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# AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW

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# Australian Left Review— July '75

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## AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW

This issue was produced by Gloria Garton, Eric Aarons, Gary Nicholls, George Harrison, Pat Elphinston.

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# V I E W P O I N T

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VICTORIA

The gossip in the corridors has it that he "is off his rocker" - as an explanation for the recent events.

Bizarre events surrounded the Cabinet coup. Letters were stolen, leaked and doctored in scenes of byzantine intrigue.

Cameron refused to believe that Whitlam would axe him only 48 hours before his head was on the block. Then he defied Gough, only to accept demotion soon after.

A stunned Caucus accepted the coup, while little overt criticism came from Labor Party conferences or the unions.

Whitlam, emboldened by his "victory", is moving to form both a new Cabinet junta and a loyalist team of whiz-kid permanent heads and new bureaucrats. His new promotions are men he counts on for personal loyalty and commitment to his economic strategy and political goals. He also trusts their efficiency and ability, not of course of his own Olympian level, but the best available.

The lawyers' cabal has increased influence. Ideological rightist Lionel Bowen has moved up a peg while Senator Jim McClelland has the herculean task of selling wage restraint to the unions and workers - as a way to strengthen the private sector and save the economy.

The media gave the "drama" the usual Roman circus treatment, full of the spicy innuendo and personal clashes that passes for political reporting. Very little attention was given to the political essence of the changes and what they mean in real politics: the struggle between capital and labor; the clash of policies and classes.

Personality clashes no doubt play a bigger role than the more determinist marxists would admit. But such personal power struggles in the final analysis are determined by politics and class struggle.

The more the working class acts in its own interests, the greater extra-parliamentary mass movements, the more real political issues play a part at the top levels of government.

The mass movement is patchy and not yet united around an alternative program. As a result, the internal ALP parliamentary struggle may seem largely one of power and personalities.

The Financial Review editorial (June 4) headlined the struggle as "Eclipse of the Left", meaning the parliamentary left. The editorial,

"All power to the technocrats" was Whitlam's password for his recent Cabinet coup, which foreshadowed his plan for personal rule, as opposed to Caucus control.

Whitlam's style has in the past been compared with Menzies' - or even de Gaulle's. His authoritarian methods, well shown in the recent coup, are aimed at stronger personal government. They have created much resentment in caucus and outside it.

correctly enough, sees this "left" as an uneasy amalgam of differing personalities and policies, without any consistent left ideology, even of a Fabian type.

Revolutionaries have understood that Labor-in-office creates new strains on those MPs previously claiming to be "left". In slightly differing ways, both Dr. Cairns and Mr. Hayden show that old labels and reputations are no longer trustworthy once in office.

Mr. Hayden has summed up his slippery path from some sort of ideological commitment to Fabianism to a sound and responsible pragmatism, in these words:

"The simple ideals and conclusions I based so many of my assumptions on have given way to an appreciation of the complexity and pluralistic nature of our society to a degree I wouldn't have believed possible .... I suppose it's a maturing process - knowing that you don't know all the solutions to the world's problems."

Hayden as Treasurer now unreservedly accepts conservative capitalist answers to economic problems.

"Orthodoxy triumphant: demand management again acceptable" the *Financial Review* (June 6) commented, adding: "the Treasury's line of fiscal orthodoxy now has its strong supporters at the highest level of government."

Hayden, that means, will slash government spending more drastically and consistently than Cairns would have done. Ideals are OK; but pragmatism means accepting "reality" - ideals must go. Dr. Cairns claims to have not altogether forgotten the ideals, only deferred them.

As he said to the recent Victorian ALP Conference: "Despite our understandable and justified aspirations for a better society, we must operate for now within the system."

Dr. Cairns must bear a major responsibility for the fate of those "justified aspirations". He prepared the way ideologically for the Whitlam-Hayden economic policy by campaigning for stimulation of the "private sector", surrendering to the auto multinationals' blackmail and encouraging foreign investment and calls for wage restraint.

At Terrigal, Cairns masterminded the "mixed economy" amendment to water down Labor's socialist objective even further.

As a result, Cairns must argue now around how hard workers should be hit in the next budget, rather than fighting for a better society.

Why must we operate within the system "for now"? When will it be possible not to operate within the system? These are basic questions posed by Dr. Cairns' logic. If a time of capitalist crisis is not the time to work for basic changes, when is? Are "normal" capitalist conditions the time - surely not.

It's like asking when is the right time for workers to fight for improved living standards. Not when business is booming, workers are told, because that would be inflationary. Certainly not in a business downturn, for that gives unemployment plus inflation ....

Workers decide such questions from their own class interests, even if it is mainly by class instinct under pressures from the hard economic reality, resulting both in their own falling living standards and inequality in distribution of wealth.

Capitalist propaganda, and the more subtle hegemony of capitalist ideas and values, of course can and do weaken this class instinct, at least for a time, before it bursts out with renewed vigor. That is why the development of counter-hegemony by the left against dominant capitalist propaganda about wages causing inflation and unemployment etc., can be decisive in limiting the length of time capitalist ideas can hold back the workers' struggles.

Counter-hegemonic struggle is even more important in developing a challenge to the system by sheeling home the blame of the crisis to the system and raising immediate demands, action and strategy.

Cairns' line of argument is particularly harmful in this regard, as it calls for capitalist solutions to the crisis at a time when workers' awareness of inadequacy of such solutions can be aroused. Cairns is arguing that workers and socialists should help solve capitalism's crises then raise the struggle for a socialist solution when the system has recovered - clearly a futile exercise.

Apologists for the Cairns "strategy" argue that there is no mass movement or support for radical measures, and that some of the Labor government's mild reformist measures are ahead of public opinion, even among workers.

The finger is even pointed: "you (the non-ALP left and particularly the communists)

are not helped by developing such a mass movement or advancing a program which can solve the economic crisis.

"How can we go ahead of mass consciousness?" we are asked (or as Dr. Cairns said: "You can't have a socialist society until you have a society of socialists".) A fair enough question and reproach, in one sense. A verbal response is not enough - renewed efforts to build the mass movement are needed by all.

The Communist Party has put forward proposals for such a program and fought consistently to build the mass movement. We have particularly tried to encourage the spontaneous movement and mobilise the great potential strength of united workers' action as a counter to the capitalist offensive.

The ALP left in arguing thus, ignores the lessons of the real experience of the mass movement itself, and the role that leftwingers and socialists must play.

Dr. Cairns won a unique status in the mass movement precisely because he "swam against the tide" from the beginning against Australian involvement in the Vietnam war. He plunged into the ideological debate, marched in the streets, all at a time when public opinion was not on the side of the anti-war movement. Clearly, this action was very important in the success of the movement, and even in the final defeat of the Liberal-Country coalition.

Cairns in his writings shows why he and others can't do that in a period of economic crisis and a Labor government: "Labor is in office; it's better than the Libs; it must therefore be kept in office; to do that, we must work within the system."

Such an argument also finds strong echo among workers.

But by such a logic, anything can be justified. It comes down to the old argument of "ends and means". Only a qualitatively different approach can begin to answer the problem.

The Communist Party says only a social revolution can solve deep-rooted capitalist problems. We organise to win support for such a solution, urgent given the dangerous dimensions the capitalist crisis is taking, here and worldwide.

We understand revolution is not on the agenda today, and we do not confine our action to propaganda for a socialist, revolutionary solution. To take a purely

propagandist approach would be to accept postponing socialism to the never-never. Nor do we wait for capitalism to completely collapse (it won't - socialism or barbarism are the final alternatives). Nor do we believe, or want it to collapse from outside influences.

Revolutions are not created by revolutionaries, but the way for them can be prepared. Mass action on a real, alternative, socialist program for workers' demands is the way to prepare for revolutionary change. Such struggles begin from workers' economic interests but are not confined to this field. It is vital to link struggles around workers' economic, political, social and moral interests. That provides a broader perspective for the economic struggle, and is vital therefore for the economic struggle itself.

The fight against wage restraint is therefore important as a beginning, as it replied to the key element of the employer-government offensive. But it is also closely related to political offensive, attempting to integrate workers and unions within arbitration. A fight against wage restraint can also challenge the existing profits-wages "sharing" of wealth.

Linked with the fight against wage restraint is the struggle for work for the unemployed, which is again linked with the use of idle material resources to meet real social and human needs - in housing, health, education, social welfare, public transport, etc.

This in turn comes to the question of favoring the "public" or "private" sector. Hayden's budget will favor the "private" (big corporations) sector.

The left needs not only to oppose government handouts to the private sector, but also to demand nationalisation of key sectors of the economy, controlled by the big corporations as well as expansion of social "public" sectors.

Nationalisation is not a "popular demand" we are told. That is not surprising, given the constant media campaign against it, aimed at protecting the multinationals and large local companies.

Another reason is the bureaucratic sclerosis of "public companies" which serve big business and adopt anti-worker positions.

Bureaucratic control has harmed the image of nationalised industry we are - correctly - told. But bureaucracy is not essential, nor for that matter exclusive to "public enterprise". "Private" companies are extremely bureaucratic.

That is why the struggle for nationalisation should be linked with workers' control and self-management demands, and should come from below, from the workers, for real control by workers and society, not just replacing private bureaucracy with public.

The right to sack workers, to produce socially harmful products, to decide production for profit, not use, need to be questioned concretely company by company, and the necessity of social control posed.

Labor Party leaders or rank-and-file particularly the Left within it, today face a crucial decision: to go along with Whitlam-Hayden strategies, either actively or passively, or to take a firm stand against them.

Much time and ground has been lost, by following or acquiescing in the Cairns line. Soon the crunch will come - certainly at budget time, possibly before it. The ALP left will need a policy, which it still lacks. If it won't or can't adopt a revolutionary policy - which it won't - it must at least challenge the union-bashing, the hand-outs to private enterprise (big business) and the inevitable budget strategy.

Mass action as against parliamentarism is key to preparing the forces for socialist transformation. Because reformist strategies mean gradual reform, working through the system and parliament, mass movements are often feared and always suspect. When mass action is accepted by reformism it is seen as subordinate to "parliamentary democracy" - don't rock the boat.

Communists see basic social change only coming through acute mass, class struggle - it will never be simply "legislated". A new form of state and a much more profound democracy must emerge, opposed to the existing state, more and more clearly being seen as an apparatus for maintaining the system and thwarting even mildly reformist changes ... a camouflaged bourgeois dictatorship in which all key power, including the media, is in the hands of the ruling class.

The great need today is persistent, patient work, with burning conviction, for the building of a big mass movement uniting workers as a class around a program challenging the power of capital, against the government strategy of wage restraint and aiding the private sector. It also means immediately a mass movement against a budget which will help the corporations, the rich and well-to-do at the expense of the majority.

The ALP left has always been weakest in the sphere of policy. It can fight well on single issues and against the extreme rightwing, the NCC and CIA in parts of the Party machine.

The three recent ALP State Conferences in NSW, Victoria and South Australia showed that the "left", such as it is vaguely defined, still has considerable rank-and-file support. The extreme right in the ALP is in considerable difficulty, particularly the NSW Ducker machine and the people who have covered up for Harradine for so long.

Moreover, there is considerable unease, resentment and questioning of the Whitlam coup and what this means for the future. There is a feeling the government is moving away from its base in the working class and unions.

Even NSW ALP rightwing leader F. Bowen, who recently stepped down as NSW Labor Council president expressed this. Given the task of replying to Whitlam's address at the NSW ALP Conference, Bowen gently but firmly reminded Whitlam that the unions were the ALP's base, after Whitlam had somewhat obliquely done some union-bashing.

This questioning and discontent in the ALP ranks is very important and shows the great possibility for real struggle against the present line and policy of the Whitlam government. The ALP left must and can take a firm stand on policy. Such a stand would be a big help in developing the mass workers' movement which is so important.

Some who claim to be to the left of the communists may say this will breed illusions in reformism and is in any case an impossible hope.

The reality is that illusions in reformism already exist among workers.

The existing disillusion only swings the pendulum back to the openly capitalist parties. Moreover, such sect attitudes only lead to determinism - and a narrow propagandist approach.

Many problems daunt revolutionaries today - the enormous pressure of capitalist ideology and propaganda, the difficulties in developing a united mass movement, divisions which distract from real work among the class and people. But these will be overcome as experience shows the working class must act independently to defend its immediate interests and prepare to fight for its future as the leading force in the popular struggle for socialism.



# THE GREAT VICTORY

-Laurie Aarons

**VICTORY IN INDOCHINA!** The peoples of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos have at last realised their dream and burning passion, which led them to make incredible sacrifices and achieve even more incredible deeds of political and military struggle. It is impossible to exaggerate either the world significance of this victory, or the immense human qualities of the peoples who defeated and humiliated the world's mightiest imperial power.

After so much has been written, it is unnecessary to repeat the statistics of bombs dropped, the unequal strengths of the armies, navies and air forces arrayed, or the industrial strength and wealth of the two sides. The United States, with 200 million people and the consumer of 40 per cent of the world's resources, drew into its aggressive war two developed capitalist countries - Australia and New Zealand. It used Japan's advanced

technology as a support base, and it levied armies from its vassal states in Asia - South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines.

Against this formidable strength, used with ruthless inhumanity unmatched since the Nazi conquest of Europe, the Indochina nations could muster only 40 million people, basically peasant economies, little industry and no advanced weapons technology - except for those "supplied" by the aggressors. At the beginning of the independence war in 1945, the Vietnamese had almost no arms. They received little outside military and economic aid for many years of their struggle, first against France, then the United States. The American excuses for their defeat include as a major cause the supply of Soviet, Chinese and other socialist countries' arms and equipment. These undoubtedly helped a lot, in the later stage of the struggle, but they reached substantial proportions only after the struggle against US imperialism began in the south with no modern war weapons and little conventional armament - most of it captured from the French and the US.

The Vietnamese never used an air force, though the US deployed huge armadas for mass bombing, chemical warfare and tactical use in battles. The ingenuity, courage and skill shown against air war is but one of the many military achievements of the Vietnamese, which will cause military text-books to be rewritten. An agonising reappraisal of military strategy has already begun in the Pentagon and other imperialist military establishments, which will go on for years. But it is safe to say that these will never really penetrate to the essence of the reasons for the US defeat, for these are not purely military.

In Vietnam, the struggle was always seen as both military and political, with politics playing a major part. The struggle was above all a people's war for national independence, with all the consequences flowing from this: the political struggle against imperialism and its puppet regimes with their social base in the classes which co-operated with French and American imperialisms. Military strategy and tactics flowed from this political strategy, with each stage of the independence war producing different military methods. Guerrilla war alternating with big positional battles, returning to guerrilla struggle, all directed by an unmatched political strategy which had definite aims at all stages.

The US imperialists tried to match this by devising their own counter-insurgency strategy. They called in "experts" from other

countries - Britain's Brigadier Thompson and Australia's Serong, for example. The CIA was decisive in the gruesome genocidal planning - re-settlement, strategic hamlets, concentration camps, massacres - all designed to dry up the sea in which the guerrillas swam among the people. This went to the criminal extent of deliberate destruction of crops, arable land and forests, to deny the Liberation forces food and shelter. Some US scientists have said it may take a century to overcome this deliberate destruction of the ecology.

No matter what strategy and tactics the US devised, whether it was "social engineering" to destroy the people's will to resist by resettlement and "education", or the use of frightfulness by air raids and wanton killing from the air or on the ground as at My Lai, the Liberation forces found the answers. This was not always easy; Wilfred Burchett has described the consternation caused by the first use of helicopter gunships at the battle of Ap Bac, and how this was overcome.

The Vietnamese won victory because the Liberation forces worked purposefully to implement their strategic aims, skilfully combining military and political struggle. Western military analysts declared the 1968 Tet offensive a failure, because the Vietnamese had lost so many of their military cadre. Yet the Tet offensive shattered the US position, destroyed the US military establishment's nerve, and broke Johnson. It began the process of US withdrawal finally forced on the US in January, 1973, though many more battles had to be fought in Vietnam and political struggles waged in the US and throughout the world before the Americans finally accepted the inevitable. Even then they did so only after a last display of brutal force in the mass bombings of the North at Christmas, 1972.

Over two years of complicated political and military struggle followed the Paris Agreement - a political struggle for implementation of the Agreement, bitterly resisted by Thieu with US backing, and military struggle to resist land-grabbing by the Thieu regime. When it finally became obvious that Thieu and the US had no intention of implementing the Paris Agreement, and after repeated warnings, the Liberation forces launched the final offensive which again combined military and political struggle with uprisings in the cities coordinated with the military offensive.

The Paris Agreement was a decisive stage in the struggle. The Americans, Thieu and their

supporters in Australia and the world now claim that the Provisional Revolutionary Government frustrated the Agreement. But to little avail: Thieu would never implement any of the main clauses of the Agreement, including setting up the National Council of Reconciliation, a coalition government and elections. The firm struggle for implementation of these provisions was an indispensable preparation for final victory, no matter what is said by some "left" armchair strategists. These also opposed the Paris Agreement, particularly the struggle for a coalition government; their opposition counted for little and has been swept away by history as the irrelevancy it always was.

The Vietnam war was a turning point in the world-historic struggle which is the essence of the present epoch. The final victories in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos will change a lot, just as the Vietnam struggle changed so much in the world, in the United States and Australia not least. Much will yet be written, from both sides, to analyse the nature and results of this epic struggle. Its importance is already immediately obvious, as US president Ford makes a pilgrimage to Europe to assure America's allies that it will stick to its commitments. World imperialism is at sixes and sevens, unsure of the future, undecided as to its strategy, beset by economic, political and social problems internally and globally.

US imperialism's intervention in Vietnam played a big part in sharpening these contradictions. The huge US expenditure - \$139 billion is admitted - accelerated the decline of the almighty dollar and precipitated the world currency crisis. The reckless war of aggression hastened the "resources crisis", while the progressive erosion of US power credibility encouraged oil and other producers to tackle the imperialist economic domination of world trade. Equally important was the way that Vietnam polarised politics in the United States, with massive anti-war actions and the decline of US ruling class prestige at home and abroad. Two US presidents were broken by their failures in Vietnam and the ensuing challenge to the amorality of imperialism, its lying, its brutal use of force, its corruption and global crimes. If the Vietnamese people had not stayed firm and fought on, the world crisis of imperialism would not be nearly so advanced.

It might be argued that US imperialism need not have made the mistakes it did in Indochina. Indeed, even that shopsoiled Metternich, Dr Henry Kissinger, has admitted that Vietnam was a mistake - for which he is as responsible

as any single individual. But imperialism is not a "policy" adopted by a government; it is the inescapable result of the social system of modern capitalism. Eisenhower justified the first US involvement by referring to the rich resources of Vietnam - its tin, tungsten and other minerals which should be kept for the "Free World". This was long before the "resources crisis" hit the world headlines, when indeed virtually no-one thought about it as a real problem. Yet imperialism's inexorable need for unlimited economic growth to make bigger and bigger profits led inevitably to a constant push to maintain and expand control over cheap raw materials through an imposed unequal trade, and to secure market and investment opportunities.

In this sense, the Vietnamese were in the forefront of the Third World's struggle against imperialist domination. Far more than Vietnam's own resources were involved in this gamble. This explains the desperation with which the United States stuck to the puppet Thieu regime, and Kissinger's "strategy" of ensuring a "decent interval" before "allowing" a final liberation victory. That this meant extending the fighting and piled more suffering upon the Vietnamese was immaterial to this strategist; people mean nothing, they are but ciphers in the mathematical calculations of money and power. The ignoble spectacle of face-saving has its own crazy criminal logic, too; the stakes were so high that even a little face saved meant a lot to the imperialist planners, still hell-bent on maintaining their world position.

Fortunately, the more they strove to save face, the more face they lost. The same is true of the Mayaguez affair; Ford and Kissinger's sordid gloating over their "famous victory" is already turning to ashes as the debits are totted up in another reappraisal. However, the US and other imperialists are unable to learn the real lessons, though they may become more skilled at their efforts to maintain their control. It seems that this may well become the central issue for political debate within the imperialist countries. The Ford-Kissinger-Schlesinger school shows little sign of change, judging by sabre-rattling threats against the oil-producers, the threats to North Korea and excuses for the Vietnam debacle. The latter are chillingly reminiscent of the German generals' excuses for defeat in World War One, which prepared the way for Nazism and for the Second World War.

