

Victorian Labor College

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Report on Proceedings at Dinner held in
South Melbourne Town Hall, September 1, 1967

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Acknowledgments

Price 30c.

**An Appraisal of Karl Marx
in acknowledgment
that 1967 marks the Centennial of the publication
of his work**

"CAPITAL," Vol. 1

Presented by
K. CARR

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Student in History and Economics
Victorian Labor College

According to Franz Mehring's biography of Karl Marx, it was in the early hours of the morning of August 16, 1867, that Karl Marx completed the corrections to the last sheet of proofs to what was to be his monumental work, "Capital," Vol. 1, sub-titled **A Critique of Political Economy**. He wrote to Engels:

"So the volume is ready. I must thank you alone for making it possible. Without your sacrifices for me, I could never have done the enormous amount of work for the three volumes. I embrace you, full of thanks. Greetings, my dear friend."

It was fitting that Marx should make his first report on the conclusion of his work to Engels, his life-long collaborator. Together they contributed profound knowledge to social science which laid the base for socialist writers to develop a high literary standard to the subject of socialism thus providing additional culture to a great and proud ideology.

By means of the sub-title (sometimes written "A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production"), Marx placed his work outside conventional economics which he regarded as something concluded and now to be criticised. For Marx the logical continuation of this science of economics created by bourgeois scholars was for the purpose of investigating the laws of capitalist anarchy and its future collapse. A continuation which, in its final conclusions, brought Marx's study into polar opposition to the point of departure of these wise men of the bourgeoisie.

Marx paid to his predecessors, the classical political economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo, a tribute of profound gratitude. Nevertheless he pointed to their basic error; their view of capitalism as being humanity's normal existence for all time instead of merely one historical stage in the development of society.

THE METHOD ON WHICH "CAPITAL" IS BASED

Marx based his work "Capital" on what and how people act, and not what they think about their actions. For Marx the base of society was **nature and labor**, not religion and morality. **His method is materialistic in that it proceeds from existence to consciousness and not the other way around.** Marx's method is also **dialectic** in that it regards both nature and society as they evolve, and evolution with its interrupted leaps, as the constant struggle of conflicting forces. It is impossible for one to divorce the class struggle from this work.

On the study of Marx it is essential that the student thoroughly familiarise himself with this Marxian method. Failure here may result in attempts at revising Marx as so many claiming to be "Marxists" have already attempted. There are of course those whose minds remain imprisoned in the conventional forms of present day society and as a consequence are ignorant of any thought outside; who, nevertheless, due to the position they occupy, feel the necessity to display knowledge of Marx's thought if only for the purpose of declaring it out of date. These people greedily feed upon the revisionist theories even though they be based on false reasoning, in order to indulge in platitudes to make up for their lack of knowledge.

The first attempt at revising Marx was made by Eduard Bernstein towards the end of last century. Bernstein considered that the development of cartels, monopolies and the like could suppress the anarchy in capitalist production. If this were not so, he stated, why is it we have not had a major commercial crisis for two decades since 1873? Is not this a sign contrary to Marx's analysis that the capitalist mode of production can adapt itself to the needs of society?

Hardly had he stated this in 1898 as a rejection of Marx's theory of crises when a profound general crisis broke out in 1900, while seven years later, a new crisis, beginning in the US, hit the world market. Said Rosa Luxemburg in reply to Bernstein, **Reform or Revolution:**

"Facts proved the theory of 'adaption' to be false. They showed at the same time that the people who abandoned Marx's theory of crisis only because no crisis occurred within a certain space of time merely confused the essence of the theory with one of its secondary exterior aspects—the ten year cycle."

THE THEORY OF INCREASING MISERY

For those who placed reliance on platitudes to discredit Marx no better choice exists than the German economist Werner Sombart. He provided all the material for these people in which to indulge their platitudes and claim Marxism obsolete. Not only did he state Marx's contention of increasing misery with greater wealth as having proved to be false, but also his theories relevant to the catastrophic collapse of capitalism. In place of this Sombart asserted that capitalism "as it grows older will become more and more calm, sedate, reasonable." Let events speak for themselves as to whom has proved to be the more correct judgment!

Sixty years before Sombart, Marx wrote a thesis under the title "The Theory of Increasing Misery," in which he states:

"Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its product in the form of capital."

This statement has been subjected to constant attack by economists and platitude indulgers. Viewing things from their position of affluence they fail to see the wood for the trees. For them poverty can be contained by charity, consequently its expansion is false and their minds may be solaced in the platitude, Marx is obsolete.

