Peace marchers challenge Hawke

Social Rights Conference
Broad opposition to Accord

‘Australia should aid Nicaragua’
Eyewitness report by Peter Milton

Philippines election boycott
How Australia aids Marcos regime

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Biggest peace marches yet

Yellowcake Bob

The nuclear disarmament movement took a big step forward on April 15 when over 50,000 people took part in some of the marches headed by APW figures like Bob Brown. The theme of the march was clearly against many of the policies and practices of the Hawke Government. The Government's sell-out on uranium was undoubtedly one of the reasons for the high turnout. The following are approximate figures for the major cities: Sydney 120,000; Melbourne 100,000; Perth 25,000; Adelaide 5,000; Newcastle 3,000; Hobart 2,000.

Wage levels

The Editor

In the midst of Keating and Hawke's euphoria about economic recovery, one important statistic has gone largely unnoticed. Under the combined impact of half indexation of the ACC and the Accord, the real cost of living has fallen back to pre-1974 levels. Through the 1980s the average share of national income going to wages was 69.6 per cent (in 1974, 71.1 had increased to 66.9 per cent). Lynch and Fraser campaigning for wages to return to their "natural" level. The resulting policies of the Hawke Government have proved successful. Treasury statistics show that by the end of the December quarter of 1984 the wages share of national income was 68.5 per cent. This is the lowest level in the post-war period.

Letters to L.M.

Barry Petersen, NSW

I was not surprised to hear that 11 members of the Victorian State executive of the Communist Party were expelled from the Party and decided to try and found a new one. It is interesting to speculate on what impact these people will have on the ALP. They say they want to form a new socialist organisation open to all Liberals and Nationalists who want to leave the ALP. This sounds like a bit of a disaster and the article by Paul White in the last issue of Labor Militant indicates where the existing factions have ended up - in the ALP!

The Communist Party supporters of the Prices and Incomes Accord which, in my view, put them to the right of the ALP, particularly in Victoria. Despite this, the ACC and the Accord ended up strengthening the Centre in both Labour and the ALP in Victoria. Left if the case is not that it would have been better if they didn't join in.

In Sydney we've just seen another example of the Communist Party electing to leave the ALP. The Green Left, with the Green Left and the Socialist Campaigners, now has greater representation in the ALP than the Communist Party. The Communists are not the only ones who have left the ALP. For example, the Liberal Party has now left the ALP.

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April 15 rallies

250,000 reasons to change policies

Bill Hayden did not join 250,000 disarmament supporters in the streets on April 15, but he did try to clutch the coat-tails of this powerful mobilisation.

He sent a message to the marchers that the Government "shares the (disarmament) commitment to stop this race to the bottom with a high priority on peace, arms control and disarmament." It suggested the rallies had indicated that the Government had put "the support of Australians from all walks of life.

Two days later he released a statement that expressed reservations about the ANZUS treaty and the fact that North-West Cape U.S. military bases is "a high priority nuclear target".

But he would be fooled by Hayden's posturing. When his message was read out to the Sydney rally many in the crowd of around 30,000 found it impossible to contain both his eloquence and his views. Around the country the peace marchers had completely opposed the Labor Government's policies with demands like "No nuclear bases!" and "U.S. bases out!" The demonstrators were enormous because most people everywhere Australia is involved in preparations for nuclear war. The election of a Labor Government had done nothing to calm that fear.

Labor's case has certainly been helped by the leaching of the Cabinet's "Strategic Balance of Australia Defence Policy" document. The states that a Labor Government would develop nuclear weapons is now considered a military threat. It is a lie with cold war rhetoric.

Hayden's case was also undermined by public statements by Prime Minister Hawke and Minister for Energy Senator Walsh. On April 13 Walsh took advantage of a radio interview in Adelaide to assert that the Cabinet had decided to protect the bases and the ANZUS alliance. On April 15 Walsh had to admit that the rallies for an end to uranium mining in the Northern Territory are against the Labor Government's policies. It is now certain that large sections of the Labor Party are against the nuclear build-up.

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Continued from page 7

When wages remained fairly static while prices rose dramatically. The rise in prices was caused by the increased wages in the mining industry, particularly in the coal and steel industries. The government responded by introducing price controls and rationing schemes. These measures were effective in controlling inflation, but they also reduced the incentive for workers to increase their productivity.

