



Australian Marxist Review

Theoretical journal
of the Socialist
Party of Australia

- ★ *Great October, Peace, New Thinking*
- ★ *Communists in today's world*
- ★ *SPA at the WMR Conference*
- ★ *Keating's economics — deregulation*
- ★ *Unity in the student movement*
- ★ *ALP National Conference*

QUARTERLY
NEW SERIES No 20
August 1988
Price \$2

Australian Marxist Review

Editor: P Symon

Editorial Board Members:

S Anthony

R Gowland

A Miller

B Rooney

**Published by New Age Publishers
for the Socialist Party of Australia
65 Campbell Street, Surry Hills 2010
Phone (02) 212 6855**

CONTENTS

Great October, the struggle for peace and new political thinking	Alan Miller	5
The communists in today's world	<i>WMR</i> discussion	12
SPA contribution to the <i>World Marxist Review</i> conference	Peter Symon	24
Keating's economics — deregulating the economy	Anna Pha	31
Unity in the student movement	Spiro Anthony	36
The ALP National Conference	Alan Miller	45

Great October, The Struggle for Peace and New Political Thinking

The following is a contribution made by
Central Committee Secretary Alan Miller on behalf of
the Socialist Party of Australia to the
International Scientific Conference entitled:
The Great October Revolution and the Contemporary World
held in Moscow on 8–10 December, 1987

New and creative political thinking must correctly reflect the needs and possibilities of the times and be the moving force in the forward march of human society and human thought.

This is in our view one of the greatest political lessons of the Great October Socialist Revolution, a lesson which is often overlooked or grossly underestimated by the contemporary communist movement.

It was the brilliant new thinking of Lenin's that guided the way to the revolution that "shook the world" and blazed the path for mankind's bright future.

Lenin's thinking however was new not because it was fashionable and not because it was wordy rhetoric. It was new because it used the scientific method of analysis contained in the theory of Marx and Engels in a correct and creative way in order to bring out the truth about the situation in Russia at the

beginning of the 20th century. Probably some at that time described Lenin as being dogmatic and using old theory.

In the process of revealing the truth for that historical period and the specific duties of the revolutionary movement of the time, demanded by the historical situation, Lenin taught revolutionaries the world over another important lesson: that the truth is always concrete.

What was the really new element in Lenin's ideas introduced into Marxist thought at the beginning of the 20th century?

By using correctly the methodology of Marxist analysis, the principles of dialectical and historical materialism in the study of the specific situation that had emerged towards the end of the 19th century, Lenin was able to point out the development of capitalism to the higher stage of imperialism and the sharpening of its contradictions at this stage of development.

Furthermore by demonstrating the law of the uneven development of capitalism on a world scale and the weak links this uneven development creates due to a specific set of conditions, Lenin taught the revolutionary movement that it was possible for the socialist revolution to be successful in one country, which happened to be the "weakest link" of capitalist development at the time and he accurately pointed out that this country was backward Russia.

It is well known that Lenin's theoretical approach to the burning questions of the revolutionary movement at the turn of the century, was anathema to many of his notable contemporaries who claimed to be orthodox Marxists and who, interpreting Marx and Engels in a mechanical way, were insisting that the socialist revolution will occur first in some industrially developed western country.

It was Lenin's genius which, having grasped correctly the meaning and the essence of the Marxist theory of endless motion, development, and change from the lower to the higher forms, demonstrated that a real revolutionary situation existed in Russia at the time and thus prepared the ground and the guidelines for the Great October Socialist Revolution which changed the whole pattern of historical development in our century.

Therefore, Lenin's theoretical generalisations were original and new. They were tested in practice and proven correct. What we must always keep in mind however is the fact that they were original because they based themselves firmly on the scientific theory of Marx and Engels, because they were the expression of the concrete formulation of the objective laws of historical development in the conditions of imperialism.

Lenin's starting point was not the revision of fundamental principles of Marxist thought, not of questioning the validity of Marxism as a world outlook but adherence to Marxism and the correct application of this theory in order to

reveal the truth about the new realities and the new contradictions that had emerged.

In the process of doing so Lenin was able to enrich and expand Marxist theory and contribute to the further development of human thought and of human society — due to the changes brought about by the October revolution.

Great October has taught us the lesson of being able to distinguish what is really new and important and to reject both the dogmatic formalist thinking and attempts to reject new thinking on the grounds of it being based on “old” Marxist concepts.

A good example of such attempts is provided by the current political situation in our country.