But even if we leave out all but increasing poverty from Marx's statement (the remainder being the subject for discussion in a further paper to be presented to this assembly for the 50th anniversary of the Labor College), the reliance on it for purposes of discrediting Marx are not only wearing thin but are reducing such to silence by the force of reality. In July of this year the ACTU reported to a Federal Cabinet Committee headed by the Prime Minister that 750,000 people in Australia are living in poverty, 200,000 of which were children under 15! While a little later in the same month, Senator J. B. Keefe, at the Federal Conference of the A.L.P., told delegates that "almost a million Australians are forced to exist at a level below the standard recognised as the national minimum." These statements not only confirm Marx as correct in his thesis statement, but also the fact that the Government completely ignored the plight of this section of the community in the budget brought down in August on the ground that no relief could be afforded, indicates clearly that the plight of these people will either be remedied by intensified class struggle or it will gather momentum facing leadership with spontaneous outbreaks against their conservatism.

However, the greatest test for correctness or otherwise of Marx's thesis is its application to the strongest and wealthiest of capitalistic powers, America. Writing in the "New Statesman" (17/7/64) Paul Johnson condescendingly asks the question, "Did Marx have a point after all?" He goes on to say, "America has never been so prosperous. Gross national product is the highest of any nation in history. Yet on the Administration's own admission, one-fifth of the nation—nearly 40 million people—live below the poverty line. Many economists and union leaders would put this proportion at much nearer two-fifths. Unemployment is higher than any advanced industrial country." The recent rioting in that country is nothing but the expression of the gathering momentum of this neglected and unsolvable capitalist problem.

If for a moment we turn to the international arena for confirmation of Marx's thesis the facts are even more startling in their confirmation. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates that world

population will increase from 3400 million to 5000 by 1985—1000 million of the extra 1600 being from underdeveloped countries. To feed these numbers, says the report, food production must increase annually by at least 4 per cent. In fact since 1958 production has increased annually by only 2.5 per cent, and even this increase may not be sustained. Even the aid from industrial powers is no remedy. The backward countries return about half the capital received in higher interest rates, debt-servicing, amortisation, etc, and will within the next 15 years be returning 100 per cent.

The winter issue of "International Socialism" points to the grim prospects of trade. With the exception of oil, it states, the advanced are decreasing relatively their consumption of the primary commodities that the backward produce. The advanced have achieved 88 per cent self-sufficiency in oils, 83 per cent in fats, 73 per cent in cotton, 90 per cent in sugar and are increasing these proportions. They go on to show that the proportion of trade between industrialised countries increased from 37.1 per cent in 1953 to 45.5 per cent in 1964. Simultaneously the backward share declined from 27 per cent to 20.2 per cent, and if oil is excluded, to 14 per cent.

As an example of how the powers tackle this problem, the pension of some 9-10,000 million dollars advanced annually barely touches the problem and ill compares with the 120,000 million dollars spent annually for purposes to destroy each other.

"CAPITAL," VOL. 1

Karl Marx only published Vol. 1 of his work before his death. However, he left voluminous notes which were edited by Engels and now comprise another two volumes.

In Marx's own publication he traces the evolution of value from its elementary form to its development to the universal equivalent—the monetary stage. As previously stated, he acknowledged the work done in this connection by the classical economists, but he went even further with his analysis in that he showed commodities to be possessed not only with a use value but with exchange value obtained through the labor contained within them, termed abstract labor.

Regarding the universal equivalent, the value stage in which all commodities have their value reflected in one commodity. This role may be played by any commodity provided with labor for its production. That gold was finally accepted as the universal equivalent was due only to its special qualities to fulfill this role.

These hidden mysteries in capitalist production through the determination of value through abstract labor create many illusions which Marx deals with in one of the most important sections of chapter 1 under the heading "The fetishism of commodities." Here he shows in contrast to the mystifying forms of capitalist production that of the clearly defined lines of production under slavery and the serf of feudal days. Because of the role played by gold as the universal equivalent, it conveys the impression of tremendous power and becomes a form of worship for some, especially the miser. Because it can be replaced by symbols in its role of currency, the illusion develops that gold has no value, and at times countries talk of "going off the gold standard" without any adverse results. Midst all the confusion it remains clear to those that want to know that, as Marx indicates, symbols such as paper can only replace gold in its capacity as currency provided it does not exceed the quantity of gold required for the circulation of commodities. That this is not observed is one of the main reasons for the astronomical rise in prices over the years.

Marx brings his analysis of value to an end with the important discovery of the origin of profit. He found this to arise through the only commodity possessed by the worker—labor power. While this commodity was purchased by the capitalist at its value, this value could be realized by the worker within a small portion of his working day, the remainder being unpaid labor which became the profit of the employer. In his speech at the graveside of Marx, Engels said:

"The discovery of surplus value suddenly threw light on the problem in trying to solve which all previous investigations of both bourgeois economists and socialist critics had been groping in the dark."

THE ORIGIN OF CAPITALISM

In the chapter on primitive accumulation Marx brings to bear a tremendous amount of historical research to this question. To those economists who explain capitalism's

appearance on the stage of history as being due to two sorts of people, one diligent, intelligent and above all frugal; the other lazy rascals, spending their substance and more in riotous living, Marx supplies the satirical retort: "And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labor, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work."

To the claims that capitalism substituted freedom to the tyranny of preceding economies, Marx retorts that their methods were anything but idealic. "In actual history," he states, "it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force play the great part."