Walsh backs Hawke on uranium

At the last National Party Conference, in 1982, the amendment to open up further uranium mining in the Northern Territory was passed by the narrow margin of 51 to 46. Malcolm Fraser, the former Prime Minister of the Centre Left faction, had lobbied the conference against the original proposal to limit uranium mining to three sites near Sydney. Fraser was concerned about the economic benefits of uranium mining.

After the conference, Walsh and Hawke continued to fight over the issue of uranium mining. Walsh believed that the sale of uranium would bring in much-needed revenue for the Commonwealth government. Hawke, on the other hand, was concerned about the environmental impact of uranium mining.

Bruce Treloar
Member for Annanda (NSW) ALP Branch

Since the 1981 Conference the Victorian, Western Australian and Queensland branches of the ALP have reaffirmed their support for uranium mining. In Queensland and Western Australia support for the mines has come from both Left and Right factions.

However, there was opposition to the sale of uranium from the Nationalists in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory branch of the ALP was opposed to the sale of uranium, and the Northern Territory Government remained committed to the development of the uranium industry.

Walsh has suggested that Australian suppliers should be given preferential treatment in the allocation of uranium mining leases. This would ensure that the Australian mining industry would benefit from the sale of uranium.

Bruce Treloar, Member for Annanda (NSW) ALP Branch, has also made a similar suggestion. He said that the sale of uranium should be used to create jobs in the Northern Territory.

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Interview with Craig Johnston

A socialist gay activist on Sydney City Council

Local government elections for the Sydney City Council in April resulted in significant losses for the Labor Party, forcing the resignation of Mayor Lizette Chappie, and a contest for the leadership of the City Council. The results were also reflected in the loss of seats for Labor candidates at the NSW state election in March. The electoral defeat was a result of the Labor Party's failure to address the needs of the working class and the growing influence of the right-wing forces in the city.

Janet Burnell
Member for Rose Bay (NSW) ALP Branch and Municipal Employees Union

In the City Council elections, the results were achieved by right-wing candidates associated with the former Mayor of the City of Sydney, Bill Harpur. The former Mayor and his supporters were ambushed in 1983 by right-wing candidates who were able to play a dominating role in the ALP campaign.

Presidential Labor candidates were defeated in a number of areas by candidates who were associated with the right-wing candidates. The result of these elections was a clear and powerful endorsement of the right-wing candidates. It was a clear and powerful endorsement of the right-wing candidates.

However, the results were not all bad for Labor and one of the most successful candidates was Craig Johnston, the secretary of the East Sydney Branch of the ALP, who was elected to the City Council. Johnston, who is an gay activist, is not a gay socialist, but he is a socialist who is working to build a socialist movement in the heart of Sydney's gay community.

Johnston is a strong socialist candidate for the ALP, and has been described by many as a “most successful socialist” by many in the community. But his victory was not without its challenges. It was a challenge for the right-wing candidates to mobilise their support and to mobilise the working class.

Johnston has been able to mobilise his support and to mobilise the working class. He has been able to mobilise his support and to mobilise the working class. He has been able to mobilise his support and to mobilise the working class. He has been able to mobilise his support and to mobilise the working class.
Pay-offs for wage ‘restraint’

Marlin Tuck
Member Livingstone (NSW) ALP Branch

The Accord has been in operation for over a year, so it can now be assessed from direct experience. The first conclusion that should be drawn is that its ‘wage restraint’ has meant a cut in real wages. The National Wage Case of September 1983, the first after the introduction of the Accord, ruled out any wage increase for the current economic recovery. The then Treasurer Hawke, who was first to introduce a wage freeze that Fraser introduced in December 1978, also opposed the Hawke Government’s position. The ACCU had argued against such a radical program. Further, in passing on 43.7 percent of the increase in the wage case, the Arbitration Commission froze the unconverted surplus on their restrictions on their rights to campaign for pay rises based on rising unemployment. It virtually ruled out any pay rises outside the National Wage Case. The ACCU and the Government’s ‘black box’ in the form of the ‘wage restraint’ program will not be compensated for the price increases that take place between March and September of this year.

In addition to these specific wage cuts, the controlled wages system has an impact on the cost of living. The wage restraint program has lead to an increase in the cost of living for the average family. The ACCU estimates that a total of 115,000 jobs have been lost in manufacturing since May 1982. After a brief upturn in the second part of last year, the downward trend has continued. The downward trend has continued.