This grim logic of imperialist dynamics leads to the conclusion that the anti-imperialist

struggle must be stepped up, and the post-Vietnam situation is favourable for this, though the possibility of an even more desperate imperialist policy must be reckoned with. The struggle against continued expanded consumption of the world's resources for ever-growing profits and a distorted, increasingly repellent social life, is a central issue in the fight against imperialism. That is the political essence of the fight against such actions as the mining of Fraser Island and uranium mining, as well as solidarity with all liberation movements.

It also raises deep questions of the nature of socialist societies for which we fight. In this, too, Vietnam has an important place, as it steps out on a course of economic advancement so vitally needed. The Vietnamese plan to combine the biological revolution with the chemical revolution in agriculture in a way that avoids the over-use of chemical fertilisers, and it appears that the bicycle and the bus will remain the main means of personal transport, instead of the car, while trucks and railways will be the main means of transporting goods. These and other plans for industrialising the country are forced by necessity, but they also provide a new alternative for social advance, one in accord with world needs.

The struggle for a new world society in harmony with the total environment is essentially a struggle against world capitalism and its economic laws, since it is motivated by profit, and economic growth for this aim, not the satisfaction of real human needs. But it also needs a review of the historical experience of socialist industrialisation, in which the experience of the Asian countries - China and Korea as well as Vietnam - could give new insights.

It is arguable that the US waged the Vietnam war with such desperate ferocity precisely to maintain its imperialist position in Asia and the world - a position vital to assure US capitalist control of resources, markets and investment. Vietnam became the test case for US imperialist power; its defeat was crucial in turning the tide. No other event since the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 so alters the world balance of forces. The problem for revolutionaries is how to press home this advantage, how to advance the forces for revolution everywhere to make the decisive change so urgent for a world being brought close to the edge of disaster by imperialist domination of at least two-thirds of the world economy.

The Communist Party of Australia has expressed the view that the Vietnamese Workers' Party played a great role in upholding the banner of Communism and internationalism, when the movement was beset with serious divisions which reduced its attractive power and its strength. The Vietnamese were able to draw support from both sides of this conflict, and maintain a semblance of unity in relation to their struggle. It is to be hoped that the favourable perspectives flowing from the Indochina victory may influence an improvement in the relations between the Soviet Union and China, though there are many intractable problems in the way.

This is very important, since imperialism hopes to use the divisions, as indeed it used them during a crucial stage of the Indochina struggle (as in Nixon's "detente" visits to Peking and Moscow). Thrashing around for some leverage in international politics, Kissinger has stressed the need for detente and has clearly implied threats if this does not help the US in its present crisis. This was the point of Kissinger's statement deploring the "willingness of the Soviet Union to exploit strategic opportunities, even though some of these opportunities present themselves more or less spontaneously, and not as a result of the Soviet Union ..." (this) constitutes a heavy mortgage on detente."

One of the major lessons of the Vietnam struggle is that determination in struggle is vital; as Ho Chi Minh put it, "nothing is more precious than independence and freedom" (emphasis added). Underlining this is the well-known Vietnamese statement that "detente is relative; struggle is absolute."

Opposition leader Malcolm Fraser has taken up the theme of utilising differences between the Soviet Union and China, as he urges a hardline course in foreign policy and a big expansion of Australian military power in the aftermath of the imperialist debacle in Indochina. Nowhere else in the capitalist world has there been such dismay and disarray in reactionary circles as in Australia. The Liberal-Country opposition cannot divest itself of its Pavlovian reflex to the alleged threat of the "southward thrust of Asian Communism". It would be an interesting exercise in psychology to attempt to disentangle the strands which are knotted in this syndrome - to discover just how much is concerned with internal politics, how much with a gut racist reaction to Asia, and how much is genuine belief that the Asian hordes

really look with envious eyes at Australia's "empty spaces" and rich resources. Suffice it to say that Fraser and Co. have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing from their quarter-century of tying Australia to US policy, particularly in Asia, as the only way to Australian security through the Pax Americana which they saw as lasting for the whole 20th century and beyond.

Now that it has obviously ended, they cling to it, but with the nagging fear that the US cannot be depended upon. Therefore, their reason, Australia must be strong militarily. Not really for defence, though; it needs strength to back up a foreign policy which is designed to defend the dominions it sees as falling. This is most openly stated by the papers owned by Sir Warwick Fairfax, who seems to have gone off his brain following the liberation victories in Indochina.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* carried 19 editorials warning of doom after Vietnam in the 44 editions from April 3 to May 24 this year. Its April 3 editorial "Sowing the wind" warned of "the progressive collapse of the land barriers which have hitherto separated us from the States and from a political system implacably dedicated to the destruction of the freedoms we take for granted." Referring to people "like Dr Cairns and Mr Uren", we are told "When we reap the whirlwind history will not have far to look for its guilty men." Somewhat strident - but only the beginning. More and more hysterically, the *Herald* ranted about the world situation after Vietnam and the Whitlam government's betrayal of Australia. It is instructive to re-read these editorials, feature articles and news reporting, as Sir Warwick's journalists piled horror on horror, menace upon menace. Orphans, refugees, bloodbaths, massacres followed day after day.

On April 22, we read that "The accounts reaching Saigon of mass executions and atrocities being committed by the vicious communists ... are growing in volume and horror ... It has been suggested, finally, that the horrors ... will cease with peace ... it is crystal clear it is not going to happen after Saigon falls or surrenders." The surrender came only eight days later, already a month has passed and even the most avid sensation-monger has not been able to find anything even remotely resembling reprisals, let alone the predicted "seven million to be purged".

Quite contrary to the rightwing predictions the Provisional Revolutionary Government is deliberately working to prevent reprisals, with

the same farsighted political vision it has displayed through the long struggle. Its aim now is to prevent any further divisions, to heal the wounds of war and to draw in all possible forces in rebuilding the country. These include those trained in technical and administrative skills by the Americans. This policy of mercy and reconciliation contrasts sharply with the ruthless terror of the Thieu administration; it is perhaps helped by the flight of the war criminals from Thieu downwards, who carried their anti-popular crimes through to the end by decamping with all the gold, art treasures and anything else they could lay their hands on and get the Americans to transport for them.

All the hoo-ha about orphans, refugees and bloodbaths was always bound to be only a nine-days wonder, but what lies behind it has to be taken seriously. The rightwing forces are deadly serious in their intention to pursue a hardline pro-imperialist policy, to increase the armed forces and spend a lot more money on "defence". The *Sydney Morning Herald* is again the pacemaker for the right. In its April 19 editorial attacking the government's defence policy, it asserts that "... Mr Barnard shows only the most primitive appreciation of what defence forces are maintained for and totally fails to recognise that they represent an integral factor of foreign policy." (emphasis added). This fits in very well with Opposition spokesman Peacock's talk about the possibility of future Vietnam-type situations, foreshadowing possible interventions. This is a policy of madness, as is the *Herald's* naive belief that Australia could influence Asia by building a massive strike force - a task far beyond its capacity in any case.

It remains to analyse the Whitlam foreign policy in relation to Vietnam and the new situation. As distinct from people like Dr Cairns and Tom Uren, so execrated by the *Herald*, Mr Whitlam has always been equivocal on Vietnam. He was never happy with even Calwell's conditional opposition to the war, as late as 1968 he was praising the shift in US military policy to win the war through a "clear and hold" strategy. He was positively unhappy at public ministerial criticism of Nixon's last criminal bombings. He opposed recognition of the PRG at Terrigal, though this was the last opportunity to lend Australia's weight to an earlier and easier peace. It needs to be clearly understood that Labor's foreign policy is Whitlam's, this explains why he feels so unjustly accused by the Opposition of supporting the Vietnamese.

Whitlam to the end did his best to assist the United States on Vietnam, though with a seeming independence. In the new situation, with Australia recognising the PRG only when it had won, it is vital to mount a big campaign to force urgently needed aid on a large scale, not allowing it to be lost in Whitlam's generalised call for an international effort, desirable as this is.

The broader questions of Australia's post-Vietnam foreign policy need serious thought and action. Whitlam still pins his foreign policy on the US alliance, ANZUS and all the paraphernalia of the past. Visiting Ford in Washington, he expressed his faith in the United States and its world role. In practical terms, this has already led to agreement for the Omega base, allegedly never to be used in nuclear war but largely pointless without such planned use.

The Whitlam foreign policy has other intersections with US plans, notably Ford's "line-drawing" in Asia - with particular reference to support for Suharto's corrupt Indonesian regime. As we have said before, the Whitlam foreign policy is essentially an alternative capitalist policy, more realistic in that it seeks to project an image of a more independent ally of the United States and a less racist, therefore more acceptable "friend" of the nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The left should fight for a genuinely non-aligned foreign policy, whose alignment supports national liberation and is therefore anti-imperialist. The struggle for such a policy will assume greater and greater significance, in domestic policy as well as foreign affairs, since US and internal reactionary pressure will increase for higher arms spending, expanding control and use of resources etc.

A key to this fight is active refutation of the big lie of "Vietnamese expansionism", so assiduously pushed by people like Denis Warner. Shattered by the US defeat in Vietnam and the collapse of his predictions, this hired pen keeps returning to the theme of the Vietnamese pledge to "make a worthy contribution to the world revolution." He represents this as threatened aggression, whereas the worthy contribution following its tremendous help by defeating US imperialism is precisely to unify and build up an independent, prosperous and happy Vietnam.

No matter how they twist and squirm, reactionaries can never make Vietnam a case of export of revolution. If ever there was a genuinely indigenous, independent and self-reliant revolution, it was this one, symbolised by Ho Chi Minh and his unique combination of internationalism and patriotism. The essence of Vietnam was the utter defeat of the export of counter-revolution in its most massive-ever attempt. This is the lesson of Vietnam, already influencing all national-liberation movements, this is its main influence upon world history.

There are lessons for all revolutionaries, too, not only for those who must wage an armed national liberation struggle. One of the most important of these is the need to find a correct strategy through deep analysis of the nature of the society one sets out to change, the class forces involved and the internal and external contradictions which help the revolution. Another is the need to stick firmly to principle and fight with determination and flexibility for the strategy, neither ignoring aid and advice nor sacrificing independence. Still another is the great importance of building a united revolutionary party to **serve** the mass struggle, not replace it.

# NEW DIMENSIONS IN UNIONISM

## by Charlie Gifford

Since the early 1960's there has been continuing debate on the left, in official labor and social democratic movements, and among the more far-sighted of the ruling class in all developed countries, on "problems" of modern unionism. The social and economic basis for this preoccupation is clear enough, certainly clearer now than a decade ago. In Australia, unionism's mettle was blunted and its old aims blurred by the relatively comfortable containment of post war economic prosperity. As with all self-perpetuating institutions, its structures and methods had become obsolete, through changes in society's economic base and the growth of non-institutional social movements. Time, and peoples needs, had gone past the traditions of the '30's.

Proceeding apace was a revolution in science and technology, rising standards of education, a younging of the population, the emergence of a multi-racial society, and diversification of the working class. Moral and social consciousness reached nodal points in mass movements against war, racism, women's oppression and despoilation of the environment. This was matched, though on not so easily defined lines, by spontaneous working class reactions to the apparent powerlessness of people in the "relations between things" syndrome of modern capitalism's power-property structures.

Apart from obvious wider implications as to the system's future, all this threatened the relevance of unionism - from whichever angle it was viewed. To the ruling class, which regards labor unionism as an essential

element in the regulation and smooth functioning of the system, unionism's loss of relevance would render the working class prey to "alien", radical influences. (A leading U.S. businessman said when visiting Australia a year or two ago, "if the unions didn't exist we would have to invent them.") Hence the generous funding, especially in the U.S., of study groups, institutes and faculties on "modern unionism." Of course, their's is a class concept of modernisation, one to which right wing union leaders readily adapt. It entails slicking up structures and settlement processes; improving "efficiency", hiring large and expert staffs, installing computers, casting union officials in the roles of well paid, collar-and-tied executives - brokers between capital and labor.

From the left, there were varying stances on unionism's dilemma, depending on where one stood politically, while the communist left was going through its own traumas of ideological rectification, with divisions and splits leading to the emergence of new forces and fresh ideas.

The divisions that rent the CPA, especially that of 1968-71 which resulted in the formation of the Socialist Party (SPA), were rooted more in domestic issues than in international ones, although the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the hegemonic power of the CPSU seemed to be the main focus of differences in 1968 and later. The main areas of deep-seated difference were attitudes to reformism and the united front, perspectives for the development of the workers movement, the independence of a revolutionary party (independent of the

ruling class, and independent within the world communist movement), and development of a viable revolutionary strategy for Australia.

This is not the place for an excursion into changes in the CPA before and after the split. Suffice to say that new horizons loomed, the spirit of inquiry was untied; "Pandora's box" was opened and the heresies therein collared and buried - including the "heresy" of workers control. Conceptually, workers control implies breaking primary reliance on class struggle confined within the limits imposed by the institutions of the system. And it above all influenced the new thinking of the CPA on the workers movement.

It was no accident that the first significant theoretical contribution on how to break the malaise of the workers movement, and how to develop a new type of unionism, came in the CPA's 1970 20th Congress document 'Modern Unionism and the Workers Movement'. (This is not idle self-praise; there was simply nothing else from the left except occasional essays from academics like Ford and Matthews, and blanket condemnations of unionism's "total irrelevance" from the campus-based "new left".) That 1970 manifesto is a remarkable document, the more so on re-reading. But like most such documents it suffered more from neglect than adherence, it attracted more lip service than real application.

Beyond doubt its main standard bearer was the communist leadership of the NSW Builders Labourers Federation. Perhaps they were uniquely placed; the BLF was the only communist-led building union in NSW, surrounded, so to speak, by the SPA dominated Building Workers Union (BWU). The BLF leaders were young, or youngish, with visionary zeal, not content to give mere lip service to new ideas. Their achievements and impact over the space of five years are so well known it appears almost trite to recount them. But briefly they were: democratisation of the union; responses to women workers, blacks, migrants, homosexuals; the famous green bans, described by Paul Ehrlich as the most dramatic thing happening in the conservation world and characterised the BLs' excursions into wide social arenas and their rapport with other people in struggle. (Were they demonstrating, incipiently at least, how the working class can be a class for itself and for society?)

On the economic front, their members' position improved dramatically, so much so that building industry wages were cited in the May 1975 metal trades award hearing to show

loss of relativity by metal workers. The BLs turned the conventions and traditions of unionism upside down, upsetting the equilibrium of employers, politicians, editorialists and the right and not-so-right in the labor movement. And in extending the dimensions of unionism they cultivated an enormous fund of goodwill and solidarity in the labor movement and the community.

Why then did they fall? Did they commit monumental errors of "left" adventurism and isolationism? Was their defeat inevitable, and did it signify the failure of CPA strategies? Of course they made mistakes. One may ask is it possible for a movement that generates the excitement and elan of the BLs to develop without mistakes? Indeed, can there be an elan without impetuosity, abrasiveness and the mark and clash of personalities? Not in real life, it seems. Apart from those from unrepentant conservatives on the left, surprisingly few criticisms of the main thrust of the BLs work have been committed to paper. Yes, Munday, Owens and Pringle didn't do enough to woo other union officials; the February 12-day strike was ill-considered, though it was hard then, or now, to see an alternative; occasionally the BLs were "way out" on their issues of struggle and "rather reckless" in their tactics; they "went it alone" too much, especially in the building trades. Those are surely peripheral matters, hardly amounting to a large body of criticism on the major issues. Aside from these, there is precious little offering.

Adventurism is not a new charge against the BLs. It was first laid in 1970 during a five-weeks strike in which flying pickets or "vigilantes" were used to de-scab building sites. Some work performed by scabs was undone by the pickets, and howls of horror were raised at the "violence" of the builders laborers. On May 29 that year the *Sydney Morning Herald* editorialised "The State Secretary of the union, Mr Munday, a leading member of the Communist Party, seems to be out to make a name for himself and his party in an extreme and adventurist manner." Nearly five years later that cry was echoed on the left. The SPA paper *The Socialist*, in its April 1975 issue, lists "adventurism" and "their adoption of the policy of violence" as reasons for the NSW BLs defeat.

The 1970 strike marked the first real consolidation of the BLs leadership with the rank and file, and laid the basis of its public image as a union that got things done. During the second week of the strike, noises and

moves were being made toward the usual conferences and "responsible" settlement - with the employers in a mood to concede nothing. But the vigilante activity started and changed the whole complexion of the strike.

Significantly, the vigilante tactic reached its peak in the fourth and fifth weeks, mass meetings grew in size as the strike progressed, and the majorities in favour of continuing the strike grew at successive mass meetings. By strike's end, with the employers caving in to the laborers' demands, the leadership, far from being isolated from the rank and file, was closer to it than ever. And that was a relationship it held to the end. Meanwhile the labor movement was agog at the laborers' tactics, with Right and conservative left joining the chorus against violence to the bosses' property. To understand that reaction it is instructive to look back to the 1970 *Australian Left Review* interview with Jack Munday, so controversial at the time, and so touted by the media pushing "communist plot" themes. People right across the political spectrum were frightened by the strike and the *ALR* interview. Yet in retrospect the interview looks commonplace, made so not by the passage of time but by the BLs consistent application to perspectives and methods of struggle that challenged the power and authority of the ruling class.

Did that type of "adventurism" lead to the isolation and fall of the BLs? Of course there are many sides to isolation, with the key questions being 'isolated from whom, and on what issues?' One line of thinking poses isolation as a factor between leadership and leadership, officials to officials. Masses of workers apparently don't figure in the relationship, nor in that concept of isolation. Thus the BLs were isolated from John Ducker of the NSW Labor Council, and from other officials including some on the left, especially in the BWU.

It goes without saying that Ducker was hostile to everything the BLs stood for. He is their inveterate enemy, once doing an Emmy performance on television after a disturbance at a Labor Council meeting during the 1972 plumbers strike - a la Tricky Dick, pyjamaed and clutching family to bosom. In that sense of isolation, the NSW power workers organisation ECCUDO is also isolated from Ducker and ilk, as are rail and bus workers from NSW Transport Commissioner and Labor Council official, Barry Unsworth.

So far as left of centre officialdom was concerned, the BLs isolation, so far as it

existed, was chiefly an inspired and contrived one. New ideas and methods always provoke reactions ranging from puzzled asistance to confusion to downright conservatism. In this sense, residual conservatism on the left was assiduously cultivated by those who had broken away from the Communist Party and formed the SPA. With important bases in the building and maritime industries the SPA saw the CPA as the main enemy and the NSW BLs as the prime testing area for the "enemy's" ideas and tactics. Putting petty self-interest above class stand, the SPA set out to block and denigrate the BLs, and to isolate them from other unions. Alf Watt, a co-founder of the opposition newspaper *The Australian Socialist*, which prepared the ground for the breakaway from the CPA (though Watt finally opposed breaking away), understated the situation when he wrote in a circular issued in April this year "From the beginning it (the SPA, C.G.) set its face against any co-operation between its members and members of the CPA, against any united action."

In public statements on advanced actions by the BLs, there was often little to choose between the condemnatory notes of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, John Ducker and SPA president Pat Clancy. In more cloistered places - on the 'blower' and in the pubs and corridors - the anti-BL campaign ran rampant in cultivating hostility, or at best indifference. Even in the Communist Party, it must be said, there was too often a staid reserve about the BLs; an uncertainty and stand-offishness that impeded a strong and united counter to the SPA-Right campaign. (This lingered to the end in many quarters, expressing itself in the line of "non-interference in BLF affairs" when Gallagher and the employers were taking over the NSW branch.)

All that notwithstanding, the builders laborers were never isolated in the mass sense, nor isolationist in their actions - quite the contrary. There are perhaps two measures of this; one is rapport between leadership and rank and file, and degree of involvement and control by the rank and file in the union; the other is general working class and community support.

Few would argue that the BLs did not excite workers everywhere, drawing respect and admiration and, especially on green bans, attracting wide public support. Indeed by strangely convoluted logic, these strengths became a focus of new criticisms, with both the conservative left and some of the "left" left clucking disapprovingly about "corrupting the



workers with anarchy" and the BLs becoming "the darlings of middle class trendies."