The Labor Party Government, under the influence of Prime Minister Hawke, as soon as it won office, sought to solve all problems and to overcome all contradictions in our society by the method of “consensus” which formed the basis of the policies contained in the document known in Australia as the Accord.

The Accord asserted that within the context of Australian capitalism both workers and employers had common interests — what was beneficial for one should also be beneficial for the other — and consequently all conflicts should cease and any differences between the two groups should be solved “peacefully” through a process of tripartite talks, with representatives of Government included.

Thus the Government tried in essence to do away with class antagonisms and class struggle in a class divided society, which is a very old idea indeed, conceived by many other people long before this Labor Government.

It was presented in such a way, to give the appearance of new thinking, as the unavoidable conformity to the new realities.

This managed to confuse and mislead a lot of people for a while, including the majority of the trade union movement.

As the objective laws of social development however do not conform to subjective wishes and the voluntarism of politicians, it became evident — a few years after the introduction of the Accord — that this policy of class collaboration was used by the ruling class to widen the economic gap between workers and employers.

The rich became richer and the poor became poorer, despite all the pronouncements about common interests and all the fashionable jargon used to dress up this totally unscientific idea.

Since the 27th Congress of the CPSU, there has been increased awareness

in the international communist movement of the complex reality of global interdependence and of the need to formulate policies on the question of war and peace and other related issues, which correspond to current reality.

Starting from the Leninist principle that concrete thinking and scientific analysis are necessary to provide a reliable and accurate guide for political action, we must first of all assess correctly today's international situation and study all factors that determine people's attitudes to the question of war and peace and other related issues.

No one can deny that today with the development of nuclear weapons, for the first time in human history, the very survival of humanity is threatened. In other words the danger of the total annihilation of mankind is no longer a product of wild imagination or of science fiction stories but a hard reality of life that must be faced squarely.

In addition to the acute danger of nuclear catastrophe mankind is faced today with a number of serious global problems, such as those associated with the protection of the environment, the militarisation of the economy of many imperialist countries, the inequitable international trade relations maintained by neo-colonialism, the starvation of hundreds of millions of people in the third world countries, problems of energy resources, etc, which, due to their nature, require serious collective efforts by all nations for their solution.

It is therefore obvious that today's world is much more interdependent than yesterday's and it is equally obvious that humanity's most urgent task in today's condition is to eliminate the danger of a nuclear catastrophe and to create the conditions for the further peaceful development of mankind and the solution of the pressing global problems.

In other words we have today a new dialectical connection between global and class interests which creates a lot of new theoretical and practical problems.

One of the most important theoretical questions raised today is that of the relationship between war and peace and the subsequent relationships between the struggle for peace and the general class struggle.

It is claimed by some that the existence of nuclear weapons has created a new situation in which the struggle for maintaining peace transcends the class struggle as such and that the working class parties should concentrate all attention to the peace movement at the expense of all other tasks and duties of the class movement.

On the other hand, we also hear the argument that too much preoccupation of the communist and workers' parties with the peace movement obstructs the fulfilment of the other tasks of the class struggle.

Both of these views are wrong because they fail to take into account the

fact that there is a dialectical unity between the issues of the peace and class struggles and that one should not be separated from the other.

The struggle for peace, by mobilising broad masses of people against the war plans of imperialism, compliments and assists the wider class struggle and the anti-monopoly struggle for social, political and economic gains by the working class, which in turn assists in the further development of the peace movement by weakening the position of imperialism.

The other connection is that a fundamental prerequisite for the effectiveness of the peace movement is the active participation in it of the working class and the leading role played by the working class party.

Contemporary experience shows that the peace movement is more effective and influential in those countries where the Marxist-Leninist party is not only an active participant in the struggle for peace but the moving and leading force.

It is true to say that the existence of nuclear weapons and the new reality it has created has brought about new and intensified old contradictions and created a very complex situation indeed.

We do not agree, however, with the assertion by some people that the existence of nuclear weapons has created an entirely new situation, in which the law of the class struggle is superseded.

It is certainly a new and complex situation in which there have already developed interconnections between humanity's global problems and human issues and class issues.

We do not, however, believe that in this new situation the law of the class struggle is superseded. What is true is that the class struggle will have to be conducted in new conditions and will assume some new forms.

The existence of nuclear weapons does not alter the operation of the objective laws of social development. As long as human society is divided into antagonistic classes, the law of the class struggle will be applicable.

In his report to the jubilee meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU to mark the 70th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev, raised a number of important questions, which illustrate the complexity of the current situation and the complexity of the tasks faced by the communist movement today.

