

SOCIALIST



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50 CENTS

# ISRAEL

## THE NEW STH AFRICA



• Aborigines on the march

## BRITAIN



## Tories go gay-bashing

AIDS is providing the vehicle for an anti-gay movement in Britain that threatens many gains of the past twenty years.

The Thatcher government is moving to make it illegal for local councils to "promote homosexuality". The Bill will cut off local funding for lesbian and gay centres, gay welfare projects and pro-gay education materials.

The Bill reflects the repressive shift in attitude among British opinion-makers. Rupert Murdoch's gutter-press *Sun* has tracked the movements of public figures, compiling information on their sex lives to run scandal stories. Meanwhile it produces headlines like "Ten Ways to Spot a Paed".

The Church of England has moved to expel the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement from its London premises, and attacks gay clergy who won't remain celibate.

Recently, judges remained largely silent while a highly respected colleague was driven

from office after the *Sun* (again) published his letters to his lover. Even Princess Anne, addressing an international conference on AIDS, drew special attention to the disease's "innocent victims", as if some victims (e.g. gays) are guilty and deserve to die.

All this has fed into and reinforced a shift in public opinion. In early 1985, fully 61% of people believed that homosexuality should not be illegal. In a recent poll, the figure had dropped to 48%. A majority oppose any public spending on services targeted to help gays. 68% are even hostile to open displays of affection by gays.

As times become harder and harder, the search for scapegoats becomes more urgent. Gays have beaten back public hostility before, most notably in the early seventies. The same militant organising can do that again.

## THE RENOUS



## Can't buy me love?

TRUE LOVE never runs smooth. Especially not for Susan and Frank Renouf.

In the Renoufs' case, of course, we are talking about true love of property, status and wealth — the stuff of all good Establishment marriages. (Affairs have always taken care of the upper classes' more biological needs.)

So lately we have been treated to an unholy brawl between two scions of the Establishment over ownership of the \$15 million matrimonial home.

Lazy Susan — sorry, Lady Susan — first got Toison D'Or as a 40th birthday present from then-hubby, pools billionaire Robert Sangster. She spent a million dollars doing it up so that she could become one of Sydney's top society hostesses.

Robert, alas, ditched Susan for a younger woman. He tried to take the mansion with him, but Susan won the right to stay until 1990, all expenses paid, as part of the settlement.

Enter money-bags Frank Renouf, New Zealand's biggest stockbroker. He offered Susan life in the manner to which she was accustomed, and beyond 1990. She offered him prominence in Australian high society. Frank bought Toison D'Or from Sangster for \$8 million to seal the happy union.

Alas, into this blissful scene intruded the stockmarket crash. Frank lost 90% of his wealth. He lost a good deal of Susan's, having invested her money for her.

Poor Susan. Poor Frank. In

scarcely a month, the marriage collapsed, having lasted just two years. Susan sent a letter to Frank's office telling him they were through. First, she took the precaution of placing a legal " caveat" on the house, claiming it as hers. Smart Susan.

Frank was having none of this. With his dwindling assets, he needed that house. He renamed it, and locked Susan out. Both sides called press conferences, and Frank sued Susan for libel.

Susan's father, much-loved ex-Liberal minister Sir John Rossiter, died the only decent thing and died. Frank weakened and let Susan back in. Silly Frank.

Susan refused to leave at the end of the week. So Frank did the only decent thing, and hired security guards to keep out her friends. Susan hired security guards to keep out his.

Frank complained that Susan was making life "intolerable", as he toddled off for another game of tennis on his private grass court. Susan complained that he was being staved out — why, she had to send the help off to buy groceries for her!

Life is devilishly hard in the fast lane. But just as an adoring public was becoming frantic with concern, Frank and Susan's lawyers managed to arrive at a reconciliation. Frank and Susan were reconciled the very same day.

The whole episode shows just how cruel the risks are that a rugged entrepreneur like Frank takes to keep the economy moving for the rest of us. His company is thought to have incurred the biggest losses of any stockbroker firm in the world in the sharemarket crash. The poor boy has been reduced to squabbling over whether he gets a half share or a full share of a \$15 million hovel.

What a risk. What a couple. What a system.

## HAITI



## The people cancel a poll

ON SUNDAY 17 January the second attempted election in Haiti in two months failed. The first election was cancelled by the military, the second by the people.

The election in November was cancelled by the ruling military led by themselves, the despotic Duvalier dictatorship, rampaged through Haiti killing up to 90 people. The military then took over the organisation of



Frank Renouf: "Intolerable" life of playing tennis

the election from the CEP, an independent electoral council, and permitted several known Duvalierists to nominate. The opposition called for a boycott of the elections, with twelve of the previous nominees (including the most popular four) refusing to stand.

The day before the election a general strike closed down 80% of Port-au-Prince, the capital, in a country where if you don't work for a day you don't eat for a day.

The boycott was an unqualified success, with 90 to 95% of registered voters staying away from polling booths. As well as the massive turnout, the elections were rife with fraud. Many people were reported to have voted more than once and one person was seen giving out money with the ballot slips.

Leslie Manigat, the junta's candidate, has claimed victory with 50.39% of the vote. He has admitted "irregularities" in his election, but claims that this happens in all countries.

The Haitian economy relies heavily on US aid. The US reluctantly withdrew aid after the November fiasco and will now have a hard time justifying its resumption.

The Haitian people have been fighting for several years, first to rid themselves of the despotic Duvaliers, and since then for democracy. After the overwhelming success of the boycott and general strike, they are sure to keep up the fight.

## After Sydney, blacks are back on the march

THE TWO demonstrations in Sydney on January 26, as well as other marches around the country, have placed Aboriginal demands firmly back on the Australian political agenda.

Over 25,000 Aborigines from all states and their supporters took part in the main march to Sydney's Hyde Park. It was the biggest black rights march in Australian history, and its size amazed even the organisers.

An earlier march of 2500 militants set out from Redfern at 7 am to march to Lady Macquarie's Chair on the harbour, overlooking the first site of colonial settlement. Feeling was high, with continuous chants of "Land Rights" and "No More Hangings". Reflecting the new spirit of the movement, we broke through two separate blockades by police to get there.

In Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide, Australia Day and its lead-up saw marches by 500-1000 Aborigines and their supporters. In Melbourne, 500 marchers disrupted the Australia Day flag-raising, and then took the front of the Australia Day parade. In Canberra, 50 land rights protesters disrupted the Governor-General's early morning flag raising.

The demonstrations mark a stunning resurgence in Aboriginal struggle. In the late 1960's, a militant black movement demanded and got some concessions through marches and campaigning, culminating in the 1972 Tent Embassy outside Parliament. But from the mid-1970's, the political climate has changed, with struggles by workers and oppressed groups gaining less support. To rebuild a movement in such a climate is a major achievement.

The question now for Aborigines and their supporters is "Where next?" Politically, the movement is clear on its goals. The black services set up in the early 1970's were seen by many Aborigines as a move towards more control of their own affairs. The demand for land rights has become central to black struggles now, because it involves not just ownership of land but the control of all aspects of community life, and especially improved housing, health and education, with

the ultimate goal of self-management and self-determination.

How to achieve these goals is the contentious question. The Rev. Charles Harris told the big Hyde Park rally in Sydney that Bob Hawke could not ignore such an expression of support for black demands by so many people.

Unfortunately, he can and he will (as the peace movement has already discovered with Labor's response to its huge rallies). Hawke has already done all he intends to do with a few vague promises and \$1.9 million for the Royal Commission into black deaths in custody.

Yet an influential group of white supporters seems determined that the movement will repeat the mistakes of the peace movement, which made itself toothless in its search for respectability.

This group, dominated by various feminists and clergy, instigated a ban on socialist banners and paper-selling at the main Sydney rally, hoping to gain friendlier press coverage. The same group was extremely upset after a previous, highly successful land rights rally got "out of control" and drowned out a speech by Premier Barrie Unsworth outside Parliament, to the delight of most marchers.

Real gains can be made for black rights only through increasing militancy, and through determined efforts to get worker support for strategic union bans.

After all, the mining companies launched their vehement lobby against land rights in 1984 because of the threat to their profits that the demand poses. Only a bigger threat in the form of union action, will persuade them and their friends in the Labor government to concede.

Meanwhile, the movement's actions need to be as pointed and direct as possible. In Sydney

the march was originally intended to go on to the Opera House to confront Charles and Di. This didn't happen, and we missed a chance to place Aboriginal demands even more firmly on the international stage. As the second year of the march has begun, it has huge, it has no real target, as all the main ceremonies were in the morning.

The next major mobilisation will be in Brisbane for the



What's to celebrate? A Land Rights marcher "greets" the Tall Ships

opening of Expo, and others will follow in late May and mid-July.

These protests need clear targets and solidarity industrial action to build up their force, and they should press on until broken up by the police. The climate is changing for black struggle, and few of us have anything else to celebrate in Hawke's Australia in 1988.

— Carole Ferriter

## RACISM



## Perkins shows how not to go

STUPIDITY in the highest ranks of the public service is nothing new, but Charles Perkins' recent racist outburst has outshone anything we have seen for some time. Any Aborigine who stirs the racist in Australia is just asking for trouble.

Perkins led off with the standard racist line: Asians are not like us Australians; their presence stirs up racist feelings; they should be kept out.

To this he added his own twist. Asians, he said, are especially undesirable because they are particularly prone to criminal activities. (He did not say so, but he was referring to then-current newspaper reports about Vietnamese criminal gangs operating in Melbourne and Sydney.)

Two things are remarkable here. The first is Perkins' level of ignorance. Vietnamese have one of the lowest crime rates of any ethnic group in Australia —

well below their proportion in the total population. Secondly, even if they did have a disproportionately high crime rate, this would be no justification for political discrimination. Perkins knows this full well, for the simple reason that among the groups in Australia with the highest crime rates are Aborigines.

Activists, including Perkins in the days before he started earning a fat cat salary, have always argued that these figures had more to do with Aboriginal expropriation and oppression, and the racism of the courts and the cops. Perkins is on dangerous ground indeed when he starts making arguments about Asians that can be turned all too easily against the very people that he claims to represent.

If Perkins believes that he can advance the cause of his people by appealing to white racism, by attempting to divert it from Aborigines to Asians, he is seriously, and dangerously, wrong.

— Graham Willitt



Perkins: stirring racist currents

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ACT 2614.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne  
Mondays, 7.00  
Lincoln Hotel  
31 Cardigan St, Carlton

Sydney  
Wednesdays, 7.00  
Meiring Hotel (opposite)  
Bridge & George St, City

Brisbane  
Thursdays, 7.30 pm  
Phone 371 1114  
for location

Cannberra  
Thursdays, 6.00  
Basil Room,  
Workers' Club, Civic

## Get it together — in the neck

GUESS how the money saved by the abolition of the under-18 dole is being spent.

Some of it is going on a bizarre publicity campaign to advertise the CES, called "Get It Together".

Fans of comedian Vince Sorrenti will like the campaign. A glossy booklet has Sorrenti telling teenagers to "Hang in there at school", "Get your brain cells together", and "Look cool in the CES". That's groovy, but Sorrenti has no advice on dealing with high youth unemployment or the poor wages and conditions of those who do find a job.

The campaign is a result of Department of Employment, Education and Training policy changes. Less money is being spent on actually supporting the unemployed (ie the dole). Instead, there are training programs designed to fill skill shortages in industry, while the Sorrenti campaign subtly blames the unemployed for their own situation whilst promoting the CES.

The Department wants to justify the continued existence of the CES by increasing the number of vacancies that it is responsible for filling. Despite the blatant con-trick — there are no more actual jobs — the government can appear to be doing something about unemployment.

Job Clubs, due to start up in March, are part of this process. In an intensive three-week course, "job-ready" people will follow a closely supervised job-chasing program described as a mixture of Dale Carnegie and Alcoholics Anonymous. The CES will claim credit for all placements.

Only "suitable" people may attend a Club. The "unsuitable" will include those without the necessary skills and experience, the disabled, those lacking in motivation (read: the long term and thus demoralised unemployed), and those who don't speak English.

Until now, local CYSS groups have catered for some of these latter people's needs. While unable to do anything about the lack of jobs, CYSS groups have provided a focus for self-help activities for long-term unemployed youth.

Many young people have

become politicised in the process, and the government wants to stop this. By closing the most politicised CYSS groups and threatening others with loss of funding, Canberra hopes to orient them towards the "job-ready" and away from being drop-in centres for the "no-hopers".

There has been some resistance to this. At Collingwood CYSS in Melbourne, the workers arrived one day in December to find trucks ready to remove the furniture and assets. The workers set up a picket line, while the young people decided to occupy.

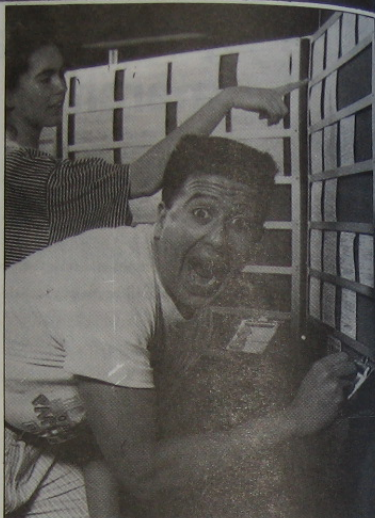
The picket and occupation lasted for five weeks over Christmas, with over 150 young people involved. Some were quite radicalised by the experience, and many of the young homeless involved have continued activity by joining squats.

While the unemployed are coming under further attack, employers are gaining from the new policies. The CES already provides a substantial recruitment service for some major employers, with local offices doing preliminary interviews and testing for Coles/New World and Alcoa, and for the State Electricity Commission in Victoria's Latrobe Valley. These companies save significantly on their own personnel sections.

Traineeship schemes are another racket of the Department of Employment. Trade unions have swallowed these, allowing young trainees' wages to be tied to rock-bottom rates while they receive a limited amount of formal training. Employers get to try out new workers for a fixed period, while the employees feel on trial and are less likely to complain. In the end, the "best" of them — those who would most likely have got jobs anyhow — get permanency, having worked 1-3 years on much lower wages.

We can expect more such schemes, in which business helps itself while ostensibly helping the unemployed. A new scheme in Britain shows how far it can go.

Under the London Compact, school children undertake to do all their homework, to come to school every day on time, and to



Groovy, but garbage: Vince Sorrenti "gets it together" at the CES

complete various projects. Those who qualify are placed at the top of the job queue with firms like Barclay's Bank and British Telecom.

In this way, companies get highly-disciplined workers for their existing jobs. The job ratrace is pushed back in time into the school room. Those who fail are again at fault.

No wonder Prince Charles has praised the scheme, saying it is a fine example of industry working alongside schools for the good of both. Like so much else on the unemployment front, it is a right royal rip-off.

— Ruth Wood

## TIME-CHARGING Phoney case from Telecom

TELECOM is at it again.

Already the subject of five times as many complaints to the Ombudsman as any other government instrumentality, it now has a new sword: time-charging for local phone calls.

A million dollar press campaign sets out to prove that consumers will benefit from its proposal to charge 16 cents for each four minutes. But as Victorian Consumer Affairs minister Peter Spjyker points out, just one 20-minute call or two 15-minute calls will wipe out

any saving made by keeping twenty other calls short. Most ordinary users will pay much more.

Telecom claims that business is overloading the phone system by using fax machines and computer "modems" for long periods, and that it cannot detect such calls.

Yet fax machines and "modems" must be Telecom approved, so Telecom can obviously have special charging signals incorporated into their design. But Telecom prefers to make the working class pay.

Telecom's proposal will particularly hurt pensioners, people with disabilities, the poor, the lonely, and anyone who has to ring a government department or business and is placed on "hold". A leaked Telecom report bluntly admits that low-income earners will be hard hit.

Telecom's only answer is that it will give some discounts to pensioners, and that it will make 008 (toll-reversed) lines more available to businesses and government departments. Big deal!

The best news is that the Telecom technicians union, the ATEA, is planning to stop the scheme. Its Queensland members did not even wait for the Federal union, they voted at a general meeting to black-ban the scheme immediately.

— Ken Stevens

## Israel: The new South Africa

THE POPULAR uprising which gripped the West Bank and Gaza in December and January marks a new stage in the Palestinian struggle.

With the failure of the Arab armies in 1967, radical young Palestinians looked to the guerrillas of the PLO to take on the Israeli state. The high point of that struggle was the virtual conquest of state power in parts of Lebanon, a base from which the PLO could launch operations inside the occupied territories.

Israel's invasion of Lebanon ended that phase — only to inaugurate a new and more hopeful stage of the struggle.

Israel hoped that clearing the PLO out of Lebanon would demoralise the people of the West Bank and Gaza and crush their resistance to Israeli occupation. Instead, the PLO's heroic battle during the siege of Beirut was an initial boost to Palestinian morale. Israel's humiliating pull-out from Lebanon was to follow, as it found it could not win an on-going guerrilla war with the local population.

The people of the occupied territories, for their part, responded to the end of PLO control of southern Lebanon by focussing on their own local issues and actions.

And they have plenty to fight about. Gaza, for example, is Israel's Soweto. The occupying forces have even placed meters on the wells to limit the use of water, thereby halving local agriculture. Gaza's inhabitants have been forced to become a migrant workforce for Israel itself.

PALESTINIANS in the occupied territories have adopted a range of tactics quite distinct from the traditional PLO options of diplomacy and the gun.

A network of community organisations has grown in number and strength. December's revolt, which surprised Israeli and foreign observers by its size and staying power, was not merely "spontaneous". Years of organising work had laid the basis.

Israeli efforts to deport Dr Mubarak Awad from Jerusalem pointed up the diversity of this work. Dr Awad directs the Palestinian Centre for Non-



Palestinian youths confront Israeli soldiers, hawk Yitzhak Rabin: the repression will go on

Violence. He was training activists in techniques of non-violent resistance.

Palestinian understanding of the strike weapon has also grown. On "Equality Day", June 24, a general strike shut not only schools and shops, the traditional components of many Middle Eastern "strikes", but also involved labourers to the extent that many Israeli companies were shut down, especially in the construction industry. "The strike proved to be a powerful weapon in our hands," said one Arab mayor.

Several events sparked off the latest unrest. Palestinian guerrillas struck several blows at the Israelis, the most spectacular being a hang glider attack on an army camp which killed six Israeli soldiers. Islamic fundamentalists killed a naval officer off the Lebanese coast, and an Israeli soldier died after his car hit a land mine in the "security zone" of southern Lebanon.

Such incidents showed Israel to be vulnerable. Then followed the Gaza traffic accident on December 9, in which several Arabs died. Angry street demonstrations mushroomed into a virtual uprising. Palestinians in Balata camp on the West Bank responded with demonstrations as well, and Israeli troops responded by shooting two women and a child. Their funeral became a mass protest rally.

BY DECEMBER 19, the revolt was under way everywhere.

Over 30,000 people marched in Rafah (Gaza) on the 18th, and next day East Jerusalem was gripped by street warfare, with

youths controlling the main Salah al-Din commercial streets for three hours.

The pre-Christmas unrest generalised to December 21. Palestinians inside Israel, long assumed by Israelis to be a passive force, joined in and showed their complete solidarity.

These events stunned Israeli public opinion. The army resorted to its traditional brutality, shooting people apparently at random as they left mosques and making some 1400 arrests. The army even invaded the main Gaza hospital and smashed X-ray and mnesia equipment before beating the nurses and harassing journalists.

For a time, the army appeared to have restored order, and Bethlehem had a quiet Christmas. But in January the demonstrations revived and this time produced a response amongst Israeli Jews. Over 25,000 supporters of the left-liberal Peace Now movement marched in Tel Aviv, demanding withdrawal from the occupied territories.

The liberal daily *Ha'aretz* commented on "the impossible attempt to impose foreign rule on a society with a national identity", while Foreign Minister Peres echoed sections of the Labor Party by raising the issue of a settlement with the Arabs, including some sort of West Bank/Gaza state.

THE PLO has made clear it is willing to settle along these lines, and the US, by voting against Israel in the UN, seems to be pressuring Israel in that direction.

But powerful reactionaries ranging from Ariel Sharon to the Labor Party's Yitzhak Rabin still argue for brutal repression. In the short run, that is what will happen.

A West Bank state would not solve the Palestinians' most pressing problems. Economically, it would depend on Israel. Israel, which would not tolerate a small Palestinian military presence in Lebanon, will hardly allow Yasser Arafat to establish a credible army in the West Bank and Gaza. Yet how independent would the state be without the ability to defend itself?

Ultimately, the existing Israeli state must be destroyed if the region's problems are to be solved. Indeed, even the old PLO formula of a binational democratic secular state, while answering the Palestinian's national aspirations, will have a huge underground of Palestinians and oriental Jews. Only a socialist state can provide a lasting solution.

All of these appear distant prospects today, and Palestinian activists' goals are understandably more immediate. Yet the last two months have shown that the Israeli state is not unshakable.

Israel depends increasingly on Arab labour these days. As the strike weapon becomes better established, the prospect of a class struggle against the state on the South African lines will become more attractive too.

— Richard Emerson



## CHEAP SHOTS

### He's Joh-king?

QUEENSLAND shire councillor Bill Roberts has a brown nose, and it's not due to sunburn.

Or Roberts is chairman of the South Burnett Local Authority association, which takes in Joh Bjelke-Petersen's town of Kingaroy. Roberts wants to rename the entire South Burnett region after the unlamented ex-premier. "Johborough" and "Bjelkeberg" are two of his proposed names.

But his most apt suggestion is "Johannesburg". Now that's a place that really knows how to rule with a 20 per cent minority ...

### Tanks a lot

IRAQI soldiers must be wondering if the seven-year Gulf War with Iran has been worth it after Iraq's latest trade deal. Baghdad has sold 150 captured Iranian tanks — back to Iran!

### So hard me, Doc

A BRITISH magistrate's court clerk discovered that witnesses had been swearing the oath on a copy of the St John's Ambulance Brigade manual. The evidence, the clerk said, sounded no dodgier than usual.

### Corporate hype

WHEN we talk about getting 'rid of waste under socialism, the drivell that goes on under the name of advertising and PR is one thing we have in mind.

Take the foyer of the Melbourne head office of chemicals multinational ICI. It recently featured a clock set 15 minutes fast, with the incredibly droll slogan that ICI was "ahead of its time".

Not surprisingly, this promotion caused a few

ulcers amongst executives who suddenly found they were late for meetings. So it's been replaced by a full length distorting mirror, with the equally witty slogan, "Have you bent yourself out of shape for a customer recently?"

Now ICI bosses just have trouble straightening their ties ...

### Land of the free

SIX MILLION Americans are now monitored at work by computer. Gives the phrase "screening an employee" a whole new dimension, doesn't it?

### Hari Curry

BRITISH industry must be in trouble. Leading retailers have taken to putting Japanese-sounding brand names on their electrical goods, in an ironic reversal of the postwar Japanese practice of labelling products "Made in Britain".

The ploy backedfire for leading retail chain Currys. They were fined \$10,000 under the Trade

Description Act for using the slogan "Japanese technology" made perfect" for their "Matsui" line of goods.

Worse was to follow. An ex-POW group complained that "Matsui" a trade mark devised for Curry's by a local agency, was in fact the name of a notorious Japanese war criminal. General Iwane Matsui was hanged after World War 2 for his role in the Rape of Nanking, in which 200,000 died.

### Eat the rich

THE bourgeoisie of Paris got indigestion last month when 200 young leftists seized their favourite restaurant, Maxim's, and converted it to a free cafe for the poor for a day.

Members of the Young Communists Movement, wearing party hats and throwing streamers, took over the elite eating-house owned by Pierre Cardin. The kitchen ground to a halt, and the regular clientele was driven out by the

### Whale of an idea

AN AMERICAN rightwing economist has come up with a great idea to save the whale — privatisation. John Majewski wants to sell off whale pods (herds) to the whaling nations, principally Iceland, Japan and South Korea. Each would attach radio transmitters to its own pods, allowing them to be tracked. It would be illegal to kill whales not on your own frequency.

Majewski's idea is being backed by the Institute of Economic Affairs, a rightwing thinktank which has also promoted privatisation of the Royal Family.



### Intrusion

Too bad, for sure. Let them eat cake ...

### What's in a name?

EVER wondered how public edifices get their names? The "grand staircase" at Carnegie Hall in New York is about to be named ... after the first person who "donates" \$500,000.

You haven't got \$500,000? No matter. You can have the service elevator named after you for a mere \$250,000.

### Clean work

ARMED class militancy starts young. Ballboys and ballgirls at the Australian Open, who earned a derisory \$6 a day, had their revenge on the tournament organisers. They threatened to go on strike unless they were given seats to watch the semi-finals and finals.

### Party games

BRITAIN'S Young Conservatives are "socially uninspiring people looking for a wife/husband". They give "mindless reactionary support for right wing politics".

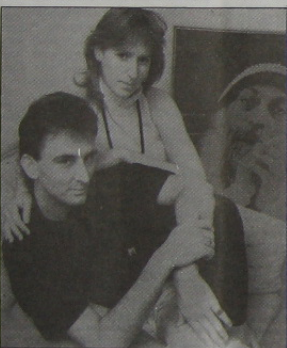
That is the considered judgement of *Marketing the Young Conservatives*, a paper by the Young Conservatives' own National Advisory Committee.

Not that British Labour can laugh. They've just had to pulp half a million 1988 membership cards, in having "accidentally" left

### Women's role

• WE don't expect a boyfriend to punch his girlfriend. Slap her once or twice but don't punch her.

— UK Judge Chajjés Garrayava to a man convicted of assaulting his girlfriend



Role and Warren: copped it from other cops

### May the force be with you

QUEENSLAND police are renowned as the most bigoted in Australia. It seems that not even their own members are safe from them.

Officers Terry Role and Jill Warren, who live together in Brisbane, are Raineeshis (Orange People). As a result, they are being persecuted by other cops, who have spread rumors about them being sexual exhibitionists, smeared Role as a radical, and threatened Role with transfer to remote Mount Isa.

Both have been forced off work for several months on stress-related illnesses. Neither likes to venture out of home any more, having been warned that they could be set up on fake charges. To protect themselves, they have installed video cameras in their home and they tape-record all incoming phone calls.

Question: When even Queensland cops fear being framed by their "colleagues", how safe are the rest of us ... ?

the nationalisation clause off their platform. Seems like Bob Hawke isn't the only one who has trouble remembering party policy.

### Minor's Club

FORGET the silver spoon. These days, the super-rich in France give their children credit cards.

Over 100,000 French upper-class families gave their offspring credit cards at Christmas. Three thousand new "kiddy cashpoints" have been set up to allow over-12s to withdraw up to \$400 at a time.

### Brute force

THOSE who think increased police intervention is an answer to domestic violence should talk to Walter Eassey, police policy advisor to the Association of London Authorities.

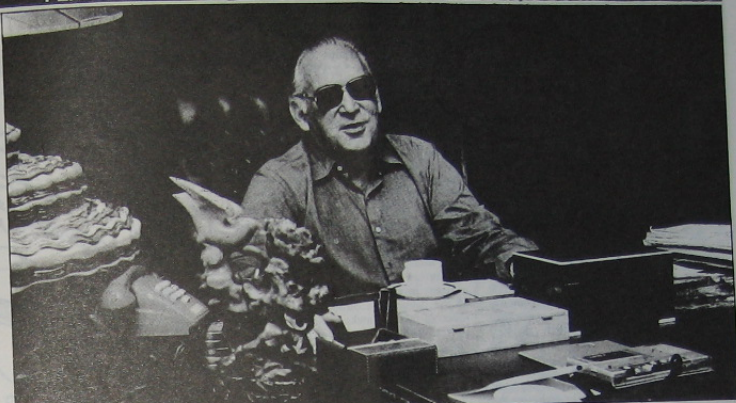
"One of the difficulties," he told *Cosmopolitan* magazine, "is that police officers come high on the list of habitual wife beaters."

"Women who are married to police officers are regular callers at women's refuges."

### Peace in our time

The United States will destroy 364 nuclear warheads under the much acclaimed INF treaty. Sounds great ... until you recall that it has deployed 1640 new nuclear warheads since appropriating SALT II in 1986.

## FEATURE



Sir Peter Abeles, boss of the world's biggest transport company: who's the multinational menace now?

# The new Aussie imperialists

**NATIONALISM** has been called the "socialism of fools". Certainly, it is a foolish orientation for socialists. Yet large sections of the left have always accepted it.

There always seems to be some foreign enemy for left nationalists to fear. For most of the postwar decades it has been "the Yanks". For a time in the seventies, we were told there was a threat to our country by "Soviet social imperialism". Then at the start of the eighties, it was the multinational corporations as a whole who were out to "turn Australia into a gun quarry".

These days, the bogey is the Japanese,

whose growing investment in this country has replaced US and British capital in the attentions of more and more leftists. One left paper went so far as to illustrate an article on Japanese property developers with a drawing of warships with the rising sun in the background, as if an invasion were imminent.

What all these fears have in common is the idea that foreign capital is more evil than the domestic variety, that Australia is some kind of victim of imperialism like the Philippines or El Salvador, and that the nation as a whole needs to be mobilised against the threat from outside.

But Australia has never been a victim of imperialism, despite its colonial past. And never was it less so than in the second half of the 1980s.

**IN APRIL 1986**, a financial journalist wrote about a "typical international takeover deal": "The seller was Australian, the buyer was British, the property was the seller's Spanish subsidiary, the firm handling the arrangement was still another nationality (American)."

Capitalism has long been a world system, but electronic communications and widespread deregulation of financial markets have recently added a new dimension. Capital flows more freely around the world than ever before, and rises in the sharemarket can whip around the globe in 24 hours. This much most people have learned from the television

news in recent months.

What is less understood is how well Australian capitalists have learned to operate in this new environment, taking over firms and building financial empires. A study by Cape Court investment bank has now revealed the striking truth.

The report estimates that investments by Australian companies in the United States would have reached \$US16 billion by the end of 1987. By contrast, American investment here was about \$9.4 billion in June 1986. Australian investment in America has been growing at a staggering 56 per cent a year, and is outstripping the US investment in this country.

It would seem that, as an LJ Hooker executive remarked last year, Australian capitalists are "beating the Yanks at their own game". And they're doing it in important areas: the media, financial services, property development, minerals and energy. Just the areas where our local nationalists get so worried about foreign control here at home!

The main investors are such well-known firms as BHP (which alone holds \$3715 million worth of investments in the US), News Corporation, the Bond Group, LJ Hooker, and the Bell Group. But to get a feel for the sheer sweep of the process, let's consider some specific examples.

Take Hooker Corporation. Not only has its high-flying chief George Herscu acquired a national real estate chain from Merrill Lynch; not only is he building mega-shopping malls in Atlanta, Denver, Tampa and Cincinnati; not only has he bought two national retail chains to occupy the shops in the malls once they're built. Hooker



Dictator Pinochet and his Aussie mate: he taps the phones, Bond taps the profits

executive Paul Carter says the profits from selling the first two malls will be "immense".

Then there is James Hardie, which now has about 28 per cent of its assets in America and expects up to 23 per cent of its profits for the current year to come from there. And Westfield Holdings, which is set to buy seven American shopping centres worth \$850 million. And Dick Pratt, who has bought a \$272 million paper board mill in Georgia and some Californian banks. Not to mention Elders, which is not only moving into the North American beer market, but has purchased a big grain storage and trading company and is now the 14th largest player in that field.

Then there is Fairfax, which has acquired *M*s magazine and installed Ann Summers as editor.

**BRITAIN** is another place where the tide of financial "imperialism" has turned in favour of the former colonials. Australian investment there more than doubled between 1984 and 1985 and again the following year.

Australians are buying up the banks, with Kerry Packer and Larry Adler moving in on Hill Samuel, and the NAB purchasing the Clydesdale bank. Fosters' assault on the British brewing market is probably well known, but less publicised is AFP's control of the office equipment firm Gestetner.

The British and American cases are the most important, but they are part of a push by Australian capital into all corners of the globe. Alan Bond will be running Chile's telephone system, the real estate firm Baillieu Knight Frank has as many offices abroad as in this country. Monier is invading the Japanese market through

Nippon Monier — and Dial-a-Dino Pizza plans to have 14 or 15 outlets in Japan within a year.

An Aussie imperialist who deserves a special mention is Sir Peter Abeles. On visiting the Melbourne brewery drivers' picket line in 1986, I was haunted by a memory. Years earlier I had visited a similar picket in Los Angeles — staged by American truck drivers who had been sacked by Sir Peter's American operations.

Today his TNT empire is the world's biggest transport operation, with a network linking 60 countries. Two thirds of its revenue, close to \$3 billion annually, comes from overseas operations. (Abeles is not personally greedy, though. He told a reporter last year, "I've been driving the same Rolls for 14 years.")

Why are Australian firms moving into overseas investments? The depressed state of the domestic economy under Fraser, followed by the Hawke government's drive to restrict the buying power of Australian workers, has meant that successful companies are outgrowing the local market. Growth into other national markets allows them to diversify risk as well as opportunities.

At the same time, the recent sharemarket boom made finance more freely available, but our sharemarket speculators began to run out of local targets. They began finding them overseas. The stock exchange crash has dampened this for now, but the experts think the lull will be temporary.

**FOR THE majority of the Australian left, who are hostile to foreign capital because it is foreign, this Australian investment push is full of ironies. What attitude will they take to it?**

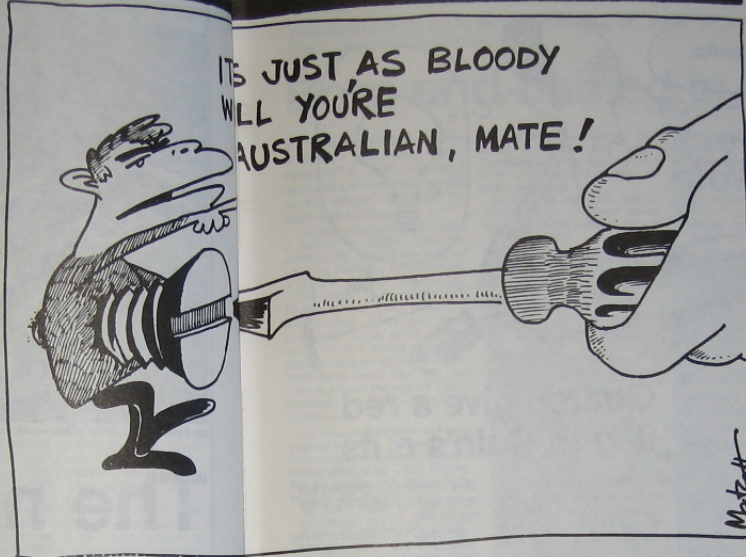
If foreign control is bad in Australia, surely it is bad in America and Britain too? Certainly the nationalists in those countries think so. When the NAB took over Clydesdale bank, Scottish nationalists were outraged. They said that the "passing of control to a foreign owner was a cause of concern, and a Scottish consortium buy-out would have been preferable."

And I guess Kerry Packer and John Elliott would have been among the pet hates of Red Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council, which warned of "increased domination of Britain by multinational companies" — as if Britain had not invented the multinational company!

If Australian capital is somehow preferable to that of other nations, surely we should be telling these protesters they don't know their luck. Alternately, if their dislike of Packer or the NAB is correct, what basis have we for preferring our domestic exploiters to those of other lands?

Of course, you can waffle on about "economic independence for all countries". But that could only mean barriers to any major capital flows between nations. As any high school economics student knows, that would mean plunging living standards and soaring unemployment. It simply won't happen. You can't sweep back the tide of capitalist development like that, not without abolishing capitalism itself.

**SO IT** is likely that foreign investment in Australia will continue to rise, and given the strength of Japan's economy and currency, we can expect Japanese firms to



take the lead. Just what harm has foreign investment ever done to this country?

The flow of foreign capital into Australia took the form of direct investment in the immediate postwar period. In order to get around the tariff barrier erected by Labor and Liberal governments, General Motors and Ford, for example, built car factories.

Once a core of foreign enterprises was established, further investment was less direct, taking the form of equity participation (buying shares) in enterprises already established here, whether Australian or foreign-owned. Most recently, foreign equity has been supplanted more and more by lending. That is a problem, mainly because not enough of the money has been invested productively. But such decisions are mostly not made by the lenders. They are the fault of domestic borrowers.

The net result of decades of foreign investment is not a country bled dry, as might happen in the third world. The multinationals have done their share of exploiting, of course, but no more so than BHP or Elders. The country is richer for its car factories. You might say the credit for creating these riches should go to the workers and not the bosses. And that is true, but it is just as true of Four 'N' Twenty Pies with its Australian management.

Equally important, since Australia has usually run a trade deficit, this country's capital inflow is the only way the country has been able to maintain a high level of consumption and still balance its national account. Put baldly, foreign capital has financed a higher standard of living for Australians, including workers, than would otherwise have been possible.

**THE CURRENT** worries about the Japanese have revived some other issues about foreign capital.

In his courageous speech to the court after being jailed last September, BLF organiser John Cummins spoke of the "foreign industrial relations methods" employed by Japanese developers who were party to the legal action against him. Much as we admired Cummins' stand, we are forced to disagree with him here.

We also have to disagree with the three left parties, who issued a statement after the police raid on the BLF attaching special blame to Japanese companies, who were said to be "pouring money into Victoria".

There is nothing foreign about attacks on unions, whether through civil legal actions (as at Dollar Sweats), lockouts (like those used by Lindsay Fox) or sackings (as at Robe River, where Charles Copeman's Japanese partners are said to have been very nervous about his union-bashing methods). They are a product of capitalist crisis. To blame them on foreigners inevitably distracts workers' attention from the real cause.

Japanese developers are not pouring money into Victoria, which if anything is a shame because it would create jobs for building workers and put unions like the BLF in a stronger bargaining position. The bulk of Japanese investment is, in reality, in tourist meccas further north.

What's more, the inflow of yen is not so great anyway. Much has been made of a *Financial Review* report estimating the Japanese "flood" at over \$8 billion. But the *Financial Review's* figures are misleading. They are using estimated final sale prices, of

which only a certain percentage is profit. The developers then have to share this with their bankers (largely domestic financiers).

And in most of the projects, the Japanese are partners with domestic developers. Very little of the capital is being brought into Australia from outside, and the bulk of the profits will probably stay here.

The real dimensions of the Japanese buying "spre" were made clear by Jeremy Alpe, managing director of the major real estate firm Jones Lang Wootton in October: "I would estimate perhaps only \$300 million to \$400 million has so far been invested by Japanese and perhaps another \$500 million from New Zealand".

Oddly enough, no one on the left is worried about the Kiwis!

**NATIONALISM** is foolish, and there is nothing socialist about it.

The growing internationalisation of the world economy does, however, remind us of a quite different perspective which was once understood to be the core of socialism. It was put sharply by Lenin in 1914: "Developed capitalism, in bringing closer drawn into commercial intercourse, causing them to intermingle to an increasing degree, brings the antagonism between the internationally united capital and the international working class movement into the forefront."

It is time that class antagonism was brought into the forefront once again. So the capitalist class becomes ever more clearly international, the workers of all countries must unite too. Their enemies, as always, will be bosses both domestic and foreign.

— 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**

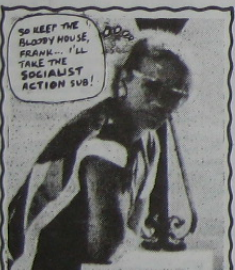
We are internationalists. The working class exists in all countries, and the struggle for socialism knows no national barriers. A socialist revolution cannot survive within a single country. It must be spread to other countries or it will fail. For these reasons we are for building a world-wide movement,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

**Liberation from Oppression**

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

**Socialist Action**

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



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Conference

SOCIALIST Action members and supporters gathered at Wandin, outside Melbourne, on the Australia Day weekend for our third annual conference and summer school.

Our conference began with reports from our branches and a frank discussion of their activities and problems. Then followed an assessment of our relations with other leftwing groups.

In an absorbing session, we drafted a more detailed position on the urgent question of Aboriginal land rights, debating contentious points such as black nationhood.

In the "political report" session we looked at the depressed state of industrial and political struggle and the economic outlook for world capitalism. While there is always enough class conflict to keep a small organisation like Socialist Action active, it is crucial to understand the political terrain in which we are operating.

The final major session looked at our magazine — its political content, and also various production problems: the impact of impending staff changes, the development of more writers outside Melbourne, and the possibility of moving to computerised publication.

Summer school

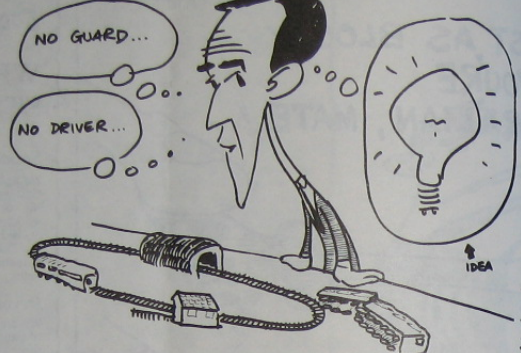
WITH OUR conference over, it was on to the more relaxed talks and discussions of our summer school.

The talks covered a wide field. On the contemporary side, they ranged from the Pilsara to Palestine. For those of a more historical bent, two French revolutions (1789 and 1968) were looked at, along with the Communist Manifesto, Sylvia Pankhurst and Glasgow revolutionary Harry McShane.

Social highlight was the now-traditional trivia quiz. Once again, this was a hilarious event, with the judges' decision definitely not being final, thanks to the judges themselves introducing a fiendish challenge system.

Only dampener on the weekend was Melbourne's predictably unpredictable weather, which ranged from halcyon to blizzard. Our comrades headed off for the various Australia Day demos, somewhat relieved that our Winter School on the Queen's Birthday weekend is held under the more reliable climate of sunny Brisbane.

**SUBSCRIBE to Socialist Action**



**THE FINAL** outcome of Melbourne's pre-Christmas train strike is still unclear, as suburban rail guards battle the Cain government's efforts to wipe out their jobs.

The dispute dates back to November 1985, when an abhor first announced cutbacks. But confrontation only began last December 8, when management attempted a trial of driver-only operated trains, the first step in abolishing guards' jobs.

The guards were prepared for this move. At workplace meetings, they had banned all drivers-only train, current regulations still required a guard for it, so they had some leverage.

As further precautions, they rostered their shop stewards onto the trial train and voted that in case of any stand-downs, one out meant all out.

When management ordered the trial to begin, the guard on duty refused to run the train. He was stood down and the rest of the guards walked off, leaving the system in chaos.

The Australian Railways Union patched up a deal with management for the guards to return that night with full pay. Next morning, the railway bureaucrats reneged and refused to pay the workers. At a stopwork meeting, the guards were in a conciliatory mood. They were prepared to go to work and talk to management, but they wanted their pay. They were adamant that if there was no pay, they would go out for the next four days.

Management knocked them back, so the guards remained out. In a show of strength, they stayed out for 12 days — the longest rail strike in 37 years.

The guards were angry, but

Guards give a red flag to Cain's cuts

they were also confident. They had recently won a dispute over the provision of two-way radios, and they knew their jobs were essential to safety. As one guard said, "This fight is not just over our jobs. It's about the type of service provided for those that use and pay for it."

This also meant considerable public support. News reports of retailers losing millions of dollars confirmed the guards' sense of power.

Rank and file assertiveness was strong. At meetings, the guards consistently overturned official attempts to get them back to work. They put out a strike bulletin, and some went to tram and bus depots trying to build the dispute. Guards regularly went to the negotiations and bound their delegates (but not the officials) before the meetings with management.

Despite all of this, the guards were forced back to work. With no strike fund, they were running out of money. Once Christmas was over, their effect on retailers would be less, and the government showed no sign of backing down.

In the end, a rank and file motion to return to work was carried. Militants had been unable to shake off the union officials' stranglehold.

The officials were content with a passive motion of support from other transport unions, and ignored rank and file motions to set up a strike fund and mobilise other workers. Despite their control over their

shop stewards, the members had no way of forcing their officials to toe the line.

Since the return to work, union officials have regained total control and undermined the guards' stand. Within a couple of days, they called a workplace meeting. Unlike a stopwork meeting, guards could only attend if they were off duty or between trains. Officials pushed through a motion lifting the ban on the trials.

The officials' only proposals for the future are a pointless publicity campaign (the last one was a flop) and a "job redesign" exercise.

Under the guise of job redesign, union leaders are trying to persuade the guards to admit that their current jobs are unnecessary. Yet even management admitted during the dispute that there was no real basis for chopping the guards' jobs — it was simply easier to cut.

Not surprisingly, many guards are becoming demoralised. Absenteeism has soared and resignations are coming in at one a day. But rank and file militants have responded by forming a "defence of guards" committee to prepare for future action.

With union leaders coniving in cutting jobs, guards face an uphill battle in coming months. They will need more of December's sort of action, and the active support of other public transport workers, if they are to keep their jobs.

— Liz Ross

Was Australia meant to be the Final Solution to England's class war, asks MICHAEL MILES of Britain's Socialist Worker.

Born and bathed in blood

IN 1788, on 26 January, eleven British merchant ships dumped a few hundred miserable and unwanted people on the eastern shore of the Australian continent.

Two hundred years later the world is invited to celebrate this sad ceremony by making international whoopee. Australia, we are assured, is 200 years old, and it's wonderful. The human cargo on this First Fleet didn't see much reason for celebrating. They had been condemned to rot in the furthest corner of the known world for desperate and usually trivial crimes. They didn't realise that they were there to prepare the way for Rupert Murdoch, Castlemaine XXXX and Neighbours.

All in all the foundation and early years of Australia represent one of the more glorious episodes in the unfolding glory of the British Empire. It is the familiar story of racism, brutality and murder.

In fact, Australia had been "discovered" in 1770, when Captain Cook stumbled into Botany Bay. (Aborigine tribes had discovered Australia at least 30,000 years earlier, but they were black so they don't figure in imperial history, just its body count.)

Cook's new discovery was considered such an important addition to the empire that not a single ship went there for the next 18 years. But in 1787 Australia was discovered again, this time by the simple-minded criminologists of the British ruling class. The upper classes were in one of their periodic panics about law and order.

The early industrial revolution, was producing social convulsions. Unemployment and hunger were rampant, and these in turn produced petty crime. But the "proletarian classes" were convinced that the "new lawlessness" was the evil work of the "criminal classes" (they seemed to think that "criminal classes" produced crime, rather like potters produced pots).

Historically the British ruling class didn't imprison its social problems, it hanged them. In 1788 there were 220 capital offences—ranging from stealing goods worth more than 40 shillings to impersonating an Egyptian (I kid you not). Almost all these hanging offences were crimes against property (murder was classified as a misdemeanour until 1803).

But the hangman could not cope with the new social tensions. Nor could the prisons. There were very few prisons, all of them medieval relics and half of them privately owned and run for profit (His Grace, the Bishop of Ely was the proud owner of a jail, although he sold it).

The jails were soon overcrowded

(even by eighteenth century standards) and prison riots began. Something had to be done, and it had to be done quickly, cheaply and totally ruthlessly. So Australia was born, and the "felons" from the lower classes were sent 15,800 nautical miles to rot and die there.

Chartists, trade unionists (most famously the Tolpuddle Martyrs) and Irish rebels. Forty thousand Irish men and women were taken to Australia. So—with a savage irony—were over 300 South African blacks who resisted white supremacy in their country.

Transportation was deliberately

expanded so more prisoners were used as slaves (or "assigned") labour. Sometimes this made life more bearable. Sometimes not. But the British state, facing mounting social unrest in the 1830s and 40s, determined to make sure that life, especially on the penal col-



Fantasy for the folks back home: An English artist's sanitised view of the first settlement

There were 736 new "Australians" on the First Fleet, 48 having died at sea. There were men, women and children; all were poor and all of them had offended against the great god of private property. The oldest was Dorothy Handland at 82 (a year later she hanged herself to become Australia's first suicide). Thomas Howall from Stafford was exiled for 14 years for stealing a dead hen valued at two pence. The youngest exile was John Hudson. His supreme majesty the British state condemned him for stealing old clothes. He was nine years old.

Over the next 90 years the British state sent 162,000 men, women and children to Australia: over 80 per cent for crimes against property. Eight hundred and twenty five shiploads of the "excitable classes" were dumped in the birdseye states. Although the majority of these exiles were not political prisoners, many were. Australia was Britain's Gulag. Generations of working class radicals and militants were despatched to Botany Bay.

Captain Swing rotters, Ludite machine breakers, Scottish radical churchmen (the Scottish Railway)

made as harsh as possible. If a "felon" survived the journey lasting up to 300 days, chained in a stinking dark deck (and on the Second world war ashore in Australia to a life she came ashore in Australia to a life of hunger, brutality and squalor.

A Scots prisoner, Thomas Walling of Dumfries, wrote: "I have seen much wanton cruelty practised on poor wretches without the least colour of justice, what may I not reasonably infer? French Bastille nor Spanish Inquisition could not centre more of horrors."

Or, as Robert Hughes says in his fine book, *The Fatal Shore*: "Australia was a frontier society based on slave labour and run by the threat of extreme violence."

A convict poet put it this way: "For night and day the irons clang and like poor galley slaves We toil, and toil and when we die must fill unhonoured graves." Australian poetry was to improve, but the cruelty did not. Convicts were used as slave labour, and were offered free-in-gangs-of-ten-to be used as "gentleman farmer" who would emigrate.

ones like Marquette Harbour, Van Diemens Land and Norfolk Island, became even grimmer. Transportation could be purgatory, and usually was. On Norfolk Island and Van Diemens Land, it was hell, always. Here the British Empire refined barbarity into an art form.

Public floggings were totally commonplace. Alexander Harris wrote in 1820: "Flogging in this country is such a common thing that nobody thinks anything of it". Unless, of course, you are the one being flogged.

One prisoner, Joseph Mansbury, was given over 2,000 lashes in less than three years. This is a con that temporary description: "His back appeared quite bare like two bones were exposed looking like two pointed ivory horns. It was with extreme difficulty that we could find any support to me that next time see suggested to me that next time we had better do it on the soles of his feet."

Alexander Harris described another flogging: "I saw a man walk

across the yard with blood that had run up from his lacerated flesh squashing out of his shoes with every step he took. The dog was licking the blood off the triangles and was carrying away great pieces of human flesh that the lash had scattered around the ground.

As the exiled Charles John Frost recalled, the "cat" used in Australia was even more savage than usual with "eighty one knots cutting the flesh as if a saw had been used". Frost also noted how much the British officer class enjoyed watching these punishments, especially the flogging of women. Women were offered more lenient thrashings if they were lashed naked to the waist.

This justice was handed out without even the pretence of anything so nasty pambly as a fair trial. Thomas Cook (no relation) wrote: "The mode of a trial was a mere mockery of justice: the officer would not even stay one moment to enquire into the merits of the charges, but would sit on his horse and sentence 14 or 15 men standing a distance away to some 50 or 100 lashes each."

But don't think that torture was all as mundane as arbitrary floggings. The British officer class made a sterling contribution to the art of torture, like the tube gag, a revival of crucifixion; the "scavenger's daughter" and the water pit torture.

How many men, women and children were killed will never be known. The first man, Thomas Barrett, was hanged a few weeks after the First Fleet landed. His crime was to steal some dried peas. He was 17 years old.

One officious governor, John Price, publicly executed 17 men in one day. A clergyman, Reverend Carvoso, helped 14 men prepare to meet their judicial maker in a period of 30 hours.

What is known is that many prisoners went to their death willingly, even jubilantly; because it represented an escape from a life worse than death. The British officers in Australia could have taught General Pinochet a thing or two.

But even Pinochet might have recoiled from the justice reserved for Charles Anderson. Anderson was an orphan who joined the Royal Navy at nine. He was wounded in the Napoleonic Wars and left with brain damage.

Discharged from the navy, he was sent to Australia for breaking shop windows. He was 18.

It was Anderson's justice to be isolated from the other prisoners on a rock in Sydney Harbour.

Robert Hughes describes how "he received a total of 1,500 lashes for such 'offences' as 'looking round from his work at a steamer in the river'. He spent two years tethered to a chain on the rock, naked and sun-blackened. His only shelter was a coffin-shaped cavity hewn out of the sandstone; at night

he would lie down in it and waders would bolt a wooden lid pierced with air holes, over him till morning.

"His food was put on the rock and pushed at him with a pole like a wild beast's rations. Prisoners were forbidden to talk to him on pain of a flogging. The welts and gouges torn in his back by the cat never healed and were infested with maggots.

"He stank of putrefaction and Sydney colonists found it amusing to row up to his rock, pitch cricks and offal at him and watch him eat."

Anderson is as much a part of Australian history as Don Bradman. The extinct Tasmanian

aborigines were every bit as Australian as Crocodile Dundee, but it won't be these Australians, or their Australia, that will be drowned in the froth of Fosters later on 26 January.

But maybe, just maybe, there is something to celebrate about Australia's ridiculous birthday party. Robert Hughes says somewhere in his book that the real aim of Australia and transportation "was less to punish individual crimes than to uproot an enemy class from the social fabric".

It was intended to be the Final Solution in the class war. So perhaps that's something to drink to—the ruling class's failure. After all, the enemy class is still here. Aren't we?

Bicentenary Quiz

IF BOB HAD BEEN THERE 100 YEARS AGO... WHAT UNIFORM WOULD HE HAVE WORN? STICK BOB'S HEAD WHERE IT FITS...



PREVIEW

A people's history of Oz

AT THIS sickening moment of national self-congratulation, *A People's History of Australia since 1788* is a four-volume work that explodes the nationalist myth-making of most histories of Australia.

Edited by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, it has seventy contributors, each writing about a particular theme over about 200 years, such as Food, Health, Gambling, Homosexuality, Radicalism, the Environment, the Women's Movement, and so on.

Inequality is a dominant theme in this history. Although

inequality has weighed most heavily upon the working class, it has many other facets.

Serious social inequalities are also based on gender, race or ethnicity, and age. Half of the Australian population owns ninety-two per cent of the country's wealth. The other half who have to get by with only eight per cent includes disproportionate numbers of women, Aborigines, certain ethnic groups, old people and children, along with members of the "traditional" working class.

The people about whom and for whom this history has been put together are predominantly of the working class but not exclusively so. They are the vast majority of Australians who, on balance, have had the pattern of social relations weighed against them.

*A People's History* also

believes that people are not powerless victims of their position; they are able to change or at least improve their condition. They have 'agency', and their attempts to assert themselves against the dominant class have been a major force in shaping Australian society.

It is important to recognize that people have mobilised collectively with some success. Among other things, they have bettered their working and living conditions, induced governments to withdraw from unpopular wars and achieved legal equality for women.

But here, too, *A People's History* is critical. Many popular movements have petered out after making only token gains; others have come to act as power bases for self-interested cliques. When it comes to achieving social justice,

some of the popular movements of the past are now part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Readers should find in *A People's History* some ideas that suggest new ways of exploring the past, comprehending the present, and making the future.

The first volume, "decentralisation of independence", and proclaimed themselves the "National Assembly". The nobles' revolt had triggered a bourgeois revolt.

— Anna Wolkenhaar

ANOTHER Bicentenary is approaching. But don't cringe.

The French Revolution, which began in 1789, destroyed a regime which deserved to go.

Pre-revolutionary France's First and Second "Estates" — 250,000 nobles and 143,000 clergy — lived on the backs of 22 million peasants. Fully 80% of peasant income went as taxes to the Crown, tithes to the Church, and rent and feudal dues to the nobles.

The peasants had often revolted, and by the 1780s were ready to do so again. This time, however, the urban sections of the "Third Estate" were also in ferment.

In the cracks of the feudal economy a class of merchants, bankers and manufacturers had developed — the bourgeoisie. They had great wealth but little political power.

The nobles' internal tariffs and monopolies of production on the manor held back their economic ambitions. The biggest noble of all, King Louis XVI, had also exasperated the bourgeoisie by bankrupting France in backing America's war of independence against Britain.

Louis tried to recoup these losses by increasing taxation upon the First and Second Estates. The nobles insisted that if he wanted more, he had to get it from the Third Estate.

Normally this is good advice to a king or a King. But the peasants and urban workers were already grossly overtaxed. The trade crises and bad harvests of the 1780s had made matters worse. Peasant uprisings against landlords and tax collectors increased throughout 1788.

TO BREAK THE deadlock, Louis called a meeting in 1789 of representatives of the three estates.

The Third Estate's representatives were mostly bourgeois. They soon made their own "declaration of independence" and proclaimed themselves the "National Assembly". The nobles' revolt had triggered a bourgeois revolt.

The bourgeoisie revolt had an unforeseen consequence too — the revolt of the urban workers.

This class, comprising 2.5 million artisans, tradesmen, small shopkeepers and wage-earners, were called the "sans-culottes", or "trouserless ones". Its leaders were dubbed by their enemies as "enragés", or "madmen".

Over 50% of their income went on bread. As they were not collected in large workplaces like modern workers, they organised in their residential districts and agitated mainly for cheaper bread.

1789: France's unfinished revolution



Time and again they kicked the revolution forward.

Louis planned a pre-emptive strike against the new assembly. The sans culottes got wind of this, and two days of demonstrations culminated in the storming of the Bastille, the King's prison, on July 14, 1789. The same week saw thousands of "peasant Bastilles", as nobles' chateaux across France were sacked. Louis backed off and undertook to become a constitutional monarch.

The Assembly, happy with mere promises, began a long debate about how much power he should retain. The sans culottes, however, acted to gain some real constitutional guarantees.

ON OCTOBER 5, 1789, a young woman, hanging a drum marching through the working class districts chanting "We want bread". She collected a huge crowd, mainly poor women, who marched 17 miles to Louis's palace at Versailles.

Louis could only disperse this

Prussia and Britain invaded, each promising to restore the old regime.

Only the Jacobins were prepared to mobilise the sans culottes in defence of the revolution. They organised volunteer armies which defeated the invasion in September 1792.

This victory saved the revolution, finished the monarchy, and brought to power the Jacobins and their best known leader, Robespierre.

History books often attribute Robespierre's power to his control of "the mob". But the sans culottes had their own mind. They kept fighting for cheaper, regular supplies of bread, and raided the stores of speculators. Robespierre lamented:

"When the people rise up, can it not be for a cause worthy of them? Do they have to concern themselves with wretched groceries all the time?"

IN SEPTEMBER 1793 the sans culottes pushed the revolution to its highest point.

Through weeks of demonstrating, they forced the Jacobins to declare a price limit on several basic necessities.

This same month, the Terror began. It first attacked monarchists, but soon turned on the sans culottes. The Jacobins, having used the sans culottes to defeat the Gironde, could no longer restrain their class hatred for them.

By now, though, France was clear of foreign armies. The rest of the bourgeoisie no longer tolerated the Jacobins. In July 1793, Robespierre was overthrown and executed. A White Terror followed, continuing the attacks on the sans culottes which the Jacobins had begun.

The sans culottes still fought for food, but were brutally repressed. 1795 was a year of military victories and mass starvation. The revolution was over.

In the balance sheet, the bourgeoisie did well. They gained a lot of property from the clergy and nobles.

The sans culottes had saved the constitutional regime by storming the Bastille and returning the King to Paris. They had saved the republic by crushing the royalists and driving out the invading armies.

The bourgeoisie was not grateful. Memories of the sans culottes have disturbed their sleep ever since.

The sans culottes wanted the revolution to go further — to real material quality, not just formal legal equality.

Socialists today still do. The French Revolution isn't over yet.

— Eric Petersen

## SOCIALIST STANDPOINTS

IT IS easy to take our natural environment for granted. The Earth is, after all, a pretty big place (510,000,000 square kilometres) and fairly old (46,000,000,000 years, give or take an aeon or two).

These sorts of figures are so incomprehensible to most people, unless they happen to work with military budgets, that nature can appear to be enormously resilient, infinitely bountiful and virtually indestructible. It wasn't until the 1960s, with the birth of an environmental movement, that this view was questioned.

The environmental movement locates the cause of the environmental crisis in the conflict between humanity and nature. Industrial-based economic growth, whether capitalist or socialist, they say, is the problem.

Rejecting the long term strategy of working class revolution, environmentalists seek to reform the capitalist system or to change individuals' lifestyles. They look for immediate parliamentary or personal solutions.

This approach, however, fails to recognise that under capitalism only one thing matters — profit — and anything which infringes this, including pollution control, will be opposed. Marxists believe that only the working class has the power to hit the capitalist class' profit (temporarily through strikes, permanently through revolution) and thus protect the environment.

This rarely cuts much ice with environmentalists, who point to what they see as the deep freeze of socialism's materialist growth ideology and union struggles for material gains.

The Marxist aim of material growth, however, poses minimal ecological problems. There is substantial room for more economic growth under socialism with the elimination of waste production (armaments and other junk), use of renewable energy sources, and an end to unemployment and the alienation of millions of workers.

Nevertheless, an interpretation of 'mastering' nature in the (capitalist) sense of domineering and wanton plunder could linger to a degree under socialism, long enough to get the balance between people and nature damagingly out of whack.

**F**ORTUNATELY, there are powerful reasons why this is unlikely.



Anti-logging demo, ruined German forest: can socialism do better?

## How green will the socialist garden grow?

When the world belongs to the non-exploiting class, we will, unlike profiteering capitalists, be able to 'afford' environmental protection. We will be able to realise the potential for harmony between human needs and preservation of natural resources. It is not automatic that the working class in power will immediately do so, but it can be argued for in the genuinely mass democratic decision-making organs of workers' control.

And such an argument is a hot favourite to win. Workers have fought for the environment when they have been at their most militant in 'materialist' wages struggles (for example the BLF's green bans). When Solidarity was flourishing in Poland, local environmentalists were at last able to force the closure of a polluting aluminium

smelter. When workers are fully in control and aware that, as Marx put it, *'the original sources of all wealth are the labourer and the soil'*, the possibilities for material improvements and ecological well-being will advance together.

### **B**UT JUST HOW 'green' will the socialist garden grow?

The role of animals in the garden, for example, will generate debate. Whales will be saved, but will meat-eating, animal experiments and other allegedly 'necessary' uses of animals for human need or entertainment disappear under socialism? Animal liberation sets free a can of worms (so to speak) even now. It will continue to do so in the socialist future.

Another debate could be over how many people the socialist

garden can support. Marxists have long been sparring with Thomas Malthus, an eighteenth century economist and parson, and his idea that over-population places too much stress on resources and is the cause of poverty and starvation. It gets an airing today as the explanation for the spread of deserts and famine in poor countries, blaming the invariably non-victim victims for the way that, under capitalism, food is produced and distributed not for need but for profit.

Malthus developed his theory to counter the radical ideas of the French Revolution. Marx attacked it as *"a libel on the human race"*. Engels savaged it as a *"vile, infamous theory... a hideous blasphemy against nature and mankind"*. They were absolutely right to do so.

But Engels was writing in 1844 when 'overpopulation' was scientifically absurd *"so long as there is enough waste land in the valley of the Mississippi for the whole population of Europe to be transplanted there"*. Population has soared since 1844, however, and it will double in the next hundred years and increase faster after that. It can not be denied, therefore, that population and its effect on resources will never need to be considered in how a socialist society manages its natural resources.

**SO THERE are, for the far future, some uncertain issues. What we can be certain about, if we are ever to reach that future, is that the current ecological crisis makes socialism more necessary and urgent.**

The revolutionary left has not always been quick out of the blocks on environmental issues. Marx never had to worry about acid rain, holes in the ozone layer or the 'greenhouse effect'. He could say little about a non-existent ecological crisis in the nineteenth century.

What Marx did, however, have to say on the relationship between people and their environment — the 'subordination of nature to man', the 'harnessing of the earth's resources', the building of a communist society based on 'material abundance' — is sometimes applied in a narrow and over-literal way by the revolutionary left to our altered environment today.

**(This to borrow a baseball analogy) has allowed the Greens to steal a base on us. But it is easy, without Marxist working class politics, to get lost in the green outfield. The home plate is still red.**

— Phil Shannon

## REVIEWS

# A gay in the life of Joe Orton

**PRICK Up Your Ears** is a film about a failed marriage. Only the fact that both partners are men makes the story exceptional.

Joe Orton had it all. Between 1963 and 1967 he rose from obscurity to be the best and brightest young playwright in Britain. His brilliant and satirical comedies, poking fun at stuffy middle-class morals, packed out the theatres. Critics raved and the Beatles clamoured for him to write their next film. He even started to make money.

Beside Orton stood his lover of 15 years, Kenneth Halliwell. Halliwell had fancied himself as an actor, then a novelist, then a playwright and failed at all of them.

Halliwell's one real success was in guiding and nurturing the talent of his young, working class lover. But by the early 1960s Orton had outstripped his mentor, who was reduced to describing himself as "Mr Orton's personal assistant".

Even this exaggerated his real role. He was, in fact, house-keeper, secretary and (less and less often) bedmate. Eventually he came to exactly fit the stereotype of "wife".

He nagged and whined to get his way, he fluttered helplessly on the edges of Orton's life, demanding attention and affection. But he had nothing left to offer — not beauty or experience or talent. He had no real purpose or place of his own to sustain him and slowly, but noisily, he slid into madness.

On the night of 8 August 1967, Halliwell, convinced Orton was about to leave him (according to the film), picked up a hammer and beat his lover to death. He then swallowed a handful of Nembutal tablets and was dead in less than a minute. It was the sort of domestic murder-suicide we still read of in our newspapers.

The relationship between Orton and Halliwell is a reminder that traditional sex roles like "husband" and "wife" do not arise from the gender of the partners. Nor do they come just from childhood conditioning of boys and girls. Society presents us with a range of possible roles, and pressures us powerfully into those that suit the status quo.

Fortunately, we are not computers irrevocably programmed by outside forces. In the late sixties and early seventies, sexual liberation struggles

enabled millions of people — women and men, gay and straight — to break out of roles that were seemed to have the force of natural law.

It is Orton's tragedy, and Halliwell's, that during their lifetimes, the liberation movements had barely begun their work.

Halliwell's pain was made worse by not even getting the advantages — limited and dubious though they are — of being the "wife" of a famous man. No reflected glory for him, no public

appreciation.

Indeed their relationship was never publicly acknowledged at all. In his biographical notes for the press, Orton described himself as a divorced father of a son — a straightforward lie. When invited to receive an award, he refused outright to take Halliwell as his partner.

Orton had to be even more dishonest about his sexuality. His diaries, and this film, show him not only to be gay, but wildly promiscuous and devoted to the anonymous gay sex of the

parks and public toilets and the chance encounter in the street.

Orton's plays, with their openly homosexual characters, were considered outrageous, even filthy, in his day. They pale beside his life. But they confronted the hypocrisy and prejudice of the period. In that, they were an early part of the struggle for gay liberation.

*Prick Up Your Ears*, an honest look at Orton's life and work, is a fitting tribute to that struggle.

— Graham Willett



Orton (Gary Oldman) and Halliwell (Alfred Molina): Gay Liberation arrived too late

## TELEVISION

### The politics of Elliot Ness

**THE UNTOUCHABLES** is back on TV!

Once again, the tragic-looking, dedicated Elliot Ness is whizzing around Chicago in his T-Model Ford with machine guns blazing, fighting a never-ending battle against the gangsters and racketeers who run the city, shooting them and smashing up their breweries. Great stuff!

Yet one thing has always been missing from *The Untouchables*. Class struggle. Workers and bosses rarely rate a mention. But far from being on the sidelines of Chicago life in the late 1920s, they were centre stage.

Chicago has a long history of radicalism and struggle, and *The Untouchables* would be far less two-dimensional if it dipped into the politics behind Prohibition and gangsterism as well as the 'chic' mops.

Chicago was a stronghold of

America's Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World. Well before Prohibition, the bosses used gangsters against workers. They beat them up, smashed their picket lines and corrupted their unions. The only thing they couldn't do was arrest strikers. Their partners in crime, the police, did that.

Temperance leagues, imbued with the Protestant work ethic, had wanted Prohibition since the 1850s. When drunkenness was blamed for disrupting production during World War One, the politicians decided it was time to sober up the working class. Rather than tackle social problems, they banned alcohol.

Workers kept drinking, of course. But now all they got was bad grog. The brewers had a bad grog. The gangsters went into Marketing and Transport as well as Industrial Relations. Some *Untouchables* episodes have the Chicago mob importing grog from Canada, importing grog from Canada. The association between business and organised crime grew.

So where does Elliot Ness fit in? Well, not all bosses

benefited from the partnership. An alliance of corrupt building union leaders and building suppliers made commercial construction very expensive. The building bosses, their lawyers and bankers, already organised in opposition to militant unionists' calls for a closed shop, became concerned about crime in Chicago in the late 1920s.

Crime hit profits. Bribes were starting to hurt. By 1930, the city was bankrupt and could not provide the services that employers expect from local government.

So when crime threatened profits, business hit back. The TV Elliot Ness, who was based on the autobiography of a minor Treasury cop, could not name the major crime czar of Chicago, Al Capone. But Capone was eventually done for tax evasion. Despite his money and influence, Capone was unable to reach a detente with the American ruling class. In 1932 they jailed him for ten years.

There was no doubt who ran Chicago now. A class that Elliot Ness and his *Untouchables* could never touch...

— Jeff Goldfarb



# Is that all there is to the circus?

**PEGGY LEE** once did a marvellous song which went, "Is that all there is to the circus?"

Somehow I kept thinking of it as I viewed the much-vaunted "celebration of a nation".

I wasn't the only one underwhelmed by the vacuousness of it all. Patrick White slammed the Bicentenary as a "vulgar, philistine" con.

You can't get serious problems solved by a circus. The circus will be taken down. We'll be left with emptiness, the dark, and probably a \$2 loaf.

Given Paul Keating's form, White may be wrong about the \$2 loaf. But he was right about the emptiness.

There is a good reason for this emptiness. It reflects the particularly empty soul of Australian nationalism.

Unlike the other ruling classes who celebrate bicentenaries at about the same time — the French and the Americans — ours never led any struggle for liberty and equality against the old order.

The best ours could do was the miserable Rum Rebellion, a brief and squalid coup by MacArthur and the NSW Corps officers to protect their corrupt rum trade. Our early bourgeoisie was more intent on butchering Aborigines, exploiting slave convict labour and grabbing land for itself than on standing up to the aristocracy.

This spineless past is one reason why Australian nationalism is so hungry for myths and heroes — Gallipoli, sporting champions and even, God help us, Alan Bond. It has no George Washington or Napoleon to rever.

It is also why, come the Bicentenary, the emphasis has been on the form, not the content of modern Australia's founding. The ships, not what was in them, have been at the centre of official attention. For what was in them was a distorted cross-section of British class society, to be transplanted helobolus to Australian soil.

That fact cannot be examined too closely, because nationalism depends fundamentally, not on flag-waving and military parades (though Australia Day had plenty of that), but on a denial of class — on the lie that "we", bosses and workers, rich and poor, rulers and ruled, are one nation and not two.

**AND SO** we had the Tall Ships. A kindergarten phrase and concept with which to mark the nation's supposed maturity.

In Melbourne, after weeks of



hype about a fleet of 70, this tawdry circus consisted of one square-rigger and six other craft that could be termed either "tall" or "ships". None were of real historical significance.

Along the pier, drawn in by the advertising, literally tens of thousands of spectators strained for a view. Over quarter of a million passed through on the day I wandered down there. Hundreds of poor saps queued unsuccessfully for over three hours to go aboard the one boat open for inspection that morning.

Fittingly, a Polish craft sent over by the workers' friend, General Jaruzelski, let us know where we really stood. It was closed to the public, while the crew piped aboard local dignitaries for a cocktail party. Under their marquee on deck, "socialist" officers and capitalist gentilefolk made small-talk and avoided the gaze of the masses below.

**FOLLOWING** this revealing charade, I went home to watch *Australia Live*. Compiled by Channels Two, Nine and SBS, this had the more sophisticated patriotism of the TV industry's liberals. But the message was the same — we are all "one nation".

To believe *Australia Live*, Australia has a deep and abiding commitment to multiculturalism. That is why, presumably, the government has given an Order of Australia to Ron Casey, the man who calls Asians "slope-heads" and "chinks" on his

talkback show.

To show *Australia Live* further, Australia is a country almost without a working class, let alone class conflicts. We met a couple of Mt Isa miners, had a glimpse of a telephone exchange — and that was it. In 70 segments, we scarcely even saw the major cities where most workers live.

Only once was *Australia Live* insightful, and then only unintentionally. In consecutive segments, Manning Clark and Bob Hawke spelt out their visions for Australia. Manning Clark was the old Labor dream of social equality without social revolution. Hawke's was merely the platitudes of any conservative Prime Minister. Labor's old goal of social reform is these days strictly the property of the historians.

Yet scarcely behind the scenes, the conflict that *Australia Live*, Manning Clark and Bob Hawke all tried to deny in their different ways kept breaking through. In Canberra, chanting Land Rights demonstrators rudely upstaged Richard Carleton. In Perth, an Aborigine hurled himself onto the fireworks display, spoiling the city-to-city synchronisation.

Perhaps most telling was the fate of the mother with newborn child whom *Australia Live* linked live to her partner in Antarctica. As soon as the show was over, the Department of Social Security launched a two week investigation into her status as a beneficiary, checking if she was in an undeclared de facto



with Alec Kahn

relationship.

One nation? Who are they kidding?

**HOPING** to glimpse the big Land Rights march in Sydney, I tuned in to the *Australia Day* telecast.

Instead, we got thousands of people watching thousands of boats watching the bloody Tall Ships again. Carefully separated off from the plebs, 3000 dignitaries listened to more platitudes from Hawke and Prince Charles.

Well, what did I expect? Millionaire Dick Smith drooled, "It's a beautiful country, and we own it, we own it!" "You own it, Dick," I thought.

Then the air force had a flypast. "It's wonderful that with just 16 million people, we can afford to be so well armed," Smith enthused. The Vietnamese, whom "we" last visited our arms upon might think it rather less wonderful.

I turned the TV off and pondered. Is there anything this year worth celebrating? Or do we just have to grimace and bear it? Actually there is. It is the way that the Aboriginal movement has used the event to thrust its way to the centre stage of politics, to the point where every commentator now feels compelled to pay at least lip service to its concerns.

And we have 200 years of struggle to remember. The Aboriginal resistance to colonialism, and the mighty class struggles, the Great Strikes of the 1890s, the Wobblies and the anti-conscription campaign of World War One, the Communist-led battles of the Depression, the postwar militancy and the defeat of the Anti-Communist movement, the smashing of the Penal Powers and the pioneering unionism of the NSW BLF.

The official celebrations will mention none of these. They are our history. We commemorate them, not in fatuous nationalist spectacles, but by carrying on the fight in the streets and workplaces — in Land Rights marches, in agitation against Labor's austerity, in organising for socialist revolution.

That way, we can write our own history, instead of being passive spectators as a "vulgar, philistine" class invents it for us.

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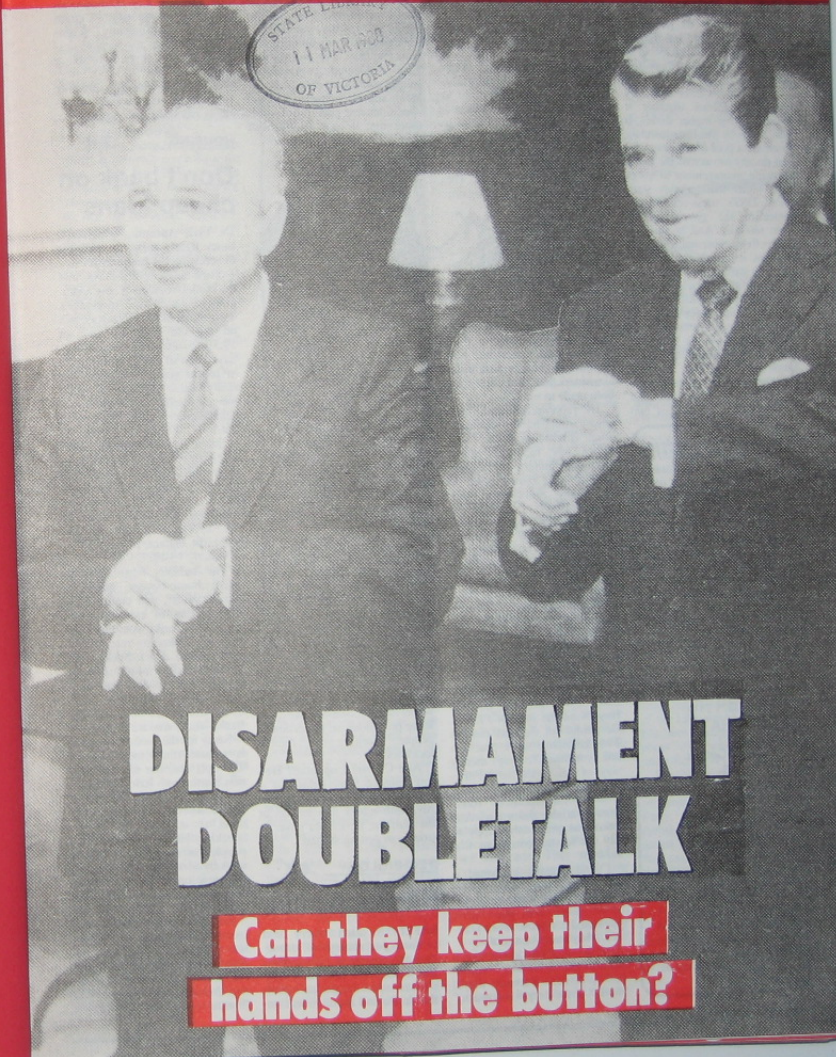
# SOCIALIST ACTION



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## DISARMAMENT DOUBLETALK

Can they keep their  
hands off the button?



# Expo 88: the greatest sham on earth

ACCORDING to its promoters, Expo '88 in Brisbane celebrates "a progressive system which everyone benefits from". Who will Expo really benefit?

No doubt some of the 30,000 millionaires in this country will make a quiet out of it through trade contacts or whatever, but it's not clear what's in it for the more than 2½ million living below the poverty line.

90% of the 300,000 people who consider themselves Aborigines fall into that second category, and they, along with white supporters will be demonstrating for land rights during this highlight of the Bicentenary. Organisers are expecting thousands of people to converge on Brisbane, and support for land rights by trade unionists is currently being explored.

Land rights protestors should not be the only ones marching. What the Queensland government portrays as the fantasy world of Expo is more like a nightmare for a lot of people.

The safety record on the construction site is a horror story in itself. Accidents happen all the time. The most recent one was on 18 February, when a plaster board ceiling fell and injured five workers in the Japan pavilion. In August last year a 35 year old labourer died from injuries suffered after falling from scaffolding in the Queensland pavilion. And on 2 February this year, a 25 year old painter was electrocuted when his metal ladder touched an unearthed, uninsulated wire on the floor of the same pavilion.

Workers on the entire site walked off the job as soon as news of the second death got around. The accidents were not unconnected with the fact that almost all the safety officers on the site were put there by the Queensland government.

Queensland pavilion workers have now elected their own

safety officer. But the construction companies emerge so quickly it's impossible for him to cover all areas.

When Expo opens, working conditions will be no better. The Queensland government and the Trades and Labor Council have negotiated special awards which seriously undermine wages and conditions. One dangerous precedent is the loss of penalty rates. During "core time" between 7 am and midnight, a casual bar attendant will receive \$9.52 an hour. This includes a 20 percent loading so that the employer is not liable for sick leave or holiday pay.

Those working in hospitality must be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The boss can make you work any hours, providing the 80 hour fortnight limit isn't exceeded. By comparison, non-Expo bar attendants work a 38 hour week, beyond which the relevant penalty rates apply. Their pay includes a 24 percent loading for sick leave and holiday pay.

To top it all off, the TLC has signed a "no strike at Expo" agreement with the government, whereupon the ALP spokesperson for Industrial Affairs applauded the government for being less confrontational than in the past.

West End and South Brisbane residents have been trying to fight Expo since it was first announced. The gradual redevelopment of the area since the early 1980s has had a massive effect on their lives.

West End was a source of low cost inner city accommodation. Factories and "unpleasant industry" discouraged the trendies from moving in. Most of the houses had been built to accommodate working class people. This has now changed as the city council and state government spread the Central Business District across the river. Factories have been demolished to make



way for smart office blocks.

The Concerned Residents Action Group formed to fight these developments, and their public meetings attracted hundreds of people. But instead of mobilising them for action, the Concerned Residents formed a committee to negotiate with the government. At this point the fight was lost.

West End now carries five times more traffic, and residents face a constant battle with air and noise pollution.

Rental accommodation costs are out of control. One 3 bedroom house in West End which currently costs \$150 per week (that's already far too much) will cost \$350 during Expo. Local residents find the rent being jacked up, or they face eviction. A Southside Urban Research Group survey showed that in West End over the last 12 months there has been a 63 percent increase in house rents.

If that's not enough, a "sight and sound extravaganza" will light up the sky every night during Expo. A total of 46 hours of noisy firecrackers and loud music will remind everyone in a 7 km radius that "Brisbane's such a great place to be."

— Louise Walker

MELBOURNE

## Green pylons!

HOW TO make an 8 km powerline passing through parkland on ten-storey pylons "unobtrusive"? The Victorian government's answer: paint the pylons green!

Not convinced? You'll understand how residents feel in the seven Melbourne suburbs the line will pass through, and how they feel about another worrying problem: the health risk. Evidence is growing that radiation from high voltage powerlines can cause nausea, nervous disorders, birth defects and cancer. They admit the evidence is inconclusive. But they'd like the government to prove the line's safe before it's built.

Residents have mobilised to stop construction, holding public meetings and rallies, and protesting at worksites. They've also looked to unions for support. The State Electricity Commission headed off a threatened blackban on the whole project with a \$100 a week site allowance, but a Trades Hall ban still applies on work near Richmond High School.

