
THE BROAD LEFT CONFERENCE



EASTER WEEKEND 1986 · 28th-31st MARCH
NEW SOUTH WALES INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
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Radical Film Festival at the Conference

Room 413, NSW Institute of Technology
(Child care available Turner Hall, entrance in
Harris Street)

FRIDAY 28 MARCH

10 a.m.: **When the Mountains Tremble**
(a magnificent film on the revolution and
counter-revolution in Guatemala, Central
America. It drew the best response at the
Radical Film Festival (MSS) 1985 and is one of
the best films on such a struggle yet produced).

Feature: Allies
(the film on CIA/US domination of Australia)

2 p.m.: **Kemira** (the film by Tom Zubrycki of
the Kemira miners struggle)
Feature: Strikebound (the film of the miners
strike in the '30s, fictionalised ...)

SATURDAY 29 MARCH

7.30 p.m.: **Couldn't be fairer** (Dennis
O'Rourke's film on oppression of Aborigines in
north Queensland, produced with Mick Miller
of the North Queensland Lands Council)

Feature: PATU (the New Zealand film on the
struggle against the Springbok Rugby tour –
the hit of the recent Asia-Pacific Film Festival in
Sydney. It is a moving and magnificent film
showing the brutality of Muldoon's police and
the resistance of the anti-racists)

*Entry free for those registered for the whole
Conference. \$4.50/\$3 for those coming for
the films only (per session).*



Broad Left Conference Concert and Dance in support of the people of Chile SUNDAY 30 MARCH 1986 7pm - midnight

Great Hall, NSW Institute of Technology,
Parramatta Road, Broadway

Part I: **Order by Numbers**
Political satire and comedy from
Queensland, presenting
"Tell Tales from the Altered State"

Part II: **Songs and music
from Latin America**

Part III: **Dance away to
Latin American rhythms**

Chilean food and drink available on sale.
Entry \$5.00. (Concession \$3.00)

Support the Chilean Resistance Movement. All monies
raised to be channelled directly inside Chile to the Popular
Democratic Movement and militant trade unions.

Chile Solidarity Committee,
P.O. Box A600, Sydney, South 2000, NSW.



Full Participation for Women

Major Panel Sessions – Thanks to the
hundreds of women who have participated in
the Socialist Feminist Forums held in Sydney
and Melbourne. Your suggestions and follow
up work have ensured that women comprise at
least 50% of the 70 speakers for major panel
discussions at the Conference. Similarly work-
shops following the panel sessions and the
campaign – workshops on Sunday afternoon.

Participation from the Floor The National
Organizing Committee has devised a question
sheet to monitor the participation of men and
women in general discussion. Chair people will
be asked to call for two volunteers to note the
length of speaking time and content according
to the gender of speakers. In this way the
Conference Women's Collective can monitor
and if necessary intervene regarding our
demand for equal participation.

Conference Women's Collective All
women attending the Conference are invited to
attend and get together over dinner at the
Concourse Cafe, lower ground floor of the
Institute of Technology at 5.30 p.m.

This will be the first meeting of the proposed
Women's Collective.

We plan to meet casually over a meal, catch
up with interstate friends and gather socialist
feminist forces for the weekend. If you feel a
little isolated or unconfident about your partic-
ipation in the weekend, please come along for
support and plans re rabble rousing re the
issues. It has been suggested by the Socialist
Feminist Forums that a Women's Collective be
formed to oversee the Conference.

Jacqui Widin (02) 601 3555 –
(Bus.) (02) 51 2840 and a Victorian woman yet
to be elected are prepared to act as organisers
for the Collective. This involves collecting
monitor sheets, collating results and reporting
back if participation is not representative.

It has been suggested that the Collective
meet at 5.30 p.m. Saturday evening to evaluate
Saturday's proceedings and plan socialist
feminist input into Sunday afternoon.
Immediate Directions Workshops.

The Collective structure has been proposed
in case of dispute, to formulate strategy and
action if required. We may decide not to
formally use it. Our full-on participation in the
broad spectrum of debate and political activity
will as per usual be totally time consuming.
However if a woman wants to evaluate and
intervene in the proceedings, bring your
support for the Collective to the Friday night
Women's meeting or contact Jacqui Widin
before the Conference or during it, via the
Registration Desk.

See you Friday night, in the Conference
sessions and possibly at the Saturday night
Women's Collective.

In sisterhood, Jane Martin & Roslyn Smidt
Conference Organizers

Outrage · Outrage

The recent collapse of the
Government's commitment to
National Land Rights demands a
full scale campaign of protest and
rage.

Strategies for this campaign will
be outlined by Aboriginal
speakers at the Conference
followed up by a public meeting on
National Land Rights organised
by the Committee to Defend Black
Rights. This will be held on
FRIDAY, APRIL 4 at 7.30 p.m.

Waterside Workers Club
60 Sussex Street, Sydney

Authorised by the Committee
to defend Black Rights (02) 660 3444



Building Socialism in Australia

by Romaine Rutnam (New South Wales)

I agree with Jim Levy (Bulletin 1) that the overall focus and purpose of the NBLC should be to make socialism a relevant aim for Australians.

Australians are very affluent in world terms. Who are the people likely to want to act to radically change the present situation? What motivates such actions?

In Australia today, there are various groups which are active around social change issues, though the activists are a tiny proportion of the total population.

These groups include:

- trade unions
- social democratic parties
- socialist/communist parties
- peace/disarmament
- environment
- aborigines (black power; land rights)
- women's liberation
- alternative lifestyle
- self-help
- gay liberation
- anti-racist
- international solidarity
- animal liberation
- children's liberation.

The building of a socialist Australia cannot be achieved without three prerequisites – common agreement over: a) a *vision* of what we want to build, where we want to go; b) a *theory* of how our society has become what it is, and how it might be changed in the direction we want it to go in; and c) a *programme* of action (including organisational forms and practices) that will be effective in achieving our aims.

It is a measure of the diversity and complexity of life in Australia that it is rare for activists in one of these groups to be active in any others. A common understanding of their aims and perspectives has not yet been achieved. The NBLC should be seen as part of the process of trying to build agreement between the activists of all these separate movements.

The concept of power is useful in trying to explain what is common behind the various struggles of these movements. In each case, these movements are struggling against the inequality of power and decision-making over a particular

sphere of social life that is important to them.

They seek to act both as a means of consciousness-raising for the powerless, and as a means of increasing the power of those groups to intervene in decision-making in their sphere of interest.

There are real possibilities for links between these movements, particularly in the campaigns they launch in the public sphere (political/industrial). This is because it is usually the case that it is the same small minority group in society who are the current decision makers over the allocation of material and human resources against whom the movements of struggle want to intervene.

There are, however, significant differences between these movements which should not be glossed over, but instead should be analysed and taken into account in developing strategies for unity.

Differences in values/methods/organisation/strategy and tactics

It is probably not too much of a simplification to distinguish between the values and methods of the older movements of struggle – the unions, social democratic and socialist/communist parties, formed in the late 19th century, basically to confront the power inequalities of class – and the newer movements of the twentieth century (mostly post 1960s), particularly those which started in the private arena of the family and social life around the power inequalities of gender and race.

A quick summary of the pre-1960's values and methods would include the following:

solidarity; collectivism; the individual as subordinate to the collective; the role of the vanguard in party and union; aim – liquidate capitalist class, smash the state; strategy – oppositionism, workerism; national-level action (centralisation, statism);

Post-1960s, the values and methods seem to include the following:

the importance of individual/local actions and solutions (decentralisation; extension into private sphere – "the personal is political"); consciousness-raising; non-hierarchical structures of organisation; prefigurative actions (i.e. building organisations and lifestyles that pre-figure the "ideal" equal society that is the goal); strategy – empowerment of the powerless; celebration of diversity (ecology – in the natural and also the human environment).

There is probably a material basis for picking the 1960s as a dividing line which produced such differences in values and methods. The level of affluence reached by working people in the post-war boom, the absence of basic wants, was a precondition for struggle around "extra" demands that were not a matter of survival but of quality of life.

In my view the post-1960's values and methods have generally been more effective (in Australia, at least) in

advancing the cause of the movement that have adopted them, than the pre-1960's values and methods.

Casual Differences

Another key difference between the struggles around class power, and the struggles around gender and race power relates to the causes of these power differentials in society.

Gender and race differences have physical basis in the biological diversity which is a principle of life on this planet.

Centuries of human culture and conditioning have certainly overlaid differences with roles and stereotype which seek to justify the power of a particular sex or sexual preference over the other/s.

However, the solution to these power differentials does not require the elimination of the other sex or race/s.

The elimination of gender and race power differences can be achieved in society with a culture of tolerance and acceptance of diversity. However, class differences are not differences that should be tolerated but ones that *should* be eliminated.

The key difference lies in the fact that there is no physical basis for class power differences. They are *entirely human constructs*.

The point to be taken from this is that there are essential differences between the movements around class power, and those around gender and race power. Each is equally legitimate in its sphere.

There should be no question of allocating a priority of struggle, say if class struggle is more important than gender struggle, or vice versa. What we need is that each struggle, on its own, is sufficient to build a socialist Australia.

The Building of Socialism

A respect for, and understanding of each of the movements, their values, aspirations and achievements, should precede the building of alliances to socialist renewal in Australia.

The next step will be to try and reach a collective vision of what the "good society" will look like, which we are all interested in building.

The strength of the movement for socialist Australia will lie in a more conscious attempt to develop methods of organisation and practice that are prefigurative of the good society – described above as the post-1960's values. These emphasise, above all, a strong relationship between personal (individual) liberation and co-operative, tolerant action.

Let us find the way to get across to all Australians that our goal is relevant to them. Marx's characterisation of communist society as one where "the development of each [individual] is the condition of the free development of all" is, to me, one of the most useful descriptions of the "good society" we like to live in.

Leftwing Strategy based on Economic Analysis

by Barbara Curthoys

One of the aims of the Broad Left Conference at Easter is to discuss "general strategic questions for the Left" in the face of "the emergence of a more extreme and ideologically confident right wing." In drawing up a strategy which will unite the left a thorough-going analysis of the economy and its political ramifications is needed because the renewed right wing offensive against the trade unions, the progressive movement and the public sector originates from the present day crisis of world capitalism and its effects on the Australian economy.

