THE BROAD LEFT CONFERENCE

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THE BROAD LEFT CONFERENCE

BULLETIN Number 1/86 February 1986

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From the National Organisers

My co-worker Rob Smith and I would like to outline the processes by which you can get more information about the Broad Left Conference. Register for the Conference, arrange to give a paper, seminar or workshop at the Conference, or contribute to the next Bulletin.

First, Rob and I can be contacted on (02) 264-3696 during office hours. An answer phone will record your message and we will get back to you if we are not in the office when you ring. We are very happy to speak to groups or individuals about your concerns and ideas for the Conference.

If you have filled out and sent us the slip on the back of the Broad Left Conference pamphlet you will automatically receive the Conference Bulletin, Conference program and registration form. Otherwise, you can write to us at P.O. Box 17, Railway Square, Sydney 2000, requesting any of the above. If you cannot attend the Conference but wish to receive the Bulletin, please forward your name, address and $10 fee to the P.O. Box.

Deadline for contributions to the next Bulletin is March 1st. Contributions need to be limited to 1000 words. Dates of further sponsors, meetings and pre-Conference discussions are available from your State Organising Committee.

South Australia (08) 203 3913
Victoria (03) 497 2330
Queensland (07) 832 5357
A.C.T. (062) 61 5584
W.A. (0995) 24 1031 (a/h)

For contact with regional centres and other states, please phone Sydney organisers.

JANE MARTIN
Conference Organiser

CHILDCARE will be available during the Broad Left Easter Conference. Contact the organisers for details on (02) 264 3696.
Draft Statement for the Broad Left Conference

by George Campbell, Peter Robinson, Barbara Wray, Kathryn Burgess, Anne Lunn, Helen Arrows, Ken McLeod, Sue Campbell, Ted Wrench, Nyantha Lashmar, and moderated by 300 plus sponsors from around Australia.

Pressing issues of current concern strongly suggest that broad left and socialist forces should come together in an open atmosphere to discuss perspectives for the left in Australia. We believe that it is both desirable and timely for those broadest forces who share similar perspectives to discuss how to develop more effective left responses to current political developments in Australia, and to the real issues of the 1980s and 1990s.

The left faces two major strategic issues at present:

1. Firstly, the emergence of a much more radical and ideologically confident right wing, which has launched a new conservative offensive against the labour and progressive movements, designed to roll back many social reforms and to put in place hardline conservative governments of the Thatcher and Reagan models.

2. Secondly, the challenge of building effective mass movements for progressive reform against the growing power and confidence of a period of Labor Governments, and the relationship of left and progressive forces to the existing Labor Government.

The resurgent right has built significant links in the corporate sector, universities and private research institutions, sections of the public service, and mainstream conservative political parties. It is mounting an increasingly powerful offensive against many of the progressive advances made by workers, women's groups, Aboriginal communities, environmentalists and various other social action movements during the 1980s and 1970s.

The right has mounted a well-organised and well-funded ideologically offensive, which seeks to change the political agenda by promoting hardline free-market economic theories, together with other conservative and reactionary values such as sexism and traditional notions of women's social role. However, the right's strategic goals extend well beyond the re-affirmation of conservative ideas and values. They also aim for fundamental changes in the structure of Australian society, in such key areas as the capital/labour relationship (through technological change in the work process, various forms of self-employment and anti-union employment practices), and selective manipulation of the labour market; public enterprise (privatisation and the marginalisation of forms of public ownership in health, education and social services, regressive tax reform); and education (rolling back progressive reforms, community movement and student-centred approaches).

The Queensland Government's assistance for Jobsearch and the toothless assault on Medicare are two recent examples of the conservative political offensive which aims to re-establish the political situation and create the conditions for the election of hardline conservative governments.

The left should respond to this challenge with its own renewed offensive seeking to build broad alliances to defend basic social and economic rights, and to extend the previous gains of the post Cold War period. The left can assist the renewal of mass movements for social change by developing a more coherent and well-supported program for social and economic change, drawing on the needs and demands of the movements they seek to build.

At Federal, State and Local Government levels, labor administrations are reiterating their new-found commitment to labour and progressive movements for social and economic reform. The left should take advantage of this situation to make gains in the workplace, community and beyond.

We call on the left to develop a clear and consistent strategy to assist the mass movements for social justice and fairness to prepare for the next period of Labor Government and to lay the foundations for left and progressive movements to the left of Labor to build alliances with the wider community and ensure that the Labor Government is contained.

Our concerns are many but the main ones include:

1. The continued escalation of the nuclear arms race and the drift to nuclear war, and in particular the pressures to push US policies on New Zealand, Australia and other Pacific nations, tying them into a global nuclear strategy against their own national interests.

2. The threat to our national and economic independence from the influence and control of multinational corporations and industries, and from the rundown of our manufacturing industry in the absence of a national industry-development plan which puts new technology to the service of human and social needs.

3. Continuing high levels of unemployment, accompanied by growing poverty and an increasing gap between rich and poor, both nationally and globally, problems which can only be tackled by radical redistributive policies on wages, taxation and social services.

4. Continuing failure to alter the granting of meaningful land rights for Aboriginal people which would give them adequate control, especially over mineral wealth.

5. Failure to fully implement key aspects of the ACTUAL Accord, including effective price controls, aspects of tax reform and the social wage, and key elements of economic policy such as industry policy and regulation of financial institutions.

6. The need to further develop the labour movement's Accord strategy through which labour effectively intervenes on the production side as well as distribution, on the social wage as well as the industrial wage, and on economic and industry planning and industrial democracy as well as immediate worker control.

7. The need for more resolute education and action to overcome the social disadvantages of women and the attitude, which accompanys and give rise to discrimination against them.

8. The need to further integrate and develop a wider range of other societies and ethnic minorities to fully participate in Australian society and to maintain and develop their own cultures and languages.

9. Growing concentration of private means of production, and the harmful consequences of this for democratic discussion of social issues.

10. Increasing multinational and national pressures to cut back the public sector at Federal, State and Local levels, and to privatise public enterprises such as Telecom, TMA and the Commonwealth Bank.

11. The co-ordinated and widespread attacks by conservative forces seeking to narrow, authoritarian and archaic schooling process, together with effective pressures to cut back promised government funds for public education while appeasing wealthy private interests.

12. The growing need for discussions and a campaign towards a society which provides adequate material wellbeing to all while conserving the environment and resources for future generations.
We have now received your second letter (October 11) and wish to let you know of some anxieties it raises. These concern the draft statements, and the sentiments in your letter: 'We cannot engage in substantial rewriting and amending, but we are considering incorporating suggestions which seem to improve the draft without altering its general sense.'

We have received reports that proposals were submitted to you for some fundamental expansion of the range of views represented by the draft—in particular, to give recognition to 'ecological considerations' until the varying views on the left towards the Accord. However, this sentence in your letter seems to rule out any such amendments.

