

# The Socialist

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## U.S. & AUST—OUT OF THE GULF!

# NO WAR FOR OIL

### GEORGE BUSH claims to be fighting aggression in the Gulf.

It's a lie. The issue is oil.

George Bush is prepared to bomb and burn the cities and suburbs of Iraq to secure US control over the world's most important commodity.

He is planning to send hundreds of thousands of young men and women to face death and unspeakable injury to make his German and Japanese rivals even more dependent on US military might.

But this is nothing new. George Bush long ago proved his fondness for killing people to expand US power—first as a supporter of Richard Nixon; later as Ambassador to the United Nations and director of the CIA. It's the reason Reagan chose him as his running-mate in 1980.

The invasion of Panama to remove the former CIA agent, General Noriega, saw working class suburbs in Panama city bombed by the US and 4-7000 civilians brutally murdered.

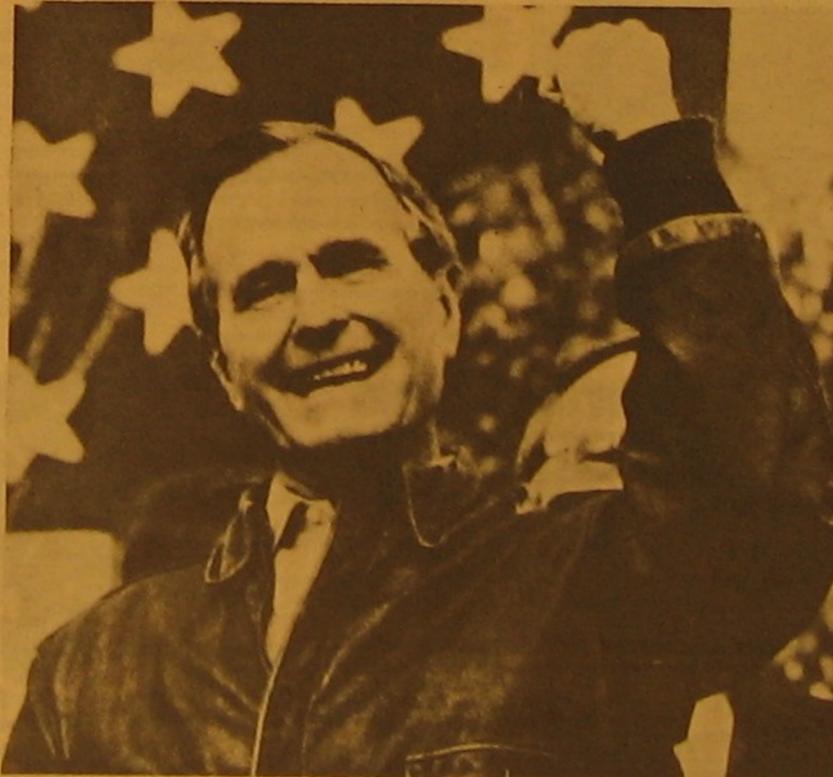
Even more importantly, the hypocritical campaign against Noriega as a "dangerous drug dealer" legitimised invading other countries within the US.

Today the cynical media campaign is aimed at another former US client whose brutality was never mentioned in the past.

According to Bush, personnel in America's Kuwait embassy were supposedly being "starved" by the Iraqis. Yet a mere 24 hours earlier, the Ambassador's wife had been interviewed on the *Today* show, saying that there was no problem and plenty of food.

Today, Bush denounces Saddam as "the new Hitler". But in 1966, the man who ran South Vietnam for the US was an *open admirer* of Hitler.

George Bush and Margaret Thatcher



have deliberately made demands on Iraq's Saddam that they know he cannot accept, because the last thing they want is for Iraq to withdraw unilaterally from Kuwait.

A leading right wing commentator called this a "nightmare scenario" for Bush because it "would kill the military option".

The Gulf crisis has shown up the hollow farce of Bush's "new world order" of peace.

The end of the Cold War has not meant the end of imperialist rivalries. Instead, the drift towards economic and political crisis in the East and the West presents us with a far more unstable and threatening world.

The system of imperialism remains, but the US is a decaying imperialism, armed to the teeth, lashing out to defend its position.

The Gulf crisis has only just begun. There will be far more savagery before it is, however temporarily, resolved.

And there will be far more and far worse crises until we organise to sweep away the whole system of competitive, exploitative capitalism, which continually creates such barbarities as oil wars, the US military and its leader, George Bush.

A defeat for the US invasion of the Gulf would be an excellent start.



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## If war breaks out...

## DEMONSTRATE

### MELBOURNE

Assemble City Square from 5.00pm on the day

### SYDNEY

Protest from 4.00pm onwards on the day at U.S. Consulate, Cnr Park and Elizabeth Sts, City.

### CANBERRA

Go directly to the Lodge to demonstrate on the day.

### BRISBANE

Assemble King George Square from 4.30pm onwards on the day

# U.S. & AUST OUT OF THE GULF! — U.S. & AUST OUT OF

## Teach-in debates Gulf

A TEACH-IN held on 14 October by Sydney's Bring the Frigates Home Coalition saw debate on many of the contentious issues surrounding the Gulf crisis.

FLO representative, Ali Karak, argued for an international peace conference with a central role for the United Nations.

Speakers from the floor responded that the history of the region since the founding of the racist state of Israel (with UN support) shows the UN has played a completely reactionary role.

There has been much talk of peace conferences and negotiated settlements but it has been struggle like the *intifada* that has taken the cause of the Palestinians forward. The UN has done nothing to defend Palestinian rights.

One participant argued that a military solution was 'possible and that the Australian left should be arguing for a political solution which is where the UN could play a role.

The real political alternative is clearly not the UN—the principal world bosses' forum—but the Arab masses. A peace settlement today can only be on George Bush's terms and a victory for him and American imperialism.

Rather than create illusions in the UN, the left can contribute to a real political solution by building a movement here which limits the options for the Australian ruling class.

That means concentrating on what our own rulers are doing, saying they and all other world powers have no role in the Middle East and should get out.

The Teach-in ended with a debate between ALP Senator Chris Schacht and Bob Howard from the ALP's foreign affairs committee, and Bob Springborg and Ghasan Hage arguing against Australian involvement.

Schacht attacked Saddam Hussein for "using force against his own people". So unlike Hawke dealing with the BLP?

Bob Springborg outlined how the US had consistently used the UN for its own purposes in the Middle East over the last ten years and compared the current situation with the Gulf of Tonkin, when the US fabricated an excuse to up its intervention in Vietnam.

Schacht claimed he had always been a supporter of the Kurds. No one could recall him arguing for an invasion of Turkey, or Iraq two years ago when the West was supporting its war against Iran.

—by Michael Thomson

FROM TOKYO to Paris, from New York to Sydney, the message on 20 October was the same: US out of the Gulf!

The International Day of Action was a great success with demonstrations in Sweden, Canada, England, Italy and Paris where 15,000 marched. The biggest action was in Tokyo where 23,000 protested against the proposal to send troops to the Gulf.

The most important development is the growth of the anti-war movement in the belly of the monster—the US.

In NEW YORK, seven reservists who have refused the army call-up led the demonstration of 15,000—swelled by Vietnam veterans.

There were protests in 14 other cities—1000 in San Francisco and hundreds in Boston, Atlanta, Cleveland, Los Angeles and Washington where 16 were arrested. They chanted "George Bush, read our lips, we're not boarding any ships".

And at a college near Chicago, Bush was heckled by students chanting "No Blood for Oil".

The opposition in the US has emerged at a much earlier stage than over Vietnam. It been built by a series of mass meetings—2000 in New York, 1700 in Berkeley—and mass teach-ins.

And it is drawing on a decade of opposition to US intervention in Central America.

Anti-war Vietnam veterans have

# From Tokyo to New York, the message was the same

issued an appeal to US troops being sent to the Gulf which points out the imperialist nature of the invasion, and shows how the big oil companies are benefiting from it.

The Coalition to Stop US Intervention in the Middle East, which issued the call for 20 October, demands immediate US withdrawal. It gives no support to the United Nations embargo or to US demands that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait.

The *New York Times* concluded, "The demonstrations suggest Washington cannot face war without creating opposition at home."

In AUSTRALIA, the biggest rally was in Sydney, where 600 people took to the streets in a lively rally and march, which sat down outside the Israeli Consulate to protest against the Temple Mount massacre.

Speakers included American priest Warren Sazami, Ken Rosenthorne from the Waterside Workers Federation and Palestinian Human Rights activist, Eddie Zamanin.

The highlight of the rally in BRISBANE was when Army Reserve Private, John Kemohan, in full military attire, joined the march.

John's protest, along with defections both in Australia and the



ABOVE: Protestors rally in Melbourne against US intervention in the Gulf and anti-Arab racism.

United States, shows that the bosses' war machine is not impregnable.

In MELBOURNE, the rally of 200 took up the question of anti-Arab racism. Recent outrages have included the fire-bombing of the Islamic College of Victoria, a burglary at the Coburg Mosque, the vandalism of the Springvale Islamic Centre as well as numerous individual attacks and death threats.

The march went through Brunswick and Coburg to Bob Hawke's electorate office, specifically to show solidarity with the large Middle-Eastern community in the area.

## A VICTIM OF THE WAR DRIVE

THE WEST'S drive to war in the Gulf has claimed its first Australian victim.

But he wasn't a sailor. Lebanese-born Ali Melhem was killed in his home in the Sydney suburb of Leumeah by a vicious campaign of racism.

Every night for over one and a half months, his small housing commission home was pelted with rocks and eggs, fires were lit underneath while windows were being smashed. The strain of having to stay awake every night to protect his family finally gave Ali Melhem a stroke and heart attack.

Now his wife, Hayat, and her eight children, have fled to find shelter with friends. Seven of the eight children are sleeping in one bed.

Thirteen year old Taleh Melhem received severe cuts and a severed Achilles tendon from one attack to the house.

Equally appalling was the reaction of the police and Housing Commission. Both did their best to ignore the attacks and the subsequent stress

on the victims and even tried to turn the blame around onto the family themselves.

In the words of fourteen year-old Younes Melhem, "The police think we did it because we want another house, but my Dad used to say it was because of the Gulf crisis."

The local cops even went so far as to threaten to charge Ali and Younes with Public Mischief, and to inform the Housing Commission so the Melhems would have to pay for the broken windows.

Dr Paul Burchett, family doctor and friend of the Melhem family, totally rejected the notion that the attacks were anything but an attempt to force them out of the area. He was at the house while stones were being thrown and saw all the family present in the room with him.

The Islamic Council takes it further. "The case of the Melhem family seems to be one of the more extreme and most tragic occurrences in this whole anti-Muslim syndrome".

Hawke's war mongering in the

Gulf has been the green light for the racists to strike. And the vultures in the Australian media have done their best to whip up an anti-Arab frenzy with their accusations of "sodality" and "calls for Arabs to be 'sent home'".

The last issue of *The Socialist* reported a vicious attack to the home of a Campbelltown councillor who supported the building of a mosque.

Now the racists have killed Ali Melhem. What lengths will they go to when the shooting starts?

—by Lindsay Munks

## Terry Jones

TERRY JONES, the sailor who refused to join the blockade in the Gulf, has been given a suspended 21-day detention sentence and a reduction in rank from leading seaman to seaman for being absent without leave from the HMAS *Adelaide*.

This was much less than most people expected.

Jones refused to join his ship when it left Perth, saying he was appalled when he saw Bush on TV, playing golf, and didn't want to kill innocent people in Arab countries.

The fact that he got a relatively light sentence indicates that the anti-Gulf war campaign, small as it is, does worry the Australian government.

—by Lesley Penrose

## Terrorists

LAST MONTH, three peace activists decided to present the US Consulate in Sydney with letters of protest at the arrest of Jeff Patterson, a US marine who refused to fight in the Gulf.

While they are waiting the guard at the Consulate put on his holster, complete with revolver and night stick.

The next minute a car screamed around the corner, stopped outside the Consulate and out jumped five armed Protective Services cops (who look after consulates). Next came a carload of NSW cops, including uniformed and Special Branch.

It is out of these ideas and struggles that a mass revolutionary movement and party will eventually be built.

If that's what you want to do, JOIN US!

The US has to be protected from peace activists!

# Is Bush's wild rhetoric the...

# Countdown to war?

THE WORLD is closer now to a major Imperialist war than it has been at any time since Vietnam.

As we go to press, the US Secretary of State, James Baker, has begun his tour of the Middle East and Europe to drum up support for a US strike against Iraq. This reflects a significant change in the fortunes of US imperialism.

For over a decade after 1975, the US avoided far less dangerous interventions. It did not invade small, ravaged Nicaragua when Somoza was overthrown in 1979.

This was the so-called "Vietnam syndrome"—the memory of military defeat, disintegration in the field, rebellion and economic crisis at home—that held warmongers like Ronald Reagan at bay.

For Bush to take his Gulf offensive, Reagan had to win a series of far more modest victories—to get away with the invasion of Grenada (far too small to threaten another "Vietnam"), the bombing of Libya, and sending a fleet to intervene in the last Gulf war (shooting down a civilian aeroplane and killing 256 people with impunity).

The defeat of the Sandinistas in the Nicaraguan elections was critical in shifting the political balance inside America as was the widespread approval of Bush's invasion of Panama.

A WHOLE section of the US ruling class is concerned about the possibility of a US defeat.

A recent issue of *Newsweek* devoted a major feature to the arguments for and against war. Those against fear that Iraq's troops have established strong, defensive positions in Kuwait which will lead to massive US casualties in any assault.

Beyond the actual conflict, they fear the consequences of generalised hatred of the US in the Middle East and the destabilisation of pro-US regimes.

Already there have been gigantic demonstrations—over 20,000 in Amman, 50,000 in Algeria, a major revolt in Syria that was put down by the army.

Nor do the bosses want a Middle East situation that would make it hard to cut the unsustainable defence budget.

Most importantly, they still fear rebellion at home—from anger at soldiers dying for the oil companies, anger at cuts to Medicare whilst there is unlimited money for war, anger at the recession the war drive has triggered off.

Already the mixture of economic crisis and war has seen Bush's popularity collapse—from 76% to 46% in just three months.

That potential for rebellion would be massively intensified if the US lost the shooting war.

The central task of socialists, therefore, has to be to work for a US and Australian defeat.

This point is clearly understood by the Palestinians who have staged a series of demonstrations in the Occupied Territories against the Western invasion.

In their first leaflet devoted to the Gulf crisis, issued on 15 August, the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (the *intifada*) considered its first task, over and above recognition of the right to self-determination, to be "to confront

the multinational forces" in Saudi Arabia who were "enforcing a military and economic siege on brother Iraq".

IT IS IMPORTANT, therefore, that we reject proposals within the anti-Gulf movement, to support the UN sanctions, demand "negotiations", a UN-sponsored settlement, and so on.

The UN sanctions—with or without the blockade—are an integral part of the drive by the world's great powers to impose their "peace" on a turbulent region of oppressed peoples.

Sanctions are not a "peaceful" alternative to Bush's war; they legitimise Bush's war rhetoric about "Iraq aggression" and "Kuwait sovereignty" by implicitly accepting that Iraq's actions are a major part of the problem.

They are not, Iraq's annexation of Kuwait is insignificant compared

with the extraordinary imperialist invasion of the region. To in any way compare the two is to shield the great powers from the enormity of their domination and their crimes.

Where this leads you can be seen by the proposition argued in *Direct Action*, that

If the Saudi Arabian monarchy really fears that this [Western withdrawal] would allow Saddam Hussein to attack it, a joint Arab military force could remain on the Saudi-Iraqi border... [or] a United Nations peace-keeping force...

What an extraordinary day it is when a left wing paper plans the military defence of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia from its neighbours—kindly offering the lives of Arab

soldiers from other countries, and implying that it would be OK for Mubarak (who heads by far the biggest Arab country) to be the region's arbiter.

Neither is there anything progressive in the call for a negotiated settlement.

It implies that the US and Australia have some right to discuss what happens in the Middle East. They do not. The only role we should demand is that they get out now.

Anyway, the only basis on which the US is prepared to negotiate at the moment is one that gives it everything it hopes to gain through war.