It is true that a great deal of research and analysis has been carried out by many left wing and Marxist economists but it would be useful if this could be integrated into a body of knowledge readily available to the labour movement generally so that theory can help give direction to our offensive against right wing policies. Economic analysis is basic to our success.

General State of Crisis

The capitalist world has been in a deteriorating state of general crisis since 1973. One of the specific features of this general crisis is that smaller capitalist nations like Australia are more dependent upon the state of the economy at the centre of international finance, particularly the economy of the United States. No national government can control international capital. "Most national economies are now globally interdependent and highly concentrated, locked into world capitalism by transnational conglomerates which straddle industries and nations."¹

The fact that national governments can no longer control international finance effectively has resulted in new contradictions between state monopoly capitalism and private monopoly functioning supranationally. The drive for de-regulation derives from the need for a freer international market, laissez-faire capitalism on an international scale. This push has been assisted by the reduced effectiveness of state monopoly capitalism.

The attempt by the Liberal Party to privatise areas of the public sector are

indicators in Australia of the general direction towards de-regulation in capitalist countries e.g. England and United States. If the Liberal Party were to win an election this trend would accelerate. However a problem for socialists is that there are also Labor Party "dries", especially within the parliamentary rightwing, who are also supporting deregulation in some areas. The floating of the Australian dollar by the present Labor Government and the licence it has given to 16 foreign banks to operate in Australia are strong indications of this trend. Only a strong united left within and outside the Labor Party can reverse these policies.

Crisis of Unemployment

The deteriorating general crisis of capitalism has also resulted in a permanent crisis of unemployment. The cyclical crises of '73-'74 and '80-'83 have resulted in high inflation and high unemployment. This has been intensified by the rapid development of the scientific and technological revolution. Many workers were made redundant because of innovations like the micro-chip and many of these have never been retrained or found new employment. Of those who lost their jobs in the '73-'74 crisis, many were never re-absorbed even though the economic situation improved.

As a result the working class has been divided into those employed in industries and in service occupations and the unemployed. It is young unskilled workers and workers in traditional trades – process, transport and clerical industries who have suffered the most. In capitalist terms there needs to be an annual growth of 3% to 5% if unemployment is not to worsen.

Inflation, deterioration of public health, housing and education, unemployment and the attempt to deregulate the labour market are products of a capitalist system in Australia which has also become subservient to international financiers and transnational conglomerates.

As has been repeated 'ad nauseum' by many on the left, Australia is *not* in a revolutionary situation and socialism is not on the immediate agenda.

However, in addition to developing programs which aim at resolving current problems we also need to aim towards transformations of a more fundamental nature.

Immediate programs can deal with issues which will result in a more just distribution of the available volume of labour among the bulk of working men and women. The following distribution would create more jobs, improve standards of living generally and make large inroads into corporate profits. (Figures of the September quarter last year as quoted in the National Times (Feb 14-20) p.7 indicate that the corporate gross operating surplus share of incomes was 16.2% compared to 12% when the present Labour Government was elected.)

Program (immediate)

- (a) Work through the accord at this stage to reduce the working week, eliminate overtime, extend holidays, support superannuation schemes higher pension, and reduced prices.
- (b) Increase the social wage as proposed by the recent conference of ALP women at their national conference. This proposal is that the Government should redirect proposed tax cuts over the next two financial years to increase the social wage and spending on such areas as education, housing, health, employment programs and social security.
- (c) Develop new spheres for the use of labour in the cultural, educational, sports, environment protection etc.
- (d) Grant full equal pay and complete job opportunity for women.
- (e) Grant land rights so that Aboriginal people can decide for themselves how their land will be used
- (f) Introduce a capital gains tax
- (g) Expand the public sector of employment, with all the consequences this entails e.g. the re-orientation of investments into labour intensive spheres

The second range of programs should begin to tackle the national/international capitalist economy at its source.

- (a) reverse deregulation
- (b) replace controls on banking and the financial sector
- (c) introduce nationalisation of major industries as a counter to the privatisation of public industries
- (d) restrict the entry of foreign capital with the eventual aim of tackling the capitalist system in its entirety.

The use of labour power by the private owners of industry must eventually be changed if we are to overcome the economic, social and cultural deprivation within our society.

At the Easter conference it is important to keep our socialist vision while finding ways for uniting the left against the immediate threat from the right.

References:

Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism. Vol 5. Edited by E. L. Wheelwright and Ken Buckley.

"The Crisis of World Capitalism and the Working-class movement in industrially developed capitalist countries." (International Academic Conference, Sofia, May 31-June 1, 1984).

Politics and the Finance Sector, No. 18, June 1985.

1. J. G. Crouch and E. L. Wheelwright. "Australia: Client State of International Capitalism. A Case Study of the Mineral Industry." *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism, Vol. 5, p. 14.*



The Third World Debt Problem

by Neil Hawthorne

The difficulty of formulating a new international economic order based on social and economic justice is one of the most pressing problems facing the developing countries at this time.

Currently the payments incurred by the Third World countries in 1985 were \$US125 billion, while receipts in the form of new credits, financial aid and investments amounted to \$US85 billion. (Source: The 1985 Financial Report of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development I.B.R.D.)

The granting of credits and loans by international agencies and individual countries to develop national economies and stimulate trade is a common and logical practice. However, to the overwhelming majority of developing countries, foreign credits have not only failed to expand economic development but have actually retarded the economies and have been a major contribution to the continuing impoverishment of the bulk of the populations, especially the working people, who bear the brunt of any and every national austerity measure.

The developed capitalist countries are themselves experiencing severe economic difficulties. One method they use to alleviate this problem is the ruthless use of science and technology to replace human labour and the simultaneous creation of a vast army of unemployed with the aim of emasculating the trade union movement and reducing the wage rates of workers. Another way is to extend credit in the form of development aid at high interest rates. The United States is the main culprit in this regard. Its massive increases in the lending rate have been extremely detrimental to the developing countries, resulting in a huge inflow of capital to Washington accompanied by a similar rise in the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar. For example, the foreign indebtedness of the Third World countries is increasing by 12% annually. The U.S. banks have deferred some of these repayments, but in effect this makes the credits more expensive and further undermines the fragile economies of the recipient countries.

The insidious effect of this means that an ever increasing proportion of the exports of the developing countries goes to earn dollars to pay their debts because the bulk of this indebtedness is in U.S.

dollars, the exchange rate of which steadily rises while the rate of the national currencies correspondingly declines. Thus, the cost of Third World imports from the U.S. and the other developed Western countries rises while their exports, mainly in the form of raw materials, attract lower prices. It follows that high inflation and a lowering of the standard of living for vast sections of the people of the developing countries is inevitable.

The question of the arms build-up imposed on the Third World countries is another cause for grave concern. The practice of the NATO countries has been to manufacture regional seats of tension. As well they falsely cite the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty countries as an external threat in order to pressure the developing countries into buying high-cost armaments. Indeed the military spending of these countries is approximately equal to their foreign debt repayments. The authoritative weekly, the National Times, in its January 24 issue claims global military spending now exceeds \$US700 billion per year and states that without its control there is little chance of dealing with the budget problems of the industrial nations or the hunger of the poor nations. One can hardly argue with that.

Before granting a deferment of payment or the reservicing of previous loans to the debtor nations the U.S. controlled International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) and the major Western banks impose stringent conditions such as devaluation, major cuts in spending for health, education and welfare, wage reductions and the cancellation of food subsidies. Simultaneously they demand freer access for foreign capital and the dismantling of the state sector.

How can this Third World debtor problem be alleviated? The expansion of exports to pay these debts is unrealistic because of the protectionist barriers erected by the Western nations and the rock-bottom prices offered for raw material exports. Sugar, for example, is the primary export for many Latin American countries. However its world price has dropped by 80% in the past two years, from \$US630 to \$US130 per tonne. The developing countries are seeing that besides an economic solution to the debt crisis a political one is necessary. At the United Nations General Assembly and at non-aligned movement forums they have repeatedly called for an end to the arms race with part of the resources thus saved directed towards development purposes. If each developing country had adequate energy resources, for example, electrification and industrialisation of the nation would soon follow and with them communications and transport infrastructure. Manufactured goods would then become more sophisticated, the people's living standards would rise and town and country would be brought closer together.

A major restructuring of the international monetary system, w based virtually on the economic h the U.S. dollar, is vitally necessary lowering of Western protectionist accompanied by a general liberalis the terms of international trade, w greatly enhance the economic po the developing countries.

The Western creditor nations h sophisticated international financi organisations such as the I.M.F., tl I.B.R.D. and the Bank for Internati Settlements, which protect their ir (Pun definitely intended). On the c hand the debtor nations have no lik An international organisation simil Council for Mutual Economic Ass which is an economic association socialist countries founded in 194 co-ordinate the economic policies members and which has its own m and financial institutions, would ge way to resolve the debt problems Third World countries.

The current North-South situati rich and poor nations can no long tolerated. A new international ecor order consisting of a monetary an organisation designed to solve development problems, promote economic integration and expand and economic ties among the dev countries along with the ending of arms race is imperative.



Problems Confronting the Labor Movement in Queensland

by Michael Carr (Queensland)

A major threat confronting the la movement in Queensland is the la gerrymander by the Petersen Gover

Petersen's continued erosion of democratic rights culminated in th S.E.Q.E.B. dispute last year. There been a steady decline over the year elementary human rights and a cor attack on the rights of workers to org Whilst the Petersen Government h the vehicle for such attacks on dem it must be remembered that wharf private enterprise establishments a behind the scene financing, advisi organising the rape of democracy. same forces are the most vocal ad of de-regulation of finance establish selling off public sector facilities an cut-back on public spending on se to the community.

A frightening aspect is of course that the Petersen regime is able to control the Treasury benches with just 39% of the popular vote. The latest gerrymander virtually guarantees that the National Party Government will stay in power with an increased majority of seats. In percentage terms, if the 1983 voting pattern is repeated in the 1986 election, the National Party would win 56.2% of seats with just 38.9% of the vote.

In the last election the A.L.P. actually polled considerably more popular votes than the Government (44%) but only has 33.7% of the seats.

The re-distribution and the creation of seven additional seats in Parliament is aimed at entrenching the National Party and no doubt will lead to an even more savage attack on workers rights in Queensland.

