

"If the arable land of our planet was cultivated as efficiently as farms in Holland, the planet would feed 67 billion people, 17 times as many people as are now alive."

Yet capitalism holds down production, and stockpiles or even destroys food, to maintain prices and profits. Many governments subsidise farmers to leave land fallow.

Even worse is the waste of human potential in unemployment, and of human brainpower in arms production. About 25% of the world's scientists are employed on military research.

After the revolution more land, people and machinery can be devoted to food production. New technology can be used to its full to automate production. We can make tractors instead of bombs.

Public services such as health care, education, public transport and child care can be expanded and provided free.

Ultimately, as enough is produced for everyone,

everything can be provided free — just as water is today. Money will become obsolete. Marx's adage of "from each according to their ability and each according to their needs" will become a reality.

THE NATURE of work will change completely. Workers will have control over how their work is performed and an incentive to use new technology to automate their work.

The structure of the workforce will change as unnecessary jobs, such as soldiers and bureaucrats, are replaced by more productive workers such as nurses, doctors, bus drivers, farmers and building workers.

But even more fundamentally, the fragmentation of labour into small specialist jobs, and the division between intellectual and manual labour, will be abolished. To quote Marx:

"In communist society, where nobody has any exclusive sphere of activity, where each can be accomplished in many branch they wish, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another

tomorrow — to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without even becoming hunter, fisher, shepherd or critic."

With the change of work and more free time, people can be more involved in art, music, entertainment and, in the words of William Morris, "the arts of enjoying life."

REVOLUTION will create the conditions for the removal of the oppression of women and gays.

Basic demands such as equal pay, access to all jobs, free safe contraception and abortion, and the abolition of sexist advertising can be met. Support for parents can be provided by free 24 hour child-care, communal laundries and dining rooms and teams of people cleaning and maintaining houses.

Alternatives to the family can be encouraged by providing communal housing. With changes to the nature of work and the abolition of money, the distinction between work at home and paid work will disappear.

To quote Trotsky: "Having rationalised the economic system, people will not leave a trace of the present stagnant and worm-eaten domestic life. The care for food and education which lies like a milestone on the present day family will be removed and will become the subject of social initiative and of an endless collective creativeness. Women will at last be free herself from her semi-serf condition."

With no economic basis for the family, monogamous relationships, sex stereotypes or gay oppression, we can expect that human relationships will be more relaxed and free-flowing.

These are only some of the ways in which life may change after the revolution. I have not even mentioned computerization, which under working class control can open up awesome new possibilities for democratic participation, economic planning and abolition of mental work.

But really, we can no more imagine the ten potentials of socialism than people in feudal times could imagine capitalism today.

In the words of the Communist Manifesto, we can look forward to a world where:

"In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

Patricia Langenacker

Taking the revolution home

HOW OFTEN have you heard it said that "the left has always ignored women?" And everyone has nodded as if it was a self-evident truth.

While the author of *Taking the Revolution Home* sometimes herself, the facts in Joyce Stevens' book are an eloquent refutation of them.

For several decades the Communist Party (CPA) was the dominant left organisation in Australia. And while we can criticise it for the political attitudes it adopted, or for not always translating its proclamations into actions, or for sometimes leaving "work among women" to be done by female members alone, the Communists seldom ignored this work altogether.

In a 1927 issue of *The Communist*, Christian Jolliffe-Smith declared that "it is at least twice as hard for a woman to be a communist as a man". While she went on to argue against "carrying the sex war into the class war", the same issue of the paper announced a call for the formation of a separate women's section in the party.

The party declined in the mid-twenties, and it was not until the Depression was looming that some serious women's

organising got underway. The Militant Women's Groups emerged, publishing the duplicated *Woman Worker* and the CPA produced a major pamphlet entitled *Women's Road to Freedom*.

In the early thirties the *Woman Worker* gave way to a newspaper called the *Working Woman*. This was a heroic era (though also one of sectarian attitudes), when Communists battled cops and the fascist New Guard, and set about rebuilding the unions on a militant rank and file basis.

The *Working Woman* reflected the militancy more than the sectarianism. It reported on women's role in building unemployed and community struggles, and delighted in recounting the actions of a woman picket engaged in "jumping on the back" of a scab and "bearing him to the ground, scratching and screaming". Somewhat later in the decade the Communists were instrumental in forming the Women's Auxiliaries, which especially in the coalfield unions were groups of fighters, not just "heavers of cake and drawers of tea".

AS THE decade progressed, the party line began to change. The "people's front" policy called for unity against fascism — but at the expense of class politics. Joyce Stevens makes a brave attempt to portray the CPA's new magazine *Women Today* as being radical in tone. She admits it ran beauty advice, "but this was often on how women could make their own cosmetics".

The truth, however, is that the focus on cosmetics, waxing and film stars was designed to woo the middle classes and create a respectable image.

The dangers of this classless "unity" against fascism were revealed during World War 2, when the Communist Party largely became an obstacle to women fighting for equal pay.

Stevens comments that the CPA-led Sheetmetal Workers union "stood alone in support" of the women, which in itself is a comment on other Communist union leaders. But even the Sheetmetal Workers had a policy, which Stevens does not report, to "avoid stoppages of work, which can only be harmful to the war effort".

The wartime battles by women within the labour



Communist Party women activists draft an article, 1944

movement were important, and this raises a side issue I can't ignore. According to Joyce Stevens, "It has been left to feminist writers such as Lynne Bane to give these events a place in labour movement history". Once again, apparently, the left has ignored women.

This suggestion is simply untrue. Socialist Action members in particular have done a considerable amount of original work in this very area. It was Janey Stone who first recorded the story of women's wartime industrial struggles in 1976, while Carole Ferrer's work in reconstructing the career of CPA writer and agitator Jean Devanny (whose importance throughout her book) is widely recognised.

Let me conclude by emphasising, despite its faults, is a very valuable book. Joyce Stevens has made available to a wider audience some important chapters in our labour and women's history which had been largely forgotten, and she does it in a readable fashion.

The human dimension is especially well portrayed in the interview with Edna Ryan.

—Richard Emerson

It is from Edna Ryan that we learn how early CPA leader Jack Kavanagh bluntly declared, "Ha, when the revolution comes most of the women will run away from their husbands because they are oppressed at home too." And that a prominent party woman defended an extra-marital affair by saying simply that her husband "doesn't satisfy me" — and she was not ostracised.

Or that "we had one party member who was a drag queen. He was very popular and accepted tolerance". Anyone who thinks the old Communist Party was an inhuman machine peopled with ogres will have their eyes opened by these interviews.

The book tells us of the decades-long involvement of Communists in the fight for equal pay, for a better deal for abortion women, and also about the battles women had to fight within the party against sexism and tokenism.

The Communist Party made a lot of mistakes, but even so, was well in advance of the rest of society on "the woman question", and sometimes in advance of feminists too. Because it makes this clear, *Taking the Revolution Home* is an important book.

—Richard Emerson



Look, Mother, how well for their ARTS

MOTHERS! More Ammunition means More Malnutrition

Australian Government Armament Expenditure:
1932-33 — £3,160,000
1935-36 — £7,350,000

Communist anti-war propaganda directed at women, 1936

Do women have a sporting chance?

PAT CASH gained many fans when he won Wimbledon this year.

He lost quite a few too, with his stupid comment that women tennis players did not deserve the same prize money as men.

Cash's outburst was mostly met with an embarrassed silence, as though he had farted in church. After two decades of feminism, did prominent people really say such things in public any more?

Cash himself was too young to appreciate the irony of his statement. It was not, after all, just the agitation by feminist tennis players like Billie Jean King that gained equal prize money for women in the 1970s. It was also the ash-bash, serve-volley routine of men's "power tennis" — epitomised today by one Patrick Cash — that drove fans and prize money to the more subtle skills of the women's game. There is some justice in sport, brute strength is not everything.

Yet the sporting field remains a major prop in popular culture to sexist attitudes. The worst insult a fan or coach can throw at a football team is still, "You're playing like a pack of women."

For that reason only, Cash's comment deserves more serious attention. Will women ever achieve true equality in sport — not just in prize money, but in participation and performance alongside men? Or is the weight of thousands of years of sex roles, reinforced by nature, too much to overcome?

MEN, OF course, have the home ground advantage in sport.

Most sports are founded on the skills of the traditional male role as hunter, warrior, and physical labourer. They test strength and the ability to run, jump, hurl club and catch. The traditional female role downplays most physical skills and the ability to compete.

There is women's sport, to be sure. But it is poorly reported and girls are given few heroines to emulate. Netball, Australia's most popular women's sport, is disgracefully ignored in the press. Only tennis and athletics, where there is joint staging of men's and women's events, have equality of coverage, since the TV cameras have to keep rolling.

For that reason, demands by women's sport for joint staging of events should be strenuously supported.

For women who can compete with men, there are other barriers.

As a kid, I saw a typical



Cricketers Lindsay Reeler and Denise Annetts during a record stand for Australia: will we see equality on the field one day?

example with the girl next door. Until age 14, Lorraine could not match any boy in our neighbourhood games of footy and cricket. She could drop-kick 40 yards, take a high mark, bowl line and length, and had a classical batting style.

Then her career nosedived. When we asked if she could come out to join a game in the street, her parents gave excuses that she'd "washed her hair this morning" or that she was "helping her mother". The real problem was not that old chestnut of puberty — on the few occasions she joined us, she still mixed it with the best of us — but her parents' fear that she was becoming a tomboy. She still played the more genteel game of netball, but the area of her true talents was cut off.

There are more formal barriers. Some years ago, a baseball team in Ballarat was a player short and their woman scorer filled the gap. The next week, four teams fielded women players. Victoria's baseball authority hastily found an archaic rule that baseball was a game "for men" and banned the Ballarat team from fielding women.

Once that would have been the end of the story. But one gain of Women's Liberation was anti-discrimination laws. The legalists of the baseball authority, fearful of running foul of such laws, opened up the game to girls provided they began at junior level. Today, even that barrier has disappeared, and small numbers of women are now trying their hand at baseball.

Self-interest also had a part in the decision. As a new sport, baseball hoped to make inroads by desegregating. Other "new" sports like indoor cricket and fun-running now hold mixed competitions for similar reasons.



with Alec Kahn

Even in the traditional Olympic sports, however, women are closing the gap.

The table below shows how women's world records have been gradually catching men in the last 60 years. In 1928, women typically took 13% longer (or more) to cover a distance, today the gap is down to 6-11%.

The political implications are significant. If women can catch up so much in such a short period of history, then the gap in physical ability cannot be so permanent after all. As women's role has changed this century, with women moving into work and sport, women's physical capacities have closed in on men's too.

As capitalism will not abolish sex roles, the gap may not disappear altogether. Indeed, the catch-up seems to have stopped at 8% in the longer swimming events, where women made up ground quickest. Under socialism, where sex roles will disappear, we could expect that 8% gap to narrow and eventually vanish.

WHETHER women actually want to compete with men is another question.

Women's cricket, for example, whizzes along at a pleasant 20 overs per hour, while men's cricket is dominated by tedious medium-pace bowlers, abysmal over rates, and bad-tempered "sides". Men's sport has as much to gain as women's from ultimate integration.

Until women's sporting standards catch up with men's, women are perfectly entitled to want separate competition. Few girls would be inspired by Martina Navratilova if she disappeared into the anonymity of men's club tennis, after all.

But those women who want to compete with men have every right to do so, and without the chauvinist comeback of, "Okay if men can enter women's leagues too." That logic is never applied to the male under-19s who play senior football, is it?

Sport is one of the most solid bastions of sexist culture for women to storm, which is why Pat Cash got away with his comments. While that bastion will only fall under socialism, the more we can besiege it now the better.

SOCIALIST ACTION

DECEMBER 1987 No. 25

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50 CENTS

STUFF THE BICENTENARY!

200 YEARS OF ROBBERY



Women's world records percentage behind men's			
Track	1928	1972	1986
100m	13.0	11.1	8.4
1500m		11.3	11.0
10000m			11.0
High jump	18.0	16.3	13.7
Swim			
100m	28.0	14.2	11.2
400m	13.7	7.9	8.1
1500m		7.1	7.8

SYDNEY

Nine hurt on yuppie project

SYDNEY'S Darling Harbour project isn't just an expensive Disney land designed to lure yuppies and merchant bankers to Sydney. It is also an industrial danger zone.

On November 14 a concrete pour collapsed through three storeys of a Darling Harbour building site. Nine building workers were dragged down by the collapse. They fell several metres and all were hurt, two quite seriously.

The collapse was no "accident". The retaining walls for the concrete pour were resting on an old wooden floor. The floor didn't have enough steel reinforcement.

Just prior to the collapse, engineers and workers on the site safety committee complained that the job was unsafe. But as ex-minister Brereton and the developers have always said, the show must go on. The Lend Lease management insisted that the pour go ahead.

A building worker described Lend Lease's actions as



"attempted murder". This is true, but Lend Lease have nothing to fear from the law.

Earlier this year, the Unsworth government abolished the common law rights of workers to sue their employers for negligence which causes injuries.

Nor need Lend Lease fear the union leaders who are complicit in the dismembering of the safety-conscious BLF. BWIU president McDonald wants an inquiry — any excuse to avoid industrial action.

Premier Unsworth has offered his solidarity to Lend Lease by suggesting that the building was "not even in the Darling Harbour site". Very profound. And quite untrue. The breakneck Darling Harbour project, the abolition of workers' common law rights, and the dismemberment of the BLF are three of Unsworth's proudest achievements. They add up to a workers' health hazard.