He goes on to show that the accumulation of wealth for the historical rise of capitalism was obtained by nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. "And the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire."

Bernard Shaw, by no means a Marxist, summarised Marx's evidence concerning the origin of capitalist accumulation in these words:

"Karl Marx . . . seized upon the blue books (Parliamentary reports) which contained the true history of the leaps and bounds of England's prosperity, and convicted private property of wholesale spoliation, murder and compulsory prostitution; of plague pestilence and famine; battle, murder and sudden death. This was hardly what had been expected from such an institution so highly spoken of. Many critics said that the attack was not fair; no one ventured to pretend that the charges were not true. The facts were not only admitted, they had been legislated upon."

(From Shaw's address in 1888 to the British Economic Association, now the Royal Economic Society.)

In the other volumes of his work Marx supplies answers to many problems facing trade unionists. For instance, the tendency for the average rate of profit to fall to be arrested through the sharpening methods of exploitation of the workers. The introduction into industry of the stop-watch and time and method studies can be understood only in this way.

Imperialism is the basis for war as well as the imperative drive to force all countries to submit to the capitalist way of life in order to provide markets for capitalist expansion.

Throughout the entire work is the dialectical analysis of the constant struggle of conflicting forces highlighted by the class struggle. If the capitalist economy with its inhuman tyranny of man over man is to be broken, it can only be accomplished through its victims. And if the victims are to become victorious they must advance in strength through knowledge and understanding of how they are exploited as well as the alternative: the building of a world without exploitation in which everyone capable of work will become a useful producer, and in which useful producers will manage the productive process and secure the social value of their product. The overthrow of capitalism is the task of the working class, says Marx. The call to action permeates its pages.

Marx's "Capital" provides the means of acquiring the necessary knowledge. The book is a century old, but it is up to the minute in its analysis of capitalism.

(Paper submitted by K. Carr, official of the Furniture Trade Union; student in history and economics at the Victorian Labor College. Presented on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Victorian Labor College at South Melbourne Town Hall, September 1, 1967.)

The Aims and Early History of the Victorian Labor College

Address by A. T. BRODNEY

THE COLLEGE ESTABLISHED

The Victorian Labor College was established in July, 1917, to give effect to an idea—the belief that the advancement of the working-class and therewith of society generally required that the workers should become intellectually free from established ideas and beliefs.

It was not to be a trade school, for these already existed. It was not to be a political party. This, too, already existed. Nor was it to be the creature of a political party, even of the Australian Labor Party. Nor yet a branch of one or all unions. Yet it sought and finally received the support of the unions of Victoria by whose delegates it was controlled. The College had a very special purpose.

The College was intended to be an independent educational body. That is to say, independent of all existing educational bodies, both in control and outlook. It was to be independent of the main current of contemporary social thinking. This was and should be its prime justification and purpose.

As all know there had been—and there still are—extensions of university teaching, somewhat diluted, outside the walls of the universities, both in Britain and Australia. In both countries there had been adult educational schemes. In particular, there had been university type teaching designed especially for working men and for trade unions. The university and the workers were to be brought together.

There was a considerable history of this movement, both in Britain and Australia. In England a break with this movement led to the establishment there of Labor Colleges.

In Australia, there were both the university-sponsored movement and separate breakaways from it by trade unionists and socialists.

In one respect, the Victorian Labor College reflected this break with university teaching. Yet it was something more than this. It was an attempt to make a positive contribution to thought and action. It sought to fit workers to refuse to accommodate themselves to established ways of thinking, by subjecting these to rigorous criticism and to free people from the intellectual subjection they involved.

A FOUNDER SPEAKS

It is proper on this occasion, however, to let one of the founders speak from an undated leaflet, probably published after November in 1918. This leaflet contains what was almost certainly the "manifesto" adopted at the first meeting of the College, held at 70 Collins Street, Melbourne, on June 9, 1917. W. P. Earsman tells the story. With F. Sinclair, Maurice Blackburn and Guido Baracchi, he constituted the founders of the College. He was an active member of the old Amalgamated Society of Engineers (now A.E.U.) and the Secretary of its Melbourne District Committee. Sinclair was a university man, a lecturer in English language and literature and a radical parson.

Baracchi had been a student at Melbourne University whose teaching he had found unacceptable.

Blackburn's memory is still vivid and green with us and needs no description. Up to the time of his death in 1944, he gave up much of his leisure time for College work.

Earsman tells the story of Ruskin College at Oxford, its support by British unions, the strike of students of Ruskin, leading to the formation in 1909 of the Central Labour College of London.