As an example of the blatant arrogance pursued by Petersen's gerrymander, his own electorate has 11,600 voters compared to an average of more than 20,000 in the Labor Party held seats in industrial centres.

An immediate issue facing the Labor Movement in Queensland is legislation encouraging the use of contract labour. Such workers are isolated from union protection and have no legal rights as do award workers. They are not much better off than serfs under feudalism. The aim of employers is to have healthy, strong, young workers undercut their workmates and reduce standards generally. This serious confidence trick played on such young workers needs to be exposed. Contract workers forfeit all rights, the right of workers compensation, annual leave, holiday loading, shorter working week, sick leave and all other conditions that provide a small amount of dignity for workers in a capitalist society.

The only ones to benefit from the contract system is the capitalist system and the parasites that feed off it.

In Queensland we have indeed reached the cross-roads, where the left must surely end the division it cannot afford and consolidate itself. One of the responsibilities of the National Left Easter Conference is to unify the left as a means of helping to restore democracy in Queensland by improved and co-ordinated efforts in the production of printed ideological material as well as moral, financial and physical support to help stop the aims of the National party Government. This is not a state issue only. Degeneration to an outright fascist regime in Queensland is a threat to all workers in this country.



The Relevance of Attacks on the Australian Working Class – a Queensland Experience

by J. Ivanoff (Queensland)

February 1986 is the 1st anniversary of the infamous power strike in Queensland. Much has been written of this notorious attack on the Australian working class, and what needs to be done is to

(a) analyse its relevance in the context of the antics of the capitalist class in bringing about this industrial conflict, and in "resolving" it to their ends and
(b) firmly resolve to bring about a working class unity to combat such a thing.

Before the strike itself, the Bjelke Petersen Government enacted legislation to amend the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act on the 14.11.84. Even a short examination of that legislation should have given forewarning of grave times to come. It provided for:

- (a) Penalties for officials or union members who take action to force non-unionists to join a union.
- (b) Protection for union members who wish to resign.
- (c) Removal of the three (3) months period of notice for resignation from the union and provided for a simple resignation in writing with union dues only payable to the date of resignation.
- (d) Limits of recovery of unpaid union dues to a period of 12 months.
- (e) Protection of employees who refuse to participate in strike action; and penalties for officials and members who attempt to force an employee to participate in strike action. Up until then only a union would be prosecuted for this action not individual officials and members.
- (f) Provisions for Industrial Commission to direct a secret ballot where strike is threatened.
- (g) The number of employees required to petition for ballot to be reduced from 20% to 5% of number of employees involved.
- (h) Where ballots have been conducted and a strike terminated, employees who have not returned to work within 7 days will be considered to have terminated their services.
- (i) Increase in penalties in most other sections of the Act.

Following that, the power strike was precipitated with this mood prevailing and

as a result of collision between the Bjelke Petersen Government and the South East Queensland Electricity Board (S.E.Q.E.B.). The Government declared state of emergency and four days later ordered S.E.Q.E.B. to sack 920 employees in its confrontation with the Electrical Trades Union. On the 22.2.85 the strike itself ended. But this did not at all does not signal the end of the working class struggle on the issues. To date a large number (400) of those employees remain unemployed and have lost considerable accrued superannuation benefits and the like.

An important point to make is that for a system of Government as exists in Queensland to survive attacks must be made on the working class movements. In so doing, its strategy is to cause and promote divisions in the organised labor movement, and in the left. Nowhere is there to be seen as concerted an effort in this direction as in Queensland.

(Unfortunately there has been a history of serious divisions in the ranks of left force in Australia for years. These differences have been a handicap to effective leadership of the left and therefore the working class, in endeavours to defend hard won conditions.)

After the strike itself, we saw that workers who attempted to be re-employed by S.E.Q.E.B. were confronted with a "new deal" by S.E.Q.E.B. management. There were a number of new conditions under which they *may* have been re-employed.

(a) They would have to make a statutory declaration which would be reviewed by Tribunal (or Appeals Committee) to include the following:

- (i) were you forced to go out on strike?
- (ii) who forced you?
- (iii) evidence of harrassment and by whom
- (iv) were you on sick leave, compensation leave, on holidays etc. at the time of the strike?

(b) Men could apply for jobs on a normal S.E.Q.E.B. application form. The conditions of employment would be as follows:

- (i) signing of a no-strike clause
- (ii) 38 hour week, 10 days a fortnight
- (iii) no bans or limitations
- (iv) no demarcations
- (v) no union membership (preferred)
- (vi) rostered shift work: 2 shifts per day 6 am-2 pm and 2 pm-10 pm to be worked any five in seven days
- (vii) requirement that men must be able to start or finish in any depot in the board area
- (viii) must be prepared to live away from home
- (ix) industry payment deleted
- (x) employees will be treated as new employee, i.e. – no experience payment no sick leave entitlements – no annual leave – no superannuation.

These conditions for those who were employed for the first time and for those who sought and gained re-employment contrast with conditions for existing

employees. Consider the divisive tactic: a "sensitive truce" exists between the two thirds of outside staff who are on the Queensland 36 1/4 hour 9 day fortnight and the one third new/re-employed men who are on a 38 hour, 10 day fortnight. Further, there are those employees who have been willing to sign new contracts accepting a 7.5% annual bonus in return for no strike. It is noted that there are now 1000 less employees than when staff was at its peak in March 1983.

Following the strike, the infamous legislation effectively banning protests and demonstrations by workers urging S.E.Q.E.B. employees to support the cause of sacked workers was enacted.

Since that time we have seen a series of incidents whereby this repressive legislation has been used to squash peaceful picketing and protests.

These events do obviously highlight the need for a unified left to be the vanguard of a strong working class movement to maintain and advance the struggle – to oppose the repression of the capitalists with their Governmental and 'establishment' resources.

If there were ever any doubts of the need for us of the left to be now united, a simple analysis of the words of the Queensland Premier, when recently discussing the S.E.Q.E.B. battle rectifies that attitude:

"Governments can do anything ... anything you like". If the legislation is defective (in "handling" union submissions) make another one. Speaking on this he said "If a tree falls across the road here, you just make a track around it – no problem." (*Brisbane Courier Mail 1.2.85*)

Even the conservative Brisbane Courier Mail admitted to the Premier's tactic – i.e. to isolate and apply awesome pressure on the smallest cells of a union – its individual members!

It is imperative, therefore, to understand that what is needed is a unity of the left envisaged by the Broad Left Conference. We need to influence and strengthen the wavering groups within the working class who are adversely influenced by attacks by such forces and we need to be able to influence all groups such as small farmers and small businessmen. Let us therefore approach the Broad Left Conference as a prime point in the history of the Australian working class, and by our resolve and unity serve notice on the Bjelke Petersens of life that the injustices caused by him will not be tolerated.

We must accept that whilst the attacks on Queensland workers are for now a Queensland experience, history teaches us that such repressions will be promoted nationally in the future. Today Queensland, tomorrow the rest of Australia.



A Socialist Feminist Perspective: Essential for The Left

by Linda Mearing (New South Wales)

The Broad Left Conference provides socialist feminists with an opportunity to put a case for the emergence of strategies and action from the Left which integrate women's issues into mainstream industrial and political campaigns.

Socialist feminists interpret Australian society in terms of two power systems operating in tandem to determine an individual's social position. First there is capitalism and second, patriarchy.

Capitalism alone is not fully responsible for the oppression of women. It is responsible for much oppression that suits the owners and managers of the means of production. However the subordination of women predates capitalism, certainly permeates capitalism and lingers in socialist societies where years of effort to eradicate it have had varying degrees of success. The subordination of women, arises from the tendency of males to see themselves as superior. This tendency leads to the phenomenon described by feminists as patriarchy.

Women who are socialist feminist do not base their case on the fact that they were born with female bodies. The argument is that regardless of gender an individual should have the right to develop and live life without being obstructed by factors related to sex. Women are biologically equipped to bear children and men are biological equipped to father children – the connection between this biological specialization and the subordination of women is by no means a "natural" one.

Socialist feminists understand that women will never achieve equality under capitalism. Capitalism derives its strength from the division and inequality of social classes.

If equality for women is ever to be achieved it will only happen under socialism. However socialist feminists know that socialism alone, that is changes in the economic order will not necessarily lead to equality for women. Attention must also be paid to the eradication of patriarchy, that means cultural and attitudinal changes affecting women's status and quality of life.

Socialist feminists work towards socialism on two fronts – economic industrial changes that challenge capitalism and cultural and attitudinal changes that challenge patriarchy.

The issues of central importance to Australian socialist feminists are *employment, equal pay, and child care*.

Although women make up 50% of the population only 38% of the workforce are women. Traditionally women are employed in the lower paid sectors of the economy, in sectors that have been hit hardest by the decline of the economy, to unionise for example retail and clothing work and in industries that are now in decline such as the clothing and footwear industries. It is predicted that without change in the direction of the economy one in every five Australians wanting to find work will be unable to find one by the year 2000.

Women who do work are likely to be receiving lower pay than men doing the same work. On the average women earn only two-thirds of what men earn. Although 38% of the workforce is women they earn only 20% of all income. The *equal pay* case lost in the Arbitration Commission recently was a severe setback to the cause of wage justice for women. It indicates how far women have still to go to achieve equality as workers.

One of the key factors determining women's position in the workforce is *child care*. In N.S.W. at present there are only 150,000 children under two years of age with licensed child care places for only 600. Over one-third of mothers of pre-school age children are in the workforce. The majority must rely on relatives or friends for child care and use sick leave or holidays when these informal arrangements break down.

The problem of child care does not recede once a child goes to school. School hours and working hours do not often match. The need for before and after school care is often overlooked as an important requirement for women. Present provisions for after school care are appallingly minimal.

Government spending on child care has never beyond threat. A promise of new child care places by the Hawke government in 1983 is soon to be replaced by a \$10 million cut on child care. Even if the spending had been maintained it would only have increased the number of places available from 6% of all children in need to 10%.

The ACTU/ALP Accord is of concern to socialist feminists because it advocates intervention and regulation of the economy with the aim of creating an equitable society.

The document commits the government to protecting people's standards. It says this will be achieved by improving real wages, redistributing wealth through tax reform, improving the social wage and programs to reduce unemployment. It argues for pay rises for the whole workforce as against the rightwing "survival of the fittest" approach. This would result in the wages of men

females and many males stagnating, while the mostly male workforce in a few key industries achieved gains.