Authority called for "volunteers" to supply services, despite the unions' allowing food through the picket and maintaining a skeleton staff for the frail elderly residents.

The collusion between the government Health Authority and the new owners shows that the central issue of privatisation is not whether the employer is state or private, but that both types of employer use a transfer of ownership to make the working class pay for economic "recovery" with cuts to jobs and conditions. Rather than mere "public ownership", we need to fight for workers' control.

MELBOURNE

Fox brews up trouble at CUB

"The officials have sold us out. They've got into bed with the employers." Chris Kelly, the elected shop steward for Melbourne's Carlton & United Brewery drivers, is blunt about where his union's officials stand.

Two months ago, Chris' employer, Linfox, found a pretext to sack all the drivers and take only some back, weeding out the militants. This action had been on the cards since the start of the year, when CUB sold its driving section to Linfox. A three week strike by Transport Workers Union (TWU) members followed the sale, ensuring jobs for all drivers and retaining the wages and conditions of the brewery drivers' award.

That strike and picket was organised by Chris and other rank-and-filers, with the virtual absence of TWU officials. In the latest dispute, the officials have openly refused to support the victimised drivers. Instead, they have campaigned against them.

At a Trades Hall Council meeting, TWU organiser Ron

Andrews king-hit Chris from behind. Although this was done in full view of over 100 people, the TWU then issued a leaflet calling for minders to help "protect" officers of the union against "this type of thuggery".

Meanwhile, Linfox are laughing all the way to the bank, or soon will be. At a yard meeting just before the sackings a manager said that in bargaining over the second tier 4% wage rise "anything and everything is up for negotiation".

The brewery drivers' award is significantly better than the award the other drivers work under. It now appears certain that Linfox will attack award provisions with a workforce weakened by the loss of militants. They will have the TWU officials to thank if they succeed.

VPSA

4% package a time bomb

THE VICTORIAN Public Service Association's (VPSA) attempts to win the second tier 4% rise turned into a farce last month.

Its executive came up with a negotiating package that would seriously threaten the conditions of every public servant. Like sacking if you refuse employment and the possibility of permanent officers becoming temporaries.

That wasn't enough for the government. It imposed a freeze on recruitment, promotions and higher duties — during the negotiations.

The Executive called general meetings of all members to discuss the 4% package. The Melbourne meeting was in the windy Treasury Gardens.

On the vote to accept the package, the General President called the motion "sacked", and immediately closed the meeting ignoring calls for a division. According to people looking down from the Treasury building, the motion lost.

Later VPSA delegates accepted the Executive package, but called for a stopwork meeting if the freeze was not lifted. The government got the leadership off the hook by relaxing some of the freeze.

VPSA leaders are trying to sell the sellout by dressing it up as a 4% pay rise before Christmas. But a lot of annoyed members are asking why VPSA will do what the government starts reemployments in earnest next year.



A NEW ERA...! SWEEPING REFORMS... DRAMATIC CHANGES FOR QUEENSLAND...



Why Joh went — and good riddance!

NEVER again will Brisbane streets echo to the chant of "Joh Must Go". Joh has gone!

His demise became apparent after the disastrous push for PM. Queensland Cabinet no longer rubber stamped his schemes. They scrapped plans for a chlorine production plant in suburban Lytton. They rejected his wish to grant a hospital licence to his old crony Sir Edward Lyons. They dismissed his proposal to give the Bayfield environmental park to Japanese developer Yoehachi Iwasaki. And they rejected a Thiess company's bid for the contract to build a jail at Borralton, even though Petersen had "promised it to Les (Thiess)".

At the Nationals' state conference early in November, delegates passed motions advocating sex education in schools, controlled prostitution and legalization of condom vending machines, all anathema to the Premier.

Some political pundits say that the move against Petersen came because his sowerism and the corruption surrounding his administration made him an electoral liability. The Fitzgerald Inquiry does seem to have had an influence. A mystery witness supposedly has direct evidence of corruption at Government level, and on November 25 the Courier Mail claimed that two National Party figures had been served with notices of allegations. Deputy Premier Bill Gunn says that Petersen was

moving to close down the Inquiry.

However, while these events, culminating in the botched sacking of five ministers, may have precipitated Petersen's downfall, the roots of the National Party crisis are much older.

Bjelke-Petersen's problems began in the early eighties, when the collapse of the minerals boom left the Queensland economy in particularly bad shape. To attract investment, he attempted to drive down living conditions and smash workers' power to resist. The SEQEB dispute was his biggest success.

Investment failed to materialize, however. In 1983-84, private fixed capital expenditure dropped capital by 84% in the previous year, and a further 14.5% in 1985-86. Two areas of National Party policy contributed to this failure.

While the need for new capital was recognized, Petersen's program for encouraging investment remained tied to mining and tourism. Queensland consistently spent the least of any state on promoting manufacturing. In 1983-84 it was \$2.46 per capita, compared with a national average of \$8.02.

TOURISM in particular has been supported, even at the expense of mining. For years mining companies have complained about excessive government freight charges and royalties.

Tourist developers, both international and local, have thrived. It was this section of capital — the so-called "white

shoe brigade" — which sponsored Petersen's push for Canberra. The rest remained opposed, including the Confederation of Australian Industry and most of the New Right.

This wider spectrum of bosses have thrown their weight behind Joh's successor, Mike Ahern. A recent survey of directors and chief executives of the top 100 companies listed on the Brisbane Stock Exchange indicated the majority supported Ahern. One reason given was that he wants to broaden Queensland's economic base.

ANOTHER reason was that Ahern has an "inclination to use a process of consultation".

This is an indictment of Petersen's style of cronynism, whereby business favours front to be seen, however, whether Ahern will be different. Ahern has suggested his economic development strategy "would include unions who wished to co-operate". But he has also said that contract labour is the way forward. All we can be certain of is that his approach to industrial relations will serve Queensland's directors and chief executives at the expense of workers.

Ambiguous statements about "consultation" might also indicate a rejection of Petersen's industrial relations methods, the other problem area for the Nationals. Petersen's absolute hostility to unionism was always his main way of distinguishing his government (from Labor).

This approach gained support from business during the Whitlam years, when industrial struggle was at historically high levels. But Petersen came unstuck when Hawke proved it was possible to use the union movement's bureaucracy to pass the burden of economic crisis

onto workers. This method of wage cutting, hidden behind the rhetoric of "restraint with equity", has far more appeal to bosses than bypassing unions altogether by introducing contract labour.

The latter is more likely to provoke a militant response from workers, and individual contracts are far messier to administer than a centralized wage fixing system. The Confederation of Australian Industry, for example, is now urging the Federal Government and the ACTU to negotiate a new wages accord based on productivity.

In short, Petersen was out of touch with the industrial relations practices most appropriate for Australian capitalism today. It remains to be seen, however, whether Ahern will be different.

Ahern has suggested his economic development strategy "would include unions who wished to co-operate". But he has also said that contract labour is the way forward. All we can be certain of is that his approach to industrial relations will serve Queensland's directors and chief executives at the expense of workers.

MICHAEL Ahern's alternative public image to Petersen is based around accountable government and social issues like sex education in schools and AIDS.

While reforms in these areas are welcome, Ahern's record also shows his to be a hardly committed reformer. Forty-two years, after all, he has been a

SOCIALIST ACTION

EDITORIAL

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PO Box 99, St Lucia Queensland 4067 Tel (07) 371 7174

CANBERRA

PO Box 17, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614.

WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne Mondays, 7.00 Carlton Hotel 91 Carlgang St, Carlton Sydney Wednesdays, 7.00 Metrop Hotel (opposite Edge & George St, City Brisbane Thursdays, 7.30 pm PO Box 211 1114 for location Canberra Thursdays, 6.30 Shortcuts Bldg (near Griffin Cir) Coppying St. Clair.

QUEENSLAND

loyal member of the most socially repressive government Queenslanders have experienced. Nothing he has said recently indicates that this will change. No mention has been made of repealing anti-civil rights laws. Or of repealing the vicious

Drugs Misuse Act, or of legalizing abortion. And while vehemently supporting majority rule in the party room, Ahern has ruled out an end to the gerrymander.

So Bjelke-Petersen's downfall is a reason to celebrate. Ahern's

rise is not. On the contrary, while the Nationals have not completely regrouped behind Ahern it is a time to take the offensive to win back conditions and rights we have lost in the last nineteen years.

The A.I.P., of course, is excited

about the possibility of winning government, and will urge us to maintain our joy for the ballot box. The spoils of Parliament, however, do not benefit us. We should take to the streets instead.

— Jeff Rickert

Fitzgerald: A Gunn at Joh's head

JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN has gone, but the Fitzgerald Inquiry lives on.

And with Bjelke-Petersen's demise, the question arises: was the inquiry used to play a part in bringing him down?

First, let's recapitulate. The inquiry into Four Corners' allegations of police corruption was originally planned to last only a few weeks. It began innocuously enough.

Any plans for a whitewash, however, were wrecked when Detective Sergeant Burgess admitted to receiving bribe money from brothels and illegal casinos.

Burgess' evidence had a snowball effect. It focussed attention on his superiors, the hierarchy of the Licensing Branch. Some of these superiors, Inspector Dwyer and Assistant Commissioner Parker, in turn offered their true confessions.

And so the inquiry's attention has gone even further towards the top. Burgess said Russell Hinze tolerated and approved of the system of bribes and rackets from casinos. Dwyer said Commissioner Lewis took the "biggest bite" of bribe moneys.

By the time the inquiry reached this level of investigation, it could only go one step higher — to Bjelke-Petersen himself. This may well have been in the mind of many Queenslanders when they sharpened their knives.

ACTUALLY, we cannot be sure that Bjelke-Petersen himself will ever be directly implicated.

It is very rich and has no need for petty graft. Generally speaking, the big bosses have no need to acquire their wealth illegally. They do quite nicely out of the legal extraction of huge profits from the workforce.

So the Fitzgerald Inquiry may well find no evidence that Bjelke personally received black market dollars.

For most of the Queensland Nationals, however, that wasn't the point. To them, Bjelke-Petersen had outstayed his time.



Gunn (right) with Bjelke: "clone" image was a problem

Investment in key areas was declining, the support of top employers was waning (see article this issue), and since the failure of Bjelke-Petersen's push for Canberra, the Nationals had fallen from 40% to 25% in the polls.

All of this was despite the insipid opposition of the Queensland A.I.P. Nor did Bjelke-Petersen's creeping senility help matters. He was protesting the innocence of Transport Minister Lane even before Lane had been accused before the inquiry.

WITH THE benefit of hindsight, it seems that the Fitzgerald Inquiry may have been set up as part of a plan to dump Bjelke Petersen.

The day after the Four Corners program, Bjelke Petersen said that there would not be an inquiry. Soon after, Police Minister Bill Gunn said that there would.

This show of independence was important for Gunn's leadership aspirations. He had to rid himself of the tag of being "Joh's clone" now that Joh was falling into disfavour. Rival Mike Ahern had already shown his independence with his stand over condom-vending machines.

Gunn, like everyone else, knew that Lewis had been

plucked from the ranks by Bjelke-Petersen and made Police Commissioner over at least 100 more senior cops. Gunn's recent role in the moves against Bjelke-Petersen suggest that he hoped to knock Joh off balance by putting Lewis in the firing line. If he did, then he certainly succeeded.

Gunn may also have been behind the mea culpas and true confessions of the crooked cops. The police might look crestfallen as they rub crucifixes in the witness box, but they certainly seem to have fallen on their feet.

In return for giving a watered down version of their own graft and dropping a few names, they get indemnity from prosecution and retire on generous superannuation. This they get on top of several hundred thousands of bribe money.

Like other crooked cops such as former Assistant Commissioner Murphy, they may even graduate into good government jobs with the TAB. Maybe Suncorp will hire their talents.

Who lured these cops out from the scrub to give evidence? One can only suspect that Police Minister Gunn may have had something to do with it.

And as Jack Lang pointed out long ago, no government ever sets up an inquiry without knowing exactly what it wants to come out of.

— Denis Alsop

WHILE THE True Confessions have taken

centre stage in recent weeks, two other aspects of the evidence are worthy of brief comment.

Firstly, the brotzel "Fantasy Photographics" is another example of an enterprise that only succeeded because it had police sponsorship. The boss was, in effect, licensed by Inspector Bulger, then head of the Licensing Branch.

As the madam said to one of the workers of the police, "They run the place."

Secondly, the evidence has been deafeningly silent about police involvement in the drug trade. This is where the police make the really big money. Fitzgerald is supposed to inquire into drugs, but so far the word has barely been mentioned.

Fitzgerald lives on, but for how long? The problem for the Nationals now is to act upon their unanimous desire to wrap up the inquiry. Preferably before any evidence about drugs.

After all, the Nationals need a respected and confident police force to fight their battles with unionists and protestors in the years ahead.

And as Jack Lang pointed out long ago, no government ever sets up an inquiry without knowing exactly what it wants to come out of.

— Denis Alsop

INTERNATIONAL

What is Gorbachev really up to?

THE SEVENTIETH Anniversary of the Russian revolution passed last month with more media interest in Gorbachev's reforms.

Glasnost ("openness" or liberalisation) has been the most visible and dramatic sign of the changes in progress. The media, once the loyal lapdog of the bureaucracy, now points, with greater or lesser courage, to the weaknesses of the economy, to the shoddy goods and services workers have to put up with, to the abuses and corruption of managers and government officials.