In words, the SPA places particularly great store in the 'united front' and the 'people versus monopoly' slogan. But their petty anti-CPA politicking stopped them from seeing the concrete people against monopoly content of the green bans, though they belatedly and reluctantly joined some of them. Similarly, with all their emphasis on united fronts and deals at the top as substitutes for mass action, they turned Nelson's eye to the fact that at the eleventh hour of Gallagher's takeover when, according to their rhetoric, the BLs stood in absolute isolation, a large and influential group of Federal Labor parliamentarians issued a declaration of support and solidarity with the NSW branch.

By and large, worker and community support was always there. Certainly, the rank and file of the NSW branch stood at one with the leadership despite an incredible five months of harassment, sackings and victimisation in an industry hit by economic recession. After the takeover move started in October 1974 Gallagher's organisers, some of whom were defeated candidates on Gallagher's ticket in the 1973 NSW branch elections, were hounded off job after job by angry BLs. With three months of intervention behind them, Gallagher's branch had only a few hundred members, many of them new to the industry and shanghaied into the Federal branch by the bosses. ("No Federal ticket no job, we'll pay for it for you.") Successive mass stop work meetings rejected the intervention and pledged confidence in the elected NSW leadership. Nor was the BLs leadership isolated community-wise, in the mass labor movement nor from its membership base.

Its downfall resulted from a chapter of perfidy without parallel in Australian working class history. Politics is about power. And isolation of a union usually results from a concerted campaign by the ruling class at a time of its choosing; when it estimates its adversary (or victim) is most vulnerable due to its own mistakes and is short on public or partisan labor movement support. It is interesting to draw a line on the 1949 coal miners strike, usually cited as the epitome of "left" adventurism in post war history. And one should look not just at the event, but at the background - the moods and political perspectives of the left.

In the early post war era most Australian communists believed that capitalist economic crises would repeat themselves in the classical

prewar forms, and on a scale even more catastrophic than in the 1930's. At the CPA 15th Congress in 1948, a section of the Congress Resolution headed "How to fight oncoming depression" stated: "The capitalist world, already deeply affected by the general crisis, which was worsened by the war, is about to plunge into the biggest of all its economic crises."

Menzies was already talking about banning the CPA, anti-communism and the cold war raged, and the Chifley Labor government was on its last legs. CPA strategy was to deepen the political crisis to complement the economic crisis shortly to come, to expose reformism and assert itself as the alternative to Labor. The coalminers' strike was slotted into that strategy.

The result was disastrous. The Chifley government immediately invoked emergency legislation and froze the unions' funds. Eight union officials were goaled for contempt of court after refusing to divulge the whereabouts of funds, and Chifley put troops into the mines. The press ran hot on a "communist conspiracy" theme and Party offices were raided by security police. The CPA had badly overestimated the level of radicalisation of the working class, and had underestimated the depth of illusions in the Labor Party, to say nothing of its other prognoses. As a result the ruling class and the right wing were able to break the strike, alienate public opinion from, and crushingly isolate the CPA and the mineworkers. CPA chronicles are sparing and careful on their analyses of the 1949-51 period, but to the extent they exist they are critical of the Party's "left" sectarianism at the time.

None of the ingredients of the 1949 coal strike were present in the NSW builders laborers situation - and especially not the "great day soon" perspective. The BLF were seldom vulnerable to frontal attack, nor to bringing themselves down through large-scale indiscretions, as the NSW Askin government discovered in 1970, 1972 and 1973. Partly due to a personal interest in Sydney's "development", NSW Premier Sir Robert Askin long rankled over the BLs and their green bans, and was out to get them, as was the Establishment generally. But on what, and how? The "strike violence" thing got maximum 1970 mileage and petered out, only to be revived again during the 1972 plumbers strike. The issue then was not "communist violence" nor the plumbers strike; it was the green bans and the new style of unionism

espoused by the BLs. The wealthy developers with their champagne profits had been taken on and beaten. Salt to the wound, the BLs had public support. Askin ranted and raved, backed by the usually bland **Sydney Morning Herald** throwing caution to the winds by running five hysterical anti-BLs editorials in the space of twelve days.

Hysteria from the right, and calm, considered politicking from the Establishment, gathered momentum during 1973. In June the NSW Master Builders Association mounted a massive press advertising campaign, accusing the laborers of everything from anarchy to sabotage. Simultaneously they closed jobs, locking out thousands of workers with an eye to pitting tradesmen against laborers, and laborers against their leadership. There could be no "sanity" in the industry under the existing leadership, ran the MBA line, focussing on the NSW BLF triennial elections to be held later in the year.

During the latter part of the year the campaign reached a frenzy, with the full weight of the ruling class arrayed against the BLs. In August, Askin used the Summary Offences Act, introduced to fill the hiatus left by the smashing of penal powers by the 1969 Clarrie O'Shea strike, to prosecute BLF officials acting in support of workers job actions. Employers were already co-operating with the Gallagher forces, and in the NSW BLF election campaign the BHP at Newcastle allowed candidates of the Gallagher ticket to enter the steelworks but excluded BLF officials.

Master builders again staged lockouts in the first weeks of November. Askin, in full flight on a law and order kick, threatened to introduce emergency anti-strike legislation against the BLs and power workers. This had been preceded by a late-October assault by Askin and the MBA on the Rocks area green ban. Early in December the MBA topped their campaign with an application for the deregistration of the BLF federally on the grounds that the NSW branch had exceeded its charter in imposing green bans. (The MBA application was based on a ruling by Mr Justice Aird that the green bans were non-industrial disputes, to be settled by negotiation between the developers, residents, conservationists and the unions.) Quite a bun party, and in the middle of it (in October the SPA displayed its "class" solidarity" with its Mundy-Nixon cartoon linking Watergate and alleged maladministration of the NSW BLF.

By way of adding spice to the assault on "new unionism", the **Sydney Morning Herald** in November carried three large feature articles on workers control during the power workers struggle for a 35-hour week, drawing comparisons with the BLs and telling its readers 'if you haven't heard of workers control then you had better learn. This is it - power rationing in the hands of power workers, green bans in the hands of builders laborers.'

The NSW leadership was returned with a 5 to 2 majority in the October BLF elections despite the two-pronged campaign against them. Campaigning on bogus charges of "corruption and mismanagement" of the NSW branch, the Gallagher-sponsored opposition ticket labelled itself "left", which no doubt sowed enticing thoughts in the minds of master builders. Frontal attack had repeatedly failed; there was scant hope of taking NSW from within on a right ticket, and little more with a "left" ticket - and besides, that meant suffering another three years of green bans. But a "left" takeover, as Gallagher had more than once threatened, held distinct possibilities; indeed it was the only way. The scenario included a divided communist left, the SPA could be relied on to back Gallagher by default; among the rest there would be sufficient confusion and vascillation to shore up a non-partisan stand. 'After all it is only a blue between rival factions of the CP.'

One can speculate on Gallagher's motives. An official of the Maoist CPA (M-L) with an implacable hatred for the "revisionist" CPA, a black and white fundamentalist with an ambition for power but with no appreciation of its nuances, opposed to green bans as petty-bourgeois aberrations, and not above breaking them, as with the Melbourne Newport power house ban; in the union movement unscrupulous as a body snatcher out to build an empire with himself top of the heap. Everyone was aware of these characteristics, but everyone underestimated his ruthlessness.

While there are some signs that Gallagher had an iron-clad deal with the employers before the Federal intervention began, it's more probable that the deals were worked out in the running. Certainly the employers had long applied pressure on the Federal body as part of their campaign against the NSW branch. In June 1974 they finally achieved deregistration of the BLF federally on the grounds of the green bans and the Federal body's failure to discipline NSW. Gallagher

welcomed deregistration, saying he was glad to be freed of the shackles of Arbitration. But he soon changed his mind. On October 7 1974 the Federal Management Committee of the BLF decided to seek re-registration **without the NSW branch**, and to establish a new NSW branch.

Gallagher set up office in Sydney in mid-October in what he almost certainly regarded as a long-term operation. It bore the marks of that, for despite the ready co-operation of employers and the NSW government his branch made little progress, other than to occupy the full-time attention of the NSW leadership, with a resultant fall off in work on the real problems of the industry.

When the NSW branch considered invoking an Equity Court ruling forbidding the federal body from establishing a NSW branch, Gallagher wailed in a circular to other unions that the NSW officials were stooping to using the bosses' courts to jail him. Almost to the day of him posting that circular, the MBA sent a confidential letter on October 22, to all its members calling on them to help the Gallagher organisers and to obstruct NSW officials. The sordid and open collaboration between Gallagher and the MBA then began in earnest. On many jobs the bosses carpeted workers one by one and delivered the ultimatum - no federal ticket, no job.

Strike-breaking federal ticket holders were flown from interstate at employers' expense. Flying squads of NSW police appeared at short notice to block entry of NSW officials to jobs, or to evict them, despite Court orders favoring their right of entry. Wholesale victimisation of delegates and militants raged everywhere. Despite exhaustion from the long campaign against the takeover, the mass of builders' laborers left no doubt as to where they stood. It was usual for BLs mass stop work meetings to be large and lively, usually around the order of 1,000-1,500. But in February and March at three Town Hall meetings against the intervention there were two meetings of 2,000 and one of 1,400 - the latter on the wettest Sydney day in 30 years.

Yet on March 24, the NSW leadership conceded defeat, recommending amid deeply emotional scenes that all members join the federal branch. Out of the blue, Gallagher delivered the **coup de grace** in the form of a package deal agreement with the employers for a \$9 flow-on from the Building Trades Award, with employment preference to federal ticket-holders. Coinciding with Gallagher's announcement, employers let it be known by

word of mouth on the bigger jobs that there would be a lockout from April 1 - jobs only to federal ticket-holders. In face of that, there was little alternative to caving in. Sure, the position could have been fought for a while, but at the cost of wholesale sackings, hardship to workers, splits. The suddenness of the final deal - and the fact that Gallagher was prepared to go that far - caught everyone unawares.

How could the final "isolation" have been avoided? Although the NSW officials could have been more conciliatory and modest in their relations with other unions and officials, the only way a substantial difference could have been made would have been to toe the line earlier on: drop the green bans as a significant movement; conform to "responsible" methods; stop being "disruptive"; and revert to "old and tested" authoritarian norms of unionism. But who on the revolutionary left was prepared to pay that price??

Sometimes it is said that too much attention was paid to green bans and moral issues, and too little to "bread and butter questions". By and large, the BLs were more successful on the latter than most unions who pay all their attention to "bread and butter". But their forte, and the deep lesson of their whole experience, was how they combined both, taking unionism out of a one-dimensional world. Ah, to stroll through the top end of Sydney Botanical Gardens on a balmy autumn day on full workers' compensation at the prevailing pay rate! Yes, a green ban saved the one, being sacrificed to a car park for the Opera House, and the 1971 accident pay campaign in which the BLs played a major part, won the other. (That campaign showed too the potential of a united building trades group. The BLF and BWIU co-operated during most of it, the more so during the long absence abroad of the then BWIU State Secretary, Pat Clancy.)

Still further possibilities of linking the immediate material interests of a section of workers with community interests, and against the monopolies, was shown in the BLs permanency campaign. It began at the end of 1972 at the start of the economic down-turn in the industry. Thus it became a fight for employment, for union hire, permanency based on planned development of the industry - and much more. Within the BLs concept was a recasting of priorities, putting workers' homes, hospitals and community projects ahead of ugly inner-city office blocks and prestige buildings. As a creative extension of the green bans movement, they developed

ideas of the workers' movement being concerned with the end results of their labor, not just in bans, but in positive conception, planning and benefit to society. They canvassed community involvement, pointed to the possibilities of reducing land prices and interest rates, and, naturally, once again stirred the ginger of the developers, whose reaction was sharp and determined, in the form of the June 1973 lockouts. Of course, permanency wasn't won. The SPA leaders turned thumbs down on the issue, posing instead the much narrower demands of 6 weeks' annual leave and long service leave. Despite sloganising, they couldn't cope with the actual "people versus monopoly" implications of permanency. Gallagher gave lip service for a time but then, after facetiously declaring permanency an impossibility under capitalism, launched into bigger things in collaboration with capital - his campaign to destroy the NSW branch.


By its temp, style and ethos, the BLs movement generated both positive and negative features. Is that really surprising? Everyone who has participated in a mass movement knows that **real** people in action develop a rich, and at times, bewildering verve, always "more varied, more multifiform, more lively and ingenious than is imagined by even the best parties". On the debit side, and on a mass scale within the BLs, was the emergence of a contempt for organisation and leadership, and for the vision and methods of others. Elitism, in the best sense of that word, can be positive and uplifting when firmly sheathed to a total reality. But when set adrift it can fall victim to the turmoil. No need for organisation, no need for leaders, do your own thing - the ultra-democracy of spontaneism

was in evidence, especially in the last two years.

Right through the early '70s, the left was reappraising all questions of leadership, masses, democracy, methods of organisation, the role of the revolutionary party in a 'liberating' reaction to the long stultification of the stalinist era. In that milieu, all sorts of anti-organisation concepts grew. After all, the very concept 'organisation' is an antithesis of absolute democracy. The BLs problems and confusions in this respect were compounded by the temper and excitement of their movement. The problem of how best to combine leadership and organisation **with** maximum rank and file involvement and the widest democracy has not been solved with the emphasis on leadership, nor did the BLs adequately solve it with emphasis on the rank and file. Similarly, the CPA organisation within the BLs operated in fits and starts - either very good or very bad - haphazardly and without sufficiently clear orientation.

The BLs dared to struggle and dared to win. Their actions were charismatic, exciting and bold. The movement could have asked more of them; but more important, we could have asked more of ourselves and given more. That they lifted the movement to new dimensions, only the blind and the philistine fail to see. When the Gallagher takeover was consummated, there were audible sighs of relief from many quarters. But those reacting that way had best not hold their breaths too long.

The NSW builders' laborers staged a dress rehearsal. What they pioneered promises to become endemic to the whole labor movement in the period ahead.



# FEMINISM AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

by Joyce Stevens

How, or if, feminism relates to the class struggle is an issue in both the women's movement and in left politics generally. Views are wide ranging and varied and some in both fields argue for separatist politics. There are feminists who reject any form of co-operation or action with male dominated structures or movements, and sections of the left who claim that feminism splits the class and has nothing to do with class politics. Some of the latter work in the women's movement with the aim of "converting women to revolutionary politics".

The fact that working class organisations - the unions and political parties - and their actions are predominantly male oriented helps to obscure some of the issues involved.

There is little argument about the fact that real differences between the sexes do exist, though what they are and when and how they arise is contentious.

One of the earliest marxist contributions on this question was Engels' "The Origin of the

Family, Private Property and the State". It was a major contribution when sex differences were still regarded as primarily biological and natural. He showed that environment and production were significant factors in the emergence and development of the family and in determining the distribution of power between the sexes.

Yet Engels' view that "The first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman" is not supported by a great deal of evidence from what is now known about human history.

Much of the history of how the human race evolved is still hidden so there is no uncontested theory as to how and why the differences between the sexes arose. While environmental and economic factors are obviously significant there is much missing evidence and many variations. This puts all theories about the origins of sex differentiation into the area of speculation.

However, we do know from the study of contemporary pre-literate societies that sex discrimination did exist prior to the development of classes. This shows that there was no inevitable link between discrimination based on sex and the emergence of economic class. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the removal of classes will not automatically eradicate sex discrimination.

One of the limiting factors in many of the studies made of women's position in pre-literate societies is that much of the work was carried out by male scientists with explicit and unconscious male biases. This resulted in studies where the evidence about women was gathered, not from the women themselves, but from the men in the tribe concerned. Yet even some of these studies show that many of these women were far from being equal. The following extract from **Our Primitive Contemporaries** by G.P. Murdoch, Professor of Anthropology at Yale University, 1934, about the Eskimo people illustrates this:

"Among the polar Eskimos the status of woman is not high. She must observe rigid taboos during menstruation and she is definitely subordinate to her husband, though she is not devoid of rights. There is only one thing in which the woman is not allowed any voice whatever and that is in sexual matters. Her husband can lend her to a friend for a night or longer without considering her wishes in the slightest, indeed without even consulting her, but she is severely condemned if she gives

herself to another man without permission'.

"A husband often displays signs of tenderness towards his wife.... On other occasions, however, he treats her with what we should call brutality, for the alleged reason that, 'if affection is to be kept alive, the woman must feel that the man is strong'."

Similar conditions exist for women among other food gathering peoples. (See **Woman, Culture and Society**, published 1974 by Stanford University). This type of society pre-dates economic class, although the social position of women even then is clearly connected to her position in production and as a bearer of children.

There are many variations in the way the division of labor based on sex operates in pre-literate societies, but generally speaking the higher status is accorded to the work of the male, even though the same work may be designated to the female in another society (see **Sex, Gender and Society** by A. Oakley).

It is evident that in some pre-literate societies, at least, there existed a double sexual standard, whereby women were regarded as their husband's property to be lent or passed on to other men. There also existed many forms of social denigration of women during menstruation as well as other taboos and rituals which effectively excluded women from the arenas of power. Male councils, ceremonies, taboos are the dominant culture and ritual is connected with economic and political activity.

There is, however, evidence of a female sub-culture - of women's ceremonies and dances and, in some instances, open hostility and ridicule of the male. In some societies there is a specific 'ritual of rebellion' in which women assume the roles of men and express their rebellion in the form of abuse and obscene remarks and gestures. A form of activity not otherwise permissible for women. This could be regarded as latent feminism - the first ten<sup>1</sup> 't'ie reject 'ns of discriminations based on sex. How this awareness and resistance developed through the ages has mainly been hidden or misinterpreted. "Most opinions coming down to us from the past are those of victors". (**Not in God's Image**, by O'Faolain and Martines). In this contest the working classes and women, on a double score, suffered the most.

Marxists, too, have found it difficult to interpret the feminist movement and in the past have largely failed to recognise its

significance, even though it has never been acceptable to the establishment and many courageous and militant women have been persecuted and suppressed.

The British suffragette movement developed into a militant mass movement of women which took the lives of at least four of them. Over a seemingly simple struggle for law reform to allow women to vote, the British establishment unleashed severe repression and violence against those women, who came to total tens of thousands and included larger numbers of mill workers. The death toll included two women who were injured by police in a demonstration, one who died as the result of forced-feeding in jail and another who threw herself in front of the king's horse at Epsom. Many more were injured in demonstrations and in jail. If militancy and courage were the criteria for revolution, then the suffragettes had little to learn from anyone. Although initially peaceful, the resistance to their demands, the arrests and forced-feeding of many women evoked a militant guerrilla type response which included arson, the destruction of mails, mass smashings of windows and bombings. Hundreds of women were arrested and were so brutally treated in prison that had not the First World War intervened, many more would have lost their lives.

The reasons for such a movement disappearing with the outbreak of war, or failing to develop politically, lies not only in the limitations of the movement itself, but also in the political opportunism and economic determinism of social democracy of the day.

"Feminism in this period was diffuse, inchoate and contradictory. It was not a clearly worked out ideology, but was rather a rebellion against the norms of bourgeois Victorian femininity. It extended into every area of cultural life and it had an international impact. The newly emerging socialist organisations were no exception. Their response to the feminist movement was varied and complex. They had no universally held position on either the 'woman question' or on the feminist movement and the reaction to the latter was somewhat different from a theoretical analysis of the origins of women's oppression. Formal commitment to the emancipation of women was one thing. A practical and personal response to feminism as an autonomous movement was another."

(Hidden from History by S. Rowbotham).

The responses in the left ranged from attempts to integrate the right to vote into the

concept of total commitment to the class struggle, to arguments that "Woman's place is in the home .... once the means of production were conquered and controlled by the people woman would be restored to her true sphere." By and large, the heritage of this and the years after the First World War was to make feminism a dirty word in the communist movement - a concept which persists today among some on the left - and to make feminists very suspicious of class politics.

Yet class politics explain one part of today's reality and feminism another. The problem is to find the ways to integrate the struggle on both these fronts without the 'woman question' being buried at the bottom.