So if Saddam were tomorrow to

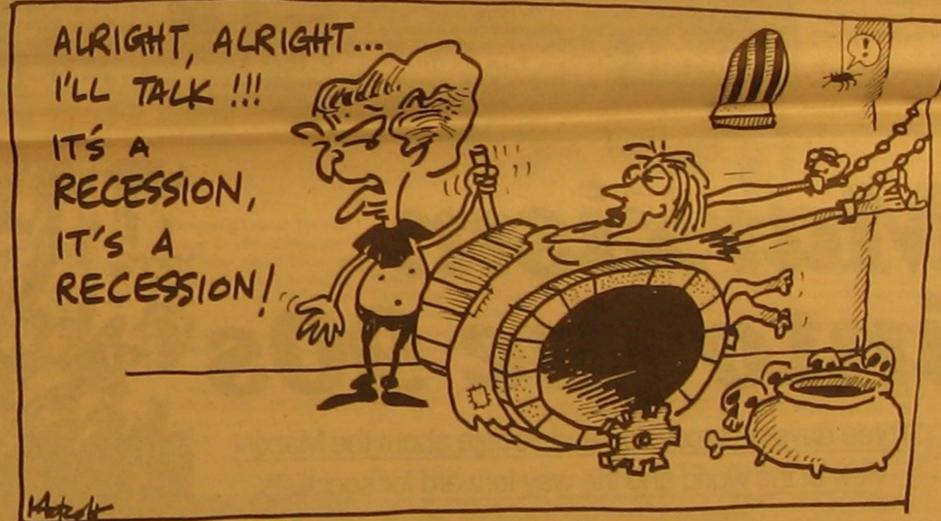
"negotiate" with the US, it would be from a position of weakness. It would be the kind of "negotiation" you have when someone points a gun at your head.

Any political settlement without a US defeat will only enshrine further oppression for the people of the region.

This does not mean we want a war—we would prefer Bush to be forced to back off, that the US were beaten by rebellion in the region and the anti-war movements at home.

But it does mean that if a war comes, we want to see the world's most powerful and brutal thugs beaten.

—by Phil Griffiths



## International Socialist Organisation

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**BRISBANE**  
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**HOBART**  
Write to: GPO Box 1896,  
Hobart, 7001.

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

### SOCIALISM

Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need.

Although workers create society's wealth they have no control over production or distribution.

We stand for socialism, the creation of a society in which the workers will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

Countries like Russia, China and Cuba are not socialist. Workers under these state capitalist regimes also face the task of building their own revolutionary movement to smash the system and take control into their own hands.

### WORKERS' POWER

Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and war.

Liberation can only be won

through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other classes and fighting for real workers' power—a new kind of state based on democratically-elected workers' councils.

### REVOLUTION, NOT REFORMISM

Socialism cannot be created by gradual reforms as seen in the Labor Party believes. The capitalist state—parliament, the military, the law—is a weapon of class rule and must be smashed. There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

### INTERNATIONALISM

The working class exists in all countries and the struggle for socialism knows no national boundaries. We are for building an international movement organising to overcome national divisions between workers.

Socialism cannot be built in a single country; socialist

revolutions must be spread if they are to survive.

We oppose imperialism, East and West, and support all national liberation struggles against imperialist domination.

Australia is not an oppressed country, but an imperialist power in its own right. This means we are opposed to Australian nationalism and immigration controls.

The threat of nuclear annihilation is a product of capitalism and only socialism can end it.

### LIBERATION FROM OPPRESSION

We fight for democratic rights and liberation. We are against the oppression of women, blacks, migrants and lesbians and gay men. All these forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. Combatting them is an essential part of building a united revolutionary struggle, that can create a socialist society free from oppression.



### REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

Crucial to a workers' movement smashing the capitalist state is a revolutionary workers' party built out of the day to day struggles around economic and political issues. We are taking the first steps towards building such a party.

Our task today is to argue for the ideas and traditions of revolutionary socialism, while fighting alongside militants and activists who are challenging the system.

It is out of these ideas and struggles that a mass revolutionary movement and party will eventually be built.

If that's what you want to do, JOIN US!

# Tim Anderson is innocent!

by  
George Petersen

TIM ANDERSON was convicted on 25 October on three counts of murder arising out of the Hilton bombing in 1978. The decision has profoundly shocked his supporters and legal circles in NSW.

Anderson has already served seven years in gaol because of an earlier police frame-up. When a judicial inquiry proved him and two fellow Ananda Marga members not guilty, they were pardoned and granted \$100,000 each as compensation.

The Crown case in the latest trial rested on two witnesses, Ray Denning—a convicted armed robber, and Evan Pederick—a former Ananda Marga member.

Denning's evidence was totally unconvincing. The jury was asked to believe that Anderson had confessed to him in prison that he, Tim, had perpetrated the Hilton bombing. The defence argued that Denning's motive in telling the story was to ingratiate himself with police and prison authorities.

Pederick said that he had planted the bomb at Anderson's instigation in a rubbish bin outside the Hilton early on 12 February, later using a remote control device to try to detonate the bomb, when Indian Prime Minister Moraji Desai arrived.

The device failed to work, but the bomb exploded when the rubbish bin was emptied the next morning, killing two workers and a policeman.

Pederick was sentenced to 20 years gaol for murder on the grounds of his evidence which, which did not carry up to

son received what passes for "a fair trial". He was represented by competent lawyers who shot the evidence of Denning and Pederick to ribbons.

The defence presented the facts. By contrast, the prosecution asked the jury to draw inferences from the evidence, and to disregard the inconsistencies, blaming these on Pederick's poor memory and the passage of time.

What went wrong? We can't know what motivated the jury. Most jury mem-

bers simply can't believe that police might lie or frame innocent people, a fact well known to criminals, lawyers and most political activists.

Undoubtedly, they were influenced by Pederick's confession to a crime for which he got 20 years gaol.

They did not believe defence evidence that, whenever a major crime is committed, police interview people with a psychopathic wish to confess to crimes they haven't committed. The jury could not credit that

Pederick may be just such a psychopath being used by the police. The defence will appeal against the verdict. It is possible that the Supreme Court will order a new trial.

But, it is also possible that, with all the hysteria produced by the use of the word "terrorism", that Tim will be left to rot in gaol.

Only a vigorous and public campaign can ensure that Tim's plight isn't buried by the legal system. The focus for this campaign is Tim's public defence committee, CEFTA (Campaign Exposing the Frame-up of Tim Anderson).

Their propaganda, effective as it is, has reached limited circles. The frame-up will certainly help restore the position of the various "anti-terrorist" units—the ones under pressure for killing David Gundy and shooting Darren Brennan. Clearly, the police framed Tim because he is a left activist, and particularly because he spoke out about police corruption and the prison system. The guilty verdict is a blow to all of us. Action is needed now to force an appeal. CEFTA meets regularly to plan a defence campaign with activities like public meetings, fundraisers and publications demonstrating Tim's innocence. Contact CEFTA on (02) 281 5100 for more information or expressions of support.

## Goodbye to the bosses' faithful mouthpiece

THE Melbourne Herald is dead—and it won't be missed. Some liberals mourn its passing as meaning "less choice" in news. They should hold the sympathy cards—The Herald was Victoria's main bastion of press monopoly and conservatism.

When a rival evening paper, The Star, started up in the 30s, The Herald simply told newsagents, "Sell it and you can't sell us." Since The Herald was their lifeblood, newsagents shunned The Star and it died within months.

Under its cloak of objectivity, The Herald was Victoria's main mouthpiece for the Libs. It even offered Liberal premier, Sir Henry Bolte, a seat on its board when he quit parliament.

The Herald helped Menzies' anti-communist witchhunt with articles by disaffected Communist Party official, Cecil Sharpley. It was so anti-worker that the ALP split that wharf-

The Herald used opinion polls as a new way to keep its mates in office. Every election eve, it ran a headline "Gallup: Libs to Win", based on marginal leads in the polls, to create a bandwagon for undecided voters. Years later Gallup Poll's Roy Morgan admitted "adjusting" the figures. When Malcolm Fraser

wanted a showdown with the unions, The Herald set its sights on the closed shop. Long-forgotten nobodies like Paul Krutulis, Frank Kane and Barbara Biggs who refused to join the union, got front-page treatment. Never was the old song, "Every scab's a hero in The Herald," more true!

When newspaper printers struck in 1975, The Herald led the counter-attack. Each day, Herald and Sun vans smashed through picket lines outside the Flinders Street fortress.

In 1971 when police laid into anti-South African rugby demonstrators, the cops were hammered in the press for bashing journalists. Only The Herald defended the indefensible.

When The Herald couldn't smear the left, it trivialised the issues. It ran the "bra-burning" cliché about Women's Liberation harder than anyone. When police arrested protesters at a Monash Uni sit-in, it focused on a pet possum that a student took

with her into the cells. While The Herald printed its news on the back of Myer advertisements, it reserved its serious columns for right-wing ideologues. Denis Warner had the run of the Herald's pages for a decade during the Vietnam war. The moralising Bishop Fox of Sale had his own column. Geoffrey Blainey inherited it after initiating his anti-Asian campaign. The Herald died from the market forces and conservatism it championed. It couldn't compete with evening TV news. The rundown of public transport cut its core readership of commuters. And its predictable reactionary line drove thousands to the more liberal Age.

We're not sad to see The Herald die. Our only regret is for those printers, journalists and news vendors whose unionisation isn't strong enough to make Rupert Murdoch keep paying them.

—by Alec Kahn



ANTI-UNION activist Barbara Biggs was one of the Herald's heroes.

# Marxism into the 90s

Three days of discussion and debate about the Marxist view of the world and the way forward for socialists

MELBOURNE: Fri 28—Mon 31 Dec

FOLLOWED BY A NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY TO REMEMBER!



## Imperialism Today

What does the end of the Cold War mean for the system of superpower rivalry? Has the US won and how will the Gulf conflict change things?

- ALSO
- The crisis in Russia today
  - The Gulf crisis
  - War and revolution
  - Kautsky

## HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

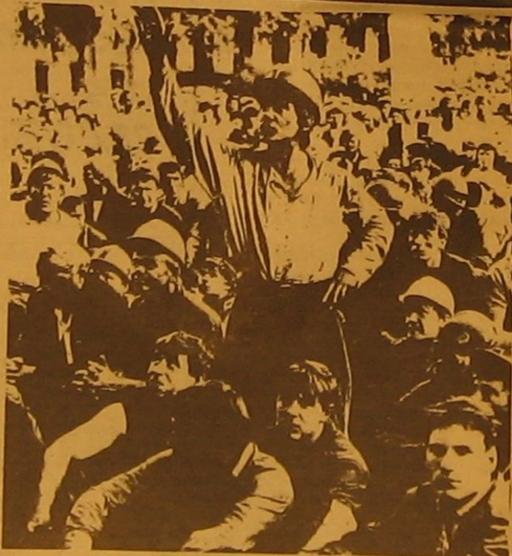
- Is the future feminist?
- The Green movement today
- An Introduction to Marxism—4 discussions on basic ideas
- Anthropomorphism, speciesism and animal liberation
- Post structuralism



## Can Castro survive?

Gorbachev has radically changed Soviet foreign policy. Can Castro escape the forces that have brought down other Stalinist regimes?

- ALSO
- Bukharin: Was he the alternative to Stalin?
  - The rise and fall of state capitalism
  - East Germany



## Class struggle today

A panel of leading militants drawing the lessons of the year's industrial struggles

- ALSO
- The Whitlam government
  - Australia and Japan
  - A new technological elite?

## Perspectives for socialists

Monday will see a major discussion of the past and future work of the ISO

## TO ATTEND:

Simply let us know by writing to GPO Box 1473N Melbourne, 3001 or contact your local ISO branch (list p 2).

There is a modest charge to cover our costs. Lunches are provided as is childcare—but you must let us know your requirements well in advance.

# Gorbachev and imperialism

## CAN ANYONE on the left still think Mikhail Gorbachev is a good bloke?

The latest shock to those who do was Russia's decision to back US intervention in the Gulf. Most ironic of all was the KGB's offer to swap intelligence about Iraq with the CIA.

But this is only the latest manifestation of foreign policy trends which bode ill for people fighting imperialism all over the Third World.

Take southern Africa. At the end of the 1980s Russia assumed the role of arbiter in working out an independence deal for Namibia. The settlement allowed the South African colonial administration to supervise the elections. They used their position to restrict SWAPO's access to the media and to allow the Kooivoet death squad and the Defence Forces to murder a number of SWAPO activists.

The settlement also mandated a withdrawal of Cuban troops. Combined with a cut in Soviet aid to Angola, this gave the South African-backed UNITA forces an opportunity to take the offensive against the Angolan government.

In South Africa itself, Moscow put heavy pressure on the ANC to do a deal with the apartheid regime. Last Yuri Yukalov of the Soviet foreign affairs ministry told the ANC's Oliver Tambo that he should renounce armed struggle lest "South Africa be destroyed".

The Moscow Circus plans to visit South Africa in December, and Soviet authorities refuse to stop it.

Africa in turn has become a model for Russian policy elsewhere, with the ambassador to Cuba saying last year that "to resolve the conflict in Central America, the same approach must be adopted as in southern Africa".

This wasn't just rhetoric. Two days after the Salvadoran rebels had called for a general insurrection in November 1989, Moscow demanded a halt to the fighting. And the Soviets have adopted an increasingly hostile attitude to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Their ambassador to Nicaragua told Moscow News in May this year that while past relations had been characterised by "friendship and solidarity", perestroika had "somewhat modified their character".

The Novosti Press Agency correspondent was more brutal, referring to the Sandinista revolution as a "coup", and insisting there was "nothing tragic" in the FSLN's election defeat earlier this year.

The pattern is similar around the world, from Vietnam where the Russians are renegeing on trade deals despite the continuing US blockade, to the Middle East where changing So-

viet policy has led the Israeli Communist paper *Zo Haderach* to support massive Jewish immigration from the USSR, even though it will be used to push ahead the Zionist colonisation of the West Bank.

The American ruling class is delighted. The new climate makes it easier for them to throw their weight around. Invading Panama became ever so much easier.

## STATE

Secretary of State Baker gloated that "both the United States and the Soviet Union today are supporting democracy. The difference is that the Soviet Union supports democracy by staying out of countries... In this one and very unique instance the United States did it by going in..."

Panama, in turn, paved the way for

the Gulf invasion. Of course these developments are no reason to long for the old days. When Stalin or Brezhnev gave assistance to third world movements it was always with cynical imperialist objectives in mind. The Kremlin was capable of cutting off the aid the minute Russian national interest required it, as happened with China in 1960, and it backed any number of murderous dictatorships even though they jailed and executed Communists.

The point is that in foreign as in domestic policy, Gorbachev's aims are not dictated by the interests of workers and peasants, but by the needs of the ruling bureaucracy he represents.

For ordinary people, both inside and outside the USSR, they are just as disastrous in their own way as the crimes of Stalin and Brezhnev.

—by Tom O'Lincoln

# NZ LABOUR DUMPED

A TWO-TERM Labour government has been well and truly dumped in New Zealand.

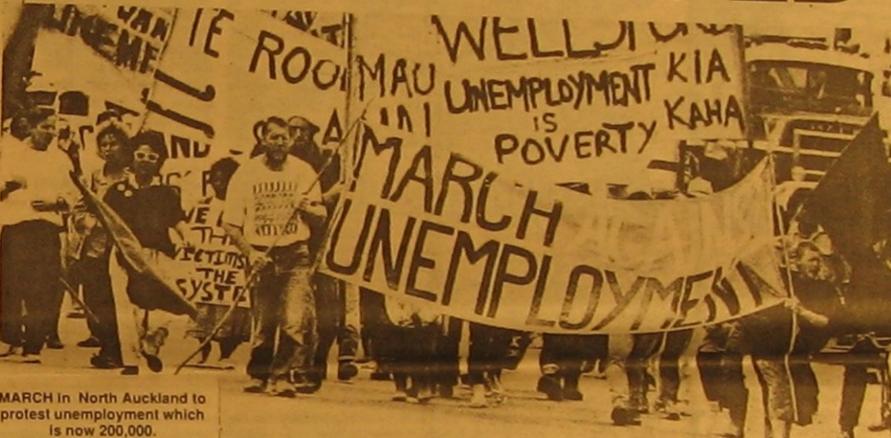
Six years ago New Zealand emerged from under the shadow of a highly authoritarian National government that sought direct confrontation with the union movement and was prepared to suffer widespread rioting in 1981 to support its allies in South Africa.