Whether the Trades Hall bureaucrats' friends in the ALP can get this ban lifted remains to be seen. Either way, a battle will still be fought in the suburbs.

— Robert Stansby

AFTER YEARS of having it almost all their own way, Margaret Thatcher and her big business friends suddenly find themselves face to face with a new mood among British workers.

In recent weeks, nurses and other hospital workers, coal mine supervisors, Channel-ferry workers have all been out on strike. Demonstrations against right wing attacks on women and gays have filled the streets of London and other major cities.

Health service workers have caught most attention, winning significant improvements in wages and conditions and public support. Nurses led off when 38 nurses from North Manchester General Hospital walked out over a pay claim. They were swamped with messages of support. During the next few days nurses in other hospitals voted for strike action.

On February 10, 6000 London nurses struck and another 6000 took supporting action. Thousands in other cities followed. Enthusiastic picket lines drew in dozens, even hundreds, of strikers. Passing workers gave money. Delegations from factories and offices brought collections. Drivers voted their support.

But it's not just the nurses who are fighting. In Scotland, non-nursing staff in hospitals, domestic workers, kitchen staff have stood up against the privatisation of their jobs to contractors. In late January, a demo of 3000 strikers from 30 hospitals in Glasgow, joined by a delegation of nurses, marched on the city health board. After making its feelings known, it marched off to join a nearby protest by 5000 striking teachers.

MEANWHILE, the Ford Motor Company has suffered its first national strike in ten years. Workers solidly rejected a pay offer put to them went on, in a secret ballot, to demand strike action. The offer — a six per cent pay rise in return for trading off hard won working conditions — was contemptible. Workers looked at Ford's massive profit of last year (£350 million) and at the Chairman's pay rise of £95,000 a year and decided they wanted a share of what's going around.

But they also understand that the trade-offs were only the thin end of the wedge. In recent years, through speed ups and sackings, Ford has increased its output from 8 cars per worker per year to 17. But its major

# Workers, gays and women give Maggie a jolt



Picketing nurses: did Thatcher miscalculate?

rival, Nissan, in north-east England, already has achieved an output of 21 and is confidently predicting 40. The current attack by Ford, if it succeeds, will be just the beginning.

Lesser strikes have had their own importance. Channel-ferry workers went out illegally and stayed out for a week after the High Court ordered them to return to work. Finally, their own union officials, terrified that union funds would be seized, persuaded them to return to work. But the fact remains



that even the more conservative parts like Dover were on strike, reflecting a very widespread mood of anger and producing the seafarers' first truly national strike since 1966.

In the coal mines, it was the pit supervisors who worked all through the 1984-85 Miners Strike, that were out for better pay. A rash of smaller, often local, actions among different sections of the working class has contributed to the general air of militancy.

SEVERAL factors have combined to make this upheaval possible. To begin with, Thatcher has overplayed her hand in attacking the National Health Service. In her zeal to destroy the last vestiges of British "socialism" she forgot that trade union awareness has been gradually growing among nurses and other health workers. And she paid no regard to the fact that 92 per cent of people depend on the NHS.

Thatcher also underestimated the impact that a limited upturn in the economy has had on workers' consciousness. Suddenly there are shortages of skilled labour in some areas, and this gives some unionists added bargaining power and greater confidence. At the same time the rightward rush of British union

and Labour Party leaders has meant they have lost touch with sections of the rank and file. This has made it harder for the union bureaucrats and politicians to control grassroots militancy.

Nor is it just the organised working class that is on the move. A private member's bill by David Alton, a right wing MP, that seeks to reduce the period during which abortions can be legally performed (from 28 weeks to 18) is producing a storm of protest.

Any restriction on abortion rights is a blow at women's right to control their own bodies. What makes Alton's Bill particularly brutal is that it will most seriously affect younger women. Without decent sex education and proper support they are often unaware that they are pregnant for some time and even then may leave the decision to have an abortion till very late.

IN mid-January tens of thousands marched against the Alton Bill all over the country. Trade unions, which have had a good history of supporting abortion rights, were well represented. Activists have organised meetings, pickets and demos to maintain the momentum.

Thatcher and her party are also on the rampage against gays. The government is backing an amendment to the local government Act that would make it illegal to "promote homosexuality."

The fightback has been extraordinary. Twelve thousand lesbians, gay men and their supporters marched through London on January 9. A couple of weeks later an AIDS candle light vigil attracted 10,000. Then on February 20, 15,000 marched at a national demo held in Manchester.

Whether this current wave of resistance continues or ebbs away, the lesson that direct action can win, is likely to be firmly imprinted on the political agenda for some time.

— Graham Willett



**High-speed crash**  
LIFE in the fast lane is somewhat slower since the stockmarket crash.  
The average price of a second-hand Porsche 928S4 has fallen \$10,000 since October — the result of a glut on the use car market caused by yuppies who can no longer afford sports cars.

**Main event**

IT'S NOT hard to tell what the main event in Sydney was on Australia Day.  
The telephonists at the Bicentennial Information Centre report that most callers wanted to know how to meet up with the Aboriginal protest marches!

**Pay backs**

WE'VE heard of welfare cuts, but this is ridiculous.  
County authorities in Wisconsin, USA, are sending demands for repayment to old people who received welfare during the Depression!

Don't accuse them of hard-heartedness, though. They don't try to collect, until the recipients are dead. Then they bill their heirs!

**Clean-up campaign**

THESE a bad smell about the Labor Party nowadays, but the party blames its candidates rather than its policies. A handbook issued to ALP

candidates for the NSW state election instructs them: "Use a deodorant, bath or shower regularly. During intensive campaigning, showering 3 or more times a day may be required to keep you fresh and confident."



**An attack of Crabb**

VICTORIAN Police Minister Steve Crabb is more paranoid than ever, following the schmozzle of his raid on the BLF office. He has posted a fulltime security guard outside his parliamentary office. Even John Cairns said to be amazed.

But then maybe we've got it wrong. Maybe the guard is there to protect the public from Steve Crabb.

**House resds**

"FOR a lighter meal out, when the bank balance is low, skip the veggie styles and try one or two of the nicer Irish risottos... Or, if it must be carbonny, Oriando's PF and Soppell's are very palatable..."

Cosmopolitan magazine? The wine column in one of the more upmarket daily papers? No, it's that hard-hitting organ of class struggle, the Communist Party's *Australian Left Review*.

**Make Russ disappear**

STAR of the Fitzgerald Inquiry, Russ Hinze, is more worried about his figure than his reputation for corruption.

The beanbag that walks has spent \$900 for a week at an exclusive Camp Eden health farm. Weight loss was a meagre 4 kilograms from his 155 kilo (24 stone) bulk.

At that rate, another \$34,000 should see the Repulsive One disappear altogether. Cheap Shots hereby announces a public "Make Russ Disappear" fund, kicks it off with \$100 kindly sent by Anonymous from "Bethany", near Kingaroy, in Queensland.

**Joh's secret**

THE Brisbane *Courier Mail* interviewed Joh Bjelke (Pete Ken? remember him?) last month. In passing, they asked what the secret of impromptu speaking in front of things, replied Bjelke.  
Not that Mike Ahern is proving much better, mind. The Queensland Teacher's Union points out that under Bjelke in 1987, education funding was \$105 million below the national average, 30,000 children were in oversized classes, and teacher numbers were frozen. Under Ahern in 1988, education funding is \$196 million below the national average, 60,000 children are in oversized classes, and teacher numbers have been cut by 700. The new broom looks awfully like the old broom, Mike.

**Born-again Barbie**

THE Baby Boomers had Barbie and Ken. Now the eighties generation has the "Special Blessings" dolls to teach them traditional values.

Cashing in on America's born-again religious cult, Kenner Parked Toys has brought out a family of cherub,

**Flagging interest**

AUSTRALIA Post has gone into the flag-selling business. For a grossly inflated \$60, they'll even sell you a Land Rights flag.  
The Land Rights flag is listed in the category "Flags of Special Interest" — along with flags depicting "Happy Hour", a drunken pink elephant, and a skull and crossbones. Presumably all three of the latter were intended for use by supporters of the First Fleet Reenactment...

**Chauvinist corner**

SOME men's vision of women still hasn't got much beyond the kitchen sink. Fashion designer Keni Falenti says he based last (northern) autumn's line of women's clothing on the shape of a bottle of Joy dishwashing



**CHEAP SHOTS**

detergent.

"I saw the bottle and said, 'This is it!' What could be more womanly than the Joy bottle? I also tried Palmolive, but the shape wasn't as feminine."

Procter & Gamble, makers of Joy, proudly agreed. A spokesman said, "A lot of our packaging gives the sense of a human figure, but only because the shape is easy to hold."



**FEATURE**

FOR YEARS, public opinion in the west sympathised with Israel, and anyone who opposed it was accused of anti-semitism. Yet today it is increasingly clear that the Israeli state and the Zionist movement which created it are reactionary. They oppress the Palestinian Arabs and attack their neighbours. At the same time Israel has become, as Trotsky predicted long ago, "a bloody trap" for the Jews themselves. JEFF GOLDHAR explains the origins of Zionism and the struggle to overthrow the Israeli state today.



Israel's leaders toast "to life"; Arab youth arrested on the West Bank

**Israel: 'watchdog' for imperialism**

"INDEPENDENCE for Palestine!" Isn't a new cry. It was the main slogan for the 1936 Palestine General Strike. Every town, city and village had some sort of organisation supporting that massive struggle. Workers stayed home. Shops, businesses and markets closed down. Transport and communications ground to a halt.

The strike was a revolt against British rule in Palestine. During it the British army killed 1000, arrested 2500 more and dynamited 5000 homes. To combat a guerrilla campaign to kick out imperialism, their air force strafed the countryside.

The biographer of the "socialist" David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, dismisses the strike in two paragraphs, being more interested in how Ben-Gurion tried to negotiate with the Palestinian ruling class.

The aim of these measures is to raise profit rates. The New Zealand treasury made this clear when it called in 1984 for "a fall in the real wage rate in relation to productivity in order to employers to find it more profitable to increase production." In New Zealand like anywhere else, the system can only work at our expense.

socialism, they also subscribed to another movement — Zionism. Its ideology had the support of most of the Jews in Palestine — workers and bosses alike — and a minority of Jews in Europe, the Americas and Australia.

The Zionist movement's support of imperialism in 1936 was not an historical aberration. From its very beginnings there has always been an alliance and dependence between Zionism and imperialism.

**ZIONISM** developed late last century as a response to the violent anti-semitism (hated of Jews) in Eastern Europe. It was a political philosophy that urged anti-semitism was inevitable. Non-Jews were inherently anti-semitic. No social change could do away with the problem; it was futile to fight it. The solution to anti-semitism was for the Jews to set up their own state.

The nineteenth century imperialist scramble had devoured virtually all the inhabited countries on earth. The early Zionist leaders realised they didn't have the hope of convincing any of the imperialist nations to give up some of their home territory for a Jewish state — but colonies were a different matter.  
So early Zionist leader Theodore Herzl

journeyed from country to country putting the case for a separate Jewish state. He even visited the Russian Police Minister Plehve, a raving anti-semitic who had just organised the 1903 pogrom (massacre) against the Jews of Kishinev.

Herzl assured him that the Kishinev events would not be discussed at the forthcoming Zionist Congress. Herzl was convinced that it was possible to come to an understanding with one's fiercest adversaries when their interests coincided with yours.

A contemporary of Herzl's, Lenin, had other ideas, as did the other revolutionaries who wanted to organise opposition to the Tsarism and its pogroms. He argued: "The Tsarist police, in alliance with the landowners and the capitalists, organised pogroms against the Jews. They try and divert the hatred of workers and the peasants against the Jews... It is not the peasants against the Jews... It is not the Jews who are the enemies of working people. Their enemies are the capitalists of all countries."

In the end it was the British who gave the most practical responses to the early Zionists. Uganda and Cyprus were bandied about as possible homelands. But it was Palestine where the interests of the British Empire and Jewish historical links coincided.

Britain needed a reliable Middle East base, and who would be better than European settlers to cope with growing Arab nationalism and safeguard the Suez Canal.

By the end of the First World War,

**The South Pacific Thatchers**

OUR FINANCIAL press have been arguing recently that Hawke and Keating should follow the lead of New Zealand's Labor government.

Under the headline "NZ's bold economic plan to make big waves here," the *Financial Review* applauded David Lange's move to lower the top marginal income tax rate to 33% for incomes over \$30,875, his reduction of tax on corporate profits to 28%, and his plans to cut the government debt by a third through a comprehensive sell-off of state assets.  
This may be good news for business but it's bad news for the working class.

A universal consumption tax (GST) of 10 percent was introduced in October 1986. Last year industrial relations legislation aimed at increasing "real wage flexibility" (they mean boosting the rate of exploitation of labour) and eliminating "labour market rigidities" (i.e. weakening the unions) came in.

Employers and the government want more "enterprise bargaining" in which real wages are tied to changes in productivity and profitability. So they have made strenuous efforts to undermine the national award system which currently ensures that all workers covered by the national award in an industry share the

same basic wage scale.

The government is also getting stuck into public employees. The Prime Minister sacked two thirds of New Zealand's coal miners with no warning. The new State Sector legislation means that from 1 April, conditions of employment usually associated with the public sector will be scrapped including annual leave, equal opportunity provisions, merit criteria for appointments, housing for remote areas, child care, flexi-time and sexual harassment clauses.

Health, education and welfare are next in line for the knife. A Royal Commission for Social Policy, which reports later this

year, has been set up to justify reduced government expenditure and control.

Government debt has increased from \$18 billion in 1984 to \$42 billion in 1988. Nearly all of this extra debt results from handouts to business.

The aim of these measures is to raise profit rates. The New Zealand treasury made this clear when it called in 1984 for "a fall in the real wage rate in relation to productivity in order to employers to find it more profitable to increase production." In New Zealand like anywhere else, the system can only work at our expense.

— Brian Roper



# Crabb, BWIU come unstuck in war of the scandals

VICTORIA is full of scandals, some real and some bogus.

The biggest bogus scandal right now comes from the second Sharp Report. Ian Sharp was appointed "Custodian" of BLF assets and funds after Steve Crabb's police stole them. Ever since then, Sharp has laboured to scratch up some evidence to justify the police raid. His second report was long but empty.

That didn't stop the newspapers raving about Norm Gallagher stealing union funds once again, and once again we heard that the notorious Luis Garcia had gone to Libya. That Norm only borrowed the money from a fund that was not drawn from members money, and quickly repaid it, was ignored. That Garcia is an obvious liar from Sharp's own account was not mentioned.

The real scandal that the Victorian government wants to play down is the revelation that Labor Minister Steve Crabb granted nearly \$500,000 to the rival Building Workers Industrial Union. They got the money in return for their union election where they were being challenged by a militant rank and file team.

\$200,000 went for two "ethnic liaison officers", supposedly to explain the policies of the union to non-English speakers. Multi-lingual election propaganda was churned out, but no individuals were ever appointed to the posts.

The other "educational" grants are just as dodgy; the application forms were dated after the grant authorisation! But the most ludicrous is \$17,000 to paint a health and safety mural. This mural was actually done by 100 unemployed kids using spray paint supplied by the city council. It has dragons, Red Indians, graffiti but no safety issues.

Though required to report regularly and audit the funds, the BWIU didn't bother until the BLF exposed the hand-outs. The Cain government has tried to distance itself by laying the blame for irregularities on the BWIU, but an awful lot of people don't believe a word of it.

The BWIU has already spent the money and won their union elections, so exposure hurts them little. But they face more serious difficulties. Last year they and



Building industry struggles, 1986 and 1987. 1988 is little different.

other building unions struck a deal with employers over wages, which was used to head off a growing unofficial industrial campaign. Two components of it are now coming unstuck.

The \$20 severance pay deal has not yet been ratified by the Arbitration Commission. There are problems now with tax and social security. But if the deal falls through, building workers will see that last year's pay deal was a fraud all along, as the BLF pointed out.

The part of the pay rise workers have received, \$16 dollars under the second tier, is causing havoc of a different kind. It was tied to a number of trade-offs, and the BWIU now has to police their implementation.

Using Steve Crabb's money, they produced a green booklet to "explain" the new conditions building workers are expected to accept. According to BLF or organiser John Cummins, this is turning Melbourne building sites into a battleground.

"They're trying to wind back practices and standards. The offers were agreed to by the BWIU officials without any consultation with the members. This course is irrelevant to the government and the Master Builders."

But not to the workers. In the past if a safety issue arose, the workers would walk out for 24 hours and be paid for time lost, as punishment for the boss. Now they're expected to just isolate the area. On many sites they have refused to accept the new rules. According to Cummins,

"If they battle they win. If they accept the Disputes Board ruling they get done."

As usual the BLF is in the thick of the battles. Organisers regularly visit building sites, and these days the bosses rarely call the cops to remove them. With building still booming, employers are mostly concerned not to lose production. That means workers can defend their rights if they're willing to fight.

—Janey Stone

## DRIVERS



### TWU officials stifle promising struggle

**BOSSSES SPIT THE DUMMY** at suggestions that workers can have a say in who owns their enterprises. The recent oil tanker drivers' dispute was no exception.

When trucking giant Linfox took over Caltex's truck fleet, drivers were given two days to accept a redundancy package or apply for jobs with the new owners.

But it wasn't just a simple transfer. Linfox announced the abolition of all non-award "restrictive work practices". And not all drivers would be needed in the new "more efficient" outfit.

With jobs and conditions under attack, the drivers were ready to fight. Their main demand was that the trucking business remain with Caltex. But Transport Workers Union officials were mostly concerned

with Caltex's failure to "consult".

In Victoria, a mass stopwork meeting threw out the official motion and went on strike. This was at least partly due to the activity of a rank and file group of former brewery drivers, themselves victims of a similar Linfox take-over a year ago. Reform group members held a street meeting and handed out leaflets to the tanker drivers, and had quite an impact.

The final result of the week's strike is not clear, but it seems certain that the drivers will eventually go to Linfox on virtually the original terms. Victorian branch official Jim Davis claims a victory, while having demobilised the drivers' militancy.

In NSW, the TWU originally called a shop stewards' meeting, not a mass meeting. There was to be no strike because of the links between the rightwing NSW leadership and the Labor Party right, currently worried about the elections.

But when the Victorians appeared to have made some gains the NSW drivers also struck. Unsworth's invoking of the Essential Services Act and the union leaders' cowardice effectively ended their fight.

Brewery drivers have seen safety standards derided and militants get victimised since their transfer to Linfox. Caltex drivers can expect the same from new owner Lindsay Fox, who has a sign on his desk reading: "When you've got them by the balls, their hearts and minds follow."

—Janey Stone

THE FIGHT for women's liberation isn't as explosive today as it once was. In the 1960s and early 1970s women marched regularly in the streets, chained themselves to buildings, and struck for the right to work and for equal pay. Today, while these things still happen, the emphasis has shifted. The "women's advisor" is more prominent than the radical demonstration. Where rank and file workers are still considered, the focus is more on their problems, their superexploitation, their position as victims rather than as fighters.

Partly this is a consequence of a change in society as a whole: the working class radicalism of that earlier era has given way to an atmosphere of conservatism in the labour movement.

Yet even in the quieter 1980s, there have been movements in Australia and abroad which show how working women can break out of the surrounding conservatism and launch powerful, even spectacular struggles. Struggles which offer more potential for the liberation of women than any other process of protest or reform.

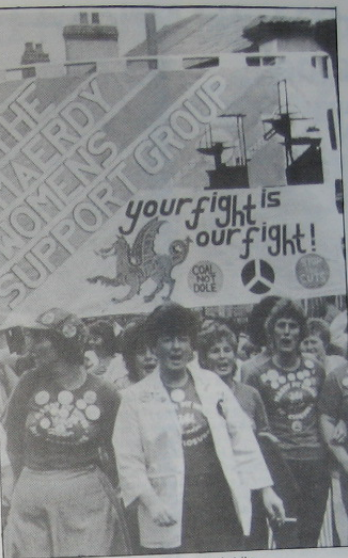
IT'S SELDOM realised how important women were in creating Poland's Solidarity trade union movement. Its birth was sparked by a strike at the Gdansk shipyards over the firing of Anna Walentynowicz, a crane operator who, she says, had placed a wreath at the gates where workers were killed in an earlier revolt. In the course of the strike other came to the fore:

"Anna Pienkowska thought of everything. She issued passes, collected food, and made sure the strike committee had access to the broadcasting centre. In a word, she took care of the administration of the strike."

Another activist, Joanna Duda-Gwiazda, organised support from people around the city: money, food, blankets and propaganda.

Women's demands for better working conditions, childcare and maternity leave were included in Solidarity's "universal demand." In one textile town Solidarity's first act was organising child care and food for striking single mothers.

In Swidnik female health workers in the local clinic visited nearby helicopter workers, saying: "since we're too small to strike and those who would be



Women on the march during the miners' strike

## Liberation in the '80s — still a class act

affected most are the patients, include our demands with your years." They agreed, and this sort of united action became known as "horizontal solidarity."

THE BRITISH miners' strike of 1984-85 could never have been sustained so long without the leading role played by the miners' wives. A Yorkshire woman explained how she got involved:

"It started because I couldn't stand TV making out that the wives weren't behind their men. We decided to go and picket... We called ourselves an action group because everyone says they support the miners, but we wanted to be active."

In addition to occasional women-only pickets, they took their place in the mass actions too and won the right to say:

and death it bitter blows. They reasoned they could ignore a union of women who had recently dropped their no-strike policy. Yet their own recent experience should have made them more cautious. When the government had backed scabbing at the Alfred Hospital in 1985 and found the nurses had walked out, they were furious. Steve Crabb fumed:

"It's outrageous. I've never had a strike pulled on me in the middle of negotiations."

By October 1985 the nurses has held a state wide strike with militant picket lines, so that after another year of negotiation and government provocation they were ready to take on the Cain regime in a 50 day struggle. "For the first time," said an RANF activist, "thousands of nurses were finding that they do have power, that they can change their own lives..."

While most unions these days are stifled by overbearing bureaucrats, the nurses showed how a strike could be run by the rank and file. With regular strike meetings, bulletins and an exchange of activists from one picket line to another, the militant strike was run. Other unions were slow to draw conclusions for their own dispute. A crane driver said to me: "It's exciting, this is what we should have done over the BLF." He went on to talk about how he was building support for the nurses on his job.

The strike showed how women workers could break out of passivity. It showed how they can leap ahead of other workers in their militancy, their organisation, and their determination to win.

Women are often concerned that the class struggle can only lead to a "male revolution", and that a separate women's movement is needed to guard against their interests getting lost in the shuffle. What the nurses proved is that women can be central to class struggle, and lead it and class struggle, and their emancipation too. During the strike the Melbourne Sun highlighted this very well:

"As if anyone needed proof of the radicalisation of Florence Nightingale, there it was at Olympic Park yesterday — a Irene Bolger Nurses' Liberation Front... And you could even hear talk of solidarity and the workers' struggle."

— Liz Ross

THE CAIN government had taken on the powerful BLF.

# Israel and South Africa — not the same!

**YOUR COVER** (February 1988) strongly equates Israel and South Africa.

These societies are very different. In Israel there is not a ruling Jewish caste exploiting a numerically superior Arab underclass. Indeed Israel was given its character by the Zionists' refusal to exploit Arab labour and their drive to replace it.

The exploitation of Arab labour from the occupied territories since 1967 has not fundamentally altered Israel's character in this respect, although it does have the potential to increase Israel's reliance on super-exploitation of Arab labour.

There is in Israel a comprehensive Jewish society organised in a nation state. This society exhibits all the fundamental characteristics (culture, language, religion etc) that would give any Marxist to argue for their right to self determination.

Your article draws four conclusions: some independent Palestinian state might be possible in the short term; such a state would be unable to exist; the state of Israel must be smashed; only socialism is the answer.

Well, yes, socialism is the answer, but there is a more immediate question—how can the Jewish and Arab working classes unite and overcome the national conflict which now divides them, so that they can fight for socialism?

Unfortunately most of Australian left supports the slogan



Palestinian refugees 1948

"smash the state." It is supposed to mean the same as smashing the Australian, or Polish state. That is the working class will overthrow its rulers by disbanding the army and police etc and replace them with democratic workers' councils.

In Israel's case the Jewish working class is disregarded as an irreformable part of an illegitimate nation. In reality it is the surrounding hostile states (Syria? Iran?) who will "smash" Israel if any one does.

The result would have nothing in common with the expansion of working class democracy. The Jewish nation would be suppressed by states which are more tyrannical against their own people than the Israeli state has ever been.

Israel should get out of the occupied territories, recognise the PLO and agree to the setting up of an independent Palestinian state which also recognises Is-

rael's right to exist. This would help establish the conditions for Jewish/Arab working class solidarity.

We should look at the demonstration on November 29 when several kilometres of the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway were lined by Israelis and Palestinians, united behind the slogan "Israel and Palestine — two states for two peoples."

TONY BROWN,  
Sydney

## Keep on dancing?

"IS THAT all there is?" asks Alec Kahn in the words of Peggy Lee about the Australia Day circus and shows that life under the patriotic Big Top is empty.

He goes on to imply that Australian nationalism is more empty than, say, French or

American nationalism because our rulers never had to lead a "struggle for liberty and equality against the old order" as did the American and French capitalist classes.

But French and American nationalism has long since been drained of class content. It wouldn't do to remind the celebrating plebs that "history is the history of class struggle" because their affluent heads could go the same way as Marie Antoinette's.

All nationalisms, like junk food, are empty of nutrition. Australian nationalism tries to co-opt critical voices—the Sydney fireworkers on The Day were synchronised to Midnight Oil singing about the CIA and Pine Gap.

Peggy Lee went on to sing, "then let's keep on dancing, let's break out the booze and have a ball." Revolutionary socialists will, instead, go on with the working class to break out and have a "festival of the oppressed," hopefully before the next 200 years.

PHIL SHANNON,  
Canberra



SEVERAL GROUPS of government professionals took industrial action in support of second tier wage claims in Canberra during February.

First the health professionals struck for and won their 4 per cent. Then curators at the War Memorial took action. Next were the librarians.

On a Wednesday afternoon about one hundred librarians lined the front stairs of the National Library, handing out leaflets to the public explaining that no professional services would be available for two hours. Other departmental libraries took similar action.

These might seem like conservative groups of workers, but they're all showing a bit of fight. Just think what they could do if offered a wages claim campaign without fighting for

— Mary Gorman

— Liz Ross

# Apartheid hawks back Botha's ban

THE UNITED Democratic Front called it "declaring war against peaceful opposition". Emminent heads of state from Washington to Canberra made hypocritical outraged noises. Media pundits said that in virtually outlawing 17 black organisations, the South African government has "over-reacted".

Yet the sweeping new crackdown by President Botha is the logical next step in the government's repression. It also signals the death-knell of Botha's ambitious program of "reforms".

The "hawks" are in the ascendant within the Cabinet, and are making the running in the power struggle over the succession to a President who is near the end of his reign.

Finding itself increasingly dependent on African skilled labour, the Pretoria regime has sought over the past decade to moderate the Apartheid system to allow a black middle class to consolidate itself.

The ideas was that a layer of politically moderate black politicians, community representatives and union officials would emerge and would restrain the increasingly powerful workers and resettle slum dwellers.

Black resistance is certainly continuing. Philip Whitefield and Vijayo Langenstarr, just returned from South Africa, told *Socialist Action* that rent boycotts are "very significant. In Soweto alone, 18 months of rent boycott has cost the town council over \$100 million, with participants withdrawing evictions, arrests, detentions vigilante attacks."

To this end petty apartheid was lessened and some forms of political expression allowed. The lynching of Botha's reform strategy was the creation of separate parliaments and local authorities within which the various non-white races could play at self-government without exercising real power.

The plan has been a fiasco. Creating a bit of space for political expression has allowed radical protest movements to develop. The blacks, coloureds and Indians boycotted the token trial. Black rightwing vigilante groups, with a free rein on the security forces, are trying to impose their terror on opponents throughout the country. Death squads are assassinating activists. Most township organisations have collapsed in the face of this relentless repression.

Botha would also have been emboldened in his crackdown by the sickening infighting among blacks in Natal province, especially around the capital

MEANWHILE on the extreme right, Botha's reform plans sparked a white backlash. His National Party



United Democratic Front rallies: now virtually outlawed

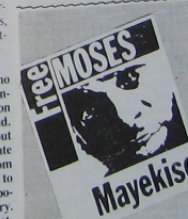
Pietermaritzburg. In January alone 108 people were killed in battles between the ANC-supported United Democratic Front and Chief Buthelez's conservative, tribal-based Zulu movement Inkatha.

Buthelez is a member of the toothless multi-racial executive authority the Botha government set up last year in Natal. He sees that body as a first step toward a power-sharing arrangement between white Natal and black KwaZulu, the "homeland" he leads. But for Buthelez and his movement lay claim to a future share in power, he has to destroy the rival UDF. Murder and intimidation are the means he uses.

Not surprisingly the UDF fights back, but only Apartheid benefits from the bloodshed. So the police and army turn a blind eye to Inkatha's violence, or even promote it.

The union movement was the only surviving group to not only survive the state of emergency but to grow. Botha's national measures are designed to curtail organisations like the Congress of South African Trade Unions. But as the basic struggle of unions is in the workplace, and Botha can hardly prohibit their members from going to work, the union movement is the best placed to survive the new repression.

is for reasons like these that the organised working class represents the real power which can eventually smash Apartheid.



THE MOSES Mayakiso Committee meets every second Saturday at the Courthouse Hotel, Newtown (Sydney), 2 pm. More details: 787 3519.

— Tom O'Lincoln and John Passant



# Violence: a question of means and ends

Revolutionary socialists are forever coming up against the question of violence. Our political opponents make statements like, "We need to reject violence as a means to political ends."

Some of the people putting these arguments are hypocrites. Australian governments, including Labour governments, have regularly used violence against workers and oppressed people. During World War One Andrew Fisher vowed to defend the British Empire to "the last man and the last shilling" and sent workers off to die. Ben Chifley used troops to break the 1949 coal strike. More recently Neville Wran's police evicted squatters from the Glebe housing estate and the Cain government used cops to smash up the BL-F office in Melbourne.

Such people have a cheek warning us against using violent means. Really our argument against them is not as much about violence but about what political ends you are prepared to use it for.

Our rulers use it to keep the existing social system intact. History teaches us that capitalists are not prepared to lose power without a fight. In Chile in 1973 a democratically elected government was overthrown by an army general, and thousands of workers were gunned down or tortured to preserve the privileges of the country's ruling elite. In Poland in 1981 General Jaruzelski's troops were used to crush the Solidarity trade union movement.

The Australian capitalists wouldn't hesitate to do the same. When the Whitlam government was overthrown in the notorious Kerr coup of 1975, the army was put on "grey alert" in case there was too much resistance to the sacking of the Prime Minister.

Of course there are genuine pacifists too, who place their faith in the methods used by Gandhi in India, or who are inspired by the example of "people's power" in the Philippines. For a time the methods of non-violent "civil disobedience" were something of a fad in the Australian peace movement, and they are currently arousing a lot of interest among the Palestinians.



There is nothing wrong with non-violence as a tactic. In fact most political protests avoid physical confrontation and this is usually quite sensible, as brawls with the cops normally leave the protestors carrying most of the injuries.

What we disagree with is the notion that says there is a single, absolute rule for human conduct which makes non-violence into a principle. Because in reality, non-violent strategies for social change have never worked.

Far from leading to the liberation of India from British rule, Gandhi's peaceful campaigns led to smaller and narrower campaigns over the years. His last campaign, in 1940-41, consisted of individual gestures which got a lot of his followers arrested but made little impact on Indian politics. In fact his methods succeeded only in *derailing* more militant movements such as the Bombay naval mutiny of 1946 (opposed by Gandhi) which could have threatened British power. The British left India for military and economic reasons which had little to do with the Mahatma.

In the Philippines, workers and peasants have long since discovered that the "people's power revolution" of 1986 has changed little in their lives. In fact, more trade union and peasant activists are being killed by the ruling class and its thugs than ever before.

IN THE American peace movement where Gandhian type tactics have been employed quite a lot, another problem has arisen. To ensure that demonstrators respond peacefully to even the grossest provocation by police, they have to be given special training in advance. The trained activists then show up on the day of the demonstration and carry out pre-planned sit-ins or what ever. Anyone else who comes along spontaneously in response to seeing a leaflet or poster is reduced to the role of passive spectator. Mass involvement is curtailed, and activities are dominated by a trained elite.

To end the horrors of war, exploitation and oppression created by capitalism it is going to be necessary sometimes to use force. The workers will need to be armed. That does not mean, as is sometimes imagined, that socialist revolution is primarily a matter of shooting the bosses.

The October revolution in 1917 in Russia led to only a handful of deaths. The revolution was based on the social power of the working class, who controlled the factories through their organisation and the streets through their numbers, and who had won the sympathy of the largely peasant soldiery by supporting the Bolshevik slogan of "peace, bread and land".

Even where street confrontations did occur, the violence was

not initiated by the workers. As Leon Trotsky told a Tsarist court after the 1905 Russian revolution:

"What did we believe necessary for the uprising to be victorious? The sympathy of the troops! What is needed for this?... Important as weapons are, the main power does not lie in weapons. Not the capacity of the masses to kill, but their great readiness to die — this is what in the last analysis guarantees the victory of the people's uprisings."

WHEN THE troops saw the workers were prepared to die in the struggle for liberation, they began to question their own role.

So the Russian revolution was primarily social, not military. Even so, the workers had to be armed for their own defence. They had to win over the armed soldiers. And in the following years, they had to wage a war in defence of their workers' state against counter-revolutionaries and foreign invaders.

We like the early Chartists in Britain, hold the view that we want social change "peacefully if we may, forcefully if we must". Unfortunately, we have seen 200 years of ruling class atrocities since the Chartist days. They make clear that it is almost certainly the "must" part of the slogan that we will have to act upon.

— Ross MacKenzie

## REVIEWS

"Amandla!" means power and the show put on by the group *Amandla*, the cultural ensemble of the African National Congress is a notable contribution to the struggle of South African blacks for power.

The performance is political throughout. Not only in the content of some of the songs and scenes, as you'd expect, but also the very nature of their music theatre style.

The Apartheid regime propagates the myth that the majority black population is essentially rural, tribal, traditional and culturally backward. This is part of the ideological base for the establishment of the Bantustans, the so-called "homelands" in which the blacks are supposed to find their "separate but equal" identities.

But in fact South Africa has had for many decades the largest permanent black urban population south of the Sahara. The music that *Amandla* presents is the product of this tradition. Its assertion is an assertion of the reality of the black townships such as Soweto. It is part of the struggle against Pretoria's efforts to destroy this urban reality — the Pass Laws, the destruction of shanty towns such as Sophiatown Crossroads, and the like.

The show draws on traditional African music, but more than a century of urban life has added a number of modern elements. These include a non-tribal guitar based dance music which grew out of the illegal drinking dens called shebeens in the 20s and 30s. Later it was influenced by American gospel and minstrel techniques and most importantly jazz, particularly swing-jazz of the 1950s.

Unlike other parts of Africa, where drumming or instrumental music were traditionally the main communal forms of music, in South Africa the emphasis was on singing. This element too contributes to the unique musical experience of *Amandla*.

The show consists of a series of items involving singing, dancing and instrumental music, organised around a rough chronology of South Africa this century.

We are shown the participation of women in the fight against the pass law, the beginning of guerrilla activity and the actions of workers, including the famous Gumbuto Dance of the mine workers. Throughout, the performance is polished and full



few white men there. The blackfellas did the rest. The pastoral industry was built on the back of slave labour."

Arthur worked on many different farms, usually for no money, clearing the land, building houses, putting in and harvesting crops. "I got no pay, only my tucker, and I worked damn hard. I never saw that ten bob a week. He promised me. I was doing the work and they was getting the profits."

Nan's job as a servant was slave labour too.

"I did all the work at Iambos. From when I got up in the morning till when I went to sleep at night, I worked. When they rang the bell, I knew they wanted me. That's all I did sometimes, run in and out. Someone was always ringin' that damn bell."

Sally and her mother visited the outbreak station where Nan Tears was shed. Now they knew their place and were whole people.

"We had an Aboriginal consciousness now, and were proud of it."

Patricia Langenacker

# Amandla! is power, and this show's got it

of energy. This is no political tract given a musical backing but a fully professional production.

I have only one real criticism. The price of the tickets must have been a deterrent for many, and the extremely booz black enamel and red velvet atmosphere of the Melbourne Playhouse was a very strange setting for this highly political show.

South Africa is also "celebrating" an anniversary this year — it is 400 years since the Dutch explorer Diaz "discovered" the Cape of Good Hope. Local blacks recently refused to participate in a re-enactment held on the beach where Diaz landed, which is normally one reserved for whites only. Instead, and far from whites only, black and female whites faced out the fear which the Apartheid regime imagines to be an appropriate response to the white colonisers.

*Amandla* represents something else — not far but determination to struggle and resist oppression. They are the best expression of the role cultural expression can play in that struggle that I have seen.

— Ruth Wood

## BOOKS

### Aboriginal and proud

IN HER BOOK *My place* Sally Morgan tells how she discovered that she had Aboriginal blood.

Four years her mother, Gladys, and grandmother, Nan, had denied that they were Aborigines. "Tell them you're Indian" they said. They were scared to tell the truth in case their children were evicted, from them or they were taken away.

Their tears were taken away experience. Nan was taken away from her family to Perth, supposedly to go to school, but instead she was put to work as a servant. Gladys was sent to an orphanage when she was three. It was government policy to take half-caste children away from their parents.

The book describes how hard the family has had to work. Nan's brother, Arthur, talked about the outbreak station in the Pilbara where he and Nan were born.

"We were the tribe that made the station. There were only a

## TELEVISION

### Gramsci on TV

IN DECEMBER Britain's Channel 4 showed a documentary about the great Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci. Called *Everything that concerns people*, it used fascinating old footage combined with interviews and re-enactments.

Gramsci was one of those socialists who were not surprised by the Russian revolution, and understood its international importance right away. The program shows original footage of a huge demonstration by Turin workers celebrating the Russian events.

Building on the revolution's lessons, Gramsci fought to build workers' councils in the Turin factories, and later Communist Party. Here the documentary misleads. It suggests he regretted the split in the socialist movement which led to the formation of the CP, and tries to make him out a sort of moderate.

Australian socialists will be keen to see this program when it comes to see to Australia, but in order to separate the valuable lessons from the distortions we suggest that you read Chris Harman's pamphlet, *Gramsci versus Reformism*.

— Richard Emerson

# Disarming talk, and that's all

**A**NOTHER round of Palm Sunday peace marches rolls by this month.

And suddenly it is possible to detect a slight mood of optimism about nuclear disarmament. Headlines like "A New Beginning" greeted Messrs Gorbachev and Reagan when they signed the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in December.

But is INF a new beginning? Or is it just another of the cruel hoaxes that the superpowers keep acting out at summits and arms talks?

Summit meetings have never brought peace any closer. The first, between Russia, America, Britain and France in 1955, was soon followed by the Suez invasion. The Kennedy-Khrushchev talks in 1961 were followed by the Cuban missile crisis. The Johnson-Kosygin summit of 1967 did not stop the Vietnam War or the invasion of Czechoslovakia. And just six months after Reagan met Gorbachev in Geneva in 1985, the US bombed Tripoli.

The same goes for arms treaties. SALT I, signed in 1972, produced a huge increase in nuclear weapons. It only limited launchers. So the US and Russia simply put 3, 8 and even 16 warheads on each launcher, each independently targetable.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty of the same year was a similar fraud. Neither side had anti-ballistic missile systems in 1972, but the ABM treaty allowed them 100 launchers each. Neither side has yet reached that limit, despite their best efforts.

The superpowers never even signed SALT II. Both paid lip-service to it, because it also allowed them more weapons. As soon as it got in their way in 1986, they ignored it.

**THIS LATEST treaty is meant to be different. Unlike the others INF actually abolishes a whole class of nuclear weapons.**

It is a desperately small class, however. Land-based ballistic missiles with an intermediate range (300-3600 miles) are just 4% of the super-powers' nuclear arsenals.

Never mind the quantity, commentators tell us — the spirit. INF is supposed to herald a new mood of compromise which will produce a 50% cut in nuclear weapons in the START treaty, due to be finalised in Moscow later this year.

But what is this spirit? Even as INF was being signed, Russia and America were speeding up other heats of the arms race.

The US will withdraw its Persh-

ing II missiles from Europe under INF — only to recycle them as anti-satellite missile launchers. Anti-satellite warfare is a dangerous new field, not covered by any treaties.

Gorbachev revealed that Russia

After all, even a 95% cut would leave each superpower with enough missiles to destroy the world. And a 50% cut may actually make a first strike more tempting for both sides!

The US in particular has relied



too was developing a Star Wars system, which explained his readiness to drop the subject from INF discussions. Reagan, of course, is pressing on with Star Wars regardless. As former defence secretary Casper Weinberger said, "if we can get a system which we know can render their weapons impotent, we will be back in a situation where we were the only nation with a nuclear weapon."

Both sides are building more submarine, ship and air launched missiles, which are not covered by INF.

As for "de-nuclearizing" Europe, forget it. The substantial French and British arsenals remain. NATO retains 4000 warheads in Europe, and is doubling its fleet of nuclear-armed F-111s in Britain from 162 to 336. Just in case these can't get through to drop free-fall bombs on Moscow, NATO is developing new "stand-off" missiles for them to launch while still in Western airspace.

**IF THIS is the real spirit behind INF, then what chance has the START treaty of actually happening?**

Max Kampelman, chief US negotiator, rates it as only "a 50-50 shot." Other insiders put the odds at just one-in-three, according to Newsweek.

Such is the Strangelove logic of nuclear war that a 50% cut in arms will not make the world any safer. Indeed, START may make it more dangerous.

on multiple warheads to get around SALT I. It has crammed hundreds of missiles onto its 36 Trident submarines, for example. Under START, if the Tridents are halved to 18, only 12 might be at sea at any given time. Since Russia won't have to halve its fleet of over 100 Attack submarines (designed to hunt Tridents), the US submarines will be more vulnerable. This will increase the temptation for both sides to strike first.

Such considerations may lead to a new form of proliferation under START. Henry Kissinger is urging the US to rush ahead with single-warhead Midgetman missiles, to spread its forces as widely as possible. And in negotiations, both sides have already bent the 50% cut so that they can develop sea-launched cruise missiles, a recent innovation.

Both scattering of weapons and sea-launched missiles will make a 50% cut a nightmare to police. Indeed, experts now admit, it is easier to police a total ban than a partial cut. Inspectors only need to spot one missile to detect a breach of a total ban. With a partial cut, they need a complete inventory of missiles and their movements.

**WHY, THEN are the superpowers going through this elaborate charade?**

Both have economic problems which make it desirable to rationalise arms spending. Russia in particular spends 17% of GNP on arms, and the rest of its economy

is distorted as a result.

Nuclear arms account for only one-fifth of Russia's arms spending. So cutting them will do little to solve Gorbachev's problems — although a long-term lessening of tension might allow him to lower general arms spending.

Just as important to both sides is the prestige to be gained from being seen to pursue peace. Michael Sheehan of the International Institute of Strategic Studies explains, "The object in arms negotiations is not so much to reach an agreement as to be seen by the public as trying to do so and to pin the blame for failure on the other side. It is a mechanism for tranquillising anxieties..."

Both sides need the prestige at present. Reagan has become a lame-duck president, while Gorbachev wants to remodel his economy at the working class's expense.

The danger is that the world's anti-nuclear movement, already in decline due to its fear of militancy, will be further gulled by the whole charade. Already Britain's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, instead of exposing INF, has tried to claim it as a great victory. British Labour leader Neil Kinnock has used INF to shed his party's position of complete unilateral disarmament, shifting to Thatcher's position of "multilateral arms limitation."

**That is the real intent of Gorbachev and Reagan with INF and START — to disarm their critics, rather than themselves.**

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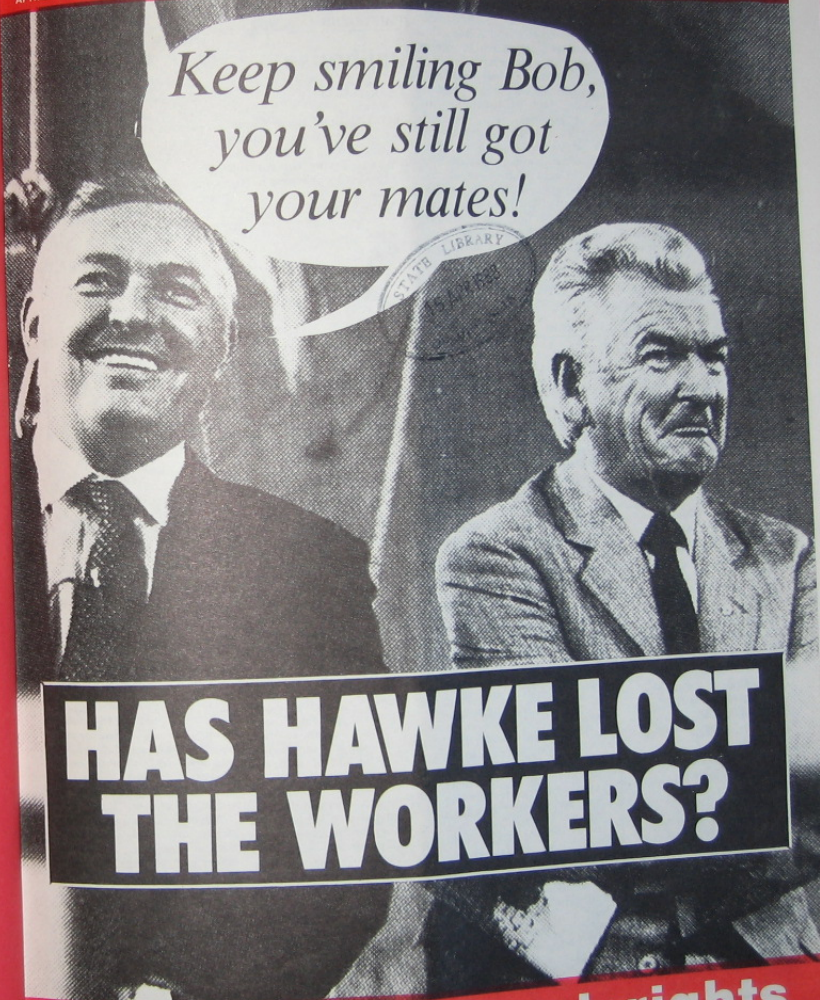
# SOCIALIST ACTION



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50 CENTS



*Keep smiling Bob,  
you've still got  
your mates!*

## HAS HAWKE LOST THE WORKERS?

• The fight for black rights

## THE UNIONS



## Whose freedom?

THE MILITANT unionists brought their Labor Day protest to a rousing finish by singing, 'Solidarity forever, for the union makes us strong'. Builders' labourers, government workers, supporters of Solidarity and others were demonstrating over lack of trade union freedom, outside the opening of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions conference in Melbourne on 14 March.

Delegates attending the conference had leaflets thrust into their hands. "Take one, this is what is really happening in Australia," urged the demonstrators. Bob Hawke got the reception he deserved with calls of "traitor" and "scab" as he went in to address the plenary session.

While Hawke and Simon Crean tried to suggest that Australian workers had never had it so good, the message from other delegates was more negative. Unionists from Chile, Poland and South Africa told of

massive attacks on workers' rights.

But instead of calling for trade union action, delegates called for "urgent representations at the highest possible level". Coming from the South African delegation this call spells further tragedy for South African workers. Even Bishop Tutu knows appeals to the Botha government are worthless.

Disappointingly Poland's Lech Walesa put in a plea "not to meet provocation with provocation". Yet Solidarity's lesson, surely, is that as the union backs down the state comes in with the iron fist.

Chile's unionists packed a bit more of a punch. Accusing Alan Bond of helping to prop up the dictatorship, the Chileans warned that the return of democracy would mean the end of Bond's company ownership. And of any others who supported the regime.

## ISRAEL



## Vanunu sentenced

MORDECHAI Vanunu, the Israeli who revealed photos of Israel's secret nuclear installation at Dimona, has been convicted and sentenced to 18 years imprisonment.

Vanunu's real crime consisted of upstaging the delicate strategy Israel was operating. While it was well known that they had a nuclear capacity, they have never openly acknowledged it.

On the one hand, they wanted it known that they had a nuclear capability, as a deterrent to the surrounding to the surrounding Arab nations. On the other hand, Israel has for decades presented itself to the world as a near-helpless David, surrounded by threatening Goliaths, bristling with weapons.

This particular myth is currently being heavily undermined, perhaps permanently, by both Vanunu's actions and the current uprising in the occupied territories. Each day on TV, the world sees heavily armed Israeli troops confronting ordinary people armed only with stones. And Vanunu's revelations show that the armed soldiers are backed by approximately 200 nuclear warheads. The roles of David and Goliath are being reversed.

The Israeli government have consistently refused to contemplate any political settlement which involved negotiations with the P.L.O. The ostensible reason for this is that

the P.L.O are "terrorists". This shaky moral stand looks very shaky when contrasted with the daily actions of their troops in the occupied territories, and with their possession of weapons of ultimate violence.

## PRISONERS



## Jailhouse rocked

"BOGGO Road is the Crime" was the slogan on a banner outside Boggo Road jail in Brisbane during the rooftop occupation by prisoners in late February.

Many expected that another



Boggo Rd protest

major riot would break out inside the jail. In an attempt to halt proposed "reforms", "old guard" screws had been running a campaign of harassment and bullying that had led some prisoners to attempt suicide.

Despite bashing, withholding or contamination of food, and gassings, especially in the notorious 86-year-old Division 2, prisoners organised their resistance the way they wanted it, and built up their campaign for changes by a well-sustained occupation of the jail roof.

Four occupiers said that they were prepared to hunger strike until they died if necessary and painted their demand for a public enquiry on the roof. Their banners read "Stop All Torture Now", "Close Division Two" and "Don't Let the Hunger Strikers Die" — a reference to other prisoners inside also on hunger strike.

A new prison is currently being built. The physical conditions there will be less barbaric than in the old Division 2, which had mattresses on the floor, and as one prisoner put it,

"no coverage, no water, only cockroaches, lice and rats." But whether conditions otherwise will be any different is another matter.

In Boggo Road there are few opportunities for work and training, and few rehabilitation programmes. Prisoners scathingly point out that the current budget of the Education Officer is \$500 for 500 men — enough to buy each one a biro! Parole procedures are secret and arbitrary, and life sentences are never for a fixed time but at the whim of the authorities.

A 24-hour picket to which Socialist Action members gave serious support was maintained outside the jail for the five days of the rooftop occupation.

## IN MEMORIAM



## Manda Biles 1958-1988

WOMEN'S liberation struggles, trade union action, gay rights demos, housing — these are just some of the issues Manda Biles was involved in since the early seventies. Right from the beginning Manda was a committed activist.

Not only did she march on the streets, but she was often in the thick of organising the action beforehand. During the last four years she was the union rep at Colberg Social Security in Melbourne, and took a consistently strong union stand.

With her death on 30 March, it's not just the activist we've lost, but a loyal friend.

It is with fighters like Manda that struggles are fought and won. And while we are the poorer for her death, her life will continue to be an inspiration.

## QUEENSLAND

## Brisbane: how we're fighting the racists

ANYONE expecting Brisbane to be just one big fun-fair during Expo will be in for a surprise. Local activists have already shown in recent weeks that they won't allow the serious issue of racism to be forgotten.

John Hay, a political casualty of the "Job for PM" debacle, found this out first hand.

Early in March, he teamed up with a group of real estate agents in an attempt to stop the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation for Sport from purchasing the Sandgate Football Club.

In classic "free enterprise" style, the agents letter-boxed with leaflets arguing "Tax-payers money is being used to set up a black-only club." They circulated petitions against "an exclusively Aboriginal club," and called meetings, out of which emerged a "Concerned Residents" group (concerned with property values).

The black community joined forces with a group of local residents and members of the "Justice 88" committee, to take on the racists at a public meeting in Sandgate Town Hall on 6 March. We distributed leaflets throughout the area exposing the racists' myth-making (government funds had not been applied for to buy the club and it would not be exclusively for Aboriginal use), and urging people to come to the meeting.

On the day, 400 anti-racists turned up. The "Concerned Residents" could only mobilise a token presence of 30 or 40. A motion that "this meeting supports the proposed purchase...and calls for the Federal government to assist by making funds available", moved by a Socialist Action member, was passed with only one dissenter.

The next battle was in the West End. Black organisations have been negotiating with the Brisbane City Council for over 2 years to establish a Cultural Centre in Musgrave Park. Recently it became clear that the Council was prepared to give the go-ahead.

Not convinced that Aborigines and their supporters could repeat the Sandgate performance, estate agents in West attempted another racist campaign. But the wheels fell off

their hand wagon when their first public meeting was swamped by supporters of the Cultural Centre. A motion similar to the Sandgate one was overwhelmingly endorsed by 300-400 people.

No doubt somewhat demoralised, John Hay chose a less

The student bureaucrats tried to justify the move on the grounds that the station was not serving the interests of "ordinary students". Apparently in their eyes blacks, women, lesbians, gays and environmentalists, all of whom 4ZZZ gives air time to, are not ordinary students.

The attack would have deprived all these groups of a voice in Queensland's Murdoch and Bond dominated media. It would have also been a blow to organising efforts for the anti-Expo protests set for late April.

4ZZZ, with its 95,000 listeners, plays a vital role in struggles like these. But how little interest the student bureaucrats have in social justice was demonstrated recently, when someone sprayed a KKK slogan over a mural by an Aboriginal artist outside the student union. It was left there for two weeks.

This time around, 4ZZZ has defeated attempts to push it off the air. But its long term future obviously remains in doubt. It will take more united action to keep it operating.

Unnerved by the protest being organised, he changed his venue to the back streets of Newstead. We were there to meet him. Although protected by 20 boys in blue, only a handful of committed businessmen arrived to cross the picket line.

Defend our radio station!

4ZZZ

Defend our radio station!

IN LATE March, Queensland Independent Union Council members, including many in the around the ALP (who control the Union) tried to force Brisbane independent radio station 4ZZZ-FM off the air, by withdrawing funding to the station. They got a surprise.

## DEMOS



## Your chance to protest

HAD A gutful of Bicentennial Bullshit? Here's your next chance to protest.

In Brisbane there will be four important activities around Expo time. From Wednesday 27 April to Thursday 5 May, there is a "United Indigenous Cultural Survival Gathering" in Musgrave Park. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are expected to come from North Queensland and interstate.

You can march three times: 28 April, 9am, from Roma St Forum to Musgrave Park, 30 April, 11 am, same route, and 4 May, 6 pm from Albert Park to Parliament to let Mr Ahern know what you think of him.

As usual the cops' PR department is spreading rumors about "Aboriginal terrorism", but seasoned demonstrators will know that Brisbane's boys in blue pose the only threat of violence.

In Canberra you can protest on 9 May, at demonstrations organised to coincide with the opening of Parliament House, initiated by the Canberra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Community.

Tony Mitchell



Demonstrating against the racists in Brisbane

## SOCIALIST ACTION

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## BRISBANE

PO Box 99, St Lucia  
Queensland 4067  
Tel (07) 371 7114

## CANBERRA

PO Box 17,  
Jamison Centre,  
ACT 2614.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne  
Mondays 7:00  
Lindcoln Hotel  
91 Gardigan St, Carlton

Sydney  
Tuesdays 7:00  
Metrop Hotel (top floor)  
Bridge & George St, City

Brisbane  
Thursdays 7:30 pm  
Riviera 371 7114  
for location

Canberra  
Thursdays 6:00  
Blair Room,  
Workers Club, Civic

**We're marching...**

**SOCIALIST** Action members throughout Australia took to the streets in the annual peace marches, held on Palm Sunday in most places. Although the mood at the marches was as insipid and middle class as ever, we sought to introduce some class politics with our banners and sales of *Socialist Action* magazine.

In April and early May the action continues. During Expo in Brisbane there will be three marches to join, and three comrades will also be present at the demonstration being held to coincide with the opening of Parliament House in Canberra.

**Brisbane**

Brisbane comrades have been heavily involved in supporting prisoners at Bogga Road jail, and the branch has sold over 100 copies of the Queensland University Socialist Action Club's new pamphlet: *200 years of struggle about land rights and the aboriginal cause.*

**Meetings**

Sydney branch of Socialist Action attracted 20 people to a public meeting last month to hear Philip Whitefield talk and show slides about the current situation in South Africa, saying the struggle there was "not just against Apartheid but against the whole capitalist system."

Canberra branch has a successful orientation week at the Australian National University, with 17 students joining our club and 40 buying copies of our magazine.

We held an unusual discussion as part of our Melbourne branch meeting on Monday, 21 March. Four experienced union workplace delegates, including two invited outside speakers, discussed shop floor problems today and the particular problem of incorporation of the unions through such methods as industrial democracy. The starting point was a discussion document originally circulated at our January national conference. Speakers from the railways, Telecom, Department of Social Security and a local high school discussed their experiences. We hope to repeat the discussion again soon, with an emphasis on how to organise the fightback.

**Sydney**

Sydney branch has been active in the campaign to free Moses Mayekiso, the jailed South African union leader. The campaign has been leaftelling the film 'Cry Freedom' and collecting signatures. About a hundred people have signed the petition each night.

**EDUCATION POLICY**



Students confront Andrew Hay over fees: ALP policy is similar

**User-pays classroom?**

**SCHOLARS FOR** dollars, that's ALP policy these days.

The Hawke Government introduced a \$250 fee for University and CAE students last year. This year the fee is \$263. Next year graduates will probably have to start paying off the full cost of their education through a special tax.

There are two motives behind charging for education. The first is to reduce taxes on the rich by making the "user pay" for public services. Unless of course they are corporations benefiting from advice on exporting. Or companies receiving subsidies on investment. Or firms benefiting from tariffs. The second motive is to restructure the Australian economy to make it more internationally competitive.

Neither approach however is likely to overcome the stagnation of Australian capitalism or remove the prospect of a recession within 18 months.

Hawke and education minister Dawkins are keen to move the burden of education spending away from general tax revenue and to place it on the shoulders of the majority of people who now get degrees and go on to become workers, as clerks, teachers and technicians.

The main benefits from education actually go to the employers of skilled labour. But the Government wants to reduce taxes on employers to encourage them to invest.

The second reason for fees is tied with Australian industry's international competitiveness. In December last year Dawkins

issued a Green Paper on education. The government wants to increase the number of graduates produced every year from 88,000 in 1986 to 125,000 in 2001. It wants the graduates to be better equipped to meet the needs of business. It wants the tertiary education system restructured to match the national economic priorities of Australian capitalism. And all this is to happen without increasing the education budget.

This means a greater emphasis on vocational education. Courses which are critical of Australian society will be under attack. At the same time politicians, senior bureaucrats in the public service and trade unions want to reduce the autonomy of universities.

The ACTU's position, embodied in its document *Australia Reconstructed* is the same as the Government's. Though ACTU Assistant Secretary Laurie Carmichael wants to go further by also subordinating secondary education to the specific vocational needs of business.

The plans include making tertiary institutions more efficient by reducing the already limited staff and students' limited say in decision making in favour of professional managers.

A companion document to the Green Paper, the Report of the Review of Australian Studies, stresses the need to build the nationalism of students. Graduates who understand their profession's place in Australian

society, the Report argues, will be more co-operative and more productive employees. In other words they will be ready to help their bosses pursue the "national interest" by making profits for them.

The idea behind the Government's education reforms boils down to a hope that by cutting taxes and increasing the skills of the Australian workforce Australia will be able to compete more effectively on world markets. But this idea is not original.

In fact the restructuring of education is in line with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (rich nations club) report *Universities Under Scrutiny*. Not only OECD members but countries like South Korea and Singapore are putting similar policies in place. They can't all do better in competition on the world market through education reform (or encouraging investment on the basis of lower taxes). The dog-eat-dog realities of capitalism will frustrate most.

Education should be expanded, to help people to enjoy, understand and control their lives. In a socialist society it would fit together logically with economic production because that productive process would likewise be controlled by workers themselves, and used for human needs. The capitalist view of schooling as just another commodity useful for making profits is the major obstacle to that kind of education.

— Rick Kuhn

**CENTRAL AMERICA**

**RONALD REAGAN** likes to play the strongman in Central America. But lately the strongman's muscles look suspiciously like they're made of cardboard.

Airlifting thousands of troops into Honduras didn't boost the morale of the Contra mercenaries or terrify the Nicaraguan government. In fact it didn't stop the Contras signing a ceasefire that looks like ending the war. And Washington's efforts to oust General Noriega from Panama became a long-pursuing saga despite constant reassurances that he would go "in a few days".

As a pretext for sending 3200 soldiers to Honduras, Reagan cooked up a Sandinista "invasion". When Sandinista troops crossed the Honduran border while pursuing Contra forces, he twisted Honduran President Azcona's arm. Azcona went through the motions and asked for help.

But while it created some media hype and diverted attention for a time from the indictments of Administration officials arising out of the Iran-Contra affair, the invasion scare didn't convince Congress to provide new aid to the Contras. And that meant they were finished.

Already their numbers had fallen from an estimated 20,000 to more like 5000. The Nicaraguan army was pounding them mercilessly. Before the US troops had returned home, the Contras had done a deal with the Sandinistas.

The ceasefire terms are by no means a total victory for the Sandinista government. They have agreed to release hundreds of jailed former National Guardsmen, the notorious torturers of the Somoza dictatorship. They have had to negotiate directly with the Contras, after vowing they would only talk with Reagan.

A ceasefire is not yet peace, and in some ways the Contras have begun dragging their feet. Yet no balance final settlement seems likely.

**THE REGIONAL** peace plan of Costa Rican president Arias, which provides the broader context, is not ideal either. As part of their concessions to oppositional rightwing elements, the Sandinistas have removed restrictions on business interests and the reactionary newspaper *La Prensa*. This at the same time they are abolishing food subsidies—a devastating blow at

**Nicaragua: peace brings new problems**



Sandinista reserivists on patrol: what will peace bring?

the poor.

Still, the result is a far cry from the destruction of the Nicaraguan revolution which Reagan has worked for so fanatically during his years in power. We don't blame the Sandinista government for making compromises when these are forced on them by brutal pressures from outside. The critical issue, however, is what happens now to the Nicaraguan economy. Arias claims that peace would show Nicaragua's problems were due to the war but to "gross economic mismanagement". He hopes the problems—which are most certainly caused by the war—will sink the Sandinistas in the near future.

Nicaraguan workers have made immense sacrifices in the past nine years. By and large they were willing to do so because they supported the struggle against US imperialism and its mercenaries. The fact that economic privileges have been continually handed out to

the country's capitalists, while workers' rights and living standards were cut, has caused grumbling but little overt resistance.

But in recent months there have been signs that people's patience is wearing thin. One sign is angry demonstrations against conscription. If peace now breaks out, the willingness of most Nicaraguan workers to go on tightening their belts will wear very thin indeed. Unless living standards rise and workers win back the right to strike, the government's popularity could nosedive like Bob Hawke's.

Because there is no sizable movement in Nicaragua which argues for a genuine socialist solution, based on workers themselves running industry and the affairs of state, most workers naturally see letting politics in terms of the policies of the Sandinistas. Yet these are actually pro-capitalist policies, with continuing concessions to private industry aimed at

boosting investment. The great danger is that people disenchanted with the Sandinista government will be attracted to the extreme rightwing groupings which pose the only apparent political alternative.

**MEANWHILE** in Panama, Uncle Sam has had no end of trouble dislodging General Noriega from power.

The conflict is a strange one. Noriega has been a protege of Washington since the 1960s, when he was recruited to the CIA. He has strong links to the Pentagon, and had a good working relationship with Colonel Oliver North, the key figure in the Iran-Contra scandal.

Noriega's real concern is not Noriega himself, but the future of the Panama Canal. In the 1970s President Omar Torrijos, riding a wave of nationalist sentiment, negotiated the return of the Canal Zone to Panamanian control and the removal of US troops by the year 2000.

The US presence in Panama is very important. So important in fact that the country's national currency is the US dollar. The American military presence includes the 13th Infantry, the 3rd Battalion 7th Forces group, the Air Force Southern Division and the US Naval Southern Command.

**REAGAN HAS** been anxious to water down the concessions made to Torrijos in the seventies, but Noriega charged. So he seized on the General as a pretext to slap a financial blockade on the country, hoping to force him out.

When the blockade failed to do the job, Washington moved to a riskier strategy: sponsoring political resistance within the country. When the besieged Noriega was unable or unwilling to pay government workers, strikes broke out. Massive working class action has boosted the anti-Noriega struggle.

Yet the mood among workers is mixed. They have no reason to love their country's military dictator, yet they dislike the way the United States takes it upon itself to decide Panama's fate. As we write, whatever his hanging or execution fate, this must be chalked up as another foreign policy fiasco for Reagan. Most Panamanians will be hoping he doesn't try to rectify it through military intervention.

— Tom O'Lincoln

### Political stature

A US newspaper survey found that twice as many people knew the names of Snow White's seven dwarfs as knew the seven Democrat candidates for President. Guess that isn't surprising when they've had Dopey in the White House for eight years...



### Truth in advertising

SO THE Israeli government has ordered tourist bureaus to stop describing Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as just "a stone's throw" from each other. Apparently it's "not appropriate right now."

Sounds quite appropriate.

### Marching orders

WE WERE interested to see that NSW police chief Avery congratulated black activists on a peaceful Australia Day protest, commenting that there were "some Aborigines, police and others who predicted, and perhaps hoped for, violence."

Yes, chief. Like whoever ordered your line of cops to twice stop the march in Macquarie Street, Brisbane... 7

rate to us. With the official death toll of Palestinians last approximating 150, maybe they'll also advise rabbis that the Ten Commandments are just "recommendations".

### Rough at the top

THE WELL dressed executive this year will be wearing a vest made of Du Pont Kevlar. Not only does it complement a pinstriped suit, it also withstands a .357-calibre bullet from a disgruntled employee.

The vests are a steal at between \$600 and \$1400, depending on style and degree of resistance to bullets. For the well-dressed union official, there are fashionable bullet-resistant safari jackets.

Those sensitive documents can be carried in an electrified briefcase, available from a crowd called CCS Communication Control for about \$3000. Its grip dispenses 47,000 volts to an unauthorised hand.

### The quality of mercy

WHAT would you expect to get if you pleaded guilty to possessing pure heroin and cocaine worth over \$1.5 million?

### May we quote you?

- If I as a commissioner can reinstate someone in their job, then why shouldn't I do the exact opposite and put them out of job?
- Brian O'Neill, NSW Industrial Commissioner
- The film *Wall Street* does for the reputation of business what *Jaws* did for fish.
- Business Review Weekly

### Once upon a time...

- 20 years ago — Anti-nuclear senator Jo Valentine was a member of the Country party.
- 12 years ago — George Bush, front runner for the US Presidency, headed the CIA.
- 9 years ago — Mick Young wrote a book called *Want To Work*.
- 1 year ago — The Democrats' election policy on telephone charging included "Assessment on the basis of time not distance".

### Ten years in jail?

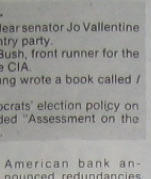
What about an 18 month suspended sentence or two years on probation? That's what two drug runners for the Loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force got. The judge accepted their story that the drugs were intended for the undercover Royal Ulster Constabulary's "anti-terrorist" activities.

Try that line next you got busted for an ounce of grass.

### Bunt axe

IN THE wake of the stockmarket crash, lots of yuppies (Young Unemployed Previously Professional Investment Executives) have lost their jobs. According to the *English Financial Times*, the methods of sacking them are blunt in the extreme.

Like black bin liners on desks, or handing over security cards and then being told why. One



### Play the game

WHAT do you do if the bomb drops on your school? Pupils at the posh English school Eton have just been issued the following instructions.

If you're in the built-up areas, take cover inside

prefering to cut services rather than increase staff.

So the workers changed tactics and closed public access on any day of the week. As well, the Museum, which shares a common foyer with the Library was hit. Baggage handlers, the people who look after your bags and coats when you go into the Library or Museum, were stood down when they refused to staff the foyer.

As we go to press the government has offered \$250,000 to pay for 10 positions, and staff are considering the offer.

Unlike Housing, which fell for a six month working party, State Library staff only go for committees that last two weeks. Again, unlike Housing, State Library has gone for public support to help them protest against long staffing.

Management actually agreed to the Monday closures,

rent. That meant \$3 million less in the government's coffers.

Walsh then told regional managers to stand down the housing officers. Some refused. They were then stood down themselves.

Staff in the regions walked out in protest. They were out for six days.

An urgent meeting was organised with Minister Walsh. The outcome was a sell out. Workers were paid for one strike day and a six month working party was set up to review staffing in the regions. No extra staff have been hired.

The situation at the State Library is more promising. At a meeting one Monday last October, staff decided to close down public access to the library down public access to the library for the day. That then turned into a regular Monday closure.



### CHEAP SHOTS

the nearest building inside rooms open windows and close curtains. On the playing fields, continue playing.

We know the British ruling class used to say that wars were won on the playing fields of Eton. We didn't think they actually believed it!

### Charge sustained

STILL in England... a Major Gilding told a traffic cop he thought he was leading a cavalry charge when he put a tape of battle music on his car radio.

"Suddenly there was a bugle call and the thunder of hooves as the cavalry appeared. I joined the cavalry charge. I gave my horse its head."

He still got a speeding ticket. We think the good major should try again, this time off the road. Perhaps on the playing fields of Eton.

### FEATURE



"The Strike": 1886 oil painting

# Does the union make us strong?

Socialists support the unions, while recognising their limitations. Janey Stone explains how the Marxist view of trade unions has evolved.

**SOCIALISM AND the class struggle** seem an obvious combination today. Yet socialists before Marx, and some even later, ignored the class struggle. Some saw actions like strikes as an obstacle. "Can anything be imagined," wrote Hyndman, leader of the British Social Democratic Federation, "more harmful, more in the widest sense of the word unsocial, than a strike?"

Fortunately, workers paid little attention to such ideas. The young working class of Marx's day fought massive battles, and this reality shaped Marx's theories. His contribution was to bring together the two strains: the political ideas of socialism and the economic struggle of workers.

Capitalism, said Marx in his earlier writings, brings workers together in large enterprises. They then combine into unions to resist bosses' attempts to hold down pay and conditions. Limited possibilities to make economic gains lead to political action, as local actions against one employer develop into more generalised struggle, placing demands on the state. This process eventually culminates in revolution.

As Engels put it, "Strikes are the military

school of the working men in which they prepare themselves for the great struggle which cannot be avoided."

This approach, which envisaged a natural and necessary course of development, has been called "optimistic", but it was not just wishful thinking. Marx and Engels based their views on real events: Britain's revolutionary Chartist union movement.

Housing's first general strike took place in Britain in 1842, lasting twice as long as that of 1926. It saw flying pickets, workers' committees that foreshadowed soviets, and political demands. Marx and Engels didn't invent revolutionary unionism, they saw it.

**BUT** An economic boom later undermined the Chartist movement and a more narrow union movement developed. At the same time a separate layer within the movement emerged: the union bureaucracy, with interests of its own.

Unions began to turn against industrial action, with the Stonemasons' Society warning: "Keep from strikes as you would from a ferocious animal." They began to separate political activities from industrial ones, and shy away from the former.

Recognising the change, Marx criticised unions for "limiting themselves to a guerrilla

war against the effects of the existing system, instead of... using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class." But he continued to see this as an aberration, and did not thoroughly analyse how unions' situation within capitalism, their structures and officials give rise to this limited consciousness.

In 1916 Lenin tackled the problem as part of his theory of imperialism. He argued that imperialist countries like Britain drew super-profits from their empires, and passed some of the loot to sections of the working class, turning them into an upper layer, which supported capitalism. These were which "labour lieutenants" who formed a "labour aristocracy". The strength of this theory was that he tried to identify the material base for union bureaucracy and reformism, rather than just warn against mistakes or betrayals.

The theory is often repeated uncritically by socialists today, but it has fundamental weaknesses. One is that it isn't clear who Lenin thought the labour aristocracy were. Sometimes it seems to be union officials, sometimes the craft unions, sometimes white collar unions ("respectful, neck, reformist and patriotic office employees"). Sometimes it even seems to be all union

## FEATURE

members in the imperialist countries. Yet the situation of each group is clearly different.

At the same time he refers to an "infinitesimal minority", suggesting that the mass of workers are not reformist but revolutionary. But a cursory glance at history or at today's working class shows this to be false: existing in revolutionary situations, reformism is entrenched throughout the working class.

**LENIN'S ECONOMIC** explanation also fails. Higher wages in one sector tend to flow through to others, so that imperialism cannot separate out an "aristocracy" through bribes. On the other hand, assuming it could do so, this would suggest that wage differentials would be higher in imperialist countries. Yet in reality they are narrower than in the third world.

Lenin had a limited understanding of the legal trade union movements operating in the west so his analysis was too schematic. He identified conservative ideas among craft unionists, for example, but didn't allow for fluctuations in that consciousness. Thus in Britain, it was traditionally conservative engineers who formed a mass shop stewards' movement during World War, and showed considerable revolutionary consciousness.

Lenin's comrade Zinoviev had singled out munitions workers as part of the labour aristocracy, yet in Petrograd's Putlov

works they played a revolutionary role in 1917.

It was the German Marxist Rosa Luxemburg and the Italian Antonio Gramsci who developed a more coherent analysis of the union bureaucracy as a social layer; and of trade union consciousness as being tied to capitalism.

Luxemburg had observed legal unions and the legal German socialist party at first hand. During several decades of prosperity and peace before the first World War, the German unions had grown but developed what she called "historically necessary evils": a layer of professionally necessary leaders, resulting in bureaucratism and a narrow outlook. Specialists ran union affairs, and members became passive.

Full time union officials came to value the organisation as an end in itself, forgetting it existed for a purpose, and they were less and less willing to take risks. They also sought a "new theory which would open up an illimitable vista of economic progress to the trade union struggle within the capitalist system." It is as if Rosa Luxemburg had foreseen the Accord!

Gramsci stressed the fact that while unions are workers' organisations, they are still organisations operating within a capitalist logic. "The trade union is the form that labour as a commodity necessarily assumes in a capitalist regime when it organises to dominate the market."

**UNIONS UNITE** workers, but also divide them. They bring them together, but for the purpose of competing with those of other trades. Workers accumulate their "property", their labour power, in "firms" which resemble capitalist firms. Bargaining takes place, the union officials sign agreements which they then have to police. Workers start to feel alienated from their own unions.

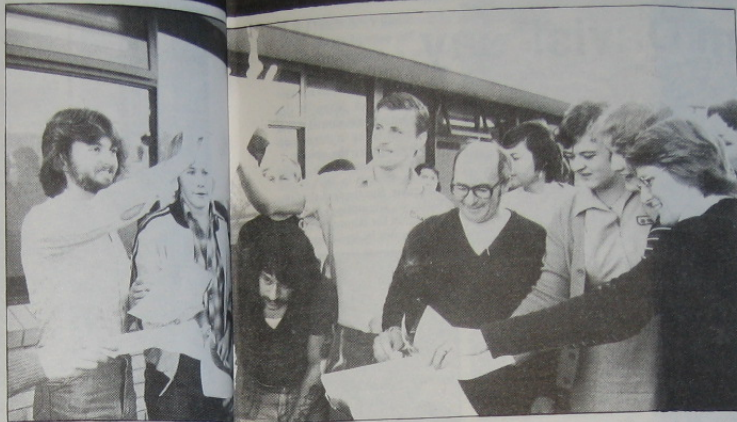
"The workers feel their organisation, the trade union, has become such an enormous apparatus that it now obeys laws... foreign to the masses. They feel that even in... the house they have built tenaciously, with patient effort, cementing it with their blood and tears, the machine crushes man and bureaucracy sterilizes the creative spirit."

How then can workers learn to go beyond trade union consciousness and organisation?

Marx and Engels only became aware relatively late in their careers that there were limitations to trade union organisation, and suggested only makeshift solutions. Lenin was the first to address the issue systematically. His 1902 book *What is to be Done?* is often quoted.

The usual summation of Lenin's views, based on this book, is that in spontaneous struggle workers can only develop a narrow union consciousness, and that revolutionary awareness can only be brought to them from "outside" by intellectuals. But there is much more to Lenin's views than that.

It is easy to show that Lenin raised differing arguments about how revolutionary consciousness could develop. For example there is the often-quoted comment on the 1905 rising to the effect that the working class is "instinctively and spontaneously" socialist. But Lenin hadn't just changed his mind since 1902. Rather his ideas developed with experience.



Defiance at a 1970s factory occupation, W. Vic.

**IN HIS EARLIEST** work he sounds like the early Marx. The struggle of the factory workers, he wrote in 1896, "inevitably turns into a struggle against the entire social order." This was written amidst an upsurge amongst the new Russian proletariat.

*What is to be done?* was a polemic, and Lenin hammered the points hard. In seeking organisation he lifted a theory from Karl Kautsky, then considered the leading Marxist theoretician in Europe. Kautsky said that since Marxism was a science, and the vehicle for science is the bourgeois intellectuals, that Marxist ideas must be brought to the workers from outside, by intellectuals.

Lenin never referred to this elitist notion again, and rightly so. The logic of it is that the workers are not a revolutionary class in their own right. Lenin saw the workers as revolutionary, and sought to realise their potential through a revolutionary party. His views are best summarised by looking at that 1905 quote in full.

"The working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social Democratic (i.e. revolutionary socialist) and more than ten years of work put in by Social Democracy has done a great deal to transform this spontaneity into consciousness."

To ask whether the workers come spontaneously to socialist ideas is to pose the wrong question. At any time some workers are revolutionary. The problem is to increase their numbers and influence, and that's where a revolutionary party comes in.

A revolutionary workers' party wants people to its politics by engaging in the day to day struggle alongside them, and by combating the division between economic and political issues which is fostered by capitalism. In capitalist society there is a division between the state, where power appears to lie, and the economy where control rests with the employing class. To enable workers to overcome this divide, you need to focus their attention on issues beyond the struggle between worker and

boss in a particular enterprise. As Lenin put it, in a passage from *What is to be done?* which has very different implications than the one discussed above:

*"Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere in which alone it is possible to attain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and government..."*

**BY LOOKING** at the whole of society, workers can grasp the need to change it, and begin training themselves to lead all the oppressed in the struggle for revolution: "Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter what class is affected."

This view is far removed from the arguments of Simon Crean or Tribune, who think workers should forget their own "selfish" interests and worry about the "national good" instead. Lenin wanted workers to broaden their outlook so that they could wage a militant struggle on behalf of all the oppressed sections of the nation.

"The Social Democrat's ideal should not be the trade union secretary but the tribune of the people."

It should be clear how mistaken are those people who imagine Lenin's views were incompatible with Rosa Luxemburg's. It is not true that Lenin opposed spontaneity, while Luxemburg simply endorsed it.

The differences were largely ones of emphasis. Lenin sought to emphasize consciousness and organisation, because he was arguing against reformists who wanted to keep the class struggle at the trade union level which it had already "spontaneously" reached.

Luxemburg by contrast was arguing against the German trade union bureaucrats

and parliamentarians who smothered militant struggle with their formal organisation. Thus she hammered the union officials who "would in the manner of a board of directors, put the mass strike on the calendar on an appointed day". The mass strike, she said, "is not artificially made, but is a historical phenomenon which at a given moment results from social conditions."

Gramsci's ideas, too, were essentially compatible with Lenin's but he added some important insights. He emphasized re-organising production under the control of workers.

"The proletarian dictatorship can only be embodied in a type of organisation that is specific to the activity of producers — not wage earners, the slaves of capital..."

**HE SAW** in the growth of democratic factory councils during the great strikes in Turin in 1919, the nucleus of a new social organisation. The council, by giving the workers direct responsibility for production, "creates the psychology of the producer, the creator of history," and the result is very different than that achieved by ordinary trade unionism:

"In the trade union, workers' solidarity was fostered by the struggle against capitalism, in suffering and sacrifice. In the council, it is a joyous consciousness... that by useful work... affirms its sovereignty, realises its power and freedom to create history."

In the councils Gramsci sought to find the beginnings of soviet-style organisations that could embody democratic workers' power. Not long after he began devoting himself to building a Leninist revolutionary party.

What all the great Marxists had in common was the struggle for a workers' movement that moved past the struggle for a share of the wealth within capitalism. In the abolition of the wages system itself. In the abolition of the class struggle at the trade union level which it had already "spontaneously" reached.

Lenin, when so much of our energy goes into defending the unions, it is important that socialists do not lose sight of this wider goal.

## 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 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. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

#### Liberation from Oppression

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

#### Socialist Action

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

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# 'Save us from Davis!' say drivers

**THE VICTORIAN Transport Workers Union (TWU) is about to get a shake up. A reform group, which is tired of "a union with no guts" is appealing to widespread disenchantment with the old guard of the Victorian leadership.**

At the core of the reform group are a number of former brewery driver militants who fought against the trucking giant Linfox when it took over CUB's truck fleet a year ago. Having been sacked three times last year, they were finally victimised last September. Since then they have been fighting for in the courts for re-employment.

They have had to fight not only Linfox, but also the officials of their union. At the original picket line at CUB they received minimal help from the TWU. When they finally were sacked for the last time, the union washed its hands of the men, even voting against them and with the bosses in the Industrial Commission. Subsequently, organisers refused to renew their union membership. The officials claimed that they "were no longer in the industry" despite the fact that they were long standing members and were actively seeking to get their jobs back.