It is possible that you are not fully aware of how limited the views encompassed by the draft, and how unsatisfactory it is as a 'framework' for any left assembly which ascribes the title 'Broad'.

We would like to illustrate this by showing the 'main concerns' in the draft statement, followed by our comments on their formulation (in italics).

1. The continued escalation of the nuclear arms race, and the drift to nuclear war. In particular, the pressures to push US policies on New Zealand, Australia and other Pacific nations, tying them in to a global strategy against their own national interests.

2. This implies that Australia is not at present a nation tied into a global nuclear strategy, but only runs the risk that 'pressure' will make it so. Many people would see this as contrary to fact. It also states as its sole criterion of any such intervention that it further Australia's national interests. It can be argued—particularly in the light of the 'nuclear winter' studies—that this merely is more than the paragraph indicates, humanity's potential for nuclear achievements is the scale. The appropriate balance between such views, from which the main thrust of any paragraphs should emerge, should properly be left to the Conference rather than assumed in advance.

3. The threats to our national and economic independence from the influence and control of multinational corporations and financiers, and from the rundown of our manufacturing industries in the service of a national auto-industry development plan which puts new technology to the service of human and social needs.

4. Here again the over-reaching importance of national concerns is apparently stressed at the exclusion of class-based or internationalist views, which would refuse to see it proper to couch the problems solely in terms of 'foreign employers and our industrial structure. Quite apart from ideological argument, important practical questions are involved here—such as the degree of protectionism, if any, which it is proper to advocate. The statement should pose such questions rather than go on a long way towards giving an answer—as the present formulation appears to do.

5. Continuing high levels of unemployment, accompanied by growing poverty and an increasing gap between rich and poor. Both nationally and globally, the problems which can only be solved by radical redistributive policies on wages, taxation and social services.

6. A whole spectrum of views is hereby excluded—views which reject a campaign for jobs which does not ask 'What kind of jobs?' or ones that would deny the ability to redistribute policies, no matter how radical, to remedy income, systemic defects that make capitalism decline more and more of the population redundant—and so on.

7. Failure to fully implement key aspects of the ACTUALP Accord, including effective price control, aspects of tax reform and the social wage, and key elements of economic policy such as industry policy and regulation of financial institutions.

8. Here again a definite tactic is specified, this time towards the Accord to call for full implementation. This excludes from the debate those views which, for example see the Accord as an Australian version of the neo-corporatist 'solution' to capitalism's ills—familiar from the European experience in particular. From these excluded perspectives, the Accord was designed to achieve what it has in fact achieved, the reduction of real wages and the neglect of the welfare population and the reliance on recovery on increasing profitability in the private sector. These views include at one pole, those who advocate a simple return to wage pressure by those groups strong enough to do it, but at the other a full implementation tactic are by no means confined to this particular wing. However, all are equally poor. Beyond the pole, by the formulation here, which simply assumes in advance the tactic that discussion will arise at.

9. The need to further develop the labour movement's Accord strategy through which labour can effectively intervene in the production side as well as distribution, on the social wage as well as the industrial wage, and on economic and industry planning and industrial democracy as well as immediate work-place concerns.

10. This further emphasizes the 'all implementation' strategy, and leaves no room for those who are dubious about the present achievements, and quite the likely potential, of the kinds of 'intervention' mentioned. Once again, the outcome of the discussion is assumed.
7. The need for more resolute education and action to overcome the social disadvantages of women and the attitude which in extreme forms give rise to discrimination against them.

7. While this formulation agrees with those who see the problem simply in terms of a more equal participation of women in the structure of existing society, it ignores those views which—whether from a socialist or a radical feminist perspective—stress the inherent limitations on the progress possible inside existing structures, and the need for a strategy going beyond them.

We cannot expect disagreement on final perspectives to disappear in such a conference, but it should not be impossible—given good will all around—to arrive at plans of action which take all views into account. But this will not occur if a significant body of opinion is simply washed away.

8. The re-emergence of racism, coupled with cutbacks on already-limited services for the specific needs of migrant workers and ethnic minorities. These threaten the fragile concept and practice of multiculturalism, with its goal of equal opportunities for migrant workers and ethnic minorities to fully participate in Australian society and to maintain and develop their own cultures and language. In point (7), the formulation here implicitly denies the relevance of a strategy consistent with goals of more far-reaching social change.

9. Growing concentration of private media ownership and control, and the harmful consequences of this for democratic discussion of social issues.

9. This seems to have been the concern of those who would not agree that the main concern here should be the growth in concentration of power in one person who would, for example, be critical of the inherent structure of communications in this society and advocate a strategy aimed at countering it, rather than one designed simply to prevent it from becoming even worse. This is by no means just a question of analysis unrelated to action; the "Community Communications" movement in the U.S.A., for example, has ideas and practice to offer here.

10. Increasing multinational and national pressures to cut back the public sector at Federal, State and Local levels, and to privatise services, such as Telecom, TAA and the Commonwealth Bank.

10. The views overheard here include those of those who would query, not just the correctness but also the tactical prospects, of a campaign aimed at defending the public sector, in its present form and functioning, against privatisation. Many would deny the utility of such a campaign, if not integrated with demands for changes needed, that is, for a "public sector" more of a reality—by attracting, for example, the present constraints that require it to serve the private sector.

11. The co-ordinated and widespread assault on education as a basis for collective and organisational strategies that diminish the education and job prospects of the poor and the underprivileged, and the need for a strategy that successfully combats this assault.

11. This again sketches out a defence of existing structures, this time within the redefinition here, and ignores the significant body of opinion critical of these structures and dubious of tactics that implicitly accept them.

12. The growing need for discussion and action towards a society which provides adequate material wellbeing to all while consuming the environment and resources for further generations.

12. The confinement of goals to material well-being, and the "sacrificing" of non-material goals to further the former, give short shrift to those who would argue that basically different perspectives must now be on the agenda. These would include, for instance, those who lay primary stress on quality of life, or contest the validity of consumerist values. The "conservation" outlook is seen as fundamentally flawed by such schools as the social ecologists, who criticise an "unnaturally designed and perverted to the foreseeable future" natural ECological practice based on the "domination of nature". Surely such contributions from the ecological movement should not be ruled out in advance.

13. And, finally, the increasingly tense and dangerous international situation which affects domestic issues and Australia's future.

13. By focussing on the "increasingly tense and dangerous" developments, this formulation now follows media practice in presenting the threat to humanity's future in terms of newsworthy items (summits, agreements, the latest weapon, etcetera). Other views locate the danger rather in the steady and unacceptably build-up in species destroying weapons stockpiles, and in the accepted criteria and nation-state behaviour, which between them create the conditions needed for catastrophe sooner or later, irrespective of the current headline situation.