In 1984 the union movement successfully put its weight behind the Labour election campaign and triumphantly saw back and waited for its rewards.

What it got was a Labour government whose economic policies proved even more right-wing than its tory predecessor.

With the window-dressing of an apparently progressive external policy (closing the South African Embassy, banning nuclear weapons, effectively scuttling the ANZUS alliance), Labour "rationalised" jobs out of existence, doubled public housing rents to "market rates" and passed legislation restricting strikes to redundancy issues.

With unemployment at 12% and inflation at 8%, the Council of Trade Unions tried to boost Labour's election chances by announcing a wage deal of 2%



MARCH in North Auckland to protest unemployment which is now 200,000.

plus a bit extra for productivity. (A branch of one union was at the time suggesting a wage demand of 14%.)

## NEW

Now the new National government intends to go further along the anti-working class road that Labour has paved.

It was this that kept a dwindling number of union organisers and delegates out

canvassing for Labour. Their efforts were in vain. Labour supporters either stayed home, or switched their votes—not to National, but to the fashionably new Green Party (which had a colour rather than a policy) and to the breakaway NewLabour Party.

NewLabour split away from the Labour Party last year and managed to return its one MP—party leader, and former Labour Party president, Jim Anderson—to the 97 seat parliament.

NewLabour has in its ranks good political and union activists but is very much an electoral machine controlled by its leader. Its policies are traditional Labour ones—a controlled economy, tariffs, increased government spending to boost the economy.

Mana Motuhake, a now well-established grouping of Maori activists, almost picked up one seat as traditional Labour voters switched parties in one of the four Maori seats.

In terms of parliamentary politics, the massive National majority will probably be a realignment of Labour toward its traditional supporters.

However, with a depressed economy where business and banks are fighting desperately for their profit edge, this is not going to extract any concessions for working people.

Whatever gains there are before us will have to be won outside of parliament.

—by Dean Parker, Auckland

## Westpac union busting



"WHO CAN you bank on to attack workers' rights and wages? The answer is the Australian bank, Westpac. Workers in South Korea have been striking for two months against anti-union action by Westpac management at the bank's Seoul branch. It is the second strike since the union was formed in August 1987.

As well as refusing to sign a new agreement on wages and conditions, management members physically attacked the strikers on 25 September in an attempt to break the strike, which is being seen as a test case for the South Korean labour movement.

The Westpac union has only 19 members (17 female, 2 male) out of a workforce of 38, but has been able to survive for three years despite discrimination against its members.

Similar occurrences have been reported at other foreign banks such as ANZ and Barclays, who often threaten to withdraw their operations back to their "home" country if a union is formed.

Westpac is the largest Australian private bank, with branches in 29 countries. The average wage of its union members is 50% that of workers in other foreign banks in South Korea.

Despite all the hysteria in Australia about how Japanese (or "Asian") capital is more anti-union than the homegrown variety, examples like Westpac show that "Aussie" bosses can be even worse.

But as this struggle shows, workers can organise and fight back, and when they do Australian workers should support them. The enemy they face in South Korea is the same we face here.

And there has been support from Australia. A picket organised by Australia Asia Worker Links and the Korean Support and Information Network was held outside a Westpac bank in Melbourne on 21 September.

Members of various unions, including Trades Hall representative Len Cooper, spoke in support of the strikers, and a number of bank workers attended.

—by Craig Keisdall

## Lebanon—Syria's reward

WITH THE end of the Cold War George Bush talks about a "new world order". He says Saddam Hussein threatens this new order.

The dramatic defeat of Lebanon's fascist Christian leader, General Michel Aoun, on 14 October, and the consolidation of Syrian control of northern Lebanon gives us a glimpse of what that "new world order" would look like.

This division of Lebanon, with Syria in the north and Israel in the south, only went ahead with United States approval. Considerable US Communist money for the United States led intervention against Iraq. As the bosses' paper *The Economist* put it, "silence from its usual critics was Syria's reward for their anti-racist solidarity".

Before the Gulf crisis exploded, Syria was number two on the United States' list of countries supporting so-called terrorism.

Socialists though, won't be shedding any tears at the downfall of Aoun. Aoun came from Lebanon's right wing Maronite Christian community. When France pulled out of Lebanon in 1946, they left the minority Maronite community in a dominant position, both economically and within the state.

When the Maronites' dominance was challenged in 1958 by the Muslim and other Christian communities, the United States sent in 14,000 Marines to prop them up. In 1982 right wing Maronite militias, under Israeli guidance, were responsible for the massacre of over 3000 Palestinian refugees.

Syria's intervention is not to challenge this but to further its own regional interests. Syria first invaded Lebanon in 1976 to prop up the Maronite-dominated government against rebellion by Palestinians and Muslims, and to begin its own long assault on the PLO.

It did nothing during the 1982 Israeli invasion. Once Israel withdrew and the country fell into civil war, Syria took the opportunity to extend its control in Lebanon.

Aoun's defeat at the hands of Syrian troops and with United States backing, will not solve Lebanon's intractable problems. The misery of the Lebanese people will no doubt continue under the US-backed government of Elias Hrawi. These people have nothing to gain from Syria's sweetheart deal with the US and will gain nothing until imperialism is driven out of the whole region.

—by Alison Stewart and Mark Gillespie

**CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE LUCKY COUNTRY...**

**STILL NO EQUAL PAY**

**Cracks in police-gay liaison**

**Gulf action at ANU**  
IN AN ATTEMPT to bring students' concerns about an impending war into the open, campus members of the ISO in Canberra have initiated the ANU Gulf Action Committee.

The committee organised a campus forum on 19 October which attracted more than one hundred listeners. Speakers from the Canberra Coalition, the ANU Green Alliance and the Student Christian Movement opened the discussion by speaking against Australian and US involvement in the Gulf region.

A lively debate then began with students offering a mixture of thoughts—support for the US.

pacifist uncertainty, confidence in the UN and, thankfully, opposition to the imperialist intervention.

Our position was clear—no sanctions, no intervention and defeat for the US. The profile of the ISO was improved and plenty of Socialists were sold. The editors of the student paper *Work* approached us, and we were able to write a full page of arguments stating our analysis.

The success gained after a lot of hard work shows it is still possible to motivate students on a predominantly conservative campus. We are hoping that our propaganda and profile will stand us in good stead next year.

—by Chris Hughes

**WOMEN workers "won" equal pay for equal work in 1969, 1972 and then again in 1974.**

So why is it that there is still a substantial difference in pay between women and men workers?

A recently-released report on *Pay Equity for Women in Australia*, carried out by the National Women's Consultative Council, has further exposed the myth of equality in pay between women and men.

Differences in women's and men's wages vary depending on the occupation. In nursing the average full-time registered male earnings are \$560, while full-time women nurses with the same qualifications are earning \$539. Average male sales assistants' wages are \$590, compared to women's average of \$329.

Women only earn 83 per cent of the average ordinary time earnings of men in August last year. When all workers' earnings are counted, including part-time and overtime, the figure plunges to 65 per cent.

Australia has one of the most sex-segregated workforces in

by Sandra Cordova

the OECD. Almost two out of three women workers are concentrated in traditional low-paying "unskilled" jobs with poor working conditions. Community services, sales assistants, nursing and clerical jobs form a large percentage of women's employment.

Because of the sexist stereotyped role of women in society there is also the extra burden of bringing up the family. This restricts women's availability and access to do overtime and shift work for some extra money.

We might have legislation like Equal Employment Opportunity and the Sex Discrimination Act. But even though we should support and demand these laws, it's important to see that legislation alone will not bring equal pay for women workers.

The role of the ACTU on this issue has been pathetic. Giving lip service to equal pay will not bring it in. Only rank and file strikes and demonstrations can achieve better working conditions and wages for both men and women workers. That sort of action will force the government, the ACTU and the bosses to take these issues seriously.

Other events have added to their doubts. Police in Oxford St recently sat around feeding their faces rather than stop bashers who were pointed out to them. They have resumed the familiar practice of entrapping beat users.

One of the writers of this article was directly affected just before the Nile demo when liaison officer Sue Thompson gave his name and description to the police!

Even the supporters of liaison, like the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, have been forced to concede that "it's foolhardy to give the police a blank cheque saying we're happy to work with them under any circumstances". But they continue to try to portray these incidents as teething problems.

This is quite difficult to believe, given a long history that includes police assaults on the first gay Mardi Gras in 1978.

As well as being gay bashers themselves, police are ineffectual in ensuring the safety of gays and lesbians from violence. Attackers usually wait until police are absent before they beat people up. There are laws against murder too, but murder happens.

Violence against gays and lesbians is a social phenomenon, rather than the action of a lunatic few. Under capitalism, gays are socially ostracised because they threaten the idea of family values, which are essential to capitalism if new generations of workers are to be produced.

Actions organised and controlled by gays and lesbians independently of the police, such as the demonstration against Fred Nile and the one organised by the arrestees at their court case, are among the first steps towards changing this situation. Police liaison is only a diversion from this essential task.

—by David Skidmore and Robert Stainsby

**LOBBY**

The report suggests working through "proper channels", such as the Anti-Discrimination Board, to improve the situation. But this sort of strategy is nothing new. In 1937, a Council of Action was set up to lobby the ACTU and the Arbitration Commission on this issue. It lasted till 1948.

But it was strike action by rank and file workers during World War Two that made the bosses finally pay out 90 per cent of male wage for women.

Women make up the majority of part-time employees. With

**Disastrous deal for Vic teachers**

VICTORIA'S secondary teachers seem set to accept a disastrous deal. It will erode pay and conditions for many classroom teachers, and cut vital support services such as the Visiting Teacher program.

The situation is extremely confused, and at time of writing, not all the negotiations are clear. But one thing is certain: if the deal goes ahead, the divisions and bitterness between the teacher unions will get even worse. (There are now two unions: the VSTA representing secondary teachers and the FTUV representing primary, technical and TAFE teachers.)

The blame for this lies with the leaderships of both teacher unions and their internal bickering. They seem more interested in abusing each other than in fighting the cuts, leaving most rank and file teachers bewildered and disgusted.

There is strong sentiment for unity on the ground, with some impressive examples of solidarity in individual schools where there are members of both unions. But so far this has been unable to break down the barriers created by the leaderships, who have basically ignored calls from the members for a united campaign.

The victors are the Labor government and the Ministry, whose "divide and rule" policy has worked.

The VSTA deal is the result of intensive negotiations between the union leadership and the Ministry of Education. Both were desperate to reach an agreement before the end of October so that the new Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) could go ahead next year. Even before the deal has been ratified by the members, all industrial action has been called off.

After a lot of promising rhetoric about not negotiating on the basis of cuts, the VSTA leadership went ahead and did just that, leaving the FTUV out in the cold. Not that the FTUV leadership is much better—President Peter Lord recently argued

for an increase in public transport fares and other public sector cuts as an alternative to cuts in education! And neither leadership is prepared to argue for strong industrial action. Once again, members' energy is being dissipated in regional half-day strikes.

Militants in the VSTA have to argue against accepting the deal and for a strong industrial campaign to fight the cuts that can unify the rank and file of both unions. And militants in both unions have to keep working to break down the appalling sectionalism that is letting the government get away with making the teachers and students of Victoria pay for their financial crisis.

—by Tess Lee Aick

Apologies to Jamie Duabar for omitting the credit from his photo last issue.

**CHEMICAL WAR ON WORKERS' HEALTH**

**IN MANY WAYS, the current dispute at the Hoechst chemical company in Melbourne is a showdown between the unions and bosses in general.**

The unions at Hoechst (AMWU, AWU, FEDFA, FIA, ETU) are fighting for improved safety conditions and the reinstatement of a shop steward, Helmut Gries.

by Daryl Croke and Ian Dudley



Sacked shop steward Helmut Gries. RIGHT: picketers fighting for his job, their lives and the environment.



**Hoechst's deadly record**

THE HEALTH and safety concerns of the Hoechst workers centre around the chemical dichlorobenzidine (DCB), which is present in certain plastic pigments used at the plant.

DCB has been classified as a group 2 carcinogenic material by the Health Department. On many occasions workers were literally covered from head to foot with it.

Yet Hoechst's parent company told them in 1978 that it was a known carcinogen. An internal report in 1988 recommended a sealed system for handling DCB. Also recommended were warning notices, training for workers about the dangers, and decontamination of the plant.

How did Hoechst respond? The problems with the handling system

When Victoria's Occupational Health and Safety legislation was first introduced it was supposed to protect workers from hazardous and dangerous working conditions.

Steve Collier, a union health and safety delegate, commented: "You do the courses and get told that you've more power than the shop steward, but when it comes to getting something done you find you've got no teeth."

A Health Department official visited Hoechst in 1986 with regard to the DCB problem. When the workers approached the Department, pleading with them to take action, none was forthcoming.

Hoechst and other chemical companies in Altona have been getting

ago. DCB was being dumped down the local tip in used cardboard, and taken there on the back of a tray truck.

Chris Kent described how, earlier this year, 9000 litres of volatile solvent vaporised over electric motors—the equivalent to 100 tons of TNT. How it didn't go off nobody knows and it would have cleaned out that whole plant and half of Altona.

The strikers have received support from local community action groups, who have been fighting the chemical companies' abuse of the environment over a number of years.

If the unions are beaten at Hoechst, their power to stop the bosses polluting the environment will suffer along with their working conditions.

INCREASE

The number of cases detected will probably increase as more ex-employees and contract workers are tested. Hoechst are frustrating efforts to set up a register of workers to assist with this

**SOCIALIST MEETINGS MELBOURNE**

Melbourne branch of the International Socialist Organisation meets every MONDAY night at 7.30pm at Bookmarks, 1st floor, 328 Flinders St, City. For further details ring 629 3148.

How Trotsky became a Bolshevik, Monday 12 November. Joining the Bolsheviks only on the eve of the Russian Revolution. Trotsky went on to play a crucial role in this victory.

1945: Japan on the edge of revolution, Monday 19 November. Contrary to the myth that Japanese workers are docile and obedient, they came close to making a revolution after the war.

Is there a working class culture? Monday 26 November. Can workers create a new culture while the capitalists are still in control of society?

On the politics of resources, Monday 3 December. Why have people led, cheated and fought for a mineral in the ground?

**MARXISM FOR BEGINNERS**

Every Saturday at 2pm. These informal discussion groups introduce the fundamentals of Marxism. For more info, contact: 1000-1006, Flinders St, City. Phone 629 3148 for further details.

**BRISBANE**

Brisbane branch of the International Socialist Organisation meets every TUESDAY night at 7.30pm at Bookmarks, 2nd floor, 99 Elizabeth St, City. For further details ring 229 8832.

Rape and power, Tuesday 13 November. Why do men rape? Are they all the enemy? What does women's oppression come from?

The revolutionary paper, Tuesday 20 November. Why do socialists sell their paper on street corners? What sort of paper do we need?

The environment and the limits to growth, Tuesday 27 November. It's argued that workers in the west have to consume less to preserve the environment. Is this so?

Iran 1979—revolution and counter-revolution, Tuesday 4 December. The Iranian working class that made the revolution against the Shah, but power ended up in the hands of the Mullahs. What happened?

**CANBERRA**

Canberra branch of the International Socialist Organisation meets every MONDAY night at 7.30pm in the Blair Room of the Canberra Workers' Club, Oldiders St, Civic. For details write to PO Box 17, Jamison Centre, 2614.

The revolutionary paper, Monday 12 November. Why do socialists put so much emphasis on selling our paper? What do we put in it?

The socialist alternative in the Middle East, Monday 19 November. The history of working class and nationalist struggles in the Middle East and their implications for today.

South Korea: workers in revolt, Monday 26 November. As trade unions and ruling class parties separately consolidate their organisations, what is the future for the South Korean working class?

Reform or revolution: a new life for social democracy? Monday 3 Dec. We look at a new justification for social democracy, and its rejection of 'labourism'.

Privatisation, Monday 10 December. Who wins, who loses from the privatisation of AUSA, Australian Airlines and Qantas?

**SYDNEY**

Sydney branch of the International Socialist Organisation meets every TUESDAY night at 7.30pm at Trades Hall, 4 Goulburn St, City. For further details ring 261 4882.

Left Wing Communism, Tuesday 13 November. Is it possible to be too left wing? How should revolutionaries relate to those who are not revolutionaries?

Can the family disappear under capitalism? Tuesday 20 November. Marxists see the family as the source of women's oppression. Do we need to smash capitalism to abolish the family and sexism?