"Unofficial groups" made up of political, social, cultural, and environmental activists outside the usual stultifying control of the Communist Party are springing up all around, organising conferences, publishing magazines, even staging demonstrations.

In recent local government elections voters in carefully chosen areas of the country were given a degree of choice over who should represent them, being given a list of candidates to select from that was bigger than the number of seats to be filled.

WHILE all these reforms are important, to list them is to identify their limitations. None of them comes even close to the sorts of freedoms that rulers in the West have tolerated for decades.

Demonstrations need permits (shades of Queensland!) and the unofficial groups are licensed by local authorities. When Latvians, Tartars and Jews have staged demonstrations of which the government disapproved, they were forcibly broken up.

All these reforms have been granted by the bureaucrats for their own reasons. Democratization is intended to win public support for Gorbachev and his policies against his conservative opponents, and to turn the cynicism and dissent of recent years into a healthy source of ideas for further change.

Glasnost is certainly a positive development. It is a process that workers can take up and fight to extend (a fight that will sooner or later bring them into conflict with Gorbachev). This is by no means the case with perestroika (economic restructuring).

As in Thatcher's Britain or Hawke's Australia, economic

restructuring under Gorbachev is a means of making workers pay for the crisis. It means working harder, living worse and coming ever more under the heel of the boss.

Currently, food and rents are subsidised by the state to the tune of billions of dollars. This is as it should be. Wages in Russia are not high and cheap access to the necessities of life is an important right. Mikhail Gorbachev has made it clear that the subsidies will be abolished. Prices will rise and there will be no wage rises to compensate.

GORBACHEV'S most daring attempt to break out of the crisis is his plan to boost productivity by decentralising economic decision making.

Starting in early 1988, the detailed plans and quotas that the Moscow bureaucrats have handed down to factories, farms and workshops will be abolished.

No longer will managers have to take delivery of raw materials, machinery and spare parts from whoever the planners dictate. They will be much freer to contract direct from factories whose products they know to be cheap and reliable and who can deliver on time.

In return for this new freedom, managers will have greater responsibility. They will no longer get their annual handout of operating funds. From now on they will have to generate their own income to pay for wages and materials. At the end of the year they will forward part of their surplus to the state as a sort of tax payment, but will be free to spend the rest as they see fit on

expanding production, improving staff facilities or paying bonuses to workers.

The pressure on managers now will no longer be to produce their quotas with little regard to cost, quality and design, but to operate efficient, profitable enterprises producing better, cheaper goods. Those who don't will be allowed to go bankrupt.

IN MANY quarters perestroika is being pointed to as a retreat from socialism. Rightwingers gloat: where now is the much-sought planned economy of socialist politics? Defenders of the Stalinist commodity and the Stalinist model of socialist economy model of socialist economy gloomily about the capitalist



Gorbachev talks to workers, shoppers queue: perestroika threatens their living standards.

that results in a better, happier, healthier world for all.

Gorbachev's reforms do nothing to change the goals of do with socialism. Production was directly dictated by the need to build an advanced industrial economy, complete with arms factories, soulless production lines, environmental disasters, environmental disasters. The planning was the work of a handful of bureaucrats it. If it means letting people speak more freely, even demonstrate in the streets, that, too, will be tolerated.

Our criticisms of Gorbachev and his policies do not rest on any alleged retreat from socialism, nor even on the fact that his reforms do not go far enough. We criticise Gorbachev

— PAGE 5

INTERNATIONAL

and his supporters because, like ruling classes around the world, they want the working class to pay and pay again to rescue the exploiters' system from economic crisis.

When firms and farms start to go bankrupt, workers will lose their jobs. We are promised that there will be no unemployment. Workers will be retrained or sent elsewhere (in fact, anywhere the

state decides) to work.

But if anything like the 13% of enterprises that are currently unprofitable start to go under, then the burden of re-training redeploying may become unmanageable. Unemployment, with or without a welfare pittance, looms darkly for many workers.

For those workers whose factories can weather the storm,

there will be the relentless grind of keeping them profitable.

Cutting wages, running down the canteen and child care and safety conditions... the whole familiar story.

It will be little consolation to workers that they may be allowed to elect their own managers. They will either elect efficient managers who can kick them into shape, or they will go

down with their factory. Some choice.

Gorbachev is on a risky path. His liberalisation may give rise to demands that he go further and faster than he wants. The attack on the working class may provoke a fightback. For socialists it is crucial that we be clear what is going on and who we have to side with.

— Graham Willitt

Tontons wreck Haiti poll



Haitians riot in July over army moves to control the poll

DESPITE massive popular support, Haiti's first free election in 30 years has been cancelled.

The election, to have been held on Sunday 19 November, was to elect a new president and legislature to replace that of Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who was forced to flee Haiti in February 1986.

The US-backed election was organised by the CEP, an electoral council independent of the ruling military Council of Government (CNG). A move by the CNG in July to take over control of the elections prompted a wave of strikes and protests that forced them to back down.

Under the new constitution the CEP disqualified 12 known Duvalierists from running for office. Seeing their empire slipping away, the Duvalierist forces unleashed a wave of violence aimed at stopping the elections.

The Tontons Macoutes, the private militia of the Duvaliers,

has re-emerged as a force of terror throughout Haiti. Gangs of men in dark glasses (the emblem of the Macoutes) rampaged through the streets of Port-au-Prince armed with guns, clubs and machetes. They killed, burned and looted throughout Haiti for the week leading up to the election.

But the Macoutes didn't reckon on the people of Haiti, who have fought back fiercely. Having rid themselves of Duvalier, the Haitian people aren't prepared to sit back and take more of the same.

A call to form "committees of vigilance" was spread by "telèjòn", the creole bush telegraph. Armed with machetes, sticks and stones, the people of Haiti set up roadblocks, mounted guard on polling stations and killed Macoutes wherever they found them. The CNG, while refusing protection to the CEP, has predictably come out against this, warning that vigilante groups "will not be tolerated". The people's determination to

have a free election can be seen in the town of Leogane, where a committee of vigilance protected the polling stations throughout the night. When they opened at 6.30am, hundreds of people were waiting in orderly lines to cast their vote.

However, in Port-au-Prince 15 voters and officials were shot dead outside a polling station. This was to spell the end of the election, as the CEP could not guarantee the safety of voters and officials or the supply of ballot papers.

The election may have been cancelled but we can be sure that the people of Haiti won't let it rest there.

— Chris Clifford

EAST EUROPE



Strike wave rips Yugoslavia

AS THE bureaucratic ruling classes in Eastern Europe struggle to cope with the world

economic crisis, one great fear haunts them — the power of the working class.

They are right to be afraid. Recent events in Yugoslavia show that, in the East as in the West, workers are a force to be reckoned with.

In late November yet another strike wave swept the country as thousands of workers demanded pay rises to offset a 170% inflation rate.

Kreka Valley coalminers were at the heart of the action. Mines have been the most consistently militant section of the working class since Trbovlje miners led a recovery from Tito's Stalinist-style repression in 1958. They were joined by workers in many other sectors.

The immediate cause of the strikes was a government austerity program that sharply increased the price of food and other basic goods and services. But behind the recent events lies a rising tide of struggle over several years.

Yugoslavia's economy has been in severe trouble since the 1981-82 world recession. It was in poor shape even before that blow, being burdened with heavy debts to foreign banks. It had little to show for the borrowings, other than grandiose projects that did not work, such as the Belgrade-Bar railway and the Smederevo metal factory, and comfortable holiday homes for the bureaucrats.

Since 1979, the government has pushed through harsh measures to keep wages down and cut state spending. Workers have not passively accepted this. Strike numbers doubled in 1984, and doubled again in 1985. This is a country where strikes are illegal.

Already this year, meat-workers, health workers and miners had all gone out over pay claims and for the sacking of corrupt managers and officials.

If these actions become more organised, Yugoslavia may yet produce its own Solidarnosc — or something greater still!

— Graham Willitt

LAW'N'ORDER

LESS THAN 24 hours after starting a four day sentence for fine defaulting and breaching a community service order, 18-year-old Jamie Partic was in hospital fighting for his life.

Partic was bashed by another inmate of Sydney's Central Industrial Prison. Other prisoners said that the inmate who bashed Partic was drunk on prison "home brew", and that several guards witnessed the bashing but did nothing to stop it until too late. The same prisoner came back into the yard later and threatened to bash any prisoner who gave evidence against him.

Ironically Partic was in the gaol's "protection wing". Warders and inmates say the wing contains some of the most violent and uncontrollable prisoners.

Eleven days later, 21-year-old Kevin Anderson went into the Central Industrial Prison and was sexually assaulted by up to seven prisoners.

Predictably, the authorities began calling for band-aid solutions. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, which usually wants more social discipline, decided that fine defaulters were "clogging up" the gaols. Minister John Akister said he'd stop fine defaulters being gaoled. This might please the *Herald*, which wants more room for "real criminals", but it hardly solves the real problem of gaol violence.

The Prison Officers Association and the Liberals demanded more gaols, more warders and more law and order. Akister promised more warders. But warden violence and corruption are part of the problem. Hiring more of them will not solve it.

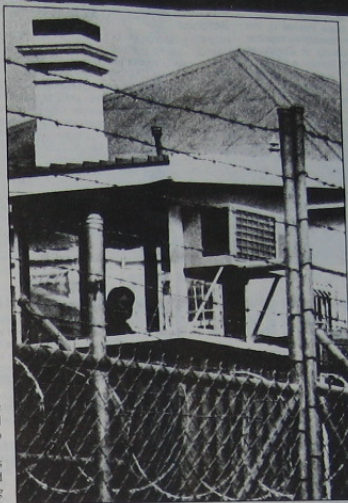
SINCE the late 1970s, reformers have tried to change the NSW prison system.

This followed a major riot at Bathurst in 1974, and an inquiry by Justice Nagle. Nagle made 252 recommendations for change, most of which have been ignored.

One that got off the ground was the building of a new "model" prison at Parklea in Sydney's western suburbs.

Instead of grey walls, Parklea was to have bright pastel colours. Its supporters claim it's a great prison, but already there have been numerous complaints from inmates about the lack of facilities and the harsh treatment, especially in the punishment cells which are open cages with no amenities.

Elsewhere too, reform has



Behind the bashings in NSW gaols

failed or even gone backward. Long term prisoners used to be able to work in places like the Central Industrial Prison and at the Linen Service, run from Parramatta gaol. But the NSW government has closed down the Linen Service, and the Central Industrial Prison now has no industry at all, just prison.

NONE of the establishment critics question the whole basis of prisons.

People are not born with criminal tendencies. Crime is learnt, usually as a result of being at the bottom of society. The vast majority of prisoners are poor whites and Aborigines. The bulk of their "crimes" are against property or are victimless (eg drunkenness and vagrancy).

Far from deterring criminals, prisons help to perpetuate a culture of crime. Recidivism rates — the rates of prisoners returning to gaol after further offences — run as high as 70%.

One reason is well-known:

of sexual riots produces an ugly predatory sexuality. Add the huggery of the more violent criminals to this generally brutalised atmosphere, and bashings and sexual assaults are inevitable.

ALL THE same, the potential for revolt is constantly present. So warders go to extreme lengths to stop prisoners organising collectively.

The Shanghai is one method. Gaol leaders are seized, bashed and removed to other gaols, often in the dead of night. A few years ago, when NSW prisoners organised an effective "union", it was broken up by several notorious shanghai. The practice is illegal, but the same authorities who are now shedding crocodile tears over Jamie Partic turned a blind eye.

Drugs are, of course, illegal in gaol. But plenty get into the gaol system, particularly heroin and marijuana, and 50% of prisoners are estimated to be on them. Warders often control the drug trade with the help of a few top crims, the "yard bosses" and the "drug crew". Authorities turn a blind eye to the drug trade because it keeps the prisoners docile.

Illegal alcohol is also brewed in the prisons from fruit and sugar. Prisoners agree it makes them violent, especially when they're locked up for days at a time with nothing to do.

Nonetheless, the last two decades have seen prisoners increasingly prepared to fight the system collectively. Barricades, hunger strikes and riots have become more common, particularly during the 1970s as the working class generally was more rebellious. Prisoner action groups now provide support outside the gaols for those inside.

Just a few weeks ago, five Melbourne prisoners forced the closure of the Jika Jika "human zoo" when they threatened death in an ultimate act of protest and self-sacrifice.

Most revolutions and socialistic uprisings see the storming of the gaols and the release of those inside. All prisoners are, in one sense or another, political prisoners.

That is why socialist support for the abolition of gaols, Socialism would remove its social causes. It would keep the Jamie Partics and Kevin Andersons out of the gaols, and find more harm's way, and find more humane, socially-based methods of re-educating those who act anti-socially.

— Michael Hudson

Xmas time, and the giving is easy

NO MATTER how bad the stock market is, the wealthy always manage to pull themselves together for some conspicuous consuming at Christmas. Mike Wilkes has bought himself a \$240,000 Bentley, while Perth financier Laurie Connell was spotted buying up heavily at an art auction just two weeks after his mate Brian Burke bailed him out with taxpayers' money.

The elite sections of the big department stores have gone right over the top this year. At Georges in Melbourne, society hosts and hostesses will be buying dinner forks at \$400 apiece, caviar bowls at \$1565, and wine glass coolers at \$5123 each. They'll be wearing cashmere overcoats at \$2895 and Santos watches costing \$3500. Even their paper clip holders will cost \$44, and the stars on their Christmas trees \$85.