To sum up, it seems that we must agree: the Statement cannot be considered a suitable document for the launching of a broad left conference, as it is in fact reflects a too-specific and unsustainably narrow complex of views on the major issues, and thus excludes bodies of left thought which are entitled to representation.

Please note that we should not be taken as necessarily advocating, either collectively or individually, the alternative views that we draw attention to. We are in agreement, however, that—like the school represented in the draft statement—they are views which constitute a valid part of left-wing thought, and ones which should be represented in a conference of the breadth required by the present urgent situation.

We have much sympathy with the aim of at least minimising the operations of "failing parties" from gaining a foothold in established political life, as they believe, of the complete truth, and thus having little or no incentive to engage in genuine discussion. However, to make this an "ever-riding" consideration would be, we believe, to vitiate the search for balance and breadth. We therefore welcome the proposals in your letter for expiation of the sponsor list.

We would like to mention another circumstance which seems disturbing the timing of the proposed Conference to coincide with that of the previously announced "Life" ("Getting Together") Conference of environmental groups and individuals. Although we know of no reason to believe this to be other than an unfortunate coincidence, we would like to know if mutually-agreed timetabling moves (with, perhaps, some joint sessions) have been made, or are under consideration, to minimise the damage from this de facto splitting of the radical movement.

If in fact the joint sponsors agree that, to achieve the breadth desired for the conference, the statement be retracted so as to be less confined to the expression of one set of views, we would be glad to associate ourselves with this badly-needed venture. An alternative would perhaps be to make precise the actual function of the draft statement, and clarify whether it is really intended to rule out of order views which do not fall within its other narrow range.

The Statement in the first brochure has been amended to take account of points raised in this article.

Women and the Broad Left Conference

By Sue Jackson and Anna Koikis-Vos (Victoria)

A National Broad Left Conference will be held in Sydney over the Easter long weekend. The Conference aims to provide a forum for broad left to discuss effective responses to current Australian political developments and to the vital
issues of the 1980s and 1990s. This paper is intended to raise issues for discussion at the women’s meeting to discuss the Conference in February 1985. It is not an attempt to raise all issues, but we hope it will help in generating discussion as part of a number of pre-Conference discussions taking place.

The Conference will take place in the context of a number of developments in Australian politics:

1. The New Right
In recent years we have seen the emergence of a more extreme and ideologically confident right wing which has launched a new offensive against labour and progressive movements designed to roll back gains made by unions, Aborigines, women, migrants, the gay community, and other progressive social movements. The influence of the new right can be seen in the push for privatisation of community assets and for deregulation of financial institutions. Both of these have massive implications for the economy and for the distribution of wealth within it. On other fronts the new right is active in the re-emergence of old debates around the family and the push towards a greater emphasis on the primacy of the family. The new right has managed to influence not only conservative politicians, but also many in the Labor Party, and has, in many areas, been able to determine the political agenda in Australia.

2. Labor Governments
Labor Governments at both State and Federal levels have significantly changed the nature of political dynamics. The Hawke and Keating leadership has resulted in a shift to the right of the ALP in both the parliamentary and political wings. The question of how to relate to Labor Governments in power has been a major preoccupation and a major source of disagreement within the left.

3. The State of The Left
The left in Australia is at an all-time low. During the last twenty years the left has experienced numerous differences which have ideological, politically, socially and culturally divided the movement into an array of factions and factional groupings. In the meantime we have seen the development of the women’s and other movements outside the traditional left and labour movement. Despite numerous gains the left has maintained an ideologi-cal grip on the political, socio-economic, and cultural life of Australia. Meanwhile, the left’s ability to mobilise and impact on Australian political developments has been hampered by its own internal crisis and its inability to come to grips with how to respond to Labor Governments in power.

Some may question the value of the Conference to women. Too often in the past the left has appeared as male-dominated, preoccupied with exclusively male concerns and issues; and willing to relegiate women to a secondary role both in terms of theory and practice. The critiques and challenges posed by the women’s movement have not been adequately addressed and the left has often insisted on fitting women into concepts, approaches and structures based on male experience. The left has traditionally been most active in the organised labour movement and around predominantly workplace issues. It is important to recognise that many women are outside the workplace and outside the organised labour movement and that new organisational methods are required to mobilise women. Along with the focus on workplace issues has gone a neglect of the areas of so-called private life, the family and sexuality. Progressive mobilisation around these issues is crucial to the building of socialism, especially the kind of socialism which women would want to see.

We believe that it is important that women have a strong presence at the Broad Left Conference because:
• It is expected that some 1000 people from around Australia will participate in the Conference and it is a good opportunity for women to play an active role in raising the concerns of socialist feminists.
• Many of our demands cannot be achieved in isolation from the labour movement generally.
• Isolation from the Labour movement results in women’s issues being continually marginalised.
• Some gains have been made within the left around women’s issues. This is part of that continuous process.
• With the left in such turmoil there is a real opportunity for women to have an input into the form a revitalised left will take. There is the chance to influence the future theoretical direction of the left and to challenge some of the more traditional concepts, assumptions, structures and methods.
• The new emergence of the right poses the very real question of how we fight back.

A meeting has been arranged to allow women to discuss the pros and cons of participating in the Conference and the form that participation should take for maximum effectiveness. We urge all interested women to attend this meeting.

The meeting to discuss women’s movement in the broad left Conference will be held on Saturday, 15th February, 2-5 p.m., 32 Budd Street, Collingwood. Contact Louise Connor on (062) 3799 (w) N.E.R. Women who have already decided to attend the Conference should register as soon as possible as numbers may be limited. It may also be wise to start thinking about travel arrangements as transport will be heavily booked at Easter.
The New Right: Hysteira and Reality
by Tricia Carwell (Victoria)

One of the aims of the Broad Left Conference is to address the issues surrounding "the emergence of a more extreme and ideologically confident right wing." We should be thoroughly aware that this is a very significant responsibility, not because of the rise of John Howard, his rhetoric and the possibility that he may be our next Prime Minister, but because many, who would sincerely identify with the Left, are moving into ideological territory occupied by self-confessed conservatives. All our Labor governments in their day to day policies and economics, are doing so without any regard for the thorough thinking about social change. How it happens, what our goals are, what might be done now. The race to deregulation, uranium mining, the containment of trade unions at the level of corporate, high level negotiations and by anti-union legislation make it difficult to believe that democratising the economy is on the agenda at all. There has been little achievement for women, in the economy and workforce, in power positions, in issues of child rearing and the culture generally.

There are good reasons for Labor's caution and there have been real steps forward. From a trinitarian perspective, gains have been made for the intervention of unions in the business of industry and enterprise. Strategies for social and economic justice the simplistic and reactive effs of Labor governments remain all being solidified. With real and effective strategies much more important and effective initiatives could be successful.