Some of the most important and interesting debate at the coming Conference will be on economic policy. At the 1982 National Conference the framework for the prices and incomes advisory board was established. That framework is unlikely to be seriously challenged in July but will be significantly influenced by what the government means in practice will emerge.

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Peter Milton's report on Central America visit

'Australia should aid Nicaragua'

Federal Parliament at the existing conditions in the three countries, and the party are an accurate and knowledgeable about Australia amongst the peoples and officials of those countries.

In assessing the performance of the Sandinista Government it is important to note that the economy was in an appallingly devastated state in 1979 when the Sandinistas gained power. The 1972 earthquake had destroyed the central district of the capital Managua and severely disrupted the economy. The previous Somoza-led dictatorship had prioritized international reconstruction funds for earthquake relief for its own private use. With the physical infrastructure destroyed by both the earthquake and the civil war, the new revolutionary government found itself with severe inflation and a paralysis of productive capacity. In addition, there was a flight of capital and a large increase of foreign debt. With the previous Somoza Government having taken a large segment of the economy in its own hands the revolutionary government inherited large Government holdings.

The Sandinista Government was therefore in a position to reorganize Government owned entities on social lines and also to participate directly in the major productive activities of the nation. For example, the domestic financial system was nationalized. However, the floods and droughts of 1982 provided a setback to the economic recovery of 1980 and 1981. More importantly economic recovery was hampered by the need to funnel resources to national defence.

Despite the difficulties, the Government has made a number of achievements. The haircut rate has been decreased from 50% of the adult population in 1979 to a rate of 3 million in 1980. Health, education, child welfare, and public enterprise, and that of private industry, was quite clear from my own experiences in the country. A particularly moving experience for my wife and I, involved meeting with the 37 women who had sons and daughters who had been killed in action against them for their deceased family members. From Honduras with the intent of (Central America) forces attempting to destroy the coffee harvest has come into the region. (The USA supplied Nicaragua with both directly and through the Honduran Government).

The women had been mounted on horses when the Pope refused to support the Sandinista Government and their priest joined them. The priest spoke English, and through him they appreciated their continuing and fervent support for the aims of the revolution, but they also indicated the strength of their religious faith.

The attitude of the Pope had both upset and angered them, and for them their priest was the true representative of the Church. When they sang their National Anthem, with tears streaming down the faces of some of them, the depth of feeling and sympathy which we felt for them was overwhelming, particularly as the meeting took place in a small parish hall, with the happy voices of schoolchildren coming from the nearby school.

Our meeting with the Defence Committees of the neighbourhood councils, was similarly overwhelming as the people were so eager to meet us. We attended a full committee session and afterwards answered questions about Australia. After the meeting, in the early hours of the morning, we toured the street blocks and talked to the people who were in duty to the night watchmen and local pastors.

Their main task is to ensure that there are no social disturbances and that there are no imbalances in the economy. They explained how the councils operated in making decisions. They indicated the importance of the residents in the development plans. The residents, based on the recommendations of the residents, make a major decision in each council.

With the moonlight reflecting on the concrete blocks of Victory celebrations in the Plaza de Revolucion in Managua

Peter Milton, a Labor member of Federal Parliament for the Victorian seat of La Trobe, made a personal fact-finding visit to Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela in late January. The following is part of the report he distributed among his fellow Parliamentarians on his return. It reports his visit to Nicaragua and makes recommendations for future relations between Australia and Nicaragua.

As part of a fact-finding visit to Latin American nations in January and February, I visited Nicaragua. The visit covered seven days from Wednesday, 30 January to Tuesday, 26 January 1985 inclusive. And involved discussions with Ministers and Public Servants and visits to areas around the capital Managua, including the town of Leon, Masaya and the Nicola River. As far as I am aware, I am the only Australian Parliamentarians who have visited Nicaragua and one of the few Parliamentarians to visit Cuba and Venezuela. In consequence, there is very little first-hand knowledge in the which could investigate more concrete long-term improvements in trade between the two countries. Of course it would be possible to combine the activities of a Parliamentary delegation with activities involving scientific, technical and cultural exchanges, if sufficient professional staff were available to the delegation.