David Jones is not to be outdone. They have periscope backgammon sets at \$695, vintage cognac at \$729 a bottle, giant teddy bears at \$2995 and pearl necklaces at \$17,500.

But the gift we like best is from the Sydney Stock Exchange to the brokers — it's free! At \$100,000, one-inch thick bullet-proof window. Just in case someone gives them a present they really deserve.

The common touch

THE DUCHESS of Kent was touring a Birmingham housing estate when an Asian tenant confronted her about the run-down facilities. He complained about the damp and the broken heating, adding, "That's not all. We've got mice in the airing cupboard."

"I think that's marvellous," smirked the Duchess. "What a super idea to keep the cage in the warmth."

Adversary system

A RECENT British soccer match between barristers and solicitors revealed the not-so-discreet charm of the petty bourgeoisie. Three barristers needed hospital treatment afterwards, one

"My father is an industrial polluter. What's yours?"



The Red Christmas

Was the week before Christmas, when all through the site not a latte was turning, not a furnace alight? No spinning tops were made, nor a first bear nor bike since Santa's little helpers went on indefinite strike. They struck for wages and cold weather allowances blizzard loadings too, and other extravaganzas. The boss, Mr Claus, was fretting, by golly. His toshpaw was idle, he was quite melancholy. But he'd stockpiled enough of the luxury toys for those privileged of birth, the rich girls and boys. So he thought he'd deliver them and bring festive yule to the infant inferiors of bourgeois class rule. But Claus hollered out "They've all got in for me" when he found that the reindeer were out in sympathy. We don't give you sleigh-rides just for the hell of it!" So Rudolph the Red Nose, the reindeers' delegate "Dasher got harness-soled, charging over the Earth. Prancer died on the leg from Adelaide to Perth". By now Claus was desperate and bereft of good cheer so he hired Scabber and Splitter, the Black-legged deer. But the union held firm and they ambushed these two and these rats with horns on became caribou stew. Santa's helpers had won but were not satiated. And Claus had his whole business expropriated. So Santa joined the list of forced abdicators ousted by the North Pole Soviet of Toy-makers. And all through the world as Christmas passed away every day became Christmas and twice on May Day.

— Phil Shannon



Murdoch plays Scrooge

RUPERT Murdoch is right up with the worst of them when it comes to meanness.

He won't allow his employees to put their personal mail through the mailroom at his Wapping plant — even if the letters are stamped.

Of course, personal phone calls are verboten. But what if one of the scabs who work at Wapping needs to make a phone call? Going out may be disastrous. So Rupert has generously installed pay phones.

Pollies not worth a cracker

NO EXPENSE has been spared in the new parliament house. It has

four restaurants, a shopping centre, and a meditation room for MPs. Presumably so Labor members can reflect on new ways to ditch party policy.

One thing missing will be childcare facilities. Maybe Canberra doesn't want to set an example in that area. Or maybe they just don't expect women with kids to be given any wimable seats in the foreseeable future.

Only area of controversy seems to be the toilet paper that will be used in the dummies, now that Paul Keating has declared, "I wouldn't wipe my arse on a caucus resolution."

Out for a byte of fiche and chips

WE LOVE the way that the economic pundits keep saying, "The market will work things out. We don't believe them, but we love the way they say it."

As everyone now knows, the big investors have computers programmed to sell shares when their prices go below a certain point. So during the recent crash, the inevitable happened. Two computers started selling their shares to each other, driving the market prices down without any human involvement at all!

If that's how market forces work, little wonder that one foreign exchange computer just flashes up a number when you press the panic button on its keyboard. It's the phone number for "Dial a Prayer".

Serving himself

AUSSIE batter H Excellence the Right Honourable Sir Ninian Stephen, AK, GCMG, GVO, KBE, is not one to be outdone.

Sixteen gardeners and 30 domestic staff are in dispute as the barristers' goal-keeper was being kicked over the line with the ball in his hands as the final whistle went. Write as now being threatened on all sides.

The best of enemies

WHEN Russian foreign minister Edvard Shevardnadze was in Washington recently, the US State Department was worried about demonstrations outside its building.

Then someone remembered it was illegal to demonstrate



CHEAP SHOTS

Ad nauseum

SO YOU think the Murdoch press is shameless. The British Labour Party weekly *Tribune* now runs paid ads. Recently advertised to readers have been Filipino mail-order brides, copies of the 1986 Royal Wedding invitation "personalised with the name of your choice", and even the sale of aristocratic "titles".

A boss is a boss is a boss

AROUND Christmas time, over a beer and some soggy chips, you might think that bosses are not so bad after all. So let us tell you of Townsend Thoresen, owners of the sunken English *Terry Herald Of Free Enterprise*.

- Only four of the surviving sailors are back on duty. Almost half have been ruled unfit, and have had to quit. As "seasonal workers", they got no severance pay.
- The company ordered its crew to take three weeks off after the disaster. Then it deducted the time from their annual leave.
- Only a few crew members were told psychiatric counselling was available, and then only six months after the ship went down.
- The company sent a survivor a letter offering 5 pounds off his next trip. The man's wife drowned in the tragedy.

FEATURE



Black resistance: A battle on the Murray River

Land Rights and the Bicentenary

WHEN AN oppressed people demands "land rights", this raises serious questions for socialists.

Firstly, where does "the land" fit into letting politics? What has liberation got to do with the ground we stand on?

Secondly, socialist politics start from the struggle of the working class against the capitalist class. The Aborigines, however, were around long before capitalism. They have survived in spite of and not because of capitalism. They now exist mainly on the fringes of the working class, and do not US or South Africa. Where does the Aboriginal struggle fit into the class struggle?

To answer these questions, we need to look into a side of Australia's history that will be all but ignored in the Bicentenary's flautulent celebration of the last 200 years.

Aborigines came to Australia in several waves of migration, starting about 40,000 years ago. They came to a continent with no cultivable cereals and no domesticable animals. They had to obtain food by hunting and gathering.

On other continents, about 10,000 years ago, some human societies abandoned hunter-gathering and took up pastoralism and agriculture. This new "mode of production" made possible the development of class society. In Australia, however, pastoralism and agriculture were impossible. You can't herd a kangaroo or milk a wombat. One or two native plants are edible and cultivable, but their cultivation is an enormous amount of work and water is not plentiful.

So the Aborigines remained hunters and gatherers. Their social organisation remained based on that "mode of production".

The basic productive unit of Aboriginal society was a clan of 10 to 50. When the available food ran low, the clan usually responded by wandering on. Each clan could cover huge distances. Obviously there

was no possibility of such a widely-dispersed population developing any stable or centralised political structures. (In some areas of NSW, it seems that Aborigines stayed put, but this appears to have been exceptional.)

The clan was also a "reproductive" unit — ie it produced children. Another social response to Australian conditions was the practice of birth control. One method was infanticide. Another was a form of vasectomy (called "subcircumcision") which was performed on adolescent males in 90% of the continent, with a seashell providing the cutting edge.

Marriage was usually with a member of another clan. Numbers of clans would be associated through intermarriage. Clans were also associated by shared languages, customs and rituals. These larger associations had extremely fluid structures. They are usually described as "tribes", but that term doesn't fit very well.

The "tribal" associations were crisscrossed by other associations of "descent groups" and "moieties". A book called *Neither Justice Nor Reason* by lawyer and anthropologist Marc Gumbert tries to explain Aboriginal social organisation, but is absolutely unreadable.

It is very difficult to draw a map of Aboriginal Australia. There were at least 500 Aboriginal languages which could be grouped into 31 related language families, but this does not mean you can divide Aboriginal Australia into 31 tribal-language areas. The linguistic borders were constantly shifting, and no area contained one pure language. Even today, there are Aborigines living in Noonkanbah who can speak 11 languages.

HUNTER-GATHERERS rely upon their own hands and the land they stand on to produce all their material needs. They need to know the flora, fauna and terrain of this land intimately.

Aborigines could identify at least 500



WA delegation to demand land rights

different species of flora and fauna. They knew the habitats, behaviour, and life cycles of all the animals they hunted. They knew something of the phases of the moon, the planets, the seasons and the tides. In short, they knew all about hundreds of square miles of Australia's natural environment.

The Aboriginal clans made records of this broad territory by bringing every significant piece of it into their cultural life. They did not make signposts. Instead they recognised natural signposts, which were given names and arranged in legends and rituals to form spoken maps — eg the "three sisters".

Numerous clans would roam over the same broad territory. Certain clans did have special links with particular areas, but this did not mean other clans could be excluded. The only customary restriction on Aboriginal movement was that each clan had particular sacred or restricted sites which no other clans were to trespass or violate. These sites were usually burial grounds or places where ceremonies were held, etc.

Sacred sites are therefore basically religious sites. But this does not mean that socialists oppose their recognition.

Aboriginal religion tends to be the animistic or spiritual type. Rivers flow, seasons change, clans were born, etc. because it is the will of spirits. People die because the spirit leaves their bodies, etc. Aborigines do not grovel before these

FEATURE

spirits. They use spirits to explain nature and their own social life. Aborigines stored their accumulated knowledge of nature and themselves in religion and ritual.

Aboriginal spirits, like all ideas, grew out of social practice. The social practice of the clan revolved around the animals they hunted. Consequently the Aboriginal spirits that explain the inanimate world are based on animals — the rainbow serpent, etc.

Religion was an inseparable part of the Aborigines' day to day life as hunters and gatherers. If many cling to religion today, they do so simply because they cling to their whole past way of life. There is no such thing as a secular struggle for land rights, and no point in wishing that one existed. Let us simply understand why many Aborigines cling to their precapitalist way of life, and accept that this necessarily involves a precapitalist religion.

CAPITALISM was brought to Australia in several instalments starting with the First Fleet.

A few years earlier, Captain Cook's ships had observed Aborigines wandering in small groups, apparently tied to no particular area. They did not possess any obvious material wealth that could be looted. The British therefore thought they had nothing to fear and nothing to steal from the Aborigines.

Governor Phillip, commander of the First Fleet, had instructions which read:

"... You are to endeavour by every possible means to open up an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affection, enjoying all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them. And if any of our subjects shall wantonly destroy them or give them any

unnecessary interruption in the exercise of their several occupations, it is our will and pleasure that you do cause such offenders to be brought to punishment according to the degree of the offense."

The Aborigines were, however, "interrupted in their several occupations". A Captain Tench described an encounter on 14 September 1790:

"The Chaplain and Lieutenant Daves spoke with the Indians. They said that they were inhabitants of Rose Hill and expressed great dissatisfaction at the number of white people who had settled in their former territories."

In the first year or two, some convicts killed Aborigines and were "brought to punishment" — they were hung. Some Aborigines killed convicts, but Governor Phillip declared, "I am still persuaded the natives were not the aggressors."

However, the policy of "enjoying all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them" did not last long. In 1792 the colony began making large land grants to set up "government farms" of 80 to 120 acres. Large fertile areas, mostly along riverbanks, became "no go" areas for Aborigines. They responded by setting fire to crops. That started a war which lasted 22 years and ended with the extermination of the Dharug tribe.

Once war was underway, settlers could kill Aborigines without fear of legal reprisals. Government troops were regularly sent out as undisputed hunting parties. Settlers were under orders from Governor King "to drive back the Aborigines from Colonial habitations."

AFTER 1813 the settlement spilled over the Blue Mountains. The story of the advance of settlement is a story of fierce Aboriginal resistance, of the loss of many Aboriginal and European lives, of the destruction of crops and cattle, of punitive expeditions by soldiers and settlers, and of the use of poison as a method of warfare.

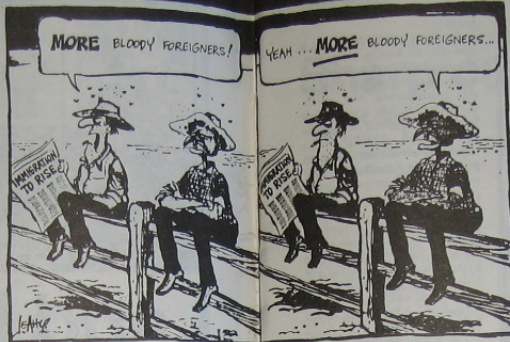
The Aborigines often gave as good as they got. The settlers' flintlock pistols and muskets could fire no faster than three times a minute. The Aborigines could throw short-range spears much faster. A recently published book, *Six Australian Battlefields*, documents the Battle of Hawkesbury in 1795, in which the Dharug Aborigines put up violent resistance to a British attack, the Battle of Bathurst in 1824, and the Battle of Pinjara (WA) in 1834.

In time, the settlers won out and drove the Aborigines back. The settlers' military technology improved, and their social system enabled them to concentrate their military forces for strategic attack. They were also assisted by the diseases they had imported: an estimated 50% of the Aborigines of Port Jackson died from smallpox in 1789.

As the frontier moved on, the reprisals followed. In 1838 at Myall Creek, 11 white men massacred 28 Aborigines of all ages. Many similar massacres occurred.

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 6,000 in 1850.

By that time the authorities had started setting up "reserves" and placing them under the control of churches. Aborigines from diverse areas were rounded up, dumped on reserves and force-fed the bible.



Even if they weren't shifted forcibly, Aborigines were forced out of their traditional land by white farming. Large areas were either fenced off or ecologically destroyed by the combined effects of ringbarking and sheepgrazing. Aborigines who avoided the reserves tended to be forced onto the fringes of country towns.

If the authorities wanted to put all Aborigines on reserves so they could die out quietly, this didn't happen. The traditional social life of the surviving Aborigines was destroyed. They ceased practising subincision and infanticide. The recovery of the Aboriginal population in NSW dates from about 1850.