Turning to Australia, Earsman wrote:

"In 1913 it was found, on examination, that the situation here was similar to that in the old world, and a few people decided that a Labor College should be set up here. An effort was made but it failed, through no fault of the founders, but because some of the leaders of organised labor had become contaminated with the supposed good fellowship of university dons. Four years went by, and in 1917 four enthusiasts decided to launch a Labor College, and named it the Victorian Labor College. Rooms were granted by the Victorian Railways Union and, with no money, the founders set

out on the task of creating an institution which would be owned and controlled by the workers, and which would be the means of assisting them to bring about a saner state of society than the present. With the recognition of class struggle as their base, they set the wheels in motion . . . and the Victorian Labor College is well on the way to establish an institution which will stand as an omen for the future. It stands for the obliteration of the slave culture, which seems to dominate society, and desires to implant a revolutionary culture in the minds of those it seeks to serve."

THE FIRST CLASSES

The first Committee meeting, already mentioned, approved a syllabus and fixed the first classes to start at Unity Hall on June 16, 1917. Unity Hall was owned by the Victorian Railways Union, a firm supporter of the College.

The four founders appear to have had frequent meetings, addressed numerous unions seeking support. They visited country centres. They visited Adelaide.

The first annual conference was held on January 28, 1918, at Unity Hall.

An early affiliation in 1918 was the Geelong Labor Council. Wonthaggi was early in having classes.

Conflict with the university-sponsored W.E.A. appeared early. Some unions were affiliated to that body and one delegate to the Victorian Labor College contemplated his being simultaneously a delegate of his union to the W.E.A. He asked the College to approve. It said "No."

Baracchi was in trouble over anti-war activity. He was gaoled and the College rather optimistically proposed a deputation to W. M. Hughes to secure his release.

Sinclair also was in trouble in Sydney because of anti-war activity, being charged with prejudicing recruiting.

A special conference of all trade unions on education was proposed for September, 1918, as a means of getting support.

The question was raised in September, 1918, of conducting the College from the Trades Hall. The Melbourne Trades Hall Council affiliated to the College in August, 1919, and paid five years' fees in advance. The 1920 conference was, in fact, held at the Trades Hall. All the founders of the College strongly desired the College to be centred at the Trades Hall. When later the Secretaryship fell vacant in

1920 and Baracchi was proposed for the position, he urged that an industrialist should hold it. This has continuously been the bias of the College.

IN OTHER STATES

Early in 1919 requests for information were received from Adelaide and Brisbane.

In 1921 proposals were made to establish a College in Kalgoorlie.

Not only did Victoria help workers in other States but they in return helped the Victorian Labor College. Spencer Brodney, of the Queensland School, in 1920, addressed the Melbourne Trades Hall Council to induce it not merely to pay an affiliation fee but actively support the College. He also met and spoke to the College Board of Management.

In 1921 Earsman wrote and published a pamphlet entitled "The Proletariat and Education." After some absence from Melbourne he had resigned from the Secretaryship in January, 1920, and was active in establishing a College in Sydney.

There were two distinct attempts in the early period to establish a Labor College in Sydney. Each had a spectacular start but collapsed within a relatively short period. At a much later period a third and more successful attempt was made in Sydney to establish a Labor College.

In Brisbane, the Workers' School of Social Science was established in the tradition of the Labor College movement on March 30, 1919. The first annual conference was held in February, 1920. P. J. Gaffney, of Queensland Railways Union, was President and Spencer Brodney, Honorary Educational Director.

An interstate conference of various Colleges was proposed.

In 1921 the Queensland School conducted a competition for an essay on "What is Internationalism"—prize £5. Mr. E. G. Hart, member of the Printing Industry Union, was by unanimous decision awarded the prize. It makes excellent reading at the present time.

The Victorian College thus heard of Hart and, in 1927, the College was fortunate in securing him as class leader and Secretary. Undoubtedly this was a very fine period in the College history. It began for me a very satisfying and

lengthy personal association with Hart, especially in the preparation of class material. The Secretarial work was never better done. The union affiliations were never more numerous.

At that time the College had the generous support of W. J. Duggan as its President for 1927. In 1928 A. E. Monk was the President and it may be said that he, too, gave generously of his time to advance the College. No Secretary of the Trades Hall Council ever did more for the College.

At the All-Australian Trade Union Congress of 1927, Albert Monk and the late George Hayes (Bakers) moved and secured the support of the Congress for Labor Colleges.

The W.E.A. made a strong bid for union support in Brisbane. The departure of Spencer Brodney for New York, followed by the almost wilful dissipation of the Workers' School's forces and funds, led to the collapse of the School.

THE WORKERS' EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

After its origin in Britain, the Workers' Education Association was established in Australia. There was strong opposition by many unionists to the W.E.A.

The Victorian Labor College was inevitably involved in this controversy over a long period. The W.E.A. in Victoria has long since abandoned the word "Worker" in its name and has ceased to play any part in workers' education. But in other parts of Australia it seems still to secure support from some misguided unionists.

In Brisbane, the W.E.A.'s attack took the form of bringing from Broken Hill a tutor whose views were acceptable. After the collapse of the Workers' School, W.E.A. teaching reverted to its former futility.

In Melbourne, the W.E.A. made two equally dishonest attempts to sabotage the College. Both were uncovered and defeated.