TWU's Jim Davis looks down his nose at militant drivers

The reform group has a serious orientation to winning the support of rank and file members. They have spent many hours going around the yards. They leafleted picket lines of the armoured car drivers and mass meetings of oil tanker drivers. They have held a rank and file meeting attended by over 50 workers, and many more have contacted them with messages of support.

**Reform group leaflets are being spread widely through the industry. One has even turned up as far away as Tarcutia in NSW.**

The slogan of the group is "Save us from Davis". Jim Davis is the Victorian branch secretary. Under his leadership, the union has a reputation of providing little service. As a reform group leaflet puts it: "The TWU Victorian branch historically has only done well where the members themselves had a significant say in what they wanted and were prepared to stick together."

The program of the group concentrates on creating a more democratic union, which provides a better service for its members and fights for improved wages and conditions.

For example, they want a women's liaison officer. As one participant told Socialist Action, "women members are completely neglected. Women drivers at the brewery had no washroom facilities at all".

Other areas of concern are welfare, insurance for owners/drivers, and health and safety issues.

It is clear that the current leadership feel the group is a serious threat. Last year one of the organisers king-hit activist Chris Kelly inside Trades Hall, and then Davis threatened him with "I've got mates in this industry and I'm going to have you fixed".

More recently, organisers, who hadn't been seen in the yards for months, suddenly turned up to warn drivers that any who attended the reform group meeting "would have his union ticket ripped up and be out of a job". They asked bosses to tell them who put notices up. They even threatened to disaffiliate from Trades Hall Council for allowing the militant drivers to leaflet there weekly!

**With Lindsay Fox planning his next move and conditions in the industry deteriorating, the time is ripe for a rank and file mobilisation. It will have to take on the union officials as well as the bosses.**

—Janey Stone

## BLF RAID



## More Sharp practices

**WHERE there's a will there's a way. BLF "custodian" Ian Sharp hasn't been able to come up with any evidence of misappropriation of money, even though he's had the union's books since last October. But the Cain government can't afford to admit defeat on this one — their political credibility is too involved.**

So Sharp has tried two new tactics. Late in March he attempted to seize the assets of the WA branch of the union, which is still legal and registered. The ostensible reason was that the Victorian branch had transferred funds there following the raid in Victoria.

The BLF had some success in court, but two WA branch accounts are now frozen, despite it being common knowledge that the money is no longer in WA. The custodian has also served papers on the Commonwealth Bank with the intention of forcing them to present their records. This may

not hold up legally, but meanwhile other banks are successfully being frightened off from dealing with the union.

What the custodian really hopes to achieve in WA is not really clear. But the fact that the BWIU is attempting to gain jurisdiction for labourers in that state may not be irrelevant.



Ian Sharp

Sharp's other tactic is rather novel. The final decision from his investigation is due at the end of August. But in the meantime a bureaucrat from Crabb's office has been ringing up journalists to inform them of the outcome of the enquiry. The word is that Gallagher will be charged with fraud of a million dollars.

Evidence may be utterly lacking, but it's likely to be a long drawn out case. Cain presumably wants to keep the pot boiling past the next election, and tie the union up in lengthy and expensive legal battles.

The repercussions on the building sites continue. At one large Melbourne site, the employers commenced legal proceedings under the 45D (secondary boycott) provisions when a dispute over amenities escalated into a strike. Even though the workers have now returned there are further writs pending; the employers are now trying to force the unions to provide guarantees on industrial harmony until the end of the job.

At another site, the days of the old panel powers have returned, with the Commission fixing the unions \$1000 for each day out.

This employer offensive is making itself felt in other ways too. With production being pushed throughout the city, not only is safety often forgotten, but also shoddy work is increasingly common. The result of this period of crushing union rights and workers' conditions may be a further disaster. —Janey Stone

**WHEN AN Y dictatorship starts to ease off on its repression, trouble is almost sure to follow. Demands for democratic rights have a way of slipping away from the neat timetables of reforming tyrants.**

The quest for national rights against imperialist oppression can inspire great movements. Both these forces have begun to emerge in Russia and Eastern Europe in recent weeks.

Most spectacular have been the demonstrations and riots in the Caucasus region of the USSR. Here, hundreds of thousands — perhaps a million — Armenians demonstrated for several days running in early March. They were showing solidarity with fellow Armenians who live in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, the state next door, and who are subjected to religious and cultural discrimination.

The demonstrations drew in many workers and two days of strikes gripped Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

In Azerbaijan, meanwhile, chauvinist thugs, inflamed by rumours spread by Azerbaijan refugees from the Armenian areas, rioted, killing between thirty and one hundred people.

After sending troops and tanks into Azerbaijan, Mikhail Gorbachev went on television to call for calm. He met with Armenian leaders and convinced them that the demonstrations were undermining his reform programme by providing his conservative enemies with stick to beat him. He promised that Armenian grievances would be investigated at the highest levels.

These tactics seem to have worked and an uneasy calm settled in the region.

**THEN IN late March, the Kremlin announced the result of its "investigation" — there was to be no change in the status of Karabakh. Tens of thousands of soldiers and police were shipped into Armenia and Karabakh to head off any protests. Armenian leaders were arrested, but not before organising a stay-at-home that turned Yerevan into a ghost-town for two days.**

Two things lie behind the apparently sudden outburst. There is not much doubt that local Communist Party officials in Armenia are hostile to Gorbachev's restructuring. They have been publicly attacked for obstructing the process. When they saw the beginnings of the agitation around nationalist



Armenian demonstrations test the limits of Gorbachev's reforms.

## Russia: the dangers of reform

issues earlier this year, they did nothing to head it off.

On the contrary, they saw it as a chance to embarrass Gorbachev and maybe to scare him. After all, even the most liberal dictators hate uncontrolled social unrest.

Armenian party officials allowed activists to circulate petitions and openly endorsed the demand for the returning of Karabakh to Armenia.

In this they have much in common with the party bureaucrats in Kazakhstan who, in December 1986 unleashed riots in Alma-Ata in an attempt to protect themselves from Gorbachev's new broom which was sweeping through their state.

But more important is a real depth of nationalist feeling in Armenia. For decades now the central government in Moscow has encouraged this. Armenians in neighbouring Iran and Turkey are viciously oppressed. Soviet Armenians generally believe that they are better off, having their own state and at least some right to use their language and practice their religion.

Soviet Armenians' main national grievance has been that a million of their countrypeople

are trapped in Azerbaijan.

**THE ARMENIAN events follow closely on smaller but significant events in the rest of Russia's empire. In the Baltic states — Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia — nationalist dissidents took to the streets earlier this year to commemorate their lost independence. Between 1918 and 1939/40 these small countries were independent. After the Hitler-Stalin Pact they were swallowed up by Russia and are still held.**

In Lithuania and Estonia the police launched dawn raids on leading activists, arresting and beating them. They stepped up patrols at all the likely venues for demonstrations and used dogs and truncheons to disperse crowds. In Tallinn, at least, some hundreds of Estonians managed to gather.

Much bigger demonstrations were held in March when thousands gathered in the streets of Latvian and Estonian cities.

In Brasov in Rumania in November last year thousands of students and workers went into the streets, protesting against pay cuts and food and power shortages. Against one of the most brutal of the dictatorships

this was an enormously courageous action. Although viciously attacked by police the events in Brasov sparked similar actions in eight other Rumanian towns.

Most impressively, dissidents in four other countries were inspired to hold solidarity demonstrations in February. Although the largest of these — in Poland and Hungary — only attracted some hundreds of supporters, they represent an important step forward in Eastern European solidarity. Solidarity has been limited. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 began with demonstrations in support of Polish workers. When the Solidarity trade union set at its peak in Poland in 1980/81 similar unions were set up in Estonia and Yugoslavia, though on a very small scale.

But international solidarity is crucial in Eastern Europe. While the Russians and their local henchmen can pick off one country at a time, victory for East European workers will never be possible. The February 1st demonstrations, then, no matter how small, are a great inspiration.

**NO COUNTRY in Eastern Europe has been untouched. In January the East German government held processions to commemorate the great socialist revolutionaries Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg (who must have been turning in their graves).**

These processions were "disrupted" by dissidents who raised banners reading "Freedom is always for those who think differently." They were promptly arrested and jailed. Ironically, the quote on the banners was from Luxemburg.

In March alone, students in Krakow (Poland) marked the anniversary of their role in the 1968 student movement with protests on campus. In Prague Cathedral and thousands more went into the streets in Bratislava to demand freedom of religion; 10,000 Hungarians marched for democracy and political and economic reform.

It is too soon to predict what will come of the current unrest. It may be that for some time yet

reforming elements in the bureaucracies will carry the day and protest and dissent will be channelled to support these factions. But sooner or later the workers will go "too far" and then we will see the real power of Marx's exhortation: "Let the ruling classes tremble."

— Graham Willett



## READERS WRITE

OUR COVERAGE of the Middle East continues to arouse controversy. *Socialist Action* welcomes letters, but we request you keep them brief, no more than 250 words. Send them to PO Box 274, Brunswick, Victoria 3056.

### Capitalist utopia

Tony Brown thinks it would be nice if Palestinians and Israeli Jews recognised each others' right to a state. This proposal is just a capitalist utopia. It ignores two crucial features of the situation: imperialism and class.

Crucial to the Zionist state is financial support from the USA, at least \$1000 per Israeli citizen. Without massive subsidies the Israeli economy would not exist. Israel's balance of trade deficit makes Australia's look minor.

In return for this support Israel, in its own rednecked way, promotes the general interests of imperialism. So long as the United States can rely on its Zionist ally to discipline uppity Arab regimes and movements, Israel can rely on US support. Recent scoldings from the Reagan administration mean nothing, given that the aid continues.

While Israel has this support there is no need for it to run the risk of a genuine Palestinian state. Such a state would have its own armed forces and independent foreign policy. It would be under immense pressure from its citizens to do something about the stolen land which remained the territory of even a diminished Israel. It would provide Palestinians committed to a genuine solution to their problems with a base of operations.

Yes there are differences between Israel and South Africa. But in practice the call for two states could only mean establishing a Palestinian bantustan without independent armed forces or foreign policy.

The Israeli working class, which benefits from US subsidies



Israelis protest

for Israel, has shown no inclination to attack Zionism. Nor, contrary to Tony Brown's suggestion, have the reactionary Arab regimes demonstrated a commitment or ability to take on the task.

The real threat to the Israeli state comes from the same source as the threat to capitalism in the region—the Arab working class.

For Tony Brown, having both an Israeli and a Palestinian state is the precondition for working class solidarity. For us, working class action is the precondition for a solution of the problem of Zionism and imperialist domination.

— Rick Kuhn  
Canberra

### Double standards

I get tired of your double standards with regard to Israel.

Aborigines are entitled to land rights, yet Israeli Jews are not. Monies spent by almost everyone on weapons and armies are monies misspent, yet Richard Emerson complains that Israel "will hardly allow Yasser Arafat to establish a credible army in the West Bank and Gaza." As if a young and struggling new Palestinian state should fritter away limited resources on an army!

The Jewish pioneers of the 1930s are criticised by Jeff Goldhar for their ideal of wanting to work the land themselves, rather than establishing a working class of Arab labourers. Later he criticises modern-day Israelis for giving Arabs "the lower-paid and dirty jobs". Make up your mind!

Israel is criticised for the money it receives in aid from the USA. Who funds the sophisticated weaponry used by the PLO? Again the double-standards—whose "watchdogs" are the PLO, or doesn't it matter?

The whole of "imperialist" Israel, with the occupied territories, has an area less than one third the size of Tasmania. The West Bank is about one quarter the size of that, and Gaza is a strip of land 28 miles by 5—hardly a viable size for a state.

The Arab countries surrounding Israel have an area over 300 times Israel's. Why then is Israel being pressured to give up one quarter of its tiny area with no suggestions of Arab countries doing the same? Jordan is already a Palestinian state, with over half its population origi-



Palestinians confront Israeli soldiers

nating in western Palestine.

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has absorbed 2 million Jewish refugees, including 600,000 from Arab countries. Why can't Arab countries reciprocate by absorbing their brethren? Israel is the only Jewish state in the world. Why should it disappear so that another state for Arabs can be created?

And why don't you push for socialist states in Arab countries? Why is Israel, the only democratic state in the Middle East, the only country in the region to receive your criticism?

— Evelyn Flitman,  
Melbourne

(This letter edited for length.)

### Palestinian refugees

The fiction that the Palestinians voluntarily left Israel in 1948 is central to Zionist propaganda. So it is vital that socialists portray the event accurately.

Unfortunately, the sloppy account in *Socialist Action* no 28, which puts the Palestinian flight down entirely to the massacre at Deir Yassin, is easily refuted by Zionist apologists, and even fuels their mythmaking.

Sophisticated Zionists admit that Deir Yassin occurred, but argue that it was an isolated incident. They cite the way that the Left only ever quotes the Deir Yassin massacre as confirmation that it was the exception, not the rule. Your article fell right into that trap.

Zionists argue that the Irgun, which carried out the massacre, was a rightwing minority of their movement, and that the Hagana,

the main Zionist militia, condemned it. They argue that one massacre does not cause a whole nation to flee, and make out that the Arab states caused the refugee exodus with radio broadcasts telling the Palestinians to return victorious after Arab armies had driven the Jews into the sea.

This mythology was decisively refuted two years ago by Israeli historian Dr Benny Morris. He uncovered a secret Hagana intelligence report dated June 30, 1948 (just after the Hagana became Israel's official army) which estimated that 70% of the Palestinian exodus was due to Zionist military action.

Just 15% of the refugees were attributed to action by right-wingers like the Irgun. Fully 55% were caused by the Hagana itself. The report specifically noted that the Arab states and Palestinian leaders opposed the refugee exodus.

Morris' findings are far more germane to the debate than another rehash of the Deir Yassin episode, monstrous though it was. So why weren't they mentioned? Lack of space cannot be an excuse, when the article was able to wander into the internal politics of Lebanon. Nor can ignorance, since *Socialist Action* itself reported Morris' crucial discovery in May 1986. Readers and the Palestinian cause, deserved better.

— Alec Kahn,  
Melbourne

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## BLACK HISTORY

SINCE 1788 Aborigines have fought many battles, but always the land has been a central concern. Today this involves not just ownership of land, but self-management of all aspects of community life. When a group of Gurindji people walked off Wave Hill Station in Western Australia in 1966, and marched to the heart of their country at Wattie Creek, they declared:

"It was said that we did this because the wages were very poor, living conditions fit only for dogs, and rations consisting mainly of salt beef and bread. True enough. But we walked away for other reasons as well. To protect our women and our tribe, to try to stand on our own feet."

"We feel that morally the land is ours and should be returned to us."

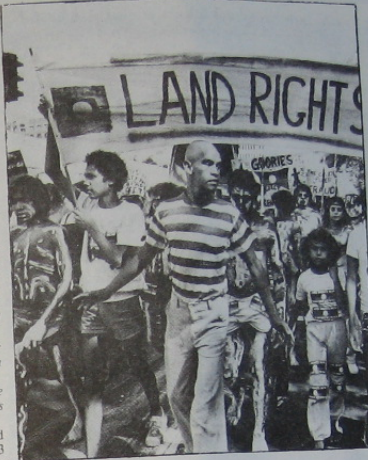
The modern struggle for land began somewhat earlier. In 1963 the Yirrkala Aborigines petitioned the House of Representatives about a Nabalco proposal to mine part of the Gove Peninsula. When all they were offered was some monetary compensation, they sued Nabalco and the Commonwealth Government.

Justice Blackburn ruled against them by using the legal doctrine of "terra nullius"—"land belonging to no one." The land which Aborigines had occupied and used for at least 40,000 years did not belong to them, he claimed.

Since then the Black movement has had little faith in the legal system, and rightly so. As Nabalco argued in a more recent case: "To accede to the Aboriginal propositions would be to unsettle the property laws." And Australian courts are there to uphold capitalist property rights before all else.

In 1972 Aborigines set up a Tent Embassy outside Parliament in Canberra, which they maintained for six months although police forcibly removed it twice. Similar protests were held in Darwin and Alice Springs. Black solidarity was growing nationally. As a tribal elder from Arnhem Land remarked, "Aborigines should be one strong force, to get things that they want. Tribal and urban Aborigines must join and be one."

**THE MOVEMENT** grew strong enough to prompt the Whitlam government to set up a Royal Commission, which



## The long struggle for land rights

made four recommendations: the establishment of Aboriginal land trusts to hold title over almost all Northern Territory reserve and mission lands; to make minerals the property of the Crown, with Aborigines having a right of veto over mining unless it was "in the national interest"; an Aboriginal land commission to hear traditional claims; a land fund to purchase areas where traditional interest was established.

The report formed the basis of Tent Embassy outside Parliament in Canberra, which they maintained for six months although police forcibly removed it twice. Similar protests were held in Darwin and Alice Springs. Black solidarity was growing nationally. As a tribal elder from Arnhem Land remarked, "Aborigines should be one strong force, to get things that they want. Tribal and urban Aborigines must join and be one."

In any case, the Commission's recommendations went nowhere near far enough. They were confined to the Northern Territory. It was left up to the Crown to decide which Aborigines had sovereign rights. And the "national interest" qualification ensured that the interests of the ruling class were catered for first.

After a rightwing mobilization swept Whitlam from power in

1975, the land rights bill came under attack. Amendments allowed companies already holding mining or exploration rights to proceed, and specifically authorized the development of the Ranger uranium mine. Also, the right to pass supplementary legislation was given to the reactionary Northern Territory Government.

The way had been opened for confrontation, and it came at Noonkanbah in the Kimberleys. On April 11, 1980, AMAX began sinking an oil bore on sacred tribal land. Representatives from Noonkanbah and the Kimberley Land Council organized a campaign including unions. The WA Trades and organized the WA Trades and Labor Council put a ban on Labor Council until it was satisfied that the Yungungona people had their sites mapped and protected.

**THE BILL** became law in 1977. By July 1982, about 30 per cent of the Northern Territory or over 406,000 square kilometres was legal Aboriginal land, and another 18 per cent was under claim.

The Act also encouraged

Aborigines to establish the Northern and Central Land Councils, which have given them some organizational muscle to tackle governments and mining companies, and in turn inspired the creation of the North Queensland, Victorian and NSW Land Councils. Mainly through these organizations, Aborigines had succeeded by 1980 in winning back over half the total amount of land associated with contemporary Aboriginal communities, though the gains are confined mainly to the Northern Territory and South Australia.

In 1982, the Black movement mobilized around protests at the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane. A threatened black African boycott forced the Blicke-Petersen Government to offer "Deeds of Grant in Trust".

These did not lead to black control of black land. While most Reserves are now administered by Black councils, to whom Aborigines can apply for land, an appeals tribunal including a ministerial representative has the right of veto. Not one application at Palm Island or Yarrabab, two of the biggest communities, has yet been granted.

**IN THE** late 1970s, progress towards land rights faltered. Canberra dumped national rights legislation, and funding cuts under Fraser and Hawke handicapped or even wiped out some Black organizations. Northern Territory Blacks have lost the power of veto and the claims process has bogged down as mining companies have dug in their heels.

Opposition from governments and the mining lobby, and the low level of movement and union struggles in this period, led to a decline in the Black movement. The 1983 Federal election, for example, was contested without a mention of land rights, although a secret ALP survey indicated majority support for Black demands.

The decline allowed the police and the courts to step up their harassment. Cops and screws have assaulted and killed Blacks in custody, and openly riled Aboriginal functions without much fuss from the media.

However this year, Aboriginal protests and the mobilization of non-Aboriginal support has placed land rights back on the national agenda. Forthcoming actions such as those at Expo in Brisbane and at the opening of Parliament House are vital to making sure it is never buried again.

— Jeff Rickert

THE COMMUNIST Manifesto is probably the only Marx and Engels that many revolutionaries ever read cover to cover.

The Manifesto holds our attention because, with superb pamphleteering skill, the politics of international working class revolution come across as powerfully now as they did 140 years ago when it was written.

By the 1840s, industrial capitalism had politically vanquished feudalism. Now trading valleys on the centre court were capitalists and the working class. The Manifesto gave working class politics revolutionary theoretical shape.

Communist Politics were distinct from the prevailing "socialisms" of the time — the utopians who concocted idealistic and fanciful models of society, and the middle class political cosmeticians who wanted to rid capitalism of its social wars through peaceful reform.

Unlike these socialists, however, the communists were actually dangerous to the capitalist class. "A spectre is haunting Europe — the spectre of communism" begins the Manifesto. Fearful capitalists tried to present communism as a "nursery tale" ogre to frighten the infant proletariat. The Manifesto shows why the ogre is one for the capitalists only.

ITS OPENING serve is a beauty: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". This slices through all the talk of muddled academics about history being driven by the oratory and diplomacy of Great Statesmen and Kings and Generals. It also cuts through the din of the capitalists' press and their parliamentary hacks who believe that the hot air from elected windbags fills the sails of history.

The roots of history, says Marx, lie in the changing methods of production of material goods. When neolithic humans turned the first pot 20,000 years ago, surplus agricultural produce could be stored. Groups of people developed a special relation to this surplus — the class of labourers who produced it, and the class who controlled it and traded it. The latter employed armed force to protect it, steal it from others, and enslave people to increase it.



## Marx's Manifesto: 'A spectre is haunting Europe'

As productive methods develop so the class associated with the new methods is forced into a struggle with the old classes that stand in their way. The radical wing of the capitalist class in the French Revolution cut off the head of Queen Marie Antoinette and numerous feudal aristocrats. Britain's capitalists, too, sliced off a King's head in their revolution in 1642.

These capitalist revolutions were progressive because they opened up the technical solution to the problem of material scarcity. But the goods produced are not free and the competitive struggle amongst capitalists for higher profits compels them to cut into their workers' wages.

CAPITALISM, however, also forces workers to unite in trade unions to prevent their wages going through the floor. For Marx, elemental struggle over wages is important, not for the "temporary economic gain" of the wage rise, but for the political gain of the "ever-expanding union of the workers", marshalling their power to overthrow the whole exploitative capitalist system.

The aim, then, is the "abolition of private property". Lest the ALP reformists and the ghost of Joe Stalin claim they are socialists because they nationalise things, the Manifesto's socialism stresses the need for the working class to

end not only the form of ownership but also the social relations of production — the wage labour that makes profits and the minority class that takes them in competition with other capitalists.

We all "own" the ABC (as they repeatedly tell us) but when we control it too we can start to talk of socialism.

There is much more in the Manifesto than this economic meat. There are spirited replies to the lies put about by the privileged classes: that communism means the abolition of personal belongings, the death of freedom, the stifling of individuality. The Manifesto shows that these issues have one meaning for the capitalist class and another for the working class.

For example, whilst communism will abolish private ownership of the means of production, which are used to exploit workers, these factories or landholdings are not the same as the Collingwood bean on your head or your record collection: no one's going to take them off you.

And in response to the charge that communism means the "community of women" Marx shows that this accusation rebounds on the capitalists. Since they see women as property, he points out, it's natural they think women will be nationalized. But the point for the communists is to end a situation where women are treated as property.

AS AN EARLY pamphlet of Marx and Engels, the Manifesto inevitably has some gaps. Yet to arise in 1848 were the problems of economic booms, working class reformism and trade union bureaucracies.

The Manifesto lacks specifics on how the working class can achieve the "conquest of political power" — through capturing the existing state or, as Marx spelt out in 1850, "smashing" it. Lenin, Trotsky and others also later developed new Marxist theories and practice in response to these issues.

The Manifesto is not the last complete word on revolutionary socialism but it is the first, essential word. There is no other road to socialism than that of the world-wide forcible overthrow of capitalism. The workers have a world to win, and nothing to lose but their chains. Writing in 1948, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels posed this challenge.

140 years later, these ideas are still indispensable in facing up to it.

— Phil Shannon

## 'Wall Street': the capitalists are the bad guys

Michael Douglas as Gekko: spectacularly evil

'WALL STREET' is a strange sort of film to have come out of Hollywood. It is a film about class — about workers and capitalists. It is set in America today. And it is the capitalists who are the bad guys.

Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen) is a nice working class boy who has been to college and has bought the values of Reagan's America hook, line and sinker. No status, happy bulshit for him about putting his education to work helping the poor and downtrodden. Not even the severities compromise of being a doctor or lawyer who might become reasonably well-off by helping other people.

Charlie is going to make it because, as he tells his father, "There's no nobility in poverty anymore".

Bud works for a stockbroking firm. He is called an "account executive" but he really just is a jumped up salesman. He spends all day phoning rich people and asking them to give him their money to invest.

Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas) is a spectacularly evil capitalist — by Hollywood standards, anyway. Fabulously rich, he spends all his time getting richer. He buys and sells companies, wrecks them if it's profitable to do so, and never considers even for a moment the lives of the workers he wrecks in the process. "It's all about bucks. The rest is conversation," is his motto.

Bud helps Gekko move in on Bluestar Airlines, the ailing company that his father works for. He sets up a meeting between Gekko and the union shop stewards from the company. Gekko is all charm and reason. The company, he explains, is going broke. If Gekko were to buy it he could, with the help of the workers, save it. All it would need would be for the workers to take a 20% pay cut and to work longer hours.

Bud's father, who is steward for the blue collar workers, is outraged. He is fully aware that once Gekko has the company him breaking it up.

And, of course, he is right. Bud finds out just in time that this is what his boss is up to. Together, he and the unions set



out to stop him. If the pilots won't fly for Gekko, if the luggage is going to keep ending up at the wrong destinations, if the unions announce that they refuse the cutbacks then Gekko will never convince the shareholders to take him in.

"If you're not inside," Gekko tells Bud at one point, "you're outside." What he forgets is that the system is more than the stock exchanges and the boardrooms. It is also the workers who build it and work the assets that the shares rest on. No-one is more inside the system than the working class because it is on workers' co-operation that everything else depends.

This is not a film where workers always behave the way socialists would like. The employees save their jobs by siding with one slightly other capitalist against the other because he compromises not to destroy the company. They still give up their wages and conditions, as they had agreed to for Gekko.

But then this is exactly what is going on in America today. Battered by the recession and Reagan's strong arm tactics, subjected to just the sort of corporate wheeling and dealing that *Wall Street* depicts, workers are accepting cuts much worse than anything we have seen (yet) here in Australia.

But in *Wall Street* the workers have at last tasted their own power in defeating Gekko.

Maybe, just maybe, they won't accept whatever's thrown at them. Now there's a plot for a sequel!

— Graham Willitt

### BOOKS

#### Women workers cotton on

MENTION THE words textile workers and immediately you conjure up a vision of women working in sweated labour conditions for some miserable pittance. As the book *Of Common Cloth: women in the global textile industry documents*, this is an image that closely matches reality, not just today, but from the Industrial Revolution on.

But the strength of the book lies, not in reaffirming what we already know, but showing us the other side of the picture. From this book we begin to get the workers' history of the textile industry, including the impressive militancy of women workers.

Like the case of the Philippines company that tried to impose quotas, force overtime, and assign six looms per worker. The workers struck.

"Complaining of unjust and

inhumane working conditions' their walkout eventually led to a massive strike throughout the Bataan Export Processing Zone, with 10,000 workers from over 20 companies participating."

This is why the bosses, far from believing their own propaganda about passive women workers, are actually quick to call in the cops and other forces of the state to control them. Another way they use the state to boost profits is through tariff protection. They claim this saves jobs, but the book shows how new technology axes jobs regardless of levels of protection.

So what should workers do? Campaigning for free trade or resign themselves to job loss? As *Of Common Cloth* explains: "So long as production is based on competition for profits, rather than satisfaction of needs, there is no sure way for workers to preserve their jobs". But they conclude:

"A unified workers' movement to combat corporations, to question their vision of industrial development and to develop a worker-centred alternative is crucial. The examples of the uprising in the most controlled of working environments — the 'free trade environments' — inspire hope."

We couldn't agree more!

— Liz Ross

# Has Hawke lost the workers?

**B**EFORE I got involved in revolutionary politics, I was in the ALP. A rightwing secretary dominated my branch at Oakleigh in Melbourne.

Critique Gough Whitlam's backtracking (this was 1974) and this guy would lecture you with barely concealed contempt. "What good are your principles if you're out of power?" It was a popular line with Labor's self-styled "pragmatists".

That branch secretary is now Senator Robert Ray, number-cruncher supreme for Bob Hawke. I couldn't help thinking of his political credo on March 19, as the Unsworth government sailed into oblivion along with Labor hopefuls around the country. In a couple of years, Robert Ray may have neither principles nor power.

Despite their pretensions, Labor pragmatists like Ray are actually a quite naive lot. Mick Young and John Brown have shown this at an individual level. Their collective naivety, though, lies in their arrogant assumption that working class Labor voters will tolerate endless disappointments because they have nowhere else to go. Labor voters always have somewhere else to go, even if it is only to anger, cynicism and the Liberals.

That was the lesson of Unsworth's defeat in NSW, just as it was of Scullin's rout in the Depression and Callaghan's demise at the hands of Maggie Thatcher in Britain.

And at the end of the day, what have the pragmatists to show for their efforts? Plenty for themselves, perhaps — witness Mick Young's lucrative QANTAS consultancy. But for the rest of us?

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, reviewing Labor's 12 years in NSW, struggled to list its achievements: legalisation of homosexuality, anti-discrimination laws... and then it was down to trivia like Sunday opening of pubs. The *Herald* was too polite to mention Labor's other legacies — rundown health and education systems which give Nick Greiner the perfect pretext to privatise them.

**L**ABOR'S pragmatists have grasped at various straws to explain the March 19 debacle.

Gun laws an 'It's Time' mood in NSW, even Barrie Unsworth's lack of charm — we heard every excuse. Not one explained Labor's real problem, which is that workers are deserting it in droves. Even amongst blue collar



workers, its vote is down to 39% from a historic level of over 60%.

So Labor leaders settled on "communication" as the problem. Evidently we don't appreciate just what they've given to us.

According to Paul Keating, that is Medicare and raising the pension to 25% of average earnings.

Sorry, Paul, but workers have got the message only too well. We paid for Medicare twice — via a levy and again by a cut to wage indexation. And pensions are 25% of average earnings only because of Labor's success in holding back wages. Pensioners will more likely remember the delays to their CPI rises if Keating tries that line.

Perhaps sensing that they had so little to communicate, Labor leaders hinted at full CPI wage rises from now on. Keating quickly withdrew that gambit; the press was adamant that Labor must not shift its economic course. And besides, Barrie Unsworth gambled on a March election to clear the decks for a horror minibus in May.

**S**O LABOR'S great pragmatists may now be on the road to electoral disaster. The cry has gone up that Labor is losing its base.

This misstates the problem, which is precisely the nature of Labor's base. While it gets its votes from workers (or used to), its real base is the trade union bureaucracy and, to a lesser degree, liberal middle class professionals.

These people dominate the ALP ideologically and organisationally. Mick Young was the last Canberra MP from working class origins, rued one Labor MP.

Labor is ruled by ex-union leaders like Bob Hawke and Barrie Unsworth, and ex-solicitors and journalists like John Cain, Brian Burke and Bob Carr.

These forces primarily want the peaceful coexistence of labour and capital. In times of boom or Liberal government, they demand small reforms that workers find attractive. In times of recession or in office, they demand sacrifices to appease employers. Given its real base, Labor is eternally doomed to let its voters down.

The criticism of Bob Hawke's business mates misses the same point. Hawke has always had business mates; Lionel Revelman, Ian Sykes and Isi Leibler helped him set up ACTU-Burke's, ACTU-Solo and ACTU-Jetset in the early seventies. Hawke could stop seeing his business mates for image reasons, but it wouldn't change what Labor is really on about.

**A**PART from saying "serve us them right", there is no joy for the Left in Labor's electoral reverses.

Rightwing independents and Liberals have gained most from the anti-Labor swing. Labor has sown conservative political ideas, but we all reap the whirlwind.

True, odious Liberal bullyboy Michael Yabsley fell to a vague environmentalist, and Dawn Fraser won as a protest Labor candidate. But even Fraser won ahead of a more genuine leftwing independent. The best of the protest candidates, expelled ALP'er George Petersen's Illawarra Workers Party, got just 16% in Petersen's seat and 7% in militant Wollongong. Jack



with Alec Kahn

Munday and a bevy of other left protest candidates polled a mere 4.5% between them in the NSW Upper House.

The ALP Left is no better placed to capitalise on the pragmatists' problems.

Hawke has cleverly coopted his leaders, Brian Howe and Gerry Hand, giving them the ministries of Social Security and Aboriginal Affairs where he has done his dirtiest work. So coopted as they, that when the ALP Right began to go cold on privatisation, Howe kept defending it. After March 19, he joined Hawke and Keating in insisting that economic policy must not change.

Nor will Labor's dwindling rank-and-file revolt. The most leftwing have already exited en masse. In Britain in 1981, Tony Benn drew such people back into the party by making a drive for the leadership. The Left here has no-one of such stature, now that the Right has thwarted John Halfpenny's senatorial ambitions.

It all seems rather grim if we restrict our vision to the parliamentary playpen. But outside, there is a glimmer of hope.

When Labor loses its grip at the polling booth, it can also lose its grip industrially. A party that cannot persuade workers to fill in a voting slip for it can hardly persuade them not to strike. With Labor's authority sipping, worker discontent rising and a slight economic upturn at present, we are already seeing a few signs of rank and file restiveness in the unions.

The Hawke government, which came to power on a program of wage-cutting thinly disguised as an "accord", deserves to be blown apart by the worker discontent it has itself built up. That would be a fitting epitaph for the pragmatist school of Labor politics.



Mick Young: ace pragmatist?

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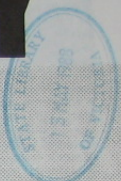
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**Poland's workers rise again**

## 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.

### Palestinian state

Evelyn Filman has raised a number of points in criticism of Socialist Action's anti-Zionist stance. I will comment on them one at a time.

We do not deny Israeli Jews the right to land. But they don't have the right to expropriate the land of others, by the various legalistic and extra-legal means they have used for decades to force out the Palestinians.

Whether a new Palestinian state would have to "fritter away" money on arms would depend on the political circumstances it found itself in. Israel proclaims its "right" to secure borders yet would deny this to a Palestinian state.

The Labor Zionists are regarded by many as socialist on the strength of their emphasis (in their ideology) on working the land themselves in communal settlements. But this supposedly left current of Zionism ignored the existing population of the region — "left" Zionism allows them no role.

The other historical wing of the Zionist movement did foresee a role for the Arab masses, as an exploited labouring class.

However, neither point of view is one which can truly be called socialist — neither allows for the Palestinian Arabs to determine their own destiny. This historical contradiction within Zionism persists into today.



Israeli soldier detains protester

The argument that having a large Palestinian population makes Jordan a Palestinian state is silly. By that logic New York City would be a Jewish state! The reality is that the Jordanian state is controlled by a non-Palestinian monarch, and the Palestinians have a right to live in their original homeland.

— Janey Stone, Melbourne

### Sex charge outrage

As you have a branch in Queensland, I was surprised that there was nothing in your last issue about a recent appalling attack on gay rights in that State. The whole left needs to be aware about this case and implications, so that we can help fight back.

Two adult gay men from the Gold Coast have been sentenced to 14 years' jail for *consenting sex in private*. Under the outdated and homophobic Section 211 of the Queensland criminal code which deals with "indecent practices between males" it is immaterial if the alleged offence occurs in public or in private, or even if anyone complained.

This outrageous case began on 18 January this year, when the police visited the home of the two men on a completely unrelated matter. The police

searched their house, allegedly for guns, and confiscated gay literature and videotapes.

The two were taken to the Southport police station and questioned separately. They "confessed" to their relationship and were then charged on their own confession! The case went to trial in March and the two were convicted. I believe that they are appealing against the conviction.

There may well be a defence campaign organised in Queensland, but as yet they don't seem to have been trying to link up with activists interstate and internationally. Activists on the ground in Queensland need to find out what is going on, and help spread the campaign. At the moment the main public support for the convicted men seems to be coming from bourgeois civil libertarians.

Just as the raid on the BLF was a gross attack on the trade union movement, this case is one of the worst attacks on privacy rights and gay rights in Australia for a long time. Two men are facing a fourteen year jail sentence and obviously need the political support of the left to win. We must take a stand now, or the flood gates of further repression will open.

— Alison Thorne, Melbourne

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### WEEKLY MEETINGS

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Lirioch Hotel  
91 Cardigan St, Carlton

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Tuesdays 7.00  
Metro Hotel (top floor)  
Bridge & George St, City

Brisbane  
Thursdays 7.30 pm  
Phone 371 1714  
for location

Canberra  
Thursdays 6.00  
Blair Room  
Workers' Club, Civic

# Expo exposed as black anger rises

SEVERAL MILITANT demonstrations have exposed the racist foundations of Expo's Queensland government sponsors. The largest demonstration was about 4000 strong.

Police avoided arrests at the opening by the Queen, but made up for it later. At a demonstration after the Labour Day march, Aboriginal kids were bashed and arrested, and women abused. The protest actions drew a lot of overseas media coverage, and a Japanese TV station drew parallels with South Africa.

At the Labour Day march a large Aboriginal contingent took the front behind the TLC officials. As is customary, they halted several times briefly, for which TLC officials Dempsey, Barton and Summers told them "you're no longer part of the procession."

Feeling was already running against the TLC executive because, after promising \$3000 to the black rights organisation FAIRA, Dempsey announced the TLC had only given \$100 and individual unions must make up the rest.

When the Aborigines and their supporters rallied outside the Expo gates, Miscellaneous Workers Union officials invited us in,

Bob Weatherall then spoke, explaining that anger over the TLC role was not directed against rank and file workers, whose support was vital.

Meanwhile new ALP leader Wayne Goss ousted the TLC by attacking the demonstrations.

Other protest actions such as a 200-strong sit-in at the Melbourne Hotel have raised issues like violence against Aborigines, deaths in jail, and refusal of service to blacks in hotels. It's great that socialist banners and publications have been welcome at all the actions.

Where they can, the cops try to put on a liberal veneer while the eyes of the world are on Queensland, but they don't keep up the facade for long. A gun was pulled on an Aboriginal kid on 3 May.

Irar from being a shock development, this sort of thing is not new. During the period of "increased understanding" a few weeks before Expo, an Aboriginal youth was shot in the face by police in a hotel.

As Michael Mansell told the Saturday rally, "I'm an expert in terrorism. We all are. But we're the ones who have been terrorised. We are the victims of white hypocrisy."

— Carole Ferner



## COVER STORY



Solidarnosc revisited: Poland's workers are fighting again

# Poland: the workers fight back

ON MAY DAY workers clashed with police all over the world, in countries as apparently different as South Korea and Poland.

The clashes show that the differences are secondary. Poland is a class society like South Korea or Australia, and its history is a saga of class struggle.

Poland has been in economic crisis since the 1970s. The country's rulers borrowed abroad for industrial expansion, hoping to sell more goods on the world market. But before the production came on stream, recession hit the world economy. Like Australia, Poland found its economy rocked by the rhythms of the world capitalist system. Like the Fraser government, Poland's rulers decided to make the working class pay for the crisis.

But when the government hiked food prices, Polish workers rebelled. They created one of the biggest union movements in the world, calling it Solidarity.

For a time, the regime had to accept it. But when the union's leaders showed a fear of bold political initiatives, and the rank and file consequently lost confidence in the ruling class moved to crush the workers' movement.

A MILITARY coup brought the jailing of thousands of activists. Yet a sizeable underground movement persisted, and now worker militancy has revived in a massive strike wave.

The strikers have already won victories. Workers at an electronics factory employing 37000 people in Wroclaw downed tools for a few hours, and won sizeable wage rises.

This victory spurred on the 16,000 workers at the Lenin steelworks in Nowa Huta, the country's biggest industrial

plant. In Wroclaw, regional Solidarity leader Wladyslaw Frasnynik appealed for strikes and protests in their support, and in response 2000 demonstrators took to the streets.

Russia's *Pravda* newspaper promptly accused the steelworkers of "blackmail" much as our own rulers accuse us of "holding the country to ransom" whenever we dare to fight for a better deal.

By 4 May the struggle had spread to the historic Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, birthplace of Solidarity. As thousands of unionists occupied the yard, demanding pay rises and legalisation of Solidarity, contingents of police massed outside. But when the workers held their ground, the police withdrew.

Inevitably, Lech Walesa has emerged at the head of the movement. Unfortunately, some of the confusion that marked Solidarity the last time around has re-emerged with him.

He is apparently advised by priests. Now we don't share the childish views of some on the left, who imagine that any movement of workers inspired by Catholic religious ideas must be reactionary. We remember the tradition of James Connolly in Ireland, and liberation theology in Nicaragua and the Philippines. Religion, as Marx put it, is the "sigh of the oppressed creature" and it plays that role for many Polish workers.

But the Catholic hierarchy have no interest in the liberation of the working class. Their goal is to control the unrest, and channel it in a harmless direction, while using it to increase their own leverage with the regime.

Walesa has also suggested

some ambiguous goals for the movement. He argues that strike action can't win economic gains (ignoring cases where it already has) and that the real objective is "reforms". By reforms, he appears to mean changes like those being undertaken in Russia by Gorbachev. Now some of the changes going on in Russia certainly are in workers' interests: a bit of freedom of expression and debate is now being allowed, though still less than in the west.

But other changes are simply intended to make people work harder, trading wage rises for productivity just like Paul Keating does in Australia or Margaret Thatcher does in Britain. In fact, the leading Polish economic reformers openly express their admiration for Thatcher.

WHILE Walesa seems bent on keeping the workers' struggle within definite bounds, it is not so clear that this can work. Eastern Europe has been in a ferment ever since the extent of the Gorbachev reforms became known.

Czechs are intensely aware that what Russia is doing today is not so different than what the Czech Communist Party tried to do in 1968, only to be stopped by a Soviet invasion. East Germany, the Baltic states and Hungary have all seen stirrings.



Lech Walesa

Should Poland's workers manage to win sizeable pay rises workers throughout the Russian empire will be inspired to follow their example. At the same time alarm bells would ring — indeed they are already ringing — in the offices of ruling bureaucrats from Berlin to Vladivostok. Those sections of the Russian ruling class who want to remain in Gorbachev might decide to make their move.

The possibility of great class battles in several countries is a real one.

For the Australian left, the Polish events will be a test of political principle. In recent years, sections of the left have been drawn back towards that orientation to Eastern bloc police states which led the old Communist Party into so many dismal mistakes. Will those leftists who have been so often did, accepting for the Polish workers what they would not accept for themselves: police violence, union-bashing and the like?

Or will they remember that socialism is about the self-emanicipation of the working class? And that a "workers state" which cannot survive without constantly repressing the proletariat deserves to be thrown into the rubbish bin of history.

— Tom O'Lincob

# No tooth fairy in the new wage system

**SIX HUNDRED** shop stewards and job delegates gave Simon Crean a hard time at a Melbourne Trades Hall meeting last month. They were all too aware that the tiresome saga of "wage restraint" is set to continue.

After several years of falling living standards, the ACTU is huffing and puffing about maintaining them and the government, frightened by electoral reverses, has claimed that the "worst is over". One journalist has even claimed that "after two years of holding up a stop sign to its affiliates, the ACTU is about to retire as unions' policeman."

If you believe that, you probably believe in the tooth fairy and Father Christmas, too. The broad outlines of the proposed new wage fixing system are now fairly clear. There will be two "levels" instead of two tiers.

The first level will be a pay rise equivalent to the projected inflation rate for 1988/89. Tax cuts in mid-1989 will supposedly make up any shortfall between projected and actual inflation.

The second level will be a pay rise traded off against productivity. On the figures first announced, the two together could add up to say 8 per cent, with 6 per cent guaranteed even to workers who are unable or unwilling to make productivity trade-offs.

**COMPARED** to the pitiful 2 per cent that nearly half the workforce have received over the past two years, this looks pretty good. It would be an improvement even on the results achieved by those who picked up second tier rises.

But of course there's a catch. Ever since the ACTU announced the deal, Keating has been talking down the projected inflation rate. At first it was going to be 6 per cent. Now his predictions are heading for 4 per cent, even after the recent disappointing CPI figures.

If we had the old system of full CPI rises to catch up with past inflation, we'd be in for 9 per cent to cover price rises for 1987-88 alone.

The tax cuts promised for mid-1989 are no more reliable than any other promise of the

Hawke government. In fact, Keating has already made it clear there will only be tax cuts "if the economy can afford it." What's more, Keating is being "even handed" by offering equal tax cuts to business, so that the overall tax revenue drops. This in turn will have to be compensated for by cuts in government services and welfare, so no matter how you look at it, we lose in the end.

The ACTU demands that the first level be paid to everyone, but how do they propose to go about ensuring that? They are currently moving away from centralised, national wage fixing and pressing claims in selected industries. If anything is guaranteed to produce delays for other workers, this surely is it.

**MEANWHILE**, Keating has another rip-off in store for the 45-50 per cent of the workforce who still haven't got a second tier pay rise under last year's system. He has hinted strongly that any second tier rise granted after June under that system is to be deducted from this year's first level payment.

What of the ACTU's argument for a flow on of the 3 per cent super claim (remember that one?) to the 40 percent of workers still waiting for it? Once again, Keating suggests this has to be deducted from any first level pay rises.

No wonder the 600 delegates who packed Melbourne's Trades Hall Council chambers were angry.

Yet THC Secretary John Halfpenny was simply using the



Paul Keating: talking down inflation

delegates for his own cynical purposes. He had Simon Crean there to take the flak, so that he could look good by comparison. He got through a militant-sounding, do-nothing motion, calling on the architects of this rotten deal to campaign against it. He made no proposals for workers to take action of their own.

No wonder the employers are not too worried about the latest union posturing. Says Bert Evans of the Metal Trades Industry Association:

*"I don't care what they say. I am only interested in what they do, and I expect them to act very sensibly."*

**IN FACT** the rush by top union leaders to press the employers for an agreement is motivated, as much as anything, by a desire to forestall resistance by more militant sections of the

rank and file.

They don't want a repeat of the second tier consultations with members, where so many members wanted to knock back the deal and had to be strait-jacketed into it. Not to mention the Melbourne building industry, where numerous sites won gains outside the system long before the BWIU leaders could finalise their sell-out arrangements with the employers.

And if given a chance, plenty of unionists who have memories of the second-tier process fresh in their minds will resist this new deal.

In the public service, the second tier productivity trade-offs will mean that by collapsing grades together there is less higher duties paid. "Broadbanding" by creating a pool of workers who can supposedly do a wide range of jobs, allows management to cover gaps rather than employ more staff. And staff cuts are in the pipeline. When workers in the NSW state headquarters of Social Security complained about the proposed axeing of 700 jobs they were told: you should see what's in store under the second tier!

This time around attack conditions will come under attack as part of the productivity bargaining, so it could be a worse deal than last time.

If the Melbourne job delegates are any indication, there is scope to fight the new wage system. But no help will be forthcoming from the majority of current union officials, who have sold their souls for the dismal fruits of the Accord.

— Liz Ross



Wages battles: a thing of the past?

**THE MEDIA** have got bored with the uprising in Palestine, and taken it off the front page. Yet the Palestinians continue to fight.

The frustrations felt by the Israeli oppressors were graphically illustrated in the first week of April. The authorities had claimed that the leadership of the rebellion, authors of eleven handbills signed the "united leadership of the uprising" were all under arrest.

All printing presses in Gaza were closed, and every press in the occupied territories was specially licensed. Yet handbill number 12 appeared and was widely distributed, setting out the program of resistance for the next ten days.

The West Bank village of Qabatiya, blockaded by the Israeli army for weeks, became a symbol of defiance. Israel imposed the collective punishment after a collaborator killed a small child from the village, and was killed in turn by angry villagers.

Four houses have since been destroyed and several hundred people arrested. Supplies of food, electricity and fuel have been cut off. Residents burn wood for heat and cooking fuel, harvest wild vegetables, or climb over rocky hills for supplies from the next village.

Israeli hopes that the rebellion was gradually exhausting itself were dashed after the murder of the PLO leader Abu Jihad, who was seen by Tel Aviv as masterminding the uprising. Widespread demonstrations and mock funerals showed that the Palestinians were neither worn out, nor dependent on one individual operating from Tunis. The army's recent foray into Lebanon appears designed to distract attention from its problems in the occupied territories.

**SO DESPERATE** are the occupation forces that they've taken to checking the pulses of young men, to see if they have been running. This is taken as proof they were demonstrating.

Western observers like to claim that these developments show a once-moral Israel has "lost its soul". But today's repression is just the latest in a long history.

The state of Israel was founded on the expropriation of people already living on the land (Contrary to myth, it was also extensively cultivated before the Zionists arrived to "make the desert bloom").

Subsequently, the imperialist-funded state has engaged in a series of wars against its Arab neighbours, attempting to seize

# Israel's "lost soul": no new development



the Suez Canal from Egypt in alliance with Britain and France, then seizing the West Bank, Gaza and Golan Heights in 1967.

The most recent act of aggression was the invasion of Lebanon and cruel siege of Beirut in 1982. Aiming to "cut off the head of the PLO" the Zionists hoped that driving the Palestinian fighting forces out of Lebanon would demoralise the population of the occupied territories. Instead it has simply turned their attention to new forms of struggle.

**WHEREVER** it holds Palestinians under its control Israel has always used the most brutal methods when it feels the need. While the media criticize

the recent bulldozing of Arab houses, they ignore a United Nations estimate that over 19,000 homes have been demolished by the Israelis since 1967.

Such methods are the inevitable consequence of attempting to establish an exclusively Jewish state at the expense of other people, and to continually expand it.

The uprising has restored the influence in international affairs of a PLO leadership that has been treated with contempt recently by Arab governments.

The struggles of the Palestinian masses have accomplished what the interminable diplomatic manoeuvres of Yasser Arafat could not. Yet the Arab states are only looking for another opportunity to stab the Palestinian resistance

in the back.

This is not just because King Hussein of Jordan or President Assad of Syria are despicable individuals, though they are that. Both have persecuted the PLO in the past because they provide cover for capitalist states, which feel threatened by radical movements. Any move for the Arab states to "guarantee" a West Bank state as part of a regional "solution" is a recipe to create a new trap for the Palestinians.

**THE ROLE** they play is also a warning for those who imagine a small state in the West Bank and Gaza would solve all the problems of the Palestinians. Other Arabs in the region, living in capitalist societies dependent on the big powers (and in some cases dependent on Israel, though they hate to admit it), face repression from their own leaders as bad or worse than that of the Israelis.

Of course the Palestinian leadership are not to be compared with the likes of Hussein and Assad, who are murderous swine. But ultimately, policies of state reflect social and military realities. Without the destruction of the various reactionary forces in the region, particularly the Israeli state but also the regimes in Amman, Damascus and Cairo, a small West Bank state — economically and militarily dependent on outside forces — would inevitably fall into a repressive pattern of its own.

Having said all this, of course we do not stand aside from today's struggle. After years of exile, it is understandable that most Palestinians are now focussing on the demand for a state in the occupied territories.

It looks winnable, while the destruction of Zionism does not. And if the Israelis could be forced to concede it as the result of the uprising, it would not result in a victory but could become the start of a wider movement for change in the region. That in turn could make the destruction of Zionism, and the fight for socialism in the Middle East, a realistic proposition.

For this reason, in addition to the basic justice of the Palestinian cause, the sympathies and hopes of socialists go with the courageous people who keep struggling into the streets of Palestine.

— Tom O'Lynch

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### Red faces over yellow cake

GOSH, who can a government trust these days? The Australian government receives a guarantee that the uranium it sells won't be used for bombs, and then someone changes the label on the box of Aussie yellow cake. And the same happens, according to the West German magazine *Der Spiegel*, to labels on South African uranium.

nicked for drink driving. The NSW Labor machine would have raked it in if they had a policy on party secretary Steven Loosley.

**Your number's up**  
EVER WONDERED why Palestinians never throw stones at cars driven by Arabs?

Perhaps because in "democratic" Israel, Palestinian and Israeli cars have different coloured number plates.

### Their conferences and ours

BEEN TO A conference lately? Consider what a group of British advertising executives had to go through at their \$8000 per head do, where the agenda was based on the day of a senior executive.

Sessions included "Basic" chaffeur talk (gleaming damaging information about clients and colleagues) and "Secretary intimidation" — asking your secretary about her love life so that you can tell the boys afterwards.

We wonder if they had a moon session about lazy workers.

### Their computers and ours

WE'RE glad to hear that the Defence Department

has just awarded a \$43 million contract to boost its billion-dollar computer based communications network. If the activities of West German computer hacker Mathias Speer are anything to go by, the network secrets should now be public knowledge in a couple of years.

The redoubtable Speer penetrated over 50 US military computers, including Star Wars and the Pentagon data base. Power to the PC!

### Their work practices and ours

AS A result of a "revolutionary change in building methods" at the Vickers shipbuilding yard in England, the bosses there managed to have a major section of a nuclear submarine welded on upside down.



SUB BUILT BY BOSSES.



## CHEAP SHOTS

### Their sackings and ours

OF COURSE, bosses do get the sack sometimes. Look what Sir Philip Shelbourne, former chairman of Britoil, received when he was made redundant.

Tickets to Wimbledon (every year) and to Covent Garden (for the Opera season), 92 quid a day for his lunch, private health insurance, hotel and travel expenses — all on top of his \$400,000 a year payout (in lieu of office and ancillary services).

Wonder what the Arbitration Commission would

do if other workers — like the Caltex drivers — asked for parity.

### So what's new? STOP US if you've heard this one before.

New NSW Premier Nick Greiner intends to close down illegal casinos, and keep them closed.

Nick will do this, he says, for as long as it is necessary to persuade the people involved — both the patrons and the investors — that the casinos aren't a good investment.

Unlike Neville Wran, Greiner has no style. Nifty once refused to close casinos in early December because he didn't want the workers to be unemployed at Christmas time.



Nick Greiner: no dice

### Their bosses and ours

AFTER some initial doubts, the bosses in Russia's "workers' state" have really taken to Mikhail Gorbachev's "reforms". Moscow News reports:

"Bosses have become distinctly better looking. They bristle with confidence. A mere year ago, they lived in dread of people's requests, of TV cameras, of poison pens. Now bosses are looking more important — gotten used to the new environment."

Or maybe they've woken up that it's not so different to the old environment?

## FEATURE



# Immigration: The real issues

FOR A nation of migrants, Australia has always fretted a lot about immigration.

The latest bout of agonising about immigration policy goes under the most distinguished of titles: The FitzGerald Inquiry, headed by former Ambassador to China Stephen FitzGerald, spent months in deliberation. Then it was bluntly told to go away and rewrite its report by a government suddenly nervous about losing the migrant vote from its fast-dwindling base of support.

The Inquiry's ultimate report, however, will surprise no-one. The business lobby, government, ACTU, migrant groups and churches all agree that the migrant intake should be raised to 150,000-180,000 a year. The only difference is about subquotas — how much should be business and skilled intake, how much should be family reunion and refugees.

This is quite a difference, as we shall see, and some fairly despicable self-interest underlies the positions of the first two groups. And hanging over the Inquiry is the shadow of the Blainey debate of 1984 and the traditional prejudices that it represented, even though Geoffrey Blainey himself has boycotted the proceedings.

The most positive thing to emerge from the Inquiry is a fairly decisive relating of Blainey and the anti-Asian, anti-migrant myths that he promoted.

There is now fairly wide agreement, even amongst Establishment economists, that by adding to demand for housing, consumer goods and so on, immigration tends to create jobs rather than cost them for the

existing workforce. Blainey's academic ally Dr Bob Birrell can only quibble feebly that the "wrong sort" of jobs are being created.

Or take the supposed drain on Social Security that migrants represent, according to Blainey. The Inquiry secretariat found that "Immigrant unemployment rates decline with increasing period of residence, so that after five years or more, they approach the unemployment rate of the Australian-born."

Those five years are more than made up for by the average migrant being five years younger than the average Australian, with consequent savings on pension payouts. In "greying" of the Australian population, indeed, is one of the main reasons that the government wants to raise the migrant intake. The newcomers can help pay the growing pension bill!

LIKEWISE, Blainey's scaremongering about Asians taking over whole neighbourhoods and forming ghettos has been exposed as a paranoid fantasy. The Inquiry has established that migrant enclaves form only in the first years of settlement, as a necessary "bridge between the immigrants' old and new society". In time, migrants disperse into other residential areas.

Nor is there the burning local resentment of Asians that Blainey claimed to be concerned about. Inquiry chairman Stephen Gerald says that "The survey work carried out in areas of very high concentrations of Asians shows the populace to be tolerant to an encouragingly high degree."

So the Inquiry has debunked Blainey

fairly decisively. That is the good news. But the only reason it has moved the immigration debate past him is pure capitalist self-interest.

Capitalism relies on an ever-growing market in which to expand. Australia's population is not only "greying" but its birthrate is declining. Even the current migrant intake of around 120,000 a year is not enough to provide a sufficiently expanding local market next century. That is why industries like housing and construction, which rely on local consumption, are pushing hard for intakes to be raised to guarantee at least 1% born.



Postwar Immigration minister Arthur Calwell: an Asian view

## STUDENTS

### No fees, no tax!

STUDENTS have been out in force recently protesting over the continuation of the government's administration fee in 1988.

Six thousand packed Melbourne Town Hall and marched noisily through the city, after answering a call to "stop work" on Monday, 18 April. A week earlier, hundreds of La Trobe students blockaded the University councilors. A week later, students at Melbourne University confronted Education Minister Dawkins.

In late March, 5000 Sydney students packed city streets to voice their protest. Wollongong University had a two day strike in mid-March.

The boycott at La Trobe is quite strong. The university has admitted that over 3500 students haven't paid their fees, costing the uni \$2 million.

The main force behind the wave of demonstrations has been the various Labor clubs and the Labor controlled National Union of Students. Student worries about amalgamation and the threat of graduate taxes

have fuelled the fire.

The dominant role played by the ALP has meant that the focus of the protests is not so much a protest against the Labor government as such, but to pressure the national ALP conference in June not to adopt a policy in support of fees. At the moment ALP policy is anti-fees. The government (surprise, surprise) is ignoring ALP policy.



## DEMOS

### Palestine picket

"PALESTINE yes, Israel no!" was the slogan hurled at John Cain and other assorted bigshots as they entered Israeli Independence Day celebrations on 3 May.

About a hundred people joined a picket called by Jews Against Zionism and Anti-Semitism, and supported by Palestinian and socialist groups.

Janez Stone, chairing the event for JAZA, explained that opposing the oppressive Israeli state had nothing to do with anti-semitism. Tom O'Lincoln, speaking for Socialist Action, argued that Zionism was a pro-imperialist movement and that a class struggle was needed to smash it.

growth through immigration alone each year.

Australian business has other problems too. Thanks to government and employer cost-cutting in the 1970s, not enough apprentices were trained. The result today is a shortage of skilled trades-people, despite a 7% unemployment rate. The quickest and cheapest solution is to import them — hence the cry for more skilled migrants.

**UNFORTUNATELY** for Australia's short-sighted ruling class, most other western countries did the same thing during the 1970s. Hence their sudden keenness to take in skilled labour from anywhere, even Asia. It doesn't matter to our rulers one jot that the Third World can ill afford a "brain drain" to compensate for their myopia.

Migrants have other attractions: for a capitalist economy like Australia's. They are one import that brings money into the country instead of taking it out. Most migrants do not have the fabulous wealth of racist mythology. But having sold their possessions prior to moving, the average family brings in \$32,000, adding a total of \$1.2 billion to the economy each year.

With half an eye on this consideration, and also because it wants to revitalise Australia's stodgy entrepreneurial class with new blood, Labor is pushing business migration particularly hard. Basically, anyone with half a million dollars and half a busi-

ness idea can buy their way to the head of the immigration queue. Approval for business migrants is virtually automatic, while only one in eight non-applicants get in.

Coming from a gold-mining country that also complains about "economic refugees" who "queue-jump" (ie Indo-Chinese who flee poverty and famine), this favoritism for the well-heeled stinks of hypocrisy. But with the Hong Kong business community shifting their assets as the 1997 handback to China draws near, Labor is not letting consistency stand in the way of competition with Canada for their dollars.

The FitzGerald Inquiry has backed all of these schemes from the business community and the Hawke government ardently. In fact, rather too ardently for Bob Hawke's liking. Its draft report rode roughshod over the ACTU's concerns about skilled immigration, and also gave ground to the business attack on multiculturalism, which Labor cannot go along with for electoral reasons. So FitzGerald was sent packing to rewrite the report in more soothing terms.

**NATURALLY**, Labor's other schemes have their critics. On the right, there is John Stone and the Confederation of Australian Industry (CAI), who want a much stronger bias towards English-speaking, skilled and business migrants even than exists now.

Their position is a half-baked combination of Blainey's racism and Labor's kowtowing to business needs, and is consequently a shambles. For example, one supporter tries to deny that it is racist to favour English speakers, because Indians can still get in.

In reality, non-English speakers are simply not the handicap to the economy that Stone and the CAI make them out to be. Indeed their children are more likely to make it to university than are Australian-born kids — so the Stone/CAI position is stupid even from its own self-viewpoint of raising a more skilled workforce. It merely reflects the cheapcast attitude that many bosses have towards providing Migrant English classes.

The more leftwing critics of the Labor/employer push for greater business and skilled intakes all make valid criticisms. The ACTU points out how it merely avoids providing better skills training here. The migrant groups observe that it is being boosted instead of family reunion, which is a much more urgent human need.

The churches have focussed on the worst aspect of the whole deal, Labor's run-down of the refugee intake from 22,000 in 1980 to just 12,000 today. Immigration minister Clyde Holding has blamed "economic refugees" for the cut, but that hardly accounts for all 15 million on the UN's books. Thailand now turns back many refugees from Vietnam, thanks to the refusal of Australia and other western nations to take them.

**DESPITE** their valid points, all of these critics remain trapped inside the logic of capitalism. None of them challenges the very concept of immigration control itself.

No-one ever tries to pack up their belongings and trek across the globe to a strange land for trivial reasons. The right to migrate is a fundamental human need in a system wracked by war, scarcity and racism. But for those very reasons, capitalism will not meet it.

What would happen if we stripped away immigration controls? Most people think Australia would instantly be flooded by Third World migrants and living standards would fall through the floor. Yet when Britain had an open-door policy for Commonwealth citizens (including Indians, Pakistanis and many Africans) until 1962, Third World migration there was modest. Even today, Australia has just one million applications a year to immigrate, many of which are not followed through. Our rulers would like us to think everyone wants to come here, but that is not the case.

Australian capitalism in its present shoddy state could probably not cope with one million immigrants. But then, it cannot cope with many things that a society not ruled by profit could, like better wages and housing for all. That should not stop us from demanding them. In a rationally planned economy, there would be little trouble matching one million immigrants with the jobs to provide for them, and the wealth would exist to cope with any temporary disruption.

Could Australian workers "accept" a much larger proportion of migrants? While surveys show that some racist attitudes are still common, 38% of the population already is migrant or of migrant parents, so undoubtedly they could. Stephen FitzGerald is right when he observes of Blainey that "he was the stirrer ... racism does not surface spontaneously ... if you stir you will get it."

Where there are no stirrers around, migrants get on just fine.

At working-class Westall High School in Melbourne, 93% of the students are migrant and there are 43 different language groups. Yet there have been just three playground brawls in the last five years.



Our culture not so long ago

At Katanning in WA, 404 Malay Muslims from the Cocos Islands have settled into a country town of 5000 without a hint of friction. When a *Time* reporter was digging for racist incidents, no-one could remember any, and when she tried to provoke racist comments in the pub, people just stopped talking to her.

**NONE** of this is to deny that Australia and its labour movement have a solid past on immigration policy, particularly towards Asians. That past, however, only



Children at the Fairfield swimming pool: few problems.

makes it more essential that socialists confront racist attitudes towards immigration today.

Australia's very foundation made it prone to racist ideas. It was a small white colonial outpost in South-East Asia, wrested violently from its black inhabitants. It inherited a wholly false ideology of white superiority built up in Europe to justify colonialism and the slave trade.

The first outbreak of anti-Asian sentiment came as early as the 1830s, when rivalry was strong between the pastoralists and the city classes. The pastoralists brought in Chinese indentured labourers, whom the town classes immediately branded as their lack-ies. This was a lie, of course — in fact, so many Chinese absconded or demanded better conditions that by the 1860s the pastoralists had turned against Chinese immigration.

That didn't stop sentiment against Asian immigration growing or undermining labour solidarity. There were murderous riots on the goldfields in the 1850s, and mass anti-Chinese marches of up to 40,000 in the 1870s. Chinese workers had to form their own unions because whites barred them — indeed, the Australian Workers' Union banned "Asiaties" from membership until the 1950s. White workers scabbed on supposedly "strike" Chinese strikers, and in the great strikes of the 1890s, even refused donations from the local Chinese unions.

Only with Federation White Australia became the first article on the ALP's platform and official government policy. So harshly was it enforced, that after World War Two Labor deported 1000 Chinese, Indian, Filipino and Pacific Island refugees from the country, and Australian occupation troops were banned from returning with Japanese wives!

Only with the demands of postwar capitalism did White Australia start to crack. Hundreds of thousands of South European migrants were brought in to build the Snowy Mountain scheme and work on the production lines.

Ironically, it was Japan's war effort, the excuse for so much anti-Asian sentiment in

the postwar period, that indirectly broke down the wall. By smashing European military power in the East, it hastened the independence of India, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Suddenly, Australia had to respect its neighbours as sovereign nations if it wanted to deal with them, rather than insult them with colour bars. White Australia went because it was expedient for it to go.

That didn't mean that migrants here got a better deal. They were, and still are, seen as factory fodder. Postwar migrants brought out on extravagant promises were shoved into the hated Nissen huts left over from the war. Italian migrant Giovanni Sgro, now a Labor MP, recalls friends hanging themselves in despair. His hostel at Bonegilla in Victoria exploded into riots in 1952 and again in 1961.

Even today, while hostels have improved, migrants invariably get out before the 26-week limit because they are ripped off there. Typically, they must pay 30% of their income as rent, as well as for food and power, and life is cheaper on the outside. The racist myth of "handouts" is a sick joke indeed.

**TODAY** the colour bar is down — or rather, replaced by a more subtle bias in the form of a points system which favours English speakers.

But the essential notion of migrants as a commodity, to be turned on and off as the system requires, has not changed one iota. Indeed, the FitzGerald Inquiry only makes that more explicit.

Socialists have a completely different interest. For us, the international solidarity of the working class and the fulfilment of human needs are paramount. To that end, we welcome all migrants who want to come here, both for their own sake and for the way they can broaden the outlook of the workers' movement.

And if capitalism cannot cope with an open-door policy towards immigration, it is just one more proof of its incompatibility with real human needs.

— Alec Kahn

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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. The 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

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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 not 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, socialist movements and wherever people are fighting for a better world, socialists are fighting for the light. If that's where you want to be, join us today!

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**THE EXPERIENCE** of the Hawke government has disillusioned most left-wingers who imagined the ALP could be a force for social progress.

Yet history should have warned them that their hopes were ill-founded before Bob Hawke ever got the chance to put the boot into Australian workers.

In power even the best-intentioned Labor politicians are eventually forced to oppose the interests of workers, because they support the capitalist system.

The ALP usually comes to power at times of economic crisis — the worst time for reform and the sort of situation where they are called on to contain worker unrest. The ruling class and its media let them take power precisely to play this role.

For example, during the depression, Labor Prime Minister Scullin cut pensions and government wages by 20 per cent. Later during World War II, John Curtin and the ALP used their influence with trade unionists to persuade workers to forego strike action. Then in 1949 Ben Chifley sent in troops to break the coal miners' strike.

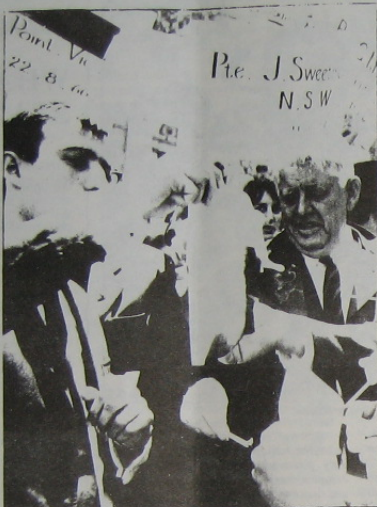
Gough Whitlam is revered today by many as a great reformer, mostly because of the way he was sacked. What they forget is the way the ruthless 1975 Hayden budget set the scene for 7 years of welfare cuts by Malcolm Fraser.

**LABOR** governments do these things for two simple reasons. One is that they accept the economic logic of capitalism. Hawke and Keating accept that wages, government spending and taxes must be kept down in order to boost profits and encourage investment.

That there could be a different kind of society, one driven by human needs rather than profits and investment, never enters their heads.

The second is that they need the support of big business to remain in power. Most obviously, they cannot get re-elected unless Rupert Murdoch and the rest of the media let the public vote for them.

But just as important, any attempt on their part to undertake serious reforms would bring them up against the economic power of the ruling class. Capitalists can refuse to invest, send money abroad to create a balance of payments crisis, shut down whole sections of industry and create unemployment, force up prices through speculation



Vietnam protest: Labor had to respond to the struggle

## Why all our Labors are in vain

and hoarding. The way that the money markets sit in judgement on every major government economic decision today is just the most recent example.

**IT'S** NO different overseas. In 1964 in Britain following the election of the Wilson Labour government, money managers switched their funds out of Britain, causing a slump in the value of the pound. Harold Wilson later described how his advisors told him to give business what it wanted:

*"A newly elected government with a mandate from the people were being told, by international speculators, that the policies on which we had fought the election could not be implemented."*

Not only does Labor confine itself to modest reforms most of the time, but they are usually reforms needed by capitalism itself, which would be brought in by a Liberal or a Labor government.



Ben Chifley

There are times when the reforms can quite significant. For example the Whitlam government ended conscription. And it was during Gough's regime that the arbitration system gave its blessing to the principle of equal pay.

But these were really gains that had already been won by the working class in struggle. It was the mass movement against the Vietnam war that made conscription unviable. And it was industrial action in the workplaces that brought women's pay much closer to men's in the early 1970s.

When we fight, Labor governments will sometimes follow the logic of Lord Hallsham: *"If you do not give the people reform they will give you revolution."* But that's an argument for revolutionary struggle, not for trusting in ALP reform policies.

**WHAT'S MORE, reforms** can easily be overturned when our rulers decide they can no longer afford them, or that we will no longer fight to defend them.

A classic case of both is the sale of uranium to France: the Labor government decided it could get away with reversing the ALP uranium policy because of workers' illusions in Bob Hawke, and that the move was necessary because of the trade crisis facing Australian capitalism. All the efforts of leftwingers inside the ALP were futile in resisting the change, and many left the party in disgust.

Most futile of all are the efforts of those who try to use Labor as a vehicle to bring about socialism. The ALP has never even claimed to be for socialism. The closest it ever got was in 1921, with the adoption of a policy calling for socialisation of industry. No Labor government has ever paid any attention even to this "socialisation objective" and in the late 1950s it was watered down.

Now it calls for socialisation "to the extent necessary to eliminate exploitation and other anti-social features". Needless to say, today we have a Prime Minister and Treasurer who are themselves "anti-social features". They regard the socialisation objective as a nuisance.

The closest anyone ever got to implementing this plank at the federal level was probably Ben Chifley. He tried to nationalise the banks to provide better finance for industry. But Labor found it didn't have the constitutional power to do it, and in the face of opposition from the bankers, Chifley gave up.

Faced with resistance from the bosses, Labor will always give up. Faced with our aspirations for a better world, they will always betray them. Those who will not learn these lessons are doomed to continuing frustration.

— Patricia Lungenakker

## 'Vote early and often' was BWIU motto

**THE TRUTH** is out! Last year's election in the BWIU was rigged.

BWIU organiser Ivo Rato has revealed extensive electoral fraud officers taken on following grants from the Victorian government, now thinks those grants were a sellout of workers, and clearly used for electoral purposes.

Ivo admits to doing the dirty work among Portuguese workers in Melbourne's western suburbs. He personally picked up blank ballots from the workers and took them back to headquarters, where they were filled out by officials. Ivo claims at least 2500 ballots are involved. The revelation vindicates the reform group which stood in last November's election. The group received a suspiciously low 27% of the vote, despite the very substantial support they had found when visiting building sites.

The day after the disclosure BWIU members at Knoxfield Shopping Centre site unanimously passed a motion of no confidence in their leadership. They demanded the election be annulled and all BWIU organisers go on leave without pay. Other workers no doubt feel the same.

BLF activist Dave Kerin told Socialist Action that the revelation put attacks on the Builders Labourers in perspective.

*"Those trade union officials who kid themselves that the attack on the BLF has to do with what Norm did in the 70's had better wake up, set their egos aside and realise that we're all at risk."*

Meanwhile, the BLF has continued to give a lead around the building industry.

Although admitting liability, the developer Grollo has refused to pay anything to two employees disabled by an accident two years ago.

So BLF members picketed his Shell building at the end of April and blocked concrete delivery. The local BWIU shop steward threatened them with an iron bar. When drivers refused to cross the picket line, he even attempted to drive a truck across himself.

Eventually the concrete trucks had to leave. Within a day Grollo had paid the money to the two injured workers.

In another incident, workers have taken unprecedented action — they are defying 45D (secondary boycott) writs. After a dispute shut down the David Jones site in Bourke St for 15 days, the owners slapped writs on the BWIU and other unions, and put bouncers on the door to keep "uninvited officials" away.

The workers didn't appreciate working under siege. At a meeting off site addressed by the BLF's John Cummins, they voted to continue action despite the writs, and despite BWIU and other unions wanting to cave in.

At the time of writing David Jones has sacked all the labourers, but the dispute is not over. Despite the demonstrable support the BLF has, they are nonetheless in serious financial trouble.

While custodian Ian Sharpe has paid organisers salaries, he is refusing to pay legal costs, parking fines or even for leaflets and posters. He says these activities are political. But after the BLF revelations, what a laugh that is!

Sharpe did not send out invoices for dues in March, making it very difficult to collect them.

The BLF have had to announce that organisers will be laid off if more building workers do not pay their subs.

Nationally, wages remain stagnant.

Without having consulted a single rank and filer, a number of building unions have lodged a wages claim in accordance with current ACTU strategy. Last year when the BWIU were selling the wages agreement of the time to the members, the secretary said there'd be no trade offs. At a recent shop stewards' meeting an official said that in this new scheme there'd be no more trade offs.

Yet one effect includes a completion bonus, effectively a good behaviour bond, not money guaranteed as a right. It also includes a traineeship scheme which brings in junior wages, traditionally opposed in the building industry.

And as John Cummins told Socialist Action, now should be the time to make gains.

*"This is the biggest boom that we've ever seen. When the bottom falls out of the building industry, it'll be followed by the biggest bust. When that happens the scramble will be on!"*

Yet instead of making gains, the BWIU do deals which eat away at conditions. For example a new "redundancy" scheme has been accepted, again without referral to members.

The BLF custodian is now expected to bring down his final report during May. It will most likely recommend winding up the union, and action for fraud of \$1 million against Norm Gallagher. Cain is expected to try to wrap it all up well before elections due early next year.

With the support of building workers, there's plenty of fight in the BLF yet.

— Janey Stone

**WOMEN**

### Backstabbers beware

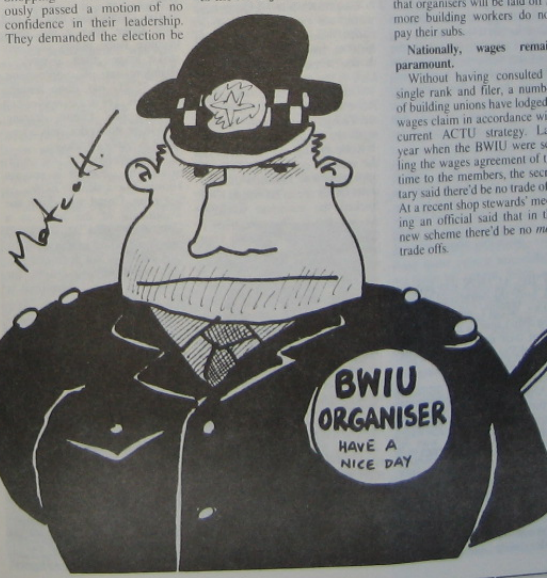
MICRANT women working at Melbourne's Hoys food factory have shown they can stand up for their rights.

Hoys sells packets of herbs and spices. When two women recently refused to work putting chili powder into packets because of the irritation they suffered they were fired. The other women in their area walked off in sympathy.

The boss here is notorious for threatening workers when they take industrial action. On past occasions he has phoned them at home and even sent goons to threaten them. The Italians are particularly afraid of his Italian-language abuse.

They know he isn't bluffing. Six months ago he literally stabbed a union organiser in the back in front of witnesses. The police have so far failed to act.

So we're pleased to announce that the women's action has led to victory. The sacked employees have been reinstated, and no one will work on the chili's pending a health and safety check.



# We can fight back, say Robe River workers

UNIONS threaten full scale industrial action'. To judge by the pronouncements of Rob Meacham of the WA TLC and other union officials, you'd think they were about to take on Robe River Iron Ore seriously. But Pilbara workers recognise bluff and bluster when they see it.

In 1986-1987 Robe gained notoriety from a lockout and strike, which forced the workers back to work on the company's terms. The defeat depressed worker morale, and the bosses whittled away hard won conditions with virtually no resistance. Workers lost confidence. The mood was despondency and even hopelessness.

The union officials had spotted militant talk, only to strangle the struggle at the first opportunity. The same noises are now being made by the same shower as last time. The cast is slightly different — but they have the same script.

Robe River has celebrated recent record production levels by attacking their workers yet again. In March they sent a letter to each of us offering a small pay rise in return for "further increases in productivity and efficiency" and a signed statement of "personal commitment" to the company.

Union officials claimed to be outraged, but all they did was write letters. Meanwhile, with less publicity but a lot more impact, workers were stirring into action on their own account.

Electricians were first to act, in February after the company tried to deny us our afternoon smoko.

WHEN two ETU union delegates refused to work as directed and received written warnings, members went on strike for two days. As a result of this, the first industrial action to be taken for over a year, we kept the smoko and the warnings were withdrawn.

This small victory showed that the company were not invincible and gave the workforce a much needed lead.

By April, the tugboat workers had had a win! Following several incidents. Two men had been sacked and accommodation changes meant the scrapping of mess facilities. Perhaps



Robe River workers: the company can be fought

most importantly, they had received neither the second tier 4% wage rise nor the 3% superannuation.

So the maritime unions at Cape Lambert took enough food to feed an army and took the tugs out to the usual moorings. They locked all the hatches and retired below. The company hired a boat and "invited" the police to come aboard, but strangely nobody wanted to let them in or talk to them.

The action tied up two iron ore ships waiting to be loaded. Attempts to redirect them to other ports were foiled by seamen in Port Hedland and Dampier going on strike at the same time, ostensibly about different issues.

THIS ACTION was just the tonic the workforce needed. There weren't many workers who didn't sport a grin on hearing of their dear company's dilemma! The tug occupation prevented Robe from using its cherished scabs.

After three days on strike and a further six hours when the seamen worked but continued their occupation, they won on the accommodation issue (though the Commission later took this away from them). They appear close to agreement on the 4%, but having regained its tug, Peko is suing the workers for criminal and civil damages.

Meanwhile the electricians

struck again for four days, over a Peko plan to stop providing tenants of company owned houses with white goods, so they would no longer need maintenance workers. One delighted local unionist told me, "It's good to see someone giving Peko a kick in the guts".

The atmosphere amongst Robe workers is now much better. Things are still tough, but the signs are encouraging.

Robe talking out the writs on the seamen could have been an opportunity to broaden the dispute. Other unionists would have backed the maritime workers. As one put it, "No one likes a strike but you can't lie on your back and put your legs up in the air either. You've got to try to do something".

But the union officials pose a major obstacle. 18 months ago leaders of the Mining Union Association (covering unions in the Pilbara), taking their lead from Simon Crean, talked down the workers' enthusiasm for Pilbara-wide action.

TODAY the workers again face official faint-heartedness. Organisers tell rank and filers that strike action will lose them members. Actually the opposite has been the case — several men joined the ETU in order to participate.

The MUA for its part happily accepted Robe's demand that

shop stewards be excluded from meetings over award negotiations.

The electricians had to end their strike after a few days, because Robe policy says any strike longer than a week is abandonment of employment. The ACTU has done nothing about this. Yet in a conveyer belt industry like Pilbara mining, with huge stockpiles, only a long strike is really effective.

The outcome of the writs against the seamen is not yet known, but a deal is likely. As last time, Crean will claim the withdrawal of the writs as a victory, then take steps to avoid any more action initiated by the rank and file. Yet action of that kind could produce results, for Robe is more vulnerable than is commonly thought.

Robe make propaganda about records in production, safety and industrial harmony. But much of this is lies. For example Robe recently claimed an "outstanding 161 consecutive days free from lost time injuries". The catch is that the company now requires injured employees to work where before they would have had time off.

So Robe River aren't the world-beaters they claim to be. It is only with the help of union leaders like Simon Crean that they and bosses like them retain their power.

— Graeme Haynes

# Kanaks face France's dirty war

IF FULL-SCALE civil war comes to New Caledonia, the blame can be laid squarely at the door of the French government, who have been fighting a dirty war there for years.

In the face of agitation for an independent state of Kanaky, representing the indigenous Kanak people, the previous French regime did give some ground. But the Chirac government proceeded with a referendum last year designed to wipe the concessions out. In the face of a Kanak boycott, the French settlers who have a voting majority approved a statute reaffirming New Caledonia as part of France.