What to workers' power? Tuesday 27 November. The first step to socialism sees "the proletariat organised as the ruling class," said Marx. What would that look like?

**PUBLIC MEETING**

What's happening in the Gulf? Tuesday 4 December. We look at what the latest events mean, and what position socialists should take.

**HOBART**

Hobart branch of the International Socialist Organisation holds regular Marxist study groups. For details write to GPO Box 1898, Hobart 7501.

**UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

We have a booklet every Tuesday, 1-3pm, pedestrian tunnel.

**Academics place bans**

UNIVERSITY EXAM results and re-enrolments should be in chaos by the start of 1991.

At national stopwork meetings in October, academic unionists voted for work bans including no processing of final assessment and no assistance with re-enrolments.

At the Sydney meeting, as well as unanimously carrying the official motions, the 800 union members present also voted for a 24 hour strike the following Thursday.

This gave a clear indication of our wishes to take stronger action than that suggested by our union officials.

In a disgraceful move, those same officials called the strike off. Nonetheless members are determined to go ahead with work bans in order to force the Vice Chancellors and the government to give us a 15-20% wage rise, more promotion prospects and job security for the huge number of workers on short-term contracts.

—by Diane Fields

**Long wait for Qld women, gays**

WOMEN'S RIGHTS activists are once again mounting pickets outside Queensland's Parliament House.

Wayne Goss has won their ire with his statement that abortion reform "was not on the government's agenda".

Abortion in Queensland is a criminal offence. Access to abortion has only come from private abortion clinics exploiting a loop hole in the law. For women in remote towns and communities this has meant that abortions are both difficult and expensive to obtain.

It is Labor party policy that abortion be decriminalised. The back tracking by Labor on the abortion issue exemplifies their whole approach to government in Queensland.

Since being in power, they have side-



stepped every contentious issue by handing responsibility to an array of inquiries and commissions outside of parliament. Wayne Goss isn't about to reform anything without the full consensus of the ruling circles.

Even with a recommendation from the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) to decriminalise homosexuality, the government has been very careful not to challenge prevailing conceptions.

Goss thinks the age of consent for homosexual relationships should be higher than for heterosexual sex. The obvious implication is that gay relationships are of a dubious nature. Labor are certainly falling over themselves to keep the establishment on side.

—by Mark Gillespie

**THUGS**

Huge solidarity rallies of over a thousand workers have twice massed outside Hoechst. The first was a response to a brutal attack the night before by thugs hired by Hoechst to break the picket.

Unfortunately trucks are now getting through the picket line, helped by "comrade" Kimer's police. Fearful of violent confrontation, many strikers place their hopes in other workers' financial support, rather than in stopping the trucks.

But failing to confront the trucks can only strengthen the company's hand. The best way to stop them—and to minimise the risk of violence—is to organise mass pickets of supporters to block the driveways and refuse to move.

The picketers will need to do this themselves, rather than rely on union officials who (in Halfpenny's words) "all agree that things should be calmed down".

The Trades Hall Council has threatened to isolate Hoechst, while the TWU has blackbanned handling Hoechst products. This sort of solidarity action may prove crucial in the dispute. It is important that links are made between workplaces at the rank and file level to ensure it actually takes place.

It is the workers' striking and picketing, not negotiations by union officials, that have focussed attention on the issue and cost the company millions of dollars. The key to winning the dispute lies with more of the same.

**CHEAP SHOTS**

**The Olympic spirit**  
ACCORDING to International Olympic Committee rules, competing cities are only allowed to give gifts valued at less than \$US200 to any delegates.

Athens supposedly promised three-day Mediterranean cruises for athletes and officials, and \$5000 necklaces for the wives of IOC officials.

The Melbourne Olympic committee stuck to the rules. Every IOC member received an Aboriginal painting worth \$100.

Well, that was the amount paid to the artists.

**Things go better**  
COCA COLA have been blamed for Melbourne losing the 1996 Olympics bid to Atlanta, the home of the bottling giant.

But Coke is not the only industry in Atlanta. Other companies with their US bases in Atlanta include CSR, Boral, Pacific Dunlop and TNT.

According to Atlanta business consultant Ken McKenzie (no relation to

**Democratic Israel**  
THE Israeli army is issuing free gas mask kits to nearly five million Jews and Arabs in Israel. They are even ordering 25,000 special masks for ultra-orthodox men (and presumably hippy atheists) who don't want to shave their long beards.

The 1.75 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank won't miss out. They'll get theirs later—at \$25 each.

**Democratic Britain**  
BRITISH TV can't broadcast anything said by the IRA. Britain excludes US black activists because their presence "is not conducive to the public good."

But Thatcher's government didn't act against South African ultra-right racist leader Eugene Terre-Blanche.

His party's emblem is a three-legged swastika. Unlike Nelson Mandela, he's not abandoning armed struggle. He gave an interview in a TV studio

**Cry freedom**  
SOME Melbourne City councillors were upset about Nelson Mandela receiving the "Freedom of the City". They said they were concerned because the ANC failed to rule out the use of violence.

Oddly enough, their concerns didn't extend to previous recipients of the city's anachronistic honours. Various naval and military regiments have been given "Freedom of Entry".

As we understand it, they have not renounced the use of violence either.

**May we quote you?**  
"FOR THE world's arms merchants the tense military situation in the Gulf is a dream come true."  
—US magazine, *Business Week*

"THERE WAS only so much that could be learnt about how a free market works from reading books by Milton Friedman."  
—Soviet presidential adviser Dr Abel Aganbegyan, asking Australia to help train Soviet managers

"THE GOVERNMENT'S kept its job, the leaders of the banks have kept their jobs, the entrepreneurs have lost their jobs but retained their wealth, while those who have made no contribution to the failure have lost their jobs and their money."  
—Former Australian Council of Social Service president Julian Daney

"NORTHERN Ireland is the only place where soldiers do not have to have inflicted on them the time-wasting trivia of a peace-time army."  
—Anthony Bevan, author of 'Inside the British Army'

# A new world order?

IT IS almost exactly a year since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

However far from the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War ushering in an era of peace and prosperity, as Western propagandists proclaimed at the time, the world system has become more dangerous and unstable.

This is most dramatically illustrated by the enormous US military build up in the Gulf.

The East European revolutions marked the end of the division of the world between two competing superpowers.

In the short term this has undoubtedly increased the room for manoeuvre of US capitalism, making possible the invasion of Panama, the defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and Bush's war drive in the Gulf.

However this does not mean, as even some on the left argue, that we now live in a "one superpower" world, in which the US has unrivalled hegemony. For one thing, as long as the USSR manages to hold together, it represents the second biggest concentration of military and industrial power in the world.

Furthermore the collapse of Stalinism has exacerbated tensions which already existed within the Western bloc. US economic decline relative to Japan and West Germany has been a major feature of the period of economic crises which began in the late 1960s.

The reunification of Germany has greatly increased the self-confidence of the West German ruling class. Thus Helmut Kohl settled the question of a united Germany's membership of NATO through bilateral negotiations with Gorbachev, to the visible chagrin of the Bush administration, who were left out of the process.

The Houston summit of the Group of Seven, the top Western nations, was supposed to be a victory celebration of the triumph of the market. Instead it was dominated by trade tensions between the US, Japan, and the European Community, leading Britain's Margaret Thatcher to warn of the danger that the world market would fragment into three competing trade blocs, centred on North America, the Pacific Rim, and Europe.

The internationalisation of capital—reflected, for example, in the high level of Japanese investment in the US and American industry's dependence on Japan's high-tech exports—makes full scale trade wars unlikely.

But now that the restraint imposed by the Cold War is removed, conflict among the major Western capitalist powers is likely to assume a new intensity.

AMERICAN car workers smash up a Japanese import. The decline of US economic power means greater instability in the world.

## The rise of regional powers

**THIS** inter-imperialist conflict is one facet of world-wide competition between capitalist powers.

The industrialisation of parts of the Third World has led to the emergence of "sub-imperialisms", that is of states which aspire to exercise the kind of dominance on a regional scale which the superpowers have enjoyed globally.

The resulting localised conflicts—for example, between India and Pakistan, Greece and Turkey, and, of course, Iran and Iraq—have the potential, as the Gulf War of 1980-88 showed, to spill over into full-scale armed struggle, with threatening consequences for the system as a whole.

The present crisis in the Gulf clearly illustrates the tensions inherent in the post-Cold War world order. The attempt by Saddam's Iraq to consolidate the regional strength achieved by its (US-assisted) victory over Iran and to solve the internal economic crisis created by the war by seizing Kuwait, led to confrontation with the massed might of Western imperialism.

The US led war drive reflects two factors in particular. First, Western control of the Gulf's vast supplies of cheap oil remains one of the main objectives of US foreign policy.

Secondly, there is little doubt that the American military build-up has come at a politically useful moment for the US, allowing it to reassert Washington's political and military leadership of the Western bloc.

The US intervention is a salutary reminder to Bonn and Tokyo that the security of oil supplies depends ultimately on the Pentagon.

Whether or not a shooting war breaks out in the Gulf, the crisis is likely to have an enormous impact throughout the Arab world, destabilising many pro-Western regimes.

## Conflict in the world economy

**THE** MOST important hostage of the Gulf crisis is the world economy.

Even though the advanced capitalist countries have reduced oil consumption relative to output since the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979, war in the Gulf would have a devastating economic impact.

Rises in the price of oil, by increasing the rate of inflation, and reducing income and therefore demand in oil-importing countries, aggravate the tendency towards stagflation endemic in advanced capitalism.

Even short of war, the oil price increases we have seen so far may well be enough to make certain the global recession that was already on the horizon.

The US economy's annual rate of growth in the second quarter of 1990 of only 1.2% led the Federal Reserve Board to say that America is "edging closer to a recession if it isn't already in one."

Behind such predictions is the massive accumulation of bad debt, reflecting the way in which the recovery from the 1979-82 recession was financed by easy credit.

To the twin deficits (in government spending and the balance of payments) under which the US economy is labouring, is now added the gigantic \$(US)500 billion which is reckoned to be the price of rescuing the bankrupt savings and loan industry.

Several other major Western economies are in the same boat as the US, in particular Britain and Canada. The Australian economy, thanks to the Hawke government's high interest rate regime—an attempt to curb rising imports and inflation—had already gone into recession before the oil price shock.

A prolonged war in the Gulf could mean a devastating recession here.

Up until now the two biggest Western economies after the US—Germany and Japan—have remained buoyant. Japanese output rose at an annual rate of 10% in the first quarter of 1990, West German by an astonishing 13.3%.

This unevenness between the major Western economies is itself a symptom of the potential conflicts between the US, still in relative decline, and its German and Japanese rivals.

## Devastation spreads

**WHATEVER** the immediate future of the advanced capitalist countries, there are large portions of the world system where the present reality is already one of economic collapse.

Much of Africa and Latin America have gone backwards even during the "boom" years of the 1980s. The once, relatively advanced, Argentine economy is now a basket case. The 1990s promise only greater wretchedness.

Similarly in Eastern Europe, the savage free market economic policies pursued by the new liberal (or remodelled Stalinist) governments are having a devastating impact.

The Morgan Stanley Bank estimated in mid-July that gross national product will fall by 10% in Eastern Europe over the next two years, while unemployment in the industrial sector will rise by 20%.

Nor is it likely that an inflow of Western capital will come to the rescue. The OECD doubts whether Western aid and investments will compensate for the loss of the subsidies on the oil and gas from the USSR, which were worth at least \$(US)5 billion a year.

These dire predictions were made before Iraq seized Kuwait. Subsequently Britain's *Financial Times* reported:

The Gulf crisis has dealt the ailing economies of Eastern Europe a second blow to their reform plans. Just as they have begun to adjust to the Soviet Union's decision to cut its oil supplies to them and to charge the dollar market price from January, the cost of alternative supplies on the open market has been sent leaping upward.

The political and social consequences of the recession engulfing the newly liberated countries of Eastern Europe are likely to be enormous.

Already divisions are opening up in the new regimes—between the supporters of Walesa and Mazowiecki in Poland, between Thatcherites and social-democrats in Czechoslovakia. In Romania and Bulgaria the situation is exacerbated by the struggle between the *nomenklatura*, still retaining effective power, and the radical democratic opposition.

And nationalist demands emerge everywhere as an expression of the underlying conflicts, threatening, in the shape of Serbian expansionism, to rip Yugoslavia apart.



## Crisis in USSR

**IN** THE USSR itself all these conflicts are developing on a far larger scale.

The stagnation of the bureaucratic command economy has encouraged local party bosses to take control of the resources in their area, thus breaking up the economic linkages binding the USSR together.

Furthermore Gorbachev and Yeltsin's attempt to introduce pro-market policies is likely to encounter enormous resistance from a population embittered by shortages and inflation.

Whether or not Gorbachev himself survives, it seems likely that some government combination will emerge which seeks to drive through the kind of austerity measures being implemented in Eastern Europe by resort to repressive means.

It is in any case hard to see how the present climate of economic crisis and political disintegration can continue indefinitely. The USSR faces major convulsions in the near future.

The crucial question in both the USSR and Eastern Europe is whether independent working class politics will emerge to challenge Stalinists and liberals alike.

The development of workers' struggles is uneven: the miners' strikes in the USSR in July 1989 were followed by defeat in Vorkuta in November; disillusionment with Solidarity has had a deadening effect in Poland; but workers in former East Germany have begun to resist the austerity measures.

Similarly, the various left-wing currents that have emerged—most importantly the Socialist Party of the USSR—are small and politically confused.

What remains clear is that the transition from state capitalism to multinational capitalism is a painful, unstable, and crisis-ridden process, creating conditions in which the authentic Marxist tradition can begin to re-establish itself.

## Socialism back on the agenda

**THE** PAST YEAR has seen world historical events, which have led to the greatest changes in the international system of states since 1945.

The next few months may see a major war involving the biggest imperialist power in an economically vital and politically explosive region.

There is thus no let-up in the series of convulsions which have made the years since the late 1960s, like those between 1914 and 1945, an epoch of wars and revolutions.

This opens up enormous possibilities for the revival of the working class movement and the revolutionary left internationally.

For over a decade Australia and the other advanced western capitalist countries have been marked by a downturn in the level of class struggle. Whether it be in the US under Reagan, Britain under Thatcher or Australia under Hawke, workers and their organisations have been under attack and many of the gains of the upsurge of the late 1960s and early 70s pushed back.

Now we are beginning to see just a glimmer of a revival. In Britain, the Thatcher "miracle" has exhausted itself and the Tory government is despised and hated.

In southern Europe, Greece has been gripped by strike wave after strike wave. In the US Bush and the Democratic controlled Congress are locked in a budget crisis.

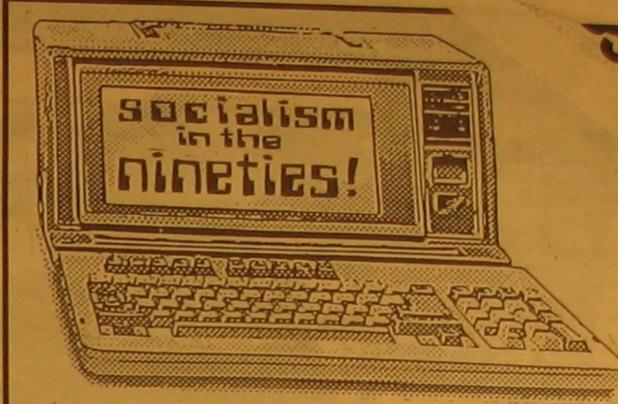
Furthermore it is clear that a war in the Gulf if it comes will not have mass popular support in the West. Already opinion polls indicate there is much greater opposition to commitment of troops than there was at the outbreak of the Vietnam war. We have seen quite sizable anti-war demonstrations in the US and in France.

Increasing working class resentment over long years of declining living standards, when combined with the depredations of recession and war, could form a heady brew.

The market may have triumphed—but what a triumph! Socialism is far from being dead; indeed we are entering into a period internationally where there are potentially great opportunities for the revival of genuine Marxist politics.

To take advantage of these opportunities socialists have to be clear and confident about their ideas—for political clarity is essential in a complicated and rapidly changing world.

However we also need to be able to apply those ideas with enthusiasm and practical flair in interventions in the struggles that do break out.