FAILURE TO CAPTURE COLLEGE

There have been various attempts by factions operating within the unions to capture the College.

That such factions should have existed was, of course, an argument for the College.

A strenuous bid was made in the late '30's by politically minded people to capture the College. When this failed, the College was subjected to a hostile campaign. Its class leaders were described as supporters of Franco, Hitler and Trotsky, and of Jew baiting.

The Jew baiting charge was rather amusing. It arose from a play which was broadcast in a Labor Hour program. Our critics were unaware of the fact that the play had been produced by the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union of America, which had a very large Jewish membership.

Having failed to gain control, the factionalists campaigned to disrupt College activities and to induce unions to cancel affiliation. This explains why some unions are now unable to claim 50 years of unbroken affiliation.

The mission of the College in the educational field is to unite labor, to welcome and discuss working-class ideas. This is why factionalism and personal opportunism were completely out of place.

The College could only have survived by being able to reject the move by the outside propaganda group in the '20's and the outside political party 27 years ago.

Scars were inflicted in the struggles, however, in the loss of the affiliations of unions which themselves fell under the control or influence of the defeated faction in the College.

Class leaders over the years have been welcomed from a wide range of working-class schools of thought and gave excellent service, keeping to fundamental issues. Ralph Gibson, of the Communist Party, could be named at one extreme and Tom Brennan at the other. Both respected the College's policy against factionalism. Only two class leaders' services were discontinued for abusing this freedom.

THE STUDENTS

Attendance at classes after a day's work is not always easy. Yet many unionists found the class more attractive than might be expected.

One student was a League football umpire. Another student who had been at a game asked the umpire why he had not reported a player. "Because," said the umpire, "I'd have to miss the class. The Tribunal sits tonight."

WIDE RANGE OF COLLEGE CLASSES

The Victorian Labor College has had no organisational ambitions. Its tasks have been strictly limited to its own educational sphere, leaving to other Labor bodies their no less necessary duties.

The College has sought to show to workers the nature of human society and how it changes and how men can see to it that it changes in the right direction — that is, towards socialism.

Therefore, the College had a class in economics to show the "economic law of motion" of capitalist society — to adopt an expression of Marx. The history of industrial systems has been presented. Much has been learned from anthropology and the social life of the Australian aborigines was not neglected. In short, social theory and history in all their aspects have been examined.

The practical work of public speaking has been encouraged. It was hoped that students take part in the battle of ideas so that new thought may issue in new behavior and so lead to the new society.

CONCLUSION

If I may refer to myself, I was appointed to conduct a College class in July, 1922. I continued a close association with the College until the end of 1955.

I now believe, as I believed in 1922, in the battle of ideas.

Until the community as a whole has been weaned from the ideas that are crystallised into the institutional behavior that supports the private ownership of the means of production and the incentive to private profit, not merely the working-class will continue to be where it now is but society at large will be in danger of dissolution.

Socialism is possible, but not inevitable. It is more urgently necessary in 1967 than in 1917.

It is thus the more necessary that independent education should be maintained and extended. It was to this end that the four men founded the College in 1917 and it is by success in doing this that the College will be judged.

**The Need For Independent Working Class Education
Based on Marxist Theory on Alienation**

Presented by

E. TRIPP

Secretary Victorian Labor College

**THE IMPERATIVE NEED TO CONTINUE WITH
THE WORK OF THE VICTORIAN LABOR COLLEGE
IN INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS EDUCATION**

In a pamphlet published in 1920 by W. P. Earsman, "The Proletariat and Education," is stated: "In 1917 four enthusiasts decided to launch a Labor College and name it the Victorian Labor College. Rooms were granted by the Victorian Railways Union and with no money the founders set out on their task of creating an institution which would be controlled and owned by the workers, and which would assist them to bring about a saner state of society than the present." The movement spread to other States, Labor Colleges were set up in Brisbane and Sydney. However, in the course of time they apparently lapsed so that after fifty years the Victorian Labor College appears to be the one remaining institution based on the lines of independent working class education.

The reasons which inspired the four enthusiasts of fifty years ago still remain, though with a somewhat greater intensity for man since 1917 has become more sombre and brutal. In 1917 workers' education was seen to be of paramount importance due to the vast change that had taken place in the possession of knowledge since the early rise of commercialism. In those days scholars gathered in universities to pursue their studies in common and impart their knowledge to the community. Education was regarded as an **end in itself**, not, as in our day, a **means to an end**.

The steady rise of commercialism gathered momentum in greed for profit, emphasising the baser instincts with intense brutality within man's nature regardless of his

moral claims. In the early forties of last century a completely helpless and peaceful agrarian population of China was forced to match arms with the capitalist military technique of the European powers and as a consequence become subjected to periodical massacres in a vain attempt to resist the importation of the opium drug into their country. Finally, by the peace of Tientsin (1858) China was forced into opening her country for the importation of this dread drug which had already wrought such havoc to its population, for the purpose it served in the creation of huge profits for its capitalist producers.