The Accord does not specifically address all issues relating to female employment however what it does address is a gain for all workers.

Over the past 10 years women have achieved a lot particularly in the area of cultural values that regulate Australia life. The long list includes; reformed laws on domestic violence; women's refuges; new legislation on sexual discrimination, equal employment and affirmative action, sexual assault and harassment; greater attention to women's health and occupational safety and educational reform making sex role stereotyping unpopular and technical education more accessible to girls.

While changes of this nature are central to the development of a society in which individuals can live and work as equals, women in Australia must continue to fight hard for economic gains as the equal pay defeat and cuts to child care clearly demonstrate.

No existing political party gives great importance to campaigning for political economy issues relating to women's place in the workforce.

The ACTU and some Trades and Labor Councils have set up women's units to promote the issues – however such initiatives need support from organisations that put issues relating to women's work into a class perspective.

Socialist feminists need a Marxist party.

The fundamental objectives of full and equal access to employment, equal pay and quality child care will never be achieved if women are kept on the margins of political struggle. Within a Marxist party, with a socialist feminist perspective the issues of women's place in society can be developed and taken into the labour movement. Women's issues must be integrated into the labour movement because women are an integral part of the labour movement.

Much work needs to be done by a Marxist party in developing the view that there should be no division in terms of rights and ambitions between men and women. A Marxist party should take up the challenge of breaking down the divisions between workers that the capitalist state preys upon.



A Time To Listen

by Mike Donaldson (Wollongong)

In a recent contribution to the Marxist Summer School reprinted in *Tribune*, an English environmental activist criticised socialists for placing production above all

else, for fetishising growth and for adopting an instrumental attitude to the environment. The criticisms have a curiously dated ring to those who have been active socialists over the last decade or more. A quick perusal of the section on the environment in the Communist Party's Program, adopted as long ago as 1979, mentions a number of the issues which communists active in the ecology movement have taken seriously.

Obviously a problem remains, for either communists are not doing what they say they are, or they are and yet appear not to be. Clearly it is time for those of us decided some time ago that it is not possible to be red without being green, to listen again to those who think the two mutually exclusive.

A recent exchange in the *Financial Review* on the question of "corporate equality" of gender highlighted another problem. In it an "enlightened (male) executive" argued that women are genetically incapable of being corporately responsible, committed or creative. The President of the South Australian Liberal Women's Network replied that women are striving to achieve and will achieve corporate equality because it is the most effective and efficient allocation of human resources; the market should be set free of sexism. A similar letter from the Woollhara Liberal Women's Network spoke of "the need for policies compatible with the realities of women's position in society" and demanded that Parliament "stop behaving like an exclusive men's club and drag itself into the present". This of course tells us what we had already learned, that gender division crosses class boundaries. And it must be counted a gain to have feminist ideas so clearly accepted into the mainstream of Australian political debate, an acceptance reinforced by the Equal Opportunity legislation passed last month which requires all capitalists with over 100 employees and all higher education institutions to promote equal opportunity for women in employment.

But where does this leave the 65 percent of women employed in the clerical, service, recreation and sales sectors? Is there any connection between the success of the EEO campaign and the failure of the comparable worth action? EEO assists individual women to gain gender equality in their workplaces. The Arbitration Commission has rejected the ACTU test case on equal pay for comparable worth which would have revalued a number of areas of predominantly women's work in which many thousands of women remain grossly underpaid in terms of the value of their work because of gender inequality.

The bashing to death last fortnight of a gay man outside a Wollongong club and the hysteria encouraged by a homophobic media over the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome underline again the isolation of gay men. Victims of heterosexual male violence, gays nonetheless remain isolated from lesbian women, the two no longer seeming to regard each other as possible allies

against hegemonic heterosexism, but as probable antagonists because of the masculinism shared by gay and heterosexual men.

And if heterosexism is insufficient to unite non-heterosexuals, heterosexual women and men are left in the peculiar position of being even less able to discuss their shared heterosexuality than gay men and lesbian women their non-heterosexuality. Second wave feminist women have been living with and among socialist men now for more than 15 years. Have we learned anything yet? Dare we tell one another?

The self imposition of exclusive categories applies to the socialist parties, and I read with some amusement a recent article in *Tribune* which described the Japanese Communist Party as *eurocommunist*. I wondered how the Japanese comrades felt being called European, and puzzled some more about what was specifically "european" about developing socialist strategies and forms of organisation suitable to national conditions. Or are "eurocommunists" communists who contest parliamentary elections? If so, on both counts, Lenin was a eurocommunist. Or perhaps "eurocommunist" is a codeword for anti-Soviet? If this is the case, what can be made of the fact that two of the most vehemently "leninist" parties, the Chinese and Albanian, were until recently the most anti-Soviet parties of all? Or perhaps eurocommunist means, in some fashion "open to the social movements"? If this is the case, then would the abysmal record of the PCI on building mass opposition to US bases in Italy count it out? And the long and genuine support for Greenham of "leninist" women in the not anti-Soviet British CP count them in?

The Easter Conference then will be for listening, a time in which, for once, we won't all disappear entirely into our familiar and comfortable fox holes, and when we acknowledge each other's existence at all, proceed to hurl the odd slogan. When Gramsci developed the useful metaphor of class struggle as being like trench warfare, I think he had in mind that the trenches somehow connected.

If some of these new and necessary interconnections can be made, and if some of the existing ones begin to be reaffirmed at the Broad Left Conference then I would consider the Easter well spent. The task of developing these interconnections and interrelations into usable strategic, programmatic and tactical forms is not the task of the Conference. Such developments can or be achieved inside a political party (which it is not and cannot be the task of the Conference to initiate), because it is only such an ongoing purposeful structure that the propositions developed can be tested in the real world and the results of that testing reflected upon. It is also, I think, only within such an organisation that the trust necessary for the sometimes difficult and painful reciprocal learnings could be

developed through a shared long-term commitment.

Including, but not exhausting, the issues and movements so far mentioned, and others not mentioned, such a party will of course be working class, because the working class comprises the bulk of the population, and because the vast majority of those currently active in social transformation are working class. Of necessity the party will have to take very seriously work within the most highly developed, secure and powerful organisations of that class, the trade unions.

The party will also be marxist because the current robustness of marxism is very much a product of those who practice it, spread through all the areas of social dynamism. As we grow to see this spread as the vast asset that it is, we will (re-) discover marxism is a unifying discourse many of us can and do share.



Thoughts on Strategy for Socialists

by Jim Moss (New South Wales)

The confederation of Australian Industry (CAI) has called upon employer groups to unite against the 'common enemy'.

Who is this 'common enemy' of the employers?

We can rest assured that it includes the unions and labour movement, the Socialists, and the movements acting for women, the environment, peace, Aborigines, civil liberties, national independence, education and the poor.

The Broad Left, as a matter of self preservation, as well as for its vision of the future, should unite against the right offensive.

What is the source of the right offensive and therefore the 'common enemy' of the Socialists? Besides the CAI and other organs of the transnational corporations, it includes the Liberal and National Parties, the leaders of the National Farmers Federation, the Right to Life, the National Civic Council, the developers, profiteers and racist groups. Among its leaders are Howard, Olsen, Bjelke-Petersen, Sinclair, McLachlan, Santamaria, Blainey and others.

Pressures on Labor Governments and the ALP. Labor and Labor Governments subject to the right offensive, and faced with real economic and financial difficulties, are retreating on many areas of policy. Socialists should resist this

back-sliding which adds to the burdens on the Australian People. They need to develop constructive policies to counter it, and to be critical of complicity with the right, without at the same time losing sight of the source of the right offensive. The right aims to destroy Labor Governments and to restore Liberal/National Governments even less responsive to the people. When Labor Governments are in office the people by their own experiences realise their limitations. There is growing disenchantment with the present Labor Government, which should not be exaggerated. This should not mean a return to Liberal Governments but Socialists should work for more radical policies and governments. When Liberal Governments are in office the only possible alternative appears to be Labor. The challenge for the left is to prevent the return of Liberal/National Governments while strengthening the labour left and the broad left.

Unite Labor Left and Broad Left. There is no question that the unions and the Socialist Left in the ALP must be defended, but to a large extent this depends upon the unions broadening their appeal. Capital and its media wage an unremitting offensive to alienate the unions from public support. Sometimes this is abetted by unions concentrating on their own narrow and sometimes selfish interests. The defence of the unions depends upon them overcoming isolation and winning the support of broader sections of the people by their concern for the needs of women, the environmentalists, the peace movement, Aborigines, poor, etc. These social movements, in return, should recognise the unions as bastions against the right offensive. It is not adequate to concentrate on strengthening the labour movement and then extend it to the social movements. The process goes on side by side. Socialists should aim to unite the two in one Broad Left Movement.

The Accord. It is not denied that the Accord has not maintained wage levels and that there has been a spectacular increase in profits. But wage levels in a period of recession compare favourably with those of other OECD countries. The growing crisis of overproduction means that the level of profits, some the result of speculation, is temporary. Wages have not been drastically reduced and the unions, in confrontation with capital, badly mauled, as was the pattern in the past. Some argue that the Thatcher confrontation with the coal miners was a victory for the miners, but it did not stop the closing of pits and virtual destruction of some mining communities, the original cause of the strike. Of course there were gains as well as losses – greater political consciousness of the miners, and experiences of solidarity, organisation and the role of the State. On the other hand it showed the lack of solidarity support from the unions as a whole. Some argue that the Accord is 'class collaboration' between the capitalists and the unions. But there

have always been agreements between capital and labour, periodically, for a time. Arbitration awards, by consent, or following the settlement of disputes, is such form of agreement. It is not denied too, that insufficient of the rank and file involved in making the decisions and implementing the Accord and this is a challenge to the unions to involve the membership.

But it is in the interest of the whole working class to have a system of centralised wage fixation. In this way the whole class, all workers, are entitled to periodic wage adjustments instead of best organised workers making gains creating a superior position over the less organised, lowest paid and most vulnerable, widening the inequities among workers. Secondly, it is not only wages are considered but the social wage, including taxation levels, social service payments, and superannuation. It is a way that the unions can speak for a wider community, widening their horizons and earning the support of the underprivileged.