## A Red-Green paper?

**THE** ISOLATION socialists face today has led to many unsuccessful attempts to reconstruct the left.

Now the Democratic Socialist Party has launched the idea of a new Red-Green paper, involving left and environmental activists, and independent of any existing organisation.

They have also offered to dissolve their own paper, *Direct Action*, and throw its resources behind the new enterprise.

There are good reasons for DSP to have second thoughts about the proposal.

The historical experience is that far from expanding the influence of revolutionary socialist ideas, such "movement" papers simply serve to fragment and demobilise the socialists who publish them.

Rather than acting as the vehicle for socialists to influence a wider layer than their own ranks, they act as an obstacle to achieving such influence.

This assertion flies in the face of all the accepted "common sense". It was nowhere better argued than by Isaac Deutscher, explaining the failure of a similar venture by Leon Trotsky, who published a broad, "non-factional" paper, *Pravda*, during the political downturn that followed the defeat of the 1905 revolution.

*Pravda's* plain language and the fact that it preached the unity of the party secured it a certain popularity but no lasting political influence.

Those who stated the case for a faction or group usually involved themselves in more or less complicated argument and addressed the upper and medium layers of their movement rather than the rank and file...

[Those] who win the cadres of a party for their more involved argument are likely eventually to obtain the hearing of the rank and file as well; the cadres carry their argument in simplified form, deeper down.

Trotsky's paper was not lacking in talent or style. Trotsky himself had led the 1905 soviet and was the movement's most talented and incisive writer. By contrast, Lenin played a less visible role in 1905 and his style was plodding and often convoluted.

Yet when the Russian labour movement revived in 1912, Lenin's paper had by far the dominant influence.

By addressing his paper to the most serious revolutionaries, by concentrating on clarifying

their ideas and strategy, by drawing them together into a disciplined and highly democratic organisation, he created a cadre rooted in most of the major factories, arguing the same basic politics wherever they were.

That politically coherent cadre formed the nucleus around which the successful revolution of 1917 was organised.

A more contemporary example of what is wrong with the "Red/Green" strategy can be seen by the example of the major US left wing paper, the *Guardian*.

No-one would deny that the *Guardian* carries much that is useful about the class struggle in the US and resistance to US imperialism.

Yet the struggle for socialism demands more than this. It demands the ability to act in a concerted and decisive fashion when major issues arise. The war in the Gulf is such an issue.

### divided

The *Guardian* has played a commendable role in advertising the demonstrations and other actions taken against the US invasion. Yet on the issues that divide the movement, the *Guardian's* own supporters are divided.

So recent issues of the paper have carried a raging debate over whether or not to demand Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, over whether or not to look to the United Nations for a peaceful solution.

These are tremendously important issues. Demanding Iraqi withdrawal is "a position which, if taken to its logical conclusion, will have us justifying a horrendous war"—as one writer put it.

Yet precisely on this most important issue, the *Guardian* is paralysed. It can reflect the movement, but it cannot lead it.

This inability to intervene is inevitably from a paper that is not linked to a disciplined organisation with clear political agreement on basic issues. But then, this (combined with a tradition of debate) is the ABC of Lenin's democratic centralism.

Will the Red-Green paper be an anti-Accord paper? We can't say because—amazingly—the letter calling for further support for the proposal does not have a single line about what political positions the new paper will be organised around.

Once the paper is up and running, would a supporter of the Accord be excluded from the "editorial advisory board"? Who would stop them? On what basis?

If leading environmentalist, Ted Trainer, were to approach them, would he be accepted with his view that workers consume too much?

Indeed, one of the signatories, Mari Hegge, has made it clear in activity around the Gulf in Brisbane that she regards herself as "neither left wing nor right wing"! Is this idea to be part of the new paper?

Because the proposal boasts of its intention to not be "centralist", it cannot, therefore, be democratic.

At the moment, members of the DSP can challenge those ideas in their paper that they disagree with. What happens in the future when they find themselves selling a paper arguing for ideas they disagree with?

To attempt to discipline the content of the paper will potentially bring them into conflict with the "independent" editorial advisory board.

In an interview with *Direct Action*, Harry Van Moort, one of the non-DSP participants, pointed out that he (and the others) run the risk of "being branded a DSP member, fellow traveller or front-runner for the party."

"That risk," commented DA, "is minimised to the extent that the paper is genuinely independent."

In other words, the members of the DSP will be expected to go out and sell the new paper on the streets, to their contacts, at work, cop all the abuse and hassles and raise the funds as well—yet the paper can only succeed if it is "independent" of them! What contempt for the ordinary member!

It also makes it clear that the idea current amongst many DSP members, that "nothing will change" with the new paper, that it will carry the party's politics, is pure fantasy.

With the new paper, they will be hostage to the "stars" who allow their names to be used to make it look more credible.

More importantly, the paper will cease to be the kind of vehicle for building the party that DA is today.

This does not imply sympathy for the ideas and ambitions of the DSP. What is being abandoned here—despite the belief of many DSP members—is a major chunk of the idea of a distinct party, with its own press, attempting to link a coherent view of socialism and a specific strategy to achieve it, to the various struggles we build.

Just as the DSP's opposition to the Accord and defence of the BLF helped change, in a small way, the climate on the left, so too will the Left as a whole be set back by its retreat from arguing the currently unpopular case for a coherent socialist party with its own "party paper".

# Can we change things individually?

**T**HERE is a widely accepted argument that we must take individual responsibility to "Do the Right Thing".

We are told by the environment movement that it's our responsibility to seek out and buy environmentally sound products. We should keep our rubbish in separate piles and find where to take them for recycling.

If we rode push bikes, walked, or used public transport instead of driving cars, we could reduce pollution and traffic congestion in the cities. If we don't conserve energy and avoid using products which contain CFC's we are personally responsible for the Greenhouse Effect and damage to the ozone layer.

If you eat at McDonald's, you may have been handed a leaflet urging you not to because McDonald's supposedly buy beef grown where forests have been destroyed and pay their staff lousy wages.

The problem with this approach is it starts in the wrong place. It is not consumers who have the power to make fundamental decisions in our society, but those who own and control industry.

The impact of an individual action is negligible compared with that of capitalist corporations or governments. The world car industry is not about to turn production over to public transport unless they are guaranteed a profit for their efforts.

But over the last few years, governments in the developed world have been cutting back on public transport in order to cut their inflated deficits. So to blame the individual who is forced to drive a car because of lack of transport is to blame the capitalist system.

Take another example. Environmentalists have for years urged us not to use aerosol cans which contain CFC gases. But every time the air conditioning unit of an office block is over-hauled, it releases the amount of CFC equivalent to about a million cans of deodorant.

Our individual contribution is nothing more than a moral gesture with very little consequence compared to their commercial use.

**T**HE POINT is, the fundamental decisions about these questions are taken in board rooms where the over-riding concern is to make a profit.

Even governments which seem to be subject to democratic control, in the end have to manage the profit-making system if they are to survive. At first glance, it seems that consumers have power. Surely they can force companies to produce better commodities by refusing to buy unacceptable ones? But that is not the way the system works.

Capitalists do not think "what does society need?", they ask themselves "how can I make a profit?"

Even if some item can't be sold because of consumer resistance, there is no guarantee it will be replaced by what we want. The capitalist producing it may simply move their capital into some other area for investment. Or they might find another market somewhere in the world where the dangers of their product are not known. Nestlé's made profits for years selling baby milk formulas in the Third World in spite of their damaging effects.

So the decision-making structures of capitalist society are far more decisive than the actions of individuals. The power of those who control production is incomparably greater than that of consumers. To claim as one speaker did at a conference on the environment in Sydney that the problem is "the mums



## Social life and power

and dads at Mt Druitt" is to let those who are responsible off the hook.

But the social and political structures are not the end of the question. Workers in Australia today have suffered wage cuts of 10% or more under the Labor government. The dole for unemployed youth does not even pay rent on a room let alone food and clothing. With child care facilities in an appalling state, parents have to shop with impatient young children in tow. So many families are under enormous pressure when they go to the supermarket to shop.

Workers have very little control over where they work or where they can find housing cheap enough to live in. Many have to travel miles every day.

To expect them to spend extra time and money finding the rare and more expensive products which claim to be environmentally safe, to spend hours walking or riding instead of using their car, is an insult.

Apart from these problems, underlying these arguments is a serious theoretical misunderstanding about humans and the way we act.

**H**UMANS marked themselves off from the rest of the animal world by their ability to transform nature by their labour.

By the combination of this propensity to labour, a large brain and other physical characteristics, humans developed language to com-

municate and the ability to reason and abstract from their experience. This development took place as humans laboured together, co-operatively.

So, as Karl Marx wrote in the 1850's, in the *Grundrisse*, replying to ideas which emphasised humans as individuals just like today: The human being is in the most literal sense a *zoon politikon* (an animal which lives in communities), not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society.

In the same work, Marx explained that ideas which emphasise the individual over community are unique to capitalism, the epoch which produces the standpoint of the isolated individual.

The more deeply we go back into history, the more the individual, and hence also the producing individual, appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole, in a still quite natural way in the family and in the family expanded into the clan; then later in the various forms of communal society... Only in the eighteenth century, in "civil society", do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes, as external necessity.

So the atomisation of individuals under capitalism gives rise to ideologies which put the individual at the centre of things. It also creates circumstances which make the individual powerless and vulnerable.

For the vast majority of people life consists of a daily grind of working

for a boss. They have no control over what they produce, how it is produced, or what happens to the products of their labour. Most of them don't even determine the hours of work or the speed at which they operate.

This lack of control over what should be their creative contribution to society breeds a feeling of powerlessness. It helps ideas which tell us we can't change the world or run our own lives, take root in people's consciousness.

This opens up masses of people to all the ideas propagated by those who run the society. Not that it means everyone accepts all the ideas all of the time, but even when some of the ideas are rejected, the feeling that you can't change anything can be a powerful disincentive to action.

This accounts for the apparent apathy and passivity of masses of workers today. So to ask that individual workers take control of the things which affect their lives is a utopian demand.

Even if an individual agrees that something needs to be done about the environment it does not follow they will feel there is any point in individual actions. If you can't defend basic conditions at work, with wages held down and workers being sacked whenever the boss decides to restructure the business, you are hardly likely to feel confident when alone.

And at home, isolated individuals are more prone to the ideas churned out by the mass media day after day.

**WE FEEL** powerful when we fight together in the workplace. Photo is a meeting of the Transport and General Workers Union of South Africa in Soweto.

**B**UT WE ARE NOT simply individuals. As Marx said, we are a *zoon politikon*. People co-operate in a million different ways every day.

Just to get everyone to work involves massive collective action. The trains and trams have to run to a schedule, we abide by red and green lights. We all agree to turn up at much the same time.

At work, masses of workers work as a collective every day on assembly lines, in offices, hospitals and schools. And often they work on products which require international co-operation for their completion.

The task is to turn this collective, co-operative side to life to the advantage of the mass of people and against those who rule.

When workers stand together and fight, they can see the power they have against their bosses. This feeling of strength can underpin very rapid changes in ideas and attitudes. It happens on a small scale in one-off strikes. Workers on a picket line will talk about how they could run the factory or office better than the management—ideas most of them would reject in normal times.

When it happens on a mass scale, the power of workers can flow onto other areas of society and other oppressed groups. It was no accident that the women's and gay liberation movements achieved their high point when the level of industrial struggle was very high in the early seventies.

The confidence to fight around immediate concerns spills over into wider political issues. So for instance, builders' labourers, after years of fighting to establish a union and decent conditions on the job, took up questions of the environment, women's and gay rights in the seventies.

But it is not only the feeling of power, important as that is. Workers also have a unique position because they do all the work which provides the bosses profits. So they actually have tremendous social and economic power.

So if we want to stop the destruction of the rain forests in Malaysia and defend the indigenous people's land rights, bans by waterside workers are more effective than appeals to builders not to use the timbers. The builders work in a highly competitive industry. They are unlikely to take the time to carefully choose timber on any basis other than cost and efficiencies.

Waterside workers are already obstructing the import of rainforest timbers; they could stop all of it coming into Australia. It is no skin off their noses—the bosses don't share out the profits from the trade. All they need is the confidence to totally ban the offending ships.

So if we want to win reforms, if we want to stop environmental damage, we have to find ways of building solidarity, strong organisation and confidence amongst ordinary people.

This means building political campaigns which bring individuals together to organise militant actions such as pickets and demonstrations. The experience of marching in the streets with thousands of people with the same demands can build confidence and determination to defy the bosses and their ideas.

It means supporting every struggle, every strike, every demonstration against the bosses and governments. A victory on one issue can build for victories around other issues.

—by Sandra Bloodworth

## REVIEWS

# The environment: Who's to blame?

**EVERY DAY** ordinary people around the world suffer the effects of environmental disasters.

In 1988, three-quarters of Bangladesh was flooded as a result of soil erosion. The explosion of the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl in the Ukraine is still causing deaths and misery for hundreds of thousands of East Europeans.

In 1984, three thousand people were killed and another 200,000 seriously injured by release of deadly dioxin gas from the Union Carbide plant at Bhopal in India.

Closer to home, BHP dumps waste into Port Kembla Harbour, threatening marine life which is essential to the food chain. And numerous chemical fires in Melbourne have led to emergency evacuations of workers and residents. Only time will tell the effect these deadly toxins have had on them.

A new British pamphlet, *Environment in Crisis* by Duncan Blackie, offers a clear indictment of those responsible for Bhopal, Chernobyl, rainforest clearing and other forms of environmental destruction. As Blackie notes,

environmental problems are not just the product of human activity. Nor does everyone suffer equally. It was the workers and peasants of Bhopal who fell under the deadly gas.

The plant and its enormous profits, however, were the responsibility of a multi-billion dollar corporation whose headquarters were half a world away in the United States.

Despite what most environmentalists say, it is not industrialism, consumerism nor ordinary people that are "extracting a terrible toll on both the environment and the mass of people who live in it," but the depredations of capitalism.

The pretensions of British Labour are exposed. Its shadow secretary for the environment is chairman of the Friends of Sellafield—the most dangerous nuclear plant in Britain! His party is also committed to nuclear weapons.

In Australia, eight years of the Hawke Government have seen the continued mining of uranium, the opening up of Kakadu, and the logging of the south-east forests of NSW. This process will not be reversed by Ros Kelly's pathetic attempts to be seen as a "dinky di greener".

Most importantly, the pamphlet takes up the many reactionary solutions being popularised by Green activists.

The most common argument is that there are too many people, and not enough resources to feed them. As Thomas Malthus argued this nearly 200 years ago.

Greens who take up Malthus's ideas offer programs to force population growth down that involve attacks on the rights of ordinary people. Some accepted as part of the Green movement even argue against food shipments to starving populations, holding that "natural culling" is best for the planet.

Yet there is no observable link between population growth and human misery. In the 19th Century, Europe and North America had record rates of growth in population alongside record increases in prosperity. And today there is

more than enough food to go round.

Green claims that resources are finite assume that the use of resources will either continue at the present level or increase, that no substitutes will become available, and that the current state of technology for extracting resources will not change.

Yet in 1978 there appeared to be a world cobalt crisis; now there is enough for 7500 years of current usage—in nodules on the sea bed. Blackie gives other examples to illustrate that resources are only "finite" if you accept existing class relations rather than challenging their underlying principles.

Left Greens also argue that the Third World's only hope is to cut its ties with industrialized countries. As Blackie warns,

This is an appalling prospect. Development within national boundaries has been tried many times this century. In Russia, it led from the workers' revolution of 1917 to the oppression and exploitation of forced industrialization under Stalin.

My only criticism of the pamphlet is that the questions of rainforest destruction is misleading and inadequate. Blackie quotes Fred Pearce, an environmentalist, who argues that,



The idea that the Amazon rainforest could disappear within a decade or so is nonsense. A way from the new roads, the forests are, for the moment, unbreached.

Though this may be true it's hardly the main argument that we need to make. Rainforests control...

weather and water cycles, and represent a vast bank of plants and animal species. At a local level, they provide the basic needs for... clean water, food, shelter, medicine, fuel, and clothing.

Rainforest destruction is unnecessary because there are many alternatives to tropical timber such

as hard wood plantations. The glibly-dismissive rainforest destruction as "catastrophism" misses the point. Rainforests are being destroyed at an alarming rate in the interests of profit and competition.

Despite this flaw, *Environment in Crisis* is an excellent

pamphlet, because, at the same time as arguing the case for saving the environment, it puts the blame where it really belongs—in the lap of our own ruling class. In the process it challenges the reactionary "solutions" coming from many in the movement.