Other states (except Tasmania) show a similar but delayed pattern of decline, near-genocide, and then recovery. In Tasmania the Aborigines were more or less wiped out, apart from about 60 Aboriginal women living with white fishermen on the Bass Strait Islands.

SOON after 1850 the gold rush began. Gold and wool created a special type of capitalist society, a "colonial settler state", with a parliamentary system based upon the British.

The reserve dwellers, however, never enjoyed any of the legal liberties of the freeborn Britons. Within the reserves, Aborigines were for decades set to work for illegal outside. The administrators of the reserves were judge, jury and jailer. Aboriginal children were taken away to be used as domestic servants.

In the 1950s, mining in remote areas was made profitable by new technology. The Aborigines in these areas got the shove once again.

This time, many were pushed into urban ghettos such as Redfern in Sydney. About one-third of Australia's Aboriginal population now lives in capital cities, but this does not mean "land rights" has become an irrelevance.

Most urban Aborigines have friends and family in outback areas. A significant proportion of the urban population is temporary, in transit to or from the outback. Urban Aborigines themselves march for land rights, so it certainly has relevance for them.

Land rights has replaced their armed struggle. They have forced some token gestures out of the legislatures. The Federal legislation allows Aborigines to apply for land that no-one else wants, provided no mining companies oppose them. The NSW legislation grants a trivial amount of money to land councils to buy land. If it happens to be for sale. This legislation goes nowhere towards returning to Aborigines the traditional use and occupation of their land.

Aborigines have very few fond memories about their life under capitalism. The labour movement can remember the joys of occasional victories, and the feelings of collective strength. Aborigines can remember only atomisation and dispersal. Small wonder, then, that many look to the past, to their life before the white invasion.

SOCIALISTS do not idealise the past. Why, then, do we not merely encourage Aborigines to forget the past, integrate into capitalist society, and look forward to socialism?

Firstly, Aborigines are already integrated into capitalism in its third world variety. They experience a high rate of imprisonment, an arrest rate which is 32 times the white arrest rate, a shockingly high rate of death while in custody, 90% unemployment in some communities, a high rate of infant mortality, appalling housing, racism, leprosy, trachoma, etc.

Secondly, no-one is integrated into capitalist society who does not have a job or some other form of solid income. The Commonwealth Department of Employment and Youth Affairs estimates that Aboriginal unemployment overall is around 50% of the Aboriginal workforce.

Thirdly, for a long time the official government policy on Aborigines was "assimilation", and it was and continues to

be a major source of poverty and disease. Local and state governments withhold services from Aboriginal communities living on former reserves, hoping to pressure them to move elsewhere to "assimilate". The result is Aboriginal communities with no electricity, no sewerage, and terrible housing.

Fourthly and finally, the real benefit of capitalism — socialism — is fundamentally about human liberation. The working class can, by liberating itself, also create the conditions for the liberation of all other oppressed sections of society. But liberation cannot be rammed down peoples' throats.

Socialists traditionally support national self-determination so that workers in oppressed nations can choose to join an international workers' movement. Similarly, Aborigines must have land rights — meaning access to their traditional lifestyle — before they can be asked to choose the possible benefits of modern society. "The land" is central to black liberation.

The leftwinger who does not support the Aboriginal demand for land rights is not serious. Australian bosses have always relied upon white-supremacist nationalism and racism. How else could they have got Australian workers to fight their miserable wars all over Asia? The Aboriginal struggle for land rights confronts racism and promotes the simple but essential idea of self-emancipation.

FOR THESE reasons, socialists give unconditional support to the land rights struggle.

The exact legal formulas of land rights are unimportant. They will be by-products of the struggle. Suffice to say for now that the existing legislation is useless. "Deeds of grant in trust" are robbery, and Aborigines should receive "freehold title".

During the Bicentenary, it is doubly important that land rights be supported. The Bicentenary is a 12 month celebration of conquest, of European expansionism, and of white militarism. If you were sickened by the America's Cup, you will be made comatose by the Bicentenary.

During the Bicentennial flagwaving, to say you are an internationalist is a fine sentiment, but mere words. Support for the land rights struggle is the way to put those words into action.

Socialists support land rights not in spite of our fight for socialism, but as part of it. Socialism is not merely about a better system of industry or commerce, but about human liberation and self-determination.

We cannot foresee how Aborigines will determine their fate, but we know that if they have land rights in a society ruled by the working class, they will do so under the best possible conditions.

— Eric Petersen

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 tinkers with the existing capitalist system. The capitalists will not allow a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. Their state is a weapon of class rule, and must be smashed.

A Mass Workers' Party

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

Internationalism

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

Liberation from Oppression

We fight for liberation and against the oppression of women, blacks, migrants and gays. All of these forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. The fight against them is an essential part of building a united revolutionary movement. They can only be ended if 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 take it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only meaningful if they are a guide to action. In the unions, social movements and wherever people are fighting for a better world, socialists are in the thick of the fight. If that's where you want to be, join us today!



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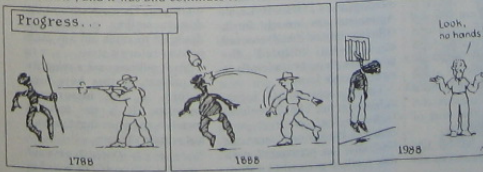
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INDUSTRIAL NEGOTIATION IN THE '80s



THE TRADE-OFF

Come to our summer school

SOCIALIST Action's annual conference and summer school will be held over the Australia Day long weekend in January.

Proceedings will commence on the Friday night with a dinner at Statefields Restaurant in Melbourne. Prominent labour historian Verity Burgmann will look at the two centuries of working-class struggle that the Bicentenary does not celebrate.

Then on the Saturday, following lunch at Camp Gundivindi in Lewis Rd, Wandin (5 km from Melbourne), we will commence three days of talks and walks, speaking and swimming, campfires and conferring.

Our annual conference will take up Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. As well as discussing our political work in general, we'll be having a close look at the details of our positions on Land Rights and on the Environment.

Talks at the Summer School on Sunday 24 and Monday 25 January will include The World Economy, Militancy in the Pilbara, The 1925-27 Chinese Revolution, The Politics of Karl Marx, The Revolutionary Party, May 1968, and The French Revolution.

Cost is just \$50 (\$35 for non-employed) which includes accommodation and meals. Or just come for a day or two at \$20 daily (\$14 concession).

Interested? Contact us now — see page 2 for phone numbers.

Mayekiso

TRASON trials are not uncommon in South Africa. But the trial of Moses Mayekiso is different.

Mayekiso is general secretary of the South African metal workers' union, and a prominent socialist. Details of the trial include organising rent and shops boycotts, and trying to make the township of Alexandra unpopulable. In a very real sense, Mayekiso's trial is a trial of the whole black movement's struggle for the past few years.

The trial, which has received international publicity and expressions of solidarity for Mayekiso, has heard initial evidence and will resume in February.

Socialist Action members in Sydney have been collecting signatures on a petition to free Mayekiso as part of this international publicity campaign. With 150 signatures gathered so far. Copies of the petition can be obtained from our Sydney branch (550-1424) or Ross McKenzie (680-1006).

PS unions gulp a 4% solution

PUBLIC servants won a second tier wage rise in November. When their union officials proclaimed it a great victory, one Melbourne workplace delegate remarked, "Any more victories like this and we're finished!"

Almost all second tier wage agreements have had unions trading off working conditions in return for flimsy pay gains. Employers and the government call this "increasing productivity". Labor minister Ralph Willis declares:

"It is very important...to have our wages based on productivity improvements. That is the system we have now in the second tier."

The public service was no exception. At first, the union negotiators tried to box clever. They submitted that the "integration" and reorganisation of various levels of work would raise productivity, and so warranted a 4% rise.

No doubt the proposed integration will increase productivity (or else the government would not support it). But the real justification for a wage rise is the fact that we have had no compensation for a 9.8% rise in prices last year, let alone this year. The hallowed halls of the Arbitration Commission can't be sullied by that sort of talk.

Given what the second tier system is all about, it was no

shock when, towards the end of negotiations, the government demanded a series of trade-offs. They had already mentioned staff cuts, which it seems union officials were ready to accept (they talked of "staffing to output ratios" being reduced after productivity rose).

Now the government wanted more. They wanted flextime recognised as a privilege, not an award-based right; no higher duties for less than two weeks; a dispute settling procedure; and new arrangements over new technology, occupational health and safety.

It was a familiar routine. The government constructs a fearsome paper tiger called "Attacks on Conditions". The union officials threaten diabolical industrial militancy. The government puts away the paper tiger, and the union officials agree to what the government wanted in the first place. The officials sell to their members on the basis that the tiger's gone.

And so it went. After mass meetings and a 24 hour strike, an Agreement was brought forth. Officials claimed it had removed or at least "diluted" the government's nasty trade-offs to an acceptable form.

The Agreement had highly dubious items like "simplified technological change procedures". It promised "increased flexibility" on permanent part-time work. It prescribed a study

of "absenteeism" in Social Security.

The guts of the thing was a new dispute settling procedure. If a dispute occurs, negotiations must now proceed up through the management and union hierarchy. Unless it's a safety issue, no industrial action can take place during these negotiations. Union members must "ensure the continuation of work and that established custom and practice prevail".

Management are warned that if they wish to introduce changes, they must keep union delegates fully informed. From experience, management are only too happy to bury delegates under mountains of "information", it keeps their minds off actual conditions!

Union officials made much of the fact that the procedure constrains management from changing work processes without consultation. As if, in a local dispute, it is management that is interested in disrupting work! More usually, the ban or the refusal to take on new functions is the only weapon a local delegate has at his disposal. It is this that the procedure inhibits.

So the procedure decreases the power of the workplace delegate, and increases the power of the union officials over them. We can only hope that in practice, most delegates will simply give up.

But the wages saga was not just one of official betrayal.

Members of all public service unions approved the deal overwhelmingly at mass meetings. The last few years of industrial and political shift to the right have made many public servants deeply cynical of their unions' power to make gains. A procedure that seems to hold the line against government attacks, without the pain of industrial action, must seem, to many workers, the best they can hope for.

Only one group is not satisfied. They are the militants amongst the membership and delegates, who can see that the union's rank and file organisation and solidarity with other workers can turn the tide against government attacks, even in these tough times for unionism. They understand the dispute settling procedure is designed to snuff out any such process before it starts.

Such militants are a minority at present, as they have been before in the history of unionism. It is the task of socialists to ensure that this does not remain the case.

— David Lockwood
ACOA member

Sharp cuts no ice in BLF report

WITH a whimper, not a bang, Victorian government "custodian" Ian Sharp has finally reported on the seized BLF assets.

His report is pathetic. Sharp says he is having trouble working out what happened to \$500,000 or so, and this and other issues are surrounded with heavy innuendo, but he can prove no wrongdoing.

This won't stop the government preparing more repressive measures against the union though. On 10 November it amended the Deregistration Act to allow it to start winding up the BLF under the Companies Act.

Already the union's mail is being tampered with. Its banking is being interfered with in South Australia and Tasmania, even though it is registered in those states. There is talk of giving the bulk of the seized funds to charity.

And if the BLF officials don't assist in all this, they are liable for imprisonment or fines.

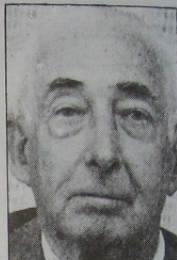
These measures are a threat to the whole labour movement in the precedents they set. The administrative committee of the State ALP has passed a unanimous motion condemning the original raid. Trades Hall, meanwhile, has been forced to condemn the use of the very same police squad in attacking a Furnishing Trades picket.

The whole business goes much further than the jailing of Clarrie O'Shea in 1969. It is a sign of how far backwards most of the official labour movement has slipped that the response is so much weaker than the powerful general strike which freed O'Shea.

MEANWHILE the election in the BWIU, the union which gained most of the builders' labourers after deregistration, has resulted in a disappointing 27% vote for the reform group.

The officials and the media have been crowing about the outcome, and saying yet again that it proves that this time the BLF is really dead.

But the BWIU reform group was not a front funded from BLF coffers. What was at stake were two different views of union action: militancy versus conciliation of bosses. This came out very clearly in the electoral propaganda from the officials,



Sharp, Gallagher: weak report

who wanted to "create an environment which will maximise investment" — ie make the bosses happy. The way to do this was to end "the stupid irresponsible strike happy actions of the Gallagher forces".

There are a number of reasons why the reform group's vote was not higher. At least 1500 foremen are members of the union and voted, while hundreds of ordinary workers never received ballots, apparently because the BWIU provided the electoral commission with an inaccurate membership list. The officials used union funds and time to campaign, and put out deceptive material pretending to come from the rank and file.

Many people believe that there must have been substantial ballot-box stuffing, given the response activists found when door knocking, and the feeling on the job. While it wouldn't be surprising, there is no concrete evidence for it.

But it must be said that some supporters of the reform group were too hopeful of electoral success. While they have been able to build an impressive network of supporters, this remains concentrated largely on city building sites and is not yet numerically strong enough for

an electoral win.

HOWEVER, this is not the whole story. While the BWIU leadership got the numbers, that is not all that matters. They will now have to control the membership. Nor can they expect the overt support they have had from the employers to continue.

The building bosses had an interest in maintaining the current non-militant leadership in power, and so were prepared to agree to deals favouring the officials. They have no such motivation any longer.