In April the government held elections to put the statute into practice. The Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) mobilised its local "struggle committees" to disrupt them. It was these committees which took the French police captive on the island of Ouvéa, besieged the town of Canala on the east coast of the mainland, and set up hundreds of road barricades.

It is clear the Kanaks are determined to fight for their independence.

Their determination was hardened in October at the end of a highly public trial, in which seven accused murderers were freed. The seven, poor farmers of mixed race, were widely believed to have been part of a larger group which massacred Kanak villagers in the township of Hienghène.

Two of the men shot dead



French forces on the move



Kanak separatists in the streets

were brothers of Jean-Marie Tjibaou, leader of the FLNKS.

French authorities have tried desperately to reassert their control, arresting four Kanak militants on charges of organising a bomb attack and sending military reinforcements to back up the many thousands of cops and soldiers already in the territory. But their failures have been obvious enough to enrage the extreme right, both in New Caledonia and in metropolitan France.

In the territory itself, armed groups of French settlers matching their Israeli equivalents for viciousness have been organised to attack Kanak blockades. They toss the term "terrorist" about, as if the Kanak people had not been long terrorised themselves.

In France, aspiring Hitler Jean-Marie LePen called for the "extermination" of Kanaks who did not surrender. But such a plan will not be so easy to put into practice.

How have the Kanaks been made a minority in their own country?

The first 60 years of French colonialism reduced them to a fraction of their original numbers, from 80,000 in 1850 to 27,000 in 1921, through the consequences of disease and the violent seizure of their land.

The French colonists, or *coloches*, took most of the arable land and drowned resistance in blood. The Kanak population only regained its 1887 level in 1962. The white population was only about 20,000 after World War II, but the French have deliberately built it up since then, with many new arrivals being drawn from colonists driven out of Vietnam and Algeria by national liberation struggles. Immigration was even boosted at times when the colony's exports of nickel were commanding poor prices and the economy was in bad shape. Paris preferred to subsidise the territory rather than lose control of it.

Kanak language and culture has been suppressed, and French metropolitan culture imposed. Police repression is routine, and violence against Kanaks a part of everyday life.

This is not an esoteric issue for Australians. When we demand a nuclear-free Pacific, it is these same French imperialists we come up against. When we demand land rights for the indigenous peoples of this continent, it is the Kanaks we are raising.

— Richard Emerson

## IN BRIEF

### Amazing scenes

WHEN the Contrats came to the Nicaraguan capital Managua to negotiate with the Sandinista government, they demanded the best — the best food, the best hospital, the best hotels.

An understandable self-indulgence after years in the jungle? Not according to documents on "humanitarian aid" obtained from US opponents of the Contra war. More likely, it's the life to which Contra leaders have become accustomed.

For those long nights under the lamplight, humanitarian aid included guitars, shrimps and lots of whiskey. The Contras also asked for and got coffee, chocolate, TVs, volleyballs and gallons of deodorant.

Either they were the sweetest smelling soldiers in the world, or the Contras made a killing on Managua's black market.

THE BOSSES always justify their whopping salaries by saying that they're paid for performance. Don't you believe it.

Top US bank executives were paid huge bonuses last year, despite banks' record losses, especially on loans to Latin America. First Chicago lost \$570.7 million. But their chief honcho, Barry Sullivan got a \$900,000 bonus on top of a \$604,000 salary. Mr Sullivan dismissed the Latin American losses as "strategically irrelevant" and "outside management control, and therefore irrelevant to his bonus."

Citicorp was more sensitive to public reaction. It gave its chief manager half a million dollars worth of shares rather than a cash bonus. An executive explained, "It wouldn't look right in a year we lost money." \$1.14 billion, to be exact.

In this country, big business seems to have fended off government critics of the shopping pay rises recently won by executives, arguing that this merely represented "cashing in" of represented benefits. Why a managerial class that has brought this country falling living standards should be "cashing in" anything has yet to be explained.

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40 YEARS AGO in 1848, the working class had a trial run at revolution. France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Italy were all gripped by revolutionary upheavals. In Germany the new industrial proletariat played a greater role than anyone expected.

By the 1840s capitalism was beginning to replace feudalism in Germany. The German capitalists needed national unity and state power to promote the best conditions for profit-making and their new methods of production. They needed wage labourers rather than serfs, and factories rather than hand-ploughs.

The capitalist class revolted against the old order. Numerically tiny itself, it had to call on the workers to provide the muscle.

The workers needed little prompting. They had no political rights and miserable living conditions. They heeded the call to fight, and allied themselves with the capitalists because the latter were fighting for democracy; for a parliament, a constitution, and the "Rights of Man".

Armed uprisings by the working class and radical democrats in March 1848 won some reforms from the Prussian King: a parliament (though it was largely powerless) and freedom of political association. The workers were far from satisfied, and in October the revolution reached its high point with weeks of street fighting, but these uprisings were defeated.

**THE CAPITALISTS** were enticed back to friendly relations with the monarchy by the offer of a constitution, however limited. The lure was effective because the capitalists' revolutionary ardour had been put on ice.

Their fear of the increasingly militant working class proved stronger than their frustration with the feudal order. The new deal might be far from perfect, but it was better in their eyes than being overtaken by a socialist revolution.

The working class fought on, and again launched heroic uprisings in May 1849, but they were again defeated, and the leading insurgents driven into exile.

The German revolution of 1848 was an exciting event not only because it had barricades and street meetings, also because questions of longer term revolutionary strategy were raised.

In the thick of the struggles, and trying to supply answers to



Scene from the 1848 revolution

## Karl Marx's revolutionary apprenticeship

the issues of the time were two German revolutionary militants, the 30 year old Karl Marx and 27 year old Frederick Engels.

In 1847 they had formed the first international communist organisation, the Communist League. But it was born a weakling, with only two to three hundred members scattered over Europe. In fact it effectively dissolved into the mass movements of 1848. It merged with the German revolution the way a tadpole merges with a hungry whale.

**THE GERMAN** working class was too industrially immature to form a viable base for a communist party. But there was another factor in the Communist League's demise as well. Marx had originally thought the German revolution would be a re-run of the great French upheaval following



democratic movement. His paper was full of arguments for a "unified democratic republic" but said little about working class concerns.

However, when the capitalists' revolutionary lances turned to jelly, Marx's tactical alliance with them fell apart. Few bourgeois democrats fought to the end. Richard Wagner, conductor of the Dresden Opera, who defended the rebels' last barricades in 1849 with musket in one hand and revolutionary leaflets in the other, was a rare exception.

**KARL MARX** now turned decisively to the working class. He became active in the Workers' Societies of the time, and his paper took up the workers' independent cause, but this intervention came too late, and military reaction triumphed.

After the defeat, Marx said that the days of the capitalist class as a revolutionary force were over. This role now fell to the young working class. For a time he and Engels had hopes that the workers could revive the revolutionary process in the short term and march onwards to victory. Later they realised these hopes were premature.

"History has proved us wrong," confessed Engels in 1895 about their belief that the 1848 crisis heralded the final death agony of capitalism. In the following 50 years, in fact, the system had boomed, "seizing the whole continent". But by that time 1917 and the Russian workers' triumphant seizure of power were not so far off.

The 1848 upheaval aroused people's passion for a better society. Richard Wagner longed for the "goddess Revolution" who would "destroy every trace of this insane order of things, of force, lies, hypocrisy, want, sorrow, suffering, tears, trickery and crime." She would "break down the power of the mighty, of law, property".

She did not come in 1848, but the experiences of that year helped Karl Marx develop the socialist ideas that could bring the prospect nearer.

— Phil Shannon

1789.

In both cases, there was only small scale capitalist production, which could not provide the material basis for socialism. So Marx concluded that the German working class had to settle for supporting the bourgeoisie, while taking the opportunity to gather experience and build its strength for a future socialist struggle.

By the start of 1848, Marx and Engels had modified this view, arguing that the democratic revolution of the bourgeoisie must be immediately followed by a struggle for socialism. But it was a stage theory, and so in what as they saw as the first stage of the process, they stuck to promoting the bourgeois revolution.

As editor of the *New Rhenish Gazette*, a daily paper financed by middle class radicals, Marx became the voice of the extreme left wing of the revolutionary

## 'The Fifties' revisits an Ice Age

"AUSTRALIA in the fifties." The phrase conjures up images of a stuffy, Anglo-Saxon backwater. Pubs closing at six o'clock; mums happy in the kitchen; a political Ice Age with Menzies serene and triumphant.

Like most popular stereotypes, this is only partly accurate. In their new book *The Fifties*, Stella Lees and June Senyard show us a decade when Australia became a modern industrial society, and ordinary workers' lives changed dramatically.

In the 1930s, Australia was still in many ways a colony on the fringes of the world economy. Its farmers produced wool and wheat for export and the state sought to nurture a fledgling industrial sector. Living standards were low by American and West European standards. In the countryside, despite a sixty-hour work week, 90 percent of farmers were weighed down by enormous debts. Productivity was low — horse drawn equipment was the norm, tractors a luxury.

Even in the cities less than half of families had any hope of owning their own home, and a mere 800,000 cars cruised the streets.

In the fifties all this changed. Uranium mines, our very own nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights, the Snowy Mountains Scheme, the explosion of suburban settlement — all these were tangible proof, it seemed, that Australia had made it as an advanced industrial country.

A substantial manufacturing sector employed hundreds of thousands. Factories poured out products barely dreamed of before the war, from televisions to zips, and more familiar objects on a previously unimaginable scale.

Ordinary workers could reasonably expect to own a house, stuffed with shiny new labour-saving devices and, of course, a car. The sons and daughters of people who had never finished primary school were shunted off to uni, fodder for a new white collar working class.

Everything was changing. Department stores edged out the local shops. Credit (buy-by and hire purchase) swamped the old virtue of thrift. Whole industries and ideologies catered to a new teenage market and sub-culture.

Lees and Senyard write about all this with some verve, but they are not starry-eyed about it.



The way we were

They recognise that not everyone got their fair share, and some got no share at all.

Chapter 5 is subtitled, "how we bombed the Aborigines and bashed the immigrants." They explore the ways in which "assimilation" replaced (or at least tempered) White Australia as a way of dealing with Aborigines, without doing anything at all about living conditions, loss of traditional lands, and widespread racism.

Similarly, while the press was full of happy and successful migrants, the real conditions in which most lived and worked barely rated a mention anywhere.

Lees and Senyard show, too, how the myth of a new classless society was created. Most obviously, there was the Liberal Party-led bosses' offensive: anti-communism, penal powers against the unions and the like. Backing this up was the work of "the media," the commentators and the writers of fiction who mostly preferred an Australian working class that knew its place: they aimed to convince workers that class struggle was not only unnecessary (look what a great life capitalism is delivering to us) but somehow alien, not very Australian.

*The Fifties* is a great read. To its descriptions it adds extracts from diaries and novels, news-

paper reports, family snapshots, and dozens of wonderful photos by Mark Strizic. I hope they do the Sixties next.

— Graham Willett

FILMS



### The trouble with Baby

ALL WOMEN are oppressed, but not all the same way or to the same degree. It was reminded of this while watching *Baby Boom*, Diane Keaton's new film.

Keaton plays JC Wyatt, a member of that generation of women who were brought up to marry doctors and executives, but who chose instead to become them.

JC is an executive with a major New York marketing agency. From her dressed-for-success padded shoulders and her executed leather briefcase, to her six-figure income and her seventy-hour work week, she is the very model of the modern feminist success story.

She doesn't have it all, as she's the first to admit. But then she doesn't want it all. She and her equally work-addicted lover are not married, have no children and have no plans for either.

Enter the child. A distant cousin dies suddenly and JC inherits his baby daughter. Maternal instinct being what it is (at least in Hollywood) she can't bring herself to adopt it, and the film launches into a series of visual gags as JC learns to be a mother — changing nappies, feeding, finding a nanny.

Her career suffers. She goes soft, as her boss tells her. She can't be the Tiger Lady and a mum, and eventually she is eased out of the company.

All grossly unfair, of course, but I found it hard to be too sympathetic towards someone whose retrenchment package lets her buy a house and sixty-two acres in rural Vermont.

JC's real problem is not that she is a victim of sexism (though she is), but that her values were, all screwed up in the first place, all wrong — right to earn a living as a woman's man, feminism is all about? Has working a seventy hour week, with little time for personal life, got anything to do with human fulfillment?

The film thinks not, and I agree. But nor is having kids what it's all about either, and that the film is ambiguous. Still, that the film is a step forward on Hollywood's trail, and Baby Boom is quite good fun.

— Chris Street

# Rainbow, or pie in the sky?

"JESSE!" asked *Time's* cover of 11 April, and the punctuation said it all. Briefly last month, the whole US ruling class squirmed at the thought of Jesse Jackson as President.

The prospect has now receded, but well they might have worried. For Jackson's populist campaign has struck a chord amongst the millions left out of the American Dream.

No other candidate in living memory has stood on picket lines, denounced scabbing and demanded soak-the-rich taxation. No other current hopeful dares to embrace gay AIDS victims, or has anything to say to the 600,000 farmers driven off the land.

And only Jackson had demurred from the protectionist xenophobia gripping the US. He tells the unemployed, "Don't get mad at the Japanese or South Koreans. General Motors took your 29,000 jobs this year and put them in South Korea. Slave labour is a threat to organised labour anywhere."

He sounds good. So good, in fact, that thousands have flocked to his Rainbow Coalition, and he is pulling over 30 per cent of the black vote and a growing minority of white working class voters as well.

Yet socialists must have severe misgivings about Jesse Jackson. For all the enthusiasm he generates amongst America's oppressed, we must ask, "Where is he leading them?" Is he really, as one leftwing paper here enthused, "radicalising America"?

**C**LEARLY Jackson is no revolutionary. He does not suggest that America's workers and oppressed seize power in their own right, or anything like it.

As a reformist, committed to working within the system, he is full of contradictions. He wants to cut arms spending, but supports a strong military. He supports the Palestinians, but promises not to meet Yassir Arafat as President. He supports the Sandinistas, but warns them on TV that "if they choose to relate to the Soviets, they must know the alternatives. If they are with us, there are tremendous benefits. If they are not with us, there are tremendous consequences."

Jackson speaks out for the oppressed minorities. Yet in his candidacy speech in October, moments after an Asian speaker had denounced the acquittal of the murderers of Vincent Chin, he declared that racial violence was no longer an issue in America.

Jackson calls for a non-inter-



ventionist foreign policy, yet says he would keep reflagging Kuwaiti tankers in the Gulf. On protectionism, he now wears T-shirts condemning foreign imports and demands better Third World wages under the slogan of "fair competition," which is a far cry from "international solidarity."

His anti-corporate program has become a vague call for "incentives" to change employer practices. Reminiscent of Bob Hawke's notorious summits, Jackson proposes a thinktank of business, labour and government to thrash out answers "together".

**J**ACKSON is not just wailing under the glare of the TV arc lights, however. Also drawing him to the right is the black Democratic machine.

When the FBI put down the militant Black Panthers in the early 1970s by cold-blooded murder, many blacks turned to electoral methods. Four of America's six largest cities now have black mayors, as do over 220 others. But the black machine's clout has not grown inside the Democratic Party, because the Democrats figure, "who else can they vote for?"

In 1984 Jesse stood without the

black machine, with limited success. This time, the bulk of the machine is backing Jackson to increase its own influence. Jackson has created a new "solid South" for it to wield, registering 2 million voters, mostly black, for the primaries. In return, black politicians are boosting Jackson while moderating his message.

Many Rainbow activists realise this, but stay with Jackson hoping he can transform the Democrats into a party of labour and the oppressed.

The US has never had a genuinely mass labour party. At times — like the 1960s — this can be a blessing, as there is no ALP-type channel for defusing outbursts of struggle. More often, it is a weakness, as the working class does not see itself as an independent player on the political stage. Unionists and blacks look to lobbying politicians inside the Democratic Party, which remains a creature of "liberal" big business.

Converting the Democrats via a bloodless coup seems to be Jackson's own aim. But to convert a party, you must first prove your loyalty to it, and that means falling in behind Mike Dukakis after the convention. Jackson has prom-

Seeing  
Red!  
with Alec Kahn

ised not to raise radical demands on the convention floor or push to be number two on the ticket. In the end, the converter becomes the converted.

Other Rainbow activists hope Jackson's campaign can boost non-electoral movements, or the Rainbow Coalition itself, into a third force in US politics. This too is a vain hope.

Socialists campaigning for black mayors found that vote-canvassing quickly swamped any longer-term goals. At Rainbow's October convention, proposals to use Jackson's momentum for a unionisation drive in the South were squashed in favour of Labor-for-Jackson Committees. The Rainbow sacrificed a membership drive so it could register 2 million voters in the South for Super Tuesday.

**T**HE REAL impact of Jesse Jackson has been to create a new, and undeserved, following for the Democratic Party.

In recent decades, 50 per cent and more of American workers have not bothered to vote for President because, rightly, they can see no point. (Reagan was elected by 28 per cent of voters against Mondale's 22 per cent.) Jackson is drawing millions of these disaffected workers back into the political process, in the end just to vote for Dukakis.

If that happens, Jackson's followers will have tragically wasted their time. There is a way forward for them, however.

That is to demand, when Jesse loses at the convention, that instead of doing deals he declares himself as an independent candidate.

The break with the Democrats could build his following into what US politics really needs, which is not a populist face for a tired old capitalist party but an independent national party of the working class. The Wisconsin Labor-Farm Party, which has such a goal and has legal ballot status, has a standing offer to Jackson to run on their designation. In California, Jackson would get the Peace and Freedom Party nomination.

The true test of Jesse Jackson and his Rainbow Coalition comes after the convention. If they fail it — and sadly, all the indications are that they will — Jackson will truly have shown that there is no pot of gold at the end of his Rainbow.

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# SOCIALIST ACTION



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## STUDENTS SAY: AXE THE TAX!



• Sydney's DSS dispute

LABOR'S MATES

Ready, willing and Abeles

GOVERNMENTS come and governments go...but Sir Peter Abeles rules on regardless.

Abeles got his knighthood from Liberal premier Sir Robert Askin. When he retired, Askin ended up with hundreds of thousands of shares in TNT and an office just down the hall from Sir Peter in TNT's Sydney headquarters.

Then came the Wran era. In the famous Alexander and Thomas Barton case in 1981, part of the Barton's defence included considerable evidence that Abeles had violated taxation and company laws in manipulating share prices and moving the profits overseas. After 16 months of hearings, the Wran government dropped the case on the day that Abeles was due to give evidence. Wran's cleaning company now has the TNT contract.

Nowadays it's Hawke, who regards Abeles as a father figure (or maybe Godfather figure?) and his No. 1 mate. Hawke

wants to open up the airlines to privatisation — which could expand TNT's transport operation nicely, thank you.

And is it just a coincidence that the National Crime Authority "cannot find" tapes made by private detective Rex Beaver for the NSW Bureau of Crime Intelligence, which alleges he has Abeles ordering an employee to shift over \$20 million out of the country in February 1985, and telling the underling when queried that he knew things the employee didn't? All of which raises interesting questions about Abeles' insider position on the Reserve Bank Board — or would, except the Justice Stewart of the NCA won't even let Beaver have his own notes of the conversation now that the tape "cannot be found".

Yes, Abeles always comes out the right way up. During the NSW election campaign, Nick Greiner made noises about moving TNT's monorial and about investigating TNT payoffs to corrupt Transport Workers' Union officials.

So first thing after the election, who comes to the party and joins a consortium bidding to get the \$6 billion Anzatic frigate program for NSW — but Sir Peter, at Nick-Bob's request. What are the odds that we hear little more about the union pay-offs, and Abeles gets to keep his train set running through the streets of Sydney?



Abeles: everybody's mate

UNIONISM

Playing by the Bok

**IN 1970 one Derek K Bok wrote that 'Unions are the most potent organized body to represent the political interests of workers', and championed the right of US workers to organise.**

In 1988 the same Derek K Bok wrote, "Unions have typically resisted efforts to reward superior achievement with greater compensation or to allow supervisors to vary the way they work in response to their special needs and capabilities." He opposed unionisation unless it could be shown that it would improve workers' conditions.

So who is Derek K Bok? In 1970 Bok was a US labour arbitrator and law professor. Now he is president of Harvard University, trying to stop his employees from unionising.

His workers told him to get back in his Boks and voted for unionisation anyhow.

OBITUARY

Harry McShane

**VETERAN Scottish revolutionary Harry McShane died last month, aged 96. He became a Marxist at 16 and remained so for the rest of his life.**

Harry started as an engineering worker on Clydeside, where for a short time until 1920 he was a member of the British Socialist Party. On leaving the BSP he joined with John McLean to form the Tramp Trust Unlimited. After

two years with the Tramp Trust, for which he helped produce thousands of leaflets and held hundreds of factory gate meetings, he joined the Communist Party, with which he remained until 1953.

During the 1930s, along with Wal Harrington, Harry helped organise the National Unemployed Workers Movement. He was at the forefront of the massive hunger marches, helping win employed workers to the struggle against unemployment.

Harry's belief in the self-emanipation of the working class led him to leave the Communist Party in 1953. He was offered a large sum of money by two daily newspapers for his story but he refused. Harry's political position was revolutionary opposition to both market capitalism and the state capitalism which dominated Eastern Europe.

In the late '70s Harry was again involved with the struggles of the unemployed, speaking to Rights of Work marches and addressing the final rally at the Albert Hall of 6,000 people.

Through the ups and downs of the class struggle, Harry was always an optimist, and never lost his belief in revolutionary socialism. The world working class movement will be poorer without him.

MANAGEMENT

Golden handshake

**JOHN O'BRIEN, managing director, and Hilary Roberts, finance director, were sacked by Repco for plotting a takeover of the company.**

The poor dears applied to the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria for help. But neither the employer nor union reps on the Commission wanted to hear the case. One reason — they weren't unionists (surprise, surprise).

So John and Hilary went to the Supreme Court. Unlike most litigants, who wait years to have their cases heard, O'Brien and Roberts v. Repco was heard six weeks after the writs went out. Halfway through, Ratco settled with them for a reputed half million dollars each.

Moral: If you get rethrenched, try taking over the factory.

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Larceny in the first degree

**THE HAWKE government, spearheaded by Education Minister John Dawkins, is poised to roll back the abolition of tertiary education fees by the Whitlam government in 1974.**

The Labor-affiliated student leaders who dreamed that the ALP Conference rather than direct action would stop the fee have been brought to earth with a thud.

There is of course no question that Dawkins' proposed tax of 2% on the earnings of graduates until they have paid for 20% of the cost of their degrees is a fee dressed up in very transparent disguise.

The fact that those who fail or drop out will still have to pay the tax proves that it is a fee. If Dawkins is serious that the great jobs graduates will get are the reason for the tax, why tax those who won't get those top jobs?

John Dawkins has shown even more contemptible cynicism by accusing students who have opposed the tax/fee of acting out of self interest, wanting to protect their cushy position in society — whereas he was a glowing altruist in his own student activist days. We will return to both of these propositions.

The basic issue for socialists is how it all affects the working class. The abolition of fees in 1974 allowed more 'blue collar' background students to take part in tertiary courses, rising from 17% of students in 1974 to 23% last year.

More women went to uni too. Their participation rate rose from 37% in 1973 to 50% in 1987. There are also twice as many mature age students attending tertiary institutions.

These are the people who will be hit most by the tertiary tax. What's more, the much vaunted glorious salaries of graduates are something of a fallacy. Graduate teachers and nurses, for example, do not start with salaries drastically higher than \$21,500 a year. This cut-in point for the tax, by the way, is not the average wage, but about \$2000 a year below it.

Who will want to enter teaching or nursing when Labor places such a disincentive in the way? Perhaps Labor plans big rises in teachers' and nurses' salaries to counter this? Don't hold your breath. For women



especially, the tax is a joke in bad taste, because their average post-graduate earnings still lag behind those of men.

So if you are a battler who has got through a uni course, the 2% levy on your income is a slug that the extremely wealthy will not feel.

**DAWKINS has argued that the tax/fee will be used to raise more funds for Austudy and tertiary places, and therefore encourage more students to stay on to the end of secondary school and go on to tertiary study. This is the tool for selling the idea to working-class parents. It is another cynical ploy.**

Already under Hawke, the percentage of GDP spent on higher education has been cut from 1.13% to 0.99%.

Within the first couple of years of operation of the tax, assuming that the present \$263 "administrative fee" is removed, the government will not gather much more money from it. The Wran report proposes that the government reform Austudy "as soon as it is possible and practicable within the next ten years." So there is no guarantee to today's parents that their kids will be better funded to attempt that degree. As things are now, average student debt is \$1,800 a year.

Students have to live off the smell of an oily rag... unless they have well-off parents... for several years. An academic

reaching the rank of professor (how many do that?) catches up with the total earnings of a bus driver when he reaches 55. Average graduate wages these days are only 24% higher than the average wage, and falling rapidly.

Yes, it pays to be rich already. Dawkins' tax/fee is not graduated according to how rich you are. On the contrary, the Wran Report recommends a 40% discount for anyone who can pay the tax up-front before doing their course — a clear advantage for the wealthy. Dawkins says he may not accept this recommendation, but will any government knock back the chance to get funds now rather than later for long!

**EVEN IF Labor does increase the number of tertiary places, there is no guarantee that working class kids will get more of them.**

Dawkins was unable to answer the question that he quizzed him on the composition of students who just miss out on tertiary places at present. Most likely the private "gram" schools will continue to take the lion's share — especially when there is no tax on the fee that they must pay even if they fail at university.

If Dawkins were serious about getting more of the less privileged sections of society into tertiary level education, he would increase spending on the

government education system and cut funding to rich private schools. Labor has done exactly the opposite in recent years.

Who should pay for higher education then? Dawkins argues that those who benefit should pay. Fine! This means that big companies should pay.

It goes without saying that an employer pays you less than you are worth. If it were not true, the profit would be impossible. This is fundamental to capitalism. So the wages that Hawke and Dawkins make such a fuss over must be less than the value of the graduates to their employers.

Tax the employers! Labor won't do this. For years it has tried to cajole companies to spend more on training and research and drawn a blank. Now it looks to us to pay what industry won't.

Company tax has dropped from 17% of government revenue in the early '70s to less than 10% today.

The core issue of the whole debate is exploitation. The this point when they quizzed him on the composition of students who just miss out on tertiary places at present. Most likely the private "gram" schools will continue to take the lion's share — especially when there is no tax on the fee that they must pay even if they fail at university.

Dawkins says that in his student days "we were campaigning about the great issues of the time". The great issue of capitalist exploitation must have passed him by. But students and parents of today are up against it. Times haven't changed that much.

— Mark Matcok

SOCIALIST ACTION

EDITORIAL

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WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne Mondays: 7.00 Lincoln Hotel, 91 Canning St, Carlton

Sydney Tuesdays: 7.00 Mirraco Hotel (top floor) Bridge & George St, City

Brisbane Thursdays: 7.30 pm For location

Canberra Thursdays: 6.00 Blair House Workers Club, Civic

# Blacks upstage Canberra circus

"ALWAYS was, always will be, Aboriginal people, Aboriginal land... Silent Presence" said the poster produced by local blacks and their white supporters, advertising the black protest at the opening of the palatial new Parliament House in Canberra on May 9.

On the day, around 2000 Aborigines and white supporters gathered after a march for land rights and recognition of black sovereignty. Federal police told us we could not take banners or placards near the House. We ignored the order.

The western wall of the forecourt quickly became plastered with land rights flags and banners which varied from "Stop the Deaths in Custody", to "Workers of the World Unite" and "Trade Union Support Land Rights". A two-storey high Aboriginal flag, suspended by gas-filled balloons, hovered overhead while hundreds of other land rights flags were visible throughout the crowd.

When the Queen and Hawke arrived, we chanted "Murderers" and "Pay the Rent". Local Aboriginal marshals had told blacks and their supporters to maintain silence. We didn't. The public address system picked up our "Bicentennial Bullshit" chant and drowned out Hawke, the Queen and Howard.

Fewer than 20,000 people — a fifth of the number that organisers had predicted — "flocked" to celebrate the flautist opening. The local Lions Club was forced to give away truckloads of bread as the expected \$100,000 worth of food sales fell short by \$70,000. (At the opening of the old Parliament House in 1927, a trench was dug for left over meat pies. The ruling class never learns!)

The number of "cheers" was down, but so too was the number of "jeers". Local black organisers had spoken of numbers comparable to the Invasion Day protest in Sydney, and even though many blacks came to Canberra from the Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia, the "presence" could have been bigger. The organisers should have aimed for a more militant demonstration and publicised it as such.

Nevertheless, the anger of Aboriginal people came through in the banners, flags and

chanting. As Tiga Bayles, an Aboriginal activist, said:

"How do you think Aborigines feel when they see all this Bicentennial bullshit? And you have the hide to say that we have been annoying. In 200 years, there has been no reconciliation and no treaty. We are not in the Constitution and have no legal rights. Let's hope the people of

this country can put enough pressure on the Government to achieve Aboriginal land rights."

As a result of the chanting and jeering, the Parliament House demonstration made a welcome change from most of the other, generally passive demonstrations these days. We drove home the point that the Aboriginal

demand for land rights is still very much alive.

The struggle goes on... Ruby Hammond, an Aboriginal spokesperson, said similar demonstrations would continue. "We're not demonstrating because we want... We're doing it for survival..."

— Ross Palbrook



BRISBANE

## Indecent Expo 88

The first month of the half-year-long hype that is Expo 88 is thankfully over.

While private enterprise and its hangers-on love it, members of Brisbane's Aboriginal community released a statement following the demonstrations at the opening in early May saying that Expo symbolised "the celebration of 200 years of oppression, the killing of our people, the theft of our lands and continuing injustices."

They were right. State premier Ahern had instructed police to stop demonstrations with this revealing statement: "We're not going to have our state during our World Expo used for this purpose with people having property taken over and their persons put at risk."

The statement that the ruling class and big business owns Expo and the state has rarely been put so explicitly. Queensland blacks are trying to inform Ahern about property they've had taken over, and Aboriginal persons still put at

risk in his government's police lock-ups.

Expo's packaging glosses over issues like racism, poverty and class, instead painting a picture of untrammelled progress, development and harmonious interaction.

Its theme is "Leisure in the Age of Technology." The Expo Authority described leisure in 1986 as "a concept of universal understanding with no cultural or socio-economic barriers". Presumably this gibberish means that we all understand a three-month holiday on the Riviera; cultural and socio-economic barriers only crop up when you try to take one.

Expo presents the cultures of various overseas "tourist destinations" through music, dancing, picturesque landscapes and wildlife, alongside the latest in whizz-bang consumer-culture technology. The contradiction between the two under capitalism is evaded. The workers and unemployed who can rarely afford these delights won't be there to ask embarrassing questions, either, with tickets costing \$160 for a season pass, \$55 for a 3-day visit, and \$25 a day.

But then, the "leisure" of the poor and unemployed generates

little profit, so its quality is of little interest to Expo.

The unstated idea behind Expo is that we all have a "community interest" in the success of the businesses showing themselves off there. Yet Expo was set up through the demolition of one of Brisbane's oldest areas, driving many people out of relatively low-cost accommodation. Now the developers are manouvering over who will "redevelop" the Expo site when it is demolished again in five months time.

Expo is providing Ahern with a diversion from the seamy side of Queensland, being revealed in lurid detail daily in the Fitzgerald Inquiry, and soon to be highlighted further with the report of the commission into the state's prison system. So widespread is corruption, that one cop revealed last month at a Police Union meeting that he had been instructed never to harass or arrest any member of the National Party or their families.

Fittingly, Expo 92 will take place in Seville in Spain. It will celebrate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of America — another land that wasn't "lost" in the first place.

— Carole Ferrer

POLAND'S history seemed ready to repeat itself last month, as a strike wave similar to that which brought forth Solidarity in 1980 gathered force.

The outbreak of militancy was crushed before activists could carve out space for an above-ground organisation. But the tensions remain.

Poland's biggest concession to democracy in recent years was a referendum last November. The regime asked citizens to approve its economic reform package, and get a shock. Even by official tallies, the two referendum questions failed to gain the required 51% approval from registered voters.

Undeterred, General Jaruzelski pushed ahead with the reforms anyway. Price rises came in that pushed inflation up to 45% for the first yearly quarter. With the price rises came the first strikes by workers.

A public transport strike in Bydgoszcz on April 25 won a 60% pay increase. Next day, 8000 workers at the giant Nowa Huta steel complex in Cracow struck. A day later, 20,000 workers of the plant were involved. An elected strike committee of eighteen raised demands ranging from pay increases for all workers in health, education and other industries to the reinstatement of workers sacked in the aftermath of 1981.

Inside the plant, elected commissions took charge of supplies, dissemination of information, dealing with management sabotage, secretarial functions and other duties. A strike committee member headed each one.

The Nowa Huta strike became the regime's biggest headache. Even the state-sponsored union inside the factory was forced into action. Inspired by Nowa Huta, strike actions broke out in the Stalowa Wola steelworks, Dmoch engineering factory, Pawlany railway equipment factory and finally in the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk.

Cracow remained the key area of activity. After a big May Day protest, 10,000 students and workers demonstrated to support the steelworkers, until police intervened and began beating people.

JARUZELSKI'S response soon became clear — quietly concede pay rises to the smaller strikes and isolate the Nowa Huta militants.

The workers at Stalowa



Handing bread to Gdansk strikers

## Solidarity falters as the upsurge ends

Wola, for example, got a big pay increase and went back to work. The regime's Anti-Terrorist force then invaded Nowa Huta at 2 am to smash the strike, arresting the strike committee and brutally assaulting workers. At least 42 were hospitalized with serious wounds.

After this episode on May 6, the strike movement crumbled. The focus shifted to the Gdansk occupation where a thousand workers, including Lech Walesa, were under siege by police. Despite a brief solidarity stoppage at the Ursus tractor factory in Warsaw, the shipyard conceded defeat on May 10.

Though still the largest working class organisation, Solidarity revealed its weakness during the brief upsurge. It has fragmented since 1982, and its leadership has moved rightwards. They see the union less and less as connecting shopfloor struggle with political revolt, and more as a structure to formulate alternative government policies.

Worse still, influential leaders like Walesa, Jan Litynski and Shygniew Bujak have accepted the logic of the regime's economic reforms, only rejecting its method of implementation. So their main demands concern "political pluralism" and the legalization of Solidarity Nationally. Solidarity was slow to respond

According to official statistics, six Poles in ten live below the poverty line.

General Jaruzelski is under great pressure to carry through a Polish "perestroika" and introduce a free market in certain sectors of the economy to boost productivity and rationalize production.

If not for Poland's history of political upheaval, it would probably lead Eastern Europe in economic and political reform. Instead, the regime continues to reject friendly deals from western governments to be more accommodating towards Solidarity. Independent trade unions appear an unaffordable risk to the bureaucracy.

LAST November's referendum defeat pointed up the regime's internal problems.

The conservative British journal *The Economist* noted that the regime had "in effect asked its people, 'Would you like us to double the basic food prices and triple fuel prices next year?' and put the loss down to incompetence."

But the referendum was also doomed by the parliamentary resolution demanding a majority of registered voters, a high target for a regime with such shallow social roots. A significant minority of bureaucrats in the Communist Party are reluctant to loosen their grip over central planning and fear the consequences of reform. Last month's events confirmed their worst fears.

The regime is now moving to tighten labour laws, and the collapse of May's strikes suggests that worker confidence has been dashed.

Some workers may also believe that the Kremlin's new liberalism marks the spirit of 1980 less necessary today. But Poland's bureaucrats are making their new attacks on living conditions with Gorbachev's backing.

Their experiences of the next year should convince Poles of that, and sooner or later the workers will again be on the move.

— Phillip Whitefield

Its appalling economy underlies the workers' protest. Poland has never recovered from the slump of the mid-1970s, having borrowed heavily to buy new technology and being caught out by the decline in world trade which undermined its export earnings. Its foreign debt is \$39 billion and growing, while its economy shrank an average 0.8% a year during 1981-85.

A recent report by a dissident group claims that output per head is 20% lower than in the 1970s. While Poland is second in the world in supply of coal per head, its mining techniques are poor, half of its coal goes unrecruited, and Poles suffer power cuts and coal rationing.

Jaruzelski: ignored referendum

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 5

### Dressed for Suck-Cess

NOTICE how Liberal leader Donald Duck keeps popping up in a yellow tie with dark polka-dots on all the news broadcasts? Contrary to popular belief, it's not because he's used the rest of his tie-rack to gag the Shadow Cabinet.

Duck is following the latest 'Dress for Success' fad in overseas business circles (a.k.a. "Power Dressing"). Up to 30% of Wall St is wearing the yellow polka dot tie on any given day, our fashion spies report.

'Dress for Success' began 10 years ago in the States with the assassination of the brown business suit as too working-class. But why the yellow polka-dot tie? Our theory: It hides the vomit stains after three-hour business lunches.

### Yesterday's heroes

JOH Bjelke-Petersen can't take a trick these days.

He got hauled before the Broadcasting Tribunal and tried to explain away a \$400,000 payoff as a defamation settlement. The Fitzgerald Inquiry is uncovering untold police corruption during his premiership. And to top it off, the Hastings Deering Corporation has suspended his \$120,000 consultancy because of problems with 'politics'.

Perhaps he should drown his sorrows in a cherry with Sir John Kerr. Kerr's portrait is still hanging at the old Parliament House. It didn't make it to the new building along with the rest of the paintings.

### Today's heroes

FIRST Nick Greiner says he wants to model his changes to the NSW Public Service on what John Cain did in Victoria. (That is, bring in his apparatus to dismember it.)

Then new Hungarian PM Karoly Grosz, an unashed admirer of Margaret Thatcher,



hopes that his heroine will stay in power for the next ten years.

Funny, we haven't heard a response from either Jeff Kennett or Neil Kinnock.

### Safe as a bank

WE HAVEN'T heard a peep out of the ALP Left over a recent unanimous decision by the High Court re-interpreting the infamous Section 92 of the Constitution. In a case about lobsters, the judges basically decided that interstate trade could be regulated so long as any legislation

### Silent Number

FOR THE upwardly-mobile mobile, a company called Faux Phones has created the Cellular Phoney, a fake car phone to impress all the other drivers on the road. They've sold over 45,000 at \$16 a pop.

With the real thing costing around the \$3000 mark, we can see why they're popular. It's not who you are, it's who people think you are.

### China shops for bulls

CHINA is planning to set up futures markets this year, according to *China Today*, to handle both physical and futures contracts. The hope is that it will even out price fluctuations.

A futures market is a place where people buy what they don't want from people who don't have the goods to sell. And in order to increase market liquidity, speculation is encouraged. If Western experience is any guide, 80% of China's speculators will do their dough on futures as Mao's heirs march relentlessly toward socialism.

### News makers

A NOTICE in the London *Sun* newsroom reads: Make it fast, make it accurate. Underneath a wag has scrawled: And make it up!

'How true, according to a recent report on last year's disinformation campaign by the British press against left-wing councils.

The *Sun* ran a story that white kids had to pay for excursions that black kids got for free. They quoted a council youth worker. It turns out she simply didn't exist.

Stories they ran about "loony left wing councilors" banning children from recting Baa Baa Black Sheep "because it was racist simply never occurred.



### CHEAP SHOTS

happened. Still, it's nice to know that we have a free press. Free from any social conscience, free to lie, ...

### Star Waste

STRANGE how the business types who whinge about waste in government never mention war or defence.

Take Star Wars. It has cost \$12 billion to date. And the Pentagon is sitting on a report that reveals that Star Wars would "suffer catastrophic failure" if ever used. Will it be used? Only if Russia is stupid enough to build missiles that can be destroyed in space if the damn thing ever works. While the Pentagon has been stargazing, the US radar network is falling apart. So Russia is building bombers that will fly low!

Our Vlad ONE bright bit of news from Expo. The Russian pavilion has sold out of posters of Lenin and had to send back homes for more.

didn't discriminate against interstate traders.

That means the principles used to throw out Labor's 1947 Bank Nationalisation Act have been reversed: Will the ALP Left once again start campaigning for socialisation of basic industries? As Dame Zara said to Harold Holt — don't hold your breath.

### May we quote you?

"I've made my own living; I've employed others; I've made a profit; I've run my own business."

— Labor Party deputy PM Lionel Bowen, boasting of his lucrative real estate investments



not too old to work or can find someone to look after the kids). This is just as well, seeing none of the billions of dollars that the government has in surplus was given to those who actually need it. First home buyers are worse off, and if they haven't got kids they will get almost nothing.

The debate still rages about whether or not we will be worse off from the changes to superannuation tax. Then there is the pain that we will feel soon from several hundred million dollars worth of cuts in states' spending imposed last month!

The mini-budget was a vicious and cynical document. But then it would be — it was the product of a vicious and cynical government.

— Graham Willett

### FEATURE



Hyundai workers then and now: Saluting the firm's emblem, and a salute of a different kind

In May, BOB MUNTZ of Australia-Asia Worker Links spoke to a Melbourne Socialist Action meeting about the class struggle in South Korea, and about the orientation of his group. Here we present edited extracts of his talk.

# South Korea's workers taste their power



**S**OUTH KOREAN electoral politics has been in the news because the opposition won a victory recently, but the parliamentary scene is far removed from the real politics of the street and the factories.

Those real politics were transformed last year by two waves of political struggle.

First there was a tremendous upsurge among the middle classes, led by students. Students have been demonstrating in the streets for a few years, but last year they got wider support. It got to the stage where the dictator of the time, Chun Doo Hwan, was forced to have to gun them down in the streets in huge numbers, or make concessions.

He couldn't bring himself to make concessions, but they were made for him by Roh Tae Woo, then the president of the ruling party. On 29 June, Roh promised free elections, release of political prisoners, and other reforms. Only the election promise was fulfilled, but it all had the effect of raising the expectations of the working class.

Almost from day one after these promises were made, you had massive strikes and demands for union organisation.

There were 3500 recorded strikes between July and September, and 1300 new unions were formed — representing nearly a third of all unions formed since World War II. Some of this happened within exist-

ing unions, but most of the strikes were spontaneous rank and file outbursts. For a country that hadn't had a legal strike since 1980, and had seen illegal ones quickly suppressed, this was extraordinary and it shook the regime to its foundations.

For the first time, strikes were taking place within the biggest corporations.

The Korean economy is dominated by eight or nine very large conglomerates which work closely with the government, like Samsung, Daewoo, Hyundai. They are very diverse. Take Hyundai: in one city called Ulsan it's got 12 different enterprises ranging from furniture making to heavy engineering, from car manufacturing to the largest shipyards in the world. All 12 formed unions in the space of three months — and this in a company where the president had sworn only a few months earlier that as long as he was alive, there would never be a union in any of his plants.

**T**HE STRIKE wave couldn't be sustained indefinitely given the lack of established and stable organisation. The only legal framework was the Federation of Korean Trade Unions, which was formed by former wartime collaborators with the Japanese.

One group I met had just formed a union after a tremendous battle — all the militants had been sacked, they'd been beaten by

poons, they'd occupied the boss's office and been almost killed when company thugs fired thirty fire extinguishers into the room. Eventually they forced management to recognise them.

At that point they had to be part of the FKTU to be legal, but all they did was stick the letters FKTU in front of their name. They had no other contact with the Federation, except once when they rang for advice, only to find that the FKTU tipped off the employers about what was going on.

From September onwards there was a quiet period of consolidation but in the last few months, since March, there's been a revival in the struggle. There appear to be about 100 strikes going on. The northern Spring is the traditional time for a "Spring Labour Offensive" as in Japan. But by contrast to earlier times, many of the current struggles are in the largest companies. Hyundai and Daewoo have had substantial disputes.

Press reports say these strikes are carried

### MINIBUDGET

## John Howard says it all!

IT'S NOT often that Socialist Action agrees with the Liberal party, but John Howard really put his finger on it. The ALP's mini-budget, he says, "makes a start on some of the policy thrusts of the Liberal and National parties."

Big business loved the mini-budget. The speculators pushed share prices and the dollar to their highest levels for months. If it's good enough for the bosses, it's good enough for the ACTU,

and Simon Crean rushed to welcome it.

When the Liberals, the bosses and the ACTU agree on something, it can only be bad news for workers. And so it is with the mini-budget.

While business has had its tax rate cut from 49 cents in the dollar to 39% effective immediately — workers go on paying. In a couple of years time (just before the next election), if we haven't had too big a pay rise in the meantime, we are promised(!) a nice tax cut. Meanwhile with every pay rise, we creep into higher tax brackets and the government rakes in millions.

Then there are the usual cuts designed to strike at those least able to defend themselves. Prescription medicines have

gone up another dollar. Pensioners and single parents may now earn a bit more than they used to (assuming they are





The kindling and the fire: a slum suburb in Seoul, marchers confront police

out much more within the law and are around more moderate demands. But the wage demands are pretty hefty — up to 40 per cent. At Daewoo the union leaders negotiated a 15 per cent pay rise and the workers rejected it. And since they all got an

average of 20 per cent last year, it adds up to sizable gains. But it's not as if the Korean economy can't afford it. Between 1980 and 1986 productivity rose by 100 per cent, while wages increased by only 40 percent. While the richest families now count their

wealth in billions, factory and farm workers are still working a 66 hour week for less than \$130 a month.

And we have some independent information on one struggle in Hyundai where it really was a continuation of last year's

strike, still over the right to organise. 20 or 30 of the most active unionists at Hyundai were jailed in October, and only released in early 1988. They immediately tried to get union elections organised but the company intervened and sacked them. So the workers intervened and sacked them, and elected a militant leadership composed of people who'd been in jail. They won 96 per cent of the vote.

When the company refused to recognise the new leaders the workers went on strike and occupied their factory. It was soon surrounded by hundreds of riot police. That strike has now been settled, but others are looming.

**SO TODAY we have a fighting trade union movement, but it's still at an embryonic stage, with few structures in existence to assist workers in organising outside of some church bodies, who are training workers — and also training students to go into factories and organise.**

The role played by students is more important than anything we've seen in Australia. They go into factories, and they have an impact. I met workers who spoke of students playing an important role in the early stages of union organising.

They're so effective, in fact, that the government has been forced to make it illegal for such "disguised workers" to get jobs in factories.

The unions seem to be divorced from the opposition political parties, and many workers are rather suspicious of them. I attended the first meeting of the Seoul Trade Union Movement League last November. This is a semi-underground body formed to try to consolidate the new militant unions. They raised various demands in opposition to the dictatorship, and in support of better wages and were very active. Virtually none referred directly to the presidential elections due a month later.

I think the union activists supported an opposition victory as a means of getting some democratic breathing space, but they did not seem to be closely involved in the election campaign.

This shows that people like Kim Dae Jung, the most prominent parliamentary oppositionist, don't represent workers to any great extent. Kim Dae Jung, although a strong advocate of democratic rights, is a staunch supporter of "free enterprise".

What workers will no doubt want to do is form their own mass political parties. There's a fair way to go before they do that, but at least the first vital step has been taken, in the wave of struggle which has got a militant union movement on the ground.

**The time is also right for closer links between trade unionists in South Korea and Australia. We ought to do our best to show these workers that international solidarity has something to offer them.**

There's a desperate need for workers to organise themselves internationally, to combat this internationally organised capitalism. This is as true for Australian trade unionists as any others. So the basis on which Australia-Asia Worker Links organises is that in our own interest — not just because we're good lefties — the Australian working class needs to develop much more extensive links internationally. Particularly at the grassroots level, it's not going to do much good just concentrating on the existing bureaucratic links.

One example of what can be achieved was shown by a recent visit by Japanese unionists. There's an increasing trend towards the use of Japanese management techniques in Australian factories, techniques that have been used very successfully to smash the Japanese union movement in the last 30 years. Very few people here know much about that, and these Japanese unionists created quite a hit by telling workers about the Japanese experience.

In this way substantial links with progressive union people in Japan can have an immediate benefit in combating these management techniques on the job in this country.

Other things we could do is take action to prevent products from Australia being used to break strikes in other countries, or prevent scab goods coming to break strikes here. It might also be possible to get much more earlier warning of companies' attempts to move factories from one country to another and do something to stop it.

**"Workers of the world unite!" is more than a noble sentiment these days. It can be essential for our survival as a union movement in the future.**



Asian workers: our bosses are theirs too  
manufactured by Daewoo in South Korea are built at GMH in Fisherman's Bend in Melbourne.

**SO WE have the internationalisation of capitalist industry. And while the working class in different countries has distinct characteristics, of course, objectively we now have an international working class developing in response.**

The issues workers need to confront have broadened enormously, yet the response of unions in the countries of our region has been disappointing in most cases. Even Simon Crean admits that. The international union organisations which exist, like the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, play the role of inhibiting real action rather than organising it.

## Linking up with Asia unions

**OUR GOAL** at Australia-Asia Worker Links is to build working relationships between unions here and in Asia. We are not concerned about this because of a vague, idealistic notion of internationalism, but because it is vital to the future survival of the Australian union movement.

We argue that there's been a tremendous change in capitalism over the past 20 years, because of developments in technology, transport and shipping — and in communications. It's far cheaper than it has ever been to ship things. Travel and communications have changed enormously. It was only in the 1970s that jumbo jets were introduced, and it became possible for business executives to travel the world and oversee operations in distant countries with very little effort.

Combine that with easy access to telephones and telex and fax, and it's become possible for companies to operate on a truly international scale. Now of course, imperialism has been around for long time, but there are vast differences between British imperialism of the 19th century and the transnational companies based in the USA today — or Australia, with our Alan Bonds and John Elliotts.

A century ago the British working class in Manchester or Leeds was pretty distinct from the labouring classes of, say, India and it was harder to argue that their interests directly coincided. We argue today that with the internationalisation of the capitalist system, there is an internationalisation of the

working class, and now workers in Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines or the USA have far more in common, their destinies are more closely tied together.

If you take the Australian company Pacific Dunlop, it's now a fully fledged multinational. It operates in more than 40 subsidiaries overseas, some of them in Asia; it's got plants in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, quite a few in mainland China, and a few shelf companies for shuffling profits around in Hong Kong. It's also got a large investment in the United States. So objectively, there's not much difference between Dunlop's workers in Thailand, Australia or the US.

Another company which illustrates the trend particularly well is Mattel, the US-based toy makers. In the 1960s they moved to Mexico with their Barbie Doll factories, but within a few years their Mexican workers formed a union. So they moved to South Korea. They weren't there long before the same thing happened, so they began to use outsiders, who are harder to organise, and they moved their factories to the Philippines. Since then they've moved on to Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

This is easier for a company like Mattel which doesn't need much capital investment. In a capital intensive industry like vehicle manufacturing, you have the "world car" where parts of cars are built in large scale plants in different countries, and those parts are assembled in other places. Ford, from its head office in St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, controls plants in eight or nine Asian countries. Engines for the LeMans car

NO, BOB HASN'T FORGOTTEN THE WORKING CLASS...!!!

WHERE'S THAT BLOODY CADDY!



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## 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 the workers of another. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

#### Liberation from Oppression

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

#### Socialist Action

**We are for Socialist Action.** It's no good just talking about the world; the point is to change it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only meaningful if they are a guide to action, in whatever people are movements and in the unions, socialists 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!

## Marxists back to school

AT AUSTINMER by the sea, south of Sydney, about 30 members and friends of Socialist Action gathered for a national educational week-end on 11-12 June.

For those who are getting fed up with hearing Swedish capitalism held up as a model for socialist advance, Rick Kuhn from Canberra branch outlined some of the less pleasant realities about that country. To provide a more positive note, Eric Harrison from Sydney spoke about the important strike in the Department of Social Security. Chris Rose from Melbourne spoke on the Aboriginal resistance against the white invasion.

Other talks included Jewish radicals and revolutionaries (showing that Zionism is not the only important political tradition among Jews), the struggle in Kanaky (New Caledonia) and the eventful life of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. A rousing talk by Eric Petersen about the life and times of James Connolly, Irish revolutionary, was a high point of the week-end.

A further educational week-end is planned for Brisbane in early August.

## Students

Socialist Action members from Brisbane to Melbourne have thrown themselves into the student campaign against the tertiary tax over the past couple of months.

Melbourne branch will be holding a meeting to discuss the issues in depth, at the Lincoln Hotel in Carlton, Tuesday 28 June, 7:30 pm. All friends of Socialist Action welcome.

## Canberra

After our participation in the rousing demonstration at the opening of Parliament House, Canberra branch has been pursuing an educational program. Coming discussions include two on basic Marxist politics, and one on the origins of socialism in the State of Victoria. Our branch meetings also regularly discuss current events.

## Sydney

The campaign to free South African trade union leader Moses Mayekiso, on trial for organising against Apartheid, continues to be an important focus for Sydney Socialist Action members. The Australian campaign has already raised \$600 to help in his defence and is stepping up its activities in the labour movement. We will also be supporting the Soweto Day demonstration called by the African National Congress.

## SOCIAL ISSUES

BRISBANE

### Police crack down on gays

QUEENSLAND police have greatly intensified their persecution of homosexuals in recent months, after pressure from some quarters to "clean up" Brisbane for Expo visitors — though goodness knows, one in ten visitors on average should be gay.

The crackdown has focused on the Transit Centre at Roma St Station and on city gay beats, with brutal arrests being made. Almost 70 men have been arrested so far, including a prominent National Party member.

The harassment reached its peak on the Gold Coast, with the arrest of two Southport men living in a defacto relationship. They have been convicted of "carnal knowledge against the

Southport prosecution because the police harassment is intimidating gays from coming forward for AIDS testing. The Council isn't vocal in its opposition because it receives state funding.

The Queensland Council for Civil Liberties has produced press releases and interviews arguing for the repeal of the Acts which make homosexual acts illegal. Gays and Lesbians on Campus, a Queensland University group, have a money and Japanese tourists similar demand.

In the absence of any militant leadership or solidarity amongst Queensland gays, these weak liberal tactics are all that have been possible. Meanwhile, the media falsely connects AIDS totally with homosexual men, and Queensland politicians continue to promote the phoney equation of Gays=AIDS=Gays=Moral Disaster.

— Patrick Palmer



RIGHT, I'M ARRESTING YOU FOR IMPERSONATING A POLICE OFFICER.

RACISM

### White peril rallies

IN LATE MAY, 1500 people attended a meeting called to attack Japanese property ownership on the Gold Coast.

The meeting was emotional and racist. It began with *Advance Australia Fair* and ended with the crowd singing and swaying to *I Still Call Australia Home*. In between,

speakers denounced "Japs" coming here to buy up land and "take over" the country. Three people who tried to argue against this were howled down.

In fact, only 3.3% of residential sales last year were to other than Australian citizens. If the figures are higher for hotel ownership, it's hard to see why the skin colour of the capitalist matters very much. It is bizarre to hear Australian "patriots" whingeing about Japanese investors pouring money and Japanese tourists spending an average \$1000 apiece in Australia's ramshackle economy.

Underlying this outburst is some disaffection by right-wing National Party members, who see their leader Ahern as a "wet" and want to pressure him. We can expect more stirring of this kind, and the ALP will not stand against it. Party leader Wayne Goss joined the right-wing chorus, demanding a land ownership register.

Socialists, at least, will continue to argue that Asians are welcome here.

— Jessie Skarfield

TOXIC DUMP

### Town watches the waste line

WESTERN Australian government proposals to build a toxic waste disposal plant at Wallaroo have residents up in arms.

The plant would deal with industrial and chemical waste, including PCBs which, when incinerated, can give off dioxin, one of the most poisonous substances known. It would also take waste from a French government-owned company at Pinjarra in south west WA.

Unwanted uranium and thorium would be transported 600 kms from Pinjarra to Wallaroo, near Kalgoorlie, which has people who live along possible routes pretty worried. Once at Wallaroo, the thorium would be buried in plastic bags in sites close to water supply reservoirs and recreation areas!

Not surprisingly the local population of 30,000 is fighting back. The Goldfields Action Group and the Goldfields Against Serious Pollution group are circulating petitions and producing a newsletter called *Hazardous Times* in their campaign to oppose the facility.

There is also a community action group at Pinjarra.

As one resident wrote, "If the people can't see safe, why put it in Rockingham or another part of the metropolitan area?"

## INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

# DSS workers back in the wars

IT HAS been a historic strike.

Workers in the Department of Social Security in Sydney have been out for over three weeks. For five days, the whole State was on strike — the longest stoppage ever.

It seems as if we have to have a staffing campaign every year in NSW, and each time it gets tougher.

The last two campaigns were for extra staff. Last year, we struck for four days to win a small number of extra people for a short period. But this year, we've been on the defensive.

The Department wants to cut almost 3000 jobs nationally over the next few years. NSW would lose 303 jobs almost immediately, as part of what the Department calls "devolution". This means spreading work out from specialist areas in Sydney to a number of Area Managements around the State, and passing what's left over down to Regional Offices.

With 303 fewer jobs, that's a lot of extra work to absorb. Workers who are tired of continuing staff cuts combined with more work, have now showed they've had enough.

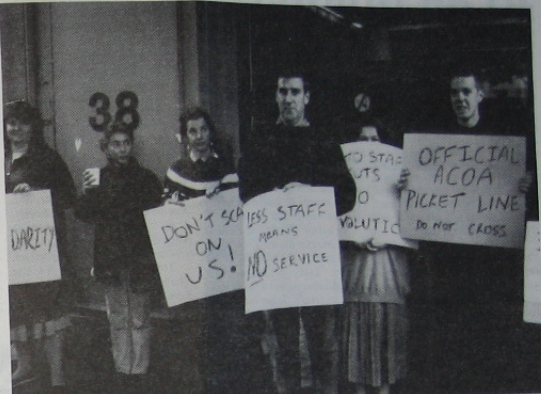
The dispute became serious in February, when ACOA members in Sydney State Headquarters (SHQ) walked off the job for a day. They drew up a log of claims, which was later revised and endorsed by SHQs around the country. Once this had happened, our national union officials were prepared to present it to the Department, sit back and wait for talks to begin.

Where there had been a statewide vote against action at the end of April, there was strong support for a 48 hour strike on 18 May. Once the action was on, enthusiasm grew and the stoppage went for five days.

Unfortunately, the dispute has been somewhat undermined by bitter wrangling within the ACOA Branch Office. The faction led by Assistant Secretary Wendy Caird is tied to the ALP "left" including Social Security Minister Brian Howe. These officials never put up a fight, preferring to do deals and try to pass them off as victories.

To the left of Caird stands the Rank and File Action group led by Branch Secretary Trevor Deeming. They have responded to members' calls for mass meetings, if sometimes slowly and reluctantly. They have also consistently opposed the National Office line that the dispute should be confined to SHQs.

Both factions have their eyes fixed on the Branch elections at the end of the year, and that tunnel vision has not helped the dispute. RFA has often let its fear of electoral damage to



Fighting back: Sydney DSS workers picket against staff cuts

Deeming keep it from throwing itself wholeheartedly into the fight. This in turn makes it easier for the Caird faction to undermine members' confidence.

THERE HAS also been some "red-baiting" from both factions, who have accused the delegates' committee — which has consistently supported strike action — of being under the control of a handful of radicals.

When the delegates' committee recommended extending the five-day stoppage, a further motion appeared, which could have been written by Brian Howe and was widely seen as reflecting the views of the Caird faction. It called on us to stop all action in NSW pending token national stoppages. RFA's response was a "middle-ground" position,

which argued that the country office should not support a longer strike.

In fact, the strike motion was only defeated by about 50 votes. NSW members carried it overwhelmingly, following their whelmily, following an enthusiastic meeting with a George Street and a march up George Street and a rally outside SHQ at Wynyard.

RFA's soft option predictably split the action vote, and was self carried by four votes statewide. Deeming's opponents moved to Branch Executive moved to overturn it, arguing about which votes were valid. Members in SHQ and some regional offices,

already angry at finding themselves back at work, walked off the job in protest and called for a metropolitan mass meeting to continue the dispute.

That meeting voted overwhelmingly to strike for another three days, and further meetings have since voted to continue the struggle. Under pressure from rank and file members the other public service union, APSA, entered the dispute in early June.

UNFORTUNATELY, support in country areas has declined as the Caird forces have put in time on the phone and made visits to regional centres, to discourage action outside Sydney.

As we go to press, a metropolitan mass meeting on 10 June has voted to continue the struggle.

Meanwhile Commonwealth public servants from all Departments stopped work on 6 June over the claim for a 6 percent wage rise. In some places, so-called "over" militants argued for a stronger claim. From the response to the debate, it was clear that a lot of officers can see through the officers' claims' arguments, and are tired of being used as a stage army in token campaigns.

But as we must lack the confidence to defy the union leaders, and the official motion was carried.

— Eric Harrison

# BLF: Sharp practices a threat to a unions

"DEFENDING the unions may become a growth industry in the near future. The attack on the BLF has become a model for how to destroy a union that steps out of line."

John Cummins, BLF organiser, was commenting on the final report of the custodian, Ian Sharp. What supporters said initially is now abundantly clear: deregistration was not a one-off event, but rather a trial run.

Last October, the police raided BLF headquarters, removed computer equipment and files, and seized bank accounts. Sharp's final report substantiates not a single one of the grounds for the raid. Supposed dog lead deals, the money from Libya, the alleged stealing of members' funds—all this has disappeared.

Sharp's remaining claims seem very minor considering the actions of the police and the government. Crayfish at Christmas parties isn't something to get excited over, especially considering that Crabb helped to consume it in 1985 (before deregistration).

Nobody complains about the amount spent at farewell parties for the old Canberra parliament house!

The accusation that \$16,000 was unaccounted for loses credibility, given that Sharp

didn't bother to question the auditors.

Yet despite having done nothing illegal, the union's funds and assets have been frozen until 1991, the year in which the BLF can theoretically apply for re-registration.

When the BLF was deregistered, Cam agreed under pressure from Trades Hall not to seize the unions' assets. With the latest moves he has successfully circumvented that agreement.

Trades Hall Council unanimously passed a resolution condemning the freezing of the funds. The president John Speight threatened a "long war" and secretary John Hallpenny has had meetings with Crabb and the custodian. But Speight's language — "concern" and "considerable uneasiness" — hardly expresses extreme outrage.

If the matter can come to a special affiliates meeting, some unions may feel that there is sufficient threat to take action. So far Crabb feels quite unmoved. The IHC's views, he said, "would be taken on board but I'm sure the government can work through the matter."

In some respects the custodian appears to be distancing himself from the government. At his press conference he made the amazing claim that his investigation had not been an inquiry but only a "custodian-

ship". "\$1000 a day is a bargain", he added.

While Sharp may not be over-impressed with the government's legal grounds for the raid, he clearly sees himself as drawing the lessons for the handling of future deregistrations. For example, he recommends that in future cases, the union's assets ought to be seized immediately.

This takes on immediacy when we consider the provisions of the new Industrial Relations Bill, withdrawn last year, but due to be re-introduced shortly. It provides that any union which breaches an order of the Commission can be deregistered.

This bill is based on the Hancock report, which concluded that any union breaching the spirit of the Arbitration Act should be



The infamous police raid on the BLF Office

hearing.

The BLF leaders are clearly feeling threatened by the reform group. But typically their solution is dirty tricks, rather than offering members a better deal.

## HOLIDAY PAY

### 'Leave our loading alone!'

THREE thousand private sector unionists marched in defence of their 17.5% holiday pay loading in Brisbane last month.

The workers, including clerks, metal-workers, building and transport workers, marched on a Trades and Labor Council rally in Albert Park to the offices of the Queensland Confederation of Industry. A delegation was told that QCI

deregistered. "The spirit" means any union preferring industrial action to conciliation and arbitration.

Until now the custodian has paid BLF organisers' salaries and bills out of the union's funds. With the accounts frozen, the union faces a financial crisis, and has had to lay off several organisers with no long service or superannuation.

In addition the custodian has returned a large number of unpaid bills to the union. If they aren't paid, creditors may take legal action. This might give the government the excuse it's been waiting for to wind up the union under the Companies Act.

If so, it will be time to rally once again in defence of the BLF.

— Janey Stone

would not abandon its anti-loading submission to the Industrial Commission and that it would soon seek to cut wages directly.

Chants of "Want do we want? Twenty-five percent!" went up as the rally then marched to Anzac Square, adjacent to the Industrial Court. T.L.C. secretary, Ray Dempsey, was cheered when he promised "a wave of industrial action unprecedented in this state" if the loading was abolished. The meeting was with a resolution to extend the stopwork to 24 hours.

The rally follows weeks of militancy in Brisbane's streets by Aborigines and students. Some of the more vulnerable bosses, like Mount Isa Mines, fear the power of a worker backlash, but only a true show of strength by unionists will widen the divisions in the QCI.

— Allan Gardiner

WHAT should the socialist attitude to terrorism be? Certainly not outright condemnation and moral outrage.

Just think of the double standard evidenced by states and reflected in the media. Terrorism for Reagan and his kind means the political use of violence by anyone they don't like. PLO actions are "terrorist". Israel however "restores order". Anything Libya does is terrorist, but the Nicaraguan contras are "freedom fighters".

It isn't just a matter of words. State sanctioned violence has historically led to immeasurably more suffering and oppression than individuals or small groups can possibly inflict. From the time of slavery, through the Spanish Inquisition, to the Nazi death camps and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ruling classes have countless crimes of violence to answer for.

So the first responsibility of the left is not to join in denunciations of the use of political violence but rather to put it in class perspective.

Secondly, it is not for us from our comparative safety and comfort in Australia to make our support for others' struggles contingent on the methods they use. A long history of oppression leads to an understandable desire for revenge.

We argue against terrorist actions not on moral grounds but because they don't work. The transformation of the social system and the establishment of socialism needs more than individual revenge.

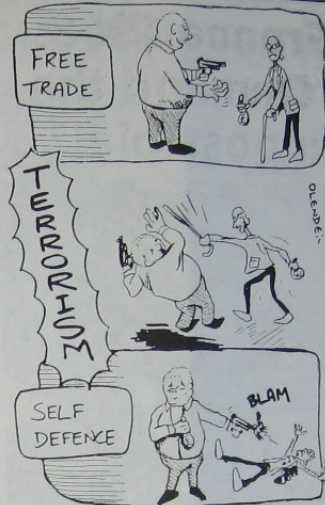
The terrorists of the 19th century hoped their dramatic actions would spark off mass revolt. But this never worked.

For example, in Russia hatred of czarist despotism frequently led to the use of individual terror, finally culminating in the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. His son simply replaced him, and an even more repressive regime ensued.

In a famous case, Alexander Berkman, a Russian-American anarchist, attempted to assassinate Henry Frick, manager of a company which had murdered strikers in Pennsylvania in 1892.

Frick survived three bullets and a poisoned dagger. There was no mass upsurge — in fact, one worker helped to overpower Berkman, who subsequently served 14 years in prison, effectively removing a talented agitator from the struggle.

THESE examples illustrate one of the weaknesses of



## What's really wrong with terrorism

such a strategy. Terrorists tend to concentrate on individuals. They can only eliminate individual members of the ruling class, not the class itself.

Yet terrorist strategies persist today amongst sections of the international Left. One need only think of Action Directe in France, the Red Brigades in Italy, Baader-Meinhof in West Germany, the Weather Underground and the Symbionese Liberation Army in the US, and the Japanese Red Army.

Trotsky commented on such people that they are not in essence any different from Labor politicians, despite their apparently revolutionary use of violence.

"Whoever staks a ministerial portfolio, as well as those who, clasping an infernal machine beneath a cloak, stalk the minister himself, must equally minimize the minister's personality and his post."

This strategy is bound to fail because it substitutes the technical feats of a small group

we oppose the substitution of "chemical preparations for the insufficient revolutionary strength of the proletariat"

BUT CAN'T armed actions be combined with mass work?

Armed struggle requires the utmost secrecy. No matter how great the desire to link up with mass struggle or use open propaganda, the very nature of such activity presses in the opposite direction. As terror activities provoke increased repression by the state, so the work of those concentrating on mass activity is made harder.

Let's look at a recent example. In the mid-1970s the vacuum created by a crisis of the Italian revolutionary left gave prominence to the Red Brigades.

Their strategy proposed a head-on clash to force a polarisation between the bourgeois state and the armed revolutionaries. Their hundreds of attacks, mainly on police, judges and politicians, reached a climax in 1978 with the kidnaping and assassination of the leader of the Christian Democratic Party, Aldo Moro.

They had a degree of popular support. As a woman in her sixties said, "I don't agree with a single thing they do. But in Italy today the Red Brigades are the only ones who have any ideals."

Yet they failed. The state brought in new repressive legislation, which was used widely against the left and unionists. By the end of 1982, 3000 members of the Red Brigades were in jail, the left was in disarray — the state strengthened and the working class demoralised.

The Red Brigades had many worker members and some popular support. But they could not convert that into mass struggle. In fact their very success was a substitute for mass action. Workers lacked confidence to act for themselves, but at least the bosses were under some sort of threat.

To revive mass activity may take time and effort but there is no substitute for it.

Leon Trotsky summed it up: "The account we have to settle with the capitalist system is too great to be presented to some functionary called a minister. (We must) learn to see all the crimes against humanity, all the indignities against which the human body and spirit are subjected, and the twisted outgrowths and expressions of the existing social system in order to direct all our energies into a collective struggle against this system."

— Janey Stone

Marxists reject attempts to artificially force the development of society. As Leon Trotsky said,

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 13

## TWU



### Officials get activist fired

IN LATE May a driver was accidentally killed at ANL's Webb Dock. But no, this wasn't aimed at ANL — it was aimed at Steve's employers, Secol! The officials were concerned that the reform group might increase its influence.

Steve's employers gave a Said manager: "I rang the union. We are blacked. You're fired!" Secol's director was also direct: "It would be best for you to go and get another job and forget about the reform group."

The TWU officials eventually agreed to support Steve's legal claim over unfair dismissal. But as reform group member Chris Kelly asks, can they be trusted? When a driver was dismissed while on Workcare last year, while on Workcare last year, and his claim was thrown out due to a clerical error, the officials voted with the employers to deny him a

**M**UCH has been written about 1968. *Time* magazine even felt moved to introduce 1988 by looking at 1968.

And indeed 1968 was different. Capitalism's long post-war boom began to collapse into an economic crisis we are still in today. Vietnamese peasants launched the Tet Offensive and smashed the idea of American invulnerability. Millions around the world marched against the war in Vietnam. Russian tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia to end the Prague spring of liberalisation. In the US the Black Panthers, a black armed revolutionary group, grew rapidly.

But the most inspiring event of 1968 was the general strike in France.

Few expected any explosion of worker discontent in France. Trade unions were weak, wages were low and unemployment was on the rise. Then in 1967 and early 1968 there were strikes in the car, steel and shipbuilding industries.

Just like today, pundits were writing off the working class as a force for revolution. Andre Gorz, a "marxist" intellectual, wrote in January 1968 that "in the foreseeable future there will be no crisis of European capitalism so dramatic as to drive the mass of workers to revolutionary general strikes."

Just four months later, ten million French workers proved him pathetically wrong.

**T**HE SPARK for the biggest general strike in history came from students. They had been demonstrating over Vietnam, "free circulation" (the right of male and female students to visit each other's hostel rooms) and the release of imprisoned demonstrators.

On May 3 after a number of demonstrations and meetings, the police moved in to close the Sorbonne, the main university in Paris. The students replied with stones and the police retaliated with tear gas. The next week saw demonstrations every day, culminating on May 10 in the "Night of the Barricades."

That night thousands of students, with help from residents, passers-by and workers, built sixty barricades to keep the police out of the Latin Quarter of Paris. After ten hours of battle, the students beat back the police and at 7am on Saturday found themselves in control of the area.

## France 1968: "Demand the impossible!"



Students occupying a school greet marching workers

Students had fought the government and won. The lesson was not lost on workers. There was also sympathy for the students, who had shown such bravery in the face of brutal police attacks.

Union leaders called a one day stoppage for May 13, in response to rank and file pressure. The one day tactic was an attempt to control growing working class anger.

Millions stopped work. One million workers marched through Paris.

Next day, workers at Sud Aviation occupied their factory. While this was a spontaneous outbreak, a trotskyst organisation led one of the unions there and had built a climate of militancy over time.

**T**HE STRIKE turned France upside down. For a few magnificent weeks, there was a glimpse of a better society.

Students with banners reading "Be Realistic — Demand the Impossible" paraded through the streets. Young workers escaped the monotony of work (and Communist Party meetings!) to join the students in real discussion and debate. Students tried to link up with workers occupying their factories.

So widespread was the strike that even professional footballers and dancers occupied their workplaces!

In any serious general strike, workers find they have to run society. During May and June French workers set up action committees to organise supplies, power and so on. Paris alone had 450 such committees.

The general strike reached its peak in Nantes. Workers set up roadblocks to control access to the city, and bricked managers into their offices. Union

committees controlled the price of goods in the shops. Women's committees bought food directly from nearby peasants and undercut the big grocery stores, forcing them to close.

Sadly, only Nantes went this far. If there had been a revolutionary party with roots in the working class, every city would have been a Nantes. The overthrow of capitalism would have been on the agenda.

It wasn't, for two reasons. Firstly, the revolutionary left was too small and divided, and was almost wholly based among students.

Secondly, the Euro-stalinist Communist Party had a strong grip over French workers. The French CP had (and still has) its eyes firmly set on the parliamentary road. It confined the general strike to economic demands when so much more could have been won.

The CP-led union, the CGT, sent most occupiers home and set up strike committees of non-elected but "trusted" union activists. So most workers watched events unfold, certainly with sympathy, but in isolation from the action.

Sometimes the CP simply led to strikers to get them back to work, telling them that other strikers had given up.

**A**T THE end of May President Charles de Gaulle played his trump card — he called elections.

The CP fell over itself to prove its respectability. It organised a return to work so that the elections could be held in an atmosphere of "calm."

The bosses played their part by offering big wage increases, longer holidays and other concessions.

The battle moved from the workplace, where workers are strong, to the ballot-box where capitalist ideas dominate. De Gaulle regained his majority and the CP lost half its seats. The vote showed the demoralisation workers felt at the return to work.

Despite its demise, May 1968 still inspires socialists. For a few glorious weeks, workers in an advanced capitalist country had shown their revolutionary potential.

The lack of their own revolutionary party stopped French workers from challenging the rule of capital. The best way we can commemorate May 1968 is by working to build a mass revolutionary party here and now, so that when Australian workers take our oppression more than one step further than French workers did.

— John Passant

## Eyes on the prize of freedom

**"I KNOW the one thing we did right, was the day we started to fight . . ."**

With its opening theme, the TV series *Eyes on the Prize* took us back to the US black civil rights struggle of the 1950s and '60s, the movement that inspired a generation.

Since the abolition of slavery, Southern blacks had suffered under Jim Crow segregation laws, backed by Ku Klux Klan lynchings and burnings. But in the depths of McCarthyist reaction, blacks broke from the prevailing mood. When in 1955, black seamstress Rosa Parks refused to stand up for a white man on a bus, she sparked the Montgomery bus boycott and ushered in a new era of black resistance.

After nine months Montgomery blacks won a desegregated bus line. Within a few years there was a whole wave of fights to desegregate the South.

The courage and commitment of the participants — both Southern blacks and the whites who joined with them — shines through in the wonderful original film footage. The race hatred does too, such as the specimen of Southern white womanhood who burlesques on about her "civil right" not to mix with blacks.

We hear too the speeches of Martin Luther King, and the singing of the grass roots activists. Even that musical cliché *We Shall Overcome* regains its original power. The inevitable talking heads intensify the impact when they describe, for example, what it was like to be in a burning bus with exits blocked by white racists.

*Eyes on the Prize* emphasises descriptive material rather than political commentary. We do, however, see John Kennedy opportunistically helping Martin Luther King, in order to gain black support at a critical electoral moment.

The southern civil rights movement was heavily influenced by Christianity and tactically organised around a philosophy of non-violence. The TV series shows the immense bravery this required.

One of the most effective organisations was SNCC — Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. As the commentator says, "SNCC was based on a new optimism — a feeling that youth could be a new force for change in the '60s."



Civil rights marchers face down state troopers

And so they were. The student sit-ins at the lunch counters and the busloads of mostly youthful freedom riders inspired mass action throughout the black community. In 1963, at a mass demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama, thousands of people were arrested and the police used dogs, electric cattle prods and high-powered water cannon. On an unprecedented scale there followed a wave of 978 solidarity demonstrations in 209 towns around the country.

But by now the movement was too large for non-violent tactics, which can only be learnt by small groups of trained people. When the police entered the ghetto during the Birmingham demonstration, blacks fought back.

This intensified struggle led to the final demise of Jim Crow laws. Although the 1964 Civil Rights Act is usually credited to John Kennedy's liberal conscience and King's famous "I have a dream" speech, the ruling class were actually worried about potential insurrection. Kennedy called a meeting of the top 100 businessmen which decided that the struggle had to be got off the streets and back into the courts.

None of this is shown in the series. Concentrating on the South and voter registration drives, it misses the larger impact the movement had.

In one episode a white racist leader says, "It's primarily a struggle for power!" It was this realisation that led the movement to move north and broaden, to the new demand for "Black Power" and to new leaders such as Malcolm X and the Black Panthers.

By the 1970s, the working class was moving into action with black workers giving a lead

in militancy and fighting spirit.

The civil rights movement inspired the social movements of the '60s, such as the student movement and the anti-Vietnam war movement. One source of the Women's Liberation Movement was white women civil rights activists, who started to think about their own oppression and liberation. Gay liberation also owes a debt to the black struggle.

Here in Australia there were freedom rides for Aborigines during outbreak towns in the early 1960s, desegregating swimming pools and other facilities.

Today the Right is again ascendant. Nobody expected the black movement to emerge when it did. When it seems hard we too should remember: ". . . Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on."

— Anna Wolkenhaar

### CARTOONS



## Stamping out the humor

**IT'S JUST not funny!** In fact, the number of supposedly radical and irreverent cartoonists who have contributed to Australia Post's biweekly stamp series is downright depressing. Among those represented in *Living Together: A Cartoon View of Australia* are Ron Tandberg, Michael Leung and Bruce Pelly.

It might be less sad if the cartoons showed any of the sharp wit that we see from these people in our daily newspapers. But that isn't what was wanted. Matthew Martin produced a design for "Parliament" that showed two MPs with an ag-

gressive arm and fist emerging from their mouths. It was rejected. "It never occurred to me that they wanted cartoonists to do other than poke fun at the things they were drawing," he said.

If poking fun was out, so too was any social comment. Spooner's portrayal for the "Police" stamp of the law apprehending Ned Kelly was rejected, as was a design for "Religion" showing The Potts Union Dick taking around the collection plate at church.

For "Trade Unions" a truly offensive design showing layabout workers by The Australian's Patrick Cook was rejected, as was a design for "Religion" showing The Potts Union Dick taking around the collection plate at church.

For "Trade Unions" a truly offensive design showing layabout workers by The Australian's Patrick Cook was rejected, as was a design for "Religion" showing The Potts Union Dick taking around the collection plate at church.

Australia Post's line is that controversial subjects cannot be featured on its stamps. Never mind that the Bicentenary, which thousands of people have been protesting against, has been a major theme on stamps for five years!

What's left is bland designs: a group of happy workers for "Unions", friendly police (now, that's a good one!) helping an intoxicated Uncle Dick home, people helping people for "Welfare" and the new Parliament House as a birthday cake . . . Nice to look at, but that's not cartooning what it is, that's a lie! Only the two-cent "Industry" stamp with its extremely toxic contribution by the boss towards raising productivity seems to have slipped past the censor. But how many two-cent stamps will fit on your average letter?

— Robert Stanbury

# The curious case of Cassie Ogdon

**T**HERE'S a bad smell hanging over Melbourne Town, and it isn't just the smog. Last month's inquest into the death of Cassandra Ogdon proves yet again that the justice you get depends on how big you are.

As all Melbourne now knows, Cassie Ogdon, 25, suicided last August only hours before she was due to testify to the National Crime Authority (NCA). A suicide note described how a teacher of hers, Peter Cross, had implicated her in cocaine-smuggling while she was an exchange student in Bolivia when aged 17. Sensationally, she named as Cross's backer Irvin Rockman — ex-lord mayor of Melbourne, owner of the Regency Hotel, and head of various state and private tourist bodies. Her note accused him of threatening her life if she talked, and of being a "Mr Asia".

At the inquest, witnesses testified to the fear Ogdon was in before her death. Cross and Rockman both "declined to answer" numerous incriminating questions. And police produced a statement signed by Cross about a "deal" financed by Rockman and the "ceremonial opening of a package" at Rockman's farm.

What really stunk was the different treatment dished out to Ogdon, Cross and Rockman. Consider the facts.

The NCA regarded Ogdon as a key witness. But through fear, she gave them little information in her initial statements. She got no protection from them.

Cross was a different matter. The son of a NSW judge, and a former business studies lecturer as well as teacher, he got kid glove treatment from the NCA in return for information he gave them on drug bosses. They gave him a glowing character reference when he faced drug charges in 1986, eventually earning a four year sentence which he has not yet served. For the last year, he has lived under NCA protection in Canberra.

Cross gained indemnity for his information, which was fair enough — he's already got his just desserts. The NCA notwithstanding. But come the Ogdon inquest and the chance that Irvin Rockman might come under scrutiny, and the police suddenly decided not to give him further indemnity for the hearing.

The result was entirely predictable. Cross refused to confirm that the signed statement was his, or say any more about the "deal" and the



Irvin Rockman and Cassie Ogdon: guess who the law protected

"package". In turn, the coroner ruled that the statement could not be used as evidence against any third person (ie Rockman). The NCA's lawyer promptly got up and agreed, and Rockman was off the hook.