4. Finally, whilst I applaud the upgrading of diplomatic relations between Australia and Nicaragua, whereby our Ambassador to Mexico has been given more responsibilities in his capacity. I appreciate that our diplomatic representation in the whole of Latin America is minimal and is part of the larger need for Australia to have a greater presence in the whole region. However, I am not convinced that even an extensive visit once every six months is sufficient to keep Australia up to date with the political and economic developments in such a volatile country as Nicaragua. I would hope that a trade representative, at least, could be stationed in Managua on a permanent basis.
NSW Socialisation Units 1931-33

Why the movement collapsed

The following is the second of a two-part series on the development of the powerful Socialisation Units in the NSW Branch of the Labor Party in the period 1931-1933.

The first part dealt with how the movement developed in the context of the political and economic situation of the time. It also looked at the early conflicts between the leaders of the units and the supporters of the NSW Labor Party, as well as the way in which the organization of the units was developed.

This second part begins by describing how the leaders of the movement attempted to build up the socialisation units in the union movement. It goes on to examine the impact of the movement on the NSW Branch of the Labor Party and the role of the units.

In mid-1931 the ALP general secretary, Graves, tried to exclude non-ALP members from the units. However, the labour movement did not accept this and the units continued to grow.

Martin Tuck

Member of Livingstone (NSW) ALP Branch

In 1932 the Inner Unit began to move away from the traditional structure of the movement. In some cases, the party's control was becoming too strong and the movement was becoming too bureaucratic.

The party's leadership was also becoming more interventionist and the movement was becoming more ideologically driven.

Bill McMahon, a central leader of the Socialisation Units, was removed from power in 1933.

The NSW Labor Council approved the move to establish the units and called on the Labor Party to adopt a similar structure. However, the party's leadership did not accept this and the units continued to grow.

Nevertheless, the Industrial Socialisation Committee organised a conference for delegates from the units and the party.
The aim of the working class should, and must, be the complete destruction of the Socialism State. The workers of the world should unite against all their employers, and establish a new order of society. In opposition to the bourgeois world, the Socialists drafted a new constitution for the working class. They believed that the Socialists must never again allow themselves to be dominated by the bourgeoisie.

In opposition to the Payne Report, McNamara drafted a statement attacking the advocacy of selling property by means of 'revolutionary reforms'. He suggested that 'solid socialisation of property and organisation' would guarantee that the workers would be unable to obtain a 'peaceful and orderly' society. Only if the extreme right organisation - the 'Guard' - was to be put in charge of the country's affairs, could the Socialists regain their power and become a meaningful force.

Socialism, however, was not on the agenda. It was not on the agenda because the Socialists had abandoned their goals. In the 1833 Easter Conference, Payne led a clear split in the movement. The Socialists, with Kiburn and McNamara, retreated from demanding immediate implementation of Socialism. They argued that Socialism must gradually be established, that the workers must first establish a 'socialist state' before they could demand its overthrow.

The Socialists' campaign to bring about Socialism had been defeated. Payne had been right. The movement had been divided. The Socialists had been forced to accept the bourgeois order.

3. This act entailed a social revolution, which means, in essence, the complete destruction of the Capitalist State apparatus.

4. Recognising the existence of the class conflict that was waged continuously between the working class and the capitalist class is those who sell their labour power, and the bourgeoisie, who has the means to change the system, it is essential to understand that this struggle must culminate in a revolutionary conflict between the classes.

The Socialists made use of a widely publicised October speech by Archbishop Sheehan who had declared that no Catholic should belong to, or even vote for, the ALP as long as it retained its Socialisation Objective. In response to the Archbishop's speech, a leader of the Langites, Harold MacCasley, announced that a motion to disband the Units would be presented to the 1833 Conference.

However, the Langites created a major scare before they got to that conference. For, in elections for the Party Executive in November and December 1833, candidates representing the Socialist organisation secured a clear majority of 17 out of 28 positions. The ALP had a clear majority in the ALP, but the Langites had a clear majority in the ALP.
Philippines election boycott

May 16 is the date for parliamentary elections in the Philippines. Many voters will be voting against Marcos's regime this time. Marcos himself will be running for another term. A boycott will be the expression of a growing opposition. The opposition consists of the former Senator Aquino who has returned from exile, the Liberal Party, and a number of trade unions. The opposition has been calling for a boycott of the election over the issue of Marcos's re-election. The boycott is seen as a way to express the民众's desire for change and a rejection of the Marcos regime.

