

Government housing projects have been seriously run down in recent years. Some estimates indicate that an immediate \$200 million increase would be needed just to restore public housing spending to 1974 levels. The government came to office promising to double public housing in 10 years — it has not even begun to fulfill this promise.

While queues grow for government housing, rents and mortgages steadily increase on private housing. The need for more housing is obvious.

The Socialist Workers Party calls for a massive program of housing construction.

Medicare is regarded as one area where the Labor government has fulfilled a promise. But the truth is that the scheme has some serious problems.

The one per cent Medicare tax levy means that for many working people health insurance is now more expensive.

To make matters worse, continuing funding cuts for public hospitals have limited their ability to provide adequate services. Many hospital administrators and health workers point out that the hospital system is in crisis. Long hours and low pay have led to serious shortages of trained staff in some hospitals.

The Socialist Workers Party stands for a universal health scheme without the tax levy. Funding of hospitals must be increased as a matter of urgency. Health workers must be given shorter working hours and higher pay.

The Hawke government's record on social welfare puts it in the same camp as the former Fraser government.

When it talks about "consensus" it means consensus with big business that hundreds of thousands must live in poverty so that 10 per cent of the population can continue to own 60 per cent of the country's wealth.

A vote for the Socialist Workers Party is a vote for people's welfare before profits.

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vote Socialist Workers Party

Make the rich pay

Policy
statement
on social
welfare

One in every six Australians live in poverty. Yet Australia is a wealthy country. There is no reason anyone should be denied housing, enough food, convenient transport, or any other of life's essentials.

Poverty exists only because of the irrational way our society is organised. Our industries are run by private companies whose only concern is to maximise profits. They take no account of the fact that their decisions affect the lives of thousands.

Unemployment is the main cause of unemployment in Australia today. Thousands of young school-leavers have never had a job, many more have had only temporary jobs.

At the other end of the scale, older workers are being increasingly forced into premature retirement, through sackings and voluntary redundancy schemes.

Many women have been pushed out of the workforce to subsist on inadequate social welfare payments or their husband's declining real wage.

The only way to improve this disgraceful situation is to change industry's priorities: to decide that jobs must come before profits. Companies that have amassed fabulous wealth through years of high profits, must now pay for the unemployment their policies have created.

At present the federal government promotes the view that profit levels must be restored to create more jobs. But this policy has failed. For two years wages have been frozen, but unemployment is as high as ever.

Instead of subsidising industries that lay off workers, the federal government should tax them more heavily — in proportion to the percentage of their workforce laid off. Workers should not be made to pay for the social problems created by corporate greed.

The government has added to the problems of victims of its "profits before jobs" approach by holding social security benefits and pensions to pitifully low levels, and by starving important public services of funds. Hospitals and welfare services are short-staffed because of government policies.

The 1984 federal budget was designed to boost big business at the expense of wage-earners and the poor. A survey of 231 chief executives and finance controllers of Australia's largest

companies found that 73 per cent thought the budget would be good for business.

The Hawke government has not honored its pre-election promise to increase pensions and benefits to 25 per cent of average weekly earnings. Yet, according to the Australian Council of Social Services the increase should be to more like 30 per cent just to keep pensioners above the poverty line.

The Socialist Workers Party supports an immediate increase in pensions and benefits to at least 30 per cent of average weekly earnings.

The under-18 unemployed still receive less than the adult dole. Labor claims to have been generous in granting \$5 per week extra after six months of unemployment! The young unemployed should be paid the adult rate.

Labor has made old-age pensioners a target for cutbacks by introducing the Pensions Incomes and Assets Test.

This means that thousands will have their

pensions reduced or cut off because they may have accumulated some assets during a lifetime of hard work. The government claims that its test is aimed against the wealthy. But the wealthy can always hire expensive lawyers to find loopholes in any law. The test will hit working people. It should be scrapped.

Retired workers have also been hit by taxation of superannuation payments. Again this is made out to be a way of taxing the rich. But the people it will hit hardest are ordinary workers who pay into superannuation schemes. The superannuation tax should be dropped.

Single mothers and their children continue have a very hard time economically. Many such women have been pushed out of the workforce by rising unemployment and inadequate childcare facilities.

The Socialist Workers Party supports establishment of properly staffed, free childcare facilities for working women.