Now Rockman may or may not be a Mr Asia. Maybe Cross just misled Ogdon about him to keep quiet, and Rockman was just smuggling cocaine for his own use. Maybe he didn't even threaten her, and she just imagined it — though that goes against everything known about her character. But we'll never know, thanks to the neat little self-piece played out by the coroner and the cops at the inquest.

Cassie Ogdon was a high school kid out of her depth, and the law offered her nothing. Peter Cross is a middle-class sleaze turned informer to save his own skin, and the NCA is doing what it can for him. Irvin Rockman is big bourgeoisie, and the law makes sure he gets off scot-free. His only "penalty" — he has stood aside from his government posts until the heat died down.

There's not one law in this system, or even two. What justice you get depends on which class you come from, and for Cassie Ogdon that meant no justice at all.

**D**OES THE Labor government want to restore democracy to Fiji? Of course it does.

And if someone apparently tries to do something about it by smuggling arms into Fiji to fight the Rabuka dictatorship, does Labor confiscate the weapons and haul them before the courts? Of course it does!

Just as well the American



with Alec Kahn

people — despite all of them breaching clear guidelines against associating alcohol with sexual or social prowess.

Meanwhile, the commercial TV stations continue to host trashy, violent cartoons onto kids because they are too profit-hungry to buy anything better.

This miserable display of double standards is Labor's "self-regulation" policy for TV in action. Self-regulation is based on the principle that if you feed a live chicken to a pack of wolves, they'll arrange not to choke on the feathers.

Self-regulation was bad enough when it first came in. The TV stations chucked out the old 11-minutes-an-hour limit on ads, and began showing blocks of 5 or even 6 commercials every 10 minutes or less.

Now the TV owners have elected themselves as hypocritical moral guardians as well. If ever you wanted a living argument against private ownership of the means of information, the moralistic greedheads of FACTS are it.

**B**ACK IN the bad old 1950s, the *Ed Sullivan Show* wouldn't film Elvis Presley below the waist for fear of corrupting minors. But we've moved on since then — or have we?

Each year the Salvation Army holds its Red Shield Appeal, so it can pick up the pieces for another 12 months after the failure of governments to provide adequate social services.

This year it introduced a touch of social realism to its TV advertising. It showed a teenage girl being thrown out of home, turning to drugs and prostitution, being bullied by a pimp, and finally being picked up sleeping in a warehouse by a Salvo. It was a trifle melodramatic for my tastes, but in 30 seconds it summed up the plight of thousands of "street kids" in our cities.

Showing reality, however, is a dangerous thing in TV-Land. So dangerous, in fact, that the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) banned the ad from prime-time TV. Kids can't watch something as sexually explicit and violent as that, FACTS said.

Such concern for the welfare of young minds is touching, coming from FACTS. A couple of weeks earlier, a FACTS spokesman went on TV to lie through his teeth about liquor ads for Ginzano, Tia Maria and the like. None of these, he claimed, were aimed at young



ROCKMAN...  
A FUNNY SMELL.

REF 335 00494  
No. 32

# SOCIALIST ACTION

JULY 1988 No. 32

Registered by Australia Post — publication no. VB07351

50 CENTS

# GORBACHEV'S BIG GAMBLE



• Sydney's DSS dispute

SOUTH AFRICA

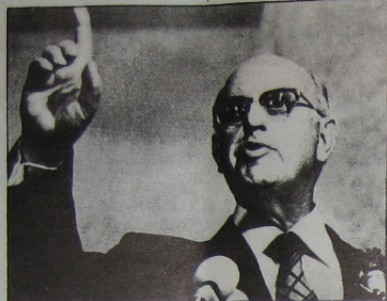


Midnight oil burns Botha

**OBVIOUSLY** P.W. Botha's apartheid regime in Pretoria has too much on its hands to keep track of the rock scene.

Midnight Oil's album *Diesel and Dust* has been climbing up the charts in South Africa, thanks in no small part to the promotion and airplay it was getting on government-controlled radio.

Then the station discovered that all proceeds of album sales were going to the African National Congress' Red forces in the sunset in Pretoria, as PW's forces give the nod to the wrong side.



P.W. Botha: burned up

left a real impression on the Cain government.

The recently released *Merplan* for public transport states, "...The Light Rail network will be made accessible to people in wheelchairs. No Light Rail conversions will proceed before wheelchair accessibility is addressed."

LIGHT RAIL  
It pays to fight



YES, we know you can't set too much store by government promises. But it looks like the protests and pickets against light rail in Melbourne last year

That's quite a shift from the Victorian government's old line that people in wheelchairs should make do with segregated buses because they can't get onto the light rail trams. It's a big victory for the activists from People for Equality Not Institutionalisation, who were amongst the most militant and persistent fighters in the campaign.

Like the old saying goes, it's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease. It pays to fight, and if the state government does back-track, we need only remember how we got this concession by direct action — and apply a bit more of the same.

**SOCIALIST ACTION**

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PO Box 17 Jamison Centre, ACT 2614.

WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne  
Wednesdays, 7:00  
Lincoln Hotel  
91 Cavendish St. Carlton

Sydney  
Tuesdays 7:30  
Mildred Hotel (top floor)  
Bridges & George St. City.

Brisbane  
Thursdays 7:30 pm  
Phone 371 7114  
for location

Canberra  
Thursdays 6:00  
Blair Room,  
Workers Club, Civic

**Militancy revives**

**WORKERS** at Robe River, WA, took their first combined industrial action in 18 months in June. At the Cape Lambert port facility they struck for 3 days, and at Pannamonica, the inland mining town, they struck for 24 hours.

So strong was the feeling that about 100 non-unionists joined in.

The main issue was the pay rise of 4% under the old wages system. Other mining companies in the area paid this a year ago. But Peko has used every tactic to avoid paying it. For example they have responded to the unions' log of claims with a list of counter claims which could result in substantial cuts in pay and

conditions.

They have also been using QC's in the Commission, which not only disadvantages unions whose advocates do not have legal training, but very effectively prolongs hearings.

Peko's recent publicity has pushed their record production and safety levels. Since their successful confrontation with the workforce in January 1987, production has increased dramatically with a reduced workforce.

Time lost due to injuries is very easy to reduce statistically — injured workers are now forced to perform so-called light duties. Previously the unions maintained that such a thing didn't exist. Total injuries have gone down, but this is at least in part due to intimidation so that workers are afraid to report accidents; they risk being moved to lower paid jobs.

In any case the drop is actually a rise when the decrease in the number of workers from 1100 to 600 is taken into account.

Nonetheless Peko trumpets its "achievements" at every opportunity. This is in such marked contrast to the actual atmosphere among workers that they added a rider to their resolution to go on strike. They protested against "any proposition by the company that the workforce at Robe is happy and contented".

**VICTORIA**



**Poverty trap**

**BOB HAWKE** intones that "by 1990, no child shall be in poverty" and gets elected. But since then what's happened to child care? At Mitchell Street co-operative child care centre in Brunswick (Melbourne) the parents and workers can tell you.

In 1986, the federal govern-

ment changed funding arrangements to child care centres. Subsidies were cut despite strong opposition at public meetings. Since then the centre at Mitchell has developed severe financial problems, and also needed renovations, but the government won't give them the funds they need. The reason: the parents are giving their low paid workers above-award wages.

Rejecting a compromise offer, the parents and workers chose instead to close the centre, but set it up inside Bob Hawke's office. Now there's an example of more useful deployment of government resources!

**QUEENSLAND**



**Stallone clones**

**BRISBANE'S** radio FM104 made everyone's day last month with a totally tasteless Bicentenary synchronised fireworks and muzak spectacular.

Listeners were advised to line the banks of the Brisbane River armed with their receivers and with torches which, when instructed, they were to pull out and flash rhythmically in time to the music.

Meanwhile overhead in a Chinook helicopter, Flt Lt John Kennedy ("a brave veteran of the Falklands War") was ferrying guns from the Queensland University Regiment to the submarine "Nautilus" conveniently lying below in the river.

While a Bypass of F-11s streaked over their heads (about 10 feet above them) to be exact, and Flt Lt Kennedy's officers got their guns to go off, FM104 blasted out Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. As the line from *Rambo II* has it, maybe they just want us to love them as much as they love us!

But no love will be lost for the 16 Queensland MPs, going abroad this winter with first class air tickets and 5-star bookings. The bill will be at least \$4 million.

Tourism Minister Geoff Muntz spent 11 days in Paris as head of a 20-person delegation who tried to stop the World Heritage listing of north Queensland. The delegation included MP Percy Nelson who said she was chosen to go after writing a 30 page report as chairperson of the Natural Resource and Economic Development Advisory Committee.

"And I also speak French". Spouses are going too because, according to Libby MP Sir William Knox, Rusa Gorbachov and Nancy Reagan have shown they can play a vital role.

**INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS**

**We're still wage-ing a losing battle**

**FOR** A while it looked like the lid on wages was set to blow.

Victorian workers demanded an immediate six percent pay rise, and transport workers shut down the railways for a week, along with most of the trams. Tens of thousands of others went out for 24 hours including public employees, building unions and metal workers.

Trade unionists in other states had also started to stir. Transport and metal unions had put on bans and run rolling stoppages. The liquor trades, the waterfront and the clerks had bans or were considering stoppages. The ACTU even felt so much heat announced a one-day general strike for 13 July.

The government, employers and media were clearly rattled, would this wages push prove impossible to stop?

Yet it was stopped — by the ACTU in exchange for some pitiful concessions.

Of course we expect this from the ACTU. What surprised many workers was the disgraceful capitulation of Melbourne's "leftwing" Trades Hall secretary, John Halppenny.

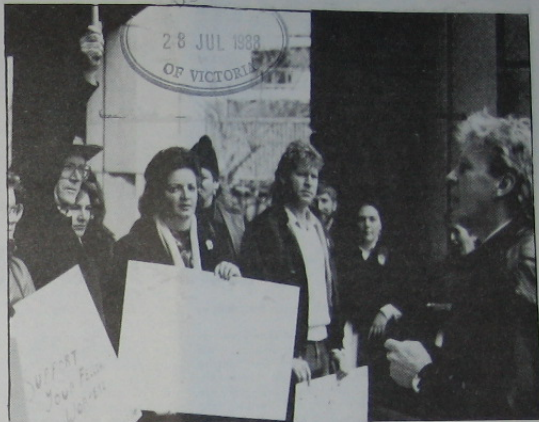
In a cynical manoeuvre designed to bolster his own reputation (in pursuit of a Senate seat or ACTU job) Halppenny first used workers' frustration to encourage the struggle for a 6 percent claim, then dumped it without consulting them when Kelly demanded it.

**PAUL KEATING** had begun wage negotiations at the end of March by announcing "We will have inflation running at 6 percent. We will have wages about the same." The government made great play of supporting "real wage maintenance".

At this point the ACTU were considering a straightforward claim of 6 percent. Ironically it was Halppenny who at that time sold them on the idea of two lots of 3 percent.

But almost immediately Keating began to talk down the inflation forecast, citing figures as low as 4.5 percent — a number based more on estimates for overseas wage movements than any domestic trends.

He made it clear that as al-



Government workers picket during the wages stoppage

ways, government wages policy is really about helping the employers.

"The new system will keep Australia internationally competitive... it really means essentially that wage restraint must continue."

And the government still has its eye firmly fixed on linking wage rises to productivity, not prices. Ralph Willis speaks of "performance-related pay and profit-sharing with multiskilling, training and financial participation." What he sees as "absolutely necessary" is a wages system which "improves productivity".

Translated into the government's wage case submission, this added up to a 5.5 percent maximum overall pay rise, to be staggered over the 1988-89 financial year — or if possible to the end of 1989. A 2.5 percent rise could be granted on 1 September, and there could be further negotiated rises up to 2 percent six months later. But that would be confined to unions who already had "maintenance of wages" deals stitched up with employers. For the rest there would be a rise in March 1989, with another one possible from July 1989.

**THERE** would also be the option of a 1 percent rise in exchange for restructuring or

"supplementary payment" deals. Tax cuts would come in late 1989 "if the economy could afford it" — or if there's an election coming up.

Keating made it clear that second tier rises granted after June would be absorbed into these pay increases.

Despite newspaper headlines about Willis "buying peace" with concessions, the government has not backed down on any of this. The overall ceiling of 5.5 percent remains the same. There is no concession for workers who haven't yet got the second tier rise.

All they've done is ask the Commission to arbitrate if an union can't get agreement with the boss. This is exactly what they can do now with the second tier. And what's the result? The courts are clogged with outstanding 4 percent claims, and a lot of the workforce still haven't got a second tier rise.

The other "concession" is about restructuring agreements (productivity trade-off). Initially these were to be limited to 1 percent out of the 5.5 percent total. Now they're not subject to the ceiling, but they must have a negligible impact on labour costs.

Women who recall past equal pay fights know this trick. It was the judges' excuse to reject equal pay (in comparable work). You can't improve your pay without

making more than a "negligible" impact on labour costs.

**A** SERIOUS national campaign could have won 6 percent up front, because the employers were largely resigned to it. For them it's small beer compared to the gains they expect from award restructuring.

The second tier experience makes them hopeful. Only 10 percent of workers managed to gain second tier rises with no trade offs. Over one third gave away more than 4 percent to the boss. With the assistance of Kelly and Crean, they confidently expect similar results this time.

The one thing that could disappoint earlier this year was the action we saw briefly in Melbourne in early July. But at present, the greatest obstacle to it is our union leaders including that cowardly lion, John Halppenny.

The Melbourne *Herald* explained earlier this year why even the vaunted "lefts" among the officials end up in the bosses' pocket.

"The power brokers of the union movement see their future incomes linked with the fortunes of the Federal and State Labor governments. Their long term future very much depends on a prosperous economy with continued wage restraint."

— Liz Ross



Wooing the capitalists: Peking officials seek investment from rich expatriates

LATE in 1978, China's Communist Party launched its country on a remarkable road of political and economic reform. For ten years now we have watched, often in amazement, as one of the most state-controlled economies in the state-capitalist bloc had shed its past.

China has junked the Stalin/Mao model of development via a ruthless command economy, and challenged most of its one-sacred truths and institutions. The recent National People's Congress, China's rubber stamp parliament, and last year's Party Congress have consolidated this process.

The rural sector has seen the most far-reaching changes. Very early on, reforms dismantled the peasant communes and shifted production to family farms.

Farmers could choose what to produce, and only had to deliver a set amount to the state. They could sell all extra output and keep the income for themselves.

The recent National People's Congress decreed the virtual privatisation of land. While technically all land remains state property, people may now buy and sell "the right to use land". This effectively sets up a free market in leases.

The real impact of — and motive behind — the change will be to consolidate millions of tiny, inefficient family plots into larger, more profitable farms. Small-holders who have been reluctant to simply give up their plots can now rent or sell "the right to use" their land. Most of these dispossessed peasants are expected to set up small businesses or move to the cities to find work.

URBAN reform has been slower. The decision to do away with lifetime job security and to link factory wages to productivity was made in 1984,

## The East is in the Red

but little yet has been done to enforce it.

Only 5% of factory workers have productivity-linked wage contracts. The first tentative bankruptcies of unprofitable enterprises took place in Shenyang in 1985 and are being cautiously extended.

After ten years of talk, factory managers gained much greater powers last month. The National People's Congress "Law Concerning Enterprises" gives them control over hiring and firing, over wage levels, and over what to produce. "The state regulates the market and the market guides enterprises" — so runs the slogan explaining the abolition of rigid state control over each factory.

The only restrictions on managers will be overall government economic policy and an obligation to "consult" with workers. An impending Bankruptcy Law will press managers and workers alike to work harder, make sacrifices and not rock the boat.

**A DRASTIC shift in economic strategy underlies all these changes.**

It should be said that the Chinese Communist Party in power never had any interest in introducing socialism — a society in which human needs are paramount. Maoism was actually about using the state to marshal the country's resources, to seal off foreign competition and to create a rich and powerful nation chiefly for the benefit of a bureaucratic ruling class.

By the late 1960s, it was obvious that Maoism had failed. China was nowhere near able to compete on the world market. Its productivity was low, the quality of its output poor, and its

trade deficit worsening. It was falling behind the rest of the world in economic growth.

After Mao's death, a short, sharp power struggle brought Deng Xiaoping to power. Deng's strategy, and that of his supporters, was to loosen state control over agriculture and to unleash the profit-conscious peasantry. The peasants had always resented the collective forms of rural production that the Maoists had so praised, but only imposed and maintained by force. With the part of the agricultural surplus that flowed to the state, Deng and Co planned to modernise and expand industry, particularly light industry.

This strategy had some early success, helped by the enormous demand of the newly-enriched peasantry for TVs, videos and other consumer goods. By 1985, however, the inherent inefficiencies of small-scale agriculture were beginning to tell.

Crucially, most family farms were much too small to use mechanised equipment and too poor to afford fertilisers. The initial growth in productivity flattened out.

**AS A RESULT,** recent years have seen a further shift in direction. All hopes now rest on building up China's coastal regions as the economic powerhouse of the country.

The process, as Beijing Review described it in February this year, is one of "China's coastal areas orienting their economy to the world market — making more exports and importing foreign investment".

By relying on China's plentiful supply of cheap labour and by offering attractive terms

to foreign investors — including the right to manage their own companies as they see fit — the ruling bureaucracy hopes to produce rapid economic development that will eventually flow through to the rest of the country.

This strategy is very risky, and sections of the Party/State ruling class are very nervous — and rightly so.

The world economy to which China is now so ardently attaching itself is in a fragile state. Fifteen years of slump, that may at some future point plunge into an intractable crisis, is hardly an encouraging vehicle for development.

Similarly, the workers in the coastal areas are not fools. They know they are being offered as very cheap factory fodder and that very few, if any, of the benefits of any economic miracle will be allowed to flow to them. Already inflation is eating away at city workers' living standards. It is not at all clear — least of all to China's rulers — just how much the working class will put up with. But they know that it would take precious little industrial unrest to scare off the foreign investors.

Like their counterparts in Russia and Britain and Australia, China's rulers are playing a tricky game. They know they must reform their economies to help them through the current crisis, but that this means surrendering some of their own power to world market forces. They have to appeal simultaneously to their working classes and to foreign savourings without weakening their own grip.

We live, as they say, in interesting times.

— Graham Willott

# Gorbachev: headed for a wild ride?

**HOW DO you ride the tiger that must be on Mikhail Gorbachev's mind after the party conference.**

The conference voted for "perestroika" and "glasnost". But large sections of the bureaucracy dislike them, and will work to sabotage them. At the same time, ordinary workers are getting impatient, and journalists and intellectuals want to force the pace.

Minority nationalities are restive, and the Armenians have launched a general strike in open defiance of Moscow.

No wonder Gorbachev walks a tightrope between reformers and conservatives, criticising the worst party hacks but also rebuking radical reformer Boris Yeltsin. The conference these critics the party but stroked it as well, referring to its "sublime" role.

This is no return to the genuine socialism of Marx and Lenin. It is the top Russian rulers' response to a crisis in their system, an attempt to modify the system yet ensure power does not slip from their grasp.

To get more productivity out of each worker, Gorbachev will use the carrot and the stick. You'll get higher wages if you work harder, and consumer goods will be much more of a priority. For what use are higher wages if there is nothing to buy?

Gorbachev told the Central Committee baldly in May: "What are we short of? Above all meat, fruit and vegetables. What a crushing indictment after decades of 'socialism'! If the reformers can't rectify this situation, they will soon forfeit popular support."

Partly the USSR shares in the stagnation of the world economy. Its industry has the same falling profit rates that plague the west. But there's another problem: it has always grown by

building more factories, not more efficient ones. But a mature economy has to grow by raising productivity.

Senior economist Abel Aganbeyan says:

"It is necessary to change the policy of channelling finance into new construction and enlargement of facilities, and instead to invest in modernization and retooling. We need to invest not so much in increasing production volumes, as in raising product quality."



Soviet cartoon: "bureaucratism"

This requires political change. You can run low-productivity enterprises — bureaucratically from the top, but not high-tech ones. For that you need workers to think for themselves. That's what glasnost is for.

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**THEN THERE is the stick. Work hard or you get a pay**



Pro-Gorbachev marchers

cut, raise productivity or you jeopardise your job. The Conference Theses announce efforts to "tighten discipline" and "set greater demands on personnel,"

And Gorbachev told the delegates:

"We cannot tolerate any form of scavenging, be it overt or covert. Enterprises that have been given the right to — cut down the incomes of those who are lazy, wasteful and idle, are using it much too timidly."

We hear this sort of argument from our own New Right: rewards for "initiative", penalties for "scroungers". And like the New Right, Gorbachev hopes free-market mechanisms will force enterprises to shape up. Those that don't will be allowed to go broke.

Theoretically, full employment will be guaranteed, with workers getting new jobs. But it is no longer guaranteed in China, and Aganbeyan has admitted he can only "try" to preserve it in the USSR.

It's unlikely Gorbachev can really re-gear the whole Soviet economy this way. Even in the west, big enterprises are seldom allowed to go under, for it would cause too much economic dislocation. More likely the real free-marketeering will be at the fringes.

Either way the heat will be on the workers. They are now allowed to elect managers, but this is really "workers' participation" rather than workers' control. Firms still have to work within the overall economic plan, and the only legal political group on the job will be the Communist Party.

What if workers do buck the system? Moscow News recently quoted a senior Polish official as saying, "Sad as it is, many workers who keep raising their pay." When asked how to stop this he replied: "I don't think it would be very wrong for the government to interfere in the affairs of factories, when state interests are at stake."

Like our own rulers, Russia's bosses will tolerate dissent as long as it's inoperative.

**IN FACT** the new "glasnost" and democratisation are really somewhat overated. It is obvious to see a society emerge from totalitarianism. But the party conference also showed the limits of the new openness.

The General Secretary still



gets to interrupt speakers and lecture them. Dissident Boris Yeltsin had his speech edited before the TV showed it and his opponent, the conservative Ligachev, got far more airplay.

Moscow News has been very grudging in its coverage of the Armenian crisis, and it took a flood of reader enquiries to force Pravda to admit there was a general strike going on.

The move to have multiple candidates for government and party posts is an attempt to shake up the apparatus, and give new people a chance to move up. But as long as there's only one recognised political party, the system still favours the top bureaucrats.

Even so, with change being



### Status symbol

THE scene, a Sydney bus. A Lane Cove yuppie pulls a portable car telephone from his briefcase and ostentatiously rings a friend.

As he finishes the call, another passenger lags behind on the shoulder. "Don't forget to tell him you can't afford a car."

### Fair cop?

LOTS of people have their cars stolen and must make do despite immense inconvenience.

So how come when NSW police commissioner's wife Zoe Avery has her car stolen, she is personally chauffeured around town in an unmarked police car?

### Name shame

RUSSIAN parents can be just as cruel as those in the West. Following Reagan's trip to Moscow, a baby boy there has been named "Ron" and a baby girl "Reagina".

Secretary Gorbachev passed the news on to



THE GODFATHER

### May we quote you?

At the last State election I didn't make clear who I supported. But I was happy with whoever won.

— *Rene Rivkin, Sydney's richest stockbroker.*

My only comment on tertiary fees is I have never understood why bored housewives should be able to go to university for nothing.

— *Rene Rivkin again.*

We are, in a sense, unnecessary, aren't we?

— *Rene Rivkin again, asked if he makes more money than he deserves.*

We love your adherence to democratic principles and processes.

— *US presidential candidate George Bush, lauding Ferdinand Marcos in 1981.*

It is our society's recognition of the sanctity of human life.

— *US Senator Urrin Hatch on the death penalty.*

I don't want to know what the law is. I want to know who the judge is.

— *Roy Cohn, aide to anti-communist witchhunter Joe McCarthy, quoted in a recent biography.*

### Charisma failure

BOB Hawke didn't exactly wow the locals on his American junket.

In a hotel lobby where secret service men were holding a lift for him, a hotel employee explained to a disgruntled guest that the President of Austria was visiting. A Chicago denizen, on being told the PM of Australia was in town, said, "Oh, that's Mr Waldheim, isn't it?"

Yes, well, Hawke, Waldheim... sometimes we can't tell the difference either.

Yes, well, Hawke, Waldheim... sometimes we can't tell the difference either.

### Trial by peers

SPEAKING of Kurt Waldheim, we can't say we were shocked that the recent "TV trial" found he has "no case to answer" for Nazi war crimes.

One of the judges was

Lord Frederick Lawton, a blackshirt candidate in Hamersmith in 1936, and praised as a "fine fighting fascist" by Sir Oswald Mosley himself.

### House rules

EVER wondered why there's a housing shortage? New York research shows that, while 28,000 people go to city welfare shelters each night, land-

### Nile opens floodgates

AMERICANS "Moral Majority" bluenoses have been rampant in recent times. In Delaware, they had *The Wizard of Oz* banned (for suggesting that some witches are good) and *The Diary of Anne Frank* blacklisted (for its discussion of teenage sexuality).

They had the Webster College Dictionary removed from South Carolina school libraries for defining certain naughty words, and science textbooks banned in Louisiana for promoting "radical social and political philosophies" (eg referring to dinosaurs as support for the theory of evolution).

So we were relieved to hear local moral guardian Fred Nile say he loved *Rambo*. The Reverend found its fervent anti-communism most uplifting, and dismissed the nonstop violence and bloodshed as "unreal and theatrical".

lords kept 45,000 vacant apartments off the market last year.

### Shoe in

SO Ferdinand Marcos has moved from his beach mansion in Hawaii into the hills in search of privacy.

But pesky tourists just won't leave him alone. They keep visiting the new house at night and throwing old shoes over the hedge for Imelda.



### Economy measure

JUST a week after announcing that 957 staff were to go as a cost-cutting measure, ABC bosses in Sydney took delivery of eight spanking new Holden Calais "company cars". To protect



## CHEAP SHOTS

their ducos, they are being kept well away from furious staff at Artarmon.

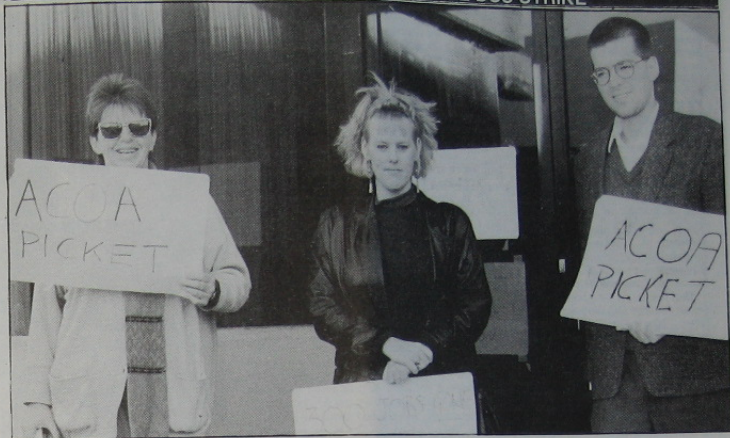
### Figures that figure

DID you know that one ninth of the US defence budget would lift every US family over the poverty line for a year. South Korea spent \$15 million on tear gas in 1987... one in six American surgeons are sued for malpractice each year?



Soviet cartoon: top-down management has to go

## SOCIALIST ACTION SPECIAL REPORT: THE DSS STRIKE



# Lessons of a historic strike

at harassing clients. Workers are often reluctant to take industrial action because they feel a strong sense of responsibility to the clients, a sentiment cynically played on by headlines like one in the Sydney Morning Herald: "Strike has left needy to charities."

But in the end we have had to face the fact that the responsibility for poverty is not ours, but the government's. And this year, when the department announced major staff cuts, we knew we couldn't hold back any longer.

The cuts we were fighting were large: 1271 jobs were to go nationally in the first round. They meant retrenchment for some, and a lot more work for those lucky enough to keep their jobs. On top of this a massive restructuring (which will still go ahead) involves major relocations of staff in Sydney State Headquarters (SHQ).

New Area Management offices dotted around NSW would do most of the current staff, but with 303 fewer jobs. The SHQ work, but with 303 fewer jobs. The rest of the work would be devolved to regional offices, with no mention of extra regional offices, with no mention of extra staff. Any vacant jobs in regional offices would probably be filled by surplus SHQ staff, disrupting career structures; and regional offices themselves face a further round of cuts within the next two years. Those numbers have not yet been announced.

**WHEN we went on strike, we faced a complicated situation because there were a number of different forces at work.**

Socialist Action minister Brian Howe, supported by the ALP left, consistently abused us for disadvantaging the most helpless members of the community by striking. When negotiators pointed out that it was his responsibility to give us enough staff to provide a reasonable level of service, he had

no answer. At another stage he is reported to have said, "We'll get those Trots in NSW."

The department's own head bureaucrats have by cut of cutting staff for the Labor government with a minimum of fuss. They made the decision to announce the cuts in SHQ first, presumably believing that it would be easy to take on and defeat workers in State Headquarters. As the dispute dragged on, they took out their frustration on NSW by persistently keeping the proposed cuts higher for us than for other states. Clearly they wanted to punish us for taking such strong action.

The national office of the main public service union, ACOA, was an obstacle most of the time. DSS organiser John Farrow tried to throw in the towel at the beginning, telling SHQ delegates that a redeployment package won in an earlier dispute was "probably the best you'll get, so you might as well take it now." We disagreed. Given the massive relocations that were proposed, that package was no longer relevant and we had to get a better deal.

National Secretary Peter Robson, who is also on the ACTU executive, persistently opposed moves to spread the dispute to regional offices. He argued that SHQs and Central Office staff should fight the first round of cuts alone, just as management intended.

Only one national bulletin was produced during the entire campaign by ACOA (APSA, the other union involved, produced none). Efforts by delegates in Victoria to get regional offices involved were sat on firmly by their officials, who flatly refused to call mass meetings.

Repeatedly a tough negotiator, Robson fails to use the real strength of a union activity by its members. Every time he

FROM PAGE 5



## Gorbachev

pushed so hard and the economic crisis so deep, Gorbachev could lose control.

The weeks-long general strikes in Karabakh and Armenia have challenged the national power structure. What if workers use such methods to fight on class issues?

A recent bus strike in Klaipeda, Lithuania shows the possibilities. The introduction of full cost accounting in the bus system last April led to wage cuts averaging about 20 rubles, despite government promises of no falling living standards.

The cuts sparked a stoppage which paralysed the city, and the workers raised 27 demands. Long-buried grievances surfaced. Glasnost had given them the confidence to act on them.

The dispute was settled, but a

visiting journalist wrote: "I cannot help feeling that a reconciliation arrived at after twenty hours of talks is an unstable one; that tomorrow can bring another strike of bus drivers or municipal workers, or some other workers vital to the city's functioning."

Soviet workers have plenty to fight about. Women especially. According to journalist Natalya Kraminova, "the press is all the time calling on a woman to go back home," because the birth-rate is too low. And now there are beauty contests. "Ain't she sweet?" said *Moscow News* about the winner of the "Miss Moscow pageant". Amidst trivia like Miss Moscow's best measurements, the story also highlighted Russian class divisions.

"People were going home after midnight: the functionaries from the organizing committee in black government cars, and the constabulary by bus, Metro or trolley."

— Tom O'Lincoln

## DSS STRIKE

appeared before a Sydney meeting he praised our action and our strength, but invariably went on to say we should go back to work — except on one occasion, in the middle of difficult negotiations.

**THE SITUATION with the NSW state officials was more complex.** Most of them are firmly tied to the national office. Assistant Secretary Wendy Caird and her faction opposed and undermined the strike.

At one point a member of her faction was overheard asking a member at a regional office to move a return-to-work motion, so that the officials would not be seen openly subverting the struggle. And after members at a mass meeting had voted overwhelmingly to continue the strike, Caird was overheard telling a mate that "the lemmings have committed suicide again."

The Caird faction hoped the dispute would collapse and drag down Branch Secretary Trevor Deeming with it. Deeming, along with Vice President Alison Adler, was elected by a campaign waged by the Rank and File Action grouping of militant workers. He was viciously red-baited by other officials, who accused him of allowing "small groups of political militants to seize control of the dispute" in order to "strengthen the position of their political grouping." Deeming supported the dispute, and although his support was often half-hearted, it enabled the activists to call meetings and to have access to the resources of the branch office. At the end, however, the good reputation he'd built up enabled him to sell an offer to members which fell far short of the

original demands.

The officials of APSA opposed the dispute, despite the fact that many of their members spontaneously joined ACOA on strike. A group of about 40 APSA members eventually forced them to join the struggle by storming the branch office, and demanding the right to vote on matters affecting their jobs.

The array of opponents was daunting. Fortunately the metropolitan Rank and File Delegates' Committee (SDC) took their responsibilities seriously. They took the lead in organising to win the dispute. Together with a group of rank and file activists, the SDC met frequently to discuss tactics and plan for mass meetings. They organised pickets, including flying pickets, occupations and demonstrations, collections for the strike fund and visits to backsliding workplaces.

We produced and distributed regular bulletins, including some for delegates interstate.

**THE STRUGGLE began in earnest in February, when Sydney SHQ staff walked out for a day, imposed bans, and called for a moratorium on devolution until agreement was reached on all the issues.**

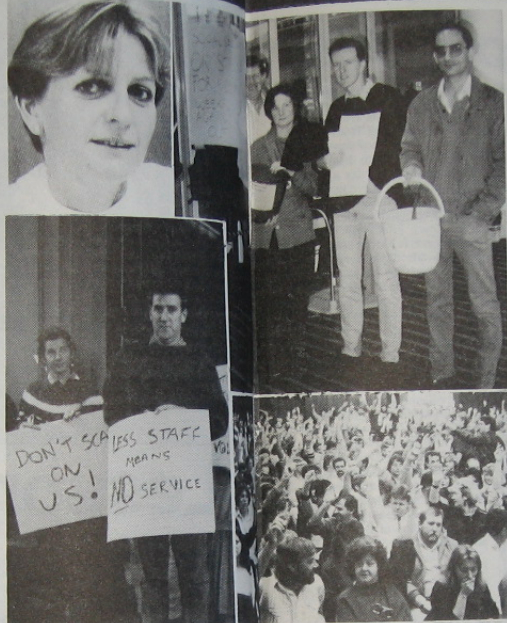
We pressured the ACOA national office into taking up our log of claims — including firm rejection of any job cuts — and presenting them to SHQ meetings in other states for endorsement. Delegates also presented the case strongly to regional office delegates at an SDC meeting, and they quickly agreed that the fight was theirs as well.

In March, a meeting of all NSW delegates agreed that mass meetings should be called to begin a joint campaign. Trevor Deeming called those meetings, after repeated urging, at the end of April.

In May, the SDC recommended a 48-hour stoppage, which was supported statewide. At mass meetings held straight afterwards, we won support for a further 48 hour stoppage. At this point disagreements appeared within the SDC.

Rank and File Action supporters proposed a return to work with further weekly 48 hour stoppages to follow, plus some bans to be imposed in workplaces. The majority of the SDC opted for continuing the statewide strike.

At the next mass meeting, a motion instigated by Caird's supporters called for an end to all action. Rather than rally behind the SDC call to continue the strike, RFA panicked and moved its "softer" option. Predictably this just split the vote of those wanting further action. Even so, the vote to continue only lost by about 50 votes statewide, showing that RFA's pessimism was misplaced. The RFA option squeaked through by 4 votes, but the Caird faction now felt confident enough to dispute the vote, and send a fax to members saying all motions had gone down. They followed this up by convening a special branch executive meeting the next day to formally overturn the mass meeting decision. Enraged, members in some SHQ sections walked off the job, and 55 of them invaded the branch executive meeting. Other SHQ sections soon followed, as did about 8 regional offices. Meeting that afternoon, they called for a mass meeting to vote on action in Sydney. That meeting decided the metropolitan area would fight on.



Clockwise from top left: Wendy Caird calls us lemmings; bucket brigades raise funds; members vote for action; picketing mass here effective.

**FROM THAT TIME, the metropolitan members went it alone. We continued to seek support, but for a time it seemed that other unions were more helpful than our own interstate branches.**

Building workers from Adelaide, who talked to some of us at a march and rally in Sydney over the 6% wage claim, were very supportive. They not only gave money, but returned to Adelaide and put bans on Commonwealth projects in support of our dispute.

A motion to DSS country offices in NSW calling for further 48-hour stoppages was defeated, but we stayed out, meeting every three days to hear reports and vote on action. We consistently declared that job cuts were non-negotiable. Even when other SHQs and Central Office called off their rolling strikes after two days and accepted the job cuts, we determined to fight on. And in the end, our firm stand secured one improvement after another in the government's offer. Peter Robson, who constantly told us that each offer was the best we'd get, and that we should give up, was proved wrong. In fact the momentum began to build up again. A call to country members to vote on action brought seven of them out on strike on 24 June, and Trevor Deeming announced to delegates that he intended to call union-wide mass meetings to discuss our dispute and the cuts which threaten so many departments. CES delegates began to

represent the interests of the rank and file. The dispute provided it was solid enough. Although most country offices gave 4-5 days at the beginning, and other SHQs and Central Office gave two days toward the end, it was the Sydney metropolitan area which bore the brunt.

Members recognized that calls for "unity" can be calls for inaction, for slowing down the dispute to wait for people who might never catch up, rather than offering them a positive example to follow.

While calling on other workers to join us, we refused to accept that workers who want to defend their jobs should be held back by those who don't.

It also proved that a group of rank and file militants — the delegates' committee — could give a lead to the members where the officials didn't. The firm stand of the SDC kept Trevor Deeming, who often wavered, on course. A strike fund was set up and endorsed by members, and we took collections at mass meetings of teachers and state public servants, at national wage case meetings and rallies, and at various workplaces. This kept us in touch with the strong feelings of solidarity felt by other unionists, who clearly wanted us to win.

The SDC also organised flying pickets, and a number of enthusiastic people turned these into very successful occupations. Many of them got so rattled at one office that picketers were locked in! We set up sub-committees to handle the media, and press and TV coverage began to improve.

Visits to offices were important, and a highly successful march and rally after one of the mass meetings was an excellent morale booster. We marched up George Street to Wynyard, chanting all the way, then had speeches and some very relevant street theatre. One TV station gave the event good coverage and interviewed one of the delegates.

**ONE OF the high points of the campaign came just after a Canberra meeting where Brian Howe thoroughly abused the NSW negotiators and their members. He then called a plane to Sydney to address an ALP dinner at St George — only to find about 40 DSS strikers waiting for him.**

Shouting and waving placards, we blocked the entrance to the Motor Boat Club so that he couldn't get in. He eventually pushed his way through the door, but the chants of "Hands off DSS!" followed him inside.

The biggest problem we faced was opposition by officials, and their refusal to inform members in other states or departments about the real issues and our strength. We need to set up a much better network of militants on the ground, so that next time, we can begin to spread the dispute earlier. And there will be a next time, if present membership feeling — and government plans to further slash staff — is anything to go on. Members did not return to work so feeling beaten. In fact the first day back saw quite a bit of wildcat action: response to local management decisions, and a number of offices maintained bans temporarily while conflicts were sorted out. We'll be ready for the next attack, having shown that it's action and not the do-nothing methods of the officials which produces results.

— Eric Harrison

## 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 we are waging 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. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

#### Liberation from Oppression

**We fight for liberation** against the oppression of women, bla. cs, 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 not 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, socialist 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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WHILE DSS workers on one side of the counter have been fending off attacks from their employers, what's happening to workers on the other side: those out of work?

Here the government is magnificently evenhanded: the unemployed are getting the exact same kick in the teeth, as the government brings in a new approach to unemployment. As part of that same restructuring that has brought us wage cuts and speed-up, welfare policy is being revamped to focus on providing employers with a readily available, skilled workforce.

In the postwar era, welfare has been primarily a safety net for people the system couldn't use productively. With all its inadequacies the dole was designed to help the unemployed — even if it barely helped them to survive. Only indirectly did it help our rulers, by staving off social unrest.

That is all changing now. Programs dealing with the unemployed will be just another device to provide aid to industry. As Social Security Minister Brian Howe puts it, "The social security system can no longer afford to be a passive safety net. It has to become a springboard, a transition to work."

This orientation to industry rather than to the person who needs help can be seen in the sort of training schemes available for the jobless. Training is geared to skills shortages and industry needs. This is also true of the traineeships scheme. Although much vaunted as a way of helping young job-seekers, it is really a way of increasing employer control over entry into industry.

Now in some ways this sounds like a good idea. Why spend your life playing Space Invaders when you can be learning saleable skills? And in fact one such retraining scheme was fought for and won by textile, clothing and footwear unions when the government was developing the new industry plan for their sector.

But there is one important obstacle to making this work for

# The boss fares well in the welfare state



the majority of the unemployed: the lack of jobs.

The total amount of work as measured in full time jobs has stayed remarkably constant over the last twenty years, with fluctuations during booms or recessions. There are more people in the workforce, of course, but a lot of them are working part time — particularly women.

Economic change has not created more jobs. But it has sorted out the winners and losers. The losers are the unskilled, particularly young workers and older ones whose skills are no longer relevant.

So if welfare programs are going to catapult more skilled people into the workforce, then other people are going to drop out. But if the government has its way, fewer of them will go into the welfare system.

Young workers have to be kept in training longer, supported economically by their families. Hence the scrapping of the youth dole. Retired workers won't get pensions, they'll live from user-pays superannuation.

And the DSS is becoming more and more a policing agency to keep people off welfare.

In January 1988 the total number of people being paid the dole was 80 percent of total unemployed, compared with 90 percent a year earlier. Policy decisions can eliminate thousands from the lists at one stroke of the pen. For example, by increasing the waiting period for school leavers from six weeks to thirteen weeks this year, the number of people registering for the dole during school holidays was 36,000 compared with 80,000 a

year earlier.

There is money for hit squads, but not for regular staff, training or wages. In Western Australia, every office has an overpayment recoveries team, but there aren't enough staff in the benefits areas, so if you're transferring from sickness benefit to invalid pension there is a two month delay.

Unemployed benefits clients are now required to produce papers signed by employers showing they're looking for work. With eleven jobs for every vacancy, this is just harassment.

Meanwhile injured workers are being pushed back into the workforce more rapidly. Workcare payments are being closely scrutinised, with DSS taking any opportunity to "help" workers get back on the job by cutting off their payments.

In a recent article of the Liberal economist Kenneth Galbraith called for retaining the welfare state in its original form because it was "profoundly conservative". By pacifying people, he said it fended off revolution.

What capitalism is doing to welfare today, by contrast, is one hell of an argument in favour of revolutionary alternatives to the likes of Bob Hawke and Brian Howe.

— Liz Ross

## UNIONS



### This is sabotage

THE NSW branch office of ACOA has been in uproar since the Social Security dispute.

Following an altercation on 29 June between Branch Secretary Trevor Deeming and organisers from the rival Caird faction, Caird supporters organised a strike followed by bans which made it extremely difficult for Deeming to do his job. Organisers would not supply him with essential information and the secretary refused to do his typing. The executive refused to release funds for travel, forcing him to use his own money to visit regional centres.

The Caird faction, smarting from the victory won by DSS workers, is prepared to disrupt the functioning of the union in order to isolate Deeming in the run up to elections in November.

As we write the bans have been lifted but the executive still won't release funds. Whatever our disagreements with Trevor Deeming, we fully defend his right to work without sabotage by factional rivals. By using such tactics, the Caird group only reveal their political bankruptcy.

# NSW: not in good Nick

SCHOOL STUDENTS Gave NSW Premier Nick Greiner something to think about on 1 July. Thousands of them went on strike around the state, and 8000 marched through Sydney streets, in protest at changes to their education.

The proposed changes include making maths, science and a foreign language compulsory, cutting back on casual teachers and altering the HSC marking system. The last point especially angers students because it means changing the rules less than 4 months before they face the exams.

Alexandra Malatestas, secretary of the Secondary Students' Union, told the crowd to wild shouts of acclaim that British students had offered their support by telephone.

The next day Education Minister Mettelford partially backed down on the changes to HSC. The kids' action had embarrassed him.

For teachers, the changes mean larger class sizes, more hours of classroom teaching and more work outside normal hours.

The NSW Teachers' Federation struck for 24 hours on 9 June, and thousands of union members rallied at Wentworth Park. But Federation officials have kept a tight control on all the actions, and since then they've been limited to bans on "outside school" activities like marking and excursions. It will take more than that to turn back the brutal attacks the Greiner government has launched, not just on teachers and students but on all workers.

BY EARLY June, Greiner had introduced 42 bills in parliament. Draconian anti-union legislation has passed two readings, with the support of the "broad" independents.

The Essential Services Bill provides for a state of emergency to be declared if essential services are threatened. And it widens the definition of "essential" so it could include any union activity.

It allows for de-registering unions for a minimum of three years if they act contrary to the "public interest" and empowers government inspectors to seize workers' property and compel them to police work — powers not even the police have at present. The Summary Offences Bill,

which passed parliament unanimously, increases police powers to deal with "riots" even if it's just three people "using or threatening to use violence".

Greiner claims this is to control bikies or football hooligans. But it can be used against pickets, demonstrators, Aborigines or the homeless. Deputy Premier Wai Murray wants to use it to jail kids who swear in school.

A similar law was used in Thatcher's Britain to arrest two men kissing on the street. No wonder that 300 people demonstrating for gay rights outside parliament on 1 July condemned the bill.

The demonstrators pointed out it was ten years since the first Gay Mardi Gras, which was attacked by police. Gays have won some hard-fought for gains since then, and Greiner threatens to turn back the clock. There are threats to limit the powers of the Anti-Discrimination Board, end funding for Lesbian and gay services, and boost wowsers in schools.

GREINER, who calls himself the Managing Director of NSW Inc, has threatened to privatise as much of the public sector as he can get away with.

Already he has sold the state abattoir at Homebush and the state brick works, retrenching the workers. An attempt to privatise court reporting services to the conciliation commission failed when workers threatened indus-

trial action. But 10 per cent of public employees will lose their jobs as the public service is restructured, and part of it privatised. Some may be redeployed, but Greiner is giving no guarantees, and a retrenchment package has been floated. If you do keep your job, say good-bye to job security.

Under the aptly-named Public Sector Management Act, government departments will be run like private enterprises. Department heads will hire, fire, redeploy and discipline employees at will.

Thousands of Public Service Association members stopped work on 9 June, voted to strike for the rest of the day, and joined a Labour Council rally at Wentworth Park in protest against the legislation. A second stoppage on 16 June voted to hold rolling stoppages, plus bans in individual departments, if the government continues its assault on the public sector.

Further action motions were deferred, however, and the campaign is now losing momentum. The rolling stoppages have yet to start, and bans alone certainly won't deter this government. The truck drivers, by defying Greiner's threats, have shown that determined action can.

THE SPECTRE of loony Towner Fred Nile holding the balance of power in the upper house has worried a lot of people. But it's not just Fred,



and it's worse than we might have thought.

A motion passed by the upper house which condemns abortion and claims to defend "the rights of the unborn child" got through on the casting vote of John Johnson, chairman of the Legislative Council, ALP back and part of the old Catholic push.

It foreshadows a Bill which would allow women to be imprisoned for up to ten years, and would allow a parent or the state to claim compensation for intentional or accidental injury. Husband could even sue wives who have miscarriages.

The next stage in the struggle could be a demonstration outside parliament house on 17 August. This is turning into something of a day of action, with the Teachers' Federation and PSA calling on their members to rally.

But it will take determined industrial action to make Greiner reconsider now. The example of the school students shows what is possible, if we fight instead of dawdling from one token action to another.

— Dorothy Morgan and Marnie de Saxe



Teachers rally against Greiner: token action won't win this fight

**WHILE** Nick Greiner follows the precedent Labor set by deregistering the BLF, Melbourne's union leaders seem determined to draw no lessons.

Although Trades Hall condemned the freezing of BLF assets, they have taken no action. They agreed in principle to have a delegates' meeting, but won't call it for fear the rank and file will use it to re-affirm demands for an immediate 6% wage rise. This would embarrass the THC who have now fallen in behind the ACTU.

Attacks on the BLF continue. When Norm Gallagher's fine was paid at the eleventh hour, tax office process servers were waiting, claiming he owes \$200,000.

Norm is no tax dodger. On legal advice he was awaiting the outcome of his court case before paying tax. For this the tax office imposed fines of \$85 a day, and that accounts for most of the \$200,000. It's a government dodge to keep the union tied up in court.

In June Izzi Miftari, BLF shop steward at a Multiplex site in Melbourne, was attacked outside his house and suffered serious injuries. Other stewards from the site received threatening phone calls with the message, "Lay off Multiplex or else!"

"The job has a bad safety and industrial relations record. The same employer sacked about 20 militants at a different site last year for having a barbecue. Multiplex also has a history of intimidation."

It's common knowledge in the industry that a contract was once put out on a Plumbers official in NSW when industrial action affected Multiplex projects.

**The BWIU has not improved. In one case, workers at the Remand Centre walked off the job over exposure to a synthetic mineral fibre. The BWIU organiser declared:**

"It's disgusting that a government allegedly defending the interests of workers will not do the right thing when building workers' lives are put at risk."

Yet how often does the BWIU do the right thing? Consider the 222 Exhibition St site where workers recently took action on a safety issue. Though the Disputes Board found they had been justified, they got no pay for the

stoppage. Instead the money went to the Children's Hospital. This led to a strike demanding they should be paid in addition to the donation to the hospital.

One week later the BWIU and FEDEFA, who always talk of "unity" returned to work leaving the plumbers, ETU and ASC&J out on their own.

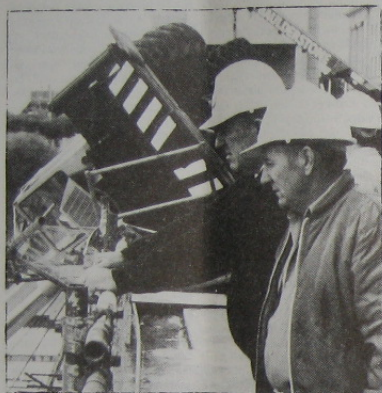
The BWIU then went and did the employers' work for them at the Arbitration Commission. But despite a direction to return to work, as I write those unions and some BWIU members are still out.

Meanwhile in WA (where the BLF remain registered) 3000 shop stewards, the majority building workers, voted overwhelmingly to go for an immediate 6% pay rise, in contrast to the ACTU's phased-in scheme. This didn't stop the FEDEFA federal secretary from signing a deal with Multiplex in WA along ACTU lines. The BLF were forced into line with threats of deregistration.

But later a group of unions led by the BLF were able to gain an earlier starting date for the deal.

At the Barrub construction site in the Pilbara, the employers have claimed an Australian record of one million man hours

# Coast to coast, the battle's not easy



**BLF officials investigate after a mobile crane tipped over in Adelaide: workers have to fight for safe conditions.**

without any production time being lost due to injuries. But local unions tell another side to the story.

"The million man hours is a terrific achievement," said the AMWU organiser, but it's not as if workers haven't had been hurt. "There have been about five deaths since the start of the project, workers smashed up never to work again and other serious injuries." It's just that there haven't been any injuries recently causing the loss of a day or

more's production time. And it's the union members who deserve the credit.

Following the death of a pipe-fitter the union secured an agreement that if a worker feels something is unsafe, they can stop the work until the issue is settled.

The workers have to police this. For example they struck recently over hazardous chemicals and electric shocks on the pipes.

Yet it's safety action like this that governments and employers are trying to stop.

— Janey Stone

**BRISBANE**

## Backpay victory

**IF YOU** fight you can win, say forty workers at a Commonwealth Bank site in Brisbane. They were working for a subcontractor called Display Wood, who went into liquidation. An unwritten law in the industry says the contractor covers the wage bill in such cases.

Waprac gave verbal assurances that the wages would be paid, so they kept working. Then weeks later, in early June, the men were told they were sacked on the spot and their wages were lost. They were owed about \$50,000 for working on an \$80 million project. When they sent a delegation to protest they found cops waiting to eject them.

They wasted no time with the industrial commission but picketed the site every day. Other workers put bans on. With solidarity action threatened on all of their Queensland sites, Waprac coughed up the back pay.

Tony Mitchell and Allan Gardner

## Educational week-end



**ON** THE weekend of 6-7 August, Brisbane branch of Socialist Action hosts a seminar on Australian capitalism and the region. We'll have a panel discussion and forum on the bicentenary. Rick Kuhn explains what's wrong with protectionism. Carole Ferrier talks on the Communist writer Jean Devany, and Tom O'Leinan speaks about organising workers in the 1930s. It will be held in the Latin American centre, Barry Parade, Fortitude Valley. For more details you can ring (07) 891 5919 or 269 5703.

# Vietnam: Savages and heroes

**STATISTICS** never tell the whole story of a conflict, but when it comes to the Vietnam war, the stats are staggering.

In the twelve years to 1973, 10 million tons of explosives were unleashed. That's two and a half times the bombs rained on all Europe in World War II. 55 million litres of Agent Orange destroyed half to three quarters of South Vietnam's forests and crop land.

Millions of peasants fled the bombardment to a life of urban poverty. South Vietnam's jails held half the world's political prisoners. Torture was routine.

One and a half million Vietnamese were killed, with My Lai and other massacres swelling the body count. And all this was on top of the destruction caused by Japan during the World War, and by France in the independence struggle of the early 1950s.

No wonder that protests began, not least in the United States itself and its ally Australia. Draft resistance in both countries, together with rebellion in the US army made the war unmanageable. But it was the resistance of the Vietnamese that made it unwinnable.

The Vietnamese Tet Offensive, launched twenty years ago in 1968, proved that the US army could be beaten, and that the South Vietnamese puppet regime had no popular support.

The "Doves" among the American and Australian ruling classes began to question the costs of the war. A few years later the Doves had the numbers, and the troops were withdrawn.

The Saigon regime rapidly crumbled and on 30 April, 1975 Saigon fell.

**HOW** COULD a poor peasant army defeat the technological might of western imperialism? Hollywood either accuses the politicians of starving the military, or blames it on the ruthlessness of the Communies who didn't fight fair.

But a look at history shows all these arguments to be fraudulent. The imperialist troops were fighting the labouring masses of a nation, not just a Communist "conspiracy".

France occupied Vietnam from 1858 to 1954, when the nationalist forces led by Ho Chi Minh's Communist Party defeated the French army. The country was partitioned into the "communist" north and the



**US troops storm ashore in the 'unwinnable' war**

"non-Communist" south, pending elections. All observers — friendly, hostile or neutral — agreed that the nationalists had majority support (the CIA put it at 80 percent).

The United States, now the dominating western power, was not about to let a country slip from the "free world". They installed a dictator in the south, Diem, who cancelled the elections and began to repress the population. But Diem was too corrupt, and the CIA overthrew him in 1963.

Their new "clean" team, Thieu and Ky, had the same problem as Diem — no public support and a lot of public resistance. So US combat troops arrived in 1965 to do a thorough job of repression. By 1967 there were half a million of them.

**THE** PRETEXT was "Communist aggression" from the north. There was no evidence of northern troops being dense in the south, so the CIA was told to manufacture it. In reality it was the US invasion together with the bombing of north and south that compelled the reluctant Hanoi government to send its troops.

Australian circles, including many on the left, often imagine that this country was dragged into the war by the Americans. In reality the Australian government was dead keen to deepen the US involvement in Southeast Asia, as well as their own.

When the US ruling circles were debating in 1965 whether to escalate the war, Australia

threw its weight in vigorously on the side of escalation.

One historian, Professor Robert Neale, relates that on 15 January, Canberra decided that Australia "should encourage the United States to plan increased air strikes against North Vietnam," and that on 19 January Keith Walker, Australian ambassador to Washington, was instructed that he should take advantage of any opportunity to harden the US position.

Another writer, Michael Sexton, reports in his book *War for the Asking* that "in addition to pressing the Americans to bomb North Vietnam, Australia at both



**Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies encouraged the US**

time was concerned to dissuade them from any idea of negotiating with Hanoi. This stand followed automatically from the Australian desire to see the war widened."

**SINCE** the 19th century, Australia's own imperialists have tried to keep one or another of the great powers deeply involved in this region, so they could use these "great and powerful friends" to help defend Australian interests. Vietnam was just a particularly spectacular example.

Looking back, it is impossible not to be awed by the courage of the Vietnamese peasants, workers and guerrillas. Of course, in our satisfaction at their victory, we should remember the dangers of attaching our political allegiance to places rather than principles. Always, in our current government place under its current government than that it has been for a long time, it is not a socialist society. The working class does not rule. Power, as in Russia and China, rests with the state bureaucracy.

The Vietnamese people won national but not social liberation. Yet we are indebted to them for two important things. First, their struggle helped shatter many people's illusions about the "free world" of western imperialism.

Second, Vietnam's fire still tingles in the fingers of western governments, who now think twice about waging colonial wars against the peoples of the underdeveloped world.

— Phil Shannon

**IN ANY struggle, you must know your enemy. Ours is capitalism; but what is capitalism?**

The answer once seemed simple: it was a system where rich individuals owned the factories. These capitalists competed on a free market without central planning. The result was a chaotic economy and economic crises. The solution seemed obvious: take industry away from these individuals, and let the state plan the economy in the interests of the workers. That, clearly, was socialism — though we might debate some of the details.

To most people on the left, this seemed to be the core of Marxism; too bad today things don't look so simple.

On the one hand, many of the most important enterprises of the system we live under are not owned by individuals. On paper, they are owned by the shareholders, but in reality companies like BHP and AMP are run by bureaucrats. Others are state firms like Telecom — who exploit their workers just like BHP.

And capitalist governments of all sorts have used planning for decades, supposedly in the interests of the people. The latest Australian version is the Hawke government's steel plan, car plan, textile and clothing package, etc.

**ON THE other hand,** those societies which have got rid of private ownership of industry and brought in centralised planning don't look very attractive today. Where they've achieved big economic successes as in the USSR, it has been through state terror against the working class. The plans, bureaucratic run, have usually been a mess. Some of these states, like Poland, have had full blown economic crises.

Now Russia and China are



## Capitalism: the nature of the beast

moving to incorporate aspects of the "free market" into their economies, in the fear that otherwise they will be unable to keep up with the capitalist west!

So the whole meaning of capitalism and socialism — and the difference between them — need to be re-examined if we are to make sense of today's world, let alone advance solutions for tomorrow.

And here Karl Marx's ideas are vital. Contrary to myth, he did not see the individual private ownership of the means of production as the main problem with capitalism. What he objected to was a situation where they were controlled by a minority — in whatever form — and used to exploit a majority.

This exploitation took the form of wage labour workers had no means of production, and no commodities to sell, and so must sell their labour for a wage.

there is a larger public sector. In a country like Burma, the state dominates the economy and they talk about "socialism". In Eastern Europe and China there are centrally planned economies.

Yet in all of them the fundamentals of Marx's analysis will apply. The means of production are controlled by a minority — though its composition varies from individual entrepreneurs through private and public bureaucrats.

Workers sell their labour for a wage, and have no control over production or the goods produced.

Production is spurred by competition. Partly it's between firms, like Swan and Carlton's beer wars. But there is also competition between national economies, led by the capitalist state. Australian examples include Hawke's agitation about American wheat quotas, and also the attempt to cut workers' wages to make "our" industry internationally competitive. Countries like Russia and China are not immune to this kind of competition — China can sell clothing to Australia cheaply because its workers are abysmally paid.

**BUT THERE is also another kind of competition between nations which explains more about the forces driving the USSR, and that's military competition. The Soviet economy is forever pushed to produce more efficiently because it competes with the United States to produce arms.**

Whatever the form it takes, the result is the same: "Accumulate! Accumulate!" that Moses and the Prophets! Workers are the victims. So what is to be done about all this? Thus we arrive at the other question: what is socialism? The whole answer would need another article but the guts of it should be clear: socialism must mean workers themselves control the process of production, and produce to meet human needs rather than the demands of competition.

Workers' control of production — which must include their democratic control of the state — can be established within individual countries. And of course that is how the process will start.

But as we have seen, the present kind of competition are international. That is why full socialism cannot be created in a single country, but demands an international struggle. And it explains why the struggles of the Polish workers, or those in South Africa, are as important to us as our own.

— Tom O'Lincov

## When the workers take centre stage

**THE REVOLUTION often seems a long way away. Yet there have been major upheavals over the past two decades which opened up revolutionary possibilities. In doing so they showed that Marxist ideas still make sense.**

*Revolutionary Rehearsals* is a new, and ambitious book about five of these experiences. It is tells you the history and makes important political points.

The settings were far flung: advanced capitalist France in 1968, a more backward Portugal in 1974-75, Chile under the Allende "Popular Unity" government in 1972-73, Islamic Iran in 1979, and state capitalist Poland in 1980-81. Yet there were striking similarities.

Each country saw a regime rocked or overthrown. Each time, the working class was at the heart of the struggle, displaying that capacity for independent activity and organisation that makes it central to revolutionary strategy.

And the demands of the insurgents — for democratic control of all spheres of social, political and economic life — were remarkably similar, as were the forms of organisation they threw up.

*Revolutionary Rehearsals* shows how, in all five situations, workers' councils grew up, beginning as inter-factory co-ordinating bodies for strike committees, and going on to assume all sorts of other tasks as the old order broke down.

Only a few emerged in France. But at the other extreme, Poland's Solidarity was a highly organised nation-wide federation of these bodies, the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committees (MKS). Here's how they operated in Gdansk:

"The whole movement was based on a wave of workplace occupations. Each striking enterprise sent a delegate to its local MKS. Within days of its establishment the Gdansk MKS had begun taking control of essential services. A fleet of 300 taxis was placed under its direction. The MKS instructed bakeries and conneries to continue producing food supplies for the working class. Lorries operated with MKS licenses."

Workers' councils can't exist for long alongside the capitalist



Demonstrating during Iran's revolutionary upheaval

state. Either the existing state is destroyed, and workers' power consolidated, or the councils are smashed and "normality" restored. Sadly it was the workers' councils that lost out each time.

The authors argue that this wasn't inevitable. They examine the politics and actions of the various groups involved in the events, and conclude that reformism — the idea that you can have socialism without revolution — led to defeat each time.

Anyone harbouring illusions about Chile's President Allende or Solidarity's Lech Wałęsa should get a rude awakening from this book. Allende left his supporters in the army, who warned him of the approaching military coup, to the mercy of their officers. Wałęsa single-handedly cancelled a democratically planned general strike, and destroyed much of Solidarity's momentum in the process.

In his concluding chapter on "Perspectives" Colin Barker describes how things could have been different. "Time and time again," he writes, "what was missing was effective revolutionary socialist organisation." The revolutionaries were fragmented and confused in their politics, leaving the field wide open for the reformists.

Barker continues: "That vacuum has to begin to be filled here and now, practically and realis-

tically." The authors argue that capitalism will keep throwing up opportunities for social transformation. The events of 1968 in France proved it can happen even in advanced capitalist countries. But events won't wait for socialists to organise once they start. If we want a real opening night we have to instead of rehearsals in future, the time to start building revolutionary organisation is today.

As an argument for doing just that, and as an inspiring account of what the working class can achieve in today's world, *Revolutionary Rehearsals* is an invaluable book.

— Robert Stainsby

### TELEVISION



## Alan meets Adolf

**LAST MONTH,** SBS showed Claude Lanzmann's epic film *Shoah*, a documentary on the holocaust. It made harrowing viewing.

Then on 6 June, while *Shoah* was coming to its end, the ABC showed a Four Corners program on Alan Bond, and his purchase of Chile's telephone company. This film documented further horrors — torture and

death — since the overthrow of the Allende government. It made pretty harrowing viewing too.

Yet here were Bond employees saying they "were not aware of the Pinochet atrocities" and arguing that people "have suggested" that there might have been these goings on, but that they have never witnessed such things. It was not a problem for Bond that the four most senior executives of the Chilean phone company were senior army officers.

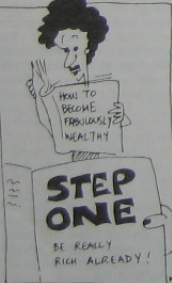
It reminded me of people who go to South Africa and return saying how peaceful things are: "We didn't see any riots. It must be an exaggeration."

Then the Four Corners program ended with the BBC's "trial" of Kurt Waldheim finding him "not guilty" of war crimes.

But the final irony was that the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal has deferred the hearing on whether Alan Bond is a fit and proper person to hold a TV license, because of his payment of \$400,000 to Job Bjelke-Petersen to settle a defamation case against Channel 9 in Queensland. As if that were his greatest crime!

It all reminds me of that sick drama dreamed up by Mick Brooks, *Springtime for Hitler*.

— Marnie DeSate





Junkies: do the cops have their interests at heart?



with Alec Kahn

# Can the cops kick the drug habit?

**L**IKE HIS namesake on the road to Damascus, Victoria's former Assistant Police Commissioner Paul Delanis had a revelation last month.

Drug prohibition was a total failure, he confessed. It merely criminalised the young, and drugs should be legalised under government control for registered addicts.

Delanis' insight, after 20 years of persecuting drug users, was not entirely altruistic. The burglary rate is soaring due to addicts financing their habits, and the police cannot defend private property against the onslaught. Indeed, the cops themselves are waist-deep in drugs corruption (something the much-vaunted Fitzgerald Inquiry in Brisbane has not touched on, despite exposing less lucrative police dealings in gambling and prostitution).

Legislation, of course, cannot solve the drug problem. It would scarcely contain some of its side effects.

Drugs reflect the mind-boggling boredom and alienation of capitalism, even for those who 'make it'. Drugs are just as rife these days in upper and middle class circles as amongst us lower orders.

The silly Drug Offensive at least had that insight. Its glossy brochure admitted that 'Some use drugs to escape from reality. People who are house-bound all day long, or stuck in boring, unfulfilling go-nowhere jobs.'

It never drew the conclusion — that we need to change society to get rid of powerlessness, of sex roles, of alienation. For that would be a socialist conclusion.

Drug legalisation — and decriminalisation — should be supported. There is no excuse for putting the

victims of this society into the hands of crime bosses and behind bars.

But you can bet that soon after drugs are legalised, they will be privatised, and the pushers of beer and tobacco will cash in on the new markets.

That's the trouble with liberal bandaids. They only cover up the sore, and maybe shift the pain. They never heal it.

**YAWN** — I guess I'll vote in the September referendum.

This tedious exercise began in 1985 amidst much fanfare. Labor was going to modernise the constitution in the Bicentennial year, make another Supply crisis impossible, and involve 'The People' (ie celebs like Peter Garrett) via numerous subcommittees.

What a fizzer it became! The subcommittees came up with eleven areas to rewrite — Labor adopted just three. The Libs wouldn't agree to rewrite the Supply provisions, so Labor dropped the ideas as too controversial. Now the Libs are opposing the changes anyway, so Labor's compromise was pointless.

So how to vote? Obviously, one should support the one-vote one-value provision, which aims to end the Queensland gerrymander, and has produced a delightful split between John Howard and the Queensland Libs. But one-vote one-value is a misnomer — until we have proportional representation, the radical left and other small parties will never get any value for their votes. Even then, Alan Bond's vote and Kerry Packard's will always count for more than yours or mine, because real power lies outside parliament.

The other major proposal is for

four year terms for both the Reps and the Senate. Having given up on abolishing the Senate, Labor hopes to undermine the influence it gives to the smaller, more conservative states by shortening its terms. But stretching the Reps's terms to four years is an anti-democratic measure. It aims to give governments more time to bring in anti-worker measures before handing out pre-election sweeteners. It should be opposed.

The other two proposals are meant to be uncontroversial and aim to encourage 'yes' voting. The recognition of local government seems harmless enough. But the 'individual rights' clause is not, though not for the spurious reasons given by the Libs.

The clause promises 'fair compensation' to individuals whose property is taken over by a government. Labor is effectively writing nationalisation of industry without compensation out of its platform for all time with this clause, and making it unconstitutional for more radical forces to attempt as well. The clause will not protect workers or their organisations from having their assets frozen by government — it would not have protected BLF funds in Victoria, for example. It is purely a promise to the rich, and should be thrown out for that reason.

**B**LOODY typical, wasn't it ... Washington's snow job after it shot down the Iranian Airbus.

The Sunday that it happened, Ronald Reagan privately contacted Iran to apologise, anxious to protect nine hostages in Lebanon.

But the Western public got a very different line. First, the US denied it had shot down the Airbus. Then Pentagon tried to blame Iran.

Admiral William Crowe said the Airbus was outside the commercial flight corridor, flying low and descending on the USS Vincennes at 450 knots, and that it ignored seven warnings on emergency radio frequencies.

This story soon fell apart. The maximum low altitude speed for an Airbus is 345 knots. The USS Sides, also in the area, reported that the Airbus was in the commercial corridor and climbing at almost twice the height claimed by Crowe.

So the story changed again. The Airbus was issuing military signals on its transponder, we were told. But the USS Sides had only picked up normal commercial signals, it emerged. Finally, five days after the event, Washington accepted responsibility.

So why the evasion? While the story was on page one and journalists would print anything, the US government lied through its teeth. Only when press interest had subsided did it admit to the truth.

Remember back in 1983, when Russia callously shot down a stray South Korean jetliner? The US claimed then that it was impossible to confuse commercial and military aircraft. And once again they snowed the world's press, only admitting after much denial that an RC-135 spy plane had been in the same area.

The snow-job this time was just as cynical. The US has appointed itself as the world's cop in the Gulf, protecting Western capitalist oil supplies and trade routes.

Yet despite their state-of-the-art equipment, US warships in the Gulf can't distinguish between large commercial planes and small military jets. They don't monitor local air traffic channels, which would tell them what commercial planes were flying. Instead, they expect pilots to be permanently tuned to emergency frequencies to pick up their constant challenges.

So even leaving aside the obvious politics to this imperialist policing exercise, the US military is simply incompetent at the task. The lies and evasions aim to cover up that fact.

The Airbus tragedy is not the West's first mid-air atrocity in the Middle East. American-armed Israel gunned down a Libyan airliner in 1973.

It will not be the last, either, as long as America can meddle around the globe in defence of the imperialist dollar.

# SOCIALIST ACTION



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50 CENTS

Howard, you racist...



# ASIANS ARE WELCOME HERE!



Sweden: miracle or mirage?





**Brisbane school**

**WHO OWNS Australia?** The twenty people who attended Socialist Action's Marxist Winter School in Brisbane, August 6 and 7, were told in no uncertain terms.

Rick Kuhn argued that Australia was a class society, owned by a minority of bosses. Carole Ferrier addressed the topic of "whose Bicentenary" by showing the history of racism in Australian society and the need to fight it. In his talk on Australian imperialism, Tom O'Lincoln summarised our traditional history which addresses Australia's Asia-Pacific role, the likes of Alan Bond were now invading America and Europe and the theory needed up-dating.

Stephen Boyce outlined the history of oppression of Kanaks in New Caledonia and described the struggle today.

Then for a change of pace, you could join the huge throng that turned up at the party on Saturday night.

**Summer camp**

If you liked the Winter School, you'll love our fourth annual summer camp. This year it will be held near Canberra over the New Year week-end. The camp includes our conference, where we discuss political developments and plan our own work. Then there will be the usual array of educational talks, not to mention a "socialist recital". Every member will be invited to sing, dance, recite verse, or otherwise entertain. Laugh? You'll nearly die...

**Red letter days**

This issue we mark Socialist Action's third birthday.

We have produced over thirty issues. Our first edition saluted the struggle in South Africa, and later we greeted the fall of tyrants in the Philippines and Haiti. We never feared to tackle the hard issues, such as defending the BLF or opposing nationalism on the left. We have fought for union rights and women's liberation, and against racism and gay oppression.



We do it all on meagre resources, and recently with volunteer labour, which forced us to slightly reduce the quality of publication. You could help us out, of course. Why not subscribe? And donations are always welcome.

**Burma's rulers shaken**

**ANOTHER** of the world's grubbier dictatorships has been thrown on the defensive. This time it is Burma, where riots and demonstrations culminated in a virtual insurrection, forcing out the new military dictator after only a fortnight in power.

On 26 July, General Sein Lwin took control of the country's presidency and of its sole legal political party, the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPPP). He was replacing the long-time dictator, Ne Win, who in his 26-year rule had reduced the country to abject poverty and, faced with a rising tide of opposition, had been forced to rule more and more through military repression.

Not that Sein Lwin was offering anything very new. He was Ne Win's loyal henchman, and had earned himself the titles of "the butcher" and "the most hated man in Burma" for his role as commander of the *lon-hain* (riot police) who murdered dozens of people during demonstrations in March and June.

At the special BSPPP conference at the end of July he had been instrumental in defeating the out-going Ne Win's proposal for a referendum to make Burma a multi-party state.

So it was hardly surprising that Sein Lwin's takeover was greeted by immediate protests.

The vicious repression of the earlier demonstrations had forced people off the streets, but it had not stopped them organising. On 28 July, two days after Sein Lwin's appointment, students went to the Shwedagon Pagoda, where thousands of pilgrims were assembling for one of Buddhism's most important festivals. They handed out leaflets against the new government.

When police arrived and tried to break up the demonstration, they were beaten back by the crowd.

From there the protests swelled, and soon spread outside Rangoon. Despite martial law, and despite a rising death toll resulting from the government's shoot-to-kill policy, riots spread from one end of the country to the other.

In Rangoon, workers and students stormed police stations and seized arms. They barricaded the streets and whole suburbs, especially in the working class areas, were off-limits to the army.

What worked for Russia in 1917 was not a wild success



Wild in the streets: demonstrators confront the authorities

troops had abandoned the southern city of Kawthang entirely leaving it under the control of the population.

With the population in arms, with whole areas of the countryside and the capital city beyond his control and with the army itself no longer reliable, it was clear to Sein Lwin that his time had come. On 13 August he resigned all positions. The BSPPP, taken by surprise, announced that his successor would be chosen within the week.

The crisis of Burmese society that culminated in the rising was no flash in the pan. It has been brewing for several years and has been open for all to see for some time. Its real roots lie in the attempt of Ne Win and his clique of army officers to build up the Burmese economy in isolation from the rest of the world.

With a nationalised economy, a vast bureaucratic structure and lots of socialist rhetoric, the Burmese army (after 1974 sheltering behind the fig-leaf of civilian rule through the BSPPP) attempted to copy Joseph Stalin's model of economic development: rigid state control was used to shut out the pressures of the world economy. Many Third World countries made the same choices during this time — Cuba, Egypt, China, Algeria.

What worked for Russia in 1917 was not a wild success

for poorer countries in the post-war years. The fifties and sixties were years of rapid growth world-wide, and the Third World countries that did best were those, like Singapore and South Korea, who found a way to insert themselves into the growing world market. Even so, few countries managed to create such an economic disaster as Burma. In 1940, it had been the largest rice exporter in the world. Thirty years later it could barely feed itself. Industrialisation had made no progress at all, and the only manufacturing industry was in cement, textiles and soap.

By the late eighties the situation had deteriorated even further. At the very last minute, the country's rulers began to toy with Gorbachev-style reforms, but it was far too late for that. A shoddy attempt by the regime to whip up racist violence against the Muslim minority met with little success. And finally this year, student riots against hunger began the ferment that brought Burma's dictators face to face with the social wasteland they had created.

If the country has a future, it lies with the students and workers who have fought back. For the Australian left, it is one more dismal example of how state control of the economy is not in itself the key to social progress.

— Graham Willott



1987: Indians and Fijians march against the coup

Just back from working in Fiji, JOHN SULLIVAN reports on recent developments under Rabuka

**Fiji: the repression deepens**

**F**IJI is slipping, quickly now, into the harsh pattern of military regimes everywhere.

In the year after the May 1987 coup, security forces directed a stream of petty standover tactics against unions, professionals and students in particular. Some were locked up for days and bashed, many were harassed with snap arrests, searches, brief detentions and crude threats. The populace was irritated by checks on their observance of the Christian Sabbath.

But the arms inquiry on 1 June and the Internal Security Decree two weeks later have made the situation deadly serious for thousands of Fijian citizens.

June saw 55 people arrested in connection with "arms smuggling". All have clear ties to the deposed Bavadra coalition and many have openly criticized the new regime.

The military has let it be known there is a blacklist of 1400 who may not leave the country. All will no doubt get their turn at interrogation in due course.

The regime reacts sharply to criticism. On June 22 Som Prakash, a lecturer at the University of the South Pacific, was taken to Queen Elizabeth Barracks, held for fifteen days and repeatedly beaten. Officially he was being questioned about hidden weapons. His real crime was a review of Brigadier Rabuka's book *No Other Way*. The review was published in May in *Coup and Crisis: Fiji a Year Later*.

The military slammed *Coup and Crisis* in a half-page press ad containing thinly-masked threats against the authors, the university, and its vice-chancellor Geoffrey Caston. All contributors have been arrested on some pretext since May 1987. Two have been picked up since the arms "exposures" and all expect re-arrest before long.

**THE INTERNAL SECURITY Decree** is a copy of legislation enacted in the Malayan Emergency of 1948-60 and still used to quell dissent in Malaysia and Singapore.

It empowers officers to search without warrant, arrest suspects indefinitely without charge, declare curfews, shoot escapees and much else. Section 8 empowers Brigadier Rabuka to "detain, discipline (and) cancel the passport of" any person who acts "in any manner prejudicial to" the maintenance of public order or the essential services.

Cane cutters striking against Sunday harvesting in



Rabuka: No velvet glove

at the Brigadier's Sababarian edict have been informed darkly that sugar harvesting is an "essential service". The Decree comes at a time when public service, clerical, nursing and paramedical unions are protesting at the huge pay cuts they've suffered in the post-coup slump. Section 8 gives the regime a handy weapon to wield in these and coming industrial disputes.

The lead-up to the security enactment smells badly. It began on June 1 with the report of the Sydney discovery of a container of arms due for shipment aboard *Capitaine Cook II*, bound for Noumea, Lautoka, Suva and Port Vila. There was some speculation in Fiji about their destination, with references to Caldoches and Kanaks in New Caledonia, extremists in Vanuatu and possible markets in distant hotspots.

**THE INITIAL** report in the *Fiji Times* hinted at Fiji as a possible destination and quoted Rabuka as saying his security forces had a "fair idea where the arms would have gone". Next day the paper began stating as an official fact that the arms were meant for Lautoka.

Within three days, it had also dropped qualifiers like "alleged", "supposed" and "might have" when referring to this "fact".

By June 6 a "similar container" plus several small caches of arms were reported found in Viti Levu and the first arrests had been made. For two weeks we were

fed banner headlines and flimsy stories of new finds and arrests, garnished with photos of holes in the ground, guns, water bottles, helmets, grenades and ammunition cases. This culminated in the June 17 presentation of the security laws.

Fijians widely suspect that no arms have entered the country or been consigned there in the fashion reported. It is hazardous to air that suspicion, though. Journalist Moseve Veliu, with keen foresight and little caution, remarked in his *Fiji Times* column on June 6 about the arms story that "any introduction of tough anti-terrorist laws authorising police to arrest and detain suspects should be resisted". Veliu and his column were removed from the daily soon afterwards.

**F**IJI's military controls whatever relevant evidence exists in the country, passing selected samples to the *Times* as it sees fit. It refused entry to Australian and New Zealand journalists to examine evidence and cover the story.

The regime staged a similar, if less spectacular, show last year.

On June 25, 1987 it enacted Emergency Regulations to force uncooperative sugar workers and merchants to resume supply of labour and goods. The same day it announced a "seizure of arms" existence of an insurrectionary "Republican Army" and several arrests. The hard kernel of the report, it transpired,

### Sellebration of a nation

EXPO 88 stallholders captured the true spirit of the event during a downpour last month. They instantly jacked up the price of umbrellas from \$30 to \$45, and even charged \$5 for garbage bags!

### Hup-two-three-five

WE LOVED the latest Army recruiting ads — the ones asking for knowledge of maths "to at least year 10 level".

The ads had a simple electronics quiz so you could test yourself. Surprise, surprise — one of the answers was wrong. We understand the test was devised by the guy who did the body-counts during the Vietnam War.

### Public defenders

JAPANESE police watched a 7 year old boy drown last month. Katsuki Iwakoshi got into difficulty in a popular swimming spot, and a friend's grandmother who was supervising him flagged down a minibus of 20 police.



### World's greatest political expert

COMING from the ALP's NSW Right, Paul Keating knows all about corruption. So in Japan last month, he decided to reassure his hosts.

"You have a parliamentary democracy here, as we have, and you have a system of government, as we do, which is not open to corruption," the Boy Wonder grovelled.

That was 11 July. Next day, Japan's \$51 million *Recruit* scandal broke, involving 46 of the nation's politicians including a string of recent prime ministers!

### The other two-thirds

THE SOCIAL worker is welcomed by five children, the oldest about eight years old. The parents have gone out foraging in the garbage heaps. Noticing how poorly the children look, the social workers ask them whether they have eaten recently. "Yes, miss, yesterday Mummy made little cakes from wet newspapers."

"What?" asks the woman. "Mummy takes a sheet of newspaper, makes it into a ball and soaks it in water,

The cops, from an elite unit on its way to guard Crown Princess Michiko, rushed to the river where the senior officer ordered them to save the boy.

One policeman said he had contact lenses and could not go in the water. A second said he had no change of clothes, while a third said he could not swim. Another said, "I think it is time to go now." While they made excuses, poor Katsuki drowned.

In a similar incident five days earlier, 74 Japanese Navy crew refused to help when their submarine hit a fishing boat. Thirty people on the boat drowned.

### The consumer society

LATEST craze in US high society is for the wives of the wealthy to get \$300 Collagen injections in the lips.

The injections, lasting five minutes, produce a "Marilyn Monroe pout" for 8-12 months. For the less covet, there is now *Video Dog*, a video-cassette for \$19.95 which offers "the experience of owning a pet without the mess and inconvenience". For the same price (and a similar sales pitch) you can also get *Video Baby*

and when it is nice and soft kneads it into little cakes. We eat them, drink some water and feel nice and full inside."