Moreover, the officials will have to play industrial police in a situation in which the large city building sites remain centres of militancy and the reform group has a strong base.

As Bernie Hocking of the BWIU reform group comments, defeat in the election doesn't mean the end of the group:

"We know we have the overall support of workers in the construction area and an excellent network of activists. The reform group can now take a lead in on-the-job action."

Bernie's confidence is based on a real mood amongst rank-and-files. Many city building sites are no-go areas for the BWIU officials. Their city organiser cannot even enter 10 major jobs. On others, the officials leave so quickly after arriving that BLF organiser John Cummins suggests buying them roller skates!

ALL OF this has serious implications for the building industry agreement, thrashed out between builders and the BWIU with the support of the Victorian government but bypassing the Arbitration

Commission.

The most important provision in the agreement is the ban on "homers". These are short stoppages which occur when an employer breaches agreements, most commonly on safety issues.

The workers usually manage to win payment for the time lost.

The current deal removes the right to take action from the hands of the rank and file, who must instead go to the Building Industry Disputes Board. The media hailed the ending of this "restrictive work practice" as a great breakthrough which would mean peace in the building industry at last.

The employers hailed it more quietly, as an opportunity to push production at the expense of safety. As a result, in one recent week 17 Melbourne city building sites had stoppages, most of them over safety. The BWIU leaders tried to get the men to go to the Disputes Board, but the workers preferred to rely on their own action.

Peter Wilson, a labourers delegate, described the response on his site:

"The boss came out and said, 'You can't go home under the new agreement.' The workers said, 'What new agreement?' The boss then brought out a nice glossy book with the agreement all printed up, but by then most had gone home.

"The next day the boss distributed a number of copies of the glossy book. A meeting of the workers rejected the book until we read and studied it. Later they still rejected it, and then demanded that the BWIU secretary Ray Collins come in and explain why the union had agreed to such a deal without consulting the membership."

— Janez Stone



The infamous police raid on the BLF office

Holiday Trivia Quiz

Okay, you asked for it... our second annual holiday trivia quiz. It's another toughie - get 12 of the 64 questions right and you're doing okay. Get 48, and you can compose next year's for us. Solutions are on page 18.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

- 1. Who said "Two Wongs don't make a white"?
- ii. "We are all socialists" nor?
- iii. "I am not a Marxist"?
- iv. "We will now proceed to construct the socialist order"?
- 2. Of whom did Francois Mitterand say, "She has the eyes of Caligula and a mouth like Monroe"?
- 3. Who said, "When you've spent half your political life dealing with humdrum issues like the environment, it's exciting having a real crisis on your hands"?
- a. Jack Mundey on the planned sacking of Sydney Council
- b. Bob Brown on the balance of power in Tasmanian parliament
- c. Margaret Thatcher on the Falklands War
- d. Harold Wilson on the falling pound
- 4. Who said "We are all German Jews"?
- a. Martin Luther King in 1963
- b. Hewitt Dayton in 1968
- c. Moshe Dayan in 1973
- d. Adolf Hitler in 1933
- 5. Who said "Enrich yourselves"?
- a. Bukharin of the New Economic Policy
- b. Deng Hsiao Ping to China's peasants
- c. Mikhail Gorbachev of *perestroika*
- d. Margaret Thatcher of privatisation
- 6. John Bjelke Petersen to his Cabinet
- 7. Who said of whom "She speaks excellent Marxian"?
- a. Lenin of Rosa Luxemburg
- b. Bruce Rexford of Germaine Greer
- c. Ian Paisley of Bernadette Devlin
- d. Gorbachev of Margaret Thatcher
- 8. Who said "These days I am the National Party"?

- 9. Who was the first gay group in Australia?
- a. CAMP
- b. Society Five
- c. Daughters of Billis
- d. Matchless Society
- e. Festival of Light
- 10. Which Bolshevik wrote Free Love, Red Love, A Great Love, and The Love Of Worker Bees?
- 11. Which French "Marxist" philosopher is in psychiatric hospital for murdering his wife?
- 12. Who are known as the Hominterns?
- 13. Who were the first women to get equal pay in Australia?
- a. Tailoresses in 1888
- b. Fruitpickers in 1912
- c. Telephoneists in 1924
- d. Metalworkers in 1944
- 14. Which was the first women's trade union in Australia?
- a. Tailoresses b. Nurses c. Telephoneists d. Models & Mannequins

- 15. What do Labor MP Ric Charlesworth and National MP John Stone have in common?
- 16. What do Sir John Kerr and Dr Ian Sharp, custodian of the BLF's funds in Victoria, have in common?
- 17. Name the politicians partially pictured below.
- 18. Which colonial power did the Vietnamese defeat in 1954?
- 19. The Cameroons have been colonial territories of which 3 powers?
- 20. Which undeclared war is known as Russia's Vietnam? And which was known as Britain's Vietnam?
- 21. Why were Papua New Guinea troops sent to the New Hebrides in 1980?
- a. To help France put down the independence movement
- b. To help put down a French-backed anti-independence movement
- c. To help put down a strike by CRA copper miners
- d. By mistake. They were meant to invade OPM strongholds in West Irian
- 22. The last acquisition of colonial territory by a European power was in 1935. What was it?
- a. Indonesia by Holland
- b. The Congo by Belgium
- c. Abyssinia by Italy
- d. The Falklands by Britain
- e. Andorra by the Vatican
- 23. What did the British call the Chinese rebels in 1910 known as Heavenly Harmony Fists?
- 24. Which guerrilla group did Ronald Reagan hail as the modern equivalent of the US founding fathers?
- 25. Which country has not been invaded by the US, Nicaragua, Burma, Lebanon, Grenada, Cuba?
- 26. Which country is not a member of the non-aligned movement: Cuba, Afghanistan, Switzerland, Sri Lanka?

SEXUAL POLITICS

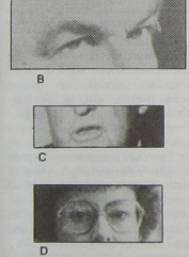
- 1. Who was the world's first woman prime minister?
- 2. Who said in 1972 that she did not expect a woman prime minister in her lifetime?
- 3. What are Jaime Wheelock of Nicaragua, King Richard of the Lothair, Cuban army chief Raul Castro, Fitchet's son, and Neil Brown believed to have in common?
- 4. Whose battle cry has been "Save Ulster from sodomy"?

ROCKERS' RIGHTWINGERS

- 1. What do Renee Geyer, Colleen Hewitt and Linda George have in common?
- 2. Which pop star said "I think Enoch Powell is the man, I'm all for him. This country is overcrowded. The immigrants should be sent home."
- 3. Which pop star said "We elected our man Nixon president, and if you don't stand behind him, get the hell out of the way so that I can stand behind him"?
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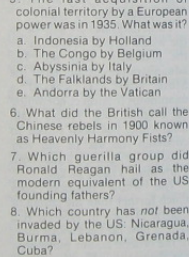
AUSTRALIANA

- 1. Which Australian mountain is named after a Pole who led an uprising against Russia's partition of Poland in 1947?
- 2. Who were transported from Dorset to Australia in 1834 for forming a union?
- 3. What was the longest strike in Australian history? (Area and years)
- 4. Which group of workers successfully struck against a fringe benefits tax?
- a. Westpac staff in 1986 over a tax on low interest loans
- b. Ulah miners in 1980 over a tax on cheap rents
- c. Postal workers in 1975 over a tax on meal allowances
- d. Labor MPs in 1974 over a tax on free air travel



BYWAYS OF HISTORY

- 1. Match the following people with how they ended up:
i. Jerry Rubin ii. Marshal Ky iii. Eldridge Cleaver iv. Sylvia Pankhurst v. Alexander Kerensky
a. a supporter of Halle Selassie b. a born again Christian c. an academic at Stanford d. a liquor store manager in LA e. a Wall St stockbroker
- 2. Which modern British party is named after Irish thieves?
- 3. In which war were many British soldiers issued with only one boot? Was it the left or right?
- 4. Who was kicked out of Jordan in 1907? Which terrorist group took their name from the event?
- 5. Who slapped the face of Britain's Home Secretary in 1972?
- a. Margaret Thatcher
- b. Ian Paisley
- c. Bernadette Devlin
- d. all of the above
- 6. From which words is the name "Pakistan" derived?



BIGGEST & BEST

- 1. Which country has suffered the most coups?
- 2. What record for a head of state did President Pedro Labrador of Mexico set in 1913?
- 3. Who is the world's richest woman?
- 4. Who was the fattest ex-king on the Riviera in the 1950s?
- 5. Who is the world's wealthiest monarch?
- 6. Who is the world's longest reigning head of state at present?
- 7. What was the world's longest general strike?
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IMPERIALISM

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REVIEWS

Deadly games in the nuclear playground

Nuclear Playground, by Stewart Firth, Allen & Unwin.

SINCE World War II, Western superpowers have used the South Pacific as a testing ground for new weapons and a dumping ground for nuclear waste.

Nuclear bombs have been exploded at Bikini, Christmas and Malden islands by the Americans; at Mururoa and Fangatau by the French; and at Monte Bello, Emu Field and Maralinga by the British. In all, says Stewart Firth, over 300 nuclear devices have been exploded in the Pacific in the last forty years.

As a result, the Pacific Ocean is contaminated, radio-active fallout makes several small atolls uninhabitable, and the food chain has been violated. Native lifestyles have been irrevocably damaged by the invasion of military personnel and western consumer goods. Stewart Firth's lucid account of these events makes chilling reading. In some cases, the inhabitants of the test sites have been callously used as guinea pigs, for the express purpose of measuring the effect of fallout on civilian populations and the food chain. Firth points out that only colonialism makes this possible. Pressure from its own people has stopped the US from testing at home, and the French would never consider testing in metropolitan France.

AUSTRALIA is not a nuclear power. But as a junior partner in the colonial exploitation of the Pacific, its interests are close to America's.

Australia's moderate position on the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone confirms Firth's view. By channeling anti-nuclear sentiment in the region onto the French testing program, Hawke

has done much to blunt the anti-US feeling in the peace movement and the impact of New Zealand's measures.

Washington has no trouble living with a nuclear free zone that allows unhindered transit of nuclear weapons. Firth provides overwhelming evidence that Australia is a vital strand in the US nuclear web stretching from Hawaii to the Philippines.

A strength of Firth's book is that he tackles this issue, unlike others who skirt around it. Unlike Keith Suter's book *Is There Life After ANZUS?*, Firth is prepared to say that ANZUS is a nuclear alliance and that Australia should get out of it.

Following the Lange ban on US warship visits in 1984, America has relented more and more on Australia as a regional power. While Labor touts itself as pro-peace and takes small initiatives, such as having a "Disarmament Ambassador", Firth suggests that behind the facade

"Australia has been careful not to take peace initiatives to the point of threatening the American alliance."

Firth goes on to observe that in the fundamentals of defence policy "the present Australian Labor government is hard to distinguish from the previous conservative government under Malcolm Fraser."

The policy on nuclear warship visits is the same as Fraser's, and the sale of uranium to France would have done the Squire of Nareen proud indeed.

It seems the chant heard on recent peace marches, "Pie Iron Bob, Yellow Cake Bob", comparing Hawke to Menzies, does Menzies an injustice!

THE PACIFIC'S first anti-nuclear group formed in Fiji in 1970.

ATOM, "Against Tests On Mururoa", was formed by including the Fiji Women's and the Christian of the Pacific Federation of Churches. ATOM helped organise the first conference of anti-nuclear activists in Suva in 1975.

ATOM has since expanded into a loose coalition of unions, non-government aid organisa-



French PM Chirac (right) and Territories Minister Pons: would not dream of testing in France

tions, disarmament activists and women's and environmentalist groups. It has little clout compared to the might of the superpowers, but has achieved a lot in raising the consciousness of Pacific Islanders. Without groups like ATOM, the islanders who are currently suing the US government for damages caused by nuclear tests would not have made their terrible situation known to the rest of the world.

The Fiji Anti-Nuclear Group (FANG) has been a thorn in America's side, and for a short time in 1982 may even have been part of the reason that Ratu Kamasese Mara, then Prime Minister, banned nuclear warship visits. Mara dropped the ban in 1983 after being heavily lobbied by the US.

Nuclear Playground was written before Fiji's two coups, but makes it clear why Washington was so happy to see the advent of Colonel Rabuka.

Firth says that the US objective in Fiji is to "build up a safe ally among the island states, now that New Zealand is seen as unreliable."

Firth notes that in 1986, FANG and the then-emerging Fiji Labour Party under Dr Bavadra posed a problem for Washington because they gave "expression to a wider discontent in the country about the [Mara] government's present foreign policy. When the 6000 tonne US

nuclear-attack submarine *Borromach* paid a visit to Suva in January 1986, the Fiji government, afraid of popular opinion, did not announce the visit in advance, nor did the police permit a march of protest through the streets of the capital."

FIRTH'S last chapter is a fictional account of the start of World War 3, which many believe will erupt in the Pacific theatre.

Hostilities start with a dispute over US bases in the Philippines and a nuclear exchange at sea. Both sides zap each other's control, command, communications and intelligence facilities, with Pine Gap, Nurrungar and North West Cape amongst the first to go. Within hours, the bulk of the planet is vapourised. The account is graphic, convincing and horrifying.

The challenge is to stop Stewart Firth's fiction from becoming fact. The anti-nuclear movement in the Pacific is important because it shows the possibility of international solidarity with a purpose amongst activists.