Meanwhile, real progress is steadily being made by the right. Underneath the rabid anti-worker rhetoric lies the much more effective rhetoric of (1) new management and work practices aimed at restructuring industry and destabilising unions. These changes have been happening for some time. They will lead to the undermining of current living standards and the real effectiveness of Trade Unions unless counter strategies are developed. (2) New Right philosophy denigrates the role played by socialism, and sees the authoritarian, monetarism and privatisation of Reagan and Thatcher to shift the debates to the right.

(3) This ideology reclaims the family as the basic unit for welfare justice, so pressing for less state intervention and more women at the kitchen sink.

(4) The Right's refurbished think tanks in universities and corporations extends the demands for competitive, private enterprise as the way out of some of capital's conundrums. Let's not be fooled by the victory of the South Australian Labor Party over the conservatives' privatisation packages. Much privatisation continues to be achieved.

(5) The fury of deregulation should also be mentioned. Internationally deregulation is not a question of no state regulation, of the pure free play of market forces. It is a matter of regulation in whose interests and by what means. The American economy is well and truly regulated in the interests of its own capital, at least the winning fraction of it.

These few brief points are not indications of despair. The right is absolutely divided in terms of strategy and Labor governments have not been totally identified with occupying the middle conservative ground. As I've said there has been progress, it's analyse, strategy and unity which we need to get the most out of these Labor governments, whilst looking elsewhere for more profound insights into how we are to change the world in the longer term.

Socialism and Survival
by John Wishart (South Australia)

Building a more effective Australian left, in part, expanding our numerical base by involving progressive people who, whilst anti-capitalist in their basic attitudes, do not presently see the relevance or identity with the socialist movement.

Of particular importance is the growing number of people concerned about environmental issues who believe that radical change to our economic and social system is necessary if an ecologically sustainable society is to be secured.

Many environmentalists have displayed an arrogant, dismissive attitude to those who raise ecological issues, especially where these challenge some of the environmentalists' views. Environmentalists have been variously labelled as lettuce eaters, middle class radicals, hippies and doomdayers. There are parallels here with the reaction which males first gave to feminists who were exploring new and challenging perspectives 10 or 15 years ago.

It is certainly true that many environmentalists need to learn about the socialist movement, about class and how power is wielded under capitalism, but it is equally true that socialists need to learn much more about nature and how the current way we produce things and often what we produce are extremely destructive of the environment.

There is no need for socialist values to be in conflict with ecological values, and in fact, the potential for an alliance between the two is great.

WHY?
First, because it is not possible to secure an environmentally sustainable society without socialism — the drive to private accumulation through profit making — is destructive not just for people but for all living things. For example, the woodchip industry and its jobs from the timber industry and destroys forest cover introducing wood diseases, and causing soil erosion on a big scale. Or, the substitution of advanced and centralised methods of power generation eliminates jobs, erodes workers' control and causes large scale problems of thermal and chemical pollution. (Modern coal and nuclear power)

Profit is placed before people and the environment. The multinational company is unconcerned about the earth, the sea and the air. They are seen as resources to be exploited just as human beings are seen as a cost of production to be managed. Whilst the profit motive remains a central dynamic of our system the environment will suffer seriously. Individual material self-interest is the antithesis of a mutually supportive community of people and other things in which the health and viability of the whole are paramount.

To date socialists have concentrated more on how capitalism exploits people than nature, partly because until 20 or 30 years ago the effects on nature were not as clear and the effects on workers were very stark indeed. But there is more to it than this. Along with the capitalists, many socialists have also subscribed to the idea of 'man conquering nature'. They have abhorred the domination which capital exercised over people. But have embraced the idea that property is to be found by
human domination over the natural world to serve perceived human material and social interests.

Environmentalists have also taken the analysis of the profit motive further in focusing on the question of growth which is also a key objective of capitalism. They have called into question the growth ethic, and the rationality of any as an organizing principle of the food chain. After growth cannot be limitless for our material world is finite. As a global human community we cannot expand indefinitely. There are only so many minerals, so much oxygen, so many fish in the sea, and so on 50 or 30 years ago the natural resources of the world seemed so vast as to be almost limitless. But it is now clear that we are reaching some critical limits, and that time will be reached in the next 50 years.

To mention a few examples:
(a) we are burning non-renewable fossil fuel - stored energy - so fast that the earth's atmosphere cannot cope with the resultant thermal and chemical pollution. Hence acid rain is now an enormous issue in Europe and Canada, destroying large forests and lakes. The climate of the world may also be significantly altered with devastating effects on agriculture - making the recent East African famines these curtain raisers to Pacific mass starvation.
(b) High technology food production, employing large-scale, amalgamated fertilisers, weedicides and pesticides and monocultural cropping and grazing is causing significant problems of soil erosion, desertification, river salinity and the poisoning of the food chain. After damaging the lands of the first and second worlds, we are busily folloing these irrational farming practices on third world countries, thereby destroying their cultures, impoverishing the people and raising their lands which they had so carefully cared for for thousands of years. Leading the charge is the agro-business multi-nationals and the financial moguls from the World Bank and the IMF who reap great profits from this kind of economic "development".

SECONDLY, it is not possible to establish worker and community control over and capitalism.

Capitalism robs people of power over their immediate life and work. Socialists have analysed extensively how decision making in industry is made by management without workers having any real say. Workers neither own the fruits of their labour nor control the work process itself.

Ecologists share this concern and its application in modern industry with such things as de-skilling of crafts and trade, and the centralisation of technical knowledge and innovation remote from the workplace.

Like the young Marx, radical environmentalists have re-visited the issue of alienation both from work and in social life. Capitalism, in its drive to specialisation and this development of passive consumerism, has gone a long way in destroying the sense of community and control over material objects and surroundings which many civilisations treasured. Although environmental innovations have in some ways freed people for leisure time activities and increased the body of possible use to the mass of the people, it has also made us dependent on outside agencies whose services now are consumed by the commercial exchange. The motor car is an outstanding example - now so complicated and expensive that most people are unable to maintain the vehicles themselves. Dependent on the motor car for transport to work and social activities they are at the same time dependent on the motor industry to "save the" mass society. The machine is big. (Of course the other negative aspects of cars on the environment have been frequently mentioned.)

THIRDLY, the ecological view is global and the socialist perspective is international.

Although there has been a tendency within the socialist movement to resort to nationalism and the idea of industrial development in one country, there is a long tradition of international solidarity among peoples and states against the capitalist imperialism. Radical ecologists are also aware of these things, believing that current problems of the third world is due to the international economic order and that greater equality across nations is not possible unless big changes occur in the distribution of power and wealth between the so-called "developed" and "underdeveloped" nations. Quotas of equity born perhaps whether it be over the use of minerals, food or technology. The vast inequalities are only possible where multi-national capital engages in super-exploitation of third world peoples.