LYNNE O'NEIL reviews a new pamphlet by Duncan Blackie

*The Environment in Crisis* the socialist case is available from Bookmarks and ISO branches, \$3.25 (plus \$1.00 postage)

## When Marx glimpsed workers' power

### THE MARXIST CLASSICS

A new series which looks at how the Marxist tradition developed and the relevance of the Marxist classics today.

Marx shows the state, which seems to exist above society, is in fact the instrument of class rule. The underpinning of this power is the armed forces.

The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.

Marx was fascinated by the democratic forms the workers threw up. Here at last was the answer to how the working class could take power from the capitalists and begin to reshape society.

### ELECTIVE

The Commune was elected by universal (male) suffrage and the councillors were recallable at any time, with only short terms of office. Those that had no decisions were to be made behind, they had to implement their policies themselves.

The Commune... was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same

by destroying the two greatest sources of expenditure—the standing army and State functionalism. But cheap government was not its aim, merely a consequence.

Its true secret was this. It was essentially a working-class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour. The Commune was openly and demonstrably internationalist. They made a German worker the Minister of Labour and put two Poles at the head of the defence of Paris.

### ATTACKED

And like many revolutions after them, they attacked the symbols of what they hated most, pulling down the Vendôme column, describing it as;

a monument of savagery, a symbol of brute force and false glory, an affirmation of militarism... an abiding insult of the conquerors to the vanquished.

Perhaps there is a lesson in it for the Hawke government and all those braying about reducing government spending: The Commune... made cheap government a reality, the Commune was defeated by

the government in Versailles. Marx had commented in a letter he wrote during the Commune that they should have marched immediately on Versailles. He predicted that if it failed, it would be because of the workers' too good nature.

Marx's admiration for the workers—their level of organisation, their democracy, and their heroism—is boundless.

He is also unbending in his scathing accounts of the barbarity and brutal savagery of the ruling class who shot prisoners with no mercy while the Communards could not bring themselves to instigate reprisals.

Eventually, when the Commune was defeated, tens of thousands were slaughtered and the leaders were hounded out of France, incarcerated for decades in the most horrible of jails, or transported to places like New Caledonia.

Clearly, any future workers' uprising would have to be prepared to defend itself against the brutality and ferocity of a ruling class under attack.

These lessons were not wasted. They were ultimately realised in the victory of the Russian working class in October, 1917. Lenin's *State and Revolution*, written just prior to the insurrection, drew heavily on *The Civil War in France*.

# Farewell, perestroika

**F**IVE YEARS of perestroika have left the USSR a radically different place. Shops are emptier, shortages more widespread, ethnic and regional unrest almost universal.

Indeed according to *Time* magazine, perestroika is no longer about the restructuring of centralised socialism, but its destruction. It would be asking altogether too much of *Time* to understand the state capitalist nature of the economies of Russia and its satellites. Nonetheless you get the point.

But perhaps nothing so graphically demonstrates the radical change that has taken place as a recent *Moscow News* story about a strike in Sol-Iletsk (a salt mine of all places) that reports, as if it was the most ordinary kind of thing in the world, "As usual the strike committee... ousted the administration and put up pickets at the entrance to the mine."

Another article records a public meeting in the Central Artists' Club with representatives from

various parties and public organisations, including democrats, socialists, social democrats, constitutional and free democrats, the Democratic Platform [liberals inside the Communist Party] and anarchists.

For years and years, commentators looked to changes in the line up of bureaucrats on top of Lenin's mausoleum at state functions for indications of the prospects for change in the Soviet hierarchy. There were left and right variations in this approach in what otherwise passed as analysis, but as Patrick Cockburn puts it in his book, *Getting Russia Wrong, the End of Kremlinology*, one of the consequences

...is an exaggerated focus on the Politburo and the top ranks of government, as if the Soviet state were an independent entity unaffected by its development.

In the 1930s we became all too familiar with the wild headlines presenting political developments in the USSR in terms of number crunching in the Central Committee, or struggles in the leadership—Gorbachev versus Ligachev, Gorbachev versus Yeltsin, etc.

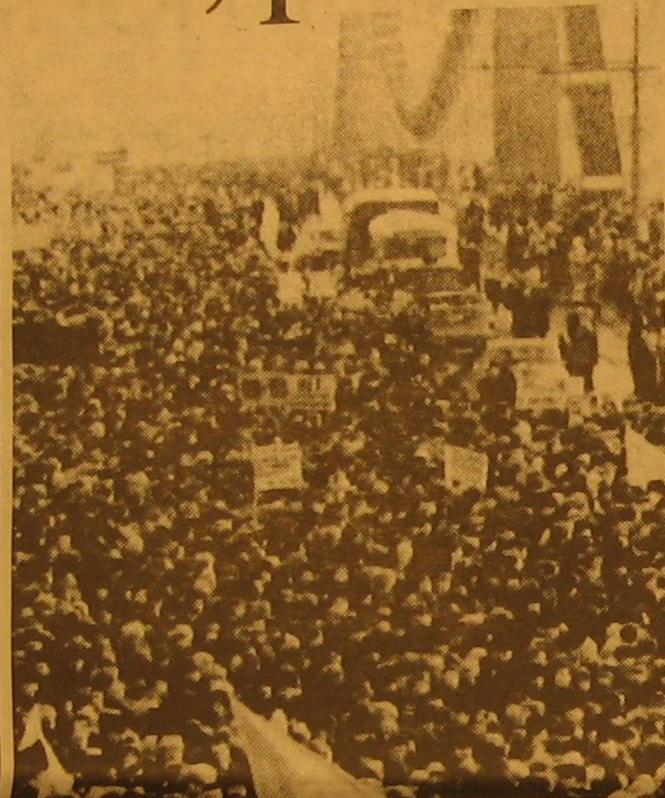
The left was just as guilty of assuming "that initiatives must come from the top down". Tariq Ali wrote of Gorbachev as leading a political revolution "from above". In Australia, we have witnessed similar propositions in the pages of *Direct Action*, until it was completely impossible to ignore the mass disaffection with Gorbachev made evident by demonstrations of hundreds of thousands in the streets of Moscow.

Then Yeltsin got a go, until without so much as a "by your leave", he promptly left the Communist Party and was no longer there able to lead the "progressive reformist current" they so desperately wanted to see in the CPSU. The baton was once again handed to a somewhat tarnished Gorbachev.

**P**ART OF the problem for both left and right versions of Kremlinology was that, in Cockburn's words again, they were "hampered by a methodology which had an inbuilt bias towards the belief that Soviet society cannot and does not change."

This is not the place to go into an analysis of the left variant of this argument. Chris Harman's review of Ernest Mandel's book, *Beyond Perestroika*, in *International Socialism* journal, No 47, goes over the state capitalist analysis in some detail. Suffice it to say here that in Mandel, there is no explanation of the dynamic of the Russian economy. Mandel himself has gone from glowing accounts of the indefinite possibilities of the Russian economy—"All the laws of development of the capitalist economy which provoke a slow down in the speed of economic growth are eliminated"—to being confronted and having to admit to the stark reality of "crisis".

With no explanation of the dynamic of the economy, their attention is focused in one way or another on the bureaucracy. It has, however, become obvious that the arguments between Gorbachev and Yeltsin, Ryzhkov and Popov, Abalkin and Shatalin, are not arguments of substance, about whether there should be privatisation, or about price rises, but rather about the way they should be carried out.



The largest demonstration since the Revolution protested against Ryzhkov's "reforms" earlier this year.

In contrast, Boris Kagarlitsky's new book, *Farewell Perestroika*, documents the rise of the mass movements, the Popular Fronts, the political clubs, the informal groups and the independent trade unions. For Kagarlitsky, the "epoch of perestroika...of contradictory and impotent reforms 'from above' inducing euphoria among intellectuals and rapture among the Western press..." has ended in a different sense.

It has been a period of breakdown passed off as reforms, and of reforms which have only led to breakdown... *Perestroika* has ended by turning into bloody chaos. But the real fight is only just beginning...the masses are beginning to grasp much better who are their enemies and who are on their side.

**F**AREWELL PERESTROIKA is a valuable and enthralling start on telling the story of perestroika from below.

The book begins in 1988 with the rise of the informal groups, the beginning of public protest, and the emergence of Pushkin Square in Moscow as a focus for informal organisation, discussion and demonstration.

Anyone who has been involved with political groups of any kind will sympathise with Kagarlitsky's accounts of the discussion associated with the early days of the Moscow Popular Front. After representatives of 18 groups draft a "Public Mandate" for presentation to the 19th Party Conference, the arguments begin around the removal of the word "socialism" from all Popular Front documents.

The arguments emerged in a different way some days later when two of the groups, Commune (a group of anarcho-syndicalists) and Civil Dignity met with the City Prosecutor and agreed to abide by the decree banning the use of Pushkin Square. The deal the City Prosecutor offered was to sanction an alternative demonstration in another part of the city which, surprise surprise, was a long way from the city centre with few passers-by etc. More arguments.

In the end the demonstration went ahead (without the minority groups) and 25 June "became a kind of political symbol, the day of the real birth of the Popular Front in the capital."

On 21 August, Democratic Union held a demonstration to protest the invasion of Czechoslovakia 20 years before. It was brutally attacked by Special Forces troops. Scores of people were beaten and arrested. Later that day, a group of Popular Front activists set out to obtain the release of those detained. They were confronted by more Special Forces troops and ordered to leave. In response to protests at the order, one of the "servants of law and order" quips, "Have you been reading too much Gorbachev?"

They were generally in a minority with very little influence over the Front's activity...and remained very distant from the day-to-day problems of people in production. Consequently the Popular Front "was incapable of resolving the tasks of free trade unions or of substituting for a Socialist Party."

**T**HE STORIES in the book speak for themselves as mass movements grow and confront the ruling circles of society.

As they strive to come to grips with the demands of building the movements and taking them forward, they are forced to try and work out what kind of political organisation is necessary to carry out the tasks.

Kagarlitsky describes the dynamic of the movements as they push against the constraints of the existing authorities and confront the limitations of their own ideas. The Moldavian Democratic Movement, for example, emerges inspired by the ideas of the Baltic Popular Fronts and their demands for national rights, only to meet the organised repression of the Moldavian Communist Party.

The official violence, as is the case in many other places as well, "far from stabilizing the situation, only reinforced radical moods among the masses." Kagarlitsky goes on,

Whereas the mass democratic and national movements at first strove to act within the framework of official legality and perceived themselves as reformist movements, the lawlessness of the authorities has brought about a transition to revolutionary methods of struggle. In a conversation with correspondents from *Vechernii Kishinev*, one of those asked the question whether he knew that the 12 March meeting was unauthorized, responded, "The October Revolution was also unauthorized."

And so the story goes on, describing the development of a movement from below that takes on a life of its own, the mass enthusiasm which accompanied the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, drawing hundreds of thousands, millions perhaps, into political activity across the USSR, and the mass disillusionment

with Gorbachev that followed his performance at the Congress. It is the beginning of the end of perestroika.

Henceforth the masses will not listen with hope or trepidation to what is happening in the Congress; but the deputies will have to react to the stormy events occurring in the country and which are passing them by...over the past months, people discovered a faith in themselves, and they had no intention of giving up one iota of their rights.

In some ways the high point of the book is its description of the self-activity of the miners' strike committees in 1989.

The strikes had definitively shown the groundlessness of hopes in a peaceful parliamentary and evolutionary path of moderate reform of which both progressive Party functionaries and Moscow liberals had dreamed... In fact, in the strike regions a situation of dual power came into being. "Although the committees reject power," wrote *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, "they have in fact had to assume some of the functions of soviets. Complaints from citizens, which previously would have been sent to Party organizations and Soviets, now come to the Kemerovo town strike committee."

What was happening was much closer to a revolutionary crisis than to "restructuring" or to the repeatedly promised but not delivered "revolution from above".

The other theme of the book is that of the struggle of political organisations desperately trying to keep up with the tasks presented by the rapidly developing social crisis and the limitations of the Popular Fronts, as broad movements united by what they are against—the rule of the Communist Party, the command system—rather than what they are for. The Popular Fronts organised largely as electoral movements had widespread support amongst workers, but workers

...were generally in a minority with very little influence over the Front's activity...and remained very distant from the day-to-day problems of people in production. Consequently the Popular Front "was incapable of resolving the tasks of free trade unions or of substituting for a Socialist Party."

**S**INCE Kagarlitsky wrote this book, the economic and social crisis of the USSR has deepened and the struggle grown more extensive.

The country's fate is no longer being decided by the deputies, government think-tanks or the bureaucrats. Every republic now has mass movements demanding national rights, some in open revolt; the influence of Sotsprof (Association of Socialist Trade Unions) and other independent trade unions has grown; strikes are more widespread.

The process of political clarification has continued as well, as activists respond to the political demands of the struggle. In June this year, Kagarlitsky took part in the founding of a new Socialist Party of the USSR.

*Farewell Perestroika* is a testament to the potential for a real struggle against bureaucratic rulers of all kinds, capable of transforming the present system and building a genuine socialist society from below.

*Farewell Perestroika* by Boris Kagarlitsky, \$20.00, available from Bookmarks.

—Reviewed by Ian Rintoul



BORIS KAGARLITSKY

# Australia 1917: from world war to class war

By Mick Armstrong

**W**HEN World War I was declared in August 1914, Australia seemed to be engulfed by a wave of patriotic fervour.

There were spontaneous pro-war demonstrations and tens of thousands rushed to enlist. Strikes were called off, rioters attacked German-owned businesses and German-born workers were sacked from their jobs.

While press and pulpit beat the drum, ALP leaders attempted to out-do them for chauvinism. Andrew Fisher, soon to be elected Labor Prime Minister, made his famous vow to "fight to the last man and the last shilling" for the British Empire.

Many on the left were shocked and demoralised by this stance, and the collapse of European social democracy into pro-war chauvinism. But they should not have been surprised. As early as 1910 Labor's future wartime Defence Minister Senator Pearce had declared that:

...the party to which he belonged was trying to realise the high ideals of humanity. There was no surer guarantee for working out those ideals than the Union Jack, the symbol of the British Empire. They had to look further afield than the mere defence of Australia, and be prepared to defend that flag and all it represented.

Yet within the space of three years, Australia was to be rocked by a great wave of upheavals that were to continue into 1920. The high points were the 1917 NSW General Strike and the massive campaigns which defeated the two conscription referenda.

The Labor Party would split in the face of mass insurgent demonstrations, armed street clashes, the formation of Labor Volunteer Armies and strike after strike outside the control of union officialdom.

Many, both on the left and right of the political spectrum, would see revolution as inevitable. How did this dramatic turnaround occur and why didn't this, the greatest social crisis ever in Australian history, end in revolution?

## Recovering from defeats

**T**O BEGIN to answer these questions it is necessary to briefly trace the development of the working class movement in the pre-war years.

The union movement had been badly shattered by the defeat of the great strikes of the early 1890s and the long drawn out Depression from which there was no sustained recovery until 1906. In response the official movement had embraced Arbitration and parliamentary Laborism.

However after 1906 there was a rapid recovery in industrial militancy and the growth of syndicalism with its emphasis on militant direct action and scorn for parliament.

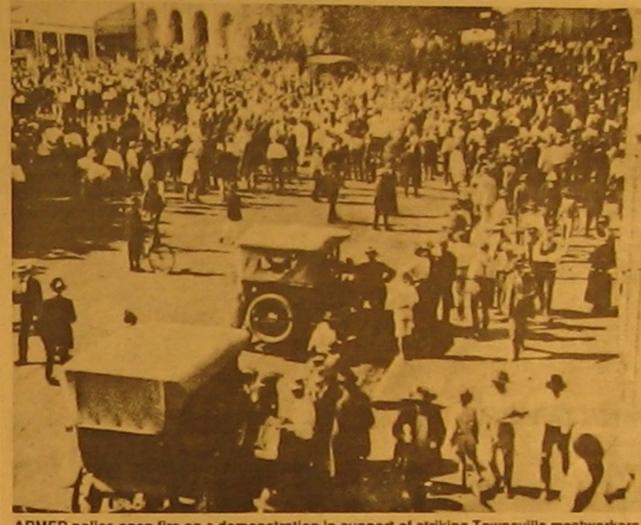
The miners led the way. The 13,000 or so NSW coal miners and the fewer than 9,000 Broken Hill metal miners accounted for three-quarters of all strike days in the pre-war upsurge. They emerged as clearly the most militant and most politically advanced section of the class and consequently developments in the mines were central throughout this period.