The Accord conforms to the strategy above in other ways. The right wants the end of central wage fixing and the deregulation of labour. The Accord has to maintain the cohesion between the unions and the labor Government and contributes to its retaining office. The Accord is not perfect but it has the support of trade unionists as a whole. It could be improved by implementing the original objectives particularly industry development and employment.

By analysing the national situation not a partial one in separate organisations Socialists are able to discern the hard rightists and work to isolate them. They are distinguished from others in a middle position, who may tend to the right but who are responsive to some extent to mass action. Socialists should seek among this strata in the fight against the right, but at the same time criticise and move to accommodate the right. It depends upon the Socialists getting their own act together and establishing a unity and action.



What is the "Broad Left"?

by Rick Mohr (New South Wales)

The "broad left", I suppose, is not "narrow left". Instead of just seeing ideological terms – in terms of the look or views people are attached to – I'd look at what it might mean in material terms: in terms of the class structure,

We see a lot of references to "the workers" and the "working class" in left debate, and particularly in the debate leading up to the Broad Left Conference. The traditional working class is, of course, the core of the left: through left parties, unions and industrial action, the working class has developed considerable possibilities for influence in politics. These are vital and must be defended.

But what about the non-workers? Australia has about 6.5 million people employed, but there are another 2.7 million who receive pensions and benefits – aged and invalid pensions, unemployment and supporting parents benefits, and so on. In addition there are the "hidden unemployed" and underemployed. With the exception of a few fortunate aged pensioners, these people are among the most disadvantaged in Australia.

There are two very good reasons for taking more account of this large sector of the population. The first is a matter of socialist principle: socialism is about equality and fairness, and the poor must be the first beneficiaries of socialism.

The second reason for including the clients of the welfare state in the "broad left" is strategic. Unfortunately, their numbers are increasing more rapidly than those of the workers. This in itself should not be taken as an inevitable fact of life, and campaigns around employment issues are among the most important of all. But while we struggle to save and create jobs, let's not forget those who don't have them.

In Gramsci's analysis of the class struggle, he identified a range of classes and sub-classes, just as Marx did in his time, and as we can in Australia today. Gramsci talked about the notion of the "leading *dirigente* class", as that class which would be able to build coalitions, explain and define situations, and muster its forces in the slow "war of position" which can, eventually, lead to a new political order.

If the working class and the left doesn't recognise and build its relevance for the 'non-working class', the Liberal Party will be happy to sell itself as their salvation. Already the Liberal Party academic Katherine West has written that the pensioners and unemployed are a natural constituency for the Liberals.

Times are, ideologically speaking, tough when the Labor Party is looking to big business as its constituency, while Liberals look to pensioners and the unemployed. Can the left cut through the ideology with a clear class analysis and practical strategies? We have an important task ahead of us if the working class is to assume the leading role in political life.

First of all we must ask ourselves whether the left is really relevant to pensioners and the unemployed. We must expand the notion of the social wage to include greater solidarity with people who don't have jobs, and we must try to make left organisation and ideas include these groups and their concerns.

The left and the working class have been able to develop more far reaching economic analysis in the past few years. The metal unions' work on employment has been important – even to the point that: we now see John MacBean taking a role in the demand for an inquiry into the BHP takeover – and making some important economic points as well!

There also needs to be far more analysis in other areas of social policy. Some of this gets done in community and consumer organisations (such as Combined Pensioners' Association), and unions have also touched on these areas. The tax summit and the coalition of union and community groups that defeated the consumption tax was a very significant step. These alliances need to be consolidated, and moved into new areas: health and Medicare; education and traineeships; pensions and superannuation; socially useful technology.

There are social and structural barriers to these alliances. There are few regular forums where the sectors get together, and they usually negotiate separately with government. Their styles are different: unions are a traditional male preserve, while women play leading roles in community groups.

We need to clarify our analysis of the 'non-working class'. Even our terminology is inadequate: we talk about 'community' or 'consumers', though these are vague terms, identified by many with bourgeois denial of class, or a capitalist preoccupation with the market place, respectively.

The notion of 'collective consumption' has been used by Manuel Castells and other Marxists to refer to aspects of the welfare state like health, education, public transport or housing. This may be one concept which could help us overcome oversimplified dichotomies like 'class or community', 'production or consumption'. It is certainly relevant to current struggles that revolve around whether we should be individual consumers, paying out cash for things like education or health care, or whether we have a right to expect these things to be provided communally.

Three million of the most disadvantaged people in Australia cannot be ignored by socialists. What better place to clarify our analysis and work out strategies together than the *Broad Left Conference*?



The Emergence of the New Right. The New Right and Women. The Rise of Anti-Feminism.

by Ann Sherry (Victoria)

The anti-feminist groups which developed in Australia in the mid '70s were a reaction to the election of state and federal Labor governments with a commitment to the use of legislative power and administrative authority to promote equal opportunity in Australian society.

The anti-feminist organisations grew from a fear that feminists had succeeded in gaining legitimacy and thus influence the policy making processes of politics and through this, the capacity to achieve social change through legislation.

In the Women's Report to the National Civic Council in 1978 it was noted:

"The work that the various communist parties and socialist left of the ALP have put into developing the womens' liberation movement is certainly paying off. Communists and socialists have long recognised that if they are ever to bring revolutionary changes – then they must first destroy the social values of our present society. Hence their devotion to building the womens' liberation movement, which now has its members working in all areas of society in the unions, in the universities, in the schools in the public service, in community life and even in Parliament".

The objective of the 'new right' Women's Groups was to counter this activity.

So, who are the 'Moderate Feminists' they dub themselves?

Womens Action Alliance, founded in 1974, claims to be the vanguard of 'moderate feminism'. They have clear links to the National Civic Council and well established in all States.

Women who want to be women split from WAA in 1979, but retains some overlapping membership. The split was caused by the desire of WWWW to give priority to the anti-abortion issue. Babe Francis, convenor of WWWW, campaigned with Right to Life in the 1980 election to make 'abortion' the major issue of the election.

The new right groups made the nuclear family a central political issue. advoca

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the necessity of its preservation in terms of fundamentalist Christianity. This protection means opposition to humanist education, to abortion, to equal rights for women and aboriginals and to gay rights. In the name of the family, WAA and WWW also advocate small government, private enterprise, and individual initiative.

One of the features of the new right groups which distinguish them from the NCC in the '50s is that they have not mobilised a strong grass roots movement. The tactics of the new Right Women's Groups have developed along different lines but give the impression of mass support.

What are the tactics of WWW and WAA?

The strategy adopted has been to target representative and educational institutions and use the mass media to spread the message. In practice this has involved lobbying politicians, conducting letter writing campaigns, organising petitions and gaining representation on government advisory bodies.

WWW in 1979 set out to abolish the National Women's Advisory Council. Its condemnation of NWAC was represented in terms of its unrepresentative and sexist nature but was, in fact, based on NWAC's opposition to Lusher's abortion motion. WWW regarded this stance by NWAC as evidence of its takeover by feminists, and as symptomatic of the infiltration of the public service by feminists seeking to "engineer" a "unisex" society. WWW made direct approaches to MP's on this issue.

NWAC held as a regular practice, consultations with community groups and this led to its sponsoring a series of State and regional conferences to encourage discussion of Australia's plans for the second half of the UN Decade for women and participation in the mid-decade conference in Copenhagen in 1980. WWW sought to participate in these conferences and as well conducted a campaign to discredit and disrupt NWAC. They conducted letter writing campaigns to newspapers alleging misconduct and rigging of NWAC conferences.

In lobbying Federal Parliament, WWW presented petitions to both the Senate and The House of Representatives calling for NWAC's abolition. The objective was to convince both the government and opposition that there was nation wide dissatisfaction with NWAC. This was carefully orchestrated by arranging multiple presentations on each sitting day by as many politicians as possible from all parties. In fact, most petitions had fewer than 10 signatures and most were presented from Victoria and Queensland where WWW were most active.

These tactics proved successful. The conservative government who had established NWAC in 1978, overturned a NWAC nominated delegation to Copenhagen and made sure the

anti-feminist groups were represented. New appointments to NWAC in 1980 included the NSW President of WAA.

In 1981, the campaign shifted to education focussing particularly on sex education in schools and women's studies courses in tertiary education.

Babette Francis was appointed to the Committee of Inquiry into Equal Opportunity in schools in 1978 by the Victorian Government. She prepared a minority report arguing that the inquiry had been undermined by feminist assumptions of discrimination.

Networking has been an important strategy. The petitions against NWAC showed evidence of at least three networks – the NCC, sections of the Liberal Party in Victoria and Queensland, and the National Party in Queensland.

Groups like WWW seem not to be concerned about building grass roots support. Their target audiences are politicians and political parties. Media campaigns, lobbying and petitioning all guided by the need to convince political parties, Prime Minister and Premiers that their views should be taken seriously. Their goal is inclusion in the policy making process and if ignored they threaten electoral damage.

Activity within the labour movement has been a feature of the Right Women's organisations and campaigns – particularly targeting the Working Women's Centre and using influence on the ACTU executive to reject or ignore proposals from the ATU Women's Committee.

The Working Women's Charter has been strengthened by amendments from the floor of Congress because of the influence of the S.D.A. and F.C.U. representatives on both the Women's Committee and Executive, their rejection of proposals on child care and affirmative action.

The Working Women's Centre has not fared so well. Mary Owen, former co-ordinator, was moved out of the Centre. A number of the positions have been abolished and the functions of the centre have changed so it now provides policy advice to the Executive and offers no advisory and information service to working women.

The three basic ideological themes of the anti-feminist movement have been reflected in all these campaigns.

1. *There is no sexism.*

Anti-feminists want 'emancipation' not 'liberation'. The need to be emancipated is relating to the devaluing of the female role brought about by 'libbers'.

2. *Sex differences are innate not socially conditioned.*

The role of women is pre-ordained by biology and nature and anyone differing from their allotted role (wife and mother) is deviant.

3. *Individual women are responsible for their situation and life.*

A positive mental outlook will overcome most problems. Phyllis Schlafley calls it

power of the positive woman'. The 'libbers' have made private issues like domestic violence, incest and sex education the province of public politics.

In short, the family should be autonomous, self sufficient and independent of state influence. Women must be self-sacrificing and unselfish, working to ensure a successful marriage. Workforce participation is a 'costly luxury of choice'. Neither her husband nor children will appreciate the lack of attention if she works.