Firth's book makes us understand that governments, no matter how "left wing" or "progressive" (and the ALP is neither), cannot be relied upon. Stopping nuclear weapons is something we have to do ourselves.

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- French students in 1968
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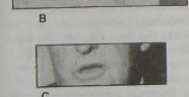
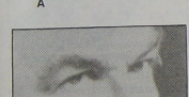
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REVIEWS

Heroes by John Pilger. Pan Books, \$14.95

A JOURNALIST with a conscience is always going to have something to tell us. Especially one like John Pilger, who has so often been at the right place at the right time.

Apart from his famous visits to Kampuchea, he was there when the last Americans left Vietnam and when Bangladesh faced invasion and famine. He writes about it all with a savage criticism laced with humour and irony, and does not spare himself. Yet amidst the brutality and oppression, he also finds heroes.

Since the Indochina war and its aftermath are the biggest story, the American government naturally comes in for a mauling. It is useful to have the story told again of how Washington used a CIA secret campaign to get Catholics to flee North Vietnam, then traded on their plight for propaganda purposes. And how the massive invasion — for that's what it was — by US forces permanently scarred a whole country. Not to mention the, Kampuchean aftermath.

But there are few countries and their rulers who escape Pilger's acid pen. Writing about the plight of the Palestinian refugees, he remarks:

"Each person was issued 2,300 calories per day . . . figures calculated by the United Nations as precisely the amount a human being needed to survive, and precisely the amount the agency could afford on its minuscule handout from the 'international community', with the notable exception of the Palestinians' shrill friend, the Soviet Union, which gave nothing."

Pilger goes on to devote two chapters to "white" and Czechoslovak dissidents, but his best social criticism is probably what he writes about Britain:

"Rosemary Dyer, surrounded by cows, walked three and a half miles to a supermarket to buy milk in cartons and vegetables in tins. She was not allowed any fresh vegetables from the farm; and she walked because she could not afford the bus fare. The Dyers owned a 1957 Hillman, but they could not afford to pay the road tax."

If the life of English agricultural labourers reads like something out of Dickens, so does that of the urban poor.

"My symbol of the 1980s is not the micro-chip, it is Princes Lodge. . . In February 1984 I slipped past the bouncers who guarded it and found up to five

Pilger's unsung heroes face up to oppression

hundred people inside, an under-class of cowed humanity. They included many young children, over whom I had to step as they played in the damp filth of carpets in darkened corridors; there was nowhere else for them to play. Some of the residents had complained, but not for long; several were evicted."

THIS hostel became the focus for a protest campaign, but Pilger tells us little about it, and this brings us to the book's main weakness.

If he were not such a good writer with a talent for comic relief, Pilger would find a lot of his readers queuing up to be treated for clinical depression. He shows us too many desiring poor and not enough resistance.

Among his heroes, there are too few actively fighting back. An exception is the schoolgirls of Walthamstow who responded

to racist agitation by rallying in their hundreds, a mixture of races, shouting "We are black, we are white, together we are dynamite!" But such examples are too scarce.

We read about the suffering of coal miners, yet the vast pageant of working class struggle which was the 1984-85 miners' strike gets only a passing mention. There is a chapter about the poor people of Beallsville, Ohio who lost so many of their sons during the Vietnam war that many were utterly despairing about it. Yet surely Pilger could have devoted some space to the more hopeful side of America in those days — the anti-war movement in which so many ordinary working people rallied and marched and sometimes went to jail.

Again, when he looks at his home country of Australia, he is scathing about its racism and worries about war bases like



From Heroes: a Deep South cop grabs a US flag from a negro boy, having already seized his "No More Police Brutality" placard

Pine Gap. But where does he place his hopes?

"This is the source of my optimism. During the 1984 general election a deep seam of youthful idealism was struck in Australia. . . One in fourteen Australians gave their first preference vote in the Senate to the Nuclear Disarmament Party."

Pilger has really missed the point. The 1984 vote was only made possible by the anti-nuclear activists who built first the Movement Against Uranium Mining, and then the modern peace movement, holding local meetings and pasting up posters and filling the streets of cities and towns. None of this is mentioned.

SUCH weaknesses notwithstanding, for a critical portrait of modern times I know of nothing to compare with this book.

The treatment of Kampuchea alone assures John Pilger a place in history. I haven't dealt with it because it's well known. Instead let me conclude with his treatment of the last day of the Vietnam war. If this doesn't bring home to you the obscurity of that conflict, nothing will.

The last soldiers, diplomats and journalists had been airlifted to a warship, and a party began on deck.

"The rock band's discord and the clatter of fest preparations all but drowned a persistent knocking at our stern. 'Damned if it ain't them,' said a marine major, peering over the side. 'Damned if it ain't the goods.'"

"As many as fifty Vietnamese huddled below us in a listing, rusted landing craft. . . During all of that day, in the still heat, an old man had swung a bathook laced up with pots and pans against the carrier's side. . ."

"As the first streaks were devoured and the rock band struck up, the *Blue Ridge* shuddered and moved forward, leaving the faces in the rusted craft still pleading to be taken on board. A box of Diet Cola was thrown down from there, but it missed and sank. They had been given, we were assured, five days' supply of fresh water and a map. That their wretched craft was already sinking and the people would go nowhere, except down, was acknowledged; but still we steamed away. . ."

"We reported that small finale, but it was published in only a few papers. . . The world's first media war. . . And that's generally happened when only the goods were involved."

— Richard Emerson

REVIEWS

How slavery lost the West

THE STRIKING stockman was recounting how the policeman was trying to get him back to work. "You've got a good boss" the copper argued. "If he is such a good boss, you work for him!" was the reply.

The stockman unwittingly hit the nail on the head. In this and in lots of other strikes the police do work for the bosses. Here it was for the pastoralists of north-west Australia.

The story of the longest, but least known strike in Australia, is recounted in a fascinating piece of oral history, the film *How the West was Lost*.

Aboriginal people working on the sheep stations were treated like slaves. They were paid a pittance. It was illegal for them to leave their jobs. Women did the domestic work. The men were stockmen. Pay was \$4 a fortnight.

The Department of Native Affairs supposedly "protected" the aboriginal people. That meant control by the local cop and the choice of working for a pastoralist the cop chose or going to jail. In reality only the pastoralists were protected.

In late 1942, a secret meeting of the ribes elected Dooley Bin Bin and Clancy McKenna to organise a strike for better wages and conditions. They were assisted by a white spokesperson, Don McCleod, who is featured in the film. He is the only one of the three alive today and is still fighting for aboriginal rights.

Eventually they decided the strike would begin on May 1, 1946. The two black leaders cycled across the desert from station to station leaving homemade calendars showing the date on which everybody would go on strike.

So on May Day 1946, 800 station workers walked off the job. The cops tried to cajole them back to work. They failed. The strikers stood firm. They held meetings. Some were in 23 languages. About a dozen or so interpreters. One meeting in July was at the races — everybody goes to the races!

The media ignored the strike. Only the Communist press told what was going on.

The strike went for three years. Two permanent strike camps were set up. Strikers were arrested and frog-marched to

jail — in regulation chains, of course.

The film was produced with the Nomad Aboriginal Community of the Pilbara region of north-west Western Australia. First and foremost is their story. Its "stars" are the strikers. Their story is retold in film just as it is told to children growing around the campfire. The strikers and their descendants re-enact many of the episodes of the strike.

Because it is the strikers' story and an analysis of the strike, many questions are left unanswered.

For instance, it was not until 1949 that the marline unions imposed a black ban on the loading of wool. What were the unions doing for three years?

In order to survive some of the strikers started to mine tin and other minerals. They were quite successful. "The blacks opened up the Pilbara for mining," the film's commentator reminds us, "not the mining companies." Some communities also bought their own stations.

The film does not end in 1949 when the strike ended. It updates the black struggle to today. Now it's against the mining bosses, who have taken over from the pastoralists as the power behind the Western Australian government. Land rights are ignored.

This magnificent strike has been written out of Australian history. In a high school history book written 13 years ago, Professor Bolton of Perth explained the changes in aboriginal employment like this:

"The war created wide employment opportunities for the Aborigines of the North both in the pastoral industry and through military activities. The first protest of changing social conditions arose in 1946 in the Pilbara district of Western Australia. Here, under the influence of a white man, Don McCleod, many Aborigines stopped working for the pastoralists in order to form cooperative settlements making a living from livestock and alluvial mining."

So if anybody wishes to you about blacks receiving grants or land or special government help, tell them to see *How the West was Lost*. It will show them why blacks should be recompensed for years of degradation and slavery.

And if they tell you stories of



Blacks re-enact the 1946 walkoff in *How the West was Lost*

how Australia used to run on the sheep's back, remind them how the wealth was created — with cheap aboriginal labour.

— Jeff Goldfarb

FILM

Superman as peace activist?



CHRISTOPHER Reeve, we are told, was determined never to make another Superman movie. He agreed to do it on condition that he could inject the issue of peace. *Superman II* is the result. A school boy decides that writing to your congressman is not going to be much good in the pursuit of world peace. So, far so good. His much better idea is . . . write to Superman!

This puts Superman under immense pressure. On the one hand, he desperately wants to help Earth people. On the other, as the image of his mother on Krypton reminds him, he isn't supposed to "interfere"; that is, change the course of history.

Never mind that in *Superman II* he did just that and got away with it.

Superman opts for ridding the world of nuclear weapons, as expected. This he does by the ingenious method of collecting them all together and throwing them into the sun. Problem solved.

But wait. Lex Luthor, Arch-Enemy, has escaped from

prison, and uses a hair from Superman's head to create another Super being, with Superman's strength and an overwhelming urge to kill Superman. Luthor teams up with the world's arms dealers, who are aggrieved at Superman's going away with their honest livelihood. The stage is set for battle.

This film has two things not going for it. Firstly its special effects are no longer interesting, and in fact look technically very rough around the edges. It is about as exciting as a summit meeting in Belgium. The fight in space between Superman and his alter ego looks like a TV wrestling bout, and the outcome is about as unpredictable.

Secondly, the issue of peace is reduced to the presence of weapons. Get rid of them, and the arms dealers, and you've solved the problem. No mention of the governments that buy weapons, the economic forces that drive countries to defend their interests, the fact that war is politics continued by other means.

The movie has the requisite flying scenes, love scenes with Lois Lane, heart-melting looks from Christopher Reeve's obnoxious blue eyes, and Superman's conflict of being Clark Kent at the same time. But it looks more like a comic than any of the previous films.

I found it boring. Only go to see it if you like comic books.

—Janey Stone

Marxism versus Christianity

ATHEISTS often quip that the world, with all its unhappiness, poverty and wars, must have been made by the Devil at a moment when God was not looking.

For most people the world does seem to be simply a branch office of Hell. Christians and Marxists alike are critical of the mess humanity is in.

Marxists, of course, do not blame the Devil for this. We hold a specific exploiting class of people responsible. Christians believe that the trouble lies with humanity's estrangement from God and the lack of Love amongst humans of all classes.

There is a gulf between Marxism and Christianity, the one using class struggle to eliminate oppression on Earth, the other using prayer for paradise in Heaven. This gulf has narrowed at various times. The Christianity of the Inquisition which put science and culture in intellectual leg-irons and barbecued 30,000 'heretics' is further from a socialist perspective than the Christianity of a gun-toting worker priest fighting against a Somoza or a Marcos.

Makeshift tactical bridges have been slung between Marxism and Christianity as well. Elements of the Church have always adapted to rising class struggle. Christianity's oppositional roots, expressed today in liberation theology, have grown and influenced many workers. Marxists have always urged for unity in class struggle with religious workers.

Yet religion still poses problems for socialist change. The Church blunted Solidarity in Poland, and in the peace movement, Quakers argue for disarmament through moral persuasion. The role of class struggle divides the two contending world outlooks and their basic philosophies are unreconciled.

Marxism has no truck with the notion of Divine beings. The only "proof" of God's existence (in the person of Christ) are the historically unreliable Gospels which were ghost-written sixty years after the alleged events. If there is no supernatural, all that is left is the natural, all that is left is atoms.

The absence of divine purpose is no cause for gloom, however. Who needs miracles when atoms in the shape of humans beings are at work and playing dog



wondrous things with hand and brain?

IN SCIENTIFIC and historical terms, Christianity is nonsense but the human need for it is not nonsense.

As Engels put it, Christianity has lasted 1,900 years and "cannot be disposed of merely by declaring it to be nonsense glued together by fraud". Religion arose from fear of the unknown and uncontrollable, such as disease and natural disasters. Gods were created to explain these forces.

With the development of class society, the power of a ruling class and its armed enforcers became another source of fear. The creation of new gods were aided by this class to sanctify their power. "Man," as Marx put it, "makes religion. Religion does not make man".

Religion expresses the earthly suffering of people. It is, wrote Marx, "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world". This movement of the oppressed often take on a religious garb. Christianity arose amongst the slaves in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. "Like every great revolutionary movement," said Engels, "Christianity was made by the masses".

CHRIStIANItY initially was revolutionary, in that its message of liberation from poverty was thought by believers to mean liberation here and now.

But its method, the preaching of the gospel to all, including slaves and emperors, promoted class collaboration. Christ's assault on the money-lenders in the temple was for symbolic purposes only. His

advice to render taxes unto Caesar was for real.

At the same time as Christianity promoted practical subservience to oppression, it dulled the pain of oppression with the drug of Heaven. It was, said Marx, "the opium of the people", or (as Lenin preferred) "spiritual booze".