Though capitalism has intensified class, sex and race oppression it has perhaps also produced the conditions which make it possible for women to develop in a new way their double-fronted struggle. The demands for an end to the division of labor based on sex, for women to control their own bodies and take back control in the area of reproduction are no longer issues relevant only to a small number of women. The development of the pill and safe abortion and the introduction of modern technology in production has dramatically changed the way of life and the potential for all women.

To some feminists the ultimate answer to all problems is a type of feminist Shangri La, with not a single male in sight. To others it is a revolution waged by women alone, presumably for the good of all. For many women who have suffered some of the worst effects of sexism these solutions may be tempting. But the majority of women are unable to separate themselves from the total social problem of the human race, and there are times when other forms of oppression press on them harder than sexism.

A woman who spends eight hours a day at a factory bench and several more in the service of a family, the Black woman whose work opportunities are at the very bottom of the already restricted range of female occupations, the woman who left school at 14 as her parents did before her, and at 18 is a wife and mother trying to keep a family on unskilled man's wage, may understandably have some difficulty in deciding whether her oppression is due to class, race, or sex. But, on the other hand, such women will not necessarily see the economic problem as the primary one.

Surveys and discussions have shown that

industrial working women are often more concerned about having to do the housework when they knock off, or having to shop in their lunch hour, or having to assume main responsibility for the family than they are about pay and work conditions. Nor do economics, for example inflation, affect women and men in exactly the same way. A woman's right to a job is tenuous under capitalism - her right to work is not even universally accepted by the union movement. A woman worker's wage usually is already less than for a man. So that a class response to inflation must take account of these differences. Otherwise what are regarded as 'class' slogans, e.g. workers' control and jobs for all are seen by many women (and men) as meaning "male workers' control", "defence of male workers' jobs", "work for all men", and not directed at the problems of women. This isolates women and splits the class more effectively than any feminist demands.

A woman on the factory floor knows that if she wants to improve her working conditions she has to find the ways to unite with her male workmates to fight the boss - even though the same male workers may unite with the boss under other conditions to limit the woman's work opportunities or to prove that he needs her job more than she does.

The only solution for that woman is to be able to fight on two fronts. Yet in practice this is extremely difficult as some recent industrial experiences show. It is almost impossible for women to sustain opposition to sexism in industries where they also rely on those men for support in struggles against the boss.

There are lulls in all struggles and times when forces withdraw to regain breath and fight again; but to fight sexism women need something more than the existing male dominated class organisations.

To enable them to fight on two fronts they require an autonomous women's movement capable of giving theoretical and practical assistance in all aspects of their work and life.

This means a feminist movement which recognises that political activism outside the feminist movement is not only valid but essential. It means giving practical assistance to the women who work in male dominated organisations, political parties, unions and job organisations to help build feminist groups in these organisations, to develop the activity of women and to help women inside and outside such organisations to exchange experiences. It means working out priorities in the women's movement which take into account the particular difficulties of industrial women workers, and women who have children and are employed and/or housewives. It means developing ideas on what happens to women after they have come to women's shelters, women's houses, or health centres.

For women working in male-oriented movements and organisations, it involves recognising and struggling against the danger of submerging the interests of women for the "good of all". Participation in, preservation and building of the autonomous women's movement is a vital component of this struggle.

A women's movement which aspires to unite all women who stand for a radically different society and the liberation of women, is essential to preserve for women the right to be the architects of their own liberation and to develop women's confidence and abilities in a supportive and feminist environment. It can ensure that the struggle against sexism is an integral part of the socialist revolution.

With close to 40 per cent of the Australian work force women, the presence of such a movement in the work force and unions is vitally important for those who seek revolutionary change. In an era when women are becoming more and more conscious of their rights as women, any class organisation which does not confront sexism both in its practice and in the attitudes of its members jeopardises the unity of the class. Marxists have a particular responsibility in this respect.

# THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ECOLOGY

by Hugh Saddler  
& Brian Aarons

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the complex web of events and processes embraced by the term 'environment and resources crisis' are a consequence of the nature of prevailing economic, social and political systems and that resolution of the crisis can only be achieved by the institution of a self-managed socialist society.

We will assume that the reader is aware of the basic ways in which the environment and resources crisis is manifest. The most urgent need of the ecology movement at this stage is an overall theoretical framework, within which the facts we already have can be related to strategies for action. The environmental debate is not mainly about the details of pollution measurements, but about people's rights to choose how they want to live; it is not, for example, about how many parts per million of lead in the air of cities is 'safe', but whether we want to continue breathing lead, given that it is known to be a dangerous cumulative poison and that the technical basis for its elimination is immediately available.

On the facts themselves, German writer Hans-Magnus Enzensberger sees the basic components of the "ecological hypothesis in the following:

1. Industrialisation leads to an uncontrolled growth in world population. Simultaneously material needs increase. Even with great expansion of production the chances of satisfying needs deteriorates per capita.
2. The industrial process so far has been nourished from mainly non-renewable energy sources. Replacement by new sources such as atomic fusion is theoretically conceivable, but not yet practicable.
3. The industrial process is also dependent on mineral raw materials, above all metals, which are not renewable either.
4. Water requirements have reached a point where they can no longer be satisfied by the natural water circulation.
5. Neither the area of land suitable for cultivation nor the yield per acre can be arbitrarily increased.

6. Pollution - disequilibriums and disfunctions in the metabolism between nature and human society - increases.
7. "Psychic pollution" - exposure to excessive noise and other irritants - also increases.
8. Thermal pollution - the waste heat emitted in all conversions of energy - poses a final critical limit on industrial expansion.

## Structures and Values

This poses the main features of the environment-resources crisis; we can now turn to the questions of origins, causes and solutions. There is a continuing and intimate interrelationship between social structures and social ideas and values. On the one hand the social system and its various structures are not metaphysical entities having an existence of their own; they consist of and are propagated by people and their actions - therefore any talk of changing 'the system' as an abstract entity without changing people and without the conscious and emotional activity of people is unrealistic. On the other hand it is clear that the ideas, values and behaviour of people are inculcated in, even forced upon them, in many instances, by the social system and the present order of things. This apparently vicious circle can only be broken by determined and creative parallel attacks on existing ideas structures and values and by projection of **alternative** ideas, structures and values.

We advance this two-sided analysis and strategy against two one-sided views which are prevalent in the radical ecology movement. There are those who see only the system and its structures and do not pay sufficient attention to the role of ideas and values.

We could perhaps sum all this up by saying that society has both a form (structures) and a content (ideas, values and actions) and that radicals need an integrated analysis and a strategy based on that analysis which take account of both form and content and offers alternatives in both cases.

## Industrial Society

Historically, the development of capitalism went hand in hand with the rise of science and

technology and in particular with their systematic application to production. It also was related to what has been called the 'Protestant Ethic' which adopted certain attitudes to work and the accumulation of wealth and capital making it easier for capitalism to take hold. It is difficult and simplistic to isolate out any one factor as the single cause: what we can say is that a whole constellation of factors operated to determine that capitalist society came into being in some countries ahead of others. At an even wider level there is the factor of the Judeo-Christian tradition which was probably a necessary though not sufficient condition for the rise of capitalism and industrial society. This tradition is supposed to have supported the notion that humanity could and should dominate nature, as against other traditions which either saw humanity as at the mercy of nature or in balance with nature. Again, this Judeo-Christian tradition has both positive and negative aspects and the relative importance of these varies with time. The advance of humanity needed a belief system which could break from fear of nature and helplessness before it. Now, however, the growth and development of industrial society has reached a point where a purely exploitative, dominating attitude to nature creates its own problems and science itself, the condition for the liberation of humanity from the unknown forces of nature, needs to broaden its own perspective and become more 'scientific' - i.e. become 'ecological'.

The importance of these points can be seen when we examine the case of non-capitalist industrial societies. The occurrence of pollution and waste of resources in the USSR, not to mention its co-responsibility with Japan for the continuation of the extinction of the whale, shows that the abolition of the capitalist class and of private profit is not sufficient to ensure the disappearance of traditional narrow economic accounting methods nor the development of environmental awareness. The attitude to nature and to the feasibility and desirability of unlimited growth of material production is often similar in Eastern Europe to attitudes in advanced capitalist societies. This stems partly from similar cultural traditions and partly from a narrow interpretation of marxism itself. While so different in many respects, marxism does share with some other nineteenth century philosophies a superoptimistic view about the possibilities of unlimited material production and the domination of nature. While

recognising the problems of capitalism's totally exploitative attitude to nature, Marx was not, and could not have been, aware of the precise forms of crisis to which this attitude would lead, nor of the particular natural limitations which the process of growth would run up against. Thus Marx cannot supply detailed answers to today's ecological problems and dogmatic reference to and narrow interpretations of his work will lead only to the sort of mistakes to be seen in the USSR.

All that said, it must be added that with all the above problems and the existence of bureaucratic structures and interests, there are still not the entrenched interests of private profit and the organisation of society around private profit. Therefore it is possible that change in the direction of recognising ecological realities will not meet the same degree of resistance. On the other hand, bureaucracies and their self-interests can certainly prevent recognition of problems and slow down action to solve them.

## The Political Economy of Ecology

What characterises capitalism, and distinguishes it from the above societies is its organisation around private profit. The fundamental problem of capitalism, in the environmental sphere as in many others, is that social effort is organised around the central principle and criterion of profit rather than around the satisfaction of real human needs. Precisely because it is primarily 'organised' for the one and not the other (of course the making of profit sometimes necessitates satisfying needs) capitalism has always been subject to irrationalities and to regular crises. The ecological crisis is but the latest of these.

Earlier periods of capitalist development saw the gradual transition from laissez-faire to monopoly capitalism. Simultaneously the spread of imperialism helped to produce and certainly to maintain the underdevelopment of the colonial countries, now called the Third World; the continuous existence today of underdevelopment is a large factor in the problems of resources.

The period since 1945 has seen the

emergence of what has variously been called neo- or late capitalism and has been marked by the long boom which may now be ending. It has also been characterised by the emergence of a large group of non-capitalist countries and by the anti-colonial revolutions, which taken together have meant a shrinking of capitalist spheres of influence and world markets. This has placed certain constraints on capitalist expansion, though many new policies of trade and economics have been developed to surmount the constraints.

However, the key new factor, which provided the necessary conditions for a renewed expansion of capitalism, was neo-capitalism in the metropolitan countries, marked by the general recognition of the necessity for Keynesian methods of management of aggregate demands and consequent extension of economic planning and state intervention into many areas of economic and social activity which had previously been left to the operation of 'market forces'. Alongside this has been a further consolidation of monopoly power in the hands of a small number of large companies, the emergence of multi-national companies and two further factors which particularly concern us here.

Firstly, there has been an unprecedented upsurge into technical development, of such a magnitude that we can properly speak of a scientific and technological revolution or a second or third industrial revolution. Such technical upsurges are common to all periods of economic expansion. What makes the present one different is that it has been brought about by the institutional integration of scientific and technical endeavour with the capitalist state and individual companies, so that the revolution is virtually a permanent one, bringing an almost uninterrupted transformation of the techniques of production. For the first time it has allowed the scale of production and other social activities to come up against some natural limits to expansion; the fact that similar limits are being encountered in the Soviet Union shows that this type of rapid technical expansion is not a characteristic of capitalism alone. Further, under the impetus of this upsurge, our productive and other activities have reached a level where they can significantly affect the environment; the most startling demonstration of this is perhaps the possibility of man-made alteration to climate. The continuous nature of technical transformation means that unless

the direction of technical advance is changed and planned, the environmental effects will rapidly grow in importance, threatening certainly the quality and nature of social life, and perhaps even the biological existence of the human species, or at least a large proportion of it.

Secondly, there has been the creation of new domestic markets by means of a phenomenon which has been called consumerism. This involves conspicuous waste, e.g. in packaging, planned obsolescence, and use of sophisticated advertising techniques to create false needs, and the systematic substitution of individual for collective solutions to real needs. Consumerism appeared in the early post-war years when several capitalist countries achieved a production level capable of satisfying the basic material needs of all people. (That this capability was not translated into reality for many shows that capitalism cannot even achieve redistribution of wealth even to the minor degree needed to ensure adequate food, shelter and clothing for everyone.) Consumerism provided a means of ensuring continuously expanding markets within the domestic economies of the main capitalist countries.

A number of liberal economists, concerned about the disastrous environmental consequences of unbridled capitalism, have identified economic growth as the major cause (e.g. Boulding, Daly, Mishan). This is true as far as it goes, but the key point is that the type of growth, not growth itself, is the cause. Economic growth occurs in ways that are determined by and reflect the existing structures and values of society. In a capitalist society where profitability is the major criterion for deciding in what activities to make new investment (and hence ensure future growth), economic growth very often occurs in ways that are directly damaging to the environment. Barry Commoner has demonstrated that the continuous technical transformation, which is one of the characteristics of neo-capitalist society, has in many cases resulted in the replacement of older materials and technologies by new ones that are more profitable, but also more environmentally disruptive, e.g. the substitution of synthetic detergents for soap, concrete for bricks, aluminium for steel, non-return bottles and cans for returnable ones. Thus pollution and resource depletion have grown even faster than the economy as a whole, and much faster than population.

It is an empirical fact, almost universally acknowledged by bourgeois economists, that growth is essential for the maintenance of full (or nearly full) employment and the avoidance of economic recession; in other words, it is essential for the maintenance of neo-capitalist society. The institutionalisation of government control of the level of aggregate demand has meant that governments always see economic growth *per se* as a primary, short term policy objective. Growth is obtained by stimulating (or maintaining, as the case may be) 'business confidence', in other words by encouraging already existing capitalist economic activities, which are responsible for the environmental problems. For example, one of the methods most frequently used to increase demand and stimulate growth is a reduction in the sales tax on motor vehicles; the theoretically equally valid alternative of stimulating the production of railway rolling stock is never used. The former policy is of course directly damaging to the environment, while the latter would in general improve it. Thus governments and capitalist industry collaborate to produce environmentally destructive forms of economic growth.

At this point it is worth looking a little deeper to see why growth is essential for the maintenance of neo-capitalism. For the system as a whole it has enabled latent class conflict to be bought off by the experience of steadily rising absolute material standards for the majority of workers. This has diverted attention from discrepancies in relative standards, which have remained more or less constant for the last 30 years, and from other undesirable features of capitalism, for example its inability to supply even the basic necessities for the poverty stricken minority, alienation and environmental destruction. Rising material standards are also a crucial component of the process of persuading workers to adopt bourgeois cultural and political values.

Growth is just as important for the health of individual capitalist enterprises as for the capitalist system as a whole. They either grow or they go to the wall. Shareholders in a growing company receive not only large dividends but more importantly they achieve capital gains with bonus issues and a rising share price. If they do not get this, they quickly become dissatisfied and take their money elsewhere; the share price falls and the company becomes vulnerable to a takeover

bid. Furthermore, the market for a great many products is characterised by oligopolistic competition under which condition it is usually much easier for a single company to increase its market share by expanding the market as a whole than by taking over another company's share (the relationship of this phenomenon to consumerism is obvious). The result is that the economy as a whole grows.

There is another reason for the drive to grow within organisations in capitalist society and this relates to the individual motivations of managers within the hierarchical structure of a company and the corporate ethos to which it gives rise. This motivation is only distantly related to the need for growth to maintain the position of the company in purely financial terms, as described above; publicly owned authorities like the Electricity and Forestry Commissions are no less committed to growth than a capitalist company. The motivations of individual managers stem partly from their thorough acceptance of the ethos of individual competitiveness that is one of the cornerstones of capitalist ideology. They arise also from a joint commitment, with managers in private industry, to the growth and profitability of their part of the neo-capitalist state-industrial system. For example the views and motivations of Forestry Commission officers are usually in complete harmony with, indeed indistinguishable from, those of managers in paper, sawmill and woodchip export companies.

Since one of the manifestations of the current economic crisis is a reduction in the rate of growth in Australia and throughout the capitalist system one might suppose that the rate of onset of environmental crisis has slackened. This is not so, for any reduction in the level of environmental impact as a result of lower levels of current economic activity is outweighed by the sacrifice of environmental standards in the effort to boost economic growth by stimulating (environmentally destructive) economic activity. In a time of high unemployment, which is associated with a low rate of economic growth in our present society, companies use the prospect of jobs in a blatant attempt to bribe workers and split the ecology movement, as the Sydney green bans, the Frazer Island dispute and many other examples demonstrate. Perhaps even more insidious are the environmental consequences of policies to mitigate the 'energy crisis'. Fortunately, this has not yet

struck Australia, but examples abound from overseas: Alaska oil pipeline (USA), relaxation of atmospheric sulphur dioxide standards (USA), postponement of a program to eliminate leaded petrol (UK).

We now turn to a more detailed examination of the operation of a profit maximising, competitive economic system, and consider in particular four major aspects which lead to wasteful use of resources and ecological degradation.

The first aspect relates to the time horizons used in decision making. Capitalist investment decisions are made on the basis of achieving a maximum rate of return on the capital invested. The investment of capital in a project brings with it a commitment to meeting the operating costs of the project as they arise, year by year, so a way has to be found of weighing up present investment costs against future operating costs and revenues.

This is done by discounting future costs at an annual rate determined by the interest rate and by an additional factor to allow for uncertainty about the future. The effect of this procedure is to make costs and revenues in the present and the immediate future far more important than longer term costs.

The environmental consequences of this can be seen by considering some examples. A company investing in large scale agriculture may well be able to achieve a return that allows it to recover all its investment plus a good profit in less than 20 years. It is then able to invest its money in another activity which could be quite unrelated to agriculture. It need not be concerned if, at the end of the twenty years, the fertility of the soil is totally destroyed. This sort of exploitation seems to be occurring in the cotton growing areas of the Namoi Valley in northern NSW. Similarly companies operating oil wells have an interest in extracting oil as quickly as possible; this will in all probability not be in the interests of the nations whose oil it is. The OPEC countries recognised this truth a few years ago, but the Australian Government does not seem to have done so with respect to Bass Strait oil.

Because the uncertainty about the future is the main factor that influences capitalists in deciding at what rate to discount future costs, there is a positive feedback element in the system. Many individual decisions to use a higher discount rate will collectively cause an increase in uncertainty about what the general

industrial and economic situation will be towards the end of the life of the projects, which in turn will increase the uncertainty for other investors, and so on. Capitalism is destroying itself by this means, as well as destroying the environment. The current economic crisis is having an important effect here, because high rates of inflation mean high interest rates and greater uncertainty about the future and the consequent preference of investors for quick profits regardless of the longer term consequences.

The second aspect is the existence of a multiplicity of decision centres. This aspect has become familiar in the environmental literature as "the tragedy of the commons". This was the phrase used by Garret Hardin to describe the conflict between the interests of every individual profit maximiser exploiting a free, common resource, e.g. clean air, fish in the sea, and the interest of the community of such individuals. Even if the community is unanimously agreed on the need to preserve the resource and does not wish to find alternative outlets for its capital (as described above), each individual will further his own interests by increasing his level of exploitation. The sum of all such individual decisions will result in accelerated destruction of the resource, to the collective detriment of all. The destruction of the North Sea herring fishery by British fishermen is (or was) an example of this process in action. On an international level the whaling industry is somewhat similar, though here the decision makers are large capitalist (or bureaucratic) enterprises which do have opportunities for alternative investment and need have little concern for the preservation of the whale fishery beyond the life of their current fleet of ships.

The third way in which a profit based system brings on environmental crisis is by the neglect of external costs, that is those costs which do not appear on the financial balance sheet. External costs include most impacts on the environment - noise, air pollution, loss of amenity and so on. Capitalist decision making is concerned only with internal costs and, by choosing new production technologies which minimise the internal costs, it has simultaneously brought on a rapid increase in the external costs of environmental disruption. The external cost aspect of the environmental problems brought on by capitalism is the one on which apologists for the system have concentrated in their efforts to reconcile the

needs of capitalism with those of the environment. Much ink has been spent (and paper wasted) in academic arguments about the relative merits of pollution taxes, statutory limits, government subsidies or various intricate combinations of these in persuading capitalists to internalise the externalities and hence protect the environment.