Of course, at times there is a certain "communism of interest" between workers/consumers in the west and their capitalist lords at the expense of third world peoples. There is a real problem here, but Australian socialists need not be defensive about this or re-tread into economic nationalism. For the longer term there is a common interest of interests between the classes of the developed countries on this score. Super-exploitation and unbridled environmental degradation such as the current destruction of the South American forests will rebound on us all in time permanently changing the ecological balance on a global scale and leading to dislocation across national and geographical boundaries.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to outline a few basic areas of convergence between the socialist movement and the radical ecology movement whilst also indicating where environmentalists have developed the analysis further. These areas and others can be used as bridges to effect greater left unity provided that both movements listen and learn from each other.

Socialist countries such as the USSR, China and Cuba have achieved much in liberating their peoples from social and economic systems which meant grinding poverty and personal insecurity. But on the environmental front their track record is more far less. Many environmentalists, seeing these flaws, have concluded that socialism is incompatible with survival and sustainability. There is another interpretation - namely that socialism is necessary but not sufficient or the creation of a sustainable society.

There is no point in the working class coming to power if we then proceed to destroy the world around us, but there is no way that we can establish a sustainable steady state economy under capitalism. As one comrade put it, "We want a socialist society with a human face and an ecological heart".

Environmental Issues and the Broad Left Conference

by Jonathan Goodfield (Victoria)

For many activists working in the environmental and anti-nuclear movements, the Broad Left Conference will provide some focus both for much-needed evaluation of their priorities and actions within the framework of the concerns of the traditional left and other social change movements, and for discussion of the differences that exist between the movements in terms of political practice and theory. This interaction will hopefully improve understanding and communication between activists working in different areas, and help develop a broader perspective in our work.
Improving practical cooperation between all sections of the Progressive movement should be the chief focus of the Conference

by David Ross (Newcastle)

Agreement on action around issues will work to ideologically unite. Conversely, attempts to impose or unify the widely diverse philosophies of the progressive movements through ideological debates in large conferences in my experience is divisive, and should be avoided. The idea for workshops is good, and will allow for more specific exchanges of experience and new ideas. However, the degree of the workshop’s success will depend on well thought through proposals that are realistic in the immediate, transitional and long term sense. Lengthy re-statements of how bad capitalism is, and generalised extrapolations to ‘unite the working class’ for capitalism’s inevitable overthrow, only underline the political impotence of the left.

The conference should be a starting point for national co-ordination and expansion of successful strategies already developed in particular movements and in particular local areas and regions.

A major concern for me however is how we can raise our own level of political understanding of the divisive class nature of the consumer state, whose given answer to Australia’s (or the world’s for that matter) economic and social problems is to fog off faster our replaceable natural resources, usually in the most ecologically irresponsible manner. Unfortunately the consumerist values underlying this mentality are deeply implanted in the working class in our country. I believe a similar values dilemma makes work and well in the socialist based economies, from 29 to 68 years after their revolutions.

Two results of this dilemma are firstly, mass precapitation and competition in the acquisition of the unnecessary, and secondly mass non-participation in the main political processes that determine the quality and nature of our society. The ‘Greens’ in West Germany have had some success in attempting to tackle this complex question. They have shown the potential of mass support for a more self-sufficient, socially and environmentally equitable society. Other small examples abound in many countries, including Australia.

If there is to be a future for socialism in Australia, and for this planet’s human survival, we must discard one-dimensional strategies that on one hand ignore the class nature of political power, or on the other, ignore the fact that we are all on a rapidly depleting single survival system: earth.

Unions and the Broad Left Conference

by George Kolovas (Victoria)

The situation in Victoria is that in my opinion the Trade Unions are developing a more individualistic approach and forgetting the dictum of the trade union movement that ‘unity is strength’. As a younger participant in the Trade Union movement I am often difficult to find the balance of the Old and New Guard. I respect the old traditions, but also find some real benefit in some propositions put by the New Guard. We must accept discussion on all issues and not simply reject proposals which have not been assessed.

Also there is the dream some people have of competing against other unions for something better to their union alone. In many cases this means forgetting the rest. This, in effect is supporting capitalist competition, and does not score any points in the left.

For the Broad Left Conference to be successful there must be an aversion of political groupings and trade unions. Representation at the Conference should be from all parts of the left spectrum. However I am hopeful on the basis of comments from comrades that this conference will be truly representative.
between the Labor Party and the ACTU and does not include the employers. This conclusion is seized upon by the Trotskyists and other sectarian left forces. The Accord was first adopted unanimously at a meeting of trade union activists open to all Left forces held in Melbourne in February, 1983. The conclusion that this must be drawn is that the organised Left was involved in regarding the Accord as a document providing the best possibility for developing the class struggle in the particular circumstances now prevailing in Australia.

The Accord is a wide-ranging document which covers essential questions such as the maintenance of the real value of wages, the improvement of the workers’ economic conditions in accordance with increased productivity, the reduction of inequality of incomes to benefit the lower and middle income earners, the introduction of an income policy by the government which aims at tackling the serious unemployment problem, improvements in social service standards and the social wage.

It should be remembered that for two years prior to the Accord being introduced, centralised wage fixing had been abandoned under the Fraser Government policy.

For that period of time there existed an opportunity in practice to test the view held by some that workers who were still best served were best able to bring about improvements outside of any centralised system.

The facts are that during that period the average worker was better off in real terms by almost 10%.

That part of the gross domestic product going to employers was increased to the highest percentage for some 20 years and the overall numbers of people living on amounts less than the agreed-upon poverty level increased dramatically.

A basic job-related trade union policy is to undertake the whole trade union movement in national wage campaigns which benefit the workers, more of whom are now organised in the economically well-placed industries.

Extending and extending the immediate interests of the workers by means of the Accord and other processes while also consistently campaigning for the socialist objective of the Australian labour movement is fully in line with the long-term interests of trade unionists.

In the period since the Accord came into being, there have been four national wage increases which with one exception have applied to all workers.

In November 1984, the first taxation reform was introduced which meant an average of about eight dollars per week in income for the average worker.

Pensions and other social service payments were also adjusted with changes in the costs of living figures and each six months’ pensions have been increased in accordance with the inflation figures. However more needs to be done by the trade union movement to assist the Pensioner movement in the campaign to lift pensions to 25% of the average weekly wage.

Industry Committees have been established with trade union participation with the aim of directing government policies in the range of industries. An additional 500,000 jobs had been achieved as a result.

The real issue for the Left is how to utilise the Accord in the ongoing class struggle. This requires of the left that it work more vigorously to assess those areas where the government has neglected its responsibilities established in the Accord, and develop united campaigns for its further realisation.

An example of this approach was the struggle by the Commonwealth Public Servants in early 1985 when they engaged in militant activities in support of their wages demands.

Another example is the campaign in support of the claim in October, 1985, that all wages be increased by 3.6% which were the then CPI figures.

The employers’ organisations bitterly opposed this claim when it was announced in Parliament attacking the Government for its support. The industrial strategies adopted by the employers despite the many high profit figures which were announced.