This anaesthetic property of religion explains why it has been duly regarded by the exploiters of every age as an aid to political control. Christianity, the rebel movement of slaves, took only 300 years to become the established religion of the Roman state.

Like that other drug, alcohol, Christianity can produce raised voices (it is the oppressed's cry against injustice) but the end result is passivity. Christianity, with its preaching of "goodwill to all men", is hesitant about methods other than non-violent reconciliation of class enemies. It is self-crucifixion of the working class to love the capitalists with their hand in your pocket or the jai-lers with their boots on your neck.

SOcialist revolution does away with the need for religion. Until antiquated beliefs die out naturally, however, socialists support freedom of religious belief.

There should be no attempts like that of the Paris Commune in 1871 to abolish God by decree and prohibit religion by law. Engels criticised this approach because it tries to change people's consciousness for them and because "persecution is the best means of promoting undesirable convictions".

Under socialism there may well also be "religious" debate on the eternal question — the

meaning of life — that philosophers from Plato to Monty Python have worried at. But there will be so much self-realisation and creativity going on, so much earthly "meaning of life", that the debate will be academic.

Trotsky's last words must be our Amen. Surrounded by the carnage of Stalinism and wars, and politically isolated by slander and assassination attempts, it was faith that kept this communist and atheist from despair. "I shall die," he wrote in his Testament, "with unshaken faith in the communist future. This faith in man and in his future gives me even now such power of resistance as cannot be given by any religion".

Phil Shannon

TRIVIA SOLUTIONS (from p14)

QUOTABLE QUOTES 1- Arthur Gelwell II-George V. 1-Marx 2-Margaret Thatcher 3-4-b 5-a 6-a 7-John Bjelke-Petersen
SEXUAL POLITICS 1-Bandaranaika (caption) 2-Tratcher 3-Homosexuality 4-Ian Paisley 5-c 6-Alexandra Kollontai 7-Aituchov 8-British homosexual spies for Russia 9-10-a Singing Liberal jingles 2-Rod Stewart 3-Johnny Cash 4-Harold Wilson
AUSTRIAN JAZZ 1-Koscziusko 2-The Topidude Martyrs 3-Pilbara 1946-49 4-b 5-Both played hockey for the jailing of Glarie O'Shea in 1969 7-a-Russ Hinz 8-Bob Hawke 9-John Bjelke-Petersen 3-Janine Haines
THE GIBBY 1-1-i-i-ii-3-iv-a-c 2-Tories 3-Crimen, left 4-PLO, Black September 5-c 6-Punjab/Alghan frontier 7-Kashmir/Balkhistan
IMPERIALISM 1-France 2-Germany, Britain and France 3-Afghanistan, Oman civil war 4-b 5-c 6-Boxers 7-Contras 8-Burma 9-Switzerland
BIGGEST & BEST 1-Bolivia 2-Shortest term of office (1 hour) 3-Queen Elizabeth II 4-King of Egypt 5-King of Tonga 6-Hirohito of Japan 7-Palestine (1936-39) 8-France 1968

THE SUFFRAGETTE movement still captures public imagination, and Pankhurst is its most famous name.

Yet the Suffragette movement led by the Pankhursts was unsuccessful in gaining votes for women. These only came as part of suffrage for the entire adult working class, a reform granted by the British ruling class after World War One to defuse a revolutionary climate.

Indeed, the Suffragette movement could not win with its class collaborationist approach and its individualist tactics. It quickly became dubbed "votes for the ladies" because of its main demand of votes for women on the same basis as men — in other words, for the 5% of wealthy women!

But one Pankhurst stood out from the rest of the family. Sylvia retained membership of the Suffragette WSPU (Women's Social & Political Union) and took part in its ill-conceived hunger strikes. But she never broke her links with the labour movement, and campaigned for suffrage amongst working class women as a revolutionary demand.

In the East End of London from about 1912 onwards, Sylvia Pankhurst organised working class women and set up the East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS), which became the nucleus of a socialist party. She led the ELFS in a series of rent strikes — "no vote, no rent" — and held mass public meetings. She campaigned for better conditions for working women and tried to form a union of serving girls.

In 1913, inspired by James Connolly's Irish Citizens Army, Sylvia Pankhurst formed the People's Army. This she saw as a way of organising men and women to fight for freedom and to resist the "brutality of government services". The army drilled each Wednesday after the ELFS meeting, and was watched and supported by hundreds of cheering East Enders. At its peak, the People's Army had 700 women members.

AS THE workers' movement in the East End was swelling, the Suffragette movement was falling apart.

Tactics became more and more desperate, culminating in Emily Wilding Davison throwing herself in front of the King's racehorse. Sylvia Pankhurst remained a member of the WSPU, even though she disagreed with its main demand of votes for bourgeois women



Sylvia Pankhurst flanked by sister Christabel (right) and Emily Davison at a 1910 Suffragette march

The communist Suffragette

only. She could not break with her mother and sister, Emmeline and Christabel, whom she admired.

Fortunately, they broke with her. In 1914, they expelled her after she spoke on the same platform as James Connolly in support of the striking Irish workers during the period of the Dublin lockout.

Emmeline and Christabel were now leading a tiny WSPU which had become a rabidly nationalist organisation. It gave white feathers, symbolising "cowardice", to young men who did not enlist for the imperialist war. Emmeline and Christabel campaigned for industrial peace during the militant wave of strikes and lockouts in the Britain of 1910-1914. Emmeline exhorted Russian premier Kerensky to keep the Bolsheviks in line.

Sylvia, on the other hand, was tremendously excited by the successes in Russia. She had eventually ren and edited a newspaper, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, since 1914, and its name was changed to *The Workers' Dreadnought* in 1917

"as members realised that solidarity between men and women was essential if they were going to win the fight". It was the first British paper to really grasp the international implications of what was

happening in Russia and to spread propaganda amongst the working class. On 17 November 1917, Sylvia Pankhurst wrote:

"Had the revolution stopped short of Kerensky's premiership and Kerensky's policy it would have meant little more to humanity than an echo of the French Revolution. Now it bids fair to become something very much more... The Russian Revolution is a Socialist revolution... Our eager hopes are for the spreading success of the Bolsheviks of Russia; may they open the door which leads to freedom for the people of all lands."

DURING this, her best political period, Sylvia Pankhurst had close connections with workers' leaders on "Red Clydeside" and the South Welsh coalfields, and with the development of the shop stewards' movement.

She established contact with the Bolsheviks, and corresponded with Lenin about the future of British communism. She argued with Lenin over the question of electoral support of the emergent Labour Party. Her attitude was to abstain from such support as the Labour Party, she said, would inevitably come to power. Revolutionary action should go for the coming fight with Labour in office.

Lenin correctly saw the potential of electoral support of Labour at a time when workers were looking to join it and regarded it as representing their class interests. Lenin refused Pankhurst in the pamphlet *Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder* and set down many of the arguments for electoral support of Labour which still have currency today, including the support of Labour "the same way as a rope supports a hanging man".

Having found it hard to break with the bourgeois feminism of her conservative mother and sister at an earlier period, Sylvia Pankhurst now failed to recognise the conditions under which work with more backward forces was necessary.

Her revolutionary impatience culminated in her unilaterally declaring her own tiny communist party, the Workers' Suffrage movement which grew out of the ELFS, as the British section of the Communist International.

PANKHURST'S failure to join with other tiny communist groups was mistaken and was a blow to British communism, as she had great credibility amongst London workers.

Lenin rebuked her sharply and contact between them ceased. She entered an abyss of muddled thinking which lasted the remaining decades of her life, even supporting the despotic Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia.

The excellent *Workers' Dreadnought* reflected her increasingly bizarre politics, and its circulation diminished and even supporting the despotic Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. One final edition talked of Lenin and the communists in the wilderness, a sadly apt description of Pankhurst's own plight.

Sylvia Pankhurst died in 1960, aged 78. Despite her decline, she was by far the best politically of her famous family, and a brilliant star of Britain's labour movement in the vital years 1917-1920.

— Dorothy Morgan



Anti-capitalist war cartoon in *The Workers' Dreadnought*

Pat Cashes in on Apartheid

JANUARY in Australian sport means tennis. Tennis means the Australian Open. And this summer, the Australian Open means protests against Pat Cash.

Since opinion polls show 65% support for Cash's trip to South Africa, protestors can expect a Cash argument.

Cash's excuses for playing in South Africa were pathetic. He wasn't going for the money, he claimed — and promptly played in a \$500,000 exhibition tournament. He needed the Grand Prix points from the South African Open, he claimed — even though the Brazilian Open was the very next week. No he couldn't play in Brazil, since he had an obligation to play a trashy Skins Games tournament. Never mind any obligation to South Africa's blacks, who are engaged in a skins game of a rather more deadly kind.

His trip was not political, Cash claimed — an excuse that Bob Hawke backed up. Yet within a week, Cash was making judgments that must have been music to P.W. Botha's ears.

"There are two sides to every story," he opined about South Africa. "... there are actually good things in every situation."

Cash was not being political, of course. It was just that South Africa was "very like Australia" (a standard propaganda claim of the white regime). "They drive the same cars on the same side of the road. The trees and foliage and the weather are all very similar." If Cash had gone to Soweto, he might have found rather fewer cars and trees and foliage to drivel on about.

Cash ended his trip by announcing that he would bring out one black and one white junior to play in Australia. David Homes of Melbourne's Anti-Apartheid Movement was spot on when he observed that it was

"a token gesture of the worst kind... a move to simply deflect criticism of Cash for going to South Africa. It is insulting to the black people of South Africa. They don't need or want our charity... they are calling for apartheid to be abolished."

NATURALLY the tennis establishment sprang to Cash's defence.

Cash had broken no Tennis Australia rules, claimed tennis chief Brian Tobin. And anyway, there has been tennis in South Africa for 82 years. They have done nothing to break the ITC rules. Why should they have tournaments there?

One rule that rule-happy Tobin



forgot was the UN sporting boycott of South Africa, placed after years of agitation both inside and outside the apartheid system. Tobin's comments reflect the blind eye turned to racism by the tennis establishment.

The International Tennis Federation sanctions the South African Open as a Grand Prix tournament, even though the UN boycott has made it a joke. Cash was the first Wimbledon champion to bother with it in over a decade. The Swedes are banned from playing in it by their government. Yet the ITF not only recognises it, but places it late on the tennis calendar, so that players desperate for cheap Grand Prix points are tempted to enter.

The South African Open is "open" in name only. Former South African tennis administrator Patrick Wagner says that top black South African players like David Somal are not invited to play in it, despite having the ability. Black ball-girls may have cheered Cash and fetched balls for him, but blacks could not compete with him as equals.

Tennis is still a bastion of white privilege in South Africa. White Johannesburg has the most private tennis courts per capita in the world. By contrast, a survey of 41 black schools around Capetown shows not one tennis court for 20,000 pupils.

The picture is similar in other

sports. Per capita, whites have 12 times as many athletics tracks, 18 times as many rugby fields and 20 times as many swimming pools. In Soweto, one million blacks have just five swimming pools and one gymnasium.

South Africa's much-vaunted sporting reforms are merely amendments to the Liquor and Group Areas Acts which exempt sports players and spectators from restrictions on racial mixing. Blacks still need passes to cross from black to white areas to use "deracialised" facilities. And the schools, the foundation of any sporting system, are still strictly segregated. White schools, with 17% of pupils, have 72% of school sporting facilities.

Few blacks have the time or money to train seriously for sport anyway. Most travel long distances to work from far-flung dormitory suburbs, often leaving and returning in darkness. In rural areas and the black "homelands", blacks are simply too poor to play sport seriously.

CASH'S defenders trotted out some more familiar arguments, which were just as feeble as Cash's.

What about Australia's treatment of blacks, they asked. Unlike the Left, which has long fought on this issue, such hypocrites only seem to notice Aboriginal oppression when their right to tour South Africa is challenged.



with Alec Kahn

Why pick on sport, they asked, when Australia does massive trade with South Africa? Again, we have always been for both sporting and trade boycotts unlike the ALP, which under Gough Whitlam increased trade with South Africa.

Why pick on South Africa, they asked, when there are other oppressive regimes? Here, we differ with the liberals who reply that South Africa is special because it legally enshrines racism.

For socialists, the legal niches are irrelevant. What matters is that in South Africa, black workers, students and township dwellers are waging a heroic struggle against their oppressors.

Our boycotts, while of secondary importance in winning change, are wanted by them to keep Pretoria under siege. As Desmond Tutu correctly points out, the sports boycott can hardly change an unjust society on its own, but it hits Pretoria where it hurts.

When other people fighting against their oppressors, in Poland or Chile or Fiji, call for boycotts, we support those too.

WHY PICK on Pat Cash, then, his defenders ask in one last despairing try, when over 130 Australians have broken the boycott?

The answer is that we don't. The rebel cricketers copped protests — and suspensions. Greg Norman copped protests, and decided not to go back. Surfer Tom Carroll, after four trips, admitted he was wrong and last year passed up the chance to win a world championship by boycotting South Africa.

Other tennis tourists like John Fitzgerald and Wally Masur also deserve our contempt. But Cash, as the most prominent, has done the most damage to the boycott. Just two days after he announced his trip, the Australian Rugby Union, which has been itching to tour, made a new lobbying push.

Tennis player Jasmat Dhiraj, a South African Indian exiled for his colour, has put it as bluntly as possible to mercenaries like Pat Cash.

"Go home, we don't want you, finish. The whites are lucky we cannot demonstrate in South Africa. If we could, not a single match would take place."