Legislative or regulatory action to implement such procedures is inevitably piecemeal and retrospective; so long as the technical innovation characteristic of neo-capitalism continues new products and new processes outside the scope of existing regulations will appear. A good example is provided by the case of non-return bottles. These were introduced following technical developments in the glass industry which allowed bottles to be made with less glass. It then became profitable for soft drink companies to externalise and transform the cost of collecting and washing bottles to the costs of disposing of used bottles. Since this was now an external cost it had to be met by the community as a whole rather than the drink companies, whose profits increased accordingly.

After a few years and much lobbying some governments got round to legislating against non-return bottles (not in Australia, though), but by the time legislation was passed the companies had reaped their profits and the bottles were a permanent addition to the list of pollutants. The point is that criteria for deciding about new products and processes must systematically and fundamentally take account of all the social costs contingent on a given decision, and that until this occurs environmental disruption will be inevitable.

The only solution is to take land and the instruments of production into social ownership and replace capitalist decision making with a self-managed democracy that allows the community to decide about the whole context of its life and work.

Finally, a brief mention should be made of what Joan Robinson has called "the fundamental bias in our economy in favour of products and services for which it is easy to collect payment". This bias can be thought of as the mirror image of the bias towards ignoring external costs. It is a major component of consumerism, to which we have already referred, and finds characteristic expression in the consumerist promotion of

individual consumption of material goods to satisfy needs that could be better met communally. The most striking example is, of course, the spread of the private car and the accompanying decline in public transport services. But the effect is also seen in the preference of developers for office blocks and luxury housing rather than hospitals, schools and community housing, or in the fact that commercial subdividers give scant attention to careful planning with the needs of residents in mind - capitalism seldom includes a market for quality planning of urban estates.

## Alternatives for Australia

We must first dispose of the widespread belief that the environment movement is inherently middle class and can serve only middle class interests. Of course it is true that up to now the majority of environmental activists have had middle class backgrounds. But the fact is that workers and low income earners have in the past experienced the most severe effects of pollution and environmental degradation and it is likely that their position will further deteriorate. The effects of industrial pollution are at their most severe inside the factories producing the pollutants; the most intense pollution associated with energy production and use is the silicosis and pneumoconiosis to which underground coal miners so often fall victims. The effect extends outside the workplace to the most polluted areas round the factories; because air pollution and noise are most severe in these areas, land and house prices are lowest and it is here that the poorest members of society are forced by their economic circumstances to live.

Immediate measures to reduce pollution will (and must) involve the expenditure of funds by companies which will be passed on in the form of price rises. Similarly, realistic energy and resources policies must involve price rises to levels which reflect the true long term value of the resources. Since these price rises will fall with equal if not greater weight on basic necessities than on luxury goods, they will bring severe hardship to the poorer members of society. It is essential, therefore, that the ecology movement integrate its demands for sound environmental policies with the wider demands of the whole workers movement for a radical redistribution of income and wealth within society.

If this connection is not made, we can look forward to one of two equally undesirable alternatives. One is the relegation of the environment movement to an ineffectual fringe, haggling over the minutiae of pollution levels while present patterns of industrial activity continue and expand in an essentially unaltered way, promoted by the active collaboration of right wing trade union bureaucrats with the employers. The actions of the Reece ALP Government in Tasmania exemplify it completely, for example, as does the stand of the leadership of the Vehicle Builders' Union on changes to the car industry.

The second alternative we must avoid is less imminent, but potentially a far greater danger. It consists of the development of an authoritarian government introducing increasingly repressive controls on the pretext of saving the environment. We can be sure that in such a society, while certain immediate threats to the environment might be alleviated, all the decisions will be taken in the interests of a small ruling elite and that the resolution of any of the other problems to which we referred at the beginning of this article, if it occurred at all, would be entirely incidental. This sort of society may seem extremely remote to people in Australia. Yet in the U.K. during the miners' strike of 1973-74 (which led to the downfall of the Heath Government), regulations were made by that Government restricting the number of lights that could be on in a house at one time, and the idea of using "energy police" to enforce this was canvassed in a semi-official way. Of course this event was a response to a political crisis, not an ecological one, but the circumstances (shortage of energy) are similar so the response could be also.

In Australia, one of the best known advocates of solar energy has asserted in an unpublished memorandum that the sort of crash research and development programme he advocates could not take place within our present legal and democratic framework and that society should be placed on a war time basis. Despite our conviction that capitalist society can never solve the environment crisis, in the long term, we cannot be certain this sort of ecological fascism might not produce a form of quasi-stability that would enable the problems to be held at bay for some time. In terms of strategy, it is crucial that this danger be recognised, which makes it essential to analyse the political implications of policies

advocated by spokesmen such as Ehrlich: a correct analysis of the facts of the environmental destruction is not enough, although it is an essential preliminary.

This authoritarian or even fascist solution is also a distinct possibility on a global scale, with the imperialist countries enforcing even more harshly the inequalities between rich and poor nations. This could lead to forced continuation of under-development, to keep resource prices low and even to export of polluting industries and waste products. It could also lead to the use of military force to secure vital raw material sources; such action by the USA against the OPEC countries in the Persian Gulf area has already been widely advocated within the USA.

It is important for radicals to realise that such a solution could well be 'sold' to the people of the rich countries, or even actively supported by sections of them, in the absence of an attractive radical alternative.

## The Radical Alternative

The radical alternative is marked above all by its **totality** in that it sees the need for substantial changes in both the structures and values of society, and moreover in the need for these to change together and in a related way. This perspective certainly does not mean that radicals should withdraw from ongoing campaigns and efforts to change ideas and values and even some structures within the system - and this may include changing the values and behaviour of people within the movement as well as experimenting with social and technological alternatives. But it does mean that we proceed from the view that the causes of the crisis are not mere surface phenomena that can be 'fixed' by technological adjustments of a minor kind or by 'patching up' the social system. That said, it is still essential that we have **detailed** alternatives in all the various areas of environmental concern.

The first requirement for an adequate strategy is a fairly clear idea of our alternative social and technological model. We cannot in any way predict the details of how an ecologically sound society would organise itself or what technologies it would or wouldn't use. But we can start to sketch some of the essential outlines of what is needed and some ideas for appropriate technologies.

At the most general level we need to project a model of an alternative society in all its aspects: structures, dynamics, values, ideas. This model should be seen to be both desirable and ecologically necessary, and should link up with the concerns of people in other areas of social and personal life. And precisely because an ecologically sound society requires a change in the basic dynamic of society - from organisation around profit to organisation around the satisfaction of democratically determined social and human needs - it also fits in with the demands of people and the needs of society in such other areas as relations between the sexes (women's liberation), control on the job (workers' control) and in the locality (self-management of the local area by its residents).

With the change in the basic organising principle of society also must go a change in the various power and institutional structures of society, from the smallest unit of social life, the family, through the various hierarchical structures of power in workplaces, schools and other institutions, right up to the level of national government and decision making. All this is best summed up in the concept of a self-managed socialist society.

Such a society can overcome the conflict between individual and collective needs by replacing the competitive and individualistic nature of present social relations, which stems from cut-throat competition in the marketplace of the economy, with co-operative attitudes which in no way need conflict with individual self-development and freedom.

All this would not of itself lead to an ecologically sound society, although it is the essential prerequisite of one. Self-managed socialism operating in the above ways would allow the rational use of resources to provide adequate living standards through collective ownership, control (decentralised as far as possible in each case) and use of goods, services, labour saving devices and technology. Freedom of information and a **social effort** to find the information and develop the tools essential to restoring the appropriate balance of humanity and nature's essential and also requires the removal of vested interests who at present make information hard to obtain and harder to disseminate. Only with this freeing and dissemination of knowledge will people be in a



position to make ecologically sound decisions.

In these ways, the ecological, social and spiritual desolations of modern capitalism, particularly the excesses of consumerism, can be overcome, not by a return to primitive pre-industrial life styles, but by the rational use, control and development of all appropriate elements of modern science and technology.

Things which then become possible include organisation of people in local 'communes' of varying sizes (eg. around the suburban block in cities), with each commune collectively owning the various tools and labour-saving devices which are needed in the numbers which are needed, so that people have access when they need it. If the numbers of cars parked along suburban streets at any one time (save peak hours) is any guide, we need only about 10% of the cars which at present exist, leaving aside any improvement in public and person-powered transport. A similar figure probably applies to such things as washing-machines, lawn-mowers etc.

Similarly there is the possibility of a rational, integrated transport system based on appropriate use of mass transport, cars, bicycles, walking etc.

To satisfy environmental and resource considerations, society will have to institute a social audit which takes account of all costs and benefits, not just the traditional economic ones. This is probably best achieved through widespread economic democracy which includes that in the workplace but also consultation of the public from the conception and genesis of a product, through production, distribution and exchange.

Further, self-managed socialism would make possible a vast reduction in work hours, both through improved efficiency because the talents and capacities of all would be tapped, and through abolition of consumerism and unnecessary production.

So the radical ecology movement should not project a society of want and scarcity, but of rational satisfaction of needs and liberation from unnecessary work. Together with selected growth in new directions and in new areas not considered legitimate for growth by traditional criteria - eg. growth of the human personality and increased richness of all dimensions of social life.

The above alternative model for how things could be done is important in breaking the ideological hold of the system over people.

This hold expressed itself in people's belief that the present order is the best or the only one possible, and in concealing from them information about what is happening and about what is possible.

However, projection of this model on its own is not enough, since people do not learn simply by having the 'truth' preached at them, but in large measure have to learn through their own experiences. Therefore a radical strategy requires two other components: a 'transitional program' and a program of immediate demands based on people's immediate needs and on the struggles which are thrown up everyday by the people themselves.

The basic idea of a transitional program is to project demands and initiate struggles which people see as reasonable yet which the system finds it very hard to contain. An example is the car industry versus an integrated, publicly owned and used transport system. The building and running of such a system would provide jobs for the workers in the car industry and existing transport facilities, especially if we take account of the possible lowering of work hours.

There remains the problem of immediate demands and struggles. Clearly the existing problems and struggles of people around environmental issues should be of concern to radicals. The current economic crisis which is likely to continue and grow, makes it imperative that much creative thought be given to this question. We point to two possibilities based on recent events:

a) The collapse of Leylands motor factory in Sydney. If at the time that car workers were losing their jobs and the factory was closing down, the environment movement had tried to link up with the workers and suggest that they demand the Federal government nationalise the company and turn its productive facilities to the making of public transport vehicles with the factory under the democratic control of the workers, the workers may or may not have responded. But it is clear that this demand would go some way to satisfying both the immediate economic needs of the workers as well as ecological needs.

b) Considering the present levels of unemployment, the ecology movement could link up with the unions and the unemployed to demand that the government set up environmentally sound industries. One example of this would be a waste paper recycling industry.

# THE STATE IN THE THIRD WORLD

by Denis Freney

In the past two decades throughout the "Third World" many governments have come to power which have adopted radical measures, nationalising most if not virtually all of their country's economy, carrying out a radical land reform, breaking with imperialism and proclaiming a socialist objective.

Yet these regimes have not taken power as the result of a socialist revolution or even in most cases through a national liberation revolution. Nor are they led by Communist Parties or parties claiming to be working class or socialist.

As often as not, they have seized power in a military coup, led by left-leaning, nationalist officers sickened by the corruption, subservience and lack of progress of neo-colonial regimes.

While it is difficult to generalise, these developments pose important questions for marxists, and it is necessary to try to situate them within a theoretical framework. Moreover, with Papua-New Guinea moving towards independence, and Indonesia a close neighbour, such problems are not isolated from our day-to-day struggle.

The Nasser 1952 Revolution and its subsequent evolution provides something of a case-history, although it was specific to Egypt in many respects. The present Peruvian, Somali and Congo-Brazzaville governments; the Syrian and Iraqi Baathist regimes and the Algerian military government are some of those "Nasser-type" regimes which spring readily to mind. Other variants are the "anzanian" government and the former Khrushch regime in Ghana.

In Egypt, Somalia, Peru, etc. (what may be termed the "Nasser model"), progressive officers took power from corrupt bourgeois regimes which, although sometimes preserving the facade of parliamentary democracy, were crudely manipulated by imperialism.

In the "Tanzanian model", governments coming to power after a struggle for independence have gradually progressed to radical economic reform, after internal struggles inside the ruling party.

Attempts so far made to give a theoretical definition to these types of regimes have, in my opinion, failed. This includes descriptions by Soviet and Chinese ideologists. They cannot, of course, consider them to be "socialist", if for no other reason than that this would raise questions as to their own versions of marxist theory. Their definitions have therefore varied, often in response to the needs of diplomacy and foreign policies. Most frequently they have described "Nasser model" regimes as "countries on the non-capitalist road". As that only defines what they are not, it begs the question.

Another common definition speaks of them as countries of "national democracy". But traditionally, "national democracy" is the regime of the national bourgeoisie, while "New Democracy" was the term used to describe China immediately after the revolution. China was then in the process of rapid change to the total overthrow of capitalism, but maintained certain capitalist economic and other vestiges to ease the transition. The countries we are describing fit into neither of these categories.

From other New Left or neo-maoist theoreticians, including the marxist left oppositions in some of these countries (Egypt, Tanzania, etc.) descriptions range from "bureaucratic capitalist" and "state capitalist", to even the "dictatorship of the petty bourgeoisie". The third is common though rather crudely summarised above. It is, however, untenable either from the viewpoint of marxist theory or concrete analysis. We will return to the confusion surrounding this "petty bourgeoisie" later.

The first two merit more attention, but both are also greatly confused and mixed up with more traditional descriptions of "state capitalism" from Lenin and Marx, as well as with the "restorationist" maoist thesis that "capitalism" was restored in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev.

The discussion suffers from a number of methodological errors: first, the obsession to fit a definition of a government or state into a few words, be they "socialist countries", "socialist-based countries", "degenerated workers' states", "state capitalism", or what you will. Such descriptions are probably necessary for journalistic purposes, but involve the risk of abstract and futile terminological debate.

Second, such terms are used for abuse or praise, depending on political viewpoint.

Third, and most important, they lack the essential historical approach. That is, the evolution of such a regime is not seen in an historical context, but statically, in a sociological view which isolates them in a moment in time.

This is a common structuralist error, infecting the Althusserian marxists as well.

Fourth, the discussion is particularly bedevilled by being abstracted from the international context in which these countries have evolved.

These last two points need elaboration prior to a more detailed examination of the theoretical problems.

#### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Colonial Revolution has been the hallmark of the post-World War II period. The stabilisation of West European capitalism after 1948 and the beginning of the Cold War froze social revolutionary developments in advanced capitalist countries for decades.

While stalinism and the bureaucratic

dictatorship remained virtually unshaken until the mid-fifties in eastern Europe, rapid economic progress occurred, with a corresponding growth in military power, counter-balancing the armed might of imperialism.

The Chinese and Vietnamese Revolutions also set a model for countries in a similar socio-economic situation. They, together with the Korean people, showed how poverty, hunger and oppression could be overcome relatively quickly with a socialised economy and a communist leadership.

Following Stalin's death, diplomatic overtures from Khrushchev and Chou En-lai, began towards leaders of the newly-independent countries, particularly Sukarno, Nehru and Nasser. These approaches, highlighted by the 1955 Bandung Conference and the development of the "neutralist bloc" were accompanied by often uncritical praise and glorification of such leaders.

But, leaving this aside, the period from 1955 to the present has been marked by a growing influence by both the Soviet Union and China in the "Third World", a willingness on their part to help with often substantial aid, and the growing attraction of vaguely socialist ideas in general.

The victory of the Cuban Socialist Revolution by 1961 added a new dimension. The success of a national liberation struggle in a small nation under the nose of US imperialism was significant enough: its transformation into a socialist revolution and the failure of attempts by US imperialism to crush it were even more significant.

The continued battle of the Indochinese revolutions, winning victories over the most barbarous aggression by imperialism, increased the stature of socialist revolution in the Third World. Yugoslavia, both socialist and neutralist, presented an increasingly attractive model to revolutionary nationalist forces.

To nationalist leaders, intent on building a strong and independent country, the success of China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba, and to a lesser extent (because of its "European" context) the Soviet Union, offered an alternative to the blind alley of dependence on imperialism.

After some time in power, such nationalist leaders saw that the local bourgeoisie - whether "compradore" or "national" - was incapable of effecting any economic advance able to provide the base for a strong army and

state. The success of nationalised, planned economies in China, Cuba, etc. seemed to do so. It would be necessary, of course, to become "socialist" but not "communist". While the more reactionary aspects, for example of Islam, would have to be combatted, the basic allegiance of the masses to such religions could be combined into an "Islamic socialism" or a "Buddhist socialism" etc. Moreover, the competition between the imperialist powers and the Soviet Union and China, and between the latter two as well, could allow these nationalist leaders to play one off against the other, providing a real independence and substantial aid from both blocs.

Lastly, such a balancing act could also provide justification for the regime to crush opposition both from the bourgeoisie and from the working class, contain them and mobilise them around nationalist goals, including the tasks of the nationalised economies.

The ability of nationalist leaderships to exploit the differences between the blocs and take power into their own hands depends, historically, on the weakness of the two major indigenous classes in the colonial or neo-colonial societies - the bourgeoisie, encapsulated in a dependent relationship with imperialism, anxious only for easy, speculative profits as opposed to capital investment in heavy industry, and tied by a thousand threads to the semi-feudal landed class; and the proletariat, weak because of the underdevelopment of industry due to the subservience of the local bourgeoisie to imperialism. In most of the countries concerned, the working class is very small compared with the peasant masses and also unorganised.

The nationalist leaderships therefore balance in a "bonapartist" way between imperialism and the "socialist bloc"; between the Soviet Union and China, between the local bourgeoisie and the working class; between the varying factions of the educated elite.

#### NATIONALIST LEADERSHIPS: "PETTY BOURGEOIS" OR BUREAUCRACY?

So far, we have spoken rather loosely of "nationalist leaderships". This is clearly insufficient as a precise social definition. What is needed is an analysis of the state in these countries. Here again, confusion reigns. The debate summarised by John S. Paul in the *Socialist Register* 1974 is witness to this.

This is, in turn, linked with the debate about the role of the "petty bourgeoisie" in these former colonial societies.

The petty bourgeoisie was a term used by Marx and Engels for quite specific social strata. It, above all, referred to the peasantry, both in pre-capitalist and early post-capitalist society. In addition, it covered the small shopkeepers, self-employed professionals and handicraft artisans. "Petty bourgeois socialism" referred to the specific dreams and goals of these layers, particularly the peasantry.

Both Marx and Lenin stressed the inability of the peasantry and other petty bourgeois layers to take power into their own hands, and thus the need for a worker-peasant alliance, under working class leadership. Basically, there is in the debate, a confusion between the petty-bourgeoisie and the state bureaucracy.

Discussion of "the bureaucracy" is forbidden ground for those who draw inspiration from the stalinist tradition. The bureaucracy even in capitalist states can achieve, and does often achieve, an autonomous role. Marx very clearly stated this in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* and for him the furthest extent of this autonomy was bonapartism in France. In the "asiatic mode of production", and "caesarism", the state had even more autonomy.

Leon Trotsky adapted and developed the marxist thesis on bureaucracy to explain the rise of the stalinist dictatorship. In his major work *The Revolution Betrayed* this analysis was made subtly with a feel for the nuances of the bureaucracy. In subsequent works it was simplified, then distorted out of recognition by many of his "followers".

What is the difference between the bureaucracy and the petty bourgeoisie? "Petty bourgeoisie" should be strictly used by marxists for the self-employed, those who work themselves, with their families and perhaps a few others. The petty bourgeois has the ambition of becoming a fully-fledged bourgeois.

Even so, such a definition covers widely disparate layers, with little else in common: from professional lawyers, already close to the bourgeoisie, to poor peasants and even semi-proletarian peasants, to the poverty-stricken cobbler, barely surviving.

Army officers do not form a part of this petty-bourgeoisie, by any strict definition, though

they may have petty bourgeois origins and ideas.

The bureaucracy - the people with decision-making power in the state apparatus (army and police officers, heads of departments, ministers, party officials when the party is identified with the state, technocrats, etc.) - forms a separate social stratum, linked with different, usually ruling, classes, but with its own autonomous existence, privileges and interests.