The Philippines Brief

The Philippines Brief is produced by the Philippines Action Support Group (PASG) to assist understanding of the issues in the Philippines and in the Philippines specifically. PASG is a national network of people who are working for a democratic Philippines.

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Another concern of the Congress is the U.S. military bases in the Philippines. The Philippine military is under the control of the U.S. military. The Philippines is one of the few countries in the world where the U.S. military has a permanent presence. The military bases are used for training and for the deployment of U.S. forces in the region. The bases also serve as a source of economic benefits for the local economy.

The Australian aid to Marcos

The following was taken from a speech by the Prime Minister of Australia.

The Australian government announced that it would provide $10 million in aid to the Philippines to help with the reconstruction efforts after the recent flooding. The aid will be used to help with the rebuilding of infrastructure, provide emergency relief, and support the economic recovery of the affected areas.

Philippines elections: The opposition is calling for a boycott of the election over the issue of Marcos's re-election. The opposition has been calling for a boycott of the election over the issue of Marcos's re-election. The boycott is seen as a way to express the民众's desire for change and a rejection of the Marcos regime.

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El Salvador elections

Embarrassing result for Reagan

The following article, by Greg Adams in the March 25-26 issue of "Pan American Weekly," reprinted from the April-May issue of "Venceremos," is a contribution to the Committee in Solidarity with Central America and the Caribbean.

In the wake of the first round of voting in the Salvadoran presidential elections, the United States strategy in Central America faces a serious crisis. Rather than the vindication of democracy which the U.S. Reagan administration hoped to sell to the United States public, the elections turned into an embarrassing failure.

The elections have been used as an excuse for introducing increasing numbers of U.S. military personnel into the region. In addition, the U.S. administration announced that thousands of troops would begin military exercises on the border with Honduras.

Toward the end of 1980, there were strong indications that the United States would intervene in a large-scale military intervention in El Salvador. Even with the release of the Kistinger Commission report in January, there appeared to be broad unity among United States political leaders on the need for direct military action.

At this time, diplomatic initiatives by the Nicaraguan government, including the announcement of forthcoming national elections and a broad amnesty for many who had been involved in antigovernment actions, began to undercut the United States government's strategy.

At this moment the disastrous defeat suffered by the Markies in Lebanon destroyed the apparent unity among the Kistinger Commission report, and past United States plans back ten years.

In this context, the Salvadoran elections, which were supposed to give the United States little comfort.

An unofficial tally of the votes in the first round has given just over 44 percent to Christian Democratic candidate General Juan Alfredo Duarte, followed by D'Aubuisson with 23 percent. Third place in the eight-person race is held by Francisco Guerra of the right-wing National Concord Party, with 13 percent.

These figures correspond quite closely to the results of the 1982 elections for the constituent assembly. In that poll, Duarte's Christian Democrats won the largest single block of seats, but did not command an overall majority. As runner-up, D'Aubuisson's National Republican Alliance (ARENA) was able to forge a coalition with a series of smaller parties, giving the ultra-rightist control of the chamber.

Since the purpose of these elections was to set the ground for further U.S. aid to the regime, the prospect of a victory for ultra-rightist D'Aubuisson is not a pleasing one. D'Aubuisson has been identified as a former U.S. ambassador in El Salvador, Robert White, as the manager of the assault on Salvadoran Archbishop Romero.

Even the major international media have publicly recognized the climate of fraud and corruption in which the polls are being conducted. ARENA candidates have repeatedly threatened violence and even a military coup if D'Aubuisson is not elected.

"Chaos, confusion and defection reign," the Australian reported on March 28. "At least 100 stations in San Salvador never opened, because either the new electoral lists, the ballot papers, the ballot boxes, or all three, simply did not arrive." Tens of thousands of people gave up trying to vote, or were left in the long lines still outside many polling stations where the time allowed for voting expired.

Even when the polls closed, scandals continued to erupt. It was reported that the Christian Democrat vice-president of the Central Election Council, Roberto Mena Regalado, had cast two votes for a failed candidate and then had changed his name.

When results began to be posted, far behind schedule, irregularities quickly surfaced. An official announcement by the electoral council put ARENA at a total of 51,000 votes, which is considerably higher than the 44,000 D'Aubuisson had been predicted with.