The pre-war upsurge peaked in 1909 with an 18 week Newcastle coal miners strike which was savagely defeated, and a four month lockout of Broken Hill miners. However by 1914 the movement had bounced back from these setbacks and indeed the war interrupted a new surge of struggle.

With the war, most strikes were immediately called off or collapsed—though not all. NSW South Coast miners fought on despite the patriotic euphoria and there was a virtual mutiny by seamen aboard the troopship Kanowna over their water allowance.

Still the general mood in the working class was undoubtedly pro-war and the level of strikes plunged by half in 1915. There was a high level of enlistment amongst unionised workers. Even in some pits, the workers forced the sacking of Germans and the Broken Hill miners' paper initially took a pro-war stance.

Still the extent of pro-war enthusiasm should not be exaggerated. Most participants in pro-war demonstrations were middle class. Many workers who enlisted did so for economic reasons as unemployment doubled to 11% by the end of 1914 due to the wartime disruption of trade.



ARMED police open fire on a demonstration in support of striking Townsville meatworkers in June 1919. The period was marked by violent class struggles.

## War fever wanes

**S**PONTANEOUS patriotic outpourings were very short lived. The Labor government had to mount a massive propaganda offensive to maintain recruitment and impose draconian censorship regulations to hide the horrors of war.

One example: in late 1914 the government released a film of German "atrocities" in Belgium. It had been shot "on location" outside the Sydney gas works.

Most workers had naively expected the war to be a smashing victory—all over in a few short months. As the death toll mounted the mood became more subdued. Casualties undermined morale inside the army itself. There was a wave of rioting by soldiers in army camps all across Australia in 1916. By August 1916 recruitment had collapsed.

The new Labor Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, now increasingly campaigned for the introduction of conscription.

One symptom of the trend was the fall-off in church attendance. From the commencement of the war, Protestant pulpits were draped with the Union Jack and it was difficult at times to distinguish between sermons and calls for recruits. Whilst respectable middle class society revelled in this jingoism workers were increasingly repulsed. Soldiers who had seen the slaughter in the trenches turned sharply away from religion.

At the same time working class resentment was building up over a series of economic grievances—unemployment and prices were spiralling while wages were held down. Workers were angry at the massive wartime profiteering, which saw shipping profits alone multiply twelve-fold between 1913 and 1916.

For a period high levels of unemployment, which undermined workers' confidence to fight, helped hold these frustrations in check. The first serious outbreak of unrest came on the Melbourne wharves in late 1915 culminating in a strike in early 1916, in defiance of union officialdom, to stop the export of wheat while the price of bread was so high at home.

Still this should not be interpreted as a strike against the war itself, the mood at this stage was more one of demanding equality of sacrifice. Pro-war sentiment continued to hold workers in check.

This was reflected in January 1916 when 2,000 coal miners on the NSW South Coast, under the leadership of syndicalist militants, struck for shorter hours in defiance of their left officials. The continuing patriotic mood meant they could not pull out the northern miners and isolated, were forced back to work.

In the last half of 1916 however this mood began to sharply change. Industrial grievances were now re-inforced by political ones.

Easter 1916 saw the brutal crushing by British troops of the Dublin uprising. The execution of the leaders of the rising, and a vicious outburst of Protestant sectarianism against the Irish-Australian minority of the working class, increasingly turned them against the war.

Moreover it was the growing threat of conscription that was to cohere the whole class in an enormous mass movement. Workers saw conscription as a threat to union organisation and bitterly opposed the unfairness of conscripting labour when there was no conscription of capital.

## Miners in the vanguard

**B**ROKEN HILL was in the vanguard. Initially the miners had been on the backfoot; half the workforce had been sacked at the outbreak of war as the main market for ore was Germany and Belgium.

This unemployment led to a high level of enlistment and provoked a wave of anti-German and anti-immigrant racism.

Anti-war militants here, just as in the rest of Australia, were at first a tiny, isolated minority. At one farewell for enlisted men in early September 1914, socialists who booed and hooted were attacked by bystanders who chased them to the Socialist Hall and attempted to smash it up.

But despite this the miners' union, the AMA, under socialist and syndicalist influence began to campaign against the war. Quite sensibly they linked their anti-war agitation to the miners' economic grievances. Agitation to cease paying rent till the war was over led in 1915 to a general stoppage of rent payments. The major issue that the militants began to organise around was the shorter working week.

In May 1915, a move to strike for a 44 hour week was defeated due to the continuing strength of pro-war sentiment amongst the rank and file. However by now the militants had cohered, as one observer put it, as a "vociferous, uncompromising and well organized" minority.

By October they were on the march. The underground miners formed a separate committee, headed by leading socialists and syndicalists. They broke with both the more conservative surface workers and their own officials, despite them being easily the most left wing in the country, and refused to work Saturday afternoons. Their slogan was: "If you want a 44 hour week take it!"

The bosses responded with sackings and this provoked a month long strike. The extremely determined and well organised underground miners set up mass pickets to impose their will on the rest of the workforce. After bitter clashes on the picket lines with the pro-war engine drivers, they closed down the mines.

The strike was widely perceived as undermining

the war effort as it threatened munitions production. As one bourgeois commentator put it:

It implied an unequivocal rejection of all appeals to patriotism, arbitration, and the public interest in favour of the assertion of their rights by force.

Precisely! The strike had little support outside Broken Hill and even in the town itself the underground miners were in a minority. However their bargaining position was strong, as with the shift to war production the mines were making massive profits and the government badly needed their output.

They had a smashing victory. A minority within a minority had broken through. This economic struggle now gave a major boost to the political struggle against the war. The ideas of the anti-war socialists who had led the strike began to obtain a resonance.

## The Labor Volunteer Army

**I**N JULY 1916, in the face of the growing threat of conscription, the militants launched the Labor Volunteer Army.

The 2,000 draft-aged workers who enrolled in the LVA in Broken Hill all took the following oath:

I... being fully convinced that conscription of life and labour in Australia will be a death blow to organised labour and will result in the workers of this land crushed into subjection by a capitalist military oligarchy, do hereby pledge myself to the working class of Australia that I will not serve as a conscript (industrial or military) and that I will resist by every means in my power any attempt to compel me or any of my comrades... to break this pledge, even though it may mean my imprisonment or death, and I take this pledge voluntarily and freely, knowing that if I break it I will be branded as a traitor to my class.

The LVA soon grew into a huge mass movement. In August 1916 after Empire loyalists attacked an anti-conscription meeting, 10,000 out of a Broken Hill population of just 30,000 rallied to denounce them.

There followed weekly, one-day stoppages against conscription and a series of monster demonstrations. In the wake of this campaign two leading militants, Percy Brookfield and Mick Considine, were elected to parliament in the place of the local Labor MPs who had not taken a strong stance against conscription.

The Broken Hill example spread to the capital cities with strikes against conscription and the formation of Labor Volunteer Armies. On 4 October 1916 there was a nationwide anti-conscription stopwork.

Up until about August the Empire loyalists had held control of the streets of the main cities. Physical attacks, particularly by soldiers, made it difficult to hold anti-conscription meetings.

On 13 August, at a 100,000 strong rally in the Sydney Domain, anti-conscription soldiers joined with working class demonstrators to drive off the right wing mob. The tide was beginning to turn.

In Brisbane a big clash in early October, involving shooting between soldiers and armed workers, led to the formation of a Labor Volunteer Army. The following week the LVA defeated attacks by rioting soldiers.

From now on, it was the pro-conscriptionists whose meetings were consistently broken up. Just one example: in the north Queensland town of Bundaberg 1,000 rioted against a pro-conscription meeting badly injuring the speaker—a former Labor minister.

In Brisbane, during a parade of draftees two days before the poll, nine young men who had refused to attest stood on the balcony of the Queensland Irish Club and called to the marchers below, "How are you going to vote?". They were greeted with a roar of "No!" from the reluctant troops.

The narrow NO victory in the referendum on 28 October, in turn served to deepen the economic struggle.

An all out coal strike in November was marked by a high level of rank and file involvement. After overturning a compromise proposal by their officials they won a smashing victory, both shorter hours and a 20% wage increase.

Massive unrest now increasingly spread out from the mines to other areas. There were important victories by shearers, meatworkers and many other

# Australia 1917: from world war to class war...

groups of workers. In August 1917 came the first demonstration for an immediate peace.

## The left's weaknesses

SO FAR, I have stressed the enormous strengths of the insurgent movement. Now we have to examine its weaknesses if we are to understand subsequent setbacks.

Inside the anti-conscription campaign, the far left, both socialists and syndicalists, tended to tail the leadership of the movement. At the national level this was dominated by fairly moderate, Labor anti-conscriptionists, feminists and pacifists.

This limited the militants' capacity to harness the massive anti-conscription sentiment for outright opposition to the imperialist war.

This is most clearly seen over the issue of racism. The mainstream of the campaign, including prominent pacifists and feminists like Adela Pankhurst, raised as a central question the bogey of "coloured" labour being imported if conscription was introduced. This argument had broad populist appeal. Pro-conscription meetings were commonly disrupted by demonstrators yelling that "niggers" were to replace white workers sent to the front.

The far left, including even the normally anti-racist Industrial Workers of the World, went along with this racist agitation. Even in Broken Hill, where the campaign was dominated by the militant left, the racist bogey was raised.

This inevitably limited the anti-capitalist dynamic of the campaign. Instead of emphasising a class-based, internationalist opposition to war, the far left helped channel the movement into narrow nationalism.

Furthermore by not challenging racism at this stage, the far left left open the space for a subsequent right wing, racist, Red-scare campaign. In 1919 a large, fascist-style movement was mobilised against the local, pro-Bolshevik, Russian community and socialists were attacked for adopting the "Maoist ideology of the Red degenerates". The "Maoist" label was used to attack the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the Australian Labor Party (ALP). Heavily influenced by syndicalist ideas, the IWW was organising the existing craft unions into a more militant, centralised and industry-based One Big Union.

Alternatively, the IWW stood for building a totally new revolutionary union.

## Limits of syndicalism

THIS RELIANCE on unions as the revolutionary instrument limited the militants' capacity to effectively challenge the politics of Laborism.

This became most obvious in the biggest and most decisive struggle of the period, the 1917 NSW General Strike. The General Strike started amongst metalworkers in the railway workshops. The formal issue was the attempt by the railways to introduce

the card system—a form of speed up. However this was but one symptom of the burgeoning discontent and bitterness.

A wave of sympathy action rapidly spread the strike to involve, in all, 76,000 workers in NSW and 20,000 in Victoria interstate. There was a high degree of rank and file involvement and the spirit of the strikers was insurgent. Most had struck either in defiance of the union bureaucracy or before they were officially called out. The government responded with a well co-ordinated scabbing operation and a wave of repression.

The response of the official strike committee was totally inept and cowardly. Yet despite the militant mood of the strikers and their broad popular support, no left challenge was mounted to the official leadership.

The IWW proved incapable of intervening to offer a road forward to spread the strike, to initiate the formation of a rank and file strike committee, to co-ordinate mass picketing and most importantly, to give a political direction to the movement.

So when the sellout came, despite enormous rank and file opposition, especially by seamen and miners who stayed out for a month after the railway workers resumed work, the officials managed to reassert their control. The workers were divided up and forced back, union by union.

This defeat was a key turning point as the General Strike had the potential to go forward to an outright challenge to capitalism. That potential was blown and what followed was the widespread victimisation of thousands of militants.

## The revolt grows

STILL, the revolt was not over yet. The militant minority had been tempered by the General Strike and was now a rapidly growing minority.

While 1918 saw a sharp retreat on the industrial front, in 1919 there was a further upsurge. The need to re-organise the union movement along fighting lines was widely recognised. The idea of the One Big Union in the wake of the defeat had enormous appeal.

Militants began to win leadership in union after union. The IWW, which had been formed in NSW, was recognised by the Trades Hall Reds. As one observer put it:

Apocalypse was in the air in 1918 as workers, daily expecting peace, read ecstatic accounts of "Russia's stupendous historic achievement".

In Townsville returned soldiers were openly jeered in the streets and told "to take off that badge of slavery" (ie their RSL badge). In Brisbane wounded soldiers campaigning for right wing candidates in the 1918 elections were pelted with stones.

Some of the syndicalist militants began to see the need to go beyond trade union militancy to build a political alternative to the ALP. This trend was spurred on by the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. But this process took time to work its way through. Old syndicalist prejudices got in the road of political clarification.

This was not helped by the fact that there were



ABOVE: Angry women besiege Sydney's Parliament House in support of the 1917 strikers. LEFT: The revolutionaries of the IWW gather in Sydney's Domain to spread their ideas.

## The system restabilises

HOWEVER, by the early 1920s Australian capitalism had been restabilised. In part this was due to victory in the war which took some of the sting out of anti-war feeling.

As well the Labor Party, following the split with the pro-conscriptionists, deliberately sought to project a more left wing image. This better enabled it to channel working class aspirations into directions less threatening to capital.

The forces of the right which had been thrown onto the defensive in 1917 now reorganised. They mounted a vituperous Red-scare campaign backed up by huge paramilitary mobilisations which intimidated many workers. Furthermore the economy began pick up after the wartime disruption in the early 1920s.

However, just as important as these factors was the weaknesses of the vanguard of the class. The working class as a whole had moved sharply to the left from 1916 onwards, but the forces of the far left were not strong enough to take advantage of the upheavals of 1917 or of the subsequent explosion in 1919.

Partly this was a product of the small size of the revolutionary left at the beginning of the war. But it also reflected political weaknesses.

The IWW collapsed unable to offer a road forward. Other syndicalists were slow to draw the lessons and by the time the Communist party had eventually formed the movement was on the downswing.

very few Australian socialists with any real understanding of the politics of the Bolsheviks. The clear-cutness of the local Russian Communists, but their numbers were small and they were seen in the broader labour movement as alien outsiders. In NSW this meant that many of the best militants firstly engaged in a futile attempt to capture the still-born Industrial Socialist Labor Party. It was not until late 1920 that a Communist party began to get off the ground. By the time this process had been worked through the second wave of struggle was largely over. 1919 saw an explosion of economic struggles over wages and the threat of post war unemployment. Broken Hill was again in the forefront. After an 18 month lockout the miners won the 35 hour week, an amazing achievement for that period. They key struggle was however by seamen who shut down much of industry and won a smashing wages victory in defiance of Arbitration. The tactics adopted in many of these strikes reflected the extreme bitterness and insurgent spirit of many workers. In Townsville, sanitary workers striking over victimisations upended night soil pans on the steps of City Hall and in front of the homes of prominent citizens. Respectable opinion was outraged, but the strikers won.

# State capitalism rankles

IT WAS only recently that I was able to pick up a copy of *The Socialist* and only on reading it through did it twig with me that *The Socialist* belongs to the same group of people who "intervened" at the Socialist Scholars Conference.

Really "intervene" is too productive a word for a relentless barrage of irrelevant broken records pumped out by the same platform several times during that conference within the scope of question and discussion periods. Some of us were interested in a discussion; we didn't travel all the way to Sydney to be patronised or lectured somewhat pedantically.

However, I suppose it is your right to out talk anyone else in discussion but what bugs me most is your insistence on a state capitalist perspective. Whilst there are many views on the nature of the Soviet Union—now and yesterday—I see that as a natural product of a diverse left drawing its ideas from many sources. But you embrace this one aspect of your outlook as some sort of *raison d'être*—what Marx called a shibboleth—which differentiates you from everyone else.

As I recall, even Mao Zedong was a state capitalist, but Mao never insisted that that was what made him a Maoist. So this makes me wonder why you seem so unwilling to air your other policies with the same adamancy of your view of the Soviet Union—maybe they aren't so different from anyone else's? Maybe instead of spouting out a set line you may have to enter a dialogue with other activists like myself. I belong to no political party and while I have been back in this country only a short time I do get sick of left wing groups such as yours setting up particular points to differentiate themselves from all the other left wing groups.

What matters, I suggest, is not what you say—anyone can walk on—but what you do and I've yet to see the ISO do much more than tell me (ever so loudly) that I should be a state capitalist. If I want to be a religion I'll go down the road, thank you.