The bureaucracy, particularly in former colonial countries is not homogeneous, but reflects, often in a distorted manner, the collective needs of different classes. But it has elements and layers who seek to get beyond "narrow class interests" and, within a more general (class) philosophical and nationalist view, develop the total progress of the "nation".

The state in former colonial countries is, for the most part, more "highly developed" than any of the indigenous classes. This derives from the need of the former colonial powers, both before and after "independence" to have a strong state - bureaucracy, including armed forces - to suppress movements for national liberation and class struggle.

Though even this is not always the case. In Tanzania, and particularly Zanzibar, the state was weak, while all classes were also underdeveloped. In Zanzibar, the state consisted of a hundred policemen. Insurgent workers could then seize their arms and make a revolution.

In other countries, such as Egypt, the imperialist need for a strong repressive apparatus was reinforced by the existing "semi-feudal" state, already powerful before the country was conquered.

While the "native" colonial bureaucracy through education and experience, is tied directly to the economic colonial order, it has in-built grievances, particularly due to expatriates holding the top positions under direct colonial rule. Sectors of this "old bureaucracy" may therefore adopt a nationalist stance, and join nationalist movements, seeing themselves as the natural rulers after independence, when the bureaucracy is to be "localised".

Nationalist movements are often led by elements from middle or lower rank cadres of the old bureaucracy, who have been educated abroad and there absorbed from the post-war

world context a knowledge of nationalist ideology and practice.

Sometimes the nationalist movement may spring from outside the old bureaucracy - from the merchant class, the professionals (lawyers, etc.) and the minute "national bourgeoisie".

But in that case, the movement is entrapped in the class limits of the local bourgeoisie, which fears the masses whom they must mobilise to some degree if they are to achieve their own goals. Colonialism, realising their inherent weaknesses, will often co-opt this local bourgeoisie into a participatory framework within the colonial system, or in later decolonisation hand power over to them before any real struggle occurs.

Nationalist movements led by younger bureaucrats or by young professionals and ex-students who go almost immediately into virtually full-time political activity, are more capable of mass mobilisation, even if these are loosely organised, and develop an alternative movement structure to the old colonial bureaucracy, ready to take it over. The young professionals and ex-students who join with bureaucrats in such a movement's leadership are not in fact far removed from them: their primary aim is also state power - that is, "parachuting" to the top of the bureaucracy.

But within such movements, left and right wings are always present in nascent form, from the beginning. This results from the differing ambitions of those taking part. The "right" aim to transform themselves rapidly into a true bourgeoisie, through exploitation of future power positions in the state bureaucracy. The other, "left" wing, is concerned with power itself, to develop the "nation", to modernise and build a strong state apparatus and gain real independence. Secondary, although not neglected, is the desire to gain a comfortable life-style.

It is difficult to distinguish between the two trends before independence. Words, after all, are cheap and the temptations once in power, great. The dividing lines between the two are fuzed: not all the "left" live modestly, and living modestly is not a sign necessarily of radicalism.

But in most cases there has been a decisive clash between the two trends soon after independence, or both co-exist and struggle under a bonapartist chief. The bonapartist chief can also quickly come down on the side of the right: Kenyatta in Kenya, and Banda in Malawi spring readily to mind.

The "left" has the advantage of understanding the problem in the Third World neo-colonial development offers no "national" solution, although it can of course provide a very lucrative "personal" solution to the elite. The question the "left" must answer - which way forward to escape from neo-colonialism - remains difficult for them to resolve, however.

Thus, the "left" is likely to divide again, into a strictly "Nasserist" wing, which wants to maintain the status quo of a nationalised economy, but envisages no ideological development or real mass mobilisation and organisation, and a "marxist-leninist" wing, which does want to go in this direction.

Such a "marxist-leninist" wing is likely to develop from a recognition of Nasserism's Achilles' heel. Nasserism borrows from the practice of "communist" regimes a nationalised economy and a one-party state, led by a "socialist" party. But it rejects "communism", not because of the bureaucratic dictatorship it has meant in so many countries, but because the Nasserist bureaucracy has still strong ideological and cultural links with traditional and capitalist ideology.

This applies particularly where religion is strong. This "ideological baggage", unless overcome, leads to a continual rebirth of the pro-bourgeois, reactionary wing of the bureaucracy, from within the "Nasserist" wing itself.

Time after time, conspiracies erupt between newly-emerging right wings within the bureaucracy and the dispossessed local bourgeoisie, the old right wing bureaucrats and imperialism. This does not necessarily mean a coup. Often it means a struggle within the bureaucracy for positions of power, to win the bonapartist leader over to the new rightwing.

"To make a revolution" for the mass of peasants and workers is not some sociological "technical means" of replacing one social system by another, but an overwhelming personal and collective involvement for the first time in their lives, in making their own history, of fighting and dying for a cause that is really their own.

In a nationalist revolution which does not have a conscious socialist goal, at least in the long term, the masses sacrifice for an almost mystical ideal, within the framework of old, traditional values, religious or otherwise.

While national revolutions (such as the Algerian) involved the masses to an enormous extent, and there is an instinctive push towards such a revolution "growing over" into a socialist revolution, mass involvement and experience is much less than in a national revolution with socialist goals (as, for example, in Vietnam).

In Cuba, however, a revolutionary nationalist leadership, seizing power from a corrupt neo-colonial puppet regime, speedily advanced from revolutionary nationalism to a marxist-leninist position, shedding each time it confronted imperialism different layers of the bureaucracy, including some of the revolution's main leaders. The refusal of imperialism to accept radical reforms, even though these did not question the total capitalist nature of the state or society, drove the leadership to the left, educating it in the process, to a socialist revolution. The process, involving armed confrontation with imperialism, also deeply involved the masses.

The Democratic People's Republic of Yemen (Aden) won independence after a guerrilla struggle led by a revolutionary nationalist leadership claiming to be marxist-leninist. It has, from information available, travelled far along the Cuban road.

In Somalia, there was no revolutionary national struggle for independence comparable with that in Yemen or Cuba. A military coup brought to power officers who claimed to be marxist-leninists. They carried through thorough-going nationalisation, and appear in conditions of extreme drought, to be handling the threatened famine well, and at the same time proceeding with a radical cultural revolution.

Similarly, in Algeria, if the leftwing of the FLN had won the post-independence struggle, not only would Algeria have had great claims to be a Cuba in North Africa, but may even have shown an advance in real socialist democracy, compared with existing "socialist countries".

Of course, these few examples serve as a warning against any attempt to apply a cast-iron schema on their origins and evolution. What we are attempting to do here is look at the general trends apparent in all of them, to varying degrees and with different emphases, to place them within a general theoretical framework which can only serve as a rough guide to analyse particular, concrete examples.

Such regimes have emerged in a unique historical situation; unique that is, in the evolution conceived by Marx and Lenin. For the key to world socialism was seen in revolution in Europe and the United States. The expectation was correct; their vision of what success there would mean to the world, even more so. But the revolution, developing in the periphery (Third World) is now returning to the centre (Europe - for example, Portugal).

The delay of the European revolution is of course one of the principal causes for the growth of bureaucratic dictatorship in those countries which have had a socialist revolution. The delay has resulted in the economic-military growth of the Soviet bloc and China.

Imperialism is immensely weakened, and particularly post-Vietnam, is almost paralysed in terms of direct military intervention. It must therefore rely on favouring its stooges and allied classes in the under-developed countries themselves, or more recently, on allies in neighbouring countries. Imperialism has now a strategy of developing powerful military stooges, such as Iran and Brazil, to act as gendarme in their regions.

But once a revolutionary nationalist leadership installs itself in power, even such indirect military intervention is very difficult. If a revolutionary nationalist regime destroys classes allied with imperialism internally and is able to resist any outside intervention from another neighbouring pro-imperialist regime, it is in a good position to survive, although, as already pointed out, within the bureaucracy restorationist tendencies continually arise, posing new threats.

Marxists are, of course, not only concerned about the overthrow of capitalism, but the emergence of socialist democracy based on workers' self-management and avoidance of bureaucratic dictatorship. One party rule, a bonapartist leadership, and the lack of mass participation in a socialist revolution, do not meet the criteria for socialist democracy, if the term is to have any meaning.

American imperialism, moreover, so pressed by other revolutionary "hot spots" must find countries like Somalia and the PDR of Yemen of minor concern, given their under-development, paucity of valuable resources, and small population. This gives these regimes additional opportunities for survival and forward development.

Some traditional communist parties have adopted a strategy of working within the Nasserist regimes. This has not necessarily been with the goal of a socialist revolutionary outcome, but often of an alliance to advance "on the non-capitalist road" or for "truly independent regimes" etc. and often in response to the degree of close diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union and/or China.

In Nasser's Egypt, traditional communists entered the regime, mainly after the "Socialist Laws" in 1961 which nationalised the local and foreign bourgeoisie and carried through a relatively radical land reform.

Faced with a choice between imprisonment, exile or the extreme difficulty of building a real mass base among people enthusiastically supporting Nasser, and, on the other hand, working within the regime, communists chose the latter.

In Indonesia, the PKI after the failure of the Madiun uprising, faced a similar quandary. Although having greater possibilities of oppositional organisation, it chose to work within the confines of the Sukarno regime, which in domestic politics was certainly far less radical than Nasser's.

In Cambodia, Khieu Samphan and his fellow communists chose, at first, a similar route: they worked within the pre-1970 Sihanouk regime. But once they suffered their first (and by other standards, relatively minor) defeat at the hands of Lon Nol and the right within the Sihanouk regime in 1967, they turned to an alternative, and in the long run far more successful political strategy.

In these three countries the local ruling class and the educated elite were relatively strong, entrenched by their role as the pre-colonial ruling class, by a long colonial tutelage and by a history of ruling class political organisation which gave it a strong sense of national self-identity.

In countries such as Somalia, DPR of Yemen and Tanzania, however, where the traditional rulers were weak, social organisation was virtually tribal, and colonialism had done little in the way of economic development or even exploitation, the task of individual marxist-revolutionaries appeared much more difficult, given their smallness in size, lack of an organisation with roots, the popularity of the regime, and its radical measures, with hope of them becoming even more radical. In such a situation, the temptation to work within the

regime as its marxist-leninist left wing is very great.

But such activity is prone to ideological degeneration. For responsibility must be taken for the regime's acts, or compromises made, for a certain isolation from the masses because of holding a position in the bureaucracy, often in the top or middle layers. So much, too, depends on the whims or goodwill of the bonapartist leader who may go along with the left, even become a Castro, but who may equally go with the right.

For these marxist-leninists, it is a constant battle, requiring a strong adherence to principle, but also extreme flexibility. Yet if they refuse to work within the regime, they face isolation, exile, or simply a non-political professional career.

## CONCLUSION

For "Nasserist" regimes, therefore, a general definition might be: in Third World countries, where the landlords, local bourgeoisie and imperialism have lost all key posts in the economy, through nationalisation as a result of a coup or evolution of a radical nationalist bureaucracy, the regime which emerges rests power, both politically and economically, in the hands of the state bureaucracy, which however maintains much of its traditional ideological baggage.

This state bureaucracy attempts to develop a modern state by using mechanisms borrowed from the Soviet or China blocs. But within this bureaucracy, ruled by a bonapartist arbiter, a clash emerges between the wing with bourgeois ambitions, and those who seek to carry on the modernising task on the basis of a nationalised economy. If this wing is victorious, it is liable to divide into two groups - one to maintain the purely nationalist "Nasserist" road, and another which sees the weaknesses and failings of such a road, as it breeds constantly new restorationist forces within the bureaucracy who ally themselves with imperialism for counter-revolution.

This second group of the bureaucracy turns to "marxism-leninism" to resolve the problem of mass mobilisation and the severe limitations imposed by traditional ideology. But it remains restricted within the confines of the Nasserist bureaucracy; or if it takes power, still finds itself restricted by its origins, by the continued presence of strictly Nasserist elements, and by the difficulty of mobilising sufficient mass activity and organisation to proceed fully on the "Cuban road", to a complete socialist transformation of society.

Such "marxist-leninist" groups, however, are exceptions at present, particularly in societies where strong class forces are present.

In general, "Nasserist" bureaucracies are likely to be seen historically as transitory regimes which have gone beyond capitalism but have not the internal dynamic to take them to a fully completed socialist revolution. They are products of the historical delay of the World Revolution in its crucial centres: West Europe and the United States.

For revolutionary marxists, the question of whether to work within such regimes or to organise outside and build a revolutionary marxist-leninist party, is a real and difficult one. It cannot be resolved by some general theoretical formulation, but only by a very concrete, historical analysis of the particular situation, within the world context.

Working within such regimes is full of dangers, particularly when an already prepared cadre force linked with the masses does not exist. If, however, there is no other way, then such an orientation may be valid, provided it keeps always in mind the possibility of the Khieu Samphan alternative: of leaving the regime at a given point, and turning to direct organisation of the party, or revolutionary front, possibly including guerrilla warfare. In other words, work within such regimes must be seen as a tactic within a much broader perspective, and not a total strategy in itself.

# THE STATE TODAY

by Eric Aarons

An army which many thought might defend a socialist government in Chile drowned it in blood. An army which was the pillar of fascism in Portugal produced forces which overturned the regime and took an increasingly socialist orientation. These are just two of the most striking events of recent times which have re-focused attention on the theory of the state. Discussion of the nature of some newly independent countries, particularly in Africa, has also centred on the state while efforts to come to theoretical grips with the character of the state in socialist countries are still continuing. Expansion of state intervention in social life, especially since World War 2 also raises many issues, and the present period of intensified crisis and class struggle has resulted in controversies about revolutionary strategy which involve the state.

In these circumstances we should look again at the marxist theory of the state and develop it as necessary to correspond to the new conditions. The main elements of the classical marxist theory of the state may be summed up as follows:

- historically, the state arose along with class society, which, without the coercive, cohesive force supplied by the state would be continually rent asunder by class antagonisms.

- In contrast to the primitive "self-management" of early society, where there was no special body of persons exclusively engaged in "ruling", but self-acting organisations of the people.

- The state consists quintessentially of "bodies of armed men" and prisons, as well as law courts, government departments, parliaments and related institutions.

- the state is separated to a degree from, and stands above, (civil) society, as does its personnel - the essential characteristics of a "bureaucracy".

- The relative autonomy of the state deriving from this separation from the rest of society has wide limits, depending on the conjuncture of circumstances.

- In general, "political power" means control of the state, which thus is the objective of political struggle. While politics reflects economics in the sense mentioned above "politics cannot but have precedence over economics"..... without a proper political approach.... the given class cannot maintain its rule, and consequently cannot solve its own (economic) problems." (Lenin). Or put in another, more historically sweeping way,

- "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power."

(Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, Chapter 29)

- For marxists, however, winning political power is only part of the objective. The class nature of the state must be overturned, the rule of the working class over the bourgeoisie replacing the rule of the bourgeoisie over the working class.

But also the bureaucracy and the standing army must be done away with as a power standing apart from and above society. This is essential not only because the old state is tied by a thousand threads to the bourgeoisie, but also because the new society, by its very nature, requires it.

- The old state cannot therefore be transformed bit by bit, but must be "smashed".

- The ultimate issues of strategy for marxists are thus how to achieve political power, and how in the course of achieving it to "smash" the old state and replace it with a new one which will develop self-management and wither away.

These are, of course, general theoretical propositions of long standing, and do not of themselves solve concrete problems in the present day. But it should also be stressed that, to a greater degree than with other revolutionary theory, they are products of experience rather than of theoretical and logical reasoning. They are of course also reasoned, and logically connected with the rest of marxism.

A look at some of the changes in the state in recent times is necessary, however, in order to avoid fundamentalist views which are satisfied with abstract "truths" and have the approach that the more things change the more they remain the same.

In order to get the discussion of changes into perspective, a trend of opinion during the '60s including in a section of the "new left", should be recalled. This, rather vaguely stated view, was to the effect that the expansion of the state in size, financial resources, coercive potential through militarisation and the expansion of the "security" police, spying techniques, etc., and the weight it contributed to securing ideological conformity, made illusory any idea of overthrowing the state.

This was an understandable reaction to the difficulties of the times, but defeatist and shortsighted nevertheless. Partly in reply to it, the "Statement of Aims" adopted at the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of Australia in 1970 said:

"The State has grown in power and extent in recent decades. The military establishment has increased greatly in size; governments have expanded their intervention in economic

life (by means of government enterprises, by the proportion of the national product coming into government hands, and by various forms of economic and financial control); other aspects of social life which the state controls or in which it plays a large part (education and scientific research foremost among these) have developed in response to the requirements of the scientific and technological revolution, and administrative and other staffs have consequently been greatly increased.

"The enhanced role of the state does not necessarily mean that it rules mainly by direct force, though this remains its ultimate function. The capitalist system exerts an ideological pressure for "rule by consensus" in which mass acceptance of the establishment's ideas, values and forms of social organisation, with powerful pressure to conform, plays a major part.

"This consensus has been assisted by social conditions - almost full employment, higher incomes, stimulation of new consumer needs, the feeling of powerlessness of individuals and groups in a complex and impersonal society, the increased power of the mass communications media to manipulate public opinion and popularise the ruling ideas, illusions about parliamentary democracy and the two-party system, racialism, fear of Asia and communism, the lack of acceptable alternative models of society, etc.

"The strength of this "rule by consensus" makes it imperative to build a body of ideas, and corresponding strategies, forms of action and organisation, which confront and challenge the prevailing ones (a "counter-consensus").

"For socialists this means participating with the people among whom they live and work in struggles around questions of common interest, and in the process, seeking to reveal the fundamental underlying issues so as to challenge the ideas and policies of the system as a whole, not just the particular case.

"It means encouraging and participating in intellectual and theoretical endeavours which reveal the real workings of the system as a whole, not just the particular case.

"It means drawing strength from these sources to develop marxism and revolutionary theory in general. In these ways a growing challenge in the field of ideas and values can be built up in all spheres of social life, intellectual endeavour, and culture."

Concerning the effect of extension of functions and growth of size of the state on its strength, the Statement of Aims went on to say:

"The continued expansion of the state, while increasing its power in certain respects, also increases its potential divisions and makes it more vulnerable to the building of such a "counter" ideology.

"On the one hand, big business (which is also divided into competing groups within and outside Australia), civil administration and the military, though united in defence of the system and increasingly inter-changing personnel among themselves, are still distinct to a certain extent, and this increases the difficulty of maintaining unity in the ranks of the ruling class, particularly in times of great social conflict.

"On the other hand, the expansion of the state into various spheres of civil life and the increasing numbers of ordinary employees involved, make the state apparatus more open to disintegration from within as the 'counter' ideas and values strike chords among the state employees themselves (including the army and police) on the basis of their own experience within these institutions, and the similarity of such experiences to those of the people as a whole."

The aim of this section of the "Statement of Aims" was clearly to summarise the changes which had taken place in the state, to connect these with the tasks and strategy of the party, and to oppose the defeatist view mentioned above.

In the last couple of years, however, a quite different interpretation has been advanced, which I believe to be erroneous. This holds that the people in advanced capitalist countries are frightened of revolution, want changes but want them within the confines of the existing system, and that it is therefore both futile and unnecessary to talk of "smashing" or destroying the state. Rather, because of the circumstances described, especially in the last paragraph of the Statement above, the state can be transformed by removing those particular individuals who are servants of the capitalists, and neutralising or winning others.

Thus the issue is raised as to whether present circumstances and changes in the state make marxist theory of the state and revolution unnecessary and/or impossible of realisation, or whether the changes in the state

provide additional opportunities and possibilities of actually carrying that theory into effect.

Pursuing the matter further, let us look more closely at the actual changes in the state, particularly the extension and development of its functions.

Most obvious probably is intervention in the economy. As monopoly in its various forms has developed, regulation of the economy by the market mechanism became increasingly unreliable and dangerous politically. For "regulation" by the market occurred through the ups and downs of the business cycle which, with its crises, gave rise to social as well as political instability. This reached a peak in the depression of the '30s, after which, under the influence of Keynesian ideas, the state intervened more directly and extensively - and for a time, it appeared, pretty successfully.