The guerrillas of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) pledged that they would not take part in any vote for anyone who chooses to vote, but they made it clear that they would not allow the army in areas under guerrilla control to hold the elections.

The FMLN guerrillas have accused El Salvador of being economically ruled by the United States, and that most of the benefits of the polls were going to the military.

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In the capital, as elsewhere, the guerrillas continued to control the streets, and much of the popular support was given to the FMLN.

For the "democratic" political bosses in the capital, this reflects an un- nerving reality. Now that a third of the population of El Salvador are now under guerrilla control, the rebel opposition.

Rather than showing the "success of democracy" in El Salvador, the elections illustrate the dilemma faced by the Reagan administration today. It was a pretty poor show, but it's the best show they've got.

The United States Government cannot afford to lose in El Salvador, not only because of the popular forces.
union affiliations

Bank union's affiliation move

The following interview with Dawson Prall of the Australian Bank Employees Union was conducted for Labor Militant by Tony Brown, member of the Public Service Association in NSW, and Renelle East ALP Branch.

Question: Dawson, can you give me some background on the development of the bank union and the relationship of banks to the trade union movement? We should see if the ALF has a natural progression from there.

Answer: Yes, it has been a slow process, but we have made progress. The main issue is the need for banks to be unionized. The ALP is currently involved in a campaign for bank unionization.

Question: Do you think that bank employees are being denied their right to join a union?

Answer: Yes, I think so. We have been making progress in recent years, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

The money market at the NSW State Bank. The floating of the Australian dollar has already increased operations in this area.

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Questions and answers on a variety of topics were discussed, including the need for better wages and working conditions for bank employees. The interview concluded with a discussion of the potential impact of the Australian dollar's floating on the banking industry.
reviews

The Battle for Bermondsey

By Peter Tatchell

The Battle for Bermondsey tells the story of attempts by socialists in the Bermondsey constituency to influence the Labour Party's policy on the nationalisation of the railways. It was written by Peter Tatchell, a member of the Socialist Movement and a leading figure in the campaign for the nationalisation of the railways.

The book is an account of the events leading up to the 1922 Labour Party conference, where the issue of nationalisation was debated and decided. It includes brief biographies of a number of key figures involved in the campaign, such as H. G. Wells and A. R. Orage.

The book is highly critical of the Labour Party's stance on nationalisation, which it argues was not strong enough.

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Labor Unity avoids debate

The Victorian ALP State Conference in March did not live up to expectations. A right-wing Labor Unity faction refused to debate the Left on uranium mining. The Right's rejection of the application for affiliation to the branch of unions dominated by the National Council of Labour Unions (NCLU).

Richard Lane, Member of Parliament (Vic) ALP Branch, ATEA delegate to ALP State Conference

Labor Unity has good reason to avoid debate. When issues have been debated at past Conferences, the Left has always won and the argument and gained support. Hawke's faction is not interested in debating issues for the sake of clarification. Its major effort in Victoria is directed at trying to switch future Conferences away from debates of the Left and to deal with issues that dominate in NSW.

It will be a different matter at the National Conference in July. The representative body will be dominated by the Right of the ALP and its supporters in Cabinet. The result of the debate will be an overwhelming loss for Labor, and victory for the Liberal candidate.

Tatchell's comments on the right-wing of the ALP are pertinent to the debate at the Victorian ALP State Conference. His views on the need for a strong left-wing within the ALP to ensure its survival in the long term are also relevant.

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Parliamentarians in minority

At the April 1 Western Australian Constitutional Convention, where the delegates were to decide on a new constitution for the state, Labor was in a minority. The delegation included several of Labor's most prominent figures, such as the Prime Minister, James Scullin, and the Leader of the Opposition, John Loder.

Scullin made several proposals, including one for a unicameral parliament with a directly elected president, which was well-received by the delegates. However, the convention ultimately rejected all proposals except one: the establishment of a unicameral parliament with a directly elected president, which was accepted by a large majority.

The delegates were divided on other issues, such as the distribution of powers between the federal and state governments, but the convention managed to avoid a deadlock and come up with a constitution that was acceptable to most delegates.

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After the convention, several of the delegates, including Scullin and Loder, continued to work on the new constitution, which was presented to the state parliament in 1908. The constitution was eventually adopted by the parliament and became the basis for Western Australia's government until 1934.
Legal test for affirmative action

Thirty-six women in the Wollongong area have taken legal action to win back their jobs in the BHP-Alloy steelworks. They were among over 300 women who gathered their jobs after the 1980-81 Jobs for Women campaign.