— Porto Alegre, Brazil, 1987

### Arms and the maniac

WHILE you contemplate the previous item — US military spending in Reagan's 7 and a half years has been \$8607 per second.

### Half wit

JOHN Halfpenny spoke at the AGM of the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association. His talk, scheduled for 20 minutes, ran for an hour and a half, and his attempts at humour went down like lead balloons.

The two fastest-growing groups in society were the very poor and the very rich, our "left-wing" hero observed. "Don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against millionaires. I think there should be a lot more of them."

Later, to even more groans, he observed that despite being Trades Hall secretary he could not just call a strike any time he wanted. "I can't just go down to the gates of Flinders Street station and say everybody out. Perhaps because there's never anybody there."

Understaffed railway workers used to such "wit" in the press will doubtless be in stitches.

### Taking care of business

KARL MARX University in Budapest will soon offer Master of Business Administration courses to bright young comrades to help revitalise Hungary's "socialist" economy.

The University of Tennessee is helping to set up the course. We wonder if it will have the mandatory three-week study of business ethics that Harvard now includes in its MBA course, following Wall Street's insider-trading scandals.



**CHEAP SHOTS**

## FEATURE



SAP leaders celebrate their 1982 election victory; economic policies similar to Hawke and Keating's.

# The 'Swedish road' is a bumpy one

Is Sweden a model of social progress? Our feature looks at the reality.

**I**N A LITTLE country like ours, it's much easier to sell a policy if you have some idealised overseas model to point to. For years, worker activists looked to Russia. But today, much of the labour movement has its eyes set on Sweden.

The ACTU blueprint for industry policy, *Australia Reconstructed* pushes Sweden as a model for Australia to follow. The ACTU leaders admire the way their Swedish counterparts get to participate in managing the economy, and they argue that union participation of that sort could fix up this country's economic ills.

Like Russia before it, the Swedish model does not stand up to close examination. The country has a history of class struggle that gives the lie to its image as a haven of industrial peace. The bureaucrats of its main private sector union federation, the LO, have about as much respect for rank and file workers as Simon Crean and Bill Kelty have been showing lately.

In fact the LO's massive bureaucracy, which runs to hundreds of paid functionaries, advisors and economists openly supports the restriction of public servants' right to strike, and is controlled from the top down.

The main argument in favour of the Swedish model, however, is that the government's policies with union backing appear to have created an economic success story. And the economic success, at least from the mid-1930s to the early 1970s, is undeniable. But an examination of why the Swedish economy has succeeded goes a long way to demonstrating that the same policies won't make a success out of Australia.

**WHAT ARE the roots of Sweden's economic prosperity? On the face of it, the reason might be the country's social democratic party, the SAP, which held power non-stop between 1932, sometimes in coalition and sometimes in its own right.**

The SAP followed Keynesian policies: it kept unemployment low by expanding government spending when necessary. Under

the SAP Sweden got out of the 1930s depression rapidly, and under its rule a "new strategy of class conflict" emerged. In reality it was not about conflict, but about doing deals.

The LO union federation made increasingly centralised wage agreements with the employers' body, the SAF. In 1938 the unions accepted "employers' exclusive prerogatives over hiring, firing, job organisation and directing work." From the 1950s unions agreed to discipline their members, but as the economy boomed, wages did not increase so quickly in the fastest growing industries, and to ensure productivity improvements, outpace productivity improvements.

This was done in the name of the "solidarity wages policy" which aimed to equalise wages by reducing differentials. It also ensured that people doing the same job in different industries got paid the same. The latter policy was aimed at keeping weak industries from surviving through paying wages the idea was to keep restructuring the economy by making sure such in-

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## FROM PAGE 5

### Fiji

was the capture of a gun and a small quantity of ammo at a farm near Nausori.

Just as unconvincing is the volume of arms said to be involved in the present episode. By June 8, the total allegedly imported had risen to three container loads — up to 48 tonnes. At the 12-16 tonnes seized in Sydney and there's over 60 tonnes, enough for quite a large army by Fiji's standards (the FMF is currently building up to 5000). The FMF wants it believed thousands are involved, to justify military rule and repression.



Fijian reactionaries demonstrate

Yet arrested to date are lawyers, housewives, businessmen, farmers, writers, teachers, students, office workers, labourers, union leaders and academics. Ex-

cept for the shadowy Mohammed Rafiq Kahan, sought by Australian police over the *Anro Australia* shipment, nobody linked to the affair by the regime seems to have any history of law-breaking.

Whatever the military claims about resistance to its regime (and revolutionary action would be fully warranted), its opponents there only ever defended their rights by moderate means.

They can no longer use these means without deadly risks. They now look to solidarity from outside Fiji to help protect them from the repression that will intensify as economic and social conditions deteriorate.

distries went under.

The deals between the LO and the SAP were supposed to produce the same wage outcome that a free labour market would produce, but without the strikes. It sounds like a neat package, and Simon Crean thinks we should adopt one like it. But there is more to the story than that.

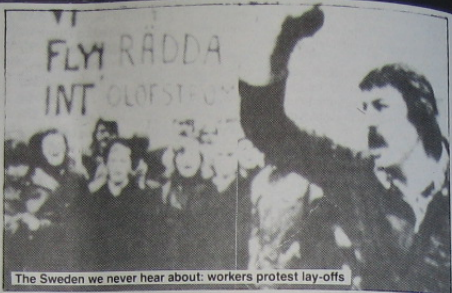
**A MAJOR** reason why Sweden got out of the Depression so fast was arms production, domestic and foreign. As Adolf Hitler prepared for war, the German economy had an artificial boom, and Sweden did very well out of supplying Nazi Germany with raw materials, especially iron ore and timber.

Sweden itself engaged in an arms build-up during the 1930s, and this laid the basis for today's current substantial armaments industry. This is the smallest country in the world to both design and produce military aircraft, the key firm being SAAB. A high proportion of state research funds are spent on military research and development.

In 1984, a quarter of the arms produced were exported, mostly to the third world; in addition to the brutal dictatorship of Pakistan's Zia Ul-Haq, Sweden arms both Iran and the pro-Iraqi Gulf states.

No doubt Sweden was a model for Bob Hawke's decision earlier this year to build up Australia's arms industry by promoting foreign exports of weaponry.

After the war ended, Sweden also profited from the destruction it had caused, supplying a devastated Europe with commodities and raw materials. Having a head start on



The Sweden we never hear about: workers protest lay-offs

the rest of Europe, it was then ideally placed to benefit from the long years of postwar prosperity.

**THE ROSY** vision of a conflict-free industrial scene is also a myth. Certainly, LO union officials have always done their best to strangle working class struggle.

In 1935 their model constitution for unions provided for officials to hold office "until future notice" once they were elected by a union congress. Since 1941 the LO has been able to veto strikes by member unions. Today strikes are not only illegal during contracts, but unofficial strikes are prohibited by union constitutions. Rank and file votes on contracts have been replaced by consultative conferences. Union branch ombudsmen were once elected, but are now appointed from above.

The rank and file are weighed down by an army of officials—even at the shop floor level the chairperson of your factory "club" is a full time official who does not work in a regular job.

Sweden's fans try to make much of the fact that the country can boast high rates of union membership, about 85 percent. But the reason for this is simply, as *Australia Reconstructed* admits, that "the administration of unemployment insurance is controlled by the unions, rather than the employment service."

Despite all this, the workers fight class battles just as we do. During World War 2 the government imposed severe austerity policies, even though the country was not involved in the fighting. In 1945 metal workers struck for five months over wages, not long before Australian metal workers had to do the same. The rank and file rejected an unsatisfactory settlement three times in democratic votes, so eventually the union leaders signed an agreement to end the strike without membership approval.

Things were quieter during the postwar economic boom, as they were in this country. But during the late 1960s and early 1970s Swedish unionists showed the same burst of militancy as their fellow workers all over the world. The strikes often escaped the control of the union officials, as in many other countries. A particularly important wildcat strike took place in 1969 in the state-owned iron mines.

It was to strangle this militancy that Sweden's much-publicised system of "industrial democracy" was introduced. The LO union officials moved away from their previous acceptance of management pre-

rogatives, but it wasn't necessarily because they were moving to the left. After all, employers had years of experience to reassure them that the LO would always act to boost production rather than defend workers' interests. They accepted "industrial democracy" because it boosted productivity, by giving workers the illusion they had a stake in the system, yet without giving them any real power.

Statutory provision for workers' participation in management decisions were again strengthened in 1976. Yet even then, workers did not have real control of their working lives. As even two of the main advocates of Swedish methods, Higgins and Apple, concede:

"The co-determination act, which came into force in 1977, had disappointed what expectations there might have been that it would directly grant local trade-union organizations an *entree* into decision-making in the firm."

**THE "ECONOMIC miracle"** in Sweden lasted about as long as did postwar prosperity everywhere else. After 1965 the economy faced challenges to its staple exports from Australian and Brazilian iron ore and North American timber, and private sector employment slumped.

The SAP government expanded public employment but since the late 1960s Swedish exports, including cars and ships, have faced stiff competition from Japan and South Korea. The 1973 oil shock hit the country hard, and in 1976 the SAP was thrown out of office against the background of a deteriorating economy (although the immediate issue was these socialist heroes' commitment to expanding nuclear power output).

From 1976 to 1982 conservative governments continued the SAP's Keynesian methods: they expanded government spending to hold unemployment down. But when they did this they faced the same dilemma as Gough Whitlam or France's Francois Mitterand: if you artificially pump up your economy this way, you suck in imports and expand your debt, the currency, and interest rates rise. Profits swallow capital to seek greener pastures. By 1980 Swedish multinationals employed 400,000 people outside the country's borders, equivalent to almost half the domestic workforce. GDP growth was only 2 percent during the 1970s, less than half the average of the industrial nations belonging to the OECD.

Industrial investment fell by 38 percent between 1976 and 1982, and in the latter year industrial output was no higher than ten years earlier.

Like Bob Hawke, the SAP social democrats had the good fortune to return to power just as the recession bottomed out—in their case, 1982. In 1986 unemployment in their case, stood at only 2.7 percent of the workforce, 117,000 people. But another 160,000 were on relief work, training schemes or employed by a government salary subsidy. So more than 6 percent of the workforce were not employed in real jobs. That is not so different from our own jobless rate.

And the underlying problem of sagging investment due to falling profit rates hasn't been solved. The SAP has tried to tackle them with policies similar to Hawke and Keating's massive devaluation of the currency, holding wages down to make sure workers pay the price for the resulting inflation.

Meanwhile it is planning a tax reform to benefit high income earners by reducing the top tax rate.

Yet despite these efforts, economic growth has averaged around 1.7 percent in the 1980s, lower even than the previous decade.

**IN A BID** to force more investment in productive industry, the SAP introduced the famous "wage earner funds" in 1984. The funds were financed by levies on profits and administered by union officials along lines similar to established pension funds.

A haze of radical rhetoric surrounds these funds. *Australia Reconstructed* calls them a kind of "collective capital formation". Although Swedish employers don't like them, they don't really change the way industry operates. It still needs to make a profit, it still needs to compete, it still subordinates the

interests of workers to these needs. The funds make as little difference for ordinary employees as does the public ownership of Australian railways, or the fact that the pension funds have owned shares in Swedish companies since the 1960s.

Swedish workers have fought back against the SAP government. In 1985, 500,000 strike days were lost in strikes in the public sector. This was followed in 1986 by further public sector strikes and lockouts. The LO union leaders responded by opposing pay parity for public sector workers. The SAP has threatened, with LO support, to limit public servants' right to strike, which they only gained in 1970. The first big struggle of 1988 involved the 42,000 members of the SIF, a white collar union, mostly in the metal industry. There were three weeks of strikes and lockouts. And there is bound to be more trouble ahead.

Sweden is closely linked with the Common Market, which will form a single economic bloc after 1992. If Sweden is to compete with the large firms within this economic juggernaut, its welfare provisions and its workers' minor privileges will come under pressure. The welfare system also faces difficulties from an ageing population, as investment income for the National Pension Insurance funds decline.

So the Economist Intelligence Unit, which issues reports for business, is quite right to say: "The days are gone when Sweden set an example for peaceful labour movement relations."

Top Australian union leaders won't care: they have their own goals and the Sweden myth is just a means to an end. But for just that reason, they myth is dangerous for rank and file workers. The sooner the trade union rank and file of Sweden knocks a great gaping hole in it, the better.

—Rick Kuhn

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. Only under world-wide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

Liberation from Oppression

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

Socialist Action

We are for Socialist Action. It's no good just talking about the world: the point is to change it. Marxist theory and propaganda are only meaningful if they are a guide to action. In the unions, social 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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## Teaching Greiner a lesson

SEVENTY thousand people rallied in Sydney on 17 August in protest against plans to change the NSW education system. Under proposals put forward by Education Minister Metherell, 2000 full time and 800 ancillary teaching positions would be abolished. Class sizes would increase, and TAFE students would pay fees.

The protesters gathered in the Domain and heard speeches before marching to Parliament House.

Obviously the potential is there for a massive campaign. Unfortunately, the organisers kept the tone of the rally pretty passive. They seem concerned to keep the conservative leaders of parent groups on side. It was largely left to the school students (and at one point, some TAFE teachers) to get spirited chants going.

In Melbourne, tertiary students have struck some blows for free education. On 9 August, Melbourne University went on strike.

The action was organised by the Education Action Group, and supported by the Staff Association. A number of lecturers canceled their classes for the day, especially in the Arts faculty. The Law School refused to support the strike because it did not have SRC endorsement. But a Criminal Law lecture on the day turned into a tutorial on free education!

It is criminal that the SRC did not support the strike. The SRC is dominated by the same gang that Dawkins belongs to the Labor Party. They have been very

snag about the struggle, and only put out leaflets or organise banners after activists have got the ball rolling. Activists held an information picket at entrances to the university, and striking students held a lunchtime meeting which filled the upstairs area in the union building. Late in the afternoon they marched to the Stock Exchange, where about 100 students managed to get inside and confront the assembled parasites.

On 17 August hundreds of tertiary students again marched through Melbourne streets.

— Jeff Goldhar

### BLF

## Phoney case flops

NOW EVEN the cops admit it! In an internal document, the police investigator who took over from BLF custodian Ian Sharp has recommended no further action be taken — because no offence can be proved!

It's quite a story. The cops entered the investigation on a verbal request. No file was established. When they first met the custodian, he "was unable to give specific instances... of criminal activity". This at the very time Labour Minister Crabb was stressing the importance of the police investigations.

The worst wrong-doing the cops could find was a minor offence regarding the purchase of a car. They felt it was "politically unwise to proceed". So much for police independence from politics.

Meanwhile in Sydney, Concrete Constructions has hit a

snag in their court action for damages against the BLF. They claim the union has cost them over \$1 million since May. Organisers have handed out leaflets on safety, compo and wages, and staged a crane sit-in to protest against cops on site.

But the builders' attempt to use secondary boycott provisions of the Trade Practices Act failed when the judge refused to find the union in contempt. The majority owner of Concrete Constructions, John Lewis, is using other methods in Melbourne. They sacked six scaffolders at 222 Exhibition St, claiming they had no more work even though their huge Melbourne Central project will continue into the 1990s! Workers at Melbourne Central didn't buy the excuse. They struck until the scaffolders got their jobs back.

Speaking of excuses, Premier John Cain is still telling the world that it was the BLF deregistration that made the current building boom possible. He said it most recently at a Melbourne Uni Labour Club reunion.

Cain seems to base his on statistics for building commencing which show an upward leap in September 1986, shortly after he sent his cops to force labourers to join the rival union, the BWIU. Supposedly this restored "business confidence".

But this was not the first leap in the statistics. The boom was underway by 1984, causing the BLF's national membership to jump from 35,000 in 1983 to 42,000 in 1985. It was this growing union strength that led Cain and Hawke to target the Builders' Labourers. The 1986 rise reflects the fact that the Melbourne Central job techni-

cally "commenced" at that time. But the developers got cold feet and the job didn't really start for another year. Some business confidence!

Booms aren't decided by union strength. The ALP's real concern was quite different: to make sure the bosses got all the benefits from the boom. And all that labourers got was the stinging embrace of the BWIU.

— Jamey Stone

### PUBLIC SERVICE

## It pays to fight

SLY AS a shithouse rat, these public service managers!

Last month Social Security workers ended a bitter fight with the Department over staff cuts. They won major concessions, losing far less staff than the bosses intended.

But management is still playing tricks. In Sydney, they tried to make heavier cuts in some sections to save their own favourite sections from suffering any loss. But the union delegates committee has decided to stop this. In Hobart the tricks are dirtier: The agreed figure for staff losses was 19. Management said OK, but then said there was a problem; money was short so 70 positions would have to go. The workers immediately put bans on.

Management had to cave in and find the cash, because the bans were well observed. So effective were the bans on correspondence, that the director's secretary had to personally deliver the message about the extra funds!

— Liz Ross

ABORTION rights are once again under attack. This time the scene is NSW, and the enemy is an unholy alliance of Nick Greiner's Liberals, the National Party, and the rightwing of the ALP.

A thousand Sydney women came to a public meeting on 25 July to hear about the proposed legal changes, and thousands more people marched through Sydney on 20 August in protest.

The first stage in the anti-abortion push was a "testing the water" motion put to the Legislative Council by Marie Bignold. This motion passed in early June with the casting vote of John Johnson, Chairman of the Legislative Council and part of the old Catholic Labor push. The motion condemned abortion, and called on the government to examine the adequacy of existing laws. It also called on the police to enforce those laws, which already make abortion a crime.

Marie Bignold's successful motion showed that the support was there in the upper house for Fred Nile's draft legislation. Nile's bill calls for a three-year jail sentence for women having abortions, or fines of up to \$20,000 for procurers of abortion. It also allows the father of the child to claim compensation if an abortion occurs without his written consent.

Guy Yeomans, the Liberal Member for Hurstville, is also known to be drafting legislation to restrict the criteria on which women can have an abortion and to confine it to hospitals. This bill may gain support because it looks moderate in comparison with Fred Nile's effort.

Abortion has never been legal in NSW. It remains a crime under the 1900 Crimes Act. But in 1971 a legal interpretation by Judge Levine made it available when a doctor determined that the pregnancy was a health risk to the mother.

This interpretation also made abortion available outside of hospitals, and easier to arrange. The new legislation would overrule the Levine ruling. The authorities would start looking for an opportunity to prosecute according to pre-1971 practice. Abortion clinics would find it very difficult to operate.

The 1971 ruling came at a time when working class struggle was reaching a peak, and the women's liberation movement was coming on the scene. All over the world, workers and socialists fought for free abortion on demand. In Paris in 1976, 50,000 women took to the streets to demand abortion

## Abortion: will NSW turn back the clock?



rights, shouting: "You don't beg for a right, you fight for it!"

Today times are harder. Workers are less confident about fighting and winning struggles. It's the sort of rightwing climate where the reactionary ideology of women's family role can take hold. The events in NSW are similar to what's happening overseas.

Canada got rid of an anti-abortion law in January 1988, but many provincial governments countered by removing medical fees coverage for abortion. A Canadian bill is also being debated which, like Nile's legislation in NSW, calls for imprisonment of women who have abortions.

cuts in hospital and health care.

In any case, making abortion illegal doesn't stop it, it just forces it underground. Around the world 200,000 women die of backyard abortions every year. A large proportion of female sterility is estimated to be caused by incompetent abortions.

These are the dark ages NSW politicians would like to take us back to. But a lot of angry women and men will fight them.

— Dorothy Morgan

### AIDS

## "More drugs, less thugs!"

THE BATTLE against AIDS is not an easy one in the oppressive states of Eastern Europe. Listen to Polish Solidarity activist Zofia Kuratowska, who as her country's leading immunologist is also part of the national AIDS Council in Warsaw:

"We are chronically underfunded. In my laboratory, people do not have gloves for protection, nor do all dentists. We have the highest incidence of hepatitis B in Europe because we have only 40 per cent of the disposable syringes that we require.

In most outpatient clinics they have syringes, Patients wanting to use disposable syringes must bring their own."

Every woman in the country has received a leaflet recommending the use of condoms, but Poland produces only 15-20 million per year for a population of 37.5 million. The quality is lousy, they frequently split, and they're so uncomfortable they're nicknamed "truncheons".

Last year a TV station showed an HIV-positive woman giving birth. After the program, her neighbours threw her out of her house and she disappeared. Cops have used AIDS as an excuse to raid premises where homosexuals live.

But Kuratowska is most worried about the fate of prostitutes. Although prostitution is illegal, regular prostitutes are tested by healthworkers and police. Amateurs, however, young boys and girls who sell themselves for hard currency out of alienation and poverty, are entirely on their own.

From this angle like so many others, Polish "socialism" turns out to be a lot like western others. Polish "socialism" turns out to be a lot like western others. Zofia Kuratowska is quite right when she argues that the solution lies in the struggle demanding health workers chanted in Warsaw last April: "More money for drugs, less for police thugs!"

— Anna Wilkenhaar

EVER SINCE 1917, events in Russia have fascinated Australian leftists. Mikhail Gorbachev and his reforms are no exception, and there are those who believe that his recent changes are replacing bureaucratic stalinist rule with genuine socialism.

But some recent Russian articles show that this is far from true. They show that Gorbachev is re-shaping the USSR in the interests of the ruling elite, and has no intention of changing basic power relations.

On 24 July, the weekly *Moscow News* ran a feature entitled "Buying your own place". The author, Vitaly Tretyakov, tells us that less than 30 percent of housing in the USSR is owned by individuals or co-ops. "The other 70 per cent is nationalized, that is, alienated from the 'owners'" he says.

Tretyakov touches openly upon what ordinary Russians have long known: placing something in the hands of the Soviet state does not make it the people's property. The state is the property of a bureaucratic ruling class, and is itself alienated from the supposed "owners" of the country.

He then goes on to discuss the drastic housing shortage which the Kremlin's Australian cheerleaders have always pretended doesn't exist. It is so bad, he says, that in Russia there is no freedom to choose your place of residence:

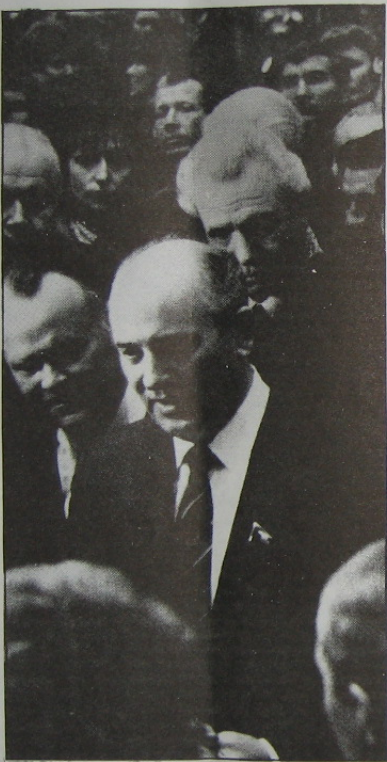
"Suppose I choose Leningrad. How can I live in a city where there are a lot of people queuing to rent a separate flat? ... Who would want to give me their place in the queue?"

TRETYAKOV comes to the conclusion that "free choice of residence is unrealistic without a free market of flats. As a first step towards this ... we need to be able to buy flats back from the state." He is ready for objections from socialists:

"Won't this give rise to a new form of social injustice where those with a lot of money will live in better flats than those with little? But then, is it socially unjust that those who work will have more money?"

Here we have the essence of "perestroika" (restructuring): Gorbachev is opening the way, John Howard-style, for unequal wages based on "who works well" and for the free market to supply a home of your own. It's the Aussie dream revisited! But just ask any worker in Sydney right now trying to buy a house in the face of soaring prices: a

## Gorbachev: reforms for the elite



Visiting a factory: only a pretence of democracy

free market in real estate can turn the dream into a nightmare.

The real beneficiaries of a free market in flats will not be workers, but those who can afford the resulting high prices: the bureaucrats and the better-placed intellectuals, including the people who write for *Moscow News*. In fact public opinion polls indicate the intellectuals are much more in favour of perestroika than the working class.

The elitist attitude of many

intellectuals was made clear by *Moscow News* correspondent Viktor Rozov: "A state of workers and peasants. Fine! But where has the intelligentia gone? Where has the 'brain' gone?"

Gorbachev is offering these relatively privileged intellectuals some added material benefits and a chance to feel important, and does not mind if their anti-working class prejudices get an airing.

**BUT WHAT** of the new "self-management" of industry? Surely that offers something to the workers? Not really. Two recent articles in *Pravda* show the limits of "democratisation".

On 17 July *Pravda* interviewed the Estonian Light Industry Minister about a big industrial combine which is adopting new management principles along perestroika lines. Individual enterprises within it — factories, construction firms, transport — will now elect managers. Within these enterprises the only legal political faction is the Communist Party. Nevertheless, you could imagine a dissident manager getting elected somewhere. But would they have any real power? No indeed. For in this industrial complex, says the Minister:

"The highest management organ will be the combine soviet. It will include leaders of enterprises, representatives of the State Planning Committees of the nation and the republic, representatives of the Soviet Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the State Committee of Supply."

The key decision-making body is packed with outside bureaucrats! The democracy is a fraud. The real purpose of self-management is to force workers within individual production units to bear the full responsibility for success or failure, without giving them real power.

**THE REAL power relations are made painfully clear** by *Pravda* of 28 July, in a report on Gorbachev's visit to the Zarya footwear producing combine. He talks to management and to the workers, exhorting them to new efforts and promoting his perestroika program. His full title is repeatedly used, his words are quoted at length, his presence dominates the entire article.

Supposedly there is an exchange of views with the workers, complaints and criticisms are raised, but the article is deliberately vague about them. Only one worker is quoted verbatim. Here is the entire quote:

**Voice from the hall:** "We are all for perestroika. We will do all that is necessary."

Some democracy! Gorbachev harangues the workers, and a crawler is found to shout encouragement from the audience.

Reports continue to filter out of the USSR about strikes against perestroika. The "voice from the hall" is far from representing the Russian workers. When their voice is finally heard, there will be some shocks in store for Gorbachev's Australian fans.

— Tom O'Leahy

## The fighting history of radical Jews

**ZIONISTS CLAIM** that theirs is the natural political movement of Jews. But there is another tradition, a working class and often socialist one, in which Jews have fought against exploitation and oppression.

The Jews of tsarist Russia suffered persecution, but were ahead of their Russian counterparts in trade union organisation. Jewish socialists were among the first in the Russian empire to respond to the growing working class movement. However, pogroms forced tens of thousands to flee by the turn of the century.

Many went to London, where they concentrated in the East End. There they competed for jobs amidst terrible slum conditions. But they had brought their fighting tradition with them. Socialists, trade unionists and anarchists flourished, and political and economic issues were interwoven.

For example a 1903 pogrom in Kishinev sparked a demonstration of 25,000. This in turn ignited protests against conditions in sweatshops. Next the Jewish Bakers Union struck for better hours and conditions and for loaves to carry a union label. Jewish housewives boycotted industrial bread, helping the strikers to win conditions years ahead of the English bakers.

There were frequent strikes around 1906, partly influenced by the revolution then occurring in Russia. In 1907 striking tailors imprisoned scabs in the



Clara Lemlich, a leader of New York's "Uprising of the 30,000".

union office, releasing them for a ransom which went to the strike fund.

During the dock strike of 1912, Jewish East Enders looked after 300 dockers' children, a debt the dockers carried to the fight against anti-semitism at Cable Street 24 years later.

The anarchists played an important role in those turbulent years, led by Rudolf Rocker, a German gentile who had thrown in his lot with the Jewish workers. They led strikes, held political discussions and had cultural activities.

**JEWISH immigrants in the USA established a community in New York's lower East Side. Again they brought with them their fighting tradition.**

In 1902 Jewish women protesting price rises marched on kosher butchers and burnt the meat. According to one

newspaper:

"Women leaders laughed at the fear of the men in doing damage. Women shook their fists in the faces of policemen and tore off their shawls and buttons from their coats."

In the years between 1909 and 1926, thousands of workers in the New York needle trades fought against Dickensian conditions. The official trade unions ignored them or worse: as migrants as unskilled labour, and as a largely female group of workers they were considered unorganisable. But they proved otherwise in the "Uprising of the 30,000" in 1909.

This was the first mass strike of its kind. The picketers, the majority young Jewish women, lasted 13 weeks, despite being told by magistrates, "You are on strike against God!"

In the 1920's the furriers' union was riddled with gangsterism. At a meeting to decide on a new contract the president announced, "Whoever asks questions tonight will pay for it with his blood". Ben Gold, a Jewish radical activist dared and was stabbed and beaten in the open meeting. Despite requiring 11 stitches he was arrested for assault.

However he managed to lead 10,000 furriers, the majority Jewish, in a successful 17 week strike in 1926.

**LONDON'S East End again in 1935 when the Jewish population became a target for British fascists.**

In a political climate where fascists freely proclaimed their hate propaganda but protesters



Jewish strikers rally: Zionism is not the only important political tradition among Jews

were arrested for insulting behaviour, the British nazis announced a provocative march through the East End. The Communists and the Industrial Labour Party called on workers to prevent it, and were joined by a number of Jewish organisations. 250,000 people rallied to stop the fascist demonstration. Centred on Cable Street, the anti-nazi confrontations with police eventually forced the government to ban Mosley's march. Mass confrontation was followed up by the Communists with political organising to win misguided workers away from nazi influence, and British fascism never fully recovered.

But on the continent fascism was on the march. Hitler invaded Poland, and forced 500,000 Jews into the Warsaw ghetto in 1940.

**INSIDE, up to 13 people per room lived on starvation rations. Illegal work and food smuggling were needed for bare survival, and underground resistance groups tried to prepare for military defence.**

But largely due to poor relations with the Polish Underground, the ghetto resistance groups could get no arms before July 1942 when mass deportations to concentration camps started. They still had pitifully few arms when the next round of deportations began in January 1943. Still they fought for four days, the first street fighting in occupied Poland, and their resistance was successful. World War II resistance became a target for British fascists.

In a political climate where fascists freely proclaimed their hate propaganda but protesters even tanks and artillery were unable to defeat the ghetto militia, who fought with the desperation of people who have nothing to lose. The rising lasted 6 weeks, and only ended when the Germans burnt the entire quarter down.

The Warsaw Ghetto uprising was the largest battle in occupied Europe to that point (except in Yugoslavia). It had a great impact on the Polish population and on Jews everywhere.

Today, the Palestinians are fighting a similar battle. The Zionists would have us think that Jewish national traditions are on the side of the Israeli oppressors. But from the Jewish socialists of Russia to the Warsaw Ghetto, history tells us a very different story.

— Janey Stone

# The two souls of Socialism

**KING GEORGE V** is said to have remarked, "We're all socialists now." Since then, lots of other people have used the term.

The Labor Party has a socialist objective, buried away somewhere and dusted off occasionally for May Day speeches. But actual Labor governments operate at the existing system, usually at our expense.

Countries such as Russia and China claim to be socialist, having placed industry in the hands of the state and got rid of blood-sucking capitalists (though they are starting to backslide on that now). But instead of the old bourgeoisie, a new class of bureaucrats rules.

Then there is Israel, whose Labor Party claims to be building socialism while making life hell for the Palestinians. There is Burma, whose "socialist" rulers preside over one of the most stagnant economies in the world. Even Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew adhered to the "Socialist International" until they kicked him out.

Capitalism is so bankrupt that governments of many types choose to wrap themselves in the red flag. But to understand politics we have to look beyond the wrappings.

**WHAT DO all these regimes have in common? Two features. One is the notion that socialism amounts to the state intervening to shape or re-shape the economy. Until recently, there was a world-wide trend to increase state intervention in economic affairs which affected even such bastions of "free enterprise" as the United States. Many people imagined this was socialism on the march.**

The other feature common to people as apparently different as Swedish social democrats and the dictators running Poland, is the belief that social change has to be brought to the people by a benevolent elite.

This ruling group, sometimes in the form of a party, is supposed to gain control of the state, maybe nationalise industry, and then hand down the new society to a grateful working class. In the words of China's Chairman Mao, they aspire to "serve the people". But in the meantime they establish a firm grip on



Socialism from above or below? Hungarian workers show their preference in 1956.

power, and usually get rich in the process.

This idea of socialism as a state-run society, controlled by an elite, is as old as ancient Greece. Philosophers from Plato to Hegel have dreamt of a planned society which would be free of conflicts and confusions. Invariably they have wanted people like themselves to be put in charge.

Such theories are very handy for tyrants who need a political veneer for their political ambitions.

**FORTUNATELY**, there has been plenty of resistance to tyrants throughout history. From Spartacus and his rebel slaves, to the peasant revolt of Wat Tyler and on to the working class struggles of the modern age, the common people have developed their own tradition of democratic mass struggle.

But it was only with the rise of the modern working class that it became possible to combined the best of both traditions: to merge the socialist aspiration for a harmonious society with the democratic tradition of mass struggle from below.

The thinker who perfected the combination was Karl Marx. Marx argued that the working class, because it learnt cooperation within the process of pro-

duction, could combine radical democracy with a socialist program. This was the real meaning of that much-misunderstood phrase, the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

As if in anticipation of the monstrous so-called "Communist" regimes of our time, Marx wrote: "We are not among those Communists who wish to turn the world into one gigantic barracks." Against the notion that a small elite should rule for the people, he insisted: "The emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers alone."

**IN THE Communist Manifesto** he described how the workers could emancipate themselves. He did not start, as you might imagine, with state ownership of industry. He wrote: "The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy."

For Marx, the key issue was workers' political power. And as for state-owned industry: "The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state, that is, of the proletariat organised as the ruling class."

The workers must place industry in the hands of the state.

But it is their state. The state is nothing more or less than "the proletariat organised as the ruling class."

These ideas were buried by the high priests of European socialism after Marx's death. Lenin fought to revive them, to create a society where "every cock shall govern." Yet as the Russian revolution he led became isolated, he was followed by Stalin, who represented the very opposite of workers' democracy. The system created by Stalin has been challenged in turn by the workers of Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and by Polish Solidarity. Genuine Marxists have looked to these struggles for inspiration.

To put it in a nutshell, there are two souls of socialism. The ideas of revolutionary socialism from below are in constant and bitter conflict with the Laborite and stalinist ideas of socialism from above.

**Socialist Action** stands with the revolutionaries, with Marx and Lenin. At a time when the Russian rulers are owning up to a history of oppression, and when the Australian Labor government is betraying its working class supporters, nothing could be more timely than our alternative: socialism as the self-emancipation of the working class.

— Tom O'Lincoln

**IF YOU'D** thought American workers couldn't be as militant as trade unionists anywhere else, the film *Matewan* will come as a surprise.

It's set in West Virginia in 1920. Matewan is an isolated mining village with a population of only a few hundred. It's a company town where both the price of coal per ton (the standard for setting wages) and all goods and services are controlled by the mineowners.

It's the sort of town that inspired the song, "I sold my soul to the company store."

The company itself is a distant but immensely powerful force: take the scene where the company's works manager informs scab labourers that they have to buy their tools at the company store. One of the black strike breakers questions this and is met with the cold and threatening question, "What's your name, son?"

As the film opens, the workers are already beginning to fight back. The company has been raising store prices whilst lowering the price of coal. The miners have walked out, and scab or "fink" labour has been called in. Joe Kenehan of the United Mine Workers is invited into town to organise the struggle along union lines.

But the workers are often more interested in guns than the finer points of union organising, and are full of racial prejudices against the "dagos" and "niggers" who are being used as strikebreakers, rather than recognising that they too are victims of the company.

Joe is right to argue for a longer-term strategy to organise a shut-down of all the company's mines. The dangers in a "military" response to the company are embodied by a local store-owner, C.E. Lively, who says "union is fine for some things, but sometimes you got to go it alone," and encourages plans to dynamite the mines and to use guns against the scabs. He is exposed in the end as a company spy.

But when the company begins to use "dirty" tactics and miners are killed, the film also shows that life isn't simple: how far can the strikers get without a violent response? So the film spirals, inevitably and tragically, toward a "high noon" style bloody resolution.

The film's greatest weakness is that it doesn't show the social background of the times; there was immense strike action taking place in the United States in 1919-21. 365,000 steelworkers struck in fifty American cities.



Workers leave the mine as company thugs look on

## The fighting miners of Matewan

The employer response was a massive "red scare." Employer spokesman John Kirby declared that the union movement was "an un-American, illegal and in-famous conspiracy" and Attorney General Palmer agreed. On 2 January 1920, 10,000 workers were jailed in the infamous "Palmer raids."

Nor does *Matewan* accurately portray the more immediate political context: at no stage are the federal troops shown intervening to quell "civil disobedience" as happened in the real-life conflict.

But the local scene is rendered convincingly, with some memorable characters. These include a pair of extremely nasty company officials, and Director John

## Fast cars, good politics

"Don't you know they're talking 'bout a revolution."

WITH a first line like that, and great music to boot, Tracy Chapman's debut album stands out as something special.

Her voice is rich and soulful, her songs simple and moving. What especially brings them to life is her deep sense of identity as a woman, a black and a worker.

In "Mountains o' things" for example, she dreams of wealth. But she knows full well that she is one of many who haven't got it — and why.

Sweet lady life,  
Champagne and caviar,  
Hope you come and find me  
Cause you know who we are,  
Those who deserve the best in life

And know what money's worth,  
And those whose sole misfortune  
Was having mountains  
o' nothing at birth.

There is an ironic dig at those who scold workers for their "materialism":

Oh they tell me,  
There's still time to save my soul.

They tell me,  
Renounce all,  
Renounce all those material things you gained by  
Exploiting other human beings."

Most of the songs are good; the single "Fast car" is a masterpiece. "Fast car" shows there's nothing specifically masculine about Bruce Springsteen's "born to run" themes.

You got a fast car  
I got a plan to get us out of here  
Been working at a convenience store  
Managed to save just a little bit of money.

But it does it without denying the oppression working women face.

You got a fast car  
I got a job that pays all our bills  
You stay out drinking late at the bar

See more of your friends than you do of your kids  
It's not up to singers to give us a political program. But songs can convey a feeling for the world, and for the urgency and possibility of changing it. Tracy Chapman's songs do this — with style.

— Robert Stairway

# Howard plays the racist card

**MOVE over, Bruce Ruxton. Now the big boys want to play in the cess-pit of racial politics.**

John Howard's announcement that his immigration policy won't be "totally non-discriminatory," and the Nationals' demand that "Asian immigration has to be slowed" marked an ugly lurch rightward in Australian public debate.

With Labor stealing his platform, Howard wants an issue to campaign on. Liberal polls say there is still a vein of White Australia racism to be mined, and Howard is digging for it.

He is using the lime-worm excuse that our "social cohesion" is under threat. Geoffrey Blainey first ran this line four and a half years ago. Yet despite his attempt at self-fulfilling prophecy (usually the easiest kind) we have seen no race riots or serious anti-Asian mobilization. The only threat to social cohesion has been from Blainey's own fans, as morons like Ron Casey and Nancy Wake crudely try to kick-start the race issue back to life.

That fact does not worry John Howard. He says that multiculturalism has been "hijacked" and puts forward a slogan: "One Australia." Anti-Asian letter-writers to the press have taken this up with glee, while in South East Asia it has rightly been dubbed the "One White Australia" policy.

The slogan is of course chauvinist drivel. The implication, that multiculturalism and Asians have divided society, is nonsense. On the contrary, Australia is a far more interesting place now than it was under the sterile, racist and sexist WASP culture that dominated until the 1960s.

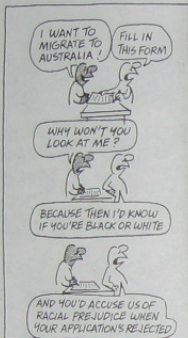
Australia is divided, but by class, not race. The country belongs to a tiny minority, the Alan Bonds and Kerry Packers, and both Liberal and Labor are at one about widening the gap between them and the rest of us. "One Australia" is just a cynical hoax to get us to salute their flag, instead of identifying with the oppressed of Asia and other continents.

**HOWARD'S attempt to play the racist card highlights several things.**

One is the swinish hypocrisy of the Liberals. Twenty years ago, they claimed to be saving Indo-China from "Communism" (ie saving it for even nastier US puppets). Now that some Indo-

Chinese want to get away from that "Communism" and the legacy of poverty that the West has left them, the Liberals don't want to know them.

Another is the degree to which Labor has moved political debate



to the right. Four years ago, when Blainey was in full cry, the Liberals didn't dare go near him, in today's climate, Howard has no such qualms.

Indeed, Labor is doing covertly what Howard wants to do in the open. On June 1 it unilaterally cut the number of Indo-Chinese refugees, and raised the pass mark for the immigration points test, cutting out migrants whose trade qualifications are not "immediately recognisable" here (ie mostly Asians, Latin Americans and South Europeans). It made the cost of even inquiring about migration to Australia prohibitive for many Third World applicants.

Finally, there is the disgusting selfishness that dominates the debate. Howard, Hawke, the Fitzgerald Inquiry — all want more business and skilled migration as a quick fix for Australian bosses' past failure to invest or train workers, and never mind the drain on Third World countries. All want to cut refugee intakes, which is an area of real human need. Even Howard's critics in the Liberal Party worry mainly about the effect on votes or, like the Confederation of Australian Industry, on investment from Asia.

For socialists, however, human needs come first. When people uproot themselves because of oppression, war, poverty or family break-up, we say — let them in. A recent economic study found that even quadrupling Australia's migrant intake to 500,000 annually would have a negligible impact on standards of living. There is simply no excuse, apart from prejudice, for keeping people out.

**ONE** sidelight to the debate has been the citizenship question.

The Fitzgerald Inquiry suggested withholding social security benefits from the one million non-citizens eligible to take out citizenship. John Howard has flirted with the idea, while Hawke — perhaps sensitive to the fact that 60 percent of such people are British or Irish — is launching a citizenship drive instead.

But why should non-citizens have benefits withheld, or be pressured at all? They work, they pay taxes, they get ripped off by employers like the rest of us. Citizenship is little more than the right to vote for two near-identical parties, and to hold an Aussie passport. You earn it by no other skill than being born here, or living here for a few years. All it really denotes is "loyalty" to Australia — that is, to this patch of capitalist-owned earth rather than some other.

As Karl Marx so admirably put it, "The working class has no country." Citizenship is a worthless institution, and we should brook no discrimination against those who can't be bothered with it.

**A FURTHER** sidelight is the question of Japanese investment.

This is mainly vexing the middle class, according to some survey evidence. The *Bulletin* ran a nasty front page some time back showing a pair of chopsticks lifting out a piece of suburbia, and 1500 chauvinists met on the Gold Coast to protest about a Japanese "buy-up".

Even if such claims had substance, one is inclined to ask, "So what?" The right-wingers who are whingeing are the same ones who



Naturalisation ceremony: who cares if people don't bother with it?

Seeing  
Red!  
with Alec Kahn

tell us how wonderful competition is. They can hardly complain if Japan wins that competition (or are they only for competition that they win?)

The truth, though, is that Japanese investment is not so large. In 1986-87 it was 17 percent of total foreign investment in Australia, ranking third behind the US and New Zealand. (Our racists never talk about the Kiwi menace!) It has almost certainly grown in 1987-88 but it is far from dominant.

A Queensland survey by consultants Richard Ellis found that only on the Gold Coast, and then only in the hotel industry is there significant Japanese ownership (16 percent of hotel-motel rooms, and 41 per cent of rooms in major hotels). Gold Coast offices and shops, Brisbane offices, shops, hotels and industrial sites — each category has only 1 to 6 per cent Japanese investment. Some take-over!

The properties that Japanese investors buy are all available on the open market. Why don't Aussie investors buy them? Partly because they want quicker returns than tourist development offers ... and partly because, like Alan Bond in Chile, they're after bigger killings overseas.

**Capitalists are capitalists whatever their nationality, and our main exploiters remain the homegrown variety by far.**

**SOCIALIST**



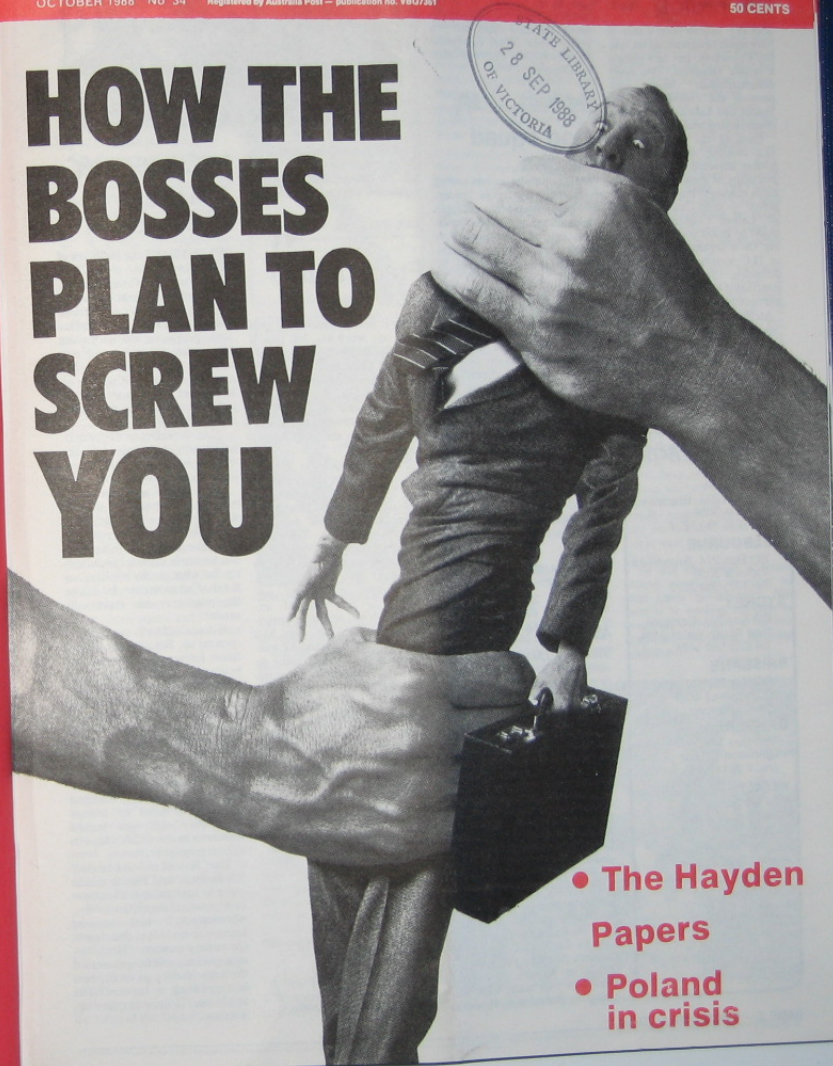
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# HOW THE BOSSSES PLAN TO SCREW YOU



- The Hayden Papers
- Poland in crisis



## CAT'S EYE

RON CASEY

### Racists off the radio!

RACIST moron Ron Casey is once again broadcasting on Sydney's airwaves. But he's getting a hostile reception. Two noisy demonstrations have condemned the executive of the Trades and Labour Council for re-employing him on radio 2KY.

Each of the rallies outside TLC meetings on 1 and 8 September attracted over 100 people, many of them carrying placards reading "Implement TLC policy — sack Casey". Chants of "Labour Council sells out" could be heard inside the meeting. On 8 September the speech of TLC secretary John McBean defending the decision was interrupted by derisive hoots and jeers.

McBean's claim that Casey "sticks up for the battlers" led to a sustained chant of "bullshit" and quite a few TLC delegates agreed. Academic Staff delegate Meredith Burgmann spoke after McBean and called for Casey to be sacked. She pointed out that

he was not only a racist but an outspoken advocate of sexual harassment of women workers.

On paper, the TLC has a fine anti-racist policy. "Racism is dangerous because it divides workers," says the pious document. But how much use is a policy when bigots can be found the airways on a TLC-controlled radio station?

### GAY RIGHTS

### God squad fizzles

WHILE Ron Casey was getting a hostile reception in Sydney, Brisbane supporters of gay rights including Socialist Action members were preparing an equally hot reception for the anti-homosexual gospel of Sy Rogers.

Sy Rogers, an ex-gay and now an evangelist attempts to convince people that homosexuality is "sinful" so they ought to go straight and join a Christian group. In an interview with the *Courier Mail* he suggested homosexuality was a disease.

Confronted with picketers waving placards and chanting, Rogers tried to distance himself from open bigotry, but he was fooling no one and his speech was met with a constant barrage of heckles. We did a much better job of getting our message across, gays are out, proud and fighting in Brisbane.

### POLITICIANS

### Wake them when it's over

THE WORLD is led by capable statesmen, we are often told. Suggestions that the working class could run society better come up against objections, even from workers, that special talents are needed to govern.

But what have we heard in the last month? Ronald Reagan's aides apparently contemplated removing him from office on the grounds that he was incapable of performing his duties. He was so apathetic that he refused to come to work, and all he wanted to do was watch movies.

Meanwhile in the other superpower, it emerges that Leonid Brezhnev was "clinically dead" in 1976, and after being revived had to be helped around by minders. According to a feature article in *Moscow News*, "he ceased to understand what was going on around him. However



Gorbachev hold the applause.

there were many influential, immoral and corrupt people among his entourage. They literally supported him on their arms."

### TAX EVASION

### Fraud squad dawdles

WE'VE always known the rich don't pay much tax, but now it looks like a few big business tax dodgers will actually be chased up. Richard Highfield, a Senior Assistant Tax Commissioner has announced that "The Tax Office has shifted its major audit emphasis to the large corporate sector."

In one operation the Tax Office followed the transfer of \$1 billion from Australian companies to a firm called "European Business Consultants" based in Monaco. Grundy Television, maker of popular TV soaps, is being investigated for transfer pricing.

Australia's pride and joy, Expo, has not escaped unscathed. Nine major construction firms were hit with \$18 million in tax bills and \$7 million in penalties, for failing to meet their obligations under the Prescribed Payments System.

But don't get too hopeful about the crackdown. This is still capitalism, and the Tax Office efforts are too little too late. Officials say that they became aware of a problem with profit shifting to dodge tax ten years ago, but only began looking seriously at it in the last 12 months.



"Everyone to the tax shelter!"

### STATE CAPITALISM

### What an eye-opener!

FOR YEARS the hallmark of Eastern bloc and Third World "socialism" was economic self-sufficiency, an idea made popular by Stalin's industrialisation of Russia. Even today some people on the Australian left pursue the mirage of economic "independence" but overseas they are all waking up to the fact that a modern economy has to relate to the rest of the world.

Alas, the rulers of the "socialist" countries are merely using this insight to arrive at new reactionary conclusions.

Take Fidel Castro. He is refusing to countenance the reforms going on in Russia and China, but even he is trying to woo foreign tourists. Like Russia, he needs the foreign currency. But what are the implications for the Cuban masses, for whom the revolution was supposedly made?

Havana's hotels are being spruced up. But he's only for affluent foreigners. "Only a petit-bourgeois dandy," says Fidel, "would fail to understand why Cubans can't use those rooms."

The same thing is happening with proposed new hard-currency chemist shops in Moscow. Russian workers won't be able to buy drugs there, no matter how urgently they are needed. And *Pravda* of 9 August reported on how the foreign bourgeoisie will get special treatment at the USSR's famous eye surgery facilities.

The "hero of socialist labour" CN Fedorov told *Pravda* that in order to earn more hard currency his medical organisation "Eye Microsurgery" had secured loans to build first class hotels for visiting patients. "Here, foreign patients will be guaranteed the same service as in the best hotels of Paris or London." The locals can continue to queue up, it seems.

## VICTORIAN ELECTIONS

# Libs can't change the mark of Cain



Jeff Kennett: Labor steals Libs' thunder



John Cain: attacked workers

VICTORIA. It's a lovely place to visit but you wouldn't want to have an election here. The last few weeks have been even duller than the 1985 campaign.

On the one hand, there is Labor Premier John Cain, who has carefully and successfully presented himself as an average sort of bloke who we can trust to lead us through the choppy waters of the big bad world economy. If he has any actual policies he has kept them a secret, and we haven't seen much of his unlovely cabinet colleagues like Steve Crabb or Tom Roper.

Probably his strongest point is his promise to boost child care. But he's only doing that to help meet the labor force needs of the employers.

Against him we have Jeff Kennett, whose record of putting his foot in his mouth leads his minders to keep him well out of harm's way. Not that he'd have much to say just about everything the Liberals want to do, Labor has done already.

Kennett talks about selling off public housing, but it's Labor who have allowed public housing waiting lists to reach 35,000. The Liberal plan for massive cutbacks in the railways would only be a logical continuation of the ALP's drive to eliminate guards from trains, and its removal of the St Kilda and Port Melbourne lines.

JOHN CAIN has pointed proudly to Victoria's unemployment rate, lowest in the country for five years running. He crowns about higher than average economic growth and investment.

He has a point. But he is careful to gloss over the other trends that led him to call an early election in the first place. A noticeable slowdown in employment growth, capital expenditure, and retail sales all point to real economic problems in the not too distant future.

Much of the state's impressive performance over the past six years has resulted from the world-wide economic recovery. Victoria's economy is based on manufacturing. World trade in manufactures is growing, and pushing prices up. The decline in the value of the Australian dollar

Rather than continuing the handouts to business, Labor set out to help them take up the opportunities for investment that the recovery offered. The government's share of investible funds declined. By reforming the workers' compensation system Labor saved losses \$600 million a year in premiums.

Government funds flowed to firms and industries that were prepared to upgrade their technology or to seek export markets. The Victorian Economic Development Corporation was launched.

More recently, the Cain regime granted tax exemptions to export industries and established an overseas trading Corporation. An annual cut of 1.5 percent in basic budgets for government departments (dressed up as restructuring and efficiency) showed business that Labor was serious about attacking its own employees.

Right from the start, Labor in power has been ruthless in its attacks on workers. The Victorian party was in the forefront of the assault on the BLF, jailing Norm Gallagher, pushing deregistration legislation through, unleashing cops on picket lines and finally raiding the BLF offices.

RAILWAY workers have been attacked again and again, faced with the threat of mass sackings and forced to strike repeatedly to defend both their working conditions and the service they provide.

Naturally someone had to pay for this. Naturally it was ordinary workers and their families. Year after year Cain's treasurer, the mis-named Mr Jolly, slashed away at government spending on education, health and public transport.

Naturally someone had to pay for this. Naturally it was ordinary workers and their families. Year after year Cain's treasurer, the mis-named Mr Jolly, slashed away at government spending on education, health and public transport.

AND THEN, as the economic recovery got settled in, the government turned around.

At times they have found themselves fighting alongside local residents and people with disabilities, as the government sought to ram the hated light rail project down the throats of people in the bayside suburbs.

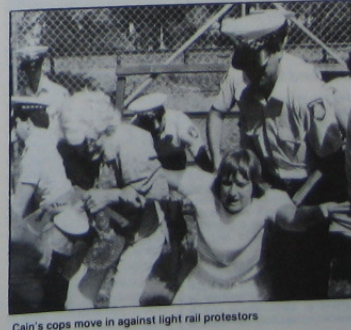
Recently, library workers at the State Library and staff at the Ministry of Housing have taken action to protect themselves.

Given this history, Victorian workers have little reason to care about the election result. How much worse could Jeff Kennett and the Liberals be? But the advantage of having the ALP in power is that it gives us daily proof of the need to create a socialist alternative.

And some of the protest campaigns have been useful, including those of two activists from the light rail struggle: Anne Fahy in Port Melbourne and John Kirby in Williamstown.

But these are about the only reasons workers have to vote in elections nowadays. So how you actually vote is really a secondary issue. Much more important is what we devote our energies to.

No one who wants a better society should be working to elect Labor governments. We need to be working full time to create an alternative to the two-track-comic parties of decaying capitalism. — Graham Willett



Cain's cops move in against light rail protestors

Best seller

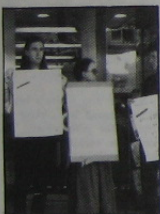
OUR LAST issue, with its uncompromising headline: *Asians are welcome here, sold exceptionally well* around the country. The issue aroused interest and sometimes arguments on street corners, at markets and in workplaces. Inevitably we encountered a few racist idiots, but they were far outweighed by the people who rallied to our support.

Often our editors have major debates about what front page will best touch on the key issue of the moment in different parts of the country, but it was easy last time.

Picket duty

SOCIALIST Action members in Melbourne and Sydney have been supporting the picket lines at Hoyts Cinemas.

We have been joined in this solidarity work by others on the left and in the unions, including Melbourne's Defend the Unions Committee. Militants from around the unions organised a barbecue right in Bourke Street. A small socialist organisation can't have a decisive impact on victory or defeat in an industrial dispute. But apart from doing our bit to boost morale, our involvement has a political value: it's an opportunity to talk to our fellow workers about political issues, and to get a feel for the state of the class struggle.



Above: Brisbane Socialist Action pickets the Victorian tourist bureau after 1987 BLF raid.

Sun and fun

PREPARATIONS have begun for the fourth annual Socialist Action summer camp, which is to be held near Canberra over the New Year week-end. The camp includes our Conference, which will consider the work of our members in different cities, including activity on campus and in unions. Those discussions will be preceded by a summary of Australian politics and the class struggle today.

But it's not all hard work. We'll hear a number of educational talks, sing loudly and not always in tune, and play games of cricket or cards where skill is less important than enthusiasm.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# Toxic shock for WA

THEY CALL it "Waste Australia" and activists opposed to the development of the toxic waste industry in Western Australia are facing an uphill battle against it.

There are several developments, but probably the most important is the integrated hazardous waste unit which the WA government plans to build in the Kalgoorlie area.

The Environmental Protection Authority have recently cleared three sites, despite opposition from local residents. The unit will burn pesticides, releasing poisonous dioxin into the atmosphere. It will also burn PCBs although there are now safer chemical ways of disposing of them.

In addition, radioactive wastes are to be buried in shallow trenches, although the area is subject to erosion and seepage, and maintenance will be needed over the thousands of years the radio-activity remains.

The WA government is legislating to restrict waste disposal to what's generated in that state. But already there have been calls for the unit to accept some from Sydney's Lucas Heights nuclear reactor. There is also likely to be pressure to accept it from overseas.

Even the WA waste will have to be transported by rail through Perth. In a recent derailment on the line that will be used, the train ended up in a river. It could have been carrying something dangerous.

Much of the toxic waste to be disposed of in Kalgoorlie will come from a rare earth plant to be built by French owned company Rhone Poulenc (RP) at Pinjarra. Locals there have also formed an action group, focusing on the large quantities of radioactive waste to be left on the site in tailings dams.

RP has increased its profits in recent years by cutting staff while pushing production. Its safety record is very poor and there has been public pressure on the company in France and the USA over its pollution record.

Local residents also object that this company is continuing the French policy of subjecting people in the Pacific to the consequences of France's nuclear program.

In another potentially hazardous move, there are plans to build a petrochemical plant in Kwinana next to Perth. This

COURSE I'M A FRIEND OF THE EARTH I OWN MOST OF IT!



plant will produce vinyl chloride monomer, a product which is banned in many overseas countries. It is highly inflammable, and once ablaze, the fire is practically inextinguishable. What's more, when on fire it produces phosgene, the First World War mustard gas.

Dangerous wastes from Kwinana would also be transported to the integrated facility in Kalgoorlie.

A number of local groups have now formed a statewide network to co-ordinate action on these issues. They've organised public meetings, letters to newspapers, petitions, submissions to the EPA and the production of a newsletter, *Hazardous Fields*.

The next step is to field candidates in marginal electorates for the forthcoming election. While this will help stimulate public debate, the problem is that if the Liberals are elected they will undoubtedly proceed with the current proposals and at an even faster rate.

The WA Labor government has accused the action groups of promoting a "campaign of fear" and "whipping up hysteria". They claim that the government can manage toxic waste disposal and stringently apply safety standards. Yet a few years ago a WA government enquiry into ra-

diation protection practices in the mineral sands industry found a very poor record of radiation safety, which has still not been fixed.

The Western Australian government has been rocked by scandals exposing its close links with big business. But Dowling and Co think they're fairly safe in the current proposals, since most of the proposed development will be in remote areas, with little electoral clout.

— Graeme Haynes

NEW RIGHT



## Red face on red scare

"VARIOUS newspaper reports ... attributed comments to me suggesting that ... Mr David Parker and ... Mr Peter Dowling had trained in the Soviet Union."

So began an ad inserted in the *Western Australian* by Charles Copeman, apologising for any such suggestions. Given the disgraceful role played by these and other WA Labor Ministers, we suspect an apology to *Gorbachev* might be more appropriate.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

# Has Keating fixed the profit slump?

long decline from the late 1960s onward. The same pattern emerged overseas.

The rate of profit had revived somewhat because of wage cutting from 1982 onwards, we argued, but was still at historically low levels. But with low profit rates, the bosses won't invest. We had statistics from the employers themselves to prove all this.

## HAS PAUL Keating got the Australian economy on the road to recovery?

It might seem like it. Economic growth has improved though it's still nothing to write home about, inflation is gradually coming down, investment is finally picking up. Keating crows that his stern policies were really for our good.

Of course, our living standards have suffered but he can always say that will be made good later on. Socialists have to have an answer.

Two years ago we had an analysis of why the economy was in crisis. We pointed out that the collapse in commodity prices which drove the Australian dollar down was simply a symptom of a bigger problem: that the demand for the minerals and agricultural products Australia exports was in long-term decline.

To re-gear the economy to export manufactured goods, new investment was needed, but it wasn't happening.

The reason it wasn't happening brought us to a key part of Marxist economic theory. Karl Marx argued that a prolonged expansion of the capitalist system, by causing widespread automation, led eventually to a declining rate of profit. This is because only living labour can create new values, and profits are derived from new values.

We could show how the post-war boom had indeed made Australian capitalism far more capital intensive, and how the rate of profit had gone through a

**BUT NOW** there are new statistics, from the Economic Planning Advisory Council, which show the rate of profit has continued to rise in recent times. It is still not back to where it was in the 1960s, but it's high enough that investment is finally starting to pick up, and surveys indicate it will continue to grow. Here, too, overseas trends are broadly similar.

Were we wrong? Is Marx disproved? Well, Marx did say that the falling rate of profit was only a "tendency" and that there could be "countervailing tendencies". But the countervailing tendencies should not just be a handy cop-out for socialists true. We halcyons don't come whose predictions don't come just how far they can go.

Firstly, the wage cutting begun under Malcolm Fraser's wage freeze and continued under Labor is pretty significant. Lenin remarked many years ago that it would be wrong to ever say "there is no way out" of capitalist crisis. There was always a way out, he said, if workers were prepared to pay the price. And pay we have.

In addition, speed-up and worsened conditions generally



Car assembly at GM: the bosses are finally investing

due to second-tier trade offs have helped profits recover. But neither wage cuts nor speed-up are sufficient explanation.

**A FURTHER** boost to profitability has come from the dramatic revival in commodity prices, especially for agricultural products like wool.

The figures show that the biggest profit recovery is in the rural sector. Prices received by rural employers last year rose by 17 percent. Meanwhile their wage costs rose by a miserly 4%.

Finally, it appears that Australian industry has become less capital intensive. Partly this is the result of the 1982 recession.

One consequence of recessions is that they help revive profit rates by "destroying" capital. This means that some firms get their bust, and others can buy up their bust and stocks of materials on the cheap. In dollar terms, therefore, the ratio of capital to labour falls.

This trend has been pushed along by another development: the fall in the Australian dollar has made it easier to export. Until recently, to the government's frustration, firms didn't respond with new investment. Rather they have used their export capacity more fully. In some industries this has gone so far that they are now stretched very tight.

Even in the short term, there will be plenty of problems for the working class. The government is nervous about the revival in the domestic economy, especially in housing. It fears too

without using more capital: another way in which industry becomes less capital intensive. Some industries where this trend is particularly marked are various metal products; chemicals and textiles, clothing and footwear.

Just as Marx argued that making the system more capital intensive depressed profit rates, making it less so will revive them.

We can now see that Marx's theoretical approach does explain the mild recovery of our economy.

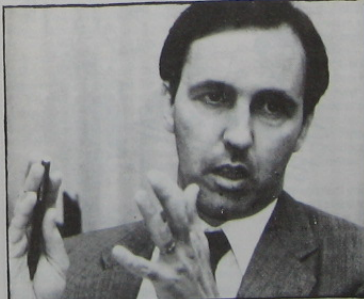
## SO WHAT happens now? Can it go on and on? This is unlikely.

In the short run, commodity prices will probably remain strong, investment will flow through into economic growth and more jobs, and Keating may be looking pretty good around election time.

Eventually, the long-term trend will be for weaker commodity markets. This is because the key industrial economies are finding ways to use less raw materials.

And revived investment, by making Australia more capital intensive, will once again put downward pressure on the rate of profit.

Even in the short term, there will be plenty of problems for the working class. The government is nervous about the revival in the domestic economy, especially in housing. It fears too



Paul Keating: too soon to crow

So they're using more labour



Unionists rally for higher pay; women workers stage a hunger strike. Japanese unions are fighting an uphill battle against clever management techniques.

## How they mauled Japan's unions

Australian employers are using new management techniques. Our feature looks at their frightening implications.

taylor-made motto: "Those who truly love their union love their company."

Back pay was the sweetener for those who would accept it. The militant union was smashed.

**MANAGEMENT** now set about restructuring the workforce, as part of its gorilla rationalisation plans.

In the late 1950s the steel bosses phased out old-style foremen who had been part of the shopfloor workteam and belonged to the union, replacing them with a "work-chief" (*sgyocho*) who was management's agent on the shop floor. This atomized workers and placed them individually under the control of management.

New technical processes drastically reduced the size of the workforce on the shop floor. They were required to possess basic scientific and mathematical knowledge in the union, replacing them with a specific trade. Once the workers became multi-functional, they were moved constantly to meet production requirements.

This meant that shopfloor-based worker solidarity was further undermined. Centralisation of production by computerisation also helped reduce the power of shop-floor unionism.

Management collected data about moods in the workplace and reacted to wage demands with a "one shot reply" which short-circuited union structures. They replaced established seniority wage system with hierarchically structured ranks and wage scales, in which a seniority wage was combined with an efficiency wage, both subject to evaluation.

Today there is a hierarchy of subcontractors fanning out from around the major corporations, which further divides the workforce. Workers in the first level of subcontractors earn 74 percent of wages earned in the corporation. The second level subcontract workers earn 60 percent. In the third level, they get 50 percent.

Regular employees, if they are competitive, are promoted. Sub-contract workers remain marginalized. This segregation shields capital from the threat of workers uniting.

Recently, employers have been pushing the "flexible time system" under which working hours are calculated over a week instead of a day. So you might work 6 hours one day and 10 the next, at ordinary rates of pay. This is a disaster for women with childcare responsibilities.

In the face of union demands for shorter hours, the bosses have come up with the Working Hour Act, which is supposed to reduce hours of work from 48 per week to 40. But there's a catch. It's up to the Ministry of Labour to say when a firm must reduce its hours. Small and medium sized firms can refuse, and big firms already work 40 hours. The firms that cause the problem are the ones who get let off the hook!

**OF COURSE** Japanese workers have often fought back. The *Shunto* Spring Labour Offensive became famous after its inception in 1955. The Offensive sets its wages and conditions of about 80 percent of trade unions, and also serves as a benchmark for public sector workers (under a no-strike clause).

But while the *Shunto* was a strong rallying point initially, it has declined more recently. This is due to fragmented local

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 7



### Dobber

JAMES Whitaker, the man who REALLY knows the Royals' wrote in Britain's *Mirror* recently. The Duchess of York is remembered at school as a perfect example of the Head Girl who succeeded in mixing fun with responsibility.

She always had a keen sense of duty. Once, at school, she even reported a girl for going out of bounds illegally. As a result the pupil was expelled.

### Royal flash

WHILE on the Royals, we liked the way British daily *The Independent* dismissed the latest royal birth in one paragraph. Reminds us of the sublime coverage that the British Communist Party daily *Morning Star* gave the royal wedding in 1973. "TRAFFIC DIS-

### Hard road to the top

"NOW 29, she started out in the fashion industry the hard way, by working for the Sandy Shaw label, owned by her father, chartered accountant. She was left with \$1 million worth of stock, which created huge problems." [*The Australian*, September 3, on Sydney fashion millionairess Robbie Cranfield.]

### FROM PAGE 5

### Keating

much money will go into our houses, and also that we will fill them up with imported goods like washing machines. This clashes with Keating's policy of channel resources into export industries and reduce imports.

Once again, workers who want a decent life for their families find their "Labor" government casting them as the villains of the piece.

Keating will probably keep interest rates fairly high to try to dampen the domestic economy, and that will make things hard for new home buyers. Meanwhile he is allowing our taxes to rise through "bracket creep" (that is, our miserly national wage rise will put us into higher tax brackets).

**RUPERT:** Traffic was disrupted yesterday when Anne Windsor married Mark Phillips in Westminster Abbey.

### Heavy petting

**LATES:** fashion among New York socialites is to dye their doggies pink at \$87 a rise at the Village Dogs Shop. But don't dismiss such extravagance as just an American folly. Sydney property millionairess Michele Benson recently advertised a \$5000 reward in the local paper for return of her missing pet Burmese cat Kahua.

### Built-in obsolescence

**350 WORKERS** at the Duracell plant in Sussex, England, are losing their jobs... because the calculator batteries they make are too good!

The company claims the batteries don't go flat fast enough and have killed off demand for replacements. Maybe the workers should have learned from the Coleco company, which makes Cabbage Patch dolls.

A customer who bought a doll, complete with birth certificate, wrote in complaining that it had fallen apart. Coleco quickly sent a one-sheet reply from "Cabbage Patch Land"... the doll's death certificate!

### Silvertalk Bob

**THOUGHTFUL** gesture by Kerry Packer, now Australia's richest man... he's lent Bob Hawke some of his precious collection of 18th century European silver to decorate the Lodge.

It's a cosy arrangement all around. Packer buys some more credit with his "mate"... Bob gets to admire the silver spoon that Kerry was born with in his mouth... and the public pays the bill for insuring Kerry's collection. Nice, huh?



### Leadership material

**OUR Canberra spy reports** that Paul Keating has a succession plan that will solve everybody's problems... Bob Hawke to take over the leadership of the Liberal Party!

### Fast forward

**AMERICAN** television stations have come up with a sneaky ploy to squeeze in more ads... they're speeding up movies!

**WCIX-TV** in Miami cut a whole 12 minutes off the running time of *Casablanca* recently, without editing the film at all. Bogey and Bergman just moved a little quicker and

gabbled a bit when they talked.

But they'll have to speed up most shows much more than that to get viewers to sit through them. American TV audiences are so dissatisfied with what's dished up to them these days, that the average viewer watches just 3.7 minutes of a program before swapping channels.

### Women's role

**"THE Canberra Times** ran this ad last month: "Togless waitress, lunch-times or afternoons, no exp necessary. We are an equal opportunity employer."

"BICENTENARY commemorative birth certificates issued by the NSW



### CHEAP SHOTS

Registry of Births have a section for father's occupation... but none for mother's.

### Same the world over

**STATE** or private, bosses are the same the world over... it seems. A London Regional Transport bus driver had his hands stuck fast to the steering wheel after a warped practical joker smeared superglue on it. But when the fire brigade arrived to cut him free, a foreman tried to stop them! "I don't want any damage to the bus," he objected.

### Supply-side economics

**THE Reagan Administration** budgeted \$620 million last year for the difficult task of destroying old chemical weapons... and another \$158 million to produce more of them!



## COVER STORY

bargaining at the enterprise level, which pre-empts union demands and organisation — The new management methods at work — The unions are also being weakened by rising unemployment (which is masked by government "massaging" of the jobless figure) and the movement of production (is) offshore due to the rising value of the Yen.

When Japanese firms move abroad, they inevitably take their management methods with them and some of the clearest lessons can be learned from US experience. Workers find that with the union compromised and shopfloor strength gutted, the cor-

porations go on to demand further concessions.

As a trade unionist in Detroit put it: "Once they take your power away, they come after your money."

Once supervisors get the hang of the new methods they can be pretty aggressive about implementing them.

A Japanese supervisor visiting Nissan's plant in Smyrna, Tennessee took his American counterpart aside after observing the underbody line where engines are installed. "You're crazy. Only 17 doing this job. In

Japan we have 22!"

In the 1930s it was not so much wages but arbitrary management and the exhausting pace of work that sparked the great American working class struggles which built strong unions in basic industry. Today the new management techniques are being used to roll back US workers' historic gains, as they were previously used against the unions in Japan.

**Our Australian rulers are now setting out to do the same to us.**

— Chris Ross

# How they want to con us

**WHO KNOWS** more about your job — you or your boss? You do, of course. And now some of the newest management theories, with fancy names like **Total Quality Control** and **Just-In-Time**, have recognised this fact.

But the new management techniques don't aim to put us in control of industry. Rather they want to con us into taking responsibility for making production more efficient while keeping overall control for themselves. And while they're at it they aim to weaken our unions, and our ability to resist attacks on our wages and conditions.

**NO, BOB HASN'T FORGOTTEN THE WORKING CLASS...!!**

WHERE'S THAT BLOODY CADDY!



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**MEMBERS** in the team meet in "quality circles" to plan the job and discuss production problems. In Ford Australia, at any one time about 20 percent of the workforce are involved in a quality circle.

In addition, the new methods aim to cut waste. Storage, transport and handling of components can account for over 90 percent of costs, and Just-In-Time management aims to cut this down. Once again, the pressure is on the workers.

With JIT it's up to the worker or the team to decide when to order and replace components, or when to start and stop production.

Everything is ordered or brought into production "just in time," so there's no need to keep large stocks of materials or finished goods.

Adelaide Griffin Press saved up to 400,000 this way. But supposedly it's good for the workforce too, with employees having more say in their jobs, which in turn means greater job satisfaction. The bosses in turn benefit through lower absenteeism and fewer strikes. Everybody's happy!

The ALP and our union leaders have joined the chorus of applause for "Quality" management methods. Victoria's labour minister Steve Crabb speaks of employees' "right to influence the decisions that affect their lives". (Meanwhile he is denying builders' labourers the right to choose their own union.)

Chris Lloyd, a researcher for the metal trades unions, applauds the "substantial changes in attitudes" he sees among workers in heavy engineering, and speaks of a "real breakthrough" in industrial relations.

But who has made the breakthrough? Listen to Michael Hewitt, a Metal Workers Union rep at Dunlop Olympic. He and his fellow workers opposed the introduction of quality circles, which they said "became a Junior Achievement style management training ground, where people learn to think and act like managers."

Or consider the views of workers at Melbourne's government ordnance factories.



Quality circle: It's the boss who benefits.



A US trainee joins in warm-up exercises at a Japanese plant. The new management techniques will strain more than your muscles.

who opposed "industrial democracy" on the grounds that management was "trying to take away rights we've had here for decades." In particular, management wanted to by-pass established union organisation on the job: "They hate the area committee most of all, because it unites the various trades and non-trades groups."

**AMERICAN labour movement activists, who've had longer experience with the new techniques, have identified the fundamental problems with them. One writer points out:**

*"Increased participation is not the same as power. It is not even a step towards power when the participation undermines the only real power the workers still have — the power to act collectively."*

Machinists in the US summed up their feelings this way:

*"The simple reason is that we don't like cooperating on the shop floor while we're being mugged by management at the plant gate."*

There are two ways in which "Quality" management can undermine militant trade unionism. To the extent that workers accept the illusion of democracy on the job, they will start to feel they don't need unions. The sight of Simon Crean helping Bob Hawke impose repeated wage cuts can only encourage such feelings.

To the extent that workers resist the new methods, they are likely to find their union officials emerging as industrial police and forcing the changes down the throats of employees.

Ken McNaughton, General Manager of Hexham Engineering, knows all about that. He tried to introduce employee participation for three years with no success. Then the union officials stepped in to help. "The union and us are talking a very similar language," he crows.

McNaughton leaves little doubt whose side these union officials are on: "The employees have still to come to grips with it... In the past they have been told not to trust the bastards, now they are being told to talk to us."

**UNION officials, and rightward moving ideologues like Socialist Forum, tell the rank and file that the new management methods open up a way for workers to gain greater power: "A magnificent journey of political reform and extension of democratic rights," one of them calls it.**

But where workers take these claims seriously, they are soon brought up against sober reality.

In TQC workshops at the Bureau of Statistics in Melbourne, workers suggested they didn't need managers under the new scheme. The workshop organiser immediately replied that suggestions had to be "achievable, and I have a sneaking suspicion that's not." Sneaking suspicion? Actually, the Confederation of Australian Industry has made it very clear that real power will still reside with the boss.

*"The test of employee participation is not the warm glow of self satisfaction. It is the cold hard economic reality of performance. It is critical that the processes of employee participation are not applied in such a way as to destroy management's ability to take crucial decisions when required."*

Obviously we have to fight against the encroachments of "Quality" management techniques. Yet like all major changes in capitalism, their introduction also brings with it opportunities for socialists.

When the bosses admit we know how to make decisions, when they talk about democracy, they raise issues which socialists can seize upon. Once the issue of who runs the workplace is opened, it is not so easily closed. That is what Richard Griffiths from Southern Cross Engineering is worried about when he says:

*"We are probably taking the dangerous route from a management point of view, of organising labour to be more responsible and communicative."*

Socialists and militants in the unions will find themselves discussing TQC and similar methods more and more. While we warn of the dangers, it is also important that we seize the opportunity to argue for a positive alternative: a society in which workers really do run industry democratically.

— Liz Ross

## 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 building a worldwide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers of one country against others. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

### Liberation from Oppression

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

### Socialist Action

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

# Hoyts exploits, say striking workers

**"BOYCOTT HOYTS!"** chanted a group of high school students who chose not to see a film, after travelling 150 miles to see it. They refused to cross a picket line of Hoyts workers, who went out on strike on 9 September.

Hoyts Entertainment in Victoria, NSW, SA and WA directed all their employees to sign individual contracts. But a lot of Hoyts workers objected, so the bosses threatened them with the sack.

Since 1981 the Theatrical and Amusement Employees Union (ATAEA) has negotiated wages and conditions for its members at Hoyts, Greater Union and Village cinemas. In May a new agreement had been negotiated "in principle" with the three companies.

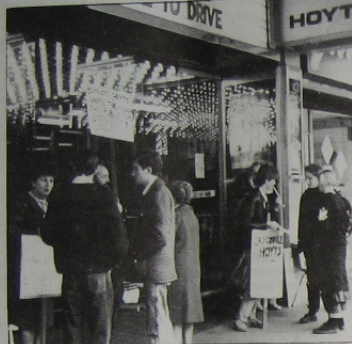
Many workers were annoyed that this agreement included reduced staffing levels. Where one usher had previously serviced two cinemas, they were now expected to service three (though with reduced tasks). But members voted to accept the agreement.

Hoyts bosses originally said they'd accept it too. Then at the end of July they began to renege. A month later, while Greater Union and Village abided by the agreement, Hoyts presented each of their employees with a new contract.

This included an undertaking that workers would "take no strike action, stoppages or work limitations". It also gave Hoyts the right to sack people "without any notice or payment in lieu of notice". Since the SEU power workers were defeated in Queensland, contracts of this sort have become more common.

All this, plus Hoyts wanted to reduce staff even further. Those not sacked would be overworked. Armed with modern technology, Hoyts' ultimate intention is for two staff to operate up to eight cinemas. What if a fire or a fight broke out?

So far the Arbitration Commission has ordered management three times to return to previous conditions and pay rates. Hoyts have refused each time.



On the picket line at Hoyts; members of the public show support

So much for respecting the "neutral umpire"! If the workers had refused to abide by arbitration, every newspaper in the country would be howling.

Unfortunately, not all Hoyts workers went on strike. Previous strikes have closed the cinemas down, but this time they could screen films, as many projectionists' union "in cinemas. This represented an attitude amongst some workers that projectionists were superior to "front of house" staff. But as more cleaners, ushers and box office workers joined the union, it had to address their concerns as well. Many projectionists didn't like that.

As the dispute affects "front of house" staff the most, management has exploited these divisions. Suddenly they refer to projectionists as "executives". Their tactics were so successful that a few Melbourne projectionists have been flown to replace strikers in Adelaide.

On the other hand, Greater Union and Village workers have actively supported the strike, joining picket lines in Sydney and Melbourne. Thousands of cinema-goers have respected the pickets. Plumbers, electricians and other workers employed on Hoyts-owned building sites have divided bans in essential areas.

Action (the main opposition group in the union) overturned a motion to reject the deal. State Secretary and RFA member Trevor Deeming was then able to support the official deal, though with some reservations.

These divisions meant that the alternative proposals also got no majority at the Sydney meeting.

The national tally supported the official motions. But winning or losing this particular vote wasn't the main issue. Much more important was what happened before the meetings and what possibilities this raises for the future.

In Melbourne rank and file activists called an organising meeting to plan the alternative motion and leaflet, then gathered support in workplaces. Some were so enthusiastic they organised meetings at work and faxed the motion and leaflet around to fellow workers. The mood of hostility to wage sell-outs they sparked has continued to grow. Since the dispute, members in the Melbourne Bureau of Statistics have organised a protest letter to ACOA and APSA officials, signed by hundreds of unionists.

Given that Sydney activists only had a couple of days to organise after the RFA's initial decision was reversed, their strong showing was encouraging.

The recent rank-and-file led strike in Sydney Social Security demonstrated that militant alternatives can work in practice. Now activists in Melbourne are also looking for something better than the on-going Robson rip-offs.