—Denis Olsen, Rosebud (Vic)

## Kautsky's warning correct

JUST FOR the record, I am not pessimistic about change—as Phil Griffiths seems to imply in his commentary on the Socialist Scholars Conference in

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Letters MUST include a contact address and phone number so that we can verify authorship, and discuss any changes that may be necessary. Letters may be cut for length.

last month's *Socialist* (#242).

And whilst it is true that both Robin Blackburn and myself did quote Kautsky, we did so for very different purposes. I wanted to stress Kautsky's warning that the attempt to build socialism in a backward country would lead to state capitalism. This is in fact what has happened; it is even what *The Socialist* thinks has happened, and it remains not the less true for having been said by Karl Kautsky.

The major source of inspiration for my intervention at the Conference wasn't so much Kautskyism in particular as classical Marxism in general. I wanted to contrast the way in which Kautsky and Luxemburg and Marx himself saw the prospects for social revolution as dependent on the development of the productive forces with the twentieth century habit, shared by Stalinism, Trotskyism and Western Marxism, of understanding revolution as essentially a triumph of the revolutionary will. In retrospect, we can see that Marx was right and almost all forms of twentieth century "revisionism" disastrously wrong.

Much of what I had to say about the connections between Leninism and Stalinism also drew on ageing back numbers of *International Socialism* (first series), especially Michael Kidron on imperialism, Nigel Harris on the continuingly progressive role of the bourgeoisie, middle period Tony Cliff on Luxemburg and on deflected permanent revolution, Duncan Hallas on party and class, Peter Sedgwick on Victor Serge. This was an excellent journal and I heartily recommend it to all your readers (there is a nearly full set in the Monash University library).

My central argument about the connection between Leninism and Stalinism is a straight lift from Victor Serge: "It is often said that 'the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at its beginning'. Well I have no objection. Only, Bolshevism also contained

many other germs..." I was introduced to this position by my reading of, amongst others, Sedgwick and Hallas in, of course, *International Socialism*.

Your organisation's insistence that Leninism has absolutely nothing to do with Stalinism, and that Leninism is absolutely right about absolutely everything, not only flies in the face of historical reality, it also denies all that is best in your own political tradition. Perhaps the British SWP's born again Leninism can be justified as a response to the coincidence of Thatcherism and Bennyry. But in Australia it serves only to immunise you from reality itself. Which is why so many (though not all) of your comrades made such fools of themselves at the Conference.

—Andrew Milner, Melbourne

## Rap off

ANNE KENNELLY's review of the latest Public Enemy album *Fear of a Black Planet* (*The Socialist* #241) is completely off the planet. Fuck knows how she can enjoy sitting down and relaxing to Public Enemy's music "after a shitty day at work".

As a woman and a Jew I find their music insulting and dangerous: because of their strong stance against anti-Black racism, many people overlook or excuse their anti-semitism and sexism.

To start with, I am surprised that Anne Kennelly did not mention that the tradition of Black militancy which Public Enemy comes from is profoundly misogynist—a fact which cannot be altered by one line in one of their songs. Most of their music is aggressively macho.

I also find that Anne Kennelly's explanation of the group's anti-semitism is not very convincing. The Jewish Defense Organisation may have organized racist pickets outside Public Enemy gigs, but that does not excuse Public Enemy's own, anti-Jewish, racism.

Their anti-semitism does not, as Anne Kennelly suggests, stem from their Black nationalism. When they attack Jews, they are merely tapping into one of the oldest and ugliest racist conspiracy theories, as evidenced by leading member Professor Griff's statement that Jews are responsible for "the majority of wickedness that goes on across the globe".

*The Socialist* should review the Yeastie Girls—an all-women, feminist-inspired rap band, which is as least as radical as Public Enemy. Perhaps you could consider the gender politics behind the Yeastie Girls

low profile, as compared to the publicity given to all-male Public Enemy.

Even if you question their feminist politics, I'm sure you would find that their music is preferable to the anti-semitic, homophobic and sexist shit that Public Enemy rap out.

—Naomi Hauptman, Melbourne.

## Tech teachers weren't scabs

MY ARTICLE on the Victorian teachers' dispute in the last issue of *The Socialist* (#242) contained an unfortunate implication which I wish to correct.

I did not intend to argue that members of the technical teachers' union who did not join the secondary teachers' strike were scabs, nor that the VSTA leadership was wholly blameless for the divisions between the teacher unions which have undermined our campaign against the cuts.

At the time I wrote the original article (which was somewhat longer), it looked as though the VSTA, in response to pressure from below, was more serious about fighting the cuts than the FTUW. In that context, I argued for critical support of the VSTA campaign rather than calling it off or watering it down for the sake of unity. However, that situation has now changed (see my article on page 6).

The people who are caught in the middle are those teachers in schools where there are branches of both unions, due to restructuring and school amalgamations. A few months ago, this was not a problem, as the unions were planning to merge anyway, and the teachers often acted as a single branch. The current divisions between the union leaderships, and the existence of separate campaigns, puts these teachers in a terrible position. It is entirely to the credit of many of these teachers that they have continued to act in a united fashion, supporting each other's strikes and other activities. This is how real unity has to be built.

Unfortunately, the rift at the top is so deep that both leaderships have resorted to abuse of each other and talk of poaching each other's members. Nothing positive can be expected from that direction in the short term. Hopefully, solidarity from below will eventually create unity based on fighting our common enemy.

—Tess Lee Ack, Melbourne

## REVIEW

## The fire last time

*The Fire Last Time, 1968 and After*, by Chris Harman, Bookmarks, 1988, \$18. (Available from Bookmarks, or ISO branches.)

CHRIS HARMAN's book, *The Fire Last Time: 1968 and After*, is more than just a fascinating history. It's full of lessons for activists today—especially if you're trying to build a revolutionary organisation.

The book was published in 1988, so this is definitely not its first review. But it is worth reviewing again since US troops invaded the Gulf because it can remind us of what is possible in such crises.

Harman explains how the 1968 revolutionary movement was a product

of the way the pattern of capital accumulation on a world scale had caused a crisis of US hegemony, of the fragmentation of the Stalinist bloc, and of the fusing together of formerly submissive rural populations into powerful new groups of workers... and the vast new student populations, forced to try to learn sets of ideas which no longer made sense of a world that seemed to be cracking up.

Not the same as today, but note the similarities. International crises open up the opportunity for generalised discussion and debate, leading some people, particularly students, to begin to question the entire rationale of the system.

In the 60s, students began struggles around reforms to universities. They may have remained just that but two other issues intermingled—the escalation of US involvement in the Vietnam war and the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Harman writes:

August 1968 was to go down in history as the month in which the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union showed they would not tolerate experiments at "communism with a human face".

That month tanks crushed the "Prague Spring" in Czechoslovakia. In the West, August 1968 was also the month when... the leaders of the Democratic Party of the United States showed they would not tolerate experiments with democracy." Police violently attacked demonstrators outside the Democratic Convention in Chicago, which elected the pro-war candidate.

Young people went to Chicago to protest as pacifists or to hand out leaflets in support of Gene McCarthy (a relative "dove" on the Vietnam issue) and left as revolutionaries. The Russian tanks meant that these new revolu-

tionaries could not so easily look to the East for an alternative. Young people were rejecting reformism and Russian-Stalinism for more democratic revolution. In many countries around the world, small revolutionary groupings began to get a hearing.

And it wasn't only students; young workers soon joined the riots against police. In Paris a week of Barricades culminated in a general strike of 10 million workers. Students were occupying universities and conducting teach-ins on revolution, while workers locked out their bosses.

The working class became the decisive force in certain major Western countries. In France, the President was forced to flee for a period. Later, in 1974, in Portugal, a workers' revolution brought down a fascist dictator.

But the struggle was stopped short of socialist revolution. Harman details the steps that led to defeat. Each time, the missing element was cohesive and decisive organisation.

To look at France, where there was most potential: there was no party to give an alternative lead to that of the Communist Party which was only interested in getting their members back to work, and preparing for parliamentary elections.

But the workers showed every willingness to continue the battle in the factories and on the streets. Unfortunately the only alternative organisation of revolutionaries that united workers and students were the Committees of Action. They could provide the necessary discussion of strategy and tactics, but unlike a revolutionary party they could not act quickly with a single will.

So when the Communist Party abandoned the strikes, there was no alternative to lead the struggle forward.

Can we be better prepared next time? The late 60s period showed that a revolutionary organisation could grow quite rapidly in the midst of the struggle. While a party based on the working class is necessary for ultimate success, the 1960s showed how even a student-based organisation could have some influence even in the early days of struggle.

In Britain, where the struggle never reached the heights of France, the International Socialists were quite well-placed on certain campuses. They increased their size through intervening in the student and anti-Vietnam war campaigns from 400 to 1000 in 1968, selling 7000 copies of their weekly newspaper, many to industrial workers.

This put them in the position to then begin relating to worker militants as strikes broke out in 1969. They used student members to intervene in working class struggle from the outside, via pickets etc, and recruited workers, building their group to 4000 by the mid-70s. Harman explains that revolutionary organisations are not just built in the workplaces. In periods when

workers face defeat and demoralisation, they are unlikely to be attracted to revolutionary politics. So, revolutionaries must continue to build their organisation wherever they can.

It was precisely the ability of revolutionary organisations to grow in the student, black and anti-Vietnam war struggles of 1968 that enabled some of them to relate to mass workers' struggles afterwards.

Revolutionaries played a huge role on the campuses. Harman doesn't mention Australia, but even here revolutionary students eventually won control of the national student union AUS.

Out of this period new revolutionary organisations flourished. Unfortunately they were often inexperienced, especially in relating to workers, or did not have coherent organisation to put ideas into practice.

Such problems can be overcome, it depends on the preparation we do now. The ISO in Australia has shown it can build an audience for our ideas on the campuses. If we continue to build our campus clubs with regular meetings, paper sales and joint activities with other lefties, we will have taken crucial steps in that preparation.

The current crisis has not led to a 1960s style upturn. Far from it. But we cannot predict what will eventually, just as no one predicted May '68. History doesn't repeat itself but books like Harman's can be a guide for "The Fire" next time.

—by Judy McVey

## Forests under threat

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

The Combined Environmental Groups refused to endorse the proposal which will hand over 1.1 million hectares to the timber industry as permanent wood production zones and lift the woodchip quota by 400,000 tonnes a year.

Bob Brown of the Green Independents called for 3 months public discussion which Field rejected. On 1 October the Greens announced they would not support the legislation necessary to implement the strategy and the Accord ended.

Field felt safe to hold out on this issue because he could be seen to be putting jobs and the economy first, and because the conservatives would not be able to win votes on the issue in a fight with the greens if it came to an election.

Whether in Parliament or out of it, the pitfalls of co-operating with governments were amply demonstrated by the Corowa dispute.

The Australian Conservation Foundation participated in the task force which selected the technology and the site. Greenpeace stood on the side of the Corowa townspeople opposing the incinerator as a means (overseas experience has shown problems with unexpected toxic emissions) and the site (Corowa is the centre of a coal, cereals and wine-growing area).

The ACF is now obliged to defend and sell the decision in opposition to Greenpeace at the price of its own credibility. If the ACF persists, its credibility in the environmental movement is lost; if it doesn't, its stocks with the government go down—a no-win situation.

There is no doubt that activists feel betrayed by recent events but do not yet draw the conclusion that co-operating with governments is a problem in itself. This presents a dilemma for the major environmental organisations. How do they pursue their aims if the electoral strategy is not an option and co-operation does not work?

ACF president Peter Garrett in a recent interview argued that one bad decision does not mean all decisions will be flawed. It is not so much that the ACF trusts the Hawke government as it shares the same frame of reference—nationalist and reformist. Despite their claims to think globally they accept the demands of the trade deficit and the need for competitiveness.

They applauded the pathetic decision to adopt a planning target for reducing greenhouse gas emission, meekly accepting the qualification not to proceed with measures that adversely affect Australia's trade competitiveness.

While they accept a capitalist framework in which they tinker to soften the worst effects, the Hawke government will be able to co-opt them to preserve its green credentials and market its decisions to their constituency.

The Wilderness Society on the other hand has decided to stay out of the working groups, citing organisational difficulties as well as reservations about the process.

What the green groups need to come to grips with is the changed climate. The Labor government does not feel the same need to placate the green lobby, it is much more worried about the economy and the attitude of the bosses.

The tactics of lobbying, petitioning the government or the bosses and reasoned argument will not work. It will take mobilisations to defend the forests in NSW and Tasmania, the sort of fight which has begun in Corowa to stop the incinerator.

They need the muscle of the trade union movement which the Rainforest Action Group in Melbourne has enlisted to ban use of imported rainforest timber. Now there is a campaign to ban import of the timber altogether.

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# The Socialist

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## AS THE ECONOMY GOES BAD, IT'S A...

# FIGHT FOR THE FORESTS

By  
Anne  
Picot

**AS THE ECONOMY nose-dives, the ruling class has launched an offensive against the environmental movement.**

The number of hostile articles in the press has increased. The mining lobby has stepped up its attacks. The economic rationalists in Cabinet came out in the open in the debate on greenhouse gases to oppose environmental controls which threaten competitiveness.

A number of recent decisions by government signal the anti-green backlash.

One was to allow logging in old-growth areas of the NSW South-East forests. Another was the Tasmanian forest strategy which led to the break-down of the Accord with the Green Independents.

Then there has been the dispute about the Corowa toxic waste incinerator and the argument amongst the environmental groups themselves about participation in the "ecologically sustainable development" working groups.

■ THE NSW forests decision pleased no-one. While there is a 12% increase to the protected area, the national park areas are three small islands instead of one large, contiguous area.

This means all the reserved areas are at risk in the future because none are large enough or sufficiently buffered to preserve their integrity. Yet the main reason for protecting these forests was to preserve habitat for rare and endangered species, plant and animal.

Although half the National Estate listed forests in the area will now be available for logging, the timber industry opposed the 12% increase to national parks, claiming this would cost the closure of one sawmill and over 100 jobs.

The local farming community had joined the environmentalists' cause because they feared the consequences for the local water supply if the Tantawangalo catchment area was logged.

On 31 October a consortium looking into a pulp mill on the east coast announced the project was feasible. Victorian green groups pointed out that the NSW areas could not supply a major new pulp mill alone and that the Victorian government would be pressured to allow logging in the Gippsland forests.

In the interim the government intends to ignore a biological survey conducted by its own department of Conservation and Lands which identified 111 sites of significance, and is instead allowing them to be logged.

### BAN

The East Gippsland coalition promised the government a fight like it has never seen before and Steve Crabb responded by introducing legislation to ban demonstrations in National Parks areas.

Hawke and Greiner justified the compromise saying the area now protected was as much as was compatible with the need to cut the \$1.8 billion trade deficit in paper and timber products.

So much for consultation about sustainable development.

■ IN TASMANIA, after 15 months of consultation the Field Labor government presented a final document on forest strategy with 2 days for agreement.

CONTINUED PAGE



LAST month, the Melbourne Rainforest Action Group (RAG) helped to organise a tour of three tribespeople from the Island of Sarawak in Malaysia.

The Penan, hunter-gatherers who depend on the rainforest for survival, have been waging a long and bitter struggle against timber loggers and the Malaysian Government.

Malaysia exports huge amounts of rainforest timbers such as Meranti and Merbau to countries like Australia.

Logging on Sarawak has led to the pollution of the rivers and streams, annihilation of

## Unions back Penan struggle

native flora and fauna and soil erosion.

And all this in the oldest rainforest on earth, millions of years older than the Amazon or Congo, and consequently home to more diverse species—many of potential use to humanity.

All of this is disappearing fast, along with the Penan. One of the highlights of the

tour was a meeting between the Penan and 150 members of the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) at Swanson Dock.

The Rainforest Action Group has already established good relations with the wharfies as a result of their regular blockades of ships importing timber from Sarawak.

Meeting actual Penan, who

are risking infection by flu (and probably jail when they return home) to tell their story to the world, served to underline the argument.

The wharfies already have 24 hour bans on timber ships. RAG plan to escalate by picketing the timber yards on Kansai Dock in November—a picket which the TWU have already agreed to honour.

—by Lynne O'Neill

RAG has launched a Save the Rainforests Picket. If you're interested in helping, ring the RAG Hotline on (03) 826 6659 or go to one of the weekly RAG meetings—Tuesday 7.30pm in the Environment Centre, Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

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