(Intervention is of course not new. Last century Marx pointed out that state expenditure for such capital consuming enterprises as railways was often necessary because private sources were inadequate, and/or such private financing would lower the average rate of profit. In a big country with a small population like Australia, there were many government enterprises - a greater proportion, indeed, than now).

Economic intervention also occurs through government expenditure - which rose to great proportions during the Second World War, and has never fallen to previous levels since. These expenditures include those on supplies for government industries and enterprises, military expenditure, wages of government employees, and on the other areas mentioned below.

What limitations are there on government measures to "control" the economy? Experience as well as theory shows that intervention cannot over-ride the economic power of private capital. We have this admission from reformists like Dr. Cairns who, it might be supposed, wants to control the economy without having the strategy or will to do so. We have the evidence from Chile, where multinationals like ITT, as well as local bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements and landowners were able to sabotage the economy, so undermining to one degree or another mass support for the government of Allende and rendering it susceptible to a long-prepared military coup.

and rendering it susceptible to a long-prepared military coup.

That the state is the state of the economically dominant class is not primarily due to the fact that its leading personnel largely come from that class and that their ideology in the main corresponds with the dominant ideology, though these aspects are important (and virtually inevitable). The primary factor is that while the levers of economic power are in the hands of one class, political power cannot for an indefinite period be exercised by another class. Or put another way, a political power must have the support or at least tolerance of the class or classes which own or control the main sinews of economic life.

Without that, the economically dominant class is able to - and will - disrupt the economy, facing the government with either loss of its political support because it cannot guarantee the livelihood of those who backed it, or having to face a crucial fight to dispossess that class.

This will be difficult in the extreme if the party or parties holding the political power have not prepared themselves and their supporters (especially ideologically, but also organisationally) for such a struggle, whose timing, moreover, is likely to rest largely in the hands of its opponents. There are no guarantees of victory in either case of course, but a policy which disarms the revolutionaries beforehand hardly helps.

Historical examples do not finally "prove" any case, but they are useful nevertheless. "Dual power" - classically, the few months after the February 1917 Russian Revolution - is notoriously and obviously unstable and fleeting.

We also have the insistence of Lenin, in the devastation following the wars of intervention and the inadequacy of the Revolution's own economic base, that a deal would have to be made with the peasantry, and to an extent with some of the town bourgeoisie, to maintain Soviet rule while an adequate economic base could be built up. This gave rise to the New Economic Policy.

In China, shortly after 1949, the economic power of bourgeois elements in the towns - especially traders - was used to create shortages and put up prices to the detriment of the population. This was foreseen and countered by the government which had accumulated reserves of grain and oil which they put on the market at low prices. This

provided for the needs of the people - and also caused the profiteers economic as well as political losses.

Private capital today, in the form of monopolies and multinationals, has if anything, a still bigger whiphand over governments than it did previously. It also has more possibilities for manoeuvre nationally and internationally because of its concentration and connections.

This speaks against reliance on reformist governments, or even governments which include forces definitely oriented on socialism being able to "control and curb" monopolies and multinationals for any length of time without proceeding to socialism. For the forces of capital can, and will when they think suitable, "escalate" the struggle by economic sabotage, making the government take the responsibility and undermining its mass base.

That is why, historically, marxists have refused to participate in governments presiding over capitalism, except in exceptional circumstances.

Where the economy has not been suitably developed, marxists have used the new state power constructed after smashing the old one, and the revolutionary fervor of the masses plus the economic strength available to them, to contain hostile or potentially hostile forces while transforming the economy as rapidly as possible.

This is quite different from a government which lacks mass revolutionary backing - and has not consistently propagated the revolutionary view - trying to gradually take away the basic economic power of the class enemy in conditions where the previous state is still basically intact.

From another angle, however, government intervention in the economy is a source of political tension and even crisis. As it has developed, governments have had to take more and more of the responsibility in the eyes of the masses for ordering the economy to ensure stability, growth and rising living standards. This, despite the fact that they cannot really discharge that responsibility or fulfill the promises they make while the bourgeois state remains and the dominant economic power is still that of capital.

We need a two-pronged approach, I believe. At one level to stress, for strategic purposes and to raise class consciousness, that it is the **system** of capitalism that is at fault, not particular government weaknesses. This view

must be held to despite demands for elaboration of immediate programs far short of socialism which would cure inflation and economic crisis. At another level to point out that one kind of intervention is to be preferred to another - intervention to benefit the working class and potentially allied social forces at the expense of the capitalists rather than the other way round.

The struggle over government policy engendered by capitalist crises and the expectations that have been built up can thus help develop political crises advantageous for revolutionaries.

One obstacle to this is the erroneous view of the state mentioned above.

Another obstacle is the "structuralist" view which asserts that the role of a political party is wholly encompassed by the requirements of capitalism when it is in government, because it is operating the capitalist state. This has an essential truth applied to the Labor Party as the above discussion shows. Especially when the Labor Party as a whole and the great majority of its members do not envisage even at a propaganda or programmatic level, or on a utopian basis, the change to a socialist society. But this is a simplistic view denying the complexities of the state and politics asserted in other contexts; it neglects essential levers of political struggle, including making use of and seeking to develop differences and differentiation within classes, state and parties.

Another, increasingly important, aspect of state intervention in the economy is the attempt to establish incomes policies. This is not new in Australia, where state regulation of wages through arbitration courts has been in existence for most of this century. But it is relatively new in many other countries, and in Australia itself too, the development of rapid inflation has reinstated the issue.

A feature of the present economic crisis with high inflation and unemployment together, is that the "cure" for inflation favored by the capitalist class and the Labor government is wage reduction, or at least "wage restraint" to lift profit rates. But it is hard to sell, and the working class is strong enough to prevent it being enforced as it has been in previous crises.

Attempts by governments and many Labor Party and trade union figures to achieve this, however, give rise to tensions and conflicts at

all these levels, and opportunities for revolutionaries.

While I do not want to go into it in detail here, it is essential also to recognise that revolutionary policy on wages only begins with opposition to wage restraint aimed to "solve" capitalist problems of recession, inflation, profit rates and new investment at the expense of the working class.

While class struggle against wage restraint policies increases the difficulties of capitalism and capitalist governments, thus in a way intensifying the crisis, no hopes should be placed in this being extended to the point where capitalism would be brought to the point of automatic collapse.

Keeping up with galloping inflation only increases the pace of the squirrel cage in which most workers find themselves, bringing a reaction of its own in the absence of a projection of a future which will radically change the situation. It is shortsighted in the extreme to play down propagation of socialist ideas on the grounds that people are interested only in the here and now, and bettering their conditions within capitalism.

More importantly, viewed historically, the task of the working class is not merely to better its economic conditions. It needs to develop a vision of re-making society in the course of transforming its own situation. And, Lenin says somewhere, no new social system can establish itself without sacrifices (as well as support) by some class. The limitations of the purely economic struggle, accepted as ABC by Marx and Lenin, are only high-lighted by the present struggle over incomes policy, while more and more opportunities present themselves for propagation of ideas which go beyond them.

Another major area of government intervention in the economy is in taxation, by which up to one third of all revenue comes into the hands of the state from local to federal levels - especially the latter.

The total of government income, its sources, the rates at which taxation is assessed and on what social groups, and its disposition into various fields are all issues of class struggles. These involve not only issues of "who benefits at whose expense", but general issues and theories concerning the economy and social life as a whole, all of which is important for revolutionaries.

The Asprey and Mathews Reports on taxation reform tabled in parliament as this

article was being written, show just how crucial taxation policy has become for capitalism at its present juncture. Space precludes examination of the concrete issues at this stage.

Other aspects of state intervention in the economy - for example, attempts at planning - could also be discussed here, but I think enough has been said.

### SOCIAL WELFARE AND EDUCATION

Despite the opposition of conservatives, di-hard private medical practitioners and others, the demand for reasonable social services in the form of pensions, health care, unemployment benefits, etc., now has the support of the great majority. The same applies to education, while demands for child care and other facilities related as well to the liberation of women are growing.

Who pays for these and the amount to be spent on them are issues of struggle involving the state per medium of government policy. No less important, however, is **how** they are controlled, by whom and above all, what purpose and whose interests are served by them.

These issues arise in all fields, but are especially evident in education. During this century, and particularly since the war, education has had to expand and develop rapidly to provide a work force combining the requisite "mix" of unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled, professional and "ideological" workers required by the changing demands of the capitalist economy as the productive forces have undergone rapid change.

Despite rhetoric by political and business interests and the educational "leaders" and bureaucrats of the state apparatus about education serving human development, these labor and social needs of capital have been the main concern of the state in the field of education.

A growing number of people, especially educational workers, and most significantly those undergoing the education, are now taking the rhetoric seriously and questioning the control, content and purpose of the education system.

More coercive and ideological power flows from this state involvement on the one hand. But on the other increasing tensions and conflicts and moreover take on a general

political flavor, precisely because of the state being tied up in it. State involvement becomes a two-edged sword.

### ECOLOGY, RESOURCES, POLLUTION

These are relatively new problems, though of course state responsibility for provision of water supply, sewerage, and "public health", is of long standing and can come under the heading of pollution control. The new scope of the problems in their totality derives from the development of technology, consumerism and in general from pursuit of private profit without consideration of social needs.

The spread of the private motor car, decline of public transport, the concrete jungle of the cities, smog and air pollution, despoliation of forests for woodchips, destruction of the natural environment (for example the threat to Fraser Island) are but some of the most obvious results.

Another article in this issue goes into more depth and raises other sides, but the main point for discussion here is that the state is forced by the growing problems and the mounting mass demands to take political responsibility for acting - or failing to act. But it is the **capitalist** state, and cannot over-ride the fundamental profit-seeking drive of the system. Indeed, the present recession and effort to lift profit rates has predictably led not only to employer assaults on green bans and pressure to further intensify the rape of the environment, but also to government retreats from previously announced intentions.

This brief examination of the modern capitalist state I believe reinforces the general validity of the "classical" marxist theory on the state. It also speaks against views which regard the enhanced role of the state as an insuperable obstacle to revolution, and against any strategy which counts on "piecemeal" change. It further points up the likelihood, even inevitability, of political crises in a growing number of areas. Revolutionaries should take all this into account in their tactics and strategy.

To speak of crises and upheavals is not to say that the revolution is just around the corner, or even likely to be on the agenda, within some definite time. By any criteria, it seems to me, development of revolution in

most industrially advanced countries - and particularly Australia, which is possibly the "luckiest" or most favorably placed (for capitalism) of all - is likely to be a protracted process.

But protracted does not mean smooth, gradually advancing in an even way towards the goal. Social life in general, and especially today, as I believe, likely to be turbulent, with class struggles on a great variety of issues becoming at times very acute.

"Motion, in its turn, is regarded not only from the standpoint of the past, but also from the standpoint of the future, and, at the same time, not in accordance with the vulgar conception of the 'evolutionists', who see only slow changes, but dialectically: 'in developments of such magnitude twenty years are no more than a day' (Marx) ... At each stage of development, at each moment, proletarian tactics must take account of this objectively inevitable dialectics of human history, on the one hand utilising the periods of political stagnation, or of sluggish, so-called 'peaceful' development in order to develop the class consciousness, strength and fighting capacity of the advanced class, and, on the other hand conducting all this work of utilisation towards the 'final aim' of the movement of this class and towards the creation in it of the faculty for practically performing great tasks in the great days in which 'twenty years are concentrated.'"

(Lenin - "Karl Marx".)

The revolutionary forces need to equip themselves both ideologically and organisationally to make appropriate responses. This cannot be done in any detailed sense, for the specific issues and circumstances of sudden outbreaks are seldom predictable (at any rate, seldom predicted) and usually surprise even most participants in them. A few examples are the outbreak of the February revolution in Russia, the Dreyfus case, and the May 1968 events in France, and the overthrow of the Portuguese fascist dictatorship last year. At a lower level, the upsurge over the penal clauses of the arbitration acts with the jailing of Clarrie O'Shea in 1969, though felt by many to be maturing, far exceeding anything that could have been reasonably predicted beforehand.

Of the Dreyfus case - the frame-up of a Jewish

captain in the French army in 1894\* - Lenin wrote:

"Let us not forget that the French bourgeois republic, for example, in a situation which from both the international and national aspects was a hundred times less revolutionary than the present, such an 'unexpected' and 'petty' immediate cause as one of the many thousands of dishonest tricks the reactionary military caste play was enough to bring the people to the verge of civil war!" (*Left Wing Communism*).

Such outbursts focus the normally suppressed and diffuse discontent, anger, strivings and even fantasies of masses of people, revealing more about the actual results of the **totality** of capitalist contradictions acting on the people than is usually possible from purely theoretical analysis.

The test for revolutionaries is far less in the area of crystal gazing than in the "strategic conceptions" which are based on analysis of the continuing contradictions of the society in which they work. This is a kind of prediction it is true, but its main value is enabling the revolutionaries to orient themselves reasonably quickly to what is happening so they can intervene empathetically and help push things in a revolutionary, rather than a reformist, or some other direction.

So the issue of whether "upsurges" and "sudden and explosive challenges" should be included in the political resolution of the CPA 24th National Congress was more than a pernickety argument about words, or a personal question as to whose version was to be accepted. It involved strategic conceptions concerning revolution and social development in general, and the nature of the period we are in, in particular. It also involved conceptions of the state in modern capitalist society, for the above contention did not stand alone, but was associated with other views about the possibility or otherwise of piecemeal transformation of the state.

I think all these issues concerning the state and its relationship to our strategy should figure also in the discussion preceding our 25th Congress.

\* Dreyfus was convicted of treason and imprisoned in 1895, retried in 1899 and acquitted in 1906.

# INTERPRETATIONS OF BLACK HISTORY

by Gary Nicholls

D.J. Mulvaney's extensively revised and profusely illustrated basic text of the history of Black Australia prior to the European invasion will undoubtedly become a central reference in studies of Australian archaeology, anthropology and history. It will be used by people as diverse as Black activists, trade-union activists, university students and crusty old professors. As well as these people, whose main aim will be the extraction of key descriptive details it will also be important, at a number of levels, for marxists. Yet like all the products of bourgeois social science it needs to be situated in an economic and socio-political context in order to allow some clarification of the nature of the ideological distortion and mystification involved.

Though trained as a prehistorian I do not wish to go into the technical arguments that may well keep others employed for many years to come. I wish instead to concentrate on the general issues and interpretations of Black history alluded to and the economic and socio-political bases of the discipline. As readers will no doubt be aware from articles in publications such as *The Australian* (Williams, 1975) and *Current Affairs Bulletin* (Dickson, 1975) there has been a remarkable spate of discoveries of ancient material (bones, tools, food-scrap etc.) over the past five to ten years. In addition, as Mulvaney points out,

there have been a large number of changes in theories about this sort of material over the same period. All Australian prehistorians would see both of these developments as significant. What is much more difficult for them to accept is that such factors as rising Black militancy are equally crucial in such developments and that the awareness of the destruction of Black society forms the real basis of the discipline.

Not unrelated to these 'practical' aspects is the failure of Australian prehistorians to confront the total historical significance of the forms of pre-class society they are studying. Mulvaney talks of the significance of the forms of these studies "in terms of Australian self-knowledge" (p.14) without specifying the major class differences. For the bourgeoisie and their allies (both Black and White) this knowledge may be conceived in terms of aesthetic, religious, antiquarian, or vague humanist interests. For marxists, involved in the struggles of the working class, this knowledge is more likely to be seen in terms of the **dynamic relation** between the economic base of the mode of production and social organisation. In line with these differing interests the bourgeoisie and their allies have a clear stake in separating Black Australians from any historical materialist understanding of their past mainly to prevent any practical political lessons being drawn from these types of study.

This is not to say that all the results of bourgeois studies such as are incorporated in this book are to be disregarded, nor that a



knowledge of the dynamics and historical tendency of pre-class society in Australia 30,000 years ago immediately and simply gives rise to timely political demands. Rather it is a challenge to **systematically** reconstruct these studies so that the **method** used is one that generates practical political lessons which can be made available to the working class and its Black and White allies.

## II

If the 1930's can be said to represent the first decade of intensive studies of living Blacks by professional anthropologists then the 1960's clearly represent the same sort of development in studies of the material remains of former Black communities. Institutionally this can be seen in W.C. Wentworth's suggestion (1959) and the establishment (1961) of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) by the Federal Liberal government and the establishment of prehistory courses in some universities at the same time. Probably the only clear articulation of the reasons for the massive increase in public expenditure evidenced by these developments is Wentworth's original submission.

His arguments are solely based on the view that "from an academic viewpoint, these people are among the most interesting primitive races in the world" (1959,2) and the fact that "under the forces of mining exploitation, pastoral expansion and civilizing influences the remnant (even in the north - GPN) is being rapidly eroded away". Very similar arguments were used in the 1920's in the case for the establishment of a chair in anthropology at Sydney University though the realisation of the level of destruction that had already occurred was not as obvious. The 1959 realisation was that, with only minor exceptions, Black society had been destroyed. Wentworth's response was to call for urgent study of not only the remnants but of prehistory. Another response also accepted by the conservative political parties was what resulted in the 1967 referendum. This campaign largely became a public expression of the guilt that the realisation of the destruction engendered in Whites.

At this same time big campaigns on Black equality were being conducted (especially in the north) and much of the tone of the

I would refer the interested reader to the following works: CPA(1967), Stevens (1968), and Rose (1968).

conservative arguments clearly have this as an undercurrent. For example Wentworth concludes his 1959 paper with the claim that one "incidental advantage" of these studies would be that "we may handle the problems of the assimilation of our aborigines a little better if we know more about their native background" (1959,9). I believe that this is exactly what the bourgeoisie have done over the last 16 years - but more on that after an examination of the contents of Mulvaney's book. It should be noted that Mulvaney himself sees only the surface manifestations of all of this viz., "a revival by Aborigines of concern for their traditional lifestyle" (p.71) and again with respect to Black protest at the activities of physical anthropologists (p.198).

## III

I intend to go through the book **seriatim** even though I realise that the organisation of the book is very clumsy and haphazard. I suspect this is largely a result of the lack of any overall theory guiding what is largely an empirical sourcebook.

Mulvaney's use of the scholastic divisions 'history', 'protohistory', and 'prehistory' confuses the essential nature of historical development in Australia and this is nowhere clearer than in his chapter on "Protohistory". By this term he means the period of time between the first Black contact with members of class societies and the era of European colonization. After some excellent discussion of the evidence for regular (though sporadic) contact with Macassans exploiting **beche-de-mer** (sea-cucumber) in the Kimberley and Arnhem Land regions, contact which extended over at least 200 years, Mulvaney concludes that the real "matter of considerable interest" (p.41) concerns "the rate at which non-material traits were assimilated into a culture traditionally termed 'conservative'" (p.41).

The massive changes in the means of production that this contact introduced (e.g. the dug-out canoe and sail and **metal** artifacts) are only mentioned in passing. The effects of these introductions on exploitation patterns, exchange systems and thus on social organisation are not even raised. A similar failure to bring out the historical tendency and its basis occurs in Mulvaney's discussion of contact between the horticulturally based, stratified societies in New Guinea and Black society in Cape York. He says that "the bow and arrow and horticultural practices were

restricted to Torres Strait" (p.49) but does not express any "theoretical interest in this situation (see also p.72 and more generally pp. 238-48).

In addition to what could be termed 'errors of omission' there is, in the same chapter, a major ideological view expressed on the significance of prehistory. This is the view that Australia's post-war involvement with Island South-East Asia merely repeats the inevitable focus laid down in prehistory and that the European colonisation of Australia was merely an "inadvertent shift" (p.51) in this focus. The wildly **ahistorical** assumptions embodied in this view, the complete neglect of the economic, social and political realities of the past 200 years and the neglect of pre-class societies outside the narrow northern coastal region say a lot about the conceived uses of prehistory for people like Mulvaney.

The chapter on "Landscape and People" contains very useful material on the relationship between natural resources, exploitation patterns, population density and mythology. What is omitted is any concept of a **dynamic** relationship. In many cases a quite mechanical determinist position is advanced, especially in concepts such as "optimum population level" (p.61ff) and "ecological adjustment" (p.68). These fail to take into account the continuously changing relationship between 'cultural adaptations' and fluctuating environmental conditions (not only seasonal but broader climatic changes and changing 'accessible' natural resources - in part determined by changing technology and exchange systems).