Pat Brewster
Member of Forest Lodge (NSW) ALP Branch and WMSU

The women were among hundreds of steelworkers sacked in 1982 and 1983. Although these sackings were carried out according to strict gate policy, the women argue that their seniority should be measured from the time they applied for a job, not from the time the company finally lifted its ban on the employment of women.

On May 16 the initial meeting of legal representatives for the women and the company will take place. Following that the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal will hold hearings in Wollongong.

This case will be of great importance to women throughout Australia as it could extend and strengthen the ability of women to use anti-discrimination legislation to gain jobs in traditionally male dominated areas of work and keep them. The case will test the legislation on both direct discrimination and the present effects of past discrimination.

Because the women are taking joint action, it will also determine whether the legislation enables groups of women in similar circumstances to act together instead of individually. The case hopes to establish that an individual complaint, if successful, can be used by other women in similar situations as a representative case.

For these reasons it could expand the use of anti-discrimination legislation as an avenue for appealing against discrimination. This would represent a significant gain in the fight for equality. Most of the women involved in the Jobs for Women campaign had been migrants from Macedonia, Turkey, Latin America and Greece.

With the onset of the recession and the consequent massive job losses in the steel industry, they were among the first to be sacked. The 36 women who filed their complaints with the Anti-Discrimination Board during 1983 argue that affirmative action had to take into account the cumulative effects of discrimination.

This case is occurring at a very opportune time. The need for affirmative action legislation with regard to job access has been recognized by the Hawke Government. The Sex Discrimination Bill which was introduced into Federal Parliament in June last year included a section on affirmative action. However, this section was deleted pending a broader discussion and a green paper has been prepared on the subject. This will be considered by the Government in May.

Affirmative action programs for job opportunities are necessary to open up the job market for women. Legislation to back up such programs has been found necessary in a number of countries. For example, such legislation has opened up jobs for women in the United States in areas such as mining and the oil and steel industries. It has been particularly important for setting access to skilled jobs.

Jobs traditionally performed by women are being undermined by technical innovation and plant rationalizations. As a result, the continuing world recession is causing women's unemployment to skyrocket higher and faster than that of men.

Affirmative action and positive discrimination policies in jobs, education and training have been introduced in Britain and Sweden. Increasingly, the workers' movement in countries like Austria, Germany and Spain is seeking affirmative action programs as a way to overcome the effects of past discrimination and high female unemployment.

Italian workers at Fiat car plants have made a significant gain when their unions forced the management to agree that 50 per cent of all new recruits should be women.

Women in the Wollongong district have faced many setbacks in the job campaigns. Not only did they lose their jobs but after winning them, they were denied legal aid to pursue their antidiscrimination case. The Legal Aid Review Committee rejected their application on the grounds that their case lacked "merit."

It is difficult to take on a multi-billion dollar monopoly like BHP when you have no job, don't speak the language and are a woman.

As the women have stated in a press release, "We wonder how many times we have to be discriminated against before we can correct the injustices we are suffering. We wonder how this legal battle can make decisions on the outcome of our case when this particular section of the Anti-Discrimination Act has never been tested, never been taken up in the past, never reached the stage of a court case."

"We wonder why our case has no merit when the legal advice we have had up until this stage indicates that the case is a good one and is important. We wonder about the use of these laws if, when a disadvantaged group like ourselves wants to seek redress under them, it is made extremely difficult for us through denial of legal aid."

Underestimated the women have kept up the struggle. They have resubmitted their case to the Legal Aid Commission and launched a fund appeal to help defray expenses.

Now that the case is finally about to be heard they need all the support they can get. They feel their case is important to all women and disadvantaged groups who have been denied equal access to work.

When these women won their jobs in the first place it was largely due to the support they received from the labour movement, the migrant community and the women's movement. They need that sort of support again to reaffirm their initial victory.

If you can help in any way, want further information or a speaker to address a meeting, or wish to send money or messages of support, write to Jobs for Women Action Committee, PO Box 138, Wollongong 2500. Phone: Monica Murphy (02) 29 6502 (work) or 28 7892 after hours, or Christina Treveska (02) 29 6502.