The employers were unable to defeat the combined efforts of the union movement and the Government and workers received the 3.6% rise, which meant a 10 to 12 dollars a week increase.

The Accord is also being used as a weapon in the campaign to win a 3% productivity rise in the form of improved systems and schemes.

While the Arbitration Court still maintains a basic employer class position it has been unable to prevent the trade union movement from extending wage gains to all workers through this centralised system.

The employing class are bitterly opposed to this policy and are seeking to again deregulate the wages system as a means of harming the unions.

The Accord has thus become an instrument to fight against this employer policy of wages deregulation.

No doubt some right-wing forces in the ALP would like to see the Accord used as a means of hamstringing the unions.

The question of whether right-wing forces can misuse the Accord depends upon how the left and millitant forces of the labour movement demand that the Accord be applied for positive policies and programmes in the workers’ interests.

Those in the Left who concentrate their attention upon the wages question alone when speaking or writing about the Accord are little better than the
economists who were subjected to trenchant criticism by Lenin in the earlier part of this century for trying to restrict the unions to narrow economic issues.

The inclusion of:
- The workers' struggle for job security.
- The miners' struggle against pit closures.
- The Victoria railway workers' struggle.
- The need for a broad-based industrial union movement.
- The need for a national campaigning to improve their job standards and preserve public health.

The existence of the Accord has not prevented the trade union movement from engaging in struggle against the employers or the Labor Government. It is the struggle against the broad-based Tax issue: opposition for entry of foreign banks; deregulation of financial institutions; removal of ceiling on interest on home loans.

The whole question of peace, the trade union movement is united and has engaged in considerable activities.

In the field of trade union rights in the struggle against repressive anti-union legislation there have been many struggles.

Reading some of the statements issued by the trade union leaders and secretaries, the impression could be gained that the Accord is the main enemy and all efforts must be directed at destroying the union movement and international solidarity.

We should remember that our society is a capitalist society, with the real power residing in the hands of monopoly whose policy is to crush the trade union movement and impose a programme of intensified exploitation upon working people.

One has only to look at the policies being carried out by reactionary circles in other capitalist countries to see the effect of these plans. In no other capitalist country has the working-class won four national wage increases in the past two years. This experience has shown that the trade union movement is existing that the Accord be applied does not work in the interests of the Australian workers.

The role of the left in these circumstances is to build the unity of the trade union movement to an even higher level, to stop arm's-length attempts to undermine the declared policy of the trade union movement to work in common with all forces in the trade union movement to see that the positive features of the Accord are carried out by the Government.

The Broad Left Conference: Strategies, Tactics and Action for Industrial Democracy and Social Responsibility

The Broad Left Conference: Why women should go and what they should do when they get there

Once again in history, it's difficult to map progress for women. On the one hand, questions of equality and rights have been tabled for the society as a whole. Most Australians, one guesses, have been in contact with parts of the debate. 38% of our workforce is women, and it's expected that more women will enter the workforce. On the other hand, women in Australia still earn only 60% of what men earn, on average. And the jobs they are entering are still the dreadful ones. The issues that go to the core of women's oppression are: (1) childbirth and childcare; (2) unpaid domestic labour; (3) the cultural predispositions that remain making women accept their lot and men paranoid about loss of power. feminists and socialists have tried to get together many times. The debates in the Russian revolution are not unlike those we continue to have. We have, however, not succeeded in integrating these central issues into the main arguments.
Socialist Feminism and the Broad Left Conference

By Jane Martin (NSW)

The Broad Left Conference presents an opportunity for Australia’s left to collectively evaluate its political analysis, practice and position as part of the left and in the above context.

Socialist feminists are politically active in the industrial sector, the public sector, the community welfare sector – paid and unpaid, as well as being active in the environmental movement, the anti-nuclear disarmament and peace movements, the feminist and gay movements, the struggle for racial equality, the trade union movement and the women’s liberation movement.

The intersections between these areas of work are both crucial and complex. By necessity we carry many contradictions in our work. Class, race and gender inequality often requires complex prioritizing of political objectives and strategies within the struggle for socialist change. Historical and contemporary economic and social factors and the intersections, consciousness and contradictions, between class, race and gender politics are fundamentally determinants in how we work at any given time, in any given campaign for socialist change. These contradictions, our political priorities and strategies, our position in the Australian international context, again need collective discussion and debate.

Socialist feminists have been both successful and very successful in developing political practice which reflects class, gender and race equality consciousness in the labour movement, the women’s liberation movement, etc.

We have made a huge impact on the ideological position of women in Australia and much less impact on the institutional-economic position of women in this country.

While women are the most marginalized group of workers in terms of their relative position re wages and conditions, women represent the most significant group of new members in the trade union movement.

Women’s employment is still subject to legalised, first fixed syndrome, wage egalitarianism still lags by 44%, the Federal Labor Government has recently instituted a savage attack on women’s right to work through its cuts to childcare funding and women’s economic dependence on men is institutionally bound by the ‘breadwinner ideology’ still fundamental in the social security and taxation system.

In Sydney and Melbourne socialist feminists are holding pre-conference discussions to ensure that our position is not marginalized at the Broad Left Conference. Other cities and regional centres are urged to do so also.

Sydney meeting of socialist feminists to be held on Saturday, 22nd February, 2.30 pm at the Inner City Education Centre, 37 Cavanagh Street, Stanmore. Please phone Jane Martin, 264 3966, for further details or if child care is required.

Melbourne meeting: Saturday, 15th February, 2.30 pm, 35 Budd Street, Collingwood. Please phone Louise 662 3799 (wk) for more information or if child care is required.

A Summary of the Paper – Left Strategies

By Max Bound and other Tasmanian sponsors

Five Tasmanian sponsors of the BLC have circulated a discussion paper to all National sponsors. The following is a summary of some ideas canvassed in the paper.

Inequalities will increase in Australia as living standards for low numbers deteriorate. Irresponsible increases in production accompany large scale destruction of food and other goods. Capacity to produce increases whilst the capacity of tens of millions throughout the world to gain access to essential needs are shrivelling. Resource destruction threatens present and future generations. These realities generate a need for more holistic approaches to developing strategies in the struggle for a human future.

An analysis which brings together the past, the present and the desired future in a way which is comprehensible to people involved in immediate struggles has not been adequately developed by the left. There is a need to bring together class and feminist analysis.

Rights and liberties are under increasing attack and the threat of a neo-fascist Holocaust looms over us all.

The effects of the destructive anti-social ideas of the ruling class are widespread, but in basic worker people are inherently humanistic and given a chance prefer to be co-operative and constructive. Progress is not inevitable and fascism could win.
Despite ever real problems workers and their unions have a potential to become the leading mass force in struggle for a future in which people control their own lives. Union support for social, economic, environmental and cultural movements, including equal rights for women in all aspects of society, and the peace movement are essential. Parliament is important, and increasing a left presence is essential — that real power resides elsewhere. The right controls the establishment and forces of coercion — economic, legal, social, propaganda, etc. The left needs must support, a mass movement, changes in mass consciousness and mass participation if the current destructive threats of economic and social life are to be turned in a more positive direction.