What are the issues the emergence of the Right Women's Groups raise for the left and particularly the women of the

1. *They should not be ignored nor their spheres of influence trivialised.*

The success of the new right in the and the successes of WWW and WAA in Australia have been significant. Ignoring them will not make them go away. Hard won services like those provided by the working women's centre have been lost. The draft Affirmative Action legislation will be the subject of a concerted right wing campaign with Professor Levin and Phyllis Schlafley adding their weight to the opposition. Business will also find this attractive since they view such change as costly.

The recent abortion trial in Queensland has raised abortion back to the top of some political agendas.

2. *The men on the left must join the fight.*

Campaigns around working conditions for women, child care, affirmative action, abortion, EEO have been marginalised. Few unions have seriously taken up the fight and few resources have been allocated.

3. *A left strategy must be developed.*

At the moment we are reactive. In the interests of pursuing a just and equitable society, the principles must be pushed. We need to be 'offensive' in organising to pursue these goals not reactive or worshipping complacent.

4. *The issues raised by women must be taken seriously.*

Labels like 'bourgeois feminists' provide a screen so the issues being raised by women do not have to be addressed seriously.

In an analysis of the 1980 Federal election by Marian Sawar, she noted that the issues being raised by Labor Women were branded "middle class feminism". The only issue raised by women taken up by labor and the media during that campaign was ABORTION – raised by WWW and the Right to Life.

CORRECTION – SUMMARY LEFT STRATEGIES paper, Bulletin No 1, p.13, col.2, last paragraph, first line.

The word **unusual** was added to the original. What the submitted article said was: "It is not that public enterprises cannot be profitable ..."

The additional word 'unusual' changes the meaning intended. The point being made was that public enterprise can be profitable, the problem is, it serves private enterprise.



Women and the Class Struggle

by Audrey McDonald

The Broad Left Conference is a positive initiative which gives the opportunity for dialogue to those who want to see united joint action around given issues aimed at advancing the immediate and long term interests of the working class.

Women have an important contribution to make in the struggles of the working class and the Left has a responsibility to ensure that they are involved to the fullest possible extent.

In the women's movement, joint struggle is possible as has been witnessed in the United Nations Decade for Women. Points of unity between widely diverse groups of women, from the Left through to the conservative women's organisations, have been found and this is continuing in the Decade follow-up actions. The exception has been those who take an extreme right reactionary position or see women's place as in the home. They in fact do not support the ideals of the U.N. Decade for Women nor the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which lists the rights women are entitled to.

Those who advance the cause of scientific socialism recognise the real cause of women's oppression as exploitive capitalist society not men. Therefore action needs to be directed towards ending capitalism and all it represents.

Whilst gains can be won under capitalism, real or basic equality can only be attained in a socialist society where exploitation of one person by another has been eliminated through the overthrow of the capitalist state and its replacement by a worker's state.

Under socialism women have the right, by law and in fact, to equal pay, equal opportunity, child care and public services to assist with household and community needs.

Nevertheless the struggle for reforms within capitalism is important not only in terms of advancing the status of women but also because it raises women's consciousness and can ultimately influence them towards the movement for social change and a socialist society.

Realising that the struggle for socialism can only be achieved by a united working class, it is essential that the women's struggle be developed in a way that furthers the unity of the class. This means rejecting views that men are the enemy.

It is true most men take a chauvinistic attitude towards women to one degree or another. This has existed throughout the centuries and will take a long period of struggle to overcome.

Under socialist society, now with years of experience, while women have real or basic equality, vestiges of chauvinism still remain. Efforts are constructively being made to overcome them.

In capitalist society some progress has also been made to change attitudes due to the influence of the women's movement. This was one of the positive achievements of the U.N. Decade. However, as male chauvinism is a manifestation of capitalist ideology and its exploitive nature it is a big task to overcome and change the attitudes of men towards women's equal role. Only when fundamental equality is established will it be possible to completely eliminate discriminatory attitudes.

Capitalist society conditions both men and women into believing that women are unequal. Therefore, it is necessary for the Left, both women and men, to raise people's consciousness encouraging women to play a full and equal role in society.

It is in capitalism's interest to promote divisions and continue to ward off moves towards winning reforms for women, especially economic reforms.

For example, after long years of campaigning by the trade union movement and women's movement, women still only receive 67% of the male wage rate and recent attempts to push ahead for equal wages has been strongly resisted by the employers as it challenges the profits they make from women as cheaper labour.

To overcome this deplorable position, now more than ever support for the campaign by the trade union and women's movement is needed and the Broad Left Conference gives the possibility to further consider strategies in the campaign for equal pay.

The Left, women and men equally, have a responsibility to unite the movement against the Right and its growing influence and presence. This means finding the way to united action by women and men and organising support for the trade unions and the various arms of the progressive movement.

The future offers many opportunities for the Left to organise actions and campaigns in areas of special concern to the women's movement (i.e. the Federal Government's National Agenda for Women) and around broader issues confronting the labour movement as a whole.

As the demands of the women's movement can only be fully realised under socialist society, progressive women activists and the Left generally need to promote the socialist objective.

Furthermore, because such objectives can only be realised in a world of peace, the peace issue is central to all campaigns.

We need to ensure that the Broad Left Conference takes these questions into account and is a positive focal point where actions will be mapped out to advance the cause of the working class, the Left and women.



The Accord and its effect on the Labor Movement

by Eugene Sibelle (Adelaide)

Some people on the Left maintain that the purpose of the ALP/ACTU prices and incomes accord was to provide a framework to struggle to maintain the living standards of working people, especially those of lower income workers. The real objectives of the accord become obvious from a closer analysis of the framework. These objectives are:

- to retain wages to assist a profit led recovery
- to enmesh unions in a tripartite system so as to weaken their power
- to assist the rationalization of Australian industry in the interest of Australian and International capital.

In respect of these objectives the accord has been remarkably successful. Large groups of employers especially in big businesses support the accord. (See KmG Hungerfords Business Poll in Business Review Weekly, December 1, 1985.)

The accord is the central strategy of the right wing Hawke Labor government. Its basic philosophy is consensus and collaboration between Labor and Capital. That it is not exactly the same as the British Social Contract or that the majority of delegates at the ACTU Congress supported the accord, does not make it a correct and worthwhile strategy for the Trade Union movement and for socialists to advocate.

Since the accord we have experienced the lowest level of disputation for a while. (See accompanying table). The decline in dispute is an indication of the process taking place in the working class. To talk about the decline in wages under Fraser and contrast this with the CPI increases under Hawke is to distort the picture. The 1981 Metal Industry Award campaign for shorter hours and a wage increase included a commitment for no extra claims. This was soon generalised to most industries and led on to the wage freeze. It was this weakness by the trade union officialdom that led to the wage pause under Fraser and its continuation under Hawke. Contrary to popular mythology it was not Labor's management that led to a recovery but the breaking of the drought, improvement in world commodity prices and the cyclical upturn of the world economy.

While Fraser managed to decrease wages in the period of the recession, Hawke is managing to restrain wages in a period of upturn. The 1985-86 budget paper on national income and expenditure in 1982-83 has wages and salaries constituting 61.3% of Australia's national income of \$150 billion, while profits made up 26.6%. By 1984-85, wages and salaries constituted 57.5%, profits were at 30.9% out of a national income of

\$186 billion. So, over the last two financial years approximately seven billion dollars has been taken from the pay packets of Australia's 5.3 million wage and salary earners. An average of \$25 per week has been paid into the packets of the corporate rich.

Table: Level of Disputation Nationally.

Year	Number of disputes	Number of workers involved	Number of working days lost
1984	1,965	562,300	1,307,400
1983	1,787	470,500	1,641,400
1982	2,069	722,900	2,158,000
1981	2,195	1,251,800	4,192,200
1980	2,429	1,172,800	3,320,200
1979	2,042	1,862,900	3,964,400

Compiled from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The accord is the nexus between all aspects of the class struggle. The pro-accord stance has led to a conservative position and a toleration of attacks on the working class under Labor. Every small reform and gain is being exaggerated to justify adherence to the ALP and the accord. The tax cuts that were supposed to help lower income groups were due anyway. The CPI increases were merely maintaining the position of the better-off workers by awarding a greater increase to the better paid. The superannuation scheme which is being traded off for a wage increase as a result of the 5.3% increase in productivity ABS figures, are all being pushed as real gains. But what of the other part of the picture?

Wage restraint has been closely followed by wage discounting in the Accord Mark II. This approach of agreeing in principle to a wage cut is a travesty of basic trade unionism, let alone socialist politics. Let's not talk about Lenin's struggle with the economists. I'm sure Lenin would not support wage discounting even if the whole trade union movement did.

The failure of the ACTU and the trade union movement to respond to the attacks on the Queensland power workers, the Meatworkers at Mudginberri, and the deregistration action of the Federal Labor government is a reflection of the Accord philosophy in the trade union movement. The attitude that we cannot oppose Labor and the accord because that threatens the ALP government, and that the ALP is much more preferable than the Liberals anyway, and that anyone who takes such a belligerent attitude to the employer's attacks and Labor's complicity just aids the right and the conservatives, is not facing the facts.

It's this approach that has strengthened the right because it does nothing to advance the class consciousness of the working class. The left collapses on the admittance of the four NCC unions into the Victorian ALP. The decline of the CPA and the growth of the Call to Australia type formations is a result of the left being held hostage to Laborism and its failure to fight for clear working class policies and interests in its own name. Surely at a time when the Peace Movement is growing, unemployment is high, Aborigines, migrants and women are being attacked and the union movement still has its forces, significant gains can be made by the left. The strategy of working within the accord will ensure that no advancement in the consciousness of the ranks through struggle, will occur. Inevitably we will be faced with a decline in the power of the labor movement.

Sydney via Bathurst

by Rob Durbridge (Bathurst)

The actual gatherings in Sydney at Easter are only part of a much more important process taking place in the progressive, movements. There is a more serious search for solutions to the impasse in which we find ourselves at a time of advances by conservatism on many fronts.