— Liz Ross



Robson: rolled

It's been a difficult dispute. But the strikers have shown a fighting spirit that the rest of the labour movement could learn a lot from.

— Louise Walker

## PUBLIC SERVICE



## Sell-out slammed

**LEADERS of the biggest public service union recently got a slap in the face from members fed up with wage deals that leave us out of pocket.**

The ACOA held mass meetings on wages which were expected to ratify the outcome of the national wage case without more than token opposition. But this time the opposition was vocal and organised in both Sydney and Melbourne.

The wages offer was pitiful, and amounted to continued wage cutting. Nobody even talks about a 6% wage rise anymore, let alone the 7% needed to keep up with the CPI. And at mass meetings in Sydney, Liverpool and Melbourne the official sell-out was rejected. In Liverpool the union leaders could only muster three votes for it.

In Sydney the opposition was divided after bureaucratic manoeuvring within Rank and File

**POLISH workers certainly aren't giving their bureaucratic rulers an easy time.**

Back in May, an eruption of strike action shook the Jaruzelski regime. At that time the government was able to quash the movement by a mixture of brutal force and conceding large pay increases to selected enterprises.

But in August the workers came back stronger than before. On 15 August, 3000 miners at Silesia's Manifest Lipowscy coal mine went on strike. Occupying the pit, they issued a list of 22 demands which included a 60 percent pay rise, improved conditions and the reinstatement of victimized activists. And right at the top of the list was a demand that the ban on Solidarity be lifted.

The strike quickly spread to more than a dozen mines. By the second week the government declared it was losing \$1.3 million a day from reduced output. But that wasn't all. Support action had spread to the docks and transport industry of Szczecin, Poland's most important port. The demands eventually found support in the Lenin shipyard at Gdansk, and at the southern Stalowa Wola steelworks.

At its peak, the strike wave involved over 100,000 workers in some 20 enterprises.

The government's first response was to repeat the tactics that had worked in May. And strikes in some big plants, such as the Wroclaw railway works and the Huta Warszawa steelworks, did collapse after receiving vague assurances of concessions. But in other areas the regime had to impose a curfew, and riot police stormed bus and tram depots in Szczecin. None of these methods were enough to break the strike wave.

A major military confrontation might have mobilised more workers, and would have jeopardised Jaruzelski's attempts to improve the country's international image.

The demand for legalization of Solidarity was winning wider support than in May. What was the government to do?

**ENTER Lech Walesa.** During the last few years he has promoted Solidarity as the only body that can help the regime solve its economic and political crisis. But that would require its legalization, and this has been Walesa's key demand — sometimes to the exclusion of basic day to day issues facing workers.



Striking shipyard workers in Gdansk, Walesa on the march: is a conflict emerging between them?

## Lech and the militants: Poles apart?

Walesa thinks the economy can be reformed through restructuring and privatising some enterprises — a view very similar to that held by Jaruzelski and his supporters in the Communist Party.

Walesa and his supporters have hoped to win the support of a conciliatory grouping inside the Communist Party.

Until now, Jaruzelski's position of complete hostility toward Solidarity has prevailed and the regime has sought to "normalise" Poland with a combination of reform and repression: for example, the sacking of union activists on the one hand, and the liberalisation of the media on the

other. Walesa now demonstrated his value to the government after extensive tours of the country he managed to persuade the various strike committees to call off their strikes. This wasn't easy. The workers' movement has become polarised since Solidarity was driven underground in 1981, with the older leaders growing more conservative while younger and more radical activists came on the scene.

It took Walesa several hours of debate to convince the committee at his own workplace, the Lenin Shipyard in Silesia, the Manifest Lipowscy mine held out until Walesa personally visited the occupation, and even then it took eight hours of argument to convince them.

Following the return to work, many activists have been victimized by the police, and after two series of high level negotiations the government is no closer to legalizing Solidarity.

The party may decide to give the union de facto recognition or official status in certain workplaces, a compromise Walesa would accept.

**AS WITH our own Simon Acrean, collaboration between Walesa and the government is likely to bring him into conflict with workers who bear the brunt of restructuring.** His advisor Jacek Kuron gave a hint of this possibility recently when he commented:

"In the conditions of economic ruin, it is impossible to have a joint fight for increases in salaries for all the workers. This would only lead to price increases, while stopping price increases would result in market shortages."

But many workers will want to fight. After the stoppages ended, workplace committees began openly signing up union members. The enthusiasm of the rank and file was soon demonstrated, with more than 4000 workers at the Nova Huta steel mill in Krakow taking out membership, followed by thousands more in the Gdansk shipyard.

They will be impatient with rotten deals. As another Solidarity advisor bluntly told the *Washington Post*:

"These guys see Walesa, with his fat belly and his big house and his Nobel Prize, and they themselves have nothing... Eventually they will find one of their own to lead them, and he will not necessarily be as committed to agreement and non-violence as Lech."

— Phyllis Whitefield

**TALKS** were only to proceed if all industrial action was stopped, yet the government made no promises and granted no concessions.

# Bosses win in Labor's new job schemes

IF YOU'RE on the dole, or you're a supporting parent, the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) has some new programs just for you. But don't celebrate yet.

The government wants to look as though it's doing something about unemployment, reduce the amount it pays out in pensions, and satisfy industry's needs for better training — all at the same time. They have come up with two new schemes to "help" long term unemployed adults, who make up 27 percent of all unemployment beneficiaries.

The names of the new programs would intrigue George Orwell.

"NEUSTART" sounds great. The government will assist disadvantaged jobseekers "consistent with its goals of social justice and the alleviation of poverty". But by ear-marking places for adults in subsidy programs which previously went to young people, the real effect is to pressure those who have received the dole for more than 12 months into jobs they don't want.

There will be no more jobs actually created. But intensive interviews and closer policing will put the heat on people, alongside minor benefits such as a payment of \$100 when you actually get a job.

The program includes a "reciprocal obligation" which requires you to "take advantage" of whatever employment or training opportunities are offered. This is an extension of the existing work test, and to police it the Commonwealth Employment Service will work closely with Social Security.

Then there is "JET", a "voluntary" program to assist sole supporting parents into employment. About 40 percent of sole parent pensioners will be in the groups that this program is aimed at.

The idea is to offer them education and retraining opportunities, and child care during their training period. But child care will only be made available for a short time after they start work



"Nonsense, Brownley. You told me three months ago you couldn't survive on what I pay you, and here you are..."

— so the scheme does little about the main reason sole parents don't go to work to begin with.

Of course, there will also be a "community awareness" campaign to challenge common stereotypes of sole parents'. Big deal.

These programs don't mean a breakthrough for the unemployed. Given that the actual number of jobs will remain the same, they will simply recycle existing jobs around to different groups of people. And other programs will suffer. For example, it is an open secret in the Department that the CYSS program is about to be axed.

The government's real concern is to redirect education and training to help with the restructuring of industry. The goal is to increase the profitability of business, not help the unemployed. The importance the Labor government now place on education and training is reflected in the Department's rising status. In the recent budget, the DEET portfolio was expanded more than any other.

Yet there is well few extra staff to do all the extra work. While DEET uses Vince Sorrentino in flash advertising to create a trendy public image, and Minister Dawkins makes weighty pronouncements, staff are facing the same restructuring and cuts that are hitting the rest of the public service.

Of course, the belt tightening is selective. We are told there is no money to fill positions and

pay higher duties. Yet there is money for the Department to continue to pay the salary of the industrial officer who spends two days a week at the Department of Veterans Affairs in Melbourne. He's there to sort out the unionists, who are too militant for the government's liking.

Yet it's not clear that those who run DEET are competent to sort anyone out. Take its attempts to formulate corporate objectives. In classic "Yes Minister" prose, a Departmental brief sums up DEET's clear sense of purpose:

"Our overriding aim every year is to fulfill our mission, by making progress toward our goals."

— Janey Stone

## STUDENTS

### No contract, no tax!

THE AUGUST budget threatens students with the prospect of having to sign a contract before entering a tertiary institution next year.

The contract would make those who sign liable for costs incurred while continuing their education. But students are preparing to fight back.

In Melbourne a "don't sign" campaign is about to be launched. First semester next year will see pickets at university

entrances, where people will be urged not to touch the contracts. But just refusing to sign is too passive. We will need rallies, marches and student strikes to bring together those who want to fight. Otherwise, as with previous fee boycotts, the campaign will lose momentum.

Recently, 40 students occupied the Canberra Department of Employment, Education and Training. In Brisbane 300 students, who were stopped from marching in single file, managed to reach the Australian Government offices for a rally. And Melbourne saw 400 march through the city.

It is demonstrations like these which have forced the government to constantly defend themselves. Mr Dawkins must even debate students on national television.

Opponents of the tax are looking to workers for support. In Canberra, a student member of Socialist Action spoke to the Tax Department union delegates' committee. The meeting voted to condemn the tax, and demanded the Department pay it for any of its employees doing courses.

Activists have distributed leaflets to all other Tax staff in the city.

Plans to address print and tax workers along with the country are underway. With stronger links between students and workers, contract and tax forms might never be printed, and the government's ability to collect the money could be threatened.

TWENTY YEARS ago this year, Czechoslovakia was gripped by the famous reform movement known as the "Prague Spring".

Today, a similar reform movement is underway in the USSR, yet the comparison is one the Russian rulers are very nervous about. The reason is that the Czech experiment went "too far" and was ultimately crushed by Russian tanks.

The Communist Party had come to power in 1948, not through workers' revolution but through full control of a government in which they were already participants. In support of this coup, a one-hour general strike was organised by Communist union officials and factory managers, and a fake "workers' army" was selected and armed by security police.

Workers who refused to join demonstrations in support were bashed.

The change of government meant no improvement for workers: in fact during 1949 the situation worsened as holidays were reduced and the working week increased. However in the following decade the economy did pick up.

Czechoslovakia was one of the most industrially advanced of the Eastern European countries, and its capital goods were in constant demand in places like Hungary and Poland. So for 15 years the regime could provide material gains to workers. Wages rose 60 percent between 1950 and 1961.

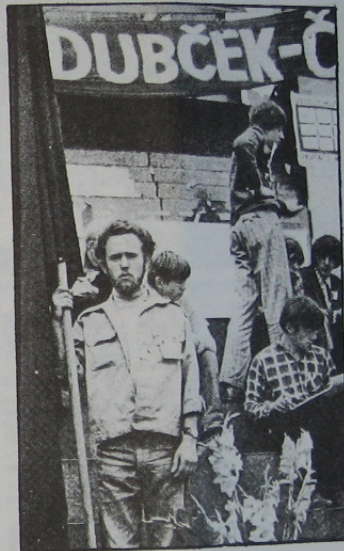
**BUT BY 1963, the country's B**markets were no longer secure. Russia, East Germany and Poland could produce their own industrial goods, and Czechoslovakia began to suffer from competition.

Unsaleable goods were stockpiled. Reduced foreign currency earnings cut the country's ability to buy raw materials and food. Food queues appeared. In 1963 national income fell by 2 to 3 percent.

By 1967 a section of the ruling bureaucracy decided it was necessary to shed inefficient areas of production. To make the economy more competitive, most workers would have to take a cut in living standards. A minority would be offered incentives, while 500,000 would be "redeployed".

But the reforms soon ran into obstruction from conservative sections of the bureaucracy, whose leader was the party se-

# A tragic ending to the 'Prague Spring'



Czech demonstrators, 1968: Dubcek let them down

cretary Novotny. So the reformers began organising to dump Novotny, with Alexander Dubcek playing a leading role.

Novotny fought back, and leading generals considered a military coup, but quick counteraction by the reformers forestalled the threat.

Both sides sought support outside the party. Novotny toured the country addressing bureaucrats whose positions were under attack, and playing on workers' fears of economic change.

THE REFORMERS retaliated by appealing to intellectuals and students. Protection was offered to writers who produced anti-Novotny material. Campus repression was lifted. Dubcek's supporters toured fac-

torial groups outside the ruling National Front was illegal. The Communist Party was still a structure for imposing bureaucratic class interests on society.

The unrest began to spread outside Czechoslovakia. March saw students demonstrate in Warsaw, and for a week they battled police in Polish towns. At this point Russian and allied armies invaded Czechoslovakia. With Dubcek appealing for restraint from the people, casualties were less than 100.

Dubcek was arrested, but came back from Russia a few days later to declare he would "normalise" conditions: reimpose press censorship, purge broadcasters, sack party leaders who had most strongly opposed Novotny. This was bound to spark resistance.

IN NOVEMBER hundreds of thousands demonstrated. In January 1969, student Jan Palach set fire to himself in protest and 800,000 people took to the streets.

Workers began to organise strikes, first over wages and conditions and then over demands for rank and file control of unions. Rail, steel and carworkers demanded democratisation. Factories sent messages to students holding a sit-in, and the students replied.

The working class wants socialism with a human face," they declared. The message was teleaxed from one factory to the next. Workers pledged strike action if students were attacked.

But without clear direction and an independent leadership, the movement began to falter. Once Dubcek had restored order, he was sacked in February. In April, censorship returned and a purge of the Party followed.

But those days are far from forgotten, in Czechoslovakia and also among Russia's rulers. Today, the "glasnost" reforms in the Soviet Union have raised the same hopes that once excited the participants in the "Prague Spring". Yet the Russian authorities recently sent police to break up a demonstration commemorating the Czech events.

Even the liberal Moscow Times has printed a justification of the 1968 Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.

It is clear that if Russian workers respond to Gorbachev's reforms by demanding real power for themselves, they will have to reckon with the same regression that faced the workers of Czechoslovakia twenty years ago.

— Louise Walker

# The roots of modern racism

WHEN SOMEONE says, "I'm not a racist but..." these days, an anti-Asian diatribe is likely to follow. At other times it has been anti-Aboriginal, anti-Italian, or anti-Semitic.

The term "racist" is no longer fashionable, yet polls show a majority of Australians opposed to Asian immigration. In most workplaces you can find someone who claims Asians are taking the best jobs and housing.

That doesn't mean most workers are thorough-going bigots. Most people have a mixture of opinions about their fellow humans, some rational and others prejudiced. Genuine racists, and political opportunists like John Howard, appeal to the prejudices in order to keep our minds off the fact that unemployment and poor housing are caused by capitalism.

Our rulers use racism to keep us divided, fighting among ourselves, so that we can't fight them effectively. So in the current wave of racist agitation the real culprit is not our misguided fellow workers but those who manipulate them.

Where did racism come from? Actually it's a fairly new idea. Prejudice between different groups of people is age-old, but history records little evidence of discrimination on the basis of race until comparatively recently.

**THE GREEKS and Romans** justified their wars of conquest on the grounds that "barbarians" who didn't speak Greek or Latin had no right to self-rule. But once an inhabitant of the Roman empire gained citizenship, ethnic origin was no hindrance to social advancement.

Just as statues indicate that some Egyptian pharaohs were black Nubians, several Roman emperors along with the famous enemy Hannibal were African and probably black.

The Spanish conquistadors, knowing well that their own country had recently been ruled by dark-skinned Moors, justified their enslavement of the South American Indians on the grounds that they were infidels more than on colour.

Modern readers of Shakespeare's *Othello* sometimes wonder why the characters show



Asian workers on the picket line at a Melbourne car factory: racism can be overcome in struggle.

no racism toward Othello. The reason is that in Shakespeare's day, black skin did not have the significance it has since acquired.

So what has changed? The answer is European imperialism and the slave trade.

The first slaves on New World plantations were convicts and Caribbean Indians but they died off and were replaced by tougher Africans. About 30 million Africans were hauled across the Atlantic against their will and introduced to a new life of misery.



Racism at work: John Howard's just a bit more subtle.

**IN ASIA and later in Africa** itself, European rule was brutally imposed on local people, and their economies exploited for the profit of western capital.

In order to justify these developments, Europe's ruling classes argued that dark-skinned people were inherently inferior. Academics, journalists and priests worked out elaborate theories to make this idea popular.

And in many parts of the "Third World" today, such as

Malaysia or Fiji, racial tensions between non-white groups are the left-overs of divide-and-rule tactics used by European imperialists.

Eventually the slave trade became uneconomic, and western colonialism declined. But the capitalist system had found new ways to make racism profitable. Dark skinned people could be used as cheap labour, and white workers' prejudices could be used to keep the working class divided.

Over many decades these tactics have done sterling services for the bosses in Europe, America, and not least in Australia.

The European conquest of Australia meant near-genocide against the Aboriginal inhabitants. The settlers' drive to widen their power in the region meant a fervent hostility to the dark-skinned peoples of Asia.

Slavery was also brought to Australia by imperialism. For example, northern pastoralists were not obliged to pay cash wages to their Aboriginal work force until well into the twentieth century. And over 60,000 Melanesian slaves were transported to Queensland from the Pacific Islands between 1863 and 1904.

**LABOR** politicians and union bureaucrats, wishing as always to avoid militant class struggle against the bosses, used this social climate to deepen entrenched White Australia attitudes

among Australian workers, and they have been used against us by our rulers ever since.

Today, the majority of the ruling class and its "Labor lieutenants" is cautious about encouraging open racial bigotry. Australia must deal with independent, and increasingly powerful Asian nations to its north. It needs skilled immigrants, and with its stagnant living standards it cannot get enough of them from Europe.

Therefore the likes of Bob Hawke and Simon Crean urge us to be tolerant.

Nevertheless, quite a lot of workers are prey to the racist agitation of John Howard. They respond to it not because they're stupid, but because they're worried. Worried about unemployment, falling real wages, cut-backs in social services. Asians and Aborigines offer a handy scapegoat, at a time when fighting the bosses seems too hard.

So it's largely useless for labour leaders to issue pleas against racism, while at the same time refusing to lead us in a struggle against the real causes of our problems. Unity among the workers is forged in struggle, for example in strikes where Vietnamese migrants have stood on picket lines alongside

Australian-born trade unionists. That is why an effective struggle against racism can only be built by socialists and other militants who also want to fight capitalism.

— Eric Petersen

## REVIEWS

A NERVOUS mayor tells Soweto residents protesting about a rent increase: "We are all South Africans." His style and politics remind you of John Howard. He is, however, black.

A cop shoves and pushes arrested black activists — comrades — to their prison cell. He is also black.

Ma Mobise is black, too. She is incensed. Another rent increase for her meagre Soweto dwelling from the local community council. Yet the roads are unmade, and it's taken donkey's years to get any amenities. This is the setting for the film *Mapantsula*.

Panic lives in a tiny shack at the back of Ma Mobise's house. He is urbane, cool, never at a loss for a word. Like so many of those around him, he travels every day to Johannesburg. But he goes to snatch purses and left wallets. The local bus is his get-away vehicle.

He is quite oblivious to the struggles going on in South Africa. He is more interested in dancing and drinking. It is only by sheer accident that he gets involved in a black township struggle and is arrested at an "illegal gathering".

**Panic is no stranger to prison: he's done time for theft and burglaries. But as a political prisoner he doesn't fit in.**

He is shown in his cell. Already there, sitting on the concrete floor, are a number of comrades, their politics emblazoned on their t-shirts. "I'm not your brother," Panic snarls back at their welcome.

"Why are you a terrorist?" police interrogator Stander asks in his office on the umpteenth floor, as he flicks through Panic's record. He knows full well there is nothing in it about political activism.

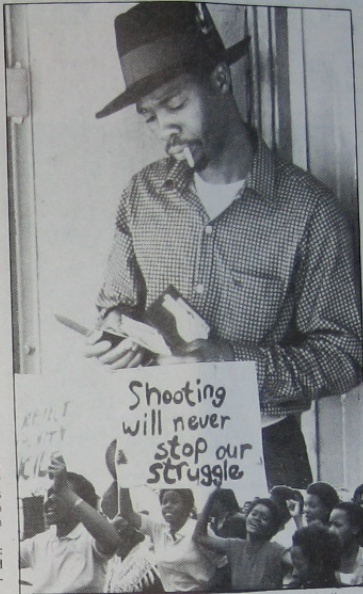
But he has a plan, Panic, no sun, tight-lipped, confused and friendless, is a likely informer. He could snoop on his cell-mates, or give Stander the low-down on Duma, a militant trade union leader and a friend of Panic's girlfriend.

Lots of South African blacks face this sort of moral dilemma. Inform and go free; stay silent ...

**Panic is not naive. He knows that windows on the umpteenth floor can be opened.**

For many, of course, the choice is not so stark, but it is always there in some form. Co-writer and director Oliver Schmitz explains.

*"In the townships there is a tremendous clash between those who are looking ahead and those*



Panic (above) cares only for ill-gotten loot, but around him the struggle rages.

## This film's not so black and white

who are into basic survival. One man will become a thief or a black policeman; he will accept the immorality of the situation expedient to feeding himself and his family. How could such a person become conscientised? That is the story of the movie."

The film *Mapantsula* is obviously a labour of love. Most of the cast is black. Schmitz tried to involve as many black technicians as possible, very difficult in a country that excludes them from its film industry.

Like the characters in the film, most of the production workers live in the townships. Perhaps that's why *Mapantsula* has such vitality. It shows real people trying to survive, how

they live with and sometimes accept their day to day oppression.

**Above all, it shows how the issues are not as black and white as we sometimes imagine.**

— Jeff Goldfarb

**BOOKS**

## The fire last time

ANY BOOK about the year 1968 is bound to be gripping reading.

It's enough just to recite the events. In France, a fiery student

movement sparked the largest working class general strike in history. In Czechoslovakia, Russian tanks crushed an attempt to reform Stalinist totalitarianism. In Vietnam the Tet Offensive shook the Americans, while at home US blacks rioted in a hundred cities.

From Mexico to Berlin and from Yugoslavia to Northern Ireland, workers and students launched huge struggles.

Chris Harman's new book *The Fire Last Time 1968 and After* covers all this and more. But what makes it special is that he doesn't just describe what happened — he explains it.

He begins with the "Long Calm" after World War II, when an economic boom depressed working class struggle and when much of the socialist movement fell into despair and cynicism.

But Harman shows how the boom was transforming economies and producing brash, new working classes. He points to little-known worker uprisings in Italy, France, Spain and Portugal in 1962-63 as a sign of what was to come.

After detailing the great events of 1968 he discusses what came after: the Italian Hot Autumn of 1969, British class battles from 1969 to 1974, the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-5, the revolt that destroyed the Greek dictatorship, and the wave of struggle that tormented General Franco's last years in Spain.

Finally he looks at how capitalist rule was stabilised. Unlike many historians, Harman doesn't believe that the upsurge was an aberration followed by an inevitable settling down. He explains in detail how the Socialist and Communist Parties worked to divert the discontent into safe parliamentary channels.

These parties used their credibility with the working classes to manoeuvre for influence within the existing system. This meant sabotaging militant actions launched by the workers themselves, and laid the foundations for the brutal attacks we are facing today all over the world.

**But if 1968 and what followed was not an aberration, that means it can happen again.** Harman writes from the perspective of a committed revolutionary who is working to bring that about. This is about just such developments as you are just starting to hear about. For that reason, this is the best book yet to appear on an exciting era.

— Graham Wiltell

# The secrets of Bill Hayden

**T**HE HAYDEN Papers dropped out of the news last month almost as quickly as maverick publisher Brian Toohy dropped them in.

That was no surprise, given the chummy relationship that Labor has cultivated with the press barons. The government's ham-fisted efforts to gag Toohy (it even got his address wrong when it applied for a warrant to raid his home) were almost superfluous, as the daily press uncritically accepts the assumptions behind Australian foreign policy anyway.

So all we got was a bit of embarrassed giggling at Hayden's patronising remarks about South-East Asian diplomats and Labor's performance as stenographer for George Schultz on the nuclear warships issue. That was a pity, because the Papers revealed a lot about Australian foreign diplomacy.

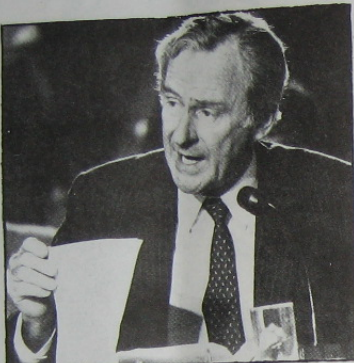
Hayden's remarks about the "erratic, hostile" nature of Indonesian leaders, the "limited maturity" of the Papua New Guineans and the "hypocritical self-effacing way" of the Japanese were more than just private indiscretions or examples of "Bill's famous tongue."

Coming from a foreign minister in his frankest moments, they reflected the junior imperialist role that Australia sees for itself in the region. PNG is to be patronised, Indonesia is a rival for influence and Japan has an irritating upper hand. As for America, it is a big brother to whom Labor is even more groveling than anyone suspected.

## HAYDEN'S PAPERS WERE MOST REVEALING ABOUT RELATIONS WITH THE US.

The way Labor allowed George Schultz to dictate, almost word for word, its climb-down in the banning of nuclear warships was remarkable. But so was another incident given less publicity.

The documents revealed that Hayden opposed the intake of 600 political refugees from El Salvador in 1983, despite ASIO's clearance of them as non-guerrillas and Immigration Minister Stewart West's assessment that they would be certain victims of right-wing death squads. His reason? Simply that the US opposed the intake, and might "create difficulties" in ASEAN, and that Bob Hawke was



Bill Hayden: his papers reveal more than we were told.

due to tour America and might get "his ears pinned back."

One source of Australia's slavish devotion to the US line, it seems from the documents, is the Office of National Assessments (ONA) in the Prime Minister's Department. ONA persuaded Hawke to approve testing of the MX missile by exaggerating Russian nuclear capabilities, and tried to overturn Labor support for a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the amazing argument that a ban would "present the US weapons laboratories with problems in preserving career opportunities to attract good staff."

The ONA even tried to get the Australian embassy in Hanoi to tape daily TV broadcasts for the CIA. (The US has no embassy there.) As Toohy dryly noted in an aside, "Often ONA is well to the right of the CIA, but it still likes to help out whenever it can."

**CANBERRA does not toe the US line through congenial sycophancy. Australia has its own mini-imperialist interests in South East Asia and the Pacific, and needs to keep the US on side and deeply involved in the region as an umbrella for them.**

These interests are growing all the time, and political principle goes out of the window as soon as

they are involved. For example, in one paper Hayden warned against serious criticism of China's support for Pol Pot. Australian business is enjoying an extremely favourable experience in China since Premier Zhao's visit to Australia. For that to be destroyed by an eavesdropping capacity on Indonesia in other fields would be damaging at home.

Defending these interests is a problem for Australia's military, another document revealed. Defence minister Gordon Scholes strongly opposed the provocative Cabinet decision in 1984 to release areas of sea near the Ashmore and Cartier Islands for exploration by Australian oil companies while they were still the subject of a maritime border dispute with Indonesia. Scholes felt that the Defence Forces would be hard pressed to hold off nigs there against military attack.

In short, Australia's imperialist appetite is too big for its own military stomach. Hence the desire to keep the US deeply involved as a big brother in the region through bases, warship visits and the like.

The cynical logic of this policy as applied during Vietnam was summed up by journalist Evan Whitton, who remarked that the Menzies government sought to protect Canberra's interests "wha-

tever the cost to Americans, and, incidentally, to Australians and the Vietnamese ..."

**T**HE HAYDEN Papers also throw light on Australia's neurotic relationship with Indonesia, suggesting the problem doesn't lie entirely with Jakarta.

In 1972, Australia took Indonesia "to the cleaners" (to quote its former Foreign Minister Mochtar) in negotiations over the seabed border, grabbing 70% of the area between the two nations. When Canberra recognised the Indonesian seizure of East Timor in 1975, it had to negotiate new sections of sea boundary. Instead of splitting the seabed down the middle, the usual course, Canberra pushed a straight line boundary that just happened to give it an extra oil and gas field.

In 1983, according to a secret memo in the Hayden Papers, the *Cessnock* was sent to the Melville Islands to monitor Indonesian radio signals during an operation in East Timor. The aim was to set up an eavesdropping capacity on Indonesia from Darwin. "The cover story for the operation is that the surveillance operations in response to reports that illegal fishing has been in progress ..."

(Now what was that about Russian fishing trawlers that engage in electronic spying?)

There is a reason for this behaviour. Contrary to what our rulers would have us believe, Australia is not a virtuous innocent that is spied on but never spies, that grants but never grabs.

It has an economic empire, small but growing, that it wants to expand. Indonesia poses no economic or military threat, but Australia sees it as a rival for territory and influence.

The more it can alienately mollify and diddle Indonesia and other smaller nations in the region, the greater that mini-empire can grow. And the more it grows, the more Australian governments will grovel to the US to defend it.

Seeing  
Red!

with Alec Kahn

BEGIN TEXT PROPOSED PUBLIC STATEMENT: SECRET---EXDIS  
THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY AND THIS GOVERNMENT HAVE  
COME ON RECORD AS SUPPORTING THE ROUTINE VISITS OF  
END TEXT SHULTZ

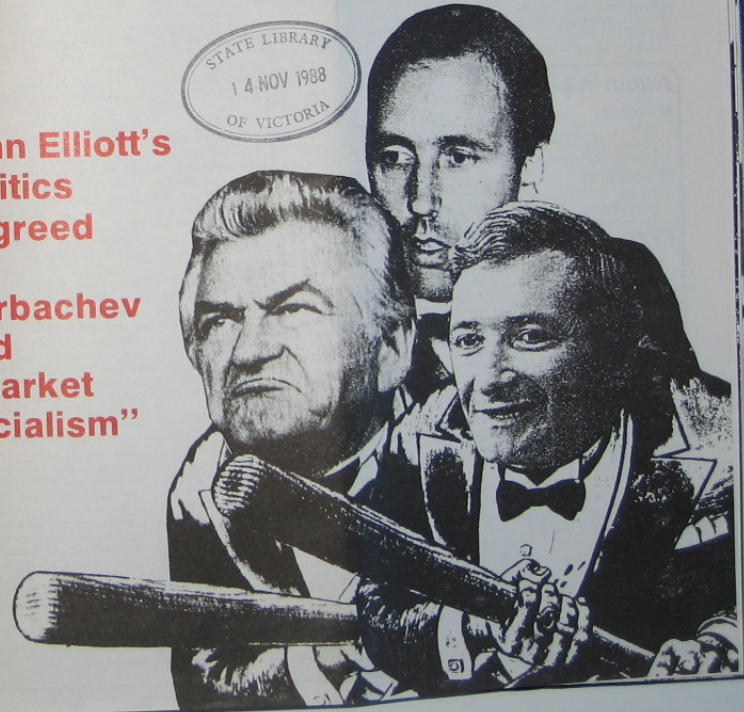




# THE WAR ON WORKERS



- **John Elliott's politics of greed**
- **Gorbachev and "market socialism"**





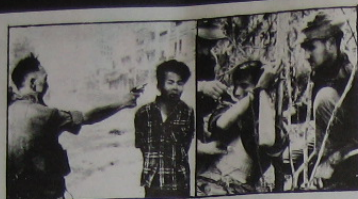
### Fortunes of war

THOSE in our midst who would like to revive good old fashioned militarism had mixed fortunes last month.

The collection of warships, some of them nuclear, which were invited for yet another tedious Bicentennial celebration encountered the inevitable protests. But this time with unexpected consequences: blusterous weather ensured that the British Art Royal couldn't beat bans by the Seaman's Union and had to leave Melbourne without docking.

Only days earlier some 10,000 or so Vietnam veterans and their friends and families marched through Melbourne streets, in a demonstration aimed to restore some respectability to one of the most disgraceful wars in recent history. Racism was on open display, as when one Bill McLeod commented: "To me, Vietnam was the mosquitoes, the chinks and the friends."

Fortunately there signs that a



The Vietnam war: nothing noble about it

lot of Vietnam vets want nothing to do with all this posturing. About 12,000 of them have not bothered to collect their service medals. Army spokesman Bob Skelton remarked, "They might have wanted to forget about the war, or just were not interested. Some may have said, 'bugger the Vietnam war'."

Which is not to say there isn't plenty of dough to be made out of Vietnam nostalgia. *Business Review Weekly* did an analysis of the money Sylvester Stallone has made over the past two years:

"It works out at \$3000 a grant, \$1.40 a head for everyone he killed on screen, \$31.5 million for every sentence over 17 words, and \$63 million for every complete sentence. And if you think *Sly* earned too much, consider having to get up early every morning to smear yourself with coconut oil."

### SOCIALIST ACTION

#### EDITORIAL

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#### BRISBANE

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

#### CANBERRA

PO Box 17  
Jamison Centre,  
ACT 2614.

#### WEEKLY MEETINGS

Melbourne  
Wednesdays, 7.00  
Lillico Hotel,  
91 Cardigan St, Carlton

Sydney  
Tuesdays, 7.30  
Meths Hotel (top floor)  
Bridge & George St, City

Brisbane  
Thursdays, 7.30 pm  
Phone: 870 3705  
for location

Canberra  
Tuesdays, 6.00  
Blair Room,  
Workers' Club, Civic

workers are about to embark on the life of vagrant "surplus officers".

### QUEENSLAND



## Residents bite back

RESIDENTS of Logan, just south of Brisbane, have toxic waste oozing up into their yards. The material is 28 per cent sulphuric acid.

One family had three dogs die in eight years from severe skin problems or lung disorders, and another reports that a pair of shoes worn around the yard, burnt a hole through a quilt when left on a bed overnight. Headaches, sore throats and skin irritations are common complaints.

The waste comes from disused mine shafts beneath the contaminated blocks. Between 1955 and 1967 the mine owners gave Mobil Oil permission to dump acidic residue from a waste oil re-refining process. Later the land was used as a tip. A 1987 report said "toxic wastes ... have been deposited" there.

The tip was closed in 1973 and by 1976 the area had been subdivided into residential allotments.

Logan Council has tried to downplay the problem. In 1987 Mayor Fred Hutnress said there was no immediate risk to residents. So the locals formed a protest group called Residents Against Toxic Substances (RATS). They have lobbied politicians, held public meetings, interrupted Council proceedings and picketed Bob Hawke.

RATS got new ammunition when consulting engineers reported that the only acceptable solution was to excavate the site and remove the material. Council then offered to relocate five households. But RATS spokesman Jan Compton says "the problem is far more widespread than that".

The State government for its part would like to bury the issue. The Logan situation highlights the absence of any strategy for managing toxic waste disposal in Queensland. In 1984 the Nationals commissioned a study of Brisbane, but the results were never released. It's likely they don't want us to know how many other sites we are walking around on.

We think it's time for more groups like RATS to sink their teeth into the Queensland government.

### PUBLIC SERVANTS

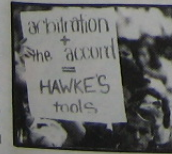


## More jobs to go

THE HAWKE government is moving to wipe out over 500 jobs in the Department of Community Services and Health. This is on top of 350 jobs lost with the recent amalgamation of departments into the "super department" DCSH.

The union, ACOA, has already sent signals to the government that if it won't fight, saying it will not oppose job cuts that can be "justified" by technological change, work re-organisation or loss of Departmental functions. The union leaders' real goal is merely a "conditions of service" package to protect the salaries and rights of those who may be made redundant.

Members at a Canberra mass meeting accepted this orientation, voting down an alternative moved by Socialist Action members and supporters proposing industrial bans. So it looks like quite a few of our fellow



### NATIONAL POLITICS

# There's no let-up in the war on workers

IN AN arrogant and idiotic speech delivered to the Australian Chamber of Commerce last month, Finance Minister Walsh declared that Australia had "largely overcome the economic problems inherited by the Hawke government in 1983."

The only exception, he said, was the current account problem which had "stubbornly survived". The current account certainly is a problem: we have just had a trade deficit of \$990 million for September, which appears to put Keating's hope of "only" a \$9.5 billion deficit for the current year out of reach.

But for ordinary working people all the other problems are still around too.

Not long after Walsh's speech came the inflation figures. Prices jumped 1.9% in the September quarter, adding up to an annual rate of 7.3%. The most important factor is the runaway price of houses, which has already placed them out of many workers' reach. Keating's forecast of 4.5% inflation by the end of the financial year looks pretty silly now.

Meanwhile unemployment is still 6.9%, higher than in many industrial nations. Increasingly the emphasis is on hassling the unemployed to get work and over-all government services continue to decline.

WHAT WALSH means by "overcoming problems" is that the Hawke government has succeeded in forcing the burden of these problems overwhelmingly onto us.

Profits have risen, and risen again. But according to a Treasury paper recently sent to Paul Keating, the bulk of Australians are worse off than they were five years ago, with average weekly earnings having fallen 5.9 per cent. By contrast "other income" a category which includes the takings of small business, landlords and investors, has increased 36.2 per cent.

Yet neither the employers nor the politicians are satisfied. New attacks on Australian workers are happening every day.



Peeter Walsh: idiotic speech

On the next two pages, we report on brutal "restructuring" imposed on Hoyts employees and coal miners. This will soon flow on to new areas: other cinema chains will inevitably follow the Hoyts example, and the government is currently laying the basis for a "reform" of coastal shipping which is bound to threaten the rights and working conditions of maritime workers along lines the coal miners are already seeing.

Housing is another area where working class Australians are going to take a battering. Although many tens of thousands of people are languishing on public housing waiting lists, the government is pushing up interest rates and so making it harder for people to buy houses. This is because housing is not an export industry, and won't solve the current account problem. The needs of human beings for shelter don't worry Paul Keating.

MEANWHILE in NSW the Greiner government is proceeding with its own anti-union offensive: 6000 striking Electricity Commission employees have been forced back to work under threat of dismissal.

The Federated Engine Drivers union says Elcom spent \$80,000 on advertising threatening workers with the sack if they didn't go back. This was backed up with courier-delivered letters to each striker.

The only glimmer of hope on the horizon seems to be those famous tax cuts we're going to be given next year so that Bob Hawke can get re-elected. But even here, we are going to pay the price this year for whatever crumbs we are thrown next year.

As Terry McCrann, business writer for the Melbourne *Herald*, has pointed out, Australians are now paying a higher proportion of their income in tax than in the last year of the Fraser government. This is because of "bracket creep: as our pay goes up (more slowly than prices, of course) we get into higher tax brackets and pay more."

McCrann exaggerates his case in order to promote his own reactionary politics, but there is no getting away from the essential point while the government cuts spending on welfare, it extracts more revenue from us with each passing year. If we get tax cuts next year, it will only be a brief pause in this on-going process.

Add this all up, include the dangerous new management techniques we reported on in our last issue, and you get a frightening picture. What are the union members doing about it? Despite honourable exceptions the overall answer has to be very little good, and quite a lot of harm.

THE ACTU has virtually become an arm of the government. Bill Kelly and Simon Crean will lobby for more funds at times, just as individual ministers do within Cabinet. But on the big questions; wage "restraint" restructuring, management methods they are as thick as thieves with Bob and Paul.

The more leflwing Melbourne Trades Hall executive makes militant noises, but has devoted far more time lately to discussing idiotic charges against the BLF than to serious organising to defend workers' wages and conditions. (A minor altercation between organisers from the BLF and the rival BWU was the pretext in September, and John Cummins' entirely constructive role in a rally for Hoyts workers was the pretext in October).

In NSW the unions have largely confined themselves to token protest at Greiner's reactionary measures. A one-day action mobilised 70,000 people to oppose his attacks on education last August, but nothing has been done to build on that.

Si Morgan of the ALP, the Libs, the AETU and even a lot of the left union leaders, were being subjected to an on-going onslaught. The reason is simple enough: Australian capitalists cannot survive without making our lives increasingly miserable.

Our daily lives are an ever more compelling argument why capitalism should not be allowed to survive.

— Tom O'Lincoln



## INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

THE HOYTS dispute ended in early October as dramatically as it began.

Strikers in Melbourne returned to work on 1 October, following a direction of the Arbitration Commission that pre-dispute wages and conditions would apply. Management told them to "go away" and three days later they received notice they'd been sacked.

In Sydney many employees were locked out.

Hoyts workers had gone on strike in September in protest over management plans to implement no-strike contracts, reduced staffing levels, and therefore increased workloads. Most voted to return to work out of fear that if they didn't, the media and public opinion off-side. Once sacked, they decided for the same reason not to resume picket lines.

Going back to work was a reasonable tactical decision in itself. The pickets were being carried by fewer and fewer strikers, and relying more and more on other supporters. Many Hoyts workers were becoming demoralised or had found other jobs. Abiding by the Commission ruling made it clear that it was Hoyts management who were prolonging the dispute.

But there was no point imagining that the sympathy of the Commission or the public would be secured by not picketing. Actually very few members of the public had been hostile to the strikers, though many had crossed the picket lines to see movies. And once Hoyts had refused to accept the strikers back, the decision not to resume the pickets amounted to a declaration of defeat.

The union did approach Trades Hall for a rally in its support. A couple of Hoyts workers took the opportunity to tour building sites and canvas support. There is no doubt that widespread sympathy existed among members of other unions, but it was all too little, too late.

On Hoyts construction sites, building workers could have been convinced to place effective bans. But the leadership of the Building Workers Industrial Union showed no enthusiasm for doing so. BLF members and organisers would have been far more helpful, but many ATAEA officials were nervous about working with the BLF. This reflected divisions within the Theatrical union itself.

About a week before the rally, the union's State secretary was replaced with Charles Living-



Unionists rally for the Hoyts strikers: too little, too late.

## No happy ending at Hoyts cinemas

stone, who has a left wing reputation but has played a right wing role in the current situation. Livingstone subsequently dismissed one of the more left wing organisers.

The rally itself was a success, attracting some 1000 workers. Most of them were building workers, including a large number of Builders Labourers. But Livingstone tried to prevent John Cummins, BLF City organiser, from speaking. Cummins refused to be silenced, and his speech was well received.

Unfortunately the occasion was marred by the sexist behaviour of some building workers, who acted like schoolboys, whistling and jeering when sacked striker Carol Fuller tried to speak. After all the hard work women activists have put into supporting the BLF, we deserve better behaviour from building workers.

Hoyts Corporation are a growing Australian multinational with ambitious expansion plans for both here and abroad. They claimed recently that their aim was to "provide cinema patrons with the best of service" and to "operate more cinemas in more locations opening at times Australians want to go to the movies".

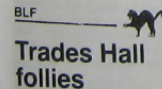
What's the cost of these fine gestures? Fewer jobs for

workers in their sweat-shop cinemas and the dole for victimised trade unionists. Hoyts chief executive Peter Ivarny has emerged as the bosses' new hero, making media appearances and spouting all the euphemisms about "rationalisation" "flexibility" and "efficiency".

The Melbourne Age backed all his proposed changes, adding in passing that perhaps his confrontational methods were unfortunate. More rightwing publications like the *Australian Business Review Weekly* and the *Bulletin* have lost no time in gloating over his success.

Workers at other cinema chains like Greater Union and Village will have to begin now preparing for the onslaught on their jobs and conditions which will surely follow.

— Louise Walker



## Trades Hall follies

WHEN JOHN Cummins insisted on speaking at the Hoyts rally, he was acting entirely within a Trades Hall policy calling on affiliated unions to support and participate in the action.

This hasn't prevented Trades Hall executive from condemning his actions, on the basis that some sort of shadowy deal existed between the BWLU and — it seems — Charles Livingstone of the Theatrical union that the BLF would be frozen out.

The Executive wasn't game to put its resolution to Trades Hall delegates, but simply circulated it as an Executive decision. The BLs did raise the issue at the next evening's council meeting, prompting an incoherent speech from the BWLU's Ray Collins in which he tried to link the BLF to the New Right.

Meanwhile in the real world, the BLF has recently been involved in a good industrial victory on Hoyts building sites. At Flinders Fair in Flinders St, management retrenched a group of militants, claiming that the job was winding down — although six stories remained to be built.

Workers responded with strike action, picketing for several days and then initiating joint industrial action with another Hoyts site at Thierry Street until all the men were guaranteed jobs.

And to ensure that no one forgets the police raid on their headquarters last year, BLs and their supporters staged a enactment on 13 October, the anniversary of the notorious events.

## INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS

# Coal miners: caving in is no answer

THE MINERS' Federation decision to accept award restructuring is a major defeat for militant trade unionism. Every boss in Australia will be encouraged to set about putting the boot into their employees.

In September the Coal Industry Tribunal handed down a historic decision in favour of the coal owners. Changed shift hours and work practices were introduced, making possible 24-hour mining, all year round. These changes will save the industry up to \$78 million per year, and will mean a 20 percent increase in production. After bitter debate, the miners voted to accept them.

Naturally the bosses are delighted. Speaking for them and the government, Federal Minister John Kerin gloated:

"The settlement, combined with management and work practice reforms being implemented in the industry here, marks a turning point for the industry, particularly in NSW."

And they haven't been slow to thank the people who've made it possible. The *Australian* described John Maitland as an "immaculate unionist". And it congratulated the union for its "entry into the 'responsible' age."

SOME OF the miners saw things differently. One of them remarked: "The old devil would turn in his graves if they saw the stupid decisions which are being made today."

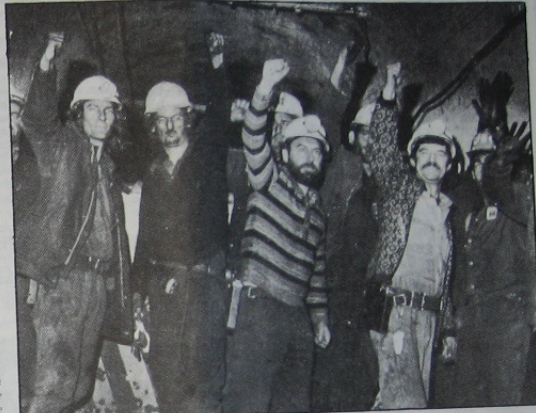
Maitland, in addressing miners' meetings, had to take such sentiments into account. At the first meeting, held at Appin in NSW, he told the members:



Fair weather fighter John Maitland

"Let's go back to 1981-82 when the NLC (the union peak body) told us to accept a \$20 wage rise. The rank and file told the NLC to get stuffed, and we got a \$68 wage rise. We can beat any bastard if we are prepared to go out and cop it."

Already the union has had to



NSW coal miners in happier days: militant action could still bring results.

"Everyone's aware that we are facing the most important set of circumstances for 30 years since mechanisation came in. We have really come to the crunch date."

Most workers' gut reaction, he said, was to fight. And "when I first heard the Tribunal decision I felt like going out and kicking bloody heads". But he no longer saw any point in a militant response, said Maitland. What was needed was "calm and informed logic". He argues now that industrial action is futile: it would be a winner take all struggle and the union would lose.

"Bullshit!" interjected one angry unionist. Appin miner Roger Mason argued it was up to the rank and file to fight.

"Let's go back to 1981-82 when the NLC (the union peak body) told us to accept a \$20 wage rise. The rank and file told the NLC to get stuffed, and we got a \$68 wage rise. We can beat any bastard if we are prepared to go out and cop it."

THE VOTE at Appin was a narrow win for the militants, but nationally the union leadership won the day. Having got the agreement accepted, they now find they have to rely on members' militancy to hold the employers to it.

Already the union has had to

strike, when Queensland mine owners wanted all the concessions before they'd pay a cent of the agreed pay rise.

In exchange for the trade-offs, the miners are getting the second tier wage rise. The membership had knocked back an earlier second tier trade-off because it gave away too much to the boss. The latest deal is much worse: so why did a majority of the rank and file vote to accept it? What has happened in the industry to bring about such a dramatic change?

The industry is actually rather buoyant. Current shortages of coal the international supply of coal have pushed prices up. Australia's main competitors for the Asian trade, South Africa and China, are experiencing production problems, while US coal is becoming increasingly domestic dependent. The Australian industry has recently been rationalised and is well placed to cash in.

But the coal owners will have to cash in fast. The rise in coal prices means that US mines will become more competitive on the world market, and they are just well placed to increase production rapidly. Meanwhile the ducton rapid oil prices makes it increasingly attractive for the growing number of industries

with dual oil-coal plants to switch to oil. South Africa's and China's problems are only temporary.

Those Australian mines already producing will soon face increased competition at home, too. Last year's mine closures contributed to the current shortages, but now many of those mines are set to re-open. Coal and Allied executive Bruce Thomson explained that after closing and selling mines, and sacking 600 workers in the process, the company was ready to rebuild.

So no doubt some miners were influenced by employers' arguments that a major strike now would cost the industry important opportunities.

In addition the Miners' Federation, despite its strong stand against the Accord and the continued militancy of its rank and file, has not been immune to the conservative political trends in the labour movement.

Over the past few years the union leadership has been more interested in improving marketing and production through a Coal Marketing Board than in fighting to defend workers' jobs, wages or conditions. Although the union keeps talking about pulling out of the ALP, Maitland

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 5

### Bondy and discipline

THE Chilean people are doubtless relieved to hear that Alan Bond accepts their vote to end the Pinochet dictatorship. "Our line is that it is for us with development," said a Bond representative magnanimously.

Indeed, she claimed, Bond's recently-acquired Chilean Telephone Corporation (CTC) is replacing old phones to allow more people to talk to each other, so "we're also advancing democracy there."

Ge, that Bondy's a helluva guy. So too, no doubt, are the two retired generals who sit on the CTC board with him. Or, as the Bond rep diplomatically described them, "two businessmen who may be retired generals."

### Jingle jangle

BUT hey, maybe Bondy's a closet communist after all.

His latest beer ad is pitched at those of us who haven't made it (a bigger

### Piggies squeal

THOSE new government guidelines on non-sexist language met the usual tedious response, proving yet again that male chauvinist pig is just another way of saying bore.

The rightwing hacks of the press trundled out all the old side-splitters about "hipsters" and "perdaughlers." So we liked the compromise proposed by feminist Eva Cox.

We'll let the chauvinists keep their sexist wording of statutes, Cox suggested. In return, women will refuse to obey laws which refer only to men. A week of that, and the pig-power brigade will be laughing out from the other side of their snouts.



### Up chic creek

MAYBE one day, if its price comes down, the car phone will be as commonplace as the colour TV. Meanwhile it's the favourite status symbol for executive yuppies to flash around in public. For example, spotted at Expo on the Kookaburra Queen floating restaurant — a young businessman stentoriously ordering from the menu using, would you believe, the aerial of his car phone to point out items to the waiter. Our observer didn't stick around to see if he also ate his meal with it.



## CHEAP SHOTS

### May we quote you?

"NOTHING harmful was ever passed down the line. Some of my grandchildren are exceedingly brilliant."

— Joh Bjelke-Petersen, denying that his years of exposure to agricultural chemicals had any ill effects.

"The growing number of wounded ... indicates to me the better ability of Israeli soldiers to carry out their duty."

— Israeli defence minister Yitzhak Rabin on Palestinian casualties in the occupied territories.

"WHAT they have done is to lend a helping hand to the people so their desire for a genuine multi-party democracy will be fulfilled."

— Brigadier Khin Nyunt on the Burmese Army, after it killed 1000 people in last month's coup.

### Exit stage right

SO RONALD Reagan, who gave up being a second rate actor to become a third rate President, wants to return to the screen. He aims to play himself in *Thumbs Up*, a movie about Jim Brady, the White House press secretary wounded 17 mistakes in grammar, punctuation and spelling, including the word "Christian."

As a rule, socialists strongly object to snuff movies. Just this once we might have to make an exception ...



### Hallelujah brother

FROM the home of born-again bible-basher comes the news that TV evangelist Oral Roberts has told his followers to write "Jesus" on the soles of their shoes. "Then as you put your foot down," he says, "you're brushing the Devil's head."

Roberts didn't reveal what to do when you step in dog poo. But definitely not brushing his head is fellow preacher Reverend Al Sharpton, who spent \$1910 last year on hair care at the Prima Donna beauty salon in Brooklyn, New York.

### Youth vote

THE BEST comment on the presidential election came from America's children. In a survey, just eight per cent voted for Michael Dukakis for "highly qualified" to be President. The same figure voted for Pee Wee Herman.

### FROM PAGE 5

## Miners

remains united and accepts its politics.

So while Australian coal mines have become among the world's most productive and profitable, the miners have lost over 4000 jobs, and allowed productivity to rise without matching pay rises.

At the same time, not only the officials but many of the members must have noticed how the BLF could be smashed without the wider union movement doing much to defend them. They must have wondered how much help they'd get from the ACTU if they chose to stand to stand and fight. One discouraging sign came from the Waterside Workers when Maitland

asked them for support, WWF Secretary Tas Bull announced he "would not provide a blank cheque" for the miners.

But that doesn't mean the union couldn't have fought and won. The miners enjoy widespread support in the working class. The media hadn't done anything like the slander job on them that the BLF suffered. There was no scab outfit like the BWIU leaders wanted to poach their members. The employers were desperate to cash in on high prices, and would have been likely to make concessions at the very least.

Besides, as the Queensland miners have already seen, there is no way to avoid a fight. You want a foot. In this sense, experience has already proved union militants right and Maitland wrong.

— Liz Ross

## SOCIALIST ACTION

### Don't miss summer camp!

YOU WON'T want to miss the Socialist Action summer camp, to be held on the week-end of 31 December to 2 January, just outside Canberra.

The camp will include our fourth annual conference, and we assess our progress and plan activities for 1989. In addition there will be talks on the current state of Australian capitalism and the class struggle, the meaning of the Gorbachev reforms in Russia and many other topics, plus an evening of entertainment put on by the many talented tutors among our members and supporters.

If you'd like to attend, contact

your local branch at the addresses listed on page two.



DEADLINES for the next issue of the magazine are as follows. Early deadline Friday 18 November, late deadline Friday 25 November.

## FEATURE

Can "glasnost" and market mechanisms turn Russia's bureaucratic system into a society free of exploitation and alienation? Our feature looks at the issues.

# Gorbachev and the fate of socialism

MIKHAIL Gorbachev, who recently consolidated his power with a purge of conservatives, likes to promote his program of *perestroika* (restructuring) with the slogan: "More socialism!"

Yet most observers, in the USSR and elsewhere, see it as a move to *less* socialism.

After all, he's introducing market mechanisms, and reducing the power of the central planners. And what is socialism to most people if not a system where state planning replaces the market? Certainly that's how it's been sold to us by the Kremlin for many years.

Yet here's what Soviet journalist Vasily Selyunin writes in *Moscow News*:

"Nearly 70 years experience has failed to reveal any particular advantages of planning as a method of centralising economic management. None of the previous 11 five-year plans was fulfilled in full on an item-for-item basis, which is the point of planning ... though formally under the dictate of the plan, the economy is developing ever more unarchurally."

Of course, critics have long pointed out the irrationalities of Russian planning. The stupidity of instructing people bureaucratically to produce so many tons of this or that was captured in a classic Soviet cartoon, in which the manager of a screw factory points to a single huge screw and declares "the month's plan fulfilled".

BUREAUCRATIC planning did industrialise Russia, though we now know the cost was horrendous. But as the economy faces more modern tasks it will no longer do, and increasingly desperate Russian economists want to bring back elements of the free market.

Gorbachev and his allies are now prepared to back them, and are scratching for "Marxist" justifications. Aleksandr Yakovlev from the Politburo said recently:

"The market ... develops and becomes civilised together with society. It is a natural self-regulating mechanism for bringing to light existing wants and their means of satisfaction."

"What makes for a socialist or capitalist market, is not the movement of commodities, capitals or even labour-power, but ... the actual place of human beings in society — are they the highest good of society or the source of extraction of profits?"

A fascinating statement. Clearly the Soviet leaders are ready to contemplate a free market in labour and capital — something they denied until recently.

But Yakovlev raises a more fundamental issue: what matters is not economic forms, but whether humans are sovereign or are the



playthings of economic forces. A valid point.

Yet few Russian workers imagine they are "the highest good" of their society. All they have been objects for the extraction of a surplus, whose purpose is bolstering national power while feathering the nests of affluent bureaucrats. Can Gorbachev's reforms change that? He says they can in two ways.

ON THE one hand, workers will elect their own managers and determine their firm's economic fate in free competition.

On the other hand, this competition will give more power to workers as consumers who have long been at the mercy of state enterprises caring only about plan targets, not giving people what they wanted.

Workers will vote at work to elect management and vote also "with the ruble." It sounds good, but it is a mirage. In practice the working class, both as producers and consumers, will be subordinated to powers beyond their control just as they are now, and just as we are in the west.

To the extent that the reforms are limited workers will find they can set company policy only within the confines of a pre-

determined economic plan, and that the "democracy" is rigged. Consumers will find that the military has far more claim on scarce resources than they do.

To the extent that it at all actually happens, new problems lurk. It is not an accident that Gorbachev is introducing a limited "industrial democracy" at the same time he's placing each individual group of workers under stiff competitive pressures. And that the authorities constantly emphasize that "with freedom goes responsibility."

"For the market is not 'civilised'" as Yakovlev suggests. It is a brutal mechanism for testing the productivity of each firm the hard way, with the losers going broke. Workers will be forced to press each other to work harder. They will be driven to choose managers who force the pace.

At the same time, market conditions will mean that exploitation of labour by individual revives alongside the long-standing exploitation of labour by the state bureaucracy. In discussing the emergence of individual sub-contracting, a Russian manager has remarked defensively:

"They say, but there will be exploitation. Of whom and by whom? If I'm working with a machine I bought myself, if I know in advance what my percentage will be ... where is the exploitation?"

## FEATURE

**T**HIS is easily answered, for it is merely the traditional argument of our own building industry employers. Unionists in the building trades know that the "independence" of the subbie often amounts to wage-labour in practice, but without union protection, and that is why they have always demanded an end to labour-only subcontracting.

In the longer term, there is the spectre of unemployment and the rise of a new layer of private capitalists. Yugoslavia has a bad case of the former, and in China we have recently learned about the charming case of Zhang Guoxi, who owns 32 factories and employs 3000 people. In his factories workers are fined for lateness, and have only two days off a month. Women employees can't marry till they've worked for three years.

The Chinese government has given Mr Zhang a bodyguard. We bet he needs one! These developments in Russia and China have enmeshed many western leftists in a hopeless debate. Do we bemoan the "restoration of capitalism" in these countries, ignoring the fact that few workers and peasants really regret the passing of the old ways? Or do we kid ourselves that Gorbachev is opening up a new promised land, just because he is dismantling some (not all) of the old repression and may raise living standards a bit?

Neither makes sense. Capitalism doesn't need to be restored in Russia. The funda-

mental features of capitalism analysed by Karl Marx have long been present.

There has always been a wages system. Yet the "abolition of the wages system" was Marx's first demand! Workers and most other people have been locked into an oppressive division of labour where they had no control over their own productive lives. And for Marx, this institutionalised division of labour was the core of a system based on "private property". *"Private property and the division of labour are identical expressions,"* he wrote.

**I**T CAN be objected that at least Russia abolished the profit motive, as when the newspaper *Direct Action* reported on the profitability of Soviet industry recently and added: "Profit levels are used in the Soviet Union as a general measure of efficiency, instead of being the key criterion determining expansion or contraction as in the west."

But profitability is not the "key criterion" in the west either. The key is *capital accumulation*, which Marx called "Moses and the Promethes" of capitalism. Profits are a means to this end, admittedly a vital means. And so they are in Russia, which is forever striving to "overtake and outstrip" the west under the lash of the arms race.

That is why Gorbachev wants each individual enterprise to make a profit.

So the argument about *perestroika* is not one between socialism and capitalism. It is about restructuring within a repressive class society.

Where then does socialism come in? The ideologists of western capitalism would argue that it doesn't. Central planning is discredited, they say, and even the Russians admit it. The market is the only way.

But for genuine socialists, the developments in Russia open up many interesting possibilities. As with "industrial democracy" and other such features of the latest management techniques in Australia, Gorbachev's *glasnost* poses the question: what if workers really are better qualified to control economic production than either capitalists or bureaucrats?

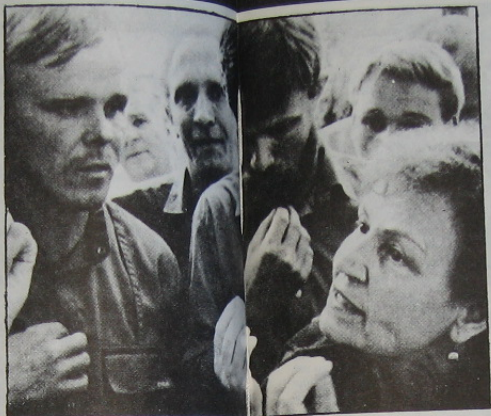
**M**EANWHILE, in the restructuring process there will be winners and losers. Some will get higher wages but others will face cuts. Those who gain higher pay will have to work harder for it. These circumstances have already sparked some class struggles.

As Gorbachev is well aware, there is always the possibility that workers will respond to the changes by launching struggles for their own power.

How would genuine socialism differ from both the state capitalism of Stalin and the "market socialism" Gorbachev is moving towards?

Let's return to Aleksandr Yakovlev's point, what matters is who your human beings are the *purpose* of society or just a means to an end. Karl Marx would have said: they have to become the subjects of history. The starting point is for workers to hold political and economic power themselves.

The next step would be economic planning under the control of the working class. How would that work? Isn't it impractic-



A public argument before the recent Party conference. Real workers' democracy is the key to a socialist economy.

cal? Isn't it the case, as economist-historian Alec Nove insists, that central planning requires such vast amounts of information that it becomes unwieldy? Certainly, that is how the Russian planners see it. But they have never combined planning with democracy.

In a draft economic program advanced to combat the rise of Stalinism in the 1920s, Leon Trotsky argued: "Workers' democracy is becoming an economic necessity. The reason should be apparent to any socialist who has worked in industry. The working class has a vast wealth of information and insights about how the economy works."

This is recognised today by managers in Russia and the west. Take Lyman Keitchum, who pioneered modern management techniques in the USA. Under his scheme "the old idea that a manager's main function is to control workers is replaced with the concept that a manager should encourage employees to use initiative." And Australian manager, Kerry Mahony of Adelaide's Griffin Press explains why:

*"Those working on the floor know a lot about the plant, the product, and what causes the hassles. In these areas they are often the experts."*

**T**HAT'S AS far as Mahony goes, and it's as far as Gorbachev goes, too: give workers some responsibility and sense of involvement, so as to make use of their creativity and knowledge, while the system as a whole is kept beyond their workers' democracy to its logical conclusion.

Workers know about much more than their own jobs. They know about the supplier industries "upstream" and the use made of their products "downstream". They have mates working in other industries and they compare notes. They are used to working in teams.

That's why the greatest examples of effective mass democracy in the history of the

time they'd be made by those who actually carry them out.

In this way we could save the original socialist vision of a planned society, which has fallen into disrepute (indeed ridicule) because the monstrosity the Russian rulers have made of it.

**A**ND WHAT of the market? In the short run, workers' democracy could not possibly set the price of every trivial consumer item. There is no doubt market mechanisms would survive and it would be stupid to try to suppress them arbitrarily. This would be a measure of how much the new society was influenced by its capitalist past.

Over time, as we create a society of abundance, it will not be necessary to use prices and money to decide who gets what. The market will wither away, as will the repressive machinery of state. What will be left is people making rational decisions in concert.

Today's Russia is light years away from any such prospect. Consider an interview published in *Pravda* earlier this year with Svatoslav Fedorov, a top bureaucrat in industry. He comments:

*"I want to remind you of the view of Karl Marx that 'the worker is only free when he controls the means of production.' The revolution was necessary above all to seize control of the instruments of production. But do the workers control them today? No, the state is actually a bureaucratic superstructure."*

*"Frederick Engels wrote that 'society, having organised production anew on the basis of free and equal association of the producers, will relegate the whole state machine where it belongs, to the museum of antiquaries'... But we have reached the point where the state machine now occupies 18 million bureaucrats. That's more than we have collective farmers."*

All true, and very telling. But it can be taken two ways. Do we to accept the logic of Mikhail Gorbachev and the HR Nicholls society, who think the alternative to the bureaucratic state is the dog-eat-dog pressures of the market, with its new forms of alienation and inequality?

Or shall we fight for the actual vision of Marx and Engels, who wanted a free and equal association of producers working in harmony? In that struggle, as always, the Kremlin bureaucrats will be among our most dangerous foes.

— Tom O'Lincob



Shopping in scarcity-ridden Russia: is the free market the answer?

## 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 to other countries are building a worldwide movement, and we oppose measures like protectionism which turn the workers into nationalism which turns the workers into one country against another. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

#### Liberation from Oppression

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

#### Socialist Action

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

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KARL MARX ...



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Yugoslav workers protest: their rulers are stirring up national hostilities to divide them.

## Yugoslavia: towards the abyss

**T**HE CRISIS now gripping Yugoslavia has begun to call into question the viability of the state itself.

Worker unrest has interacted with national chauvinism, the latter cynically manipulated by bureaucrats desperate to retain power, to shake the federal power structure established after World War 2.

The crisis arises from the failure of the Yugoslav experiment in so-called "market socialism". Measures like those currently planned by Russia's Gorbachev were put in place in Yugoslavia decades ago: decentralisation of party power, direct competition between enterprises, opening to foreign capital.

It has failed. Inflation is between 170 and 200 percent. The foreign debt is \$25 billion and absorbs a whopping 45% of export earnings. Managing it has led to belt tightening imposed by the International Monetary Fund, including massive wage cuts and a rise in unemployment which is now 15 percent.



Milovan Djilas: thinks Yugoslavia is dying

Yugoslav workers are fighting austerity measures were met by a strike wave that drew in a third of a million workers. Most terrifying of all for the country's bureaucratic ruling class, organised workers from different republics within the Yugoslav federation fought alongside each other.

**YUGOSLAVIA** is composed of six autonomous republics and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo). The northern republics of Slovenia and Croatia are relatively prosperous, with wages levels twice those of the south. This affluence makes Slovenia and Croatia more successful in attracting foreign capital, and more tolerant of dissent.

But inflation has cut into their competitive edge, and some of the local power brokers are toying with the idea of much greater independence from the central government, so they can compete more effectively with the west.

The largest ethnic group, the Serbs, make up roughly a third of the population. Their charismatic leader Slobodan Milosevic thinks he has found a way to establish control over the country as a whole by dividing the poorer provinces from the richer republics, and asserting greater Serbian authority.

He has shamelessly revived grievances dating back to fierce riots in Kosovo in 1981, when thousands of Serbs led the predominantly ethnic Albanian province. In Novi Sad, capital of Vojvodina, Serbian nationalist

has been stirred up against ethnic Hungarians.

Demonstrators have carried not only poster sized pictures of Milosevic but also pictures of long dead Serbian kings! In this way Milosevic also hopes to keep Serbian workers' minds off their economic troubles, and to make it harder for workers of different nationalities to wage a united struggle against their rulers.

**THIS HAIRY** game of playing one nationality against another could of course backfire, hursting Yugoslavia wide open. In Kosovo there is open talk of civil war and villagers have demanded to be provided with guns.

The tensions are fueled by economic misery. Per capita income in Kosovo is one third that of Serbia. Many from among the local population have gone to work as guest workers elsewhere in Europe. For 235,000 with a job, there remain 135,000 without one.

The crisis is taking its toll on politicians. In Novi Sad early in October a crowd of 300,000 forced the resignation of the local poliburo. In late October, CP leader Stipe Stuve recommended the removal — not a purge, he hastened to add — of a third of the entire Central Committee.

At the Central Committee meeting of 20 October, Milosevic suffered a rebuff. His ally Dusan Ckrebic did not survive a vote of confidence. However Milosevic has won greater Serbian control of the judiciary and security services in Kosovo.

Meanwhile, out in the wings, other ruling classes are salivating at the prospect of spoils they might acquire if and when Yugoslavia collapses.

**IN FEBRUARY** this year, Macedonians in Australia demonstrated against a Greek government sponsored "Congress on Macedonian Studies" intended to propagate Greek claims to Macedonia. You might have wondered: why all the fuss? Why now?

The Greek revolutionary newspaper *Worker Solidarity* explains:

*"All the commotion about provocations from Skopje (the capital of Yugoslav Macedonia) are nothing but camouflage for the preparations being made by Greek capitalism so that it doesn't miss out on any intervention, military or diplomatic, in the event of chaos in Yugoslavia."*

Long-standing Yugoslav dissident Milovan Djilas, who first popularised the term "new class" to refer to the state bureaucracy, takes a similarly cataclysmic view of where the country is heading:

*"I am convinced that we are witnessing the last stages of communism throughout the world and that Yugoslavia will be the first European nation to disintegrate itself of the system."*

Things are not really at such a pass yet. The stalwart system Djilas refers to as "communism" is too deeply entrenched. But with each passing month Yugoslavia is showing that "communism" of that sort has little left to recommend it.

— Mark Matcott

## Israel: the left is building solidarity

**T**HE PALESTINIAN uprising in the West Bank and Gaza has transformed Israeli society, Israeli activist Sue Katz recently told a London audience.

Things have changed so much in every area of society, she says, that it's hard to imagine the clock being turned back again.

*"One of the things that broke me out when I first went to Israel was the complete indifference to the occupation. Today, everybody has an opinion, not only on the intifada but also on what a political solution should be."*

*"Everyone now recognises the absolutely dominant contradiction in Israeli society is the question of the occupation. Even on the far right people say the occupation has to end."*

The current election campaign has meant extensive media coverage for the two major political parties. Less attention has been devoted to grass roots organising which has much more important implications. Most importantly there has been an explosive proliferation of groups actively supporting the Palestinians.

Sue described the support the Israeli left has given from the beginning of the uprising nearly a year ago.

**IN ONE** of the earliest activities, a group called *Women Against the Invasion of Lebanon* held weekly vigils on a busy Tel Aviv intersection.

The women distributed leaflets and displayed slides showing the treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli army. This might not sound very radical, but to do it in Israel took courage. "Basically we were scared for our lives," said Sue. "Years of experience had shown us that having a demonstration on that intersection can be bad for our health."

Supporting the Palestinians carries serious risks. For example the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem was closed, and its director charged, just for providing typesetting services for West Bank organisations. Although these organisations operate openly and no charges have been laid against them, it was argued that the Centre should have known that the Israeli Security

Organisation considered them to be hostile organisations.

A number of Israelis who met a PLO delegation in 1986 are serving jail sentences. And when a court recently released three imprisoned editors of an opposition newspaper on bail, a higher court sent them back to prison because they had "crossed the borders of the national consensus".

So imagine the surprise of the WAIL demonstrators to find themselves regularly at the centre of up to 150 passers-by, passionately arguing the issues — and publicly, in the street! The protesters had become the focus for public debate in a way that had never happened before.

Similar demonstrations are held weekly in Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv by a group called *Women in Black*. Their signs: "If you are against the occupation don't honk twice" had produced a remarkable response, with even army people honking.

**THIS GIVES** them the courage to keep going in spite of verbal and physical abuse, including one rightwing group who regularly encircle them and push them into the street, where police are waiting to arrest them.

Women in Black have organised many joint activities with Palestinian women. One demonstration started with only 40 rather nervous participants. But despite the intimidation of being escorted by 50 police vehicles, the march grew in numbers.

*"Women were out there in only bathrobes. Other had got all dressed up for it. It swelled and swelled and was absolutely massive by the time we finished."*

The government's policy of



THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

shooting unarmed demonstrators, deliberately breaking plastic bullets, has had a profound impact on ordinary soldiers who are called on to carry it out.

The group *Yesh Gvul* (meaning "There is a limit") was originally formed following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Its members now pledge to refuse to do military services in Lebanon or the occupied territories.

Hundreds of young people have signed the pledge, many ending up in prison. They have distributed thousands of copies of a booklet calling on soldiers to disobey unlawful orders.

**L**OCAL groups appealing to specific audiences have also proliferated. Few sections of society have remained untouched.



Palestinians confront Israeli authorities: the Jewish left is mobilising in their support

A group of Tel Aviv academics called *Ak Kan* (meaning "No more") held a forum in March, with Israeli officers just returned from the occupied territories. A Palestinian lawyer who also spoke was subsequently placed under administrative detention.

For twenty years there have been annual demonstrations on the anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip, which followed the 1967 war. This year the turnout was "absolutely amazing" said Sue, "the largest left wing march in Israeli history."

Around 12,000 people marched. There were groups opposed to the occupation, Jewish and Arab students, contingents of Oriental Jews, soldiers and pre-draftees who have declared they will not serve in the occupied territories.

Israeli society is becoming increasingly polarised, according to Sue. "The right is growing tremendously strong and fearless about what they want to do. There is open discussion of transfer." This means the mass expulsion of Arabs. A recent poll revealed that nearly half of Israelis favour such a solution.

In this atmosphere, the Israeli left's active support for the Palestinian uprising becomes very important. Although only a minority among the Jewish population, they show that a united struggle is possible.

— Janet Stone

# Crime must pay, says prison "reformer"

THREE NEW jails will open in Queensland next year, and many people are hoping that real prison reform will come out of the recommendations of the Kennedy Commission.

Will prisoners really get a better deal? Certainly, moving to a new jail will be an advance for those in the 19th century number 2 division of Boggo Road, who have no running water or sewerage. But Queensland prisoners have problems beyond their physical environment.

In the past they have organised and fought primarily against unaccountable parole procedures, lack of education and training, inadequate contact with relatives, psychological harassment and physical violence from screws. The Kennedy Commission's recently completed review is unlikely to solve these problems.

Kennedy's overall philosophy is that of a businessman. He represents himself as the person who "single-handedly" transformed the old PMG's Department into Australia Post and Telecom, in the course of which he wiped out Redfern Mail Exchange where "there were always strikes".

The guts of Kennedy's proposals is economic efficiency, including privatising substantial sections of the jails' operations to make a profit. He wants to introduce appropriate "management techniques" to control those who live and work there.

Prison wardens will be divided into two categories: security and supervisory correctional. The security screws, who basically guard the jails, will be employees of private security firms. Home detention will also be provided by security guards, who will use technological surveillance to establish whether, for example, you have had a drink.



Boggo Rd protest

IT'S PROPOSED that the new Borallon low to medium security prison outside Ipswich will be entirely private.

So a whole new class of civilian cops is being created to police sections of the population. Who watches them while they're watching you? The security firm bosses, who in turn are supposedly responsible to Kennedy's new autonomous Corrective Service Commission, which is "under the direction of the Minister" Queensland politicians being such well-known models of integrity!

The State's 1100 screws are not happy with the Report. They will no longer be government employees with public service conditions. Contracts for new staff will be less favourable, and the jails will be Essential Services which means, among other things, no strikes.

It's possible the new system may be harder on especially corrupt or vicious screws. And they'll lose their power over parole, which will be the responsibility of the Commission.

But the overall emphasis is on profitability and efficiency rather than prisoner welfare.

PRISONERS earn from 30 cents to a maximum of \$120 a day. Kennedy expresses his amazement that prison farms can't make a handsome profit given these wage rates.

He suggests setting up private industry within the jails offering "decent wages for a decent day's work". Whether prisoners will ever get ahead, let alone "decent" wages, is yet to be seen.

A major limitation of the report is in dealing with with education and training. Apparently there have been negotiations with Education authorities about a "school" and trade training. But these seem very vague, compared with the elaborate scenarios worked out with the security firms.

Another key deficiency is its almost total lack of discussion about AIDS. Most male prisoners are involved in voluntary or

forced anal intercourse at various times. Yet there's no mention of distributing condoms.

No talk of distributing clean needles, either, even though seven out of ten prisoners nationally are inside for drug related offenses. Going to jail means a death sentence for more and more prisoners, these days. But maybe the National Party, whose recent conference voted for restoring the death penalty, think that's just fine.

The new jails aren't just designed to be cosy. The Self Contained Accommodation Modules at Wacol, for example, "will enable a much better segregation of prisoners into manageable groups". Bad as Boggo Road is, at least prisoners can get together to talk and organise, and they can see what's going on in most areas of the jail. Kennedy specifically refers to this as undesirable.

THE PLANNED move of Aborigines and Islanders from a racially-segregated section at Stuart Prison near Townsville has met with mixed reactions from black prisoners. They suspect the new cell blocks will undermine their communal solidarity.

They have no great confidence in the prison system's intentions: this is, after all, the jail in which Arthur Murdoch (dubbed the "Black Stallion" by racist screws) has not been outside a cage-like cell for nine years.

Although blacks make up a large part of the prison population, the Report makes few concrete proposals about combating racism, confining itself to suggestions about representation and liaison. Like AIDS, it just doesn't seem to be a big problem.

Meanwhile the needs of women prisoners aren't seriously addressed at all.

Some of Kennedy's rhetoric about moving from a "military model" to a "welfare justice model" has been blown by recent developments. Shortly to take charge of Boggo Road jail is ex-Brigadier Fornsby, veteran of Borneo and Vietnam, who says he is going to "kick heads". Says Fornsby, "there are a lot of benefits to be gained from the system I am used to."

— Carole Fernier

## WORKING CLASS HISTORY

# The IWW: fanning the flames of discontent

ONE ENEMY, the *Employing Class!* declared the May Day 1915 *Direct Action*, newspaper of the Industrial Workers of the World. In those days the weekly sold 16,000 copies per issue, and the organisation boasted 55,000 members and close supporters.

The IWW (or "Wobblies") first formed in Chicago in 1905, after the defeat of a copper miners' strike. By 1915 they had a significant following in Australia.

Marxist economics was central to IWW theory. Articles showing how workers produce the profits employers enjoy appeared regularly in *Direct Action*. These ideas were taken into the workplace, where texts like Marx's *Wages, Price and Profit* were studied.

As internationalists, they attacked the "White Australia" policy calling it a "narrow parochial outlook". They expounded "the world-oriented view of Karl Marx... his famous cry: 'Workers of all countries, Unite!'"

THE WOBBLIES' aim was to build One Big Union of wage workers. This would bridge craft divisions which regular trade unions promoted, and end the pitting of one group of workers against another.

They argued that in this way workers could seize power at the point of production. Like Marx, they considered that working class emancipation must be the task of the working class itself.

This involved recognising that the state — police, armies, courts, parliament — is a weapon of class rule and cannot be manipulated in the interests of workers. Despite this, and unlike most unions, the Wobblies stressed the need to debate political as well as economic questions. As *Direct Action* explained, "The IWW is not anti-political, but simply non-parliamentary."

The Wobblies played an important role in some of the biggest strikes Australia has seen. From the 10,000 strong Broken Hill strike of 1908-9 to the 1917 New South Wales rail strike involving 50,000 workers and the Townsville meatworkers strike of 1919, Wobblies were in the thick of the fight.

## WHAT TIME IS IT?



Their motto against speed-ups was "Go slow — fast workers die young!" a sentiment we could use in fighting Labor's productivity deals today.

Yet they were probably most famous for their agitation against the Great War. From the outset, the IWW argued that war was a class question — the real enemy was the employing class at home, not workers fighting for the German capitalist 7000 mile away.

IN JULY 1915 Tom Barker, editor of *Direct Action*, dipped his pen in acid, and was arrested by the Hughes Labor government for producing perhaps the most famous poster of World War I:

TO ARMS!  
Capitalists, Parsons,  
Politicians, Landlords,  
Newspaper Editors, and  
Other Stay-at-home Patriots  
YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS  
YOU IN THE TRENCHES!  
WORKERS, FOLLOW  
YOUR MASTERS!

As the war dragged on through 1916, the Wobblies became a central force in the anti-conscription campaign. IWW activists all over the country addressed weekly rallies of thousands, arguing for a general strike if conscription was introduced. With unemployment rising, prices sky-rocketing and wages frozen, opposition to the war grew rapidly.

But they didn't always agree with other anti-conscriptionists. When some argued that conscription should be opposed because Maltese workers were being transported to take white recruits' jobs, *Direct Action* replied:

"The question will not be settled by boycotting a few Maltese. Accept the Maltese as fellow labourers. At heart they are unionists... Do not abuse a few unionists who were lured here by the lie at the lips of the immigration agent."

Support for the Wobblies grew steadily amongst unionists.

THIS DOUBLE sided approach to class politics was the recipe for their success. The IWW was able to appeal to militants concerned about wages and conditions, prove its methods of organising on the job, and thus win credibility for its arguments against the capitalist system.

Because of their success, the IWW came under heavy surveillance, and were subject to police set-ups and raids. In September 1916, Sydney police arrested Charles Reeve at a weekly IWW meeting for uttering the "seditious" words:

"Billy Hughes and Senator Pearce are the scabbiest, longest pair of crawlers that ever crept into Parliament on the backs of labour."

In an effort to stop Wobbly ideas from spreading further, a dozen Sydney members were arrested on trumped-up charges of arson and treason. Membership of the IWW became illegal, with a penalty of six months imprisonment.

Despite these attacks, the IWW Central Committee failed to develop even basic contingency plans. As the weekly meetings in the Domain continued, most active members spent much of 1917 in gaol. When no alternative leadership emerged, the organisation started to crumble.

The new greater unity provided by the IWW, and so hated by the boss, had not been enough. From the outset they argued that by organising One Big Union they could — gradually grow into control of the industries... This view failed to recognise the power of the capitalist state — a fatal mistake.

But despite the inadequacies that brought them undone, the IWW form an important part of our revolutionary history.

Louise Walker



By Pat the Flame of Discontent



# Why union officials sell out

**MOST TRADE** union activists wonder at some time what side their officials are on. Many get so disenchanted with the grub-by deals and sneaky manoeuvres that they give up any serious involvement in union affairs.

But if we can understand what trade union officials are, and why they do these things, we can combat the cynicism.

Trade unions are the creation of the working class, built and defended under difficult circumstances. Workers build them because they find they can only defend their living standards by banding together against the boss.

But once the unions are built a gap emerges between the membership and the full time officers. This is sometimes as obvious as the pay packages the officials take home — usually much fatter than the members earn. They often enjoy middle class lifestyles, even sending the kids to private schools.

If income was the only problem, that would be easily fixed by paying officials the same as the rank and file. But in fact there are unions like the Metalworkers, where the officials are not all that well paid and yet the union bureaucracy has become very conservative in the past decade.