Also in this chapter the question of various racial theories about Black Australians is discussed, but purely in scholastic terms with not even a hint of awareness of the ideological import of the bulk of these studies. If any conclusion can be arrived at on the basis of studies of physical characteristics of Australian Blacks it must surely be the emphasis on the 'plasticity' of **Homo sapiens** rather than racial categorisation. This interpretation also means that physical anthropological studies (of skeletal material etc.) may not be as helpful in determining patterns of dispersal or migration as Mulvaney suggests and their importance has probably been greatly over-rated in the past. This view has obvious repercussions on the present dispute between physical anthropologists and Black militants over the digging up of

skeletons. Mulvaney's view (p.198) of this dispute is politically naive though I accept his point about the importance of a knowledge of burial practices and grave goods (p.199).

The chapter on "Ethnohistory" touches on probably the single most important aspect of Black history, i.e. the seeming lack of economic movement beyond a sedentary, intensive exploitation of natural resources and the corresponding failure of the development of class society until recent times (and then only as a result of the dominance of European capitalism in Australia). Factors such as the rigorous enforcement of a conscious population control policy by contraception, infanticide etc., were undoubtedly of very great significance here.

Mulvaney makes very short work of a hoary old debate in academia about so-called 'ethnographic parallels' (i.e., the use of data from studies of recent pre-class or tribal societies to interpret the earlier development of human social organisation). He says that such material should be used by prehistorians provided they "use them as human documents and not in a formalistic manner in which earlier ethnographers selected data as a 'type' or fossilised evolutionary stage" (p.71). He proceeds to do this for cases such as the Mungo people (p.150ff).

In the chapter on "History and explanation" Mulvaney outlines the initial development of 'dirt archaeology' in Australia and the relationship of the explanatory theories advanced in the 1930's and 1940's to then contemporary developments in Britain is clear. Stone artifacts are the major, indeed almost only, 'definitions' of culture and supposed migrations are the 'explanations' of changes in these cultures. Elsewhere I have noted the socio-political basis of these interpretations - suffice it to say that they reflect an antiquarian and racist view of prehistory. The role of Radcliffe Brown and the Sydney Department of Anthropology at Sydney in stifling any historical research in the late 1920's and early 1930's is made clear by Mulvaney but his view of "the Depression" as the reason for no more chairs in anthropology being established needs quite a deal of

**Ideology in social science: the case of British prehistory**, unpublished B.A. (Hons.) thesis 1974, Sydney. Especially pp. 114-138.

clarification.' His outline of changes in his own terminological position over the last six years reflects the extreme and abstracted empiricism of his approach to this whole area of technology. He has still not developed any overall theoretical approach to make sense of the material.

The chapters on "Pleistocene origins", "The Australian Core Tool and Scraper Tradition", "Pleistocene beasts and fossil man" and "The Australian small tool tradition" provide more detailed empirical examples of the general weaknesses suggested above. The data in these sections could well be worked on by marxists interested in the articulation of climatic and environmental changes with technological developments, exploitation patterns, population density changes and changes in social organisation (including exchange patterns).

The length of time for human occupation of Australia seems to be at least 40,000 years and even this time period spans major changes in the natural environment associated with the terminal period of the Pleistocene era e.g., rising sea-level, changing rainfall and/or evaporation rates, altering vegetation distribution and the extinction of large mammals. The role of the cultural activities of man (fire and hunting) in some part of these two later developments seems probable (pp.208-9). As well, we now have abundant evidence of basic technology levels and changes but very little work on the relationship of this fundamental area to other aspects of social existence. The discussion of the 'core and scraper tradition' and the 'small tool tradition' often seems to degenerate into a scholastic emphasis on typologies or else an empiricist emphasis on site reports (what was dug up and where).

The chapter on "Incipient agriculturalists?" once more raises what I see as the major problem of the present material. Mulvaney's attempt to write off all theories of progress by saying that all they amount to are peculiarities of the European mind, is not only indicative of a failure to closely examine the significance of the available ethnohistorical or protohistorical evidence but is also a charge that can be leveled against his proposed replacement theory (?) of "balanced

See for example my own Anthropology at Sydney: a view from the left, in *Sydney studies in critical anthropology*, 1975, 23-37.

cultural ecology" (p.238). This concept is an extreme of mechanical determinism and is as much a product of European thought as are theories of progress.

It is of course absurd to claim that the 'acceptance' of the material possessions of Europeans evidences the economic stagnation of Black society, because the latter had no real control over the situation. But take the case of the Macassan visits in the north. There seems to be quite a deal of evidence that Blacks were easily able to get rid of the intruders if they did not want them and yet the same Blacks still accepted quite significant implements from them - implements which would undoubtedly have enabled much more efficient and intensive exploitation of resources and which also could have greatly affected systems of exchange (because of very high and obvious use-values). Once made available these implements were eagerly accepted and they conveyed obvious advantages. Hence the demand for a better technology existed but was not acted upon by Blacks themselves.

The potentially stultifying effects of ideology in this context cannot be lightly dismissed. Mulvaney's view of traditional Black life seems to be on the 'noble savage' end of the scale and he fails totally to take into account such factors as very high infant mortality rates or more contentious areas such as satisfaction of human needs. In any case the final arbiter of social existence - the historical process - has shown that this particular social formation cannot survive in its own right. Each of the general views has obvious current political implications which I will attempt to delineate in the next section.

The final chapter on "Field Archaeology" is simply a miscellany of empiricist work - carved trees, canoe trees, bark shelters, bark paintings, burials, fish traps, stone arrangements, stone pictures, quarry sites, rock art and decorated implements.

#### IV

The historical tendency of the pre-class societies referred to by Mulvaney was short-circuited by the European invasion. That invasion pitted a capitalist super-power against a scattered series of pre-class societies and it resulted in the physical destruction (with very few exceptions) of the latter. Indeed, as we have seen, it was very largely this realisation that was behind the

significant increase in public funding of the institutional bases of recent Australian prehistory.

Yet over a similar period of time there has also been a marked upsurge in Black militancy - initially merely demands for equality of economic assimilation into White Australian society, but by the mid to late 1960's becoming a demand for integration on the basis of a group of people possessing a distinctive cultural heritage. The Communist Party of Australia has effectively mirrored these changing demands in its changing policy on 'Aborigines' but too often this is where it has left the matter. The Party has not attempted a true class analysis of the Black movement.

The bourgeois use of prehistory (and other areas of anthropology) to combat the demands and position of radical Blacks has been quite blatant. The mythico-religious emphases of appeals to their 'traditions', the attempts to split 'traditional' and 'urban' Blacks for the purposes of land rights and other economic claims, the attempts to create and foster a Black bourgeoisie etc., all use much of the material referred to above interpreted in just the ways I have been criticising, i.e. in idealist or empiricist ways.

A historical materialist account of Black history shows instead that it is but one more instance of the process that precedes capitalism and that it was destroyed because of the needs of an expanding capitalist power in the nineteenth century. From this point of view the attempts to 'revive' traditional life-styles can be seen as an attempt initiated and encouraged by the bourgeoisie to maintain a permanent 'living museum' in certain areas (e.g., Arnhem Land) and as a way of mystifying Blacks in areas where militant demands seem more dangerous (e.g. NSW). In other words it is an attempt to keep Blacks living in an oppressed and helpless state. The historical materialist or marxist understanding of Black history enables us to realise that pre-class social formations are not viable as progressive components of a decaying capitalist system and that those Blacks who want to take control over their own lives by challenging the State over questions such as Land Rights and who realise the necessity of joining with the proletariat to win these struggles, are those who should be supported.

At the same time one should not be insensitive to the growth of a Black identity and the relationship to their own history that

this implies. The valuable insights into social organisation in a classless social formation and the ways in which a technologically impoverished culture attempted to conquer nature are examples of progressive aspects that have permanent historical importance for progressive peoples.

It is clear that my view of the political lessons that emerge from a historical materialist interpretation of Black history is only rudimentary. This whole area of marxist scholarship is virtually untouched and requires a great deal of further work.

#### V

In conclusion I would simply emphasise the importance of studies of pre-class social formations for marxists since the 'object' of these is an elementary forerunner of communist, classless society and hence provides some information on the nature of future social relations in a stateless context etc. Also these studies both are illuminated by and in turn clarify the historical materialist method itself. In light of this I see Mulvaney's book as a valuable source of data but even agreeing with his claim that "the surviving archaeological evidence is restricted both in its variety and interpretative potential" (p.69). I feel that the book does not begin to tap what 'interpretative potential' is there. Only the marxist method can do that in a way relevant to the needs of the majority of people (both Black and White) in the contemporary world.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

## OPENING THE CLOSET

A review of **NEST OF TRAITORS** by Nicholas Whitlam and John Stubbs. Published by the Jacaranda Press, 1974. 259 pp. \$7.50. Reviewed by Rowan Cahill.

One of the uses of history elaborated by Nietzsche was the critical function, where aspects of the past are brought to court, inquired into, and convicted.

Slowly this process is happening to the Petrov Affair which created national trauma in Australia twenty years ago.

The defection of Vladimir Petrov, a minor Russian diplomat and self styled super-spy, on the eve of the 1954 Federal elections and the Royal Commission into Espionage that followed was a major event in the political history of Australia.

As a result of the Petrov Affair, Russia broke off diplomatic relations with Australia for five years; the ALP was shattered and fragmented and the DLP was spawned; Dr H.V. Evatt's chances of becoming Prime Minister were dashed and his career and health wrecked; the Crimes Act was amended to make it a potential suppressor of political dissent (a function it performed during the Vietnam War); a number of Australian citizens were driven into exile, reputations were smeared, careers wrecked; fuel was added to the fires of antipodean anti-communism and the ALP was cast into the political wilderness for some eighteen years; the intelligence organisation ASIO came before public notice and its existence and clandestine activities created a paranoia amongst leftists of all hues, encouraging and facilitating an intellectual conservatism and social passivity in academia (something that was changed by the Vietnam War).

Yet for two decades the Petrov Affair has been allowed to slumber in the national closet, a political skeleton needing a good airing, but receiving very little; that is until the publication last November of

**Nest of Traitors** by Nicholas Whitlam and John Stubbs.

Belatedly then, but better late than never, the Petrov Affair has been "discovered". Why now? Well, the times are propitious - times warmed from abroad by the flames of Nixon and Watergate, the CIA and Chile; and at home by former Attorney-General Murphy's raid on the Canberra headquarters of ASIO (March 1973) and the current Royal Commission investigation into Australia's security and intelligence services.

A fair amount of what is contained in the Whitlam-Stubbs book can be read elsewhere, in the parliamentary speeches of Dr. Evatt, in the writings of Dr. John Burton (onetime Secretary of the Department of External Affairs - 1947 to 1950), Brian Fitzpatrick, W.J. Brown, Allan Dalziel, and Kylie Tennant.

Indeed at a time when it took tremendous courage to speak out against the Petrov Affair, that is back in the 1950's, it was the respective voices of Burton, Fitzpatrick and Evatt that were heard, to be joined later by that of the federal M.P. Eddie Ward whose consistent and pointed "muckraking" made him the nemesis of ASIO. And one must not forget a fine book that has been conveniently "forgotten" by many journalists, commentators, analysts, authors, etc. **The Petrov Conspiracy Unmasked** (1956), edited by the communist journalist W.J. Brown (this book was republished in 1973 but was totally ignored by the mass media, the literary and academic journals etc).

None of the foregoing is to decry **Nest of Traitors**. It is an excellent book drawing on a history thesis undertaken at Harvard University by Nicholas Whitlam, 1966-67. This initial work has been extended and supplemented by extensive interviews with the incredibly theatrical medical practitioner and onetime ASIO counterspy Dr. Michael Biologuski, and Dr. John Burton (now Reader in International Relations, University College, London). Other important sources for the book are

the excellent investigation into the Petrov Affair by journalist Evan Whitton (and published in the **National Times**, September 1973) and, of course, the nine volume transcript of the Royal Commission on Espionage.

This transcript is a particularly odious document which shows just how dangerous a Royal Commission can be when it interferes in political matters and, incidentally, places large question marks against the reputations of a number of members of the legal profession who comprised the Commission, raising questions about the integrity of the law when it plays at politics.

The authors (Whitlam is a merchant banker in London, Stubbs a Canberra journalist) rightly commence their investigation of the Petrov Affair back in the immediate post-war years when the Chifley Labor government created the ASIO Hydra. Here the early cold war influence of British intelligence (MI5) upon the domestic policies of the Chifley government is explored - courtesy of material supplied by Dr. Burton.

Welcome is their analysis early in the book of the character of Dr. Evatt, an analysis which grapples with his contradictions and inconsistencies, humanises him a great deal, supplementing and modifying the valuable - but adulatory - work on Evatt by Dalziel and Tennant.

For the rest of the book the story of ASIO intrigue and political opportunism by the Menzies government is well known to those who lived through the Affair.

**Italians in Australia. Paper presented to the World Conference on Italian Immigration, Rome, February 1975. (Obtainable from FILEF 18 Munro Street, Coburg, Victoria. 3068.**

Reviewed by by Alastair Davidson.

The first wave of post-war migrants to Australia, the "bloody Balts" who arrived in the late 'forties and early 'fifties, were fleeing the old world for political reasons. But many, far too many, were more pro-German than pro-politics, more pro-fascist than anything else. Despite the rigors they faced as foreigners breaking up a smug Anglo-Saxon (plus Irish) homogeneity - in camps like "Riverlake" and on the "Snowy", they merged into our society. They learnt English, took up the Australian way of life, and now, are almost indistinguishable from the "true blues". In doing so they drove Australia to the right politically - though, of course, not by themselves. For the conservatives who rule Australia, they provided a useful core of people who had seen that it wasn't a God that had failed in communism, but that it had always been a Demon possessing men.

The old chestnut about Menzies being the "grey eminence" behind the Affair is properly put into its place. Sure, he used the Affair to further his own, and his party's, political fortunes but the authors rightly concentrate more on the activities of a select, clandestine, group of self appointed custodians of Australian democracy (christened by Burton as the Gnomes of Melbourne), based in the Australian intelligence community, who engineered Petrov's defection (without any recourse to the Parliamentary representative, ministerial or otherwise) and as the authors suggest - and almost conclusively prove - indulged in forgery and conspiracy to defraud a nation when it came to creating the top secret documents Petrov was alleged to have stolen from the Russian Embassy.

The authors develop the point that Australia experienced a strong McCarthyite period during the '50's, a point that needs to be made since so many commentators consistently ignore the facts and look back at the period as a golden era mellowed by the Churchillian glow of Menzies a man by the way who emerges from this study deservedly tarnished (a man who I feel is too well protected from serious historical analysis by our savage overprotective laws of libel).

**Nest of Traitors** is a timely vital book, especially for the generation of Australians who did not experience the fifties with its fears, its hatreds, and the general attempt to stifle political dissent characterised so much of the domestic policies of successive Liberal governments.

To explain how they have fitted in we need to look beyond the political explanation of an Australian culture always a little to the right and welcoming those devoted to private enterprise. We must also remember that these people arrived when the government-promoted infrastructure of Australian capitalism - transport, vast schemes of hydro-electrical development - was burgeoning. There were plenty of jobs, plenty of money, and above all relative isolation from the urban centres and the classic place of capitalist production, the factory. All these factors combined to make Australia a rather pleasant place to be after the Old World - even for the "Poms" who have always constituted the largest migrant group.

In the middle 'fifties, a second wave of migrants started to arrive, the "Wogs" from Southern Europe, who were fleeing the old world for economic reasons. Many of these were socialists, or had come from countries where the working class is traditionally committed to revolutionary socialist parties, like Greece and Italy. They have never really been assimilated; have congregated in near-ghettos like Carlton, Brunswick, Coburg; still speak their own language, and even differ from the "true blues" in their physical appearance. Because of their relative isolation from the community they

did not affect it politically for many years. Occasionally, rather trite nonsense (and irritating nonsense) was written about how Australian eating and drinking habits had changed since the arrival of the Italians, etc. This only indicated how plain bloody discrimination had given way to patronising attitudes which allowed Italians to be restaurateurs or boxers, and Greeks to run fish 'n' chip shops, but not to aspire to the jobs of the "real" Australians. Parenthetically, I recall being told by an Australian (who admired the Germans as "real good fighters") when I was migrating to Australia in 1958, that we were all being imported as slave labor so that real Australians could get ahead on our backs.

These migrants - the second wave which started to peter out in the mid-sixties - arrived just as Australia was caught up in the contradictions of the world market. Before that, we may agree with MacFarlane and others, peculiar conditions had ensured relatively good conditions for the workers. On these conditions had been built the myth of a lucky country, free from the ills of the Old World. When the second wave arrived the great schemes of development were closing down and the real development was in the urban centres, where they found out the reality of their luck in the factories of the imperialist controllers of Australian industry. Nearly all, despite their origins as peasants ended up (at least at first) in the factories. In particular the women were only freed from the misery of the rackrented houses of the industrial periphery to escape into some factory or other.

There is no possibility of a decent life - much less an escape from the contradictions of capitalism - for these people, whose condition has now been surveyed by Des Storer. Although his inquiry is into the Italian community, it holds *mutatis mutandis* for the others. First, he points out that "Italians form a significant population in a pluralistic Australian society in 1975." The bulk of these people live in inner and middle area suburbs of "working class" quality. Areas like Coburg-Brunswick in Melbourne, where he interviewed 400 families, are almost ghettos (25,000 Italians live here in 11.5 square miles). 47.5 per cent of his interviewees were unskilled laborers. Only 18 per cent earned more than \$100 a week. 60 per cent earned between \$65 and \$95 per week, while the average weekly earnings in Australia were \$124. Storer writes: "All this data is limited and only hints at problems Italians face in coming to live in Australia. They are **forced** to take low paid unpleasant work and to work long hours. Italian women must work to add to the family income. They tend to live in cheaper suburbs where they must renovate at high costs. All this is done often to give their children a chance to obtain better employment and more opportunities than they had. Has this happened?" He then goes on to show that

they are blatantly discriminated against in education and social mobility and do not participate in Australian political life, even at the trade union level. His sources (1971) show that only seven non-anglo-saxons hold office in Victorian trade unions. His own survey reports: "The FILEF survey shows that while 40 per cent of the 400 Italian families had at least one member in a trade union, only one person was a shop steward and none were office holders in their unions". And, this is not because they don't want to be involved. On the contrary, it appears that Australian structures and attitudes are geared to keeping them out of the decision-making positions. For example, of the 169 persons refused Australian citizenship in 1966-1970, 155 were communists. The people whom they would lead if allowed, favor the ALP by 70 per cent if this survey is a guide.

This exclusion from political life extended to most other social functions: "Well over 80 per cent of families stated that none of their family ever use the following services - day nurseries, kindergartens, elderly citizens' clubs, home help services, meals on wheels, child endowment, sickness benefits, unemployment benefits, maternity allowance benefits, mental health services, legal services, child welfare or youth clubs."

Yet, despite the radical segregation which they experienced they wanted **Italian**, that is, ethnic services of the same sort, not admission on Australian terms to the poor social facilities available in this country. Indeed, in their choice of schools - Roman Catholic - they showed a determination to maintain the social and cultural patterns of their past.

Des Storer's solutions follow fairly directly from these preferences. He argues for less nationalistic citizenship conditions; for free health and the interpreters to make it really available; for multilingual teaching and the systems to create cross-cultural awareness; and for the encouragement of participation by Italians in union and industrial activity. Above all, he urges an end to the paternalism of the present through direct aid by the government to the Italians so that they could organise themselves, "and advocate their own cause".

These suggestions are of course, all worthy and their implementation needed, but they are **reformist**. Moreover, they assume that a spontaneous consciousness of their "own cause" emerges. As marxist-leninists, we cannot agree with this position and we must ask ourselves what real activity have we been conducting in what is Australia's new proletariat - or at least constitutes a large part of it? So far, it appears to me that the lefty has indeed left the Italians and others to do their own thing - which may breed chauvinism and perhaps damage working class unity.

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