The BL Conference in particular has provided an impulse towards left unity or at least joint action and support. In the central west of New South Wales the conferences provided the basis for the calling together of a wide range of activists in Bathurst on March 2nd. An unexpectedly large number of young people attended and the areas of activity included disarmament, anti-nuclear, labor movement, environmentalists, feminists and farmers. To this core can be added a number of people who wished the meeting well and will support further activities, and those who are interested but live over the spread of western New South Wales. This would total about 50 people.

While not enough to make a revolution, it's a strong core of activists which rivals the ALP membership in the area. Political affiliations are interesting. Most are non-aligned and had never belonged to a party. Some expressed trepidations about groups like the SLL. Former ALP members who have left in protest at the rightward shift nationally and in the local branch made up a solid percentage. A few belonged to the ALP or the CPA, and some supported resistance.

Issues raised in the workshops matched the range of involvements. The "No-Base" campaign in the area was raised from an environmental viewpoint, the growth of the Right in the rural crisis required analysis and intervention and unions needed a focus for co-operation.

The rural crisis was discussed as a subject for the Easter conferences. In particular there is a need to recognise the role of agribusiness in financing huge debts at high interest rates and the role of farmer organisations which are serving the interests of agribusiness, not the farmers themselves. Many of those most in debt are the smaller farmers who are being mobilised by the Right but instances were given of support for the idea of union-farmer links in opposition to the union-bashing of the organisers.

It is difficult to report the general and diverse discussion which took place. One thing which disappointed a number of the participants about the BL Conference was that it would not launch a new socialist party.

I found the discussion invigorating a good basis for building co-operation and confidence among activists. Rather than seeking theoretical solutions first, building working unity around agreed issues seems a pre-condition for left advance; in particular making the indigenous analysis and search capable of sustaining more effective socialist politics.

A number of those attending the Bathurst discussion, which was addressed by a Bathurst organiser of the Getting Together Conference and convened by a Broad Left Conference Sponsor, will be in Sydney at Easter. It certainly be a test of the maturity of the movement under the gaze of a lot of people previously uninvolved. If free debate can occur without too much rancour or division it will be a milestone. Our experience suggests that we should be confident of great interest and goodwill.

Uniting the Forces or Else!

by Hugh Hamilton (Queensland)

For whatever reason during the attack on the Trade Union Movement Left groups that do function in this area and those people who are here today have some connection with those groups – did not seriously attempt to co-ordinate the Left's activities during 1985 ... there an attempt to define common grounds for socialists' thought and to influence the dispute.

On frequent occasions when some of us did get together, it appeared to me it was a 'them and us' situation. Disunity sometimes boarding on paranoia. I think we were all guilty of this.

The following is an exaggerated comment ... but I make it to emphasise the point ... within the Left an attitude prevailed that everybody on the Left has got to have a tag.

We have reached the stage when some on the Left refer to each other as 'the crazy ones' and some on the left refer to others as 'the pack of right wing bastards, and there's 'the wankers'.

If we all say we are going in the same direction – for Christ's sake let's put aside those things we can't agree on and try to find some common ground that we can all agree on and help to take the political and social movement in this state forward and let's drop the tags and name cards.

Today's gathering, I hope, will go some way in establishing a forum to at least provide an area for dialogue and exchange for a variety of Left forces in Queensland, and hopefully a network can be established that can be used to organise people and organisations that have common goals and a common desire to do something to beat back the tide of reactionary politics here in Queensland.

To return to my comments about the Trade Union Movement finding itself fighting on a new terrain.

For approximately 30 years following the second world war, with few exceptions, i.e. ups and downs of the economy, economic growth in this state and throughout the country was the norm ... and the spin-off from that economic growth for unions and their members was higher living standards.

From the early '70s all that changed. During the '60s socialists in this country thought that unemployment in capitalist countries could be solved. I think we all understand now that unemployment can't be solved and even Labor governments recognise that it is going to be around 10% of the workforce in this country no matter what – with a possibility of it getting worse.

Today Labor governments are measuring their performance with regards to employment opportunities for the Australian workforce on the basis of whether it is up or down from a level of 8%. In 1986 8% is the norm.

During the past ten years the impact of technological change and the introduction of computerisation has had a devastating effect on the workforce and the trade unions have not been able to develop an effective strategy to maintain jobs.

The relatively large manufacturing base has disappeared and much of it has now been transferred to trade free zones in Asia.

Many farmers are in ruin because of the world market prices and high interest rates.

While small and medium farmers are facing ruin, the giant agro, economic and political monopolies such as Elder IXL and Adelaide Steamship Co. are becoming a dominating force. They are capitalising on and using the genuine problems of the small farmers to further consolidate their own positions. The main spokesman for the farmers is Ian McLachlan, a director of Elders IXL and a member of one of the wealthiest grazing families in Australia ...

A new phenomenon in Australia also is the organising of the farming community and the small business community by rabid right wingers who have introduced into the farming community the worst type of anti-labour/anti-union philosophy. A philosophy that is taking on and is capable of turning their supporters into a potential new guard storm trooper type organisation.

I recently had the opportunity of listening to a report by the president of the Australian Cattleman's Union. Quite frankly the gentleman frightened me with the hatred and venom he directed at the

Trade Union Movement and his threats of organising the farming community to become physically involved in taking care of the militant trade unions in Australia, along with wage cutting, deregulation and all that goes with the new right philosophy.

Of course, this is not new to socialists for during times of crisis in capitalist countries, we have often seen other sections of the workforce being organised to become the main bulwark against the trade union and workers' movement.

These are new organisations that have been formed to pursue the aims of the employing class in this country. We are also witnessing the John Leards and others in the community who are forming new employer organisations because they claim the old ones haven't been tough enough on the trade union movement.

In general, I suppose we can say this all part of the new right – and of course it is.

Their aim is to obstruct and restrict the unions from carrying out normal operations with the ultimate aim of smashing the organised trade union movement and demolishing it.

They rely on the help of conservative governments of all labels by having legislation enacted to put trade unions out of business. For example, Thatcher's legislation in Britain and the Queensland anti-union legislation.

In the past, conservatives like Menzies and others hated the trade union movement and the socialist movement just as much as anybody else. One just needs to reflect on the communist dissolution bill and Menzies' proposal to drop the bomb on China.

However, to a degree those people tolerated the democratic institutions of the Australian society. In today's conditions, to achieve the sort of society that the new right want, they must weaken the ability of the trade union movement to defend workers' conditions and ultimately destroy it.

So, the new terrain that we find ourselves in declares strikes illegal. Picketing is illegal. Fines and penalties are introduced on a massive scale against trade union activists, trade union leaders and trade union organisations.

Individuals can be fined up to \$50,000; unions up to a quarter of a million dollars. Nobody will go to jail. Officials who are fined, workers who are fined – will either pay up or have their property confiscated.

No closed shops – no compulsory union membership – compulsory strike ballots – an impotent arbitration commission – all this goes with attacks on the living standards and conditions of workers. To cite a few: no penalty rates for overtime – no penalty rates for shift work – no 17½% annual leave loading – no superannuation – no wage rise to sugar workers – and so it goes on.

Some might say – "Well, what's new? That's always been the case".

I am suggesting that it has not always been the case. Certainly everything that we have referred to has happened on one

occasion or another, today it is all to be happening at the same time in a concerted organised way on a very wide front organised by a force in our community that is determined to take on the Trade Union Movement and smash it.

In the United States of America, these things have happened with the introduction of the right to work legislation in the southern states resulting in reduced living standards of workers.

The membership of unions in the United States of America is down to approximately 14% of the workforce.

There is also a communication revolution. Its effect on the masses is devastating. The role played by the media particularly television.

Example in major confrontations that the Trade Union Movement has with governments and big employers in Australia and throughout the world, the struggle can be seen on television as it is happening – picket lines – picketers being bashed by the police. Bullet-proof buses for scabs.

Workers are now acutely aware because of TV that where major disputes have been lost such as in the air traffic controllers, the miners in Great Britain, the printers in Great Britain and SEQEB in Queensland, not only has the dispute been lost but also workers' jobs. They were sacked.

The worker and his family surely make a mental assessment of such scenes and like everybody else, workers and their families like backing winners.

As Dinny Madden of the ETU said in an interview recently about the SEQEB dispute which highlighted this fact: "when the Trade Union Movement has a blue – win or lose – you go back to work. Not so any longer."

These are new elements in the struggle. They concern workers. They make them think twice, so to speak, about their own involvement.

These new elements have created problems for the leadership of the unions and for the rank and file.

It is going to make it harder for the Trade Union Movement to get workers to down tools, pen or pencil, *for someone else's fight*. Acts of solidarity require a great deal of individual maturity and understanding of the workers who are going to take that step.

Yet, solidarity is the most important aspects of trade union action. It is the key to success. It is the highest expression of unity of the working class.

Without working class solidarity, the employing class is able to pick off one section at a time – the BLF – the Meatworkers Union – SEQEB.

During 1985, evidence of this lack of solidarity at all levels of the Trade Union Movement was as obvious as day to those who were prepared to acknowledge the reality during the SEQEB dispute for months prior to the building trades group statement.

I hurry to add though, that the trade unions did not do enough to lift the understanding of workers to develop a counter attack against the government by united action of the movement.



Capitalist Growth and Economic Policies

by Max Bound (Tasmania)

The growth issue is little discussed, in critical terms, and little understood even by many on the left.

There are fundamental economic, social, ideological and political, as well as ecological reasons why an economic strategy, based on conventional growth, means real problems for workers.

Growth of Capital results in use of new technologies to increase profits at the expense of jobs.

Becoming competitive, in capitalist terms, can retain or even gain a market but overall it reduces the number of jobs. (We are part of a world economy.) If benefits from industrialisation are to flow to workers there needs to be increasing worker/union/public control in economic planning and decision making; public equity, already existing in many industries, because of hand-outs of public monies to private companies, needs to be recognised and begin to be a source of public income.

Additionally, re-industrialisation needs to be linked with the questions – what is the purpose of production – what is the social and ecological effect of particular types of production – how will people, job availability and the overall economy, be affected. The concept of the social audit needs to be developed and popularised.

At the ideological level, the growth approach encourages workers to retain capitalist ideas of progress and accept the values of consumerism and intense competition. Quality of life, social harmony and co-operation, matters about which the left is concerned at a fundamental level, are secondary in the outlook fostered by capitalism and its growth approach.