The conquest of India was no less barbarous in its methods; in fact it was even more brutal than its previous heathen conquerors. The savage Mongol and Tartar hordes at least preserved the cultural life of the country, the communist village community. Only the advent of commercial conquest by Britain assured the destruction of this. It was imperative that it do so, because commercial conquest is based on the inherent necessity of reducing every country it conquers into the same way of life as its own in order that it becomes a market for expansion of the profit system. The forceful transformation of India's agrarian economy to that of the landowner and impoverished peasants by the British led to the first great famine in India exactly a century ago, "in which over a million people were killed in one district alone," writes Rosa Luxemburg in "The Accumulation of Capital."

From this glimpse into history it is easy to grasp how the steady rise of commercialism put an end to any idealic relations existing within the community. The brotherhood relationship existing within the guilds—which now exists in name only with the trade unions which grew out of them—were supplanted through the promotion of private ownership in production to what Marx termed a relationship of "naked cash value." With this development the class struggle became more revealing than ever before. Inheriting from the last century all the baser instincts of human nature through the rise of commercialism our own century, now more than half gone, has witnessed two global wars bringing us near to the Orwellian stage predicted for 1984 of perpetual war!

As already noticed by 1917 the impact of commercialism on education had destroyed any quest for knowledge in advancement of the cultural stage of man. More than ever, education became a matter of class interest, a method whereby to advance the interests of capitalism. Government grants were provided for universities where students no longer felt the necessity to impart their knowledge to the community, but to use it solely for their own individual advancement. Over the years, with the advance in technology to industry, this is more emphasised. Study now is not of a general nature but confined to subjects pertaining to the requirements of students for their position in society. The demands made on students through exams have driven many to drugs and many suffer from mind derangements. Due to specialisation, mass-produced doctors, mathematicians, lawyers and such-like come off the chain-belt system as within a factory. Many are the outcries from the scholarly concerning student illiteracy, which in its turn leads to inability to the clear expression of thought.

This harnessing of education to the necessities of commercialism and its effect on the thought structure of imprisoning it within the conventional forms of capitalism was not unnoticed by Marx. In his writings on Capitalism and Human Alienation, contained in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, he remarks as follows:

"Alienation shows itself not merely in the result, but also in the process of production, within productive activity itself. . . .

"In what does this alienation of labor consist? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not a part of his nature, that consequently he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery, not of well-being, does not develop freely a physical and mental energy, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labor. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague. Finally, the alienated

character of work for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his work but work for someone else, that in work he does not belong to himself but to another person."

In the so-called affluent age alienation becomes even more noticeable. Today in order that workers may become owners of their homes, motor cars and other luxuries produced in modern society, they must mortgage their future through hire purchase agreements with an addition of the payment of extortionate interest rates. This brings with it the compulsion to work long hours of overtime or failing this to look for a second job. In many cases the wife also is compelled into the work force that financial commitments may be met.

Thus the time spent in work for another is not decreased with this so-called progress in the modern age but increased. On top of this is the negative attitude towards struggle against this unnatural existence and the development of a general apathy to anything likely to bring about a collision with existing conditions through fear of getting too far behind in the time-payments. Thus more and more people are being reduced to thinking along the lines of that desired by capitalism.

In proof of this one has only to observe the period of 1917 and the opposition expressed to World War I through rejection of conscription even though enormous propaganda was brought to bear in an effort to show the war as a great human ideal for the ending of war altogether. Fifty years after, not only is support given to conscription for an undeclared war in Vietnam but also with the full understanding that it is a war against "communist aggression!" This implies that the majority now recognise it as the sacred duty to fight with capitalism against its greatest enemy, communism. For communism, another name for socialism, means an end to capitalism through the means of planned methods of production in the interests of all. It matters not that of course this is not the meaning for the war in Vietnam any more than World War I was the war to end all wars. What is important is that commercialism has so reduced the mind to the conventional lies of our

civilisation that men now quietly acquiesce to any vile methods being used to exterminate a philosophy which history records as the avowed teaching of the early Christians upon which capitalist morality is supposed to be based.

So inescapable is this deterioration of thought through alienation from the real meaning of life that the great satirist George Orwell's prediction for 1984 stands out with all its frightful warning. In that year Orwell presumes the world to be at perpetual war. Have we not entered the period of permanent war economy? Orwell has the Ministry of Truth with its three slogans: "War is Peace." "Freedom is Slavery," "Ignorance is Strength." Do we not today go to war in the interest of peace? Is not freedom the right to choose one's master! And is not ignorance the one remaining force that keeps capitalism alive?

It is upon this last slogan, "Ignorance is Strength," that the entire labor movement should concern itself. Eliminate ignorance through increasing knowledge to the working class through institutions like that of the Victorian Labor College. Only by this method can the thoughts of young men and women transcend the narrow limits of capitalist thought and the workers traverse the path historically destined by history, to the final goal of socialism. Knowledge is power. Labor Colleges, in this present age, are of ever greater importance if mankind is to be saved from barbarism.