**THE NATURE** of the officials' jobs also sets them apart from the daily experience of their members. They have better working conditions: cars, hotels to stay in on interstate junkets — even trips to Sweden!

But far more important than creature comforts is the content of their jobs rather than producing wealth and being exploited, the officials are brokers between capital and labour.

Constantly mediating between their members and the employers, they begin to "see two sides" to every issue. They decide the boss "has a point" and become more and more "realistic". Settling disputes becomes the aim, rather than winning.

Those officials who resist often get worn down by the pressure of their peers. If a whole union leadership tries to be more militant than the general run, as the BLF did, what happens? They are hounded by the ACTU leaders and even many "left"



Bureaucrats at work: Bill Kelly cooks up a deal. Officials leave them in the lurch.

For the most part, this doesn't mean union officials become out and out traitors to the labour movement. After all, they have to face elections. If they get too far out of step with the mood of the members they could be out of a job. Organised groups of rank and file workers have shown time and again that you can remove unpopular leaderships.

And if all the bargaining comes to nothing, the officials' last resort is industrial action. They dislike it, but they know that without this threat, they would never get any concessions from the boss. So they can't just ignore their members.

**TO PUT** it another way: what the officials have to offer the employers in negotiations is the consent of workers to a deal. Without that consent they are nothing.

Of course, corrupt bureaucrats can solve this problem in the short run by stacking meetings and rigging ballots. Even not so corrupt officials are sometimes tempted by these devices.

But such methods are risky. The more far sighted among the union leaders will work actively to build a base of support among the union shop stewards and other members who share their

"moderate" view of the world. In this way the union bureaucracy extends its roots into the rank and file itself.

So the union officials face a delicate balancing act: their incomes and status rest on maintaining the union organisation and to a degree its strength; yet they do this with the aim of arriving at an eventual settlement with the employers within the existing social order.

In recent years the union bureaucrats seem to have had it pretty much their own way. The promises of the Accord — maintaining real wages, power for the rank and file on the job, better working conditions — have all been broken and most union officials have been accomplices in the betrayal.

How can they get away with this? The recession of 1982-83 had a terrible impact on the confidence of the union rank and file. After strong industrial campaigns around wages and conditions in 1981, it seemed all was lost in the mass sackings and economic crisis that followed.

**A SERIES** of subsequent defeats — the smashing of the BLF, Robe River, Dollar Sweets — have deepened the demoralisation. Since 1982 the union bureaucracy has kept a tight lid

on industrial struggle, and only a minority of militants has been prepared to resist the rightward tide.

It might seem like the Simon Creams of the world hold all the cards. But the current downturn in worker militancy won't last for ever. Just as the demoralisation and apathy of the 1950s gave way to radical struggle in the 1960s and early 1970s, at some point the bad times of the 1980s will end. Workers will again wage militant campaigns and challenge the conservatism of their union officials.

Socialists fight to ensure that the rank and file establish as much control as possible over the union leaders. To this end we often help establish rank and file groups to organise independent action. But the battle within the unions is only part of the story.

The problem of union bureaucracy is virtually inevitable as long as we live under capitalism, and need defensive organisations to bargain over the terms of our wage slavery.

It is only when large numbers of workers look beyond unions to revolutionary organisation that we can create a working class movement that is truly democratic and consistently militant.

— Graham Willett

## REVIEWS

**BLACKBOARD** Jungle, Goodbye Mr Chips, To Serve Them All Our Days ... classroom conflict always makes good drama.

When the drama tells a true story it's even more powerful. Such a movie is *Stand and Deliver*, the tale of Jaime Escalante, a computer buffon who took up teaching at run-down Garfield High in Los Angeles.

Within a year, he had taken his senior class of 18 semi-numerate, semi-delinquent Chicano kids to the most difficult college entrance maths exam in the country (one attempted by just 2% of students). All passed with flying colours.

It is an inspiring story. Unlike most things that Tinseltown touches, it is not turned to dross. Escalante himself watched over the production like a hawk, and the result is a film where you can almost taste the dust from the impoverished Chicano neighbourhoods.

Like the reality it portrays, *Stand and Deliver* is open to different interpretations. Right-wingers will see in it a vindication of their attacks on leftwing teachers. While Escalante's head of department complains bitterly about the lack of facilities, Escalante quietly makes do with what he's got.

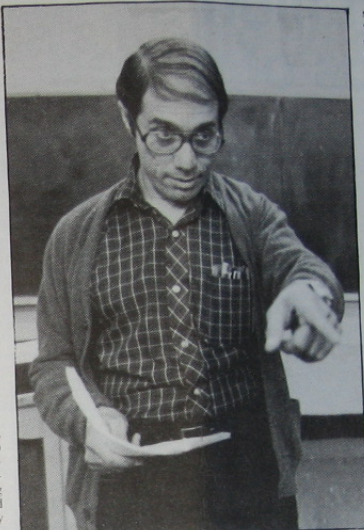
Yet to read into that a conclusion that all teachers should be like Escalante is facile in the extreme. For a start, he's blessed with theatricality and a lightning wit. He controls classroom louts with just the right touch of mockery to get their fellow-students laughing at them without poisoning the atmosphere. The energy he pours into his lessons is incredible.

He pays a price for his dedication that few people could afford, bringing on a heart attack and sailing his marriage dangerously close to the rocks.

Liberals will see something else in the movie. Like Escalante himself, they will argue that all you need is *ganas* (Spanish for desire) to succeed.

But the last third of the movie casts grave doubt on this. The Educational Testing Service believes that the students must have cheated to achieve such a remarkable result, and forces them to re-sit. As Escalante angrily points out, if they had come from Beverly Hills High, no-one would have asked any questions.

The students re-sit and again perform brilliantly. But to imagine that the Educational Testing Service is the last barrier of racist and class suspicion that they will face is sheer fantasy.



Jaime Escalante stands and delivers

## A teacher who beat the system

Even if it were, a fundamental problem remains. The Garfield kids are like those of us who win the lottery — the exception rather than the rule. Few students are lucky enough to draw a Jaime Escalante (now ranked fourth amongst US calculus teachers) to overcome all the other disadvantages of working class life.

The Garfield students are exceptional in that sense only, however. For socialists, the movie's real point will be that in background and raw ability they are no different to millions of other kids around the world whom capitalism writes off and consigns to production lines, to plantations and to unemployment. Yet given a break, they master one of the most baffling exams in the US school system.

Nor is this a fluke result. Garfield's success has steadily

grown. Last year, 87 students sat and passed the same prestigious exam.

This calls into question what we accept as "genius" and "talent". If a place like Garfield can match and outperform America's most elite schools, then clearly most of us have the innate ability to shine, given the right opportunities.

That means that a fantastic waste of human potential is being inflicted on us by a system in which disadvantage and inequality are inbuilt — a waste of rare individuals like Escalante can point to but scarcely diminish through their own Herdian efforts.

Jaime Escalante's remarkable story deserves to be heard. *Stand and Deliver* tells it with dignity and passion. More than that, it challenges us all to

stand and deliver a world in which race and class no longer determine who shall succeed and who shall fail.

— Alec Kahn

## BOOKS

## Between the lines

**BERNICE Morris'** autobiography is the story of a rather ordinary woman. It is all the more fascinating for that.

Born in the backblocks of Victoria she saw first hand the burden that the Great Depression loaded onto working people.

In Melbourne she found herself mixing in left wing circles and during World War 2, the Russians' resistance to Hitler convinced her to join the Communist Party.

It was at a Party meeting that she met Dave Morris. Dave had been an open Communist since 1931 and as the Cold War set in he came under scrutiny from civil and military secret police. In 1946 he was placed on the Black Lists. During the Petrov spy hysteria he was twice called before the Royal Commission and accused, ludicrously, of being an undercover Communist!

For years he was hounded out of jobs until finally he, Bernice and their children left Australia — going first to China and then to Moscow. So much for the claim that "no one was hurt by the Petrov affair".

Morris says herself that she was never well versed in political theory. This comes through when she talks about the big issues — the Party's zig-zags during World War 2, China's Great Leap Forward, the Russia-China conflict.

But she has a wonderful eye for daily life. The gross and petty sexism of the Chinese Communists infatuates her. The complex income/status relations in Moscow, the perverse enjoyment she gets as she successfully finds her way through the Russian black market — these are the experiences that only a real insider can give us. They alone would make this book worthwhile reading.

— Graham Willett

Jaime Escalante's remarkable story deserves to be heard. *Stand and Deliver* tells it with dignity and passion. More than that, it challenges us all to

Bernice Morris, *Between the Lines*, Sybylla Press.



# John Elliott's politics of greed

**A**NOTHER month, another takeover bid. John Elliott, the man who aims "to Fosterize the world" is Australia's most rapacious boss bar none nowadays.

He is also its most political. Already federal Liberal Party president, Elliott clearly covets the hapless John Howard's job, even engaging Alister Drysdale, the man who steered Malcolm Fraser to power, as his adviser.

The top bosses want him in Canberra, 26% in a recent survey wanted him as PM, ahead of Howard (19%) and behind only Hawke (34%). Like Hawke, Elliott has had trouble getting a blue ribbon seat, but once he gets it, is set to move swiftly on the top job. He makes no secret of the hammering he has in mind for workers, so we would do well to look at him closely.

**L**AST YEAR John Elliott called for the same values for Australia that make his beloved Carlton Football Club great. First among these were strong leadership (ie his) and limited democracy. "Democracy," he warned, "can lead to an awful middle."

VFL followers know what "limited democracy" under Elliott's presidency at Carlton means. Working-class fans who once filled the terraces have had their best vantage points taken over by the John Elliott Stand, a row of glassed-in "superboxes" available to corporate sponsors at \$65,000 each.

Inside, company executives watch from velvet seats as waiters ply them with lobsters and prawns and crowd noise is piped in at adjustable volume for atmosphere. Outside, the standing room patrons are herded behind the goals, where they look right into the afternoon sun.

John Elliott's vision for Australia is Carlton writ large. He wants free education ended, health privatised, 20% of public servants sacked, a work-for-the-dole scheme, a consumption tax on food and other necessities, and ID cards for the poor. He wants Ayers Rock taken back from the Aborigines and only migrants with skills let into Australia.

He generously offered to give up the family allowance paid to his estranged first wife, and his wedding invitations last year summed up his attitude to women: "they didn't even mention his new wife's name!"

The same John Elliott wants the top rate of tax cut to 30%, and threatens to take his companies overseas if tax concessions for takeover loans are removed. This



is a man whose firms have not paid over 25% tax since 1975, and in 1987 coughed up just 10.4%. A man who is now worth \$80 million and owns a \$3 million flat in Toorak, a \$13 million villa in France, and whose private jet has gold-plated seatbelts.

**E**LLIOTT'S hero is Margaret Thatcher. "She has broken the back of the union movement," he enthuses. "To actually observe what Thatcher's done is really an amazing thing."

Yet Elliott can only stave clear of the New Right. He has bigger fish to fry in the Liberal Party. His rise is a lesson in how ruling class patronage works in this country.

Elliott's origins were well-to-do middle class — bank officer father, home in Kew, school at Carey Grammar — just the breeding the ruling class likes in its managers. He got a BHP traineeship, the "fast track" for young executives in the late 1950s, and did commerce at Melbourne University.

While the best of his generation fought against hanging, racism and the Vietnam War, Elliott was catching the eye of BHP boss Sir Ian McLennan and future CRA chief Rod Carnegie, who recruited him to management firm McKinsey and Co for six years.

In 1972 Elliott cashed in on these contacts. With McLennan and Carnegie's aid, he secured \$30 million from Melbourne's Myer and Baillieu families, National Mutual and the CBA Bank to take over

jam-makers Henry Jones IXL. This was only the start. Henry Jones took over pastoralists Elders Smith, who in turn took over brewing giant CUB. By 1983 Elliott was grabbing companies in New Zealand, Britain and North America.

The Elders takeover was particularly rewarding. Elliott issued thousands of one-cent shares to himself and fellow executives, which they cashed in at full value. Elliott personally made \$657,000 on a \$3000 outlay ... and remains opposed to a capital gains tax on this day.

None of these takeovers produced any gain for consumers, a fact about which Elliott openly boasted: "The only way to gain market share growth and avoid price wars is through acquisition." So much for the benefits of market competition! On the contrary, the takeover borrowings overseas helped boost the foreign debt which workers are still being made to pay for today.

Elliott's own workers pay directly in the "rationalisation" that follows each takeover. Since April, 150 New Zealand workers have been sacked from pastoral firms taken over by Elders. Brewery drivers had to wage a bitter strike to keep their jobs and conditions when Elliott sold them to mate Lindsay Fox three years after capturing CUB.

**D**URING all this, Elliott has gathered political clout too.



with Alec Kahn

As treasurer of the Victorian Liberal Party, he set up the shadowy 500 Club. For \$500, business people bought private dinners with Liberal MPs. It got quick funds for the party, a direct line to the polities for employers, and power for Elliott, who chaired the Club and gained a base amongst senior Liberals and bosses.

Robert Holmes a Court's 1986 raid on BHP consolidated Elliott's power. Terrified of losing Australia's premier company to the new Perth mafia, Melbourne's establishment turned to Elliott to save them. He did (at great profit to himself), raising \$1.7 billion in a week to block Holmes a Court and confirm his position as "governor" of Victorian capital.

With John Howard floundering Elliott tried to overturn the preselection of the mediocre Roger Shiption in Higgins and move into parliament.

For once his preparation was poor. His backing was thin, millionaire football cronies Lindsay Fox, Richard Pratt, Basil Sellers and Peter Scanlon, pollster Gary Morgan and three elite Torak branches. But Higgins has 28 Liberal branches, and while the big bosses want him, the more middle class areas were wary. Small business, for example, knows how Elders has ruined farmers in Victoria and bought up big during the drought. Elliott lost the vote to reopen the seat 67-34.

It was a temporary setback, however. Elliott walked into the party presidency ahead of Malcolm Fraser, a testament to his power in the Liberal machine. A supporter now heads the Higgins electorate committee, and by next election the seat should be his for the asking, despite his feigned indifference to a political career at present.

If Howard loses that election, Elliott will be his obvious successor. The ruling class will have an alternative to Hawke who has the same spurious "common touch" but the ruthlessness of a Thatcher.

John Elliott's star is on the rise. And Labor will not contain him. While publicly they condemn him, Bob Hawke enjoys a private joke with him and Paul Keating thinks he is adding to the assets of the country.

**L**ike the CUB drivers back in 1985, we'll be on our own when the showdown comes with Elliott and the Uglies.

# SOCIALIST ACTION



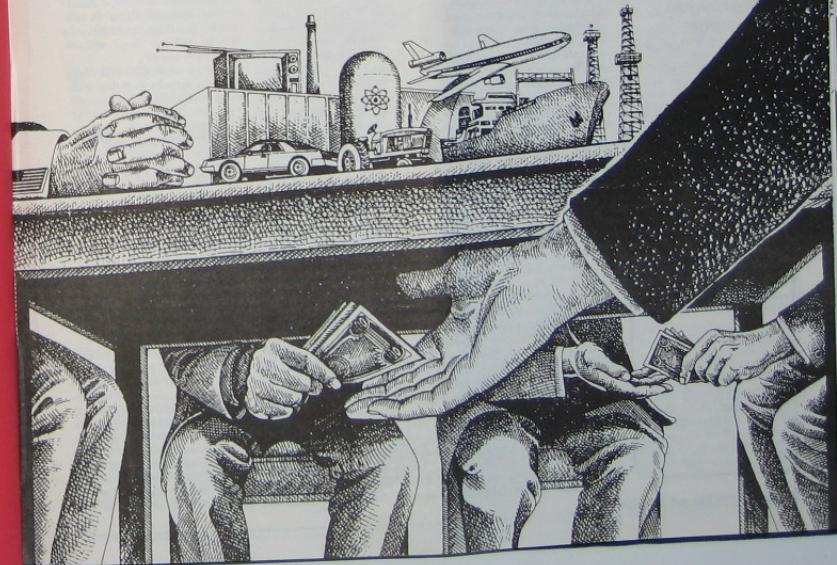
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50 CENTS

## Fitzgerald, Rothwells, VEDC ...



# OUR SCANDALOUS SYSTEM



SPICES



### Ghosted spook

TONY BARBER, host of TV's *Sale of the Century*, revealed in an intriguing ABC radio interview not long ago that he had trained to be a priest, but quit just six months before being ordained.

"I was very serious about becoming a priest," Barber explained. "My motivation was the mess the world was in, and the persecution of Christians in places like Vietnam. I was very much influenced by an American priest-author named Father Dooley. He wrote many books and I think I read them all. They were about, principally, the church's fight against Communism."

"One day I was invited to visit a television station. When I got there I was told a man from the Central Intelligence Agency was speaking. So I listened with some interest. Someone asked this man about Father Dooley. The CIA man laughed and said, 'There is really no Father Dooley.

He at the Agency made him up, or created him, for propaganda purposes. We wrote all his books and broadcasts, and anything else he was supposed to have written."

"I decided there and then to leave my training to enter the priesthood," said Barber.

GAY RIGHTS



### Good news, bad news

SIX YEARS INTO the AIDS crisis, the federal government has finally taken the first steps in preparing a national policy. It's a surprisingly good document.

Because it aims to provoke debate, it contains some silly ideas. The worst is the idea that all migrants should be tested for AIDS, as if the disease is "something coming from 'out there'."

It also largely ignores the low levels of AIDS research spending, and the fact that AIDS will need an increase in welfare and health funding at the very time when the government is cutting back.

But overall the report argues for education and compassion, rather than penalizing people with AIDS or those in high risk groups.

It talks about decriminalizing homosexuality and prostitution, and funding these groups to do their own education work. It suggests giving condoms and syringes to prisoners. It recognizes the importance of widespread and honest sex education, especially for young people.

Words on paper are all very well. But recent events around Australia show just how fragile the current toleration extended to gays, the largest single group with AIDS, may be.

In NSW Fred Nile's mob raves on unabated. In Victoria, police have stepped up their harassment of gay men on the beats, entrapping and arresting at least nine men in Brunswick and others suburbs elsewhere.

The most outrageous of the recent attacks have come in Hobart. A gay information table at Salamanca Markets has been banned by the Council, and raided week after week by cops — wearing rubber gloves. Despite dozens of arrests, gay activists have returned repeatedly to demand the legalization of homosexuality and funding for AIDS education.

On 27 November about 60 people picketed the Tasmanian

Tourist Bureau in Melbourne to protest the repression in Hobart.



Fred Nile in trouble

NSW POLITICS



### Immoral minority

FIRST IT was America's "Holy Wars" with rightwing evangelist Jerry Falwell trying to seize the empire of rival Jim Bakker, who was disgraced in the "Flearygate" scandal. Now our own Aussie bible-bashers are at it.

In the last NSW election Fred Nile's Call to Australia won three seats in the Upper House. Because God had temporarily struck down his long-term supporter, Jim Cameron, with a heart attack the Party drafted Marie Bignold onto their ticket. Marie had done the "right" thing on issues like abortion. But Fred's been a bit misled by her refusal to toe the line on other issues like education.

Now Jim Cameron has risen, Lazarus-like, and Fred wants his old side-kick back. He put it to Marie that God would prefer to have Jim representing Him.

But like Inna Duna, Marie knew when she was onto a good thing and sat firm. Fred's claims that she isn't really a party member, that a woman's place is in the home, and that a committee headed by her was conducting a witchhunt were to no avail.

In fact the last accusation has spurred Bignold to sue him for defamation and have him charged with contempt by the Parliamentary Privileges

Committee. The Call to Australia Party has been thrown into turmoil. Marie has been expelled (just in case she was a member), twenty senior coordinators have resigned, and a conciliator has

been appointed. And since the efforts of mere mortals were failing, a Day of Prayer was held.

God moves in mysterious ways. If the contempt charge sticks, the Upper House could expel Fred Nile. Then Jim Cameron could take his seat right alongside Marie Bignold.

QUEENSLAND



### Bats and robbin'

AFTER the blasting of the Mt Etna bat caves, Queensland Cement and Lime has put full page advertisements in the newspapers declaring they are a "very responsible company".

In a letter to the Brisbane *Courier Mail*, QCL manager Robin Town claims his outfit is "responsible, moral and tolerant" unlike environmental protesters who are "narrow minded and self interested."

Such as they liked bats, he continued, they had to provide employment and generate dividends for shareholders.

We note that the premier, too, has announced his concern for protecting QCL workers' jobs. Hearing him talk about saving workers' jobs makes one suspicious, so we weren't surprised to hear that Queensland Cement has donated a claimed \$200,000 to the National Party. It also turns out that the 130 jobs they're talking about will be short term anyway.

In the end there'll be no caves, no bats, no jobs. But the shareholders will be laughing.

WAGE DEAL



### Robe River ructions

ROBE RIVER workers have finally got their second tier, 4% pay rise.

But the price has been high. Smoko tacked onto lunchtime, and the abolition of the washing up time which they had won through determined strike action.

Not everyone was pleased with this result, and workers at Cape Lambert found a way to do something about it. They decided that without washing up time, they would have to hand in their time cards dirty. But this made them impossible to process, so time has now been found for the workforce to wash its hands before handing in the cards.

# There's scandal galore in our ugly society

There's another outrage every time you look.

In Queensland the Fitzgerald witnesses have piled shock revelations on top of gross inequity. In Western Australia, the collapse of Rothwells merchant bank has exposed the depths to which the finance community can sink. Even in staid Victoria money is thrown around and good money is thrown after bad, and the Victorian Economic Development Corporation turns out to be a public disaster.

Of course our first reaction is grim satisfaction that the arrogant jerks who used to run Queensland are getting their come-uppance.

What could be finer than the spectacle of Don Lane, Russ Hinze and Teddy Lyons tipping buckets on each other, followed by Bjelke-Petersen himself being hauled into the witness box. It's no wonder crowds were queuing to watch Job perform.

But it's clear even from the Queensland revelations that the corruption isn't limited to the conservative side of parliamentary politics. Property developer Eddie Kornhauser may have lent Russ Hinze \$250,000, but he's done a lot more favours for Bob Hawke.

KORNHAUSER was responsible for saving Hawke's political career back in 1974, when Gough Whitlam was thinking of dropping him as ALP president. Hawke's biographer Blanche d'Alpuget notes that "Kornhauser had a number of (political debts) out in the party" and he called them in to keep Bob in the job.

Hawke himself has described Kornhauser as a "substantial helper of the Labor Party" so if, as is claimed, he pulled a few strings to pay back the favour, it wouldn't be surprising.

The Rothwells scandal, of course, is the ALP's own baby. The WA government have blown at least \$100 million of taxpayers' money in vain attempt to rescue parasite Laurie Connell.

And in Victoria, it is a Labor regime supposedly renowned for economic management which lent \$16 million to a company managed by Tony Garwood, who had already lost \$2 million in previous ventures. Not to mention backing a gold mine

run by convicted criminals.

Regarding the latter one journalist quoted Mark Twain's definition of a mine as "a hole in the ground owned by a liar". But the biggest liar is John Cain, who reassured the workers of Victoria during the recent state election that everything was all right with the VEDC.

We have a right to be angry when politicians waste money and especially when they line their own pockets. But if we left it at that, we wouldn't be addressing the real scandal which these events highlight.

THE REAL outrage is that whoever is in power, governments represent the interests of the rich.

In both the WA and Victorian cases, we have ALP governments handing out cash to rich business people, while ordinary workers face falling real wages and cutbacks in government services.

The media have focused on the fact that poor Laurie Connell has had to abandon construction of his dream home on the Swan River, after spending \$15 million and demolishing seven houses. They don't even mention that public housing waiting lists are lengthening week by week all over the country, because Labor governments are cutting housing budgets.

The furor over the VEDC has centred on the incompetent handling of some of Labor's loans. But the real scandal is that public money is handed over to



Big Russ: the ugly face of capitalism

entrepreneurs when the Cain government is constantly running down the transport system.

Much is made about Russ Hinze taking a \$100,000 loan from developer George Herscu at the time he was pressuring Brisbane council on Herscu's behalf. This has stirred memories of charges that Herscu bribed Norm Gallagher. What is never mentioned is that Herscu got off with a good behaviour bond on those dubious charges, while Gallagher was sent to jail. The Cain government, like Russ Hinze, is thick as thieves with the likes of Herscu.

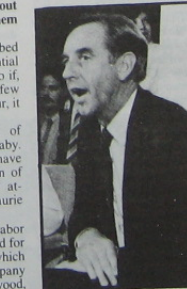
This is the logic of the VEDC. It's the logic of government investment in Rothwells. It's even the logic of Russ Hinze doing favours for George Herscu, because apart from whatever take-offs he might get he also sees Herscu's property developments as "progress".

In such a system, human needs always come off second best. And we shouldn't be surprised when politicians, whose very role in society leaves them ignorant, develop a casual attitude to the use of public money.

Russ Hinze is important only because he is the ugly face of capitalism right out in the open. As long as we live in an ugly society, there will always be people like him.

THE SAME point can be made another way. Remember when Charles Perkins got the boot as head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs? One of the issues was the failure of the Walgett pub venture, which was used to smear the whole program of aid to Aborigines.

After the VEDC scandal blew up, Labor made much play out of the fact that there are always going to be some failures in a program of that type, which is true. Yet federal Labor refused to apply that criterion in the case of Aboriginal Affairs. There is one standard for loans to white millionaires, another for loans to



John Cain: handing out money to the bosses

— Tom O'Lincain

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Queensland 4067  
Tel (07) 470 3765

**CANBERRA**  
PO Box 17  
Jamison Centre,  
ACT 2614.

**WEEKLY MEETINGS**  
Melbourne  
Wednesdays, 7.00  
Lincoln Hotel  
91 Gardigan St, Carlton

Sydney  
Wednesdays, 7.00  
Metrop Hotel (top floor),  
Bridge & George St, City

Brisbane  
Thursdays, 7.30 pm  
Phone 870 3765  
Phone 870 3765

Canberra  
Thursdays, 6.00  
Blair House,  
Workers Club, Civic

**Brisbane centre**

BRISBANE branch now has a new organising centre, at 50 Baynes Street, West End. Attached to our new office is 'Rosa's Bookstore'.

All friends of Socialist Action are welcome to attend the official opening of Rosa's on Sunday, 11 December from 3pm. Refreshments and music will be provided, and Ross MacKenzie from Sydney branch will speak about the early history of the left in Queensland.

Brisbane branch continues to meet at 7:30 pm on Thursdays, now at the new address. For further details phone (07) 846 2145.

**New pamphlets**

WE ARE pleased to announce two new pamphlets from Socialist Action.

**Macedonia: The Revolutionary View** is an article written by Greek revolutionaries and produced by us in a bilingual edition. It makes clear that not all Greeks have swallowed the chauvinist claims of their government, which wants to ignore the national rights of Macedonians. The pamphlet sold well at a recent demonstration by the Melbourne Macedonian community.

**Socialist Action: The Ideas Behind the Action** is a collection of 26 articles from our popular 'Socialist Standpoints' column. It offers an introduction to socialist politics ranging from the fight against oppression through the battle of ideas, and on to our vision of a new of society.

**Summer madness**

THERE'S NOT much time left to make your plans for our Summer Camp.

Events will kick off on the evening of Friday, 30 December, in a Canberra restaurant with a talk on 'Love, Sex and Socialism'. Saturday will include 'Lenin for Beginners', 'Politics of the Pacific', 'Capitalism Since the War' and a talk on the Gorbachev reforms in Russia.

Sunday will be devoted to our conference, where we'll consider the state of the labour movement, our own work and whatever other questions members want to raise.

On Monday we'll have talks on 'The BL's Fight for Survival', 'Polish Solidarity, and 'Greiner Capitalist'. The camp will finish after lunch.

**SUBSCRIBE to Socialist Action**

**EASTERN EUROPE**



Solidarity rally last May: Thatcher's anti-union measures were cited by the Polish regime

**Seeing through Maggie**

**POLISH Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski announced he "would like to be the best pupil in her class."** He was saluting Maggie Thatcher, which visited Poland in November.

Rakowski meant this literally. He announced he was shutting the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, in a move clearly aimed at breaking the confidence of Solidarity trade union militants.

The problem is that many Polish workers, bitterly disillusioned with the social system they live under, are under the illusion that western political leaders offer a progressive alternative. It's essentially the same situation as when western union militants cherish illusions in Russia or China.

Fortunately, there are activists within Solidarity who want no part of this. The recently formed Polish Socialist Party was at the forefront of the recent strikes. During Thatcher's visit they circulated the following leaflet:

**"THE BRITISH Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, will undoubtedly find a common language with General Jaruzelski. Most importantly they are sure to exchange experiences in crushing trade union rights.**

The two are already world class experts in this respect. In fact there is already a tradition of cooperation here. When the Bri-

tish miners were on strike, Jaruzelski hurriedly came to Thatcher's assistance by increasing coal exports to Britain.

"So perhaps Mrs Thatcher could be made an honorary member of the politburo. No? Then she should at least be copied onto the consultative council — a group of independent experts advising Jaruzelski.

"Her advice was utilised back in May when our mass media quoted the example of the smashing of the British seafarers' strike as proof that sympathy strikes couldn't be tolerated here either.

"They should find it easy to reach an agreement this time too. They can tell each other of the best way of protecting the privilege of the rich against the poor, of the most effective methods of lowering the consumption of working people, of the most skillful methods to be adopted in cutting social services.

"Thatcher could now oversee the sacking of miners from the Jastrzebie pits. She herself has thrown tens of thousands of miners out of work. And if it proves necessary to reintroduce martial law the British Prime Minister's wealth of experience will surely come in handy. After all martial law has been going on in Northern Ireland for 19 years.

"It's quite possible that Mrs Thatcher will try to use her visit to Poland to assume the pose of a defender of workers' rights, expressing her support for Solidarity. No thanks!

"We would prefer a thousand times over the support of Britain's miners or seafarers; or of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland who have everyday experience of poverty, persecution and

terror from the security forces. "They can understand that Mrs Thatcher wants to use us. We say to Mrs Thatcher:

**"Reinstate the sacked miners! Repeal your anti-union legislation! Withdraw the troops from Northern Ireland!"**

**RUSSIA**



**Limits of glasnost**

**HOW REAL is Gorbachev's democratisation? It has a long way to go, according to Moscow News.**

"Since January 1 of this year," the weekly paper reports, "there have been 644 unannounced attempts to hold rallies or demonstrations — 46 attempts in October alone."

On October 20, nine people were arrested outside the Lira cafe, where the dissident Democratic Union were attempting to hold a rally. Three people were sentenced to 15 days in jail.

But lest Queensland readers feel this is all too familiar, the paper hastens to reassure us that "this doesn't mean that street democracy is being curtailed. A 35-person meeting in Luzhniky discussed various legal issues."

Luzhniky is a park well away from the city centre. On 31 the new chief ideologist, Vadim Medvedev, announced that he would not lift the ban on Alexander Solzhenitsyn's book *The Gulag Archipelago*. With each passing day, Gorbachev's glasnost is looking a little sicker.

**ENVIRONMENTAL**

**The Greenhouse will affect us all**

**MOST PEOPLE** are worried about the greenhouse effect: predictions of cyclones, droughts and floods from the warming of the earth's atmosphere have hit home to us.

But some people are rubbing their hands: "When unusual weather patterns occur you will be in a position to profit," says an outfit of Futures Brokers in Adelaide. Drought will push up the value of futures shares in wheat, corn and other food stocks, and some parasites will make a killing.

Other sharp-eyed Harrys are sizing up the opportunities. A Melbourne engineering firm is looking at the commercial possibilities from new techniques in coastal and marine construction to cope with rising sea levels.

The nuclear lobby have found ways too. In a hypothetical display of environmental concern, they argue that nuclear-generated electricity is cleaner, because the major greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, is not given off.

This ignores what is given off: radiation, plutonium for bombs, and the like. So there are few things more disgusting than Max Walsh writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the choice is between "nuclear power and cold baths and canes". Yet it could be that these are the only choices capitalism is prepared to offer us.

**WE HAVE a right to be worried.** The warming of the earth's atmosphere by up to five per cent in the next 40 years threatens more than just rained-out cricket matches and a shorter snow season.

The increase in temperature mightn't sound so great, but the last ice age was only five de-



Russian environmental protestors: east and west, workers action is essential

grees cooler than the earth's current surface temperature, and that spelt bad news for mastodons.

Rainfall is set to increase by 10 percent globally. Australian summers will be 50 percent wetter. There will be more cyclones and floods. The oceans will expand and the sea will rise by a metre, flooding low-lying countries.

Millions in Bangladesh could starve, as a large part of their agricultural land is lost. Rising temperatures will also reduce the water retention of the soil and food production will suffer from soil infertility and drought.

Carbon dioxide, which traps the sun's heat, is mostly responsible. The gas is produced by the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas), and 5000 million tons of such greenhouse gas is prepared to be added to the atmosphere.

Trees absorb carbon dioxide, but they're being felled at a rate of one footy field every second. Phytoplankton in the oceans absorb it, but they're being destroyed by ultraviolet light flooding in through the damaged ozone layer.

The ozone is being destroyed

by chlorofluorocarbons (used in refrigerators, air conditioners and aerosols) which also heat the earth.

The other major heat-trapping gas is methane, the waste gas from animals. Intensive farming has doubled the world's cattle population in forty years, all in the service of McDonald's hamburgers and their ilk, so there are now twice as many cow farts floating aloft.

**NOW ISN'T this — the motorised, electric, hamburger munching society — evidence of the evils of industrial development? A lot of environmentalists argue that we need to move towards "simpler, less energy-intensive lifestyles".**

They are encouraged in the view by the fact that countries like Russia, which claim to be socialist societies, are also environmental disaster areas. The onnental disaster areas. The nuclear energy was safe in the USSR look pretty sick since Chernobyl.

Less known, but now being publicised in the Russian press, are the fact that the Aral Sea has shrunk dramatically, and that in Moscow, an estimated million citizens live in environmentally unsatisfactory conditions.

But what this really shows is that Russia, like Australia or America, is a society where economic production is not organised to meet human needs. Rather it is devoted to destructive competition — in the Russian case it has mostly been a matter of military competition with the west.

Socialists agree that the wasteful use of energy for producing junk goods, for heating and cooling poorly designed

buildings, and for transporting millions of people around in cars is harmful to the environment. The global motor car fleet accounts for a fifth of all carbon dioxide emissions — and this with just one eighth of the world's people owning a car!

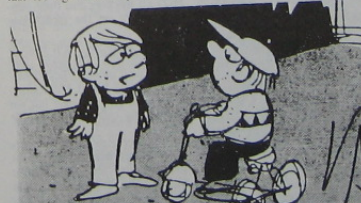
**A SOCIALIST society would A**ransform our transport and energy culture. We won't have governments cutting back public transport and individual cars won't be made energy-efficient. Solar energy can replace more destructive types.

The vast portion of our economy that devotes energy to producing waste — nuclear and conventional weapons, pointless packaging, junk mail and the like — can be eliminated. The creative energy that is now devoted to thinking up advertising gimmicks can be devoted to preserving the environment.

It will not be necessary to go back to an impoverished life style. Even in the short run we can fight against job cuts in the railways, and encourage building workers to place "green bans" on environmental projects. Working class action of this type, however, is unlikely if environmental activists tell workers that they should feel guilty about owning a car or wanting a decent standard of living. The real culprits are the giant oil companies, the car producers, the nuclear lobby.

Ultimately what is needed is a global "green ban" imposed by workers of all countries, on the capitalist system that makes it profitable to destroy the earth we live on.

— Phil Shannon



"My father is an industrial polluter. What's yours?"

**The natural**  
SO BOB Hawke has scored an invitation to appear in *The Comedy Company*. Funny, we thought he was already in a show of that name. We'd say he's a natural to play 'Con the Fruiterer' — after all, he's been playing 'Con the Worker' for 18 years.

**Copping out**  
QUEENSLAND cops are retiring at the rate of three a week — double the rate of a year ago, according to the Police Union.

Question: has rolling drunks, bashing blacks and bullying kids become twice as stressful in the last 12 months, as the police seem to want to suggest? Or has a certain well-known corruption inquiry got something to do with the exodus? As they say in Brisbane, if the cap fits, wear it.

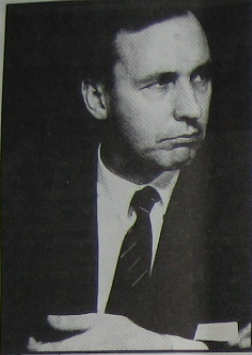
**Efficiency plus**

An efficiency team was due to put the stopwatch on public servants at the Veterans' Review Board in Sydney, which handles pension claims.

But the time-and-motion people failed to show up at the appointed hour. When the Board phoned them to find out why, their excuse was, "Sorry, we made a mistake in our diary."

**Lead not to temptation**

AFTER furious lobbying by fundamentalists, Cleator Moor town council in Britain has decided to ban Martin Scorsese's controversial film *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Cleator Moor does not have a cinema.



Keating: claptrap

**Inflated asset**

LABOR may call him the world's greatest treasurer, but Paul Keating obviously wasn't listening one day in economics class. Consider this quote in *Keating A Biography* by Edna Carew.

"Let's say they [Bond and Elliott] end up with \$20 billion in gross assets abroad, our net debt abroad is reduced by \$20 billion."

This is, of course, gross and net drivel. Buying foreign assets does not reduce foreign debt by the same amount — in fact, the invariable overseas loans for the purchase increase debt until the assets earn enough profit to pay them off. Stock to predicting inflation figures, Paul — no-one takes you seriously on those any day.

**Sweet thought**

MAGNANIMOUS gesture by British pharmaceutical company Stafford Miller. When its workers smashed production records, it gave them each a toffee.

In case the workers got too carried away with such generosity, company production controller Roger Northwood announced, "Don't chew

the sweets here. You must eat them in your own time."

**Shrouded in mystery**

WE'RE glad to report that true believers remain by the carbon dating of the Shroud of Turin. The year of Christ's crucifixion has merely been shifted to between 1260 and 1390.

**Election expense**

POSTSCRIPT to the US presidential election: the Republican Party spent \$500,000 on the podium for its national convention. Too bad it couldn't afford a better platform.

**Star struck**

AMERICAN companies are now trying to name stars in distant galaxies after the wealthy — for a price, of course. Sounds reasonable to us — provided the wealthy go and live there as well.

**May we quote you?**

"FIRST, I would say a prayer for myself and the country."

— Dan Quayle, asked what he'd do if he became President

"NONE of these people on the dole know what it's like to be in debt for half a million."

— British Conservative MP Jeffrey Archer.

"IT'S A big world out there with a lot of customers."

— Jimmy Swaggart, disgraced TV evangelist, making his comeback.

"If I could talk football, I'd have no-one in the Cabinet."

— Science minister Barry Jones



**CHEAP SHOTS**

"I GET all tangled up and I might say something I shouldn't. I know what you fellows are like, you're always trying to make something out of something."

— Jon Bjelke-Peterson on appearing at the Fitzgerald inquiry.



**Quest-ionable taste**

CHARITY quests are pretty sick. But one of the sickest was to be the fund-raising effort by the WA candidate in the Mrs Australia quest, Sandy Shaw.

She's just auctioned an iron bar (belong to Wilson "Iron Bar" Tuckey for \$200). Tuckey used the iron bar, you may recall, to beat up an Aborigine in his pub. We hope Mrs Shaw's favoured charity, the WA Society for Crippled Children, has the good taste to send the money back.

has the power to get members together.

And next year, the Rank and File group must regroup and come out fighting.

**HOVTS workers and their supporters are on the picket line again.**

Every Saturday night from 6 to 9 pm, the Theatrical and Amusement union rallies its forces in Bourke Street, Melbourne. It's not an easy struggle but we are turning quite a few people away.

A picket also greeted Hoyts shareholders who turned up at their Annual Meeting late last month. The boycott is still in force and Hoyts management has been served notice that this issue is not about to go away.



**FEATURE**

**Malaysia: fighting the repression**

Janey Stone reports on her recent visit

**ON THE 27th of October, eighteen people in a detention camp in Northern Malaysia went on a ten-day hunger strike.**

They were marking the round-up in October 1987 of 107 political activists under the Internal Security Act, which allows detention for 60 days without any open trial. This can then be extended for another two years, renewable indefinitely.

Malaysia claims to be a democracy. Yet any public opposition gatherings are forbidden and public expression of resistance to the government is very difficult.

A small demonstration in support of the hunger strikers in an out-of-the-way park led to a number of arrests. Families and friends of the detainees were assaulted by the police when two of the wives tried to release balloons carrying slips of paper with their husbands' names.

A "Freedom Run" organised by an opposition parliamentary party also resulted in arrests — when three participants refused to take off t-shirts bearing the word "freedom".

At the time of the detentions, the political domination of the prime minister Dr Mahathir was looking decidedly shaky and the economy was in crisis. In a remarkable series of political events since then he has re-asserted his control. The economy is said to be again on course to join the ranks of the newly industrialised countries. Things should be looking good for Malaysian capitalism.

Yet a statement released by the detainees points out an important contradiction.

"While on the one hand it tries to justify our detention by saying that the political climate necessitates it, on the other hand the government has been trying desperately to woo foreign investors by selling them the view that the situation has returned to normal."

**MALAYSIA is a product both of its colonialist past and its continuing integration into the world capitalist market.**

British colonialism sought to exploit the profits from plantations, particularly rubber. But the labour did not come from the local population. The British imported it from China and India, claiming that the rural Malays were "nature's gentlemen, fond of the simple life" and therefore poorly adapted to modern productive conditions.

But the real reason was the fierce resistance of the local population to the colonialisation process, ranging from civil disobedience to virtual guerrilla war.

British policy led to the different ethnic groups being concentrated into distinct economic niches. The Malays remained overwhelmingly rural and poor, except for the small traditional ruling aristocracy. The Chinese came to dominate urban commerce. They retained their own language and culture.



Striking bank workers: building unions is an uphill battle

Consequently communalism has come to colour every aspect of Malaysian social life, and political and racial issues frequently appear disguised as class conflicts.

Uppermost in modern memory are the race riots of 1969, when communal violence resulted in many Chinese deaths. But the riots were not simply the product of racial hostility. They actually resulted from an unstable political situation.

Having lost control of the national capital in an election, the ruling party needed to re-assert itself. Exploiting genuine grievances to mobilise sections of the rural Malay population, they bussed thousands of them into Kuala Lumpur and directed their anger at a convenient scapegoat.

**SINCE independence in 1957 the country has been ruled by a coalition dominated by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which had led the independence movement and which was based on the ethnic movement and the 1969 riots, UMNO used its state control to modernise the ruling class and improve Malaysia's role in the world economy.**

The New Economic Policy aimed to create a Malay bourgeoisie in the name of dealing with the social backwardness and poverty of the indigenous population. It imposed Malay as the one national language ("Bahasa Malaysia"), granted Malays privileges in land ownership, business licenses, educational opportunities and government positions, and stipulated the percentage of Malay ownership of company shares.

It thus appeared to be compensating them for the decades of backwardness. But in fact there was also an increase in Chinese ownership of businesses. The end result was a multi-racial business class.

Following Mahathir's ascendancy in 1981, he introduced his "Look East" foreign policy. This meant an association with the Third World as against Europe, while maintaining an anti-communist stance. The imperialist posture made good propaganda, but the actual outcome was a turn towards Japan for both investment and political ideas.

On my visit I was struck by the way that all political proposals are made in the name

**THE UNIONS**



**Industrial notebook**

**BAD NEWS for public servants: the ACOA elections in NSW have been narrowly won by the more right wing faction led by Wendy Caird.**

Caird will take office on 1 January, replacing Branch Secretary Trevor Deeming who leads the more left-wing and workplace-based Rank and File Action Team.

Rank and File polled well. With about 5600 voting — an usually high number — the left

lost the five official positions by between 199 and 287 votes.

The Caird faction, who call themselves the "Activists" have been active only in suppressing disputes and undermining opposition. Given the recent outbreak of staffing disputes in several departments, this election result comes at a bad time.

Deeming had already agreed to call union-wide meetings of delegates to discuss joint action on staffing. There's now only one month to organize these meetings and (hopefully) mass meetings to follow.

Deeming can still help overturn Caird's (and the National Office's) divisive and defeatist strategy of department-by-department fights. But he must move quickly while he still

## FEATURE

of racial harmony. This is supposed to be guaranteed by the political system, in which the ruling coalition, the National Front, comprises parties based on each main racial group.

But in reality, these parties represent the upper class members of each race. An environmental activist Gurnit Singh told me: "Politics in Malaysia today is politics of the elite. Many people use race and religion to rise to power."

The Malay party UMNO overwhelmingly dominates the political process. The other coalition parties play along because it suits their class interests. That is why the Malaysian Chinese Association stayed in the coalition even when a leading member was detained.

**THIS POLITICAL equilibrium was threatened last year when Mahathir faced a combination of economic recession (mainly caused by falling prices in Malaysia's main exports of rubber, tin and palm oil) and political tensions as factional unrest erupted within UMNO.**

In this situation Mahathir drew on the issue used in the past by the ruling class to divert attention from their difficulties — the prospect of racial violence.

In announcing the detentions in October 1987, Mahathir claimed there was a danger of riots as in 1969.

It was claimed that Chinese efforts to retain control of their Chinese schools were raising racial tensions. But the real threat came from the ruling party itself.

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At an UMNO Youth rally just before the clampdown, there were banners with the words "May 13 has begun" a reference to the 1969 riots. Others had a painted kris (Malay dagger) and the words "Soak it with Chinese blood". There were inflammatory anti-Chinese speeches. Some participants wanted to burn and effigy of a leader of the Malaysian Chinese Association.

As the detainees declared, "the so-called crisis of national security was a scenario orchestrated by racialist and extremist elements within the ruling coalition itself."

Those detained included trade unionists, feminists, religious leaders, environmental and other public interest activists, and members of parliament, including some from the ruling coalition.

The wide range of political views among the detainees appears to have been intended to demonstrate that the arrests were not political but were for "security reasons". But one UMNO member arrested languished for only a couple of weeks before being released, and shortly after he was granted an honour.

It is not that the government saw those detained as a serious threat. But the level of fear you can observe today in Malaysia attests to the effectiveness of the warning which the detentions represented. The government showed it could control the country, both through state powers and manipulation of popular fears.

The arrests were accompanied by the closure of three newspapers, including the only English language daily with any degree of independence. These later re-opened with much weakened content and without the more independent minded journalists.

During 1988 Mahathir's opponents tried to use the courts to unseat him, but his clever political manoeuvring has resulted in a split in the party, with Mahathir retaining power. He has also succeeded in increasing the power of the central government by expelling and forcing resignations of leading judges.

Mahathir can change the constitution at any time by virtue of UMNO's large majority in parliament. The judiciary can no longer question government actions. The television and newspapers are largely under government control. And Mahathir as Home Minister has control over the police.



Mahathir and his advisors: repressive, but the opposition parties offer no real alternative

**BUT THOSE who see a developing direction, and therefore focus their opposition on Mahathir personally, miss the main point.**

Mahathir has certainly suppressed democratic rights. The current joke, that UMNO means "Under Mahathir, no opposition" expresses a bitter truth. But the opposing UMNO faction offer no alternative. As Gurnit Singh says, "They want a movement to get them elected but not to give the population a voice."

Mahathir's actions resulted not only from his factional difficulties, but also from the need to deal with major economic problems.

Malaysia's worst economic recession ever occurred in 1986. Since late last year, an export-led economic recovery has occurred. This is partly a result of improved prices for rubber and palm-oil, and partly due to increased demand for Malaysian manufacturing, particularly electronics.

"Looking back, 1987 was an extraordinary year". The enthusiasm of the governor of Malaysia's central bank mirrors the hopes of Malaysia's capitalists as the finance minister, Daim Zainuddin cuts corporate tax, increases consumption taxes, limits public spending and pursues privatisation. No wonder that he is called the Nigel Lawson of the East.

But the bosses' jubilation bodes little good for the ordinary worker. Unemployment is around 10%. Food prices continue to climb, while wages lag behind. There has been a wage and staffing freeze in the public service since 1983, resulting in 200,000 unfilled vacancies.

It is very difficult for workers to organise. Only about 11% are in trade unions, many of them small or "in-house" (enterprise based).

Labour minister Lee said recently, "Unions have the right to organise strikes but they must have the interest of the nation in mind." It is the government that determines the "interest of the nation".

Workers in the public sector can form unions and negotiate with the employer, but they are hamstrung by bureaucratic procedures which make industrial action extremely difficult. A legal strike requires a two thirds majority in a secret ballot.

In the private sector, things are somewhat different. For instance earlier this year bank



Malaysian factory scene: the regime resorts to endless tricks to keep the unions out.

workers ran a campaign over wages. They held lunch time pickets, and turned up for work wearing badges and t-shirts.

During October, workers at a rubber plantation walked off the job when a supervisor assaulted and tied up the husband of a woman employee. After a two week strike they succeeded in forcing the transfer of the supervisor.

Most importantly a major confrontation is currently looming among electronics workers in the free trade zones. These were set up in the early 70's to encourage foreign investment. Investors were given almost a completely free hand, and numerous concessions such as five year tax free periods regularly renewed.

**THE GOVERNMENT has kept trade unions out of the free trade zones by various devices. For example, the electrical workers union was denied coverage of the women making electronic chips on the grounds that electrical was not the same as "electronic".**

Similarly the workers in the Selangor Pewter factory could not join the metal workers union because of a ruling that pewter was not metal (it is mostly tin).

The Labour minister justified the restrictions on workers in the free trade zones because "we want to give new investors time to settle down". In some cases this has meant 16 years without having to negotiate collectively with employees.

The government has now announced that workers can join unions but is insisting that they be "in-house".

While some of the leading multinationals operating in this area would like to keep unions out (after all, many moved to South East Asia to escape from the unionised workforces of the West) others have a more sophisticated view. As one academic said, "If there are no formal mechanisms for negotiations, one might get more militant forms springing up".

The electronics workforce has swelled over five-fold since the early 1970's as the industry has grown in importance. Workers have become more skilled and sophisticated. Yet they have been unable to bargain collectively over their problems such as eyestrain. Women electronics workers I met were very concerned about such issues as shift work. They said that the strains of the workplace regularly showed up in episodes of mass hysteria.

The electronics workers are keen to organise and they want a national union, not in-house ones which will be more vulnerable to pressure and manipulation by local management. The workers in at least one factory have already had a one-day stoppage over the issue. Further demonstrations are being planned.

Although opponents of the government, including MPs, have little access to the mass media and are forbidden outdoor public meetings, there is still a range of political activist groups.

One is the Environmental Protection Society, whose president Gurnit Singh says, "We must dispel the myth that politics is the prerogative of politicians."

Corruption and nepotism is rife on the Malaysian political scene, and some activists attempt to oppose the worst abuses. When a company wanted to build a toll highway, a group called the Anti-Abuses Movement was formed.

Feminists concentrate on issues like violence against women. Others, such as the Catholic church workers also concentrate on grassroots activity. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* reports one as saying her group wants to organise and conscientise the grassroots — estate and factory workers and squatters — with the aim of forming a mass-based people's movement.

That's a good summary of what's needed. But it's going to be an uphill battle.

— Janey Stone

## 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 bring in 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 building a worldwide movement, and we oppose measures of protectionism which lump the workers of one country against others. Only under worldwide socialism can there be an end to war and the threat of nuclear war, and an end to the abuse of the environment.

#### Liberation from Oppression

We fight for liberation and against the oppression of women, blacks, migrants and gays. All of these forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. The fight against them is an essential part of building a united revolutionary movement. They can only be ended through anti-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, socialist movements and wherever people are fighting, we are fighting. If that's where you want to be, join us today!

## WORKING CLASS HISTORY

AS WE watch today's Labor governments undermine our living standards and our union organisation, we feel shocked. Yet such things have a very long history.

There were Labor governments in power during the Great Depression, too, and there wasn't one of them that didn't do the bosses' bidding. Fortunately there were people willing to fight back.

Australia was one of the countries hardest hit by the Depression, and the employers were quick to take it out on the working class.

In 1928, waterside workers went on strike against an award of the Arbitration Court which considerably worsened their conditions of employment. The Nationalist government brought in the notorious "Dog Collar Act" to regiment the waterfront, and scabs were used.

In all states, the scabs got police protection. In Victoria, the Labor government's cops smashed picket lines and killed a striker.

1929 brought similar attacks on the Timber Workers, whose new award threatened "longer hours, less pay, piecework and the substitution of youths for adults."

The coal owners locked the miners out in an attempt to enforce a 12 1/2 percent wage cut. During the 1932 federal election campaign, Labor leader Scullin promised to reopen the mines on the workers' terms if elected. Miners raised huge sums of money for his campaign but once in power, Scullin reneged. The promised federal intervention never happened.

At Rothbury, in December 1929, a picketer was killed by police, provoking a mass outcry from trade unionists. Miners struck around Australia and a 20,000 strong demonstration in Sydney called on Scullin to use the armed forces to protect miners against the police. He refused.

**THE UNION** set up pickets at all Northern collieries and established a Labor Defence Corps. There was talk of disaffiliation from the ALP (sound familiar?).

Over the next few weeks rank and file action escalated, until a demonstration of 2000 Labor Defence Corps members at Kurby was broken up by police. The miners held out until they were defeated in June.

When the full force of the Depression hit in 1931, workers' confidence was at an all time



Lang, like most Labor politicians, only created more headaches for the working class.

## The 1930s: Labor was no better

low. Some continued to fight back, but when they did they always faced the armed power of the state, whether Labor or the conservatives were in power.

At the time Scullin came to office in October 1929, unemployment was over 12 percent, imports massively outweighed exports, conservatives controlled the Senate, and five million pounds of Treasury bills held by British bondholders were to fall due in June 1931.

The Commonwealth Bank Board and the conservatives put pressure on Scullin to introduce austerity measures. He invited an official of the Bank of England, Sir Otto Niemeyer to advise him. Niemeyer's advice was to cut wages by 20 percent.

Scullin's own answer, higher tariffs, had failed to pull Australia out of the Depression.

**NSW PREMIER Jack Lang** had a plan of his own. He too adopted protectionist measures, introducing legislation giving preference to goods produced in NSW. To the extent that this worked, it just ex-

ITS MOMENTS LIKE THESE YOU NEED—

"MINTIES" THE UNIVERSAL SWEET

ing class resistance during the Depression. The unemployed got little satisfaction from ALP governments.

In Victoria the Hogan Labor government added to the problem by sacking 6000 railway workers in two years. Melbourne's unemployed activists showed what they thought of Hogan by driving him off the May Day platform in 1932.

Jack Lang was no better. The Sydney Morning Herald described a battle between the unemployed, who were trying to stop an eviction, and the NSW police:

"After the desperate battle, in which iron bars, piping, rade bludgeons and chairs were used by the defenders, and banons by the police, the eighteen defenders were dragged, almost insensible, to the waiting patrol wagons."

"Only one man was hit by bullets fired at the walls of the house by police."

"A crowd numbering many thousands gathered in Union Street. When constables emerged from the back of the building with their faces covered with blood, the crowd booed and shouted insulting remarks."

During the Depression Labor claimed to govern on behalf of all social classes. But no such thing is possible, especially at times of economic crisis. In reality, the ALP always governs for the bosses. Their priority is maintaining the stability of the system.

Today when we see Bob Hawke, Peter Dowding and John Cain cut wages, prop up shady businesses, and send the cops to break up our demonstrations, we are simply observing the latest act in a long running saga.

—Mary Gorman



Jim Scullin: promises broken

**UNEMPLOYED** movements were a high point of work-

## INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

# DSH: taking the government down a peg

On the picket line at Defence Service Homes



**UNIONISTS** in the federal public service have been doing battle over the past few weeks, with struggles springing up in Defence Service Homes Corporation and in the Department of Community Services and Health.

Workers in Defence Service Homes (DSH) have had a most important victory. After eleven days on the picket line, they forced the government to guarantee there will be no workers sacked following the sale of DSH to the Westpac Bank.

DSH workers, members of the two main public service unions (ACOA and APSA), were stood down after applying bans in support of a log of claims covering job security and income protection. The guarantee of no sackings was generally seen as the most important issue, because public servants see job security as a compensation for low wages and poor working conditions.

The government's refusal to agree to this was a major attack on all its employees. Workers outside DSH were keen, therefore, to offer support. When DSH members visited other departments they were offered suggestions on how to win, received motions of support and collected large amounts of money for their strike fund.

Workers in Veteran's Affairs, the department to which DSH is attached, were especially supportive, walking out on three occasions and organising bans and a national 24 hour strike.

**DESPITE** opposition from ACOA officials, who have a policy of pursuing all campaigns on a department by department basis, even when the issues affect all members, support for service wide action was building.

In Melbourne a rank and file push in this direction was well under way when the dispute was settled.

In Sydney, Social Security delegates have adopted a policy of opposition to the department by department strategy. They have called for a service-wide delegates' meeting to discuss the issue of staff cuts and how to respond to them.

The credit for the DSH victory

belongs primarily, of course, to the DSH members whose determination took management and the government by surprise. But the solidarity from other sections also played its part, both in pressuring the government and in bolstering the morale of the picketers.

The dispute is important in another way. ACOA officials are always keen to avoid stand downs, and resist suggestions that stand downs should be met with strike action. They argue that such an escalation diverts the struggle from the original issue.

Leftists in the union have challenged this view, arguing that a militant response to stand downs can win victories. The outcome of the DSH dispute is powerful evidence for our point of view.

**MEANWHILE**, public servants in the Department of Community Services and Health (DCSH) are taking up the cudgels to resist the cutting of 500 jobs.

Well-attended meetings have shown real anger towards the government and management and there is a new enthusiasm to take action, coupled with a slowly growing impatience with the union officials' strategy.

In a department with very lit-

tle history of militant action, management may initially have felt that DCSH unionists would not show much fight. When the government and Health were amalgamated 350 jobs went without any resistance.

There is now a widespread awareness that job cuts mean demoralisation for hundreds of excess officials who get shunted around until they resign in frustration, and more work for those left.

At the early meetings in Canberra the arguments of Socialist Action members and supporters about the need to fight were well-received, but concrete proposals for stepped-up action received only a handful of votes. However, our amendment at a later mass meeting received 60 votes out of 300 and included motion to get around official foot-dragging.

Attacks on public servants' working conditions can be expected to continue. The Labor government is keen to show Australian bosses how to go about rationalising and streamlining their enterprises. But the determination of DSH and DCSH workers is an important sign to all workers that the bosses can be fought.

Many unionists, who may not know Leon Trotsky from a turnip, are starting to follow his advice for the working class: "disturb your bosses, rely on your own strength, and control your own leaders". These are three key ingredients for a winning recipe in the public service and wherever the bosses are to be opposed.

—Robert Staines (ABS) and Phil Shannon (DCSH)

are more interested in their bureaucratic positions than in a real, united fight.

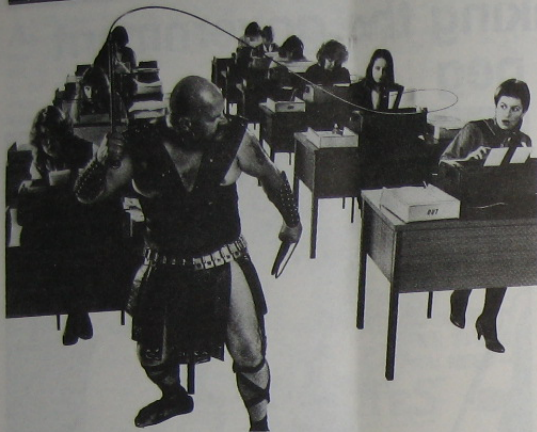
Also, unlike the recent Social Security dispute in NSW, there are not enough rank and file militants to successfully challenge the officials' control of the dispute. Nor is there yet in Canberra the sort of rank and file network of public service unionists spread over different departments who can organise action to get around official foot-dragging.

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—Robert Staines (ABS) and Phil Shannon (DCSH)

SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 11



## Why we hate Monday mornings

**DO YOU** hate Mondays? Is your work boring, frustrating and draining? Do you feel like a machine rather than a person?

It's a common feeling. Karl Marx made a classic analysis of it under the heading "alienation of labour".

What is this alienation of labour?

"Labour is external to the worker. You do not confirm yourself in your work, but deny yourself, feel miserable and not happy, do not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortify your flesh and run your mind. Your labour is not voluntary but forced. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but a mere means to satisfy needs outside itself."

We don't hate work because we're lazy. We have all at some time felt real satisfaction at completing a task or figuring out a problem, and with it comes a sense of camaraderie with our fellow workers. And we spend lots of our free time voluntarily doing work: gardening, car maintenance, charity work or political activity.

It is forced labour which is alienating: "labour under the rule, coercion and yoke of another person" as Marx put it.

**MOST OF** the time we have little or no control over what we do at work. Assembly lines, quotas and speed-ups

push us to our limit. When management cuts corners, it often means safety and quality is sacrificed.

At the same time work is so specialised that we only use a part of our abilities. The factory worker merges with the machine, the office workers with the computer, and both are commonly treated as if they don't have a brain.

The new management techniques currently being introduced claim to solve this problem through multi-skilling, but because of the power relations in capitalist society, multi-skilling becomes a means to eliminate jobs, not liberate us from alienation.

Meanwhile we are also estranged from other people by competition between workers and between firms. In the so-called free market system everyone, even the boss, is subject to what Marx called "an inhuman power" — the compulsive growth of the economic system.

Yet what makes us human is free conscious activity. Our ability to learn, to develop our abilities, and interact with other people and with nature creatively is what distinguishes us from animals.

Forced labour alienates us

from our humanity, while free labour is our human essence.

**IN ADDITION** to being alienated from our labour, in this society we are alienated from what we produce. If you work in a car factory, you do not own the cars that are made there, even though you have worked to make them. You still have to save up and buy one.

Or if you work at Heinz, you can still be hungry if you don't earn enough to buy all the food you need. The objects, says Marx, "begin to confront you as an autonomous power — hostile and alien. The workers are robbed of the objects they need most for life."

This experience was summed up in that Depression song about a worker reduced to begging:

"Once I built a railroad, made it run,

Made it race against time,

Once I built a railroad, now it's done.

Buddy, can you spare a dime?"

Marx described how people are even estranged from the products they live in, even though these too are created by the labour of the working class:

"The poor person's basement dwelling is an ungenial element, an alien restrictive power

which only surrenders itself to you at the expense of your sweat and blood. You cannot look on it as your home ... Instead you find yourself in someone else's house, whose owner lies in wait for you every day, and expects you if you fail to pay the rent."

For workers paying off mortgages it might be the bank rather than the landlord who has this power, but the basic reality is the same.

To summarise: capitalism is a system where we are estranged from the process of production and from what we produce. It's a system of forced rather than free labour.

**SO WHAT** is free labour? Cooking a meal is a good example. For a MacDonald's employee or hassled housewife it can be pretty oppressive. But at other times it can be a pleasant and productive experience.

We use both our brain and our physical powers to plan and prepare it. We work at our own pace and in our own manner. We enjoy the meal and perhaps share it with friends. Our labour produces direct benefits.

A society where all work was of this type would be very different to capitalism. In fact the transformation of work is a central task of the socialist revolution. By getting rid of useless tasks, such as advertising, bureaucracy and the army, and by using technology to the full, working hours can be drastically reduced. The most unpleasant and boring jobs can be largely eliminated.

With workers controlling the labour process, work will be, come safer, more satisfying, more meaningful. Our rulers implicitly recognise this fact when they argue that their fake "industrial democracy" will make us more motivated on the job. Real workers' democracy will unleash tremendous creativity among the workforce.

Multi-skilling will cease to be a threat and become a liberation, as our jobs become more interesting and varied. Marx pictured it this way:

"It will be 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, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind."

Production will be developed so that enough is produced that we can live by the maxim: "From each according to their ability and to each according to their need."

And for the first time, we can all look forward to Monday morning.

— Patricia Langenacker

**THE DECISION** by a judge in Sydney that a young woman should be sterilised because of her intellectual disabilities raises an issue of great importance to socialists, who should always be concerned with human dignity.

Controversy will be further fuelled at the suggestion by Victoria's ombudsman that sterilisation should be considered in the case of parents whose children have become wards of the state.

Why has this issue suddenly aroused controversy in 1988, when sterilisations have been performed for years?

The Family Court judge has decided that the fourteen-year-old woman's parents could consent to a sterilisation on her.

It's the question of consent that has involved the courts. Legally no doctor can perform any operation on any person without their consent, or the consent of someone who can validly give it.

Consent is vital. Without it doctors could be liable for criminal or civil assault, or could be up for professional misconduct. But what happens when a person can't give consent because they don't have the present mental or intellectual capability?

**COMPULSORY** or non-consensual sterilisation have had a sorry history, especially in the first part of the twentieth century.

Proponents of eugenics argued that personal traits like mental illness, intellectual disability, epilepsy, criminality and pauperism were hereditary, and those that possessed them should not be allowed to breed.

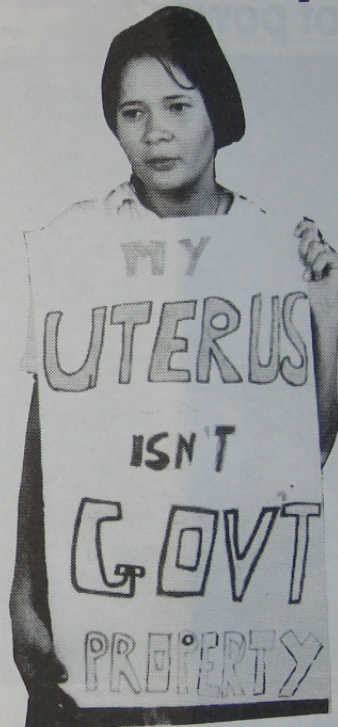
Others, followers of social evolution went even further. They agreed with Darwin's argument that the species advances by the survival of the fittest. Yet they believed that the unfit, like alcoholics, criminals and prostitutes were reproducing at a higher rate.

The eugenics movement was quite successful. By 1937, thirty-one US states and two Canadian provinces provided for compulsory sterilization in their statute books. The movement declined in the 1940s, when people saw Hitler taking such ideas to an horrific conclusion. But sterilisations continued.

Other arguments emerged. There were the economic justifications: that children of people with intellectual disabilities would be neglected, that they would become a burden on the state.

Currently, sterilisations on women with intellectual disabili-

## Dilemmas of a sterile society



Fighting words. But why is the state intervening?

ities are rationalised on the basis that the operation is in their best interests. The woman would not have to be informed about menstruation. She wouldn't have to experience the discomfort and inconvenience of monthly periods.

There would be no danger of pregnancy, with its attendant pain and trauma. No need for abortions. No wasting time and energy on sex education.

**THE EXTENT** of involuntary sterilisations in Australia is hard to determine. Recent government reports in NSW,

on trying to have children, only to find out that they were sterilised as young teenagers.

Hysterectomies, tubal ligations, and to a much lesser extent vasectomies, are used as an alternative to education and independence training. Often it's an easy option for parents unable to come to terms with their children's sexuality.

Increasing concern about the rights of people with disabilities and moves towards de-institutionalisation are two reasons why sterilisation has become an issue in the 1980s.

**THE INCREASED** concern did not happen by accident: it is the result of the struggles of disabled persons to get a better deal in society.

They are demanding freedom of movement and personal relationships, freedom from abuse, the right to manage money and make decisions. There is a proliferation of self-advocacy groups. The Intellectual Disability Rights Service of Sydney's Redfern Legal Centre, and the militant actions by People for Equality Not Institutionalisation (PENI).

At the same time the current vogue is for closing institutions, getting people back into mainstream society, and setting up community residential units. This sounds good, but really it is a cover for cutbacks in health and social services, and for shifting the burden of care back onto the family, especially women.

As this burden increases, parents will be tempted all the more to use sterilisation as an easy option. Doctors have for years convinced with parents, and surreptitiously performed operations that take away the basic human right to reproduce. The trend could accelerate now.

The capitalist state, through its judges, has stepped in. Given some of the other alternatives, this is by no means the worst thing that can happen.

Nevertheless, any increase in state power, whether openly repressive or supposedly benign is a worry for socialists. The only reliable protection for young women with intellectual disability is a powerful social movement that can fight for their rights and create a more progressive climate, and eventually create a society where human needs are paramount.

— Sam Berry

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SOCIALIST ACTION — PAGE 13



REVIEWS

**A**ustralia's bosses all agree the economy needs restructuring. But they argue over how to do it.

The New Right wants to kick heads. But there are other capitalists and their ALP mates who want to incorporate the unions, and persuade us that the changes are good for us.

John Mathews' *A Culture of Power* argues the second point of view. It aims to convince employers that the union leaders and ALP have some clever ideas for Australian capitalism, and simultaneously to convince workers that capitalist solutions are the best for them too.

Mathews says change is inevitable. Capitalism run according to the old assembly line methods "is just not efficient or productive goods produced in this way are now too costly to compete."

"In the 1990s," he writes, "productivity will be crucially dependent on skill, and on worker responsibility and commitment. Industrial democracy has become a matter of economic survival."

Mathews says "codetermination" between workers and management will give us a greater say in running society. We'll move step by step a year in the workplace leads to a place on the Board, which flows on to control of investment funds, giving us some real clout running the economy.

**B**UT ALTHOUGH some countries have already tried such methods, Mathews is hard pressed to point to any successes.

The Swedish labour movement pioneered the idea of union-controlled investment funds. Billed as a challenge to monopoly power, the scheme's real aim was to revitalize an investment-starved industrial sector. In the face of employer resistance, it has been much revised and reduced, and has had virtually no impact on investment.

By 1985 the government announced the scheme would not operate after 1990. Workers had lost money from levies and had little to show for it.

Or take employee share schemes, another of Mathews' pet ideas. Though he says these have swept Britain and the US, he can't point to a single place where worker shareholders have influenced company decisions.

In fact he admits a major problem. Shareholders want profits distributed to them; management wants to plough back into expanding the business; and workers want more

# Can the Accord create a culture of power?



Author John Mathews thinks unions can pack more punch under the Accord

jobs and higher wages. He has no answer for the dilemma confronting worker/shareholders: are they shareholders first, or company managers, or workers?

Similar problems face his vision of industrial democracy. Mathews says the workforce of the future will be a "flexible, highly skilled, responsible and democratically organised workforce which...codetermines with management how the work will be done."

Yet he recognises this can mean speed-ups, increased stress and the introduction of shop-floor groups like Quality Circles that are frequently a cover for union busting.

mix of sources, there is nothing in his plan that differs dramatically from the current set-up.

In fact he sounds downright reactionary when he suggests the government "take steps...to ensure that it is not subverted by that significant minority not persuaded as to the merits of working."

Mathews' strategy for achieving his goals is weakest of all. The key feature is re-electing a Labor government, followed by signing accords with various pressure groups. He claims Labor's first two terms have shown it can manage the economy, and a third term can bring sustained reform.

Most observers of Labor in power would say the government's greatest "success" was in wage cutting. Even that great supporter of the Accord Laurie Carmichael admits that its benefits for the working class aren't "immediately evident". Mathews doesn't seem to have noticed.

"The Accord has liberated us from the treadmill of wages struggle and allowed unions to concentrate on quality of life issues," he claims. For most of us this means the ACTU's refusal to defend our living standards, and our constant battle to preserve working conditions.

**F**OR MATHEWS, even Hawke's broken promises are a blessing.

"The notion of a Labor Party being elected to government on the basis of a once-for-all program...these ideas have had their day." Instead he wants a "flexible agreement in the face of events." Like maybe the dumping of the ALP's anti-uranium policy?

Mathews raises important issues, but they deserve better treatment than he provides.

Democracy on the job is a good idea: why not elect management? Accord between government and workforce could be very useful, but under the current regime it's always at our expense. What's needed is a very different sort of government: a workers' state, where we actually control political decision-making.

That would be socialism. Yet at the beginning of the book Mathews rules out socialism as an "immediately defined and essentially unattainable goal."

But in that case what's left is nothing resembling a "culture of power". Power remains with the employers and a state machine that upmen Labor governments have never changed one bit.

— Liz Ross

REVIEWS



Lindy Chamberlain at her trial: a travesty of justice

# Lindy's trials: up close where it hurts

**FOR EIGHT** years now we have lived with the ghost of Azaria Chamberlain, the baby who achieved national fame by disappearing at Ayers Rock one night in 1980.

We have endured the trials of her parents, Lindy and Michael, and argued furiously among ourselves about the cause of her death. With his new movie, *Evil Angels*, Fred Schepisi starts to make sense of the whole extraordinary experience.

Many of us are heartily sick of the whole thing by now, but it's worth reminding ourselves that what happened to Lindy Chamberlain says a lot about the society we live in. It's not a pretty

picture, but it makes one of the best and most chilling films released this year.

The film-makers are unashamed supporters of Lindy Chamberlain, as well they might be. If we will never know for certain what did happen to Azaria, we do know there was never a scrap of evidence for the claim that Lindy murdered her. Lindy's conviction was based on no body, no weapon, no motive and a scenario for the murder that was physically impossible.

It was based on a media hate campaign that struck a deep chord with millions of ordinary Australians.

Chamberlain was so deeply hated by so many people not

because she had murdered her baby — others have done much worse without provoking such a reaction. She was hated either because she refused to admit it and plead for forgiveness, or because she did not behave the way a "real woman" is supposed to.

She did not cry for the media or for the jury. She exchanged harsh words with the prosecutor at her trial instead of whimpering. She was a victim of society's ingrained ideas about how women, and especially mothers, behave.

These aren't new insights. *Socialist Action* once ran an article arguing along these lines. So, at different times, has much of the left.

But this film presents the argument in a very powerful manner. Media harassment stops being a phrase and becomes a horrible reality when Lindy and Michael are being pursued across their lawn by three TV helicopters, in a scene that looks like something from the Vietnam war.

We see the effect on the Chamberlains themselves — up close where it hurts. Private moments of doubt, of anger, of blaming each other.

Above all we have Meryl Streep as Lindy. Streep is without doubt one of the strongest actors of our time. Her ability to show emotion, even bottled up emotion, gives us a real insight into the character well beyond the words in the script.

This is a film about events that all of us were involved in. Indeed, it includes scattered scenes of ordinary people arguing about the case that left me, at least, squirming in my seat. It is a film that helps us see how the great issues socialists are always going on about (sexism, the media, the courts) really affect all our lives.

— Graham Willett

BOOKS

## The art of revolution

**IS THERE** any such thing as revolutionary literature? Barbara Harlow's book *Resistance Literature* says that there is — and plenty of it.

In particular she points to stories and poems written within the national liberation movements that have changed the face of the world this century.

Harlow discusses about thirty works: novels, stories, biography and poetry. But this is more than a survey. *Resistance Literature* recreates the visions of the writers and supports their political goals.

Harlow says that ideas of "art for art's sake" are useless to readers of revolutionary literature, and she takes her cue from Salvadoran poet Roque Dalton:

*Poetry  
Forgive me for having helped  
you understand  
you're not made of words  
alone.*

Art is a weapon, used by our side and theirs, and the best writers in this book realise it. Keeney novelist N Gugi Wa Thiong'o presents a post-colonial official who talks "with suggestive variation of a new cultural movement". What he means is that the corrupt nationalist government should harness to its own ends the popular and artistically fruitful Mau Mau liberation struggle.

Against this we have the way in which literature can build solidarity against oppression and exploitation.

Women writers are especially important here. Harlow shows a recurring theme — life in the struggle against the general causes of oppression can also bring gender roles crashing down. For it is women fighters. "Feminism means women's liberation, and that is seen as part of a struggle against forces of oppression — it must contain a larger collective vision."

Internationally, too, this literature is important. The book gives an inkling of the range of politically-charged writing happening around the world.

Often writers in different post-colonial societies are aware of each other's works, and there is a strong impression in *Resistance Literature* of an international "communion of the imagination". Certainly, the strong tradition of writers rallying to support each other against attacks by the state confirms this.

It's not just writers. Literature makes it possible for fighters in many struggles to reach out beyond their own communities for solidarity. We are lucky that so much of it is written in English. It gives us access to have never realised many of us have never had, and make us aware of the human struggle in what might otherwise be far away issues.

Harlow's book is an introduction to an exciting world of literature that challenges us all to reconsider what makes us all a good read for revolutionaries — and to go beyond just reading.

— Allan Gardner

# Exams: why they're a failure

**EXAMS,** Mao Tse Tung once observed, "are a surprise attack upon the people."

The Chairman said a lot of odd things. But as I watched the Year 12 students grimly trooping into the exam centre at Melbourne's Showgrounds for their final exams last month, I had to agree that this time old Mao got it right.

Having experienced over 150 exams in my own student days (and a week long sit-in at Monash in 1974 in protest at the whole crazy game), I marvel that people still submit to the torture. Or worse, advocate more of it... like the stupid letter to the Age by ex-radical Alex Fazakas, moaning that the Year 12 English exam has been too easy for his students to show off the sophistication he had taught them!

The criticism of exams and other competitive forms of assessment that we raised in that struggle on the campuses in 1974 still holds true today. They are just anti-educational props for a system of privilege into which the private schools and universities eagerly feed.

Competitive assessment lays down that all students must learn at the same rate. If they don't, they are punished by having to repeat a year, or by missing out on higher education altogether. The fear of failure becomes the dominant force in education.

Yet obviously humans don't all learn at the same rate. If, on failing a test, they were told their areas of deficiency so they could relearn and pass at their own pace, testing would be an educational exercise. But this non-competitive, non-punitive approach, often known as diagnostic learning, is staunchly resisted by the universities.

## COMPETITIVE learning leads to crazy distortions.

At Monash, the stories used to be legion... of students succumbing by leaping from the eleven-storey "Ming Wing" of the lecturer who had to drop his pass mark to 11% because he'd set his exam too hard on the guy so doped up on pep pills after non-stop cramming that he tore through an entire exam essay writing each line over the last one.

Sure, these were the extreme cases. But studies also show that most tertiary students stop reading (apart from textbooks). The pressures to cram reduce reading to an arduous chore... and they call it education!

Defenders of exams claim that you must be tested before being turned loose as a brain surgeon or a bridge designer. That may be so,

IF SCHOOLS DIDN'T HAVE EXAMS, THE BOSSES WOULD HAVE TO MAKE UP THEIR OWN....



but why by competitive and punitive means? And if, as the exam lobby claims, they are simulating work conditions, why is "cheating" banned? The ability to work in groups or out of manuals is more vital in most jobs than the ability to compete.

The exam lobby reveals a corner of the truth when it talks of the demands of work, however. The demand for exams comes from those who control work, the employers, and it comes directly and indirectly.

**APPLY for any white-collar job and the form will ask for your exam results. Exams give the bosses an easy way of grading workers, young ones in particular, as a first step to hiring the "best talent".**

Big companies don't even wait for students to finish studying. They award scholarships to grab the pick of the crop early, give grants to ensure that research is directed to their own fields, and sit on college councils to keep business interests uppermost.

Today, business wants more graduates. But not so many that it will support open entry to tertiary education, that might cost it a few tax handouts. So the exam system remains, and students must pay the tertiary tax for the privilege of providing more brain-power for employers.

(There is, of course, a faction of academia that dislikes being the bootboy of commerce. Its alternative, the ivory tower university, is

just as elitist, and it ardently supports exams to select "the best minds".)

The consequences of all this echo through education. Despite Whitlam's abolition of tertiary fees, elite private schools remain the stepping stones to the universities and professions. The exam system is a large part of the reason. The private schools prey on middle class parents' ambitions for their kids, bragging of the Year 12 pass rates they get by "spoon-feeding" and by ruthless weeding out in Years 10 and 11.

Meanwhile, progressive innovations born of the mid-1970s questioning of assessment are being rolled back. Victoria's Year 12 STC course (in which students and teachers negotiate a syllabus, assessment is descriptive and there are no exams) is being abolished despite its success.

In Victoria, 90% of STC pupils admitted to university go through in minimum time, compared with around 70% of high school kids and 50% of spoon-fed private school kids. So the exam system is shown to be inefficient as well as inhuman, yet the authorities cling to it.

**WHILE the STC course has shown that non-competitive assessment can work, it's worth recalling some of the more sweeping goals of the 1974 campaign.**

Our aim of non-competitive learning was just an initial one. We wanted open entry to the universi-

Seeing Red!

with Alec Kahn

ties, a living wage for students, and staff-student control of education as part of workers' control of society.

One of the militant teacher unions of the time had called for open entry, to tear down the privilege of the universities, and we took it up as a logical conclusion of our hatred of the exam system.

The NSW Builders Labourers were raising the question of workers' control, and the STC experience and ventures like the Political Economy course at Sydney Uni have since proved that staff-student control is viable.

We demanded a living wage so that adults as well as kids could educate themselves under an open entry scheme. Thousands of people on "mature age" schemes and at Britain's Open University have shown that adults are just as able as kids to handle tertiary education, if not more so. Thousands more are kept out by the need to support a family.

Alas, when the university authorities smashed our sit-ins at Monash and Macquarie with mass arrests, students lowered their sights instead of widening them to the great union struggles going on outside the campuses. Only ALP campus politicians like Deane Wells (now a failed Queensland MP) diverted them into futile gabfests with professors intent on maintaining their power.

The upshot was a concession worse than the exams that originally got us fighting: the blight of "continuous assessment" which has kept students' noses to the grindstone and clean of politics ever since. Those who halt-make revolutions do indeed dig their own graves.

But the fact that we rats rebelled against the rat-race is still a cause for optimism. Maybe those grim-faced unfortunates who lined up at the Showgrounds will do the same.

Let's hope the next rebellious heat of the rat-race learns from our defeat in 1974 and takes away the starker's pistol instead of negotiating about how many times it is fired.