Among the questions were:

“Can capitalism get rid of militarism and function and develop in the economic sphere without it?”

“Can the capitalist system do without neo-colonialism, which is currently

one of the factors essential to its survival?"

"How realistic is our hope that the awareness of the terrible threat the world is facing...will become a part of practical policies?"

These and other related questions are indicative of the seriousness of the situation faced by humanity and the need for a significantly increased political capacity of the communist movement, to deal with the situation in such a way as to prevent a destructive nuclear confrontation and secure the road for humanity's progress.

Some may say that it is impossible for capitalism to exist without militarisation of the economy, without neocolonialism, that is, that capitalism and non-militarisation are contradictory terms. But it is not sufficient simply to say that.

Of course there is a contradiction between the aggressive nature of imperialism and its drive for maximum profit on the one hand, and the people's desire for the elimination of the danger of nuclear war and everlasting peace, on the other.

When it comes to the question of nuclear war or peace, there can only be one acceptable solution to this contradiction, that is the solution in favour of peace, since the alternative means certain annihilation of mankind and destruction of our planet.

When dealing with the motion of society, we understand that the purposeful activity of people becomes the decisive factor in the process of development, change and progress. We, therefore, must conclude that it is the powerful activity of the peoples of the world in defence of peace which can provide the strength necessary to resolve the contradiction in favour of peace.

That is why, at the threshold of the 21st century, a tremendous responsibility rests on the shoulders of the people's movement for peace and the international working class movement.

This responsibility requires of the working class and peace movements not only to search for ways to preserve peace but to actually provide the correct scientific answer to all the current complex problems and to successfully mobilise the world's popular masses in a mighty anti-war movement which will compel imperialism to abide by the principle of peaceful co-existence.

If left alone, if not seriously challenged on all fronts, imperialism will never adopt an attitude in favour of international security, disarmament and peace.

If, however, the pressure upon imperialism from all sections of the anti-imperialist movement is such that it can neither be ignored nor contained, then and only then the conditions will be created for the resolution of the contradiction in favour of peace and collective security.

This means that in today's conditions all the anti-imperialist forces — the

socialist countries, the working class movement in the capitalist countries, the national liberation movements and also the international peace movement must intensify their efforts for mounting the pressure against imperialism, for the consolidation of the process of disarmament.

The working class movement in the capitalist countries must utilize properly the favourable situation created by the bold peace initiatives of the Soviet Union, and the other socialist countries in order to intensify the struggle against imperialism on all fronts — in the peace movement, in the factories and other workplaces, in the mass democratic movements, etc.

The period of disarmament and peaceful co-existence, far from being a period of retreat in the face of imperialism, is a period of intense class struggle and of increased anti-imperialist activities.

Any attempt to interpret the process of disarmament and peaceful co-existence as an abandonment of the class struggle and as a means of appeasement towards imperialism, is both wrong and harmful for it tends to disarm the movement ideologically in the face of a very powerful enemy.

Imperialism will be forced to accept disarmament and peaceful co-existence not only because of the attractiveness and the realistic nature of the peace proposals of the Soviet Union but also because of the intensification of the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the world.

Likewise the new political thinking which is so necessary in today's complex conditions must be regarded by our movement not just as a mental exercise of some people at the top which will provide all the answers to the problems like some magic wand.

New political thinking must mean above all, increased social and political awareness and increased political activity by the masses of the people in all countries.

The ultimate purpose of new political thinking in our view is to raise the consciousness and the will to struggle for a peaceful and better world of millions of people in every country and inspire them into determined action in defence of peace and progress.

In the final analysis it is the people's action and struggle which will determine everything.

This concept, in our view, is in accordance with the historic lessons of the Great October Socialist Revolution which demonstrated that people in resolute action, guided by a correct theory and an understanding of the situation is the only firm base for success.

The new political thinking, therefore, must be seen as both a method of analysis, of understanding and explaining contemporary realities and as a movement, a dynamic new movement of decisive struggle for peace and progress in favour of the working people.

The communists in today's world

*The **World Marxist Review** issue of March 1988 contained a summary of a round-table discussion which had been held by the **WMR** and attended by representatives of a number of communist and workers' parties.*

*Because of the widespread interest in the topics discussed and the points of view expressed we have reproduced an abridged version of the **WMR** discussion. It has been abridged only for reasons of length. The full version is available in the above mentioned issue of the **WMR**.*

For reasons of identification we have included the countries from which the representatives come.

The round-table took the form of responses to some views put forward by the Social Sciences Institute of