(Introduced by E. Tripp, Secretary Victorian Labor College, on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the College, September 1, 1967.)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mr G. Baracchi (last surviving foundation member, Guest of Honor) and Mrs Baracchi; Mr R. Coles, President Melbourne Trades Hall Council; Mr M. C. Jordan, Secretary Melbourne Trades Hall Council; Mr W. Brown, President State A.L.P., and Mrs Brown; Mr W. Hartley, Secretary State A.L.P., and Mrs Hartley; Mr A. T. Brodney (Guest Speaker) and Mrs Brodney; Mr A. E. Davies (Secretary in 1920s) and Mrs Davies; Mr G. Butler (Furnishing Trade Society), President Victorian Labor College; Mr E. Tripp (Australian Society Engineers), Secretary Victorian Labor College, and Mrs Tripp.

Messrs P. Higgins, S. Aitchison, R. Sorrell and J. Culpin, representing Electrical Trades Union.

Messrs F. Mutton, L. Carmichael, J. Halfpenny, N. Clapton, J. Simmonds, G. Edson, T. Deak and I. Whittle, representing Amalgamated Engineering Union.

Messrs J. Topp and H. Barry, representing Bakers' Union.

Messrs R. Spring, J. Scrafton, R. Morgan and P. Beeson, representing Australian Society of Engineers.

Messrs K. Carr, G. Butler, H. Maloney and S. Calder, representing Furnishing Trade Society.

Messrs I. Hodson, W. Burke, Mrs Burke and Miss Hamman, representing Transport Workers' Union.

Messrs W. Dunn, W. Hyatt and R. Sharp, representing Confectioners' Association.

Messrs C. Fagan and J. Martin, representing Sheet Metal Union.

Mr T. Mills, representing Meat Industry Employees' Union.

Messrs A. Sanger, C. Stapleton, D. Gunn and T. Bosley, representing Boilermakers and Blacksmiths' Society.

Messrs S. Willis and J. Bell, representing Boilermakers and Blacksmiths' Society (Williamstown Branch).

Messrs J. McGinley and J. Knight, representing Printers' Operatives' Union.

Messrs A. Gregory and W. Donnelly, representing Tramway Employees' Union.

Messrs W. Miller, A. Joyce, P. Slape and R. Andrews, representing Municipal Workers' Union.

Mr and Mrs Weekley, representing Timber Workers' Union.

Mr and Mrs D. Gray, representing Boot Trades Employees' Federation.

Messrs E. Wilson, S. Longstaff, J. Laragy and A. Kriacou, representing Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation.

Mr and Mrs Dowling, Mr and Mrs Cugley, representing Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association.

Messrs C. Croft, T. Connolly and K. Barrett, representing Bricklayers' Society.

Mr D. Lovegrove, representing Plasterers' Society.

Messrs C. Harris, R. Kiernan, F. Perkins and Mrs Perkins, representing Postal Workers' Union.

Messrs A. L. Cahill, K. McCormack, B. Smiddy, representing Printing and Kindred Industries' Union.

Messrs J. Garvie, L. Dalloway, E. Forbes and Mrs C. Hankin, representing Miscellaneous Workers' Union.

Messrs J. Healy, B. Fitzpatrick, representing Australian Railways Union.

Messrs R. Walsh, E. McCormick, W. Hamilton and H. Rourke, representing Waterside Workers' Federation.

Messrs G. Crawford, J. Shepherd, B. Mier, F. Lack, J. Rutherford, G. Merritt, K. Jowett, L. Cooper, J. Bruce, B. Halton, L. Allan (Brisbane, Qld), D. Mildred (South Australia) and R. Hovey (Tasmania), representing Plumbers and Gasfitters Employees' Union.

Mr F. Martin, representing Moulders' Union.

Messrs J. Lewis and N. Basso, representing Clothing Trades Union.

Distinguished Visitors, Activists and Students

Messrs J. Sendy and B. Taft, representing State Communist Party; Mr J. Butler, representing Socialist Party of Australia; Hon S. Merrifield, MLC; Hon J. M. Tripovich, MLC, and Mrs Tripovich; Mr P. Furey; Mr N. Robertson; Miss M. White; Mr N. Feinberg; Mr and Mrs R. Dahlitz,

Mr G. Lacey; Miss S. Carney; Mr E. Sibley; Mr and Mrs D. O'Brien; Mr G. Watson; Mr R. Dorning; Mr J. Craig; Mr J. Hamilton; Mr D. Ould; Mr B. Balcombe; Mrs B. Walker; Miss M. Heagney; Mr J. Hegarty; Mr B. Payne; Mr and Mrs Hyslop; Mr A. Bowen; Mr W. Barnes.