In social terms, practice has shown the growth economy concept is accompanied by an increase of practices which further divide the working class. Key sections of workers are granted high wages, whilst increasing numbers are relegated to low pay, and to part time and/or casual hire. Living standards in capitalist consumption terms increase for some whilst others become even poorer and less secure.

(Part-time work for professionals may even be an advantage, but for the poorly paid, part-time/casual work is an economic disaster.)

This situation and increasing long-term unemployment, leads to increasing frustration and instances of violent reaction, which in turn provides an 'excuse' for violent repression by the forces of the State.

We do need re-industrialisation, but we want re-industrialisation to benefit people, not merely to increase profits at the expense of jobs.

Those sections of the Accord which could make it possible to work for increasing worker/union input and control in economic policy-making need to be developed and their implementation fought for as a priority issue. The concept of public equity in return for public gifts to private enterprise needs to become a real issue of practical politics.

The difficulties are obviously great, even enormous, but in my view the left cannot make real gains unless and until it pushes these issues as priorities. That means examining the growth concept – it means pushing the social audit concept. At the political level the destructive waste, social and economic inefficiency endemic to the 'growth' society serves the right.

The humanistic approach requires concern for people not profits and that is what the Left needs to do more to project. Ideas and use of resources to develop ideas and practical policies, providing for *a sort of growth which benefits people as an alternative to capitalist growth, are a must for the left*. Without the channelling of resources and the development of such ideas and their popularisation, the working class and people are left with no understandable alternative to capitalist approaches and will remain under the ideological control of the capitalist class ideological machine.

I believe the Left strategy paper produced in Tasmania and summarised in BLC Bulletin No. 1 sums up important aspects of the context in which we have to work when it says:

"Capitalism now threatens the living standards of large numbers and will increasingly fail the expectations of many more people. Despite this, many will continue to live at a standard, which if measured in terms of consumption, will be relatively high. The quality of life is being eroded. There are irresponsible increases in production, whilst simultaneously large quantities of food and some other goods are destroyed. There is no serious effort to create the conditions in which millions of people now starving can begin to feed themselves. As our capacity to produce increases, the capacity of tens of millions, throughout the world, to gain access to the wealth produced, is shrinking. Increased destruction of resources threatens present and future generations".

SATURDAY LUNCH at the Broad Left Conference Watch out for "TITS AND PIECES"

A Satire on the changing role of women.
Lower Ground Floor, outside the Concourse
Cafe (or if weather permits on the lawn
behind the cafe)

Produced by the
Crazy Mamas of Newcastle,
Lisa Dickinson, Meg Dunn & Alana Thompson



Developing The Networks

by Tony Douglas (Victoria)

It's good to see the 'Broad Left Conference' taking shape. At last an attempt is being made to draw together progressive people in a non-destructive atmosphere to map out strategies and responses to the political crisis that enveloped the Left since the early seventies. The areas to be discussed seem relevant and future oriented, is a refreshing change from some brawling in the left of the ALP in recent times that has passed itself off as a debate.

I feel that the Conference needs to critically examine the institutions and ideas that the Left has traditionally supported.

A prime example is the support for bureaucratic (public sector) solutions to the array of social, political, environmental and economic concerns we confront today.

In essence, bureaucracies with their hierarchical structure, their overriding concern for self-preservation and concomitant lack of concern about social change, their desire to maintain control rather than create or liberate one of the major impediments to change. They are at best a waste of precious resources and, at worst a co-option and oppression used by the ruling class with our money and political support. None of this is breathtaking and it is not to say that we cannot use bureaucracy in a short term sense to initiate new programs or block the excesses of the privately owned corporations from time to time. What is evident, however, is that there must be a better way to get public resources working for individuals and groups in the community, and our basic work should be directed to empowering and resource those people and groups, not manipulating and controlling them.

In short, a more sophisticated response to the 'privatisation' plans of the right needs to be fashioned. It is no good supporting the unsupportable as a means to stopping something worse being its place. Many of the criticisms levelled at our public institutions by the right are an element of truth in them. But our criticisms must go further – we must be on the sad experience of the Victorian Government during its second term where super departments have been formed that emasculate creative s...

(e.g. Worker Co-operatives), ignore minority opinions and interests (e.g. the Aborigines bad deal on land rights and the effects of education cuts on working class children) and impose bureaucratic, business-oriented solutions to complex issues (e.g. establishment of woodchipping industry). All these moves are in contradiction of party policy and against the interests of most of the people who voted for the Cain Government – a government whose first term in office, it must be said, was characterised by a steady, if unspectacular process of reform.

Only when such issues are tackled will we see far reaching changes and progressive reforms under a Labor Government.

We are particularly interested in

Contribution for Conference

The following statement appears in the Broad Left Conference brochure:

“Pressing issues of current concern strongly suggest that Broad Left forces should meet in an open atmosphere to discuss perspectives for the left in Australia ... The left should respond to this challenge with its own renewed offensive, working to build alliances and to develop a more coherent program for social and economic change.”

To this end, a group of people from a variety of left political perspectives have been meeting in Sydney over the past two months to discuss a joint viewpoint in opposition to the prevailing climate of retreat in the labor movement, to be presented at the Broad Left Conference.

We believe that the following kind of analysis needs to be taken regarding the pressing issues facing the left in Australia today, and should be urgently taken up with the Conference:

The working class movement now faces serious attacks on living standards, democratic rights and the right to organise – both in Australia and internationally.

The election of a Labor Government in 1983 and again in 1984 was a rejection by the working class of the cutbacks and anti-worker attacks of the Liberals under Fraser.

However, the record of the Hawke/Keating Government represents a continuation of similar right-wing policies – holding down wages, cutbacks in social welfare, anti-union measures such as deregistration, and anti-democratic measures such as ID cards.

In reality, the Labor Government has acted as an alternative capitalist administration. In particular, because of its links with the union movement, the Labor Government is able to get away with measures the Liberals couldn't.

The unions are under attack around the country – notably the SEQEB dispute in Queensland, the Meatworkers at

attending the Broad Left Conference to discuss the issue of setting up a cost-effective, achievable alternative media structure with people at the Conference and in pre-Conference discussions. Perhaps such discussions could come under “Strategies and Models for Social change and Effective Left Coalition”. I don't know. One final point. It seems to me a great pity that the Broad Left Conference and the Getting Together Conference are both being held over Easter.

Many of ‘the personal is the political’ people will be there and it's a pity that we aren't all at the same conference. We may be giving a workshop on ‘alternative media’ there and may not have the time to catch all of the interesting material coming out of your conference.

Mudginberri, the Food Preservers and the Builders Labourers Federation. There has been a serious undermining of traditional working class rights – to strike, to organise and to campaign for independent claims.

Under the ALP-ACTU Accord, the independent action of workers and unions has been severely held back. There has been complete reliance on the Labor Government, which has failed to deliver on its promises. Instead, we have seen, for example, higher taxes on workers, the middle class and working farmers. The fiscal policies of the Government have aided the development of right-wing forces, for instance, in the leadership of the farmers' revolt.

The actions of Federal and State Labor Governments are opening the way for defeat for the workers' movement, and the victory of extreme conservative forces under Howard and his friends. Attacks on the rights of the Labor movement by ALP Governments are the thin end of the wedge for the more open onslaught of the most reactionary forces in the future. The nature of such an onslaught is already shown by the situation in Queensland under Bjelke-Petersen.

There is now a serious challenge to left and progressive forces to reassert fundamental, long-fought-for, principles of the Labor movement.

We need to restate a number of crucial policies which are basic to the defence of working-class interests:

(a) *Defence of the Unions:* No deregistration of any union; no penal powers of any kind; militant defence of unions under attack, e.g., SEQEB, Mudginberri and the B.L.F.

(b) *Defence of living standards:* No limitation on extra claims by unions; no limitation on the right to take industrial action for union claims; no discounting of wage indexation.

(c) *Defence of democratic rights:* No limitation on the right of socialist and left-wing views to be presented in the ALP (no undemocratic expulsions, such as that of Bill Hartley); against attacks on civil rights, e.g. the ID card; no to frame-up

QUALITY CHILD CARE will be provided at The Conference

Friday 10 a.m.-10 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m.-10 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m.-10 p.m.
Monday 9 a.m.-12.30 p.m.

Child care arrangements must be made in advance by indicating your requirements on the Registration form prior to the Conference, or phone Jane or Roslyn on (02) 264 6471. Child care will be located at the Institute of Technology opposite Turner Hall (easiest entrance from Harris Street).

Donations according to means would be much appreciated to help cover enormous cost of child care during a holiday weekend.

trials like those of Norm Gallagher and Lionel Murphy; no to attacks on freedom of the press, e.g. the cases of Brian Toohy and Wendy Bacon; abolish ASIO and Special Branches.

(d) *Defence of social conditions:* Tax the rich; opposition to higher taxes on workers, the poor, the middle class and working farmers; no cuts, rather large-scale expansion, of social welfare (no witchhunt against pensioners and other beneficiaries); for genuine superannuation for all; opposition to the incomes and assets tests, which dramatically reduce the incomes of many pensioners, both workers and self-employed; support measures aiding working farmers, such as guaranteed prices and a moratorium on mortgages and loan debts.

(e) *Internationalism:* No U.S. bases, no nuclear ships, no uranium mining; full support for national liberation struggles, including South Africa and Central America; Australian Government action support self-determination for the people of East Timor and West Papua and the Philippines; no Australian military aid to dictatorships in the region.

(f) *Rights for the oppressed:* Support for full, equal rights for women, including the right to abortion, genuine equal pay and job opportunities, free child care; support Aboriginal rights, including genuine land rights, full compensation, and health, education and welfare facilities.

(g) *Support for the defence and extension of the public Sector:* No to privatisation schemes; campaign for the Labor movement's traditional socialist objective – Nationalisation of private industry under workers' control.

John Baker (Blue Mountains), Janet Bonser (Sydney), Verity Burgmann (Melbourne), Tony Cox (Melbourne), Paul Ford (Sydney), Bob Gould (Sydney), Natalie Gould (Sydney), Caroline Graham (Sydney), Frank Hardy (Sydney), Phil L. (Sydney), Helen Lowe (Sydney), Jim McIlroy (Sydney), Andrew Milner (Melbourne), George Petersen (Wollongong), Mairi Petersen (Wollongong), Brian Phipps (Wollongong), Janet Walk (Sydney).