Given such changes, democracy would be strengthened and Parliament would be best subject to those who control capital and its establishment. For the left, cooperation and co-ordination are essential but there can also be strength in diversity. We should not seek to create a monolith. The contradiction between the need of the mainstream media to appear relatively unbiased and its essential part in the processes of controlling people's minds, needs to be understood and opportunities utilised.

People respond to a multitude of issues and the need to increase its importance to influencing those responses. A variety of different backgrounds and experiences affect responses. The experience is of a lifetime of exposure to indoctrination in the basic ideas and values of the ruling class.

Unconsciousness, even class consciousness, is often found among those who work with, or least react to the general public. However, socialist ideas frequently run in families. The family is often the positive humanistic aspects of the consciousness.

"Social ideas frequently exclude women from male union solidarity. Racial ideas and the complacency about the poverty and suffering of other people in Australia and in other countries exclude aboriginals and others from the concept of solidarity." The Australian worker union is not perfect but like others is a product of capitalist society. In general terms, the working class, accepting for those very highly paid sections of it, are less corrupted by capitalist ideas than other sections of society.

What we are concerned to raise here is the potential for co-operation between unionists and other exploited people; the underlying ideas or ideologies which are either held or hinder this co-operation... There are "soft edges" to ruling class control. The current attack on living standards and the expectations of large numbers of people needs to be met with rational explanation of how such cuts are harmful to the economy as well as to people. This explanation needs to be presented in the context of possible alternative approaches which challenge current orthodoxies. Unions should be encouraged to argue from the point of view of the public rather than only self interest.

"Action for social progress requires firstly the defence and advancement of workers interests as a class. These interests include centralised wage fixing rather than high wages for a minority and low wages for the majority; organised and those in non-strategic industries. Equal pay for equal work. Workers and union involvement in economic planning and decision-making. The Accord between the unions and the Federal Labor Government is an avenue which can help in furthering the struggles on these and other issues.

Secondly, the union movement has a responsibility to other people's movements and should help provide resources and an important mass base in other democratic movements..." Forward economic planning and making decisions about resources for domestic interests and other vital economic questions in a time framework which ensures union members to be consulted, are the constant. Workers participation which by-passes unions, leaves workers powerless, access to information and employee working capacity in terms of back-up resources and worker expertise. The above areas which are new to workers and unions, must be part of the processes of developing industry, commerce and the work place.

The paper points up the social aspects of unionism and its weaknesses and problems in the public sector are noted, as is the need for democratic structures. Supporters of capitalism malign and lie about the public sector and try to hide the fact that it props up an otherwise unsustainable system.

"Perhaps the greatest piece of manipulation and blather about the public sector is the inference that it is a costly appendage, with no real part in wealth production, it is the public sector which provides the services already mentioned, plus rail services, airports, post facilities, power, communication satellites and finds facilities for, as well as paying for, actual research on behalf of private enterprise. These services are with few exceptions, provided cheaply or for nothing and enable private enterprise to function.

It is not unusual that public enterprises cannot be profitable. Telecom is, despite its provision of services to uneconomic areas. The problem is that the public sector has been designated the role of unpaid or grossly underpaid nursemaid to private enterprise..."

Other questions discussed in the paper include — the causes of war, some issues facing the peace movement; the social audit concept, and the future of work.

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**A First Response**

**THE BROAD LEFT CONFERENCE: A FIRST RESPONSE**

by Jeff Richards, (South Australia)

This Conference is a welcome opportunity for us to discuss the current problems that confront socialists in Australia. We live in a time when the labour movement has made significant gains through the election of ALP governments, federally and in the states. The process by which we can extend those advances will be at the centre of all the debates and discussions leading up to and during the Conference.

**EXCLUDING AND INCLUDING**

At the meeting on Novemberiah 8 a heated discussion arose about whom we should include and exclude from the Conference. The idea of excluding anyone claiming to be a socialist presents more problems than it solves. If a member of the centre left is excluded from the Conference because he/she is called a right winger, or because they are a traitor to the labour movement, then we could find that such epithets thrown with frivolous abandon at many other comrades. It would be a tragic situation if the accusers suddenly found themselves the accused.

What if someone wrote to move a motion saying that all those who advocated a special wage for young people were nothing more than a pack of traitors to the young unemployed. One
might conceivably exclude conscripts to the left of the centre left. What if a motion were moved condemning all those who oppose the right to conscript women into the armed forces, and what other, more nothing than a bunch of imperialist war mongers bent on assassinating the continued subjugation of the people of South East Asia. One might even exclude those women who are to the left of the centre left. What if a motion were moved against all those who did not openly condemn the Banna Government's cynical abdication of its anti-uranium policy. What if someone in a foolish moment were to call for the exclusion of such people because they were just a withered bunch of left posers more interested in their positions than their principles. Such a struggle would go on endlessly and would waste our time. It would also be detrimental for us to exclude people on the left because of the fear of a 'takeover' or because they oppose the ALP ACTU Accord. One of the most important discussions at the conference was on the effect of the Accord to the socialist project. To exclude the participation of comrades who oppose the Accord would be to the detriment of the discussion. Providing comrades are willing to observe the proper rules of debate and discussion, then they should have the chance to put forward their point of view, before the Conference, during the Conference and after the Conference.

THE CONGRESS CALLS

The Congress calls on a quashing point for discussion. To insist that we file a formal document would negate the whole process of discussion leading up to the Easter weekend. It is necessary for us to be ready to go beyond the call in formulating a response to the ascendancy of an extreme right in Australian politics. Let me give an example of one point on the call that I feel is worth re-examination:

"The need to further develop the labour movement's Accord strategy through a united labor effort, on the production side as well as the distribution, on the social wage as well as the industrial wage, and on economic and industry planning and industrial democracy as well as immediate workplace campaigns.

Some Questions:
1. Does the "Accord strategy" need to be developed or does this need to be abandoned altogether?
2. Has the Accord allowed the working class to strengthen its position in society? Has it improved the overall standard of living? Has it increased labor's share of the national product?
3. Has the Accord strategy allowed unionists to fight for a "socialist wage"? Have the living and working conditions of women improved significantly under the Accord, or will it be necessary for women to escape the constraints of the Accord to increase their power and influence in society.
4. To what extent have the conditions of the unemployed improved under the "Accord strategy"? How involved have unions become in fighting for the interests of the unemployed since Labor won government federally? Unemployment and the threat of unemployment is the most important instrument that the ruling class uses to hold back the demands of workers under a liberal democracy. Yet it would seem that this is one of the most neglected issues in the labour movement.
5. Has the Accord allowed us to protect the trade union movement from attack? The conclusion of the Government and the ACTU is the destruction of the Builders' Laborers' Federation is one of the most scathing attacks on the history of the Australian labour movement. Why is the position of the Workers' Federation, if the days of "an injury to one is an injury to all". We ought to be asking ourselves if this "Accord strategy" has facilitated this conclusion. Similarly, the SEGB's dispute in Queensland and the rather heartless response of the union movement towards it should also come under our scrutiny.
6. Under the social wage also comes the standard of living of Aboriginal people, pensioners, newly arrived migrants from places such as Vietnam and Chile. Has the trade union movement been fighting for those people under the "strategy of the Accord."?