Apologies

F. Crean, MHR; J. F. Cairns, MHR; H. McIvor, MHR; Gordon M. Bryant, MHR; Senator S. H. Cohen; D. G. Elliot, MLC; John W. Galbally, MLC; Clyde Holding, MLA; W. L. Floyd, MLA; L. M. Fennessy, MLA; A. W. Knight, MLC; F. N. Wilkes, MLA; W. T. Divers, MLA; C. T. Edmunds, MLA; Dr H. A. Jenkins, MLA; H. J. Souter, Secretary ACTU; Mr and Mrs G. Hall; Mr and Mrs E. L. Thornton; Mr B. Barnes.

Cancellations

Telegram received from Mr G. Baracchi that due to sudden illness he would be unable to attend. Mr M. Jordan apologised owing to last-minute disability.

PROCEEDINGS

President G. Butler called on Mr K. Carr to introduce his paper on Appraisal of Karl Marx in acknowledgment that 1967 marks the Centennial of the publication of "CAPITAL," Vol. 1.

During progress of dinner, President called on Vice-President P. Higgins to propose a Toast to the early pioneers of the College. Mr A. E. Davies (Secretary in the twenties) responded.

President then called on Mr R. Coles, President of the Trades Hall Council, to propose Toast to Victorian Labor College. Mr E. Tripp, Secretary Victorian Labor College, responded; at the same time introducing second year paper on the need for Independent Working Class Education based on Marx's writings on Alienation.

The Guest Speaker, Mr A. T. Brodney, addressed the assembly on **The Aims and Early History of the Victorian Labor College.**

Mr W. Brown, State President A.L.P., moved a vote of thanks to Mr and Mrs Brodney for their sterling work over the years for the Labor College, which was endorsed by a standing ovation.

Among the letters received and referred to by President Mr Butler was a letter from Mr Brodney's brother, Spencer Brodney, from New Jersey, USA. It read as follows:

To the President,

*Victorian Labor College,
Melbourne, Australia.*

It is with greatest satisfaction that I have learned that on the first of September this year the Victorian Labor College will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. To all who have co-operated in the past as well as those who are now co-operating in carrying out the aims of the College the entire community should be grateful. I say this because it can only be when the ideals that inspire the Labor movement are attained that there can be a sane, just and rational society. It is by providing the knowledge and understanding necessary to these high purposes that the Victorian Labor College has already greatly distinguished itself and promises still finer achievements in the years to come. To all concerned I rejoice that I am able to send my cordial congratulations and heartfelt wishes.

SPENCER BRODNEY,

*Founder and first Director, Workers' School of Social Science,
Brisbane, 1919-1920.*

As already stated, the College foundation member Guido Baracchi and his wife, due to sudden illness to both with severe conjunctivitis a day or so before the dinner, were unable to attend. The bitter disappointment, coupled with the Board of Management's condolences, brought from Guido this very memorable letter:

September 4, 1967

Dear Ted,

On Saturday morning Victoria and I, both still ill, were sitting disconsolately in our living room, exchanging desultory remarks about the pleasures we had missed the night before but hoping you had all had a glorious Jubilee—when, about noon, there was an unexpected knock on the front door. Victoria went and opened it and came back beaming, bearing a mass of flowers, lovely and fragrant and fresh, with a card from you on behalf of my old College. Thank you from our hearts. We are deeply touched. The saffron daffodils, the carnations white and pink and speckled, in their setting of heath, dispelled our disconsolation. Indeed, I date the beginnings of recovery from soon after their arrival. Those flowers have proved "a sight for sore eyes." Truly you have "said it with flowers" and again, we thank you one and all.

No less for the Board's telegram of August 30, whose sentiments likewise touched us. The "speedy recovery" it hoped for has in fact set in: Victoria is better and, though I am still under treatment with anti-biotics, I show marked improvement. Sincere thanks to the Board, then, please, for their telegram as well as the flowers.

My eyes still do not permit of a long letter now, but later I want, as I said in my telegram, to write down some thoughts about the College I had hoped to convey, formally or informally, at the dinner.

But, for now, a single thought must suffice, and that not my own. Rather long ago, someone here told me you were a profound admirer of Rosa Luxemburg's. You will, then recall some words she wrote during the revolutionary struggles of 1918 in Germany:

"Determined revolutionary activity coupled with a deep feeling for humanity, that alone is the real essence of Socialism. A world must be overturned, but every tear that flows and might have been staunchd is an accusation; and a man hurrying to a great deed who knocks down a child out of unfeeling carelessness commits a crime."

For all the difference of time and place and circumstance that telegram and those flowers from the College somehow remind me of these words. There is about both a HUMANITY that moves us and at the same time refutes a conception on which Nye Bevan once poured his scorn, the conception of a Socialist as "a desiccated calculating machine!"

On August 4, you wrote to me, Ted, that my old College "is very much alive." Much more so, I would add, than in the days of its founders. This is as it should be. In a "free world" where islands of affluence exist only in a sea of absolutely increasing misery, there is all the more urgent need for independent working class education.

Thus I look forward to paying the VLC a visit when next we come to Melbourne. Meanwhile, over and beyond our sad regrets for having missed that historic dinner, truly fraternal greetings from us both to you all.

—GUIDO BARACCHI.