DISARMAMENT, IMPERIALISM AND AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

The participation of left in the peace movement is another area of discussion at the Conference. The peace movement has represented one of the greatest mobilizers of concerned people over the last few years, it is a forum from which we can openly put forward our ideas and convince people about our views without using takeover tactics and exclusion. One of the areas that many of us (myself included) have neglected to pursue the role Australia plays in the Western imperial descent in the Asia Pacific region.

Australia's military role in the Asia Pacific region is quite large. We provide military assistance to some of the most repressive dictatorships in South East Asia. We ought to be asking what economic and strategic interests Australia has in pursuing its present foreign policy. Just because the peace movement in its official policy does not agree to campaign against Australia's foreign policy does not mean that we in the left should neglect it. The elevation of the submarine project to a sacred cow in the South Australian election campaign and the silence of a large part of the left over it really lead us to ask if questions of expediency have completely overcome our political principles.

The victory of the right in Australian society will begin with the surrender of the forces of conservatism within our own ranks. Part of that surrender includes our failure to confront those forces openly and publicly. The paradox of exclusion of the various currents in the labour movement will be to facilitate that surrender. If we have got something to say, then let us say it openly and without fear. Leave all the police dogs in the labour movement to rot in hell.

The Need for Unified Action on Contemporary Issues
by Jack Coombes (New South Wales)

Radical workers often raise the point as to when the left are "... going to get their act together". It is a common expression that one hears. I believe that this comes from a feeling of concern as to the lack of a coherent left view on a range of topics to do with economic social, political, environmental and peace issues. I believe that those workers (plus others) will have an expectation that the Broad Left Conference will produce some concrete proposals as to the strategies around which all sections of the left can act together. They would see the Conference therefore as a unifying Conference for future action around specific issues and demands. Having said that I propose that an agenda item could be -

What are the concrete steps on contemporary issues is it possible for the Broad Left Conference to initiate.
Some thoughts on the Conference Program

by Jim Levy (New South Wales)

With reference to the program for the Broad Left Conference, I refer to the Sydney Morning Herald of November 15, 1985 which contains the following paragraph:

Average weekly ordinary time earnings for adults in full-time employment rose by 1.6 per cent in the September quarter, to $388.40.

A crisis of the Australian working class this does not make! Of course too many workers do not command these wages, but that is not the point. The fact is that for an enormous number of workers a crisis is always a crisis. It is a crisis that the mass of workers come to socialism as a result of these objective circumstances. A large number of activists did not come to socialism because of poverty, illiteracy, poor health, lack of opportunity, oppression. Rather, many have become socialists because of moral and ethical considerations. Our parents taught us to share, or the Church taught us to sacrifice. We learned that cooperation actually works.

Another problem, just how do we define the worker these days? Does worker mean a blue collar male working on the shop floor for a wage somewhere near $388 a week and in a union which protects him? Is the worker a migrant female taking in sewing at home with no knowledge of the union and movement and less interest in it? Am I a worker? Is it obvious that the growth of the service industries and the decline of manufacturing along with the considerable influence of Australian society, render easy definitions of worker and of working class very difficult.

What is the relationship between these observations? Briefly, Australian socialism must confront realistically the degree to which Australian capitalism has succeeded. It helps to explain why the socialist parties have lost membership, why it is difficult to sustain the ideological debates of the period 1930-1950. Memories of the Depression and the common front during WAA are fast fading as one generation replaces another. The relevance of socialism to Australian society is indeed open to question.

If we believe that objective circumstances are the basis for the development of socialist consciousness, then we must accept the fact that we are in for a hard time for failing to develop the mass movement, or even to stop the rot, it means accepting that fact that until or unless those objective circumstances change radically, socialism will remain irrelevant to most Australians. It means that we must hang in there doing what we can to achieve justice when and where possible, and to work hard on articulating a sensible vision of a socialist Australia so that when capitalism's crisis actually does create the objective circumstances, the movement is able to provide leadership. In order to hang in there and to be ready we must, above all, work to maintain socialism as a legitimate word in the Australian vocabulary. I am terrified that in the crisis fascism might well defeat socialism.

What about the program for the Conference? If we are to bring together the Broad Left, we must:

1. devote a panel or a workshop to analysing from a socialist perspective the successes of Australian capitalism;
2. devote a workshop to defining the socialist constituency and the worker;
3. devote a seminar or workshop to formulating proposals on how to get the message across, how to ensure that socialist remain a legitimate word in the Australian political lexicon.

Queensland Report

The Queensland Sub-Committee of the Broad Left Conference Sponsors and Supporters has met a number of times since Xmas. While the Conference has broad support in this State, the Sub-Committee feels that steps should be taken to ensure the support of a full range of individuals working in different areas of struggle throughout Queensland. To this end, individuals in the black community, the gay community, the environmental movement, the migrant community, the academic community, the progressive church groupings, the peace community, the Coalition for Democratic Rights/The Queensland School, the rural communicative groups in the professions, and the women's movement are being approached to participate in and support the Conference.

MARCH 8 SEMINAR

A seminar is to be held on Saturday 8th March, 1986, in order to compile a theme and agenda for Queensland contributions to the Y.B.L.C. It is not envisaged that Queensland (or any other State) attend the Y.B.L.C. as a bloc but rather as a grouping of individuals all working in different areas of left activities.

REGIONAL CENTRES

The Convening Committee suggests that interested persons in various centres could be brought together to form a group or organisation to facilitate participation by as broad a spectrum as possible. The Convening Committee is composed of Peter O'Brien, Wallace Tchorear, Garrett Purll, David Eteshansk, Don Brown, Judith Wischert.

The Getting Together Conference

The Getting Together Conference is to be held at the University of M.S.W. on the Easter weekend. Environmentalists, a number of sympathetic alternative lifestyle groups, and those representing Aboriginal land rights, gay rights, the women's movement are involved. It is hoped that effective exchange of participants and ideas will take place between the two Conferences. A combined social event is to be planned for the Saturday night.
THE BROAD LEFT CONFERENCE

Easter 1986

NSW Institute of Technology, Broadway, Ultimo, Sydney

(opposite Carlton Brewery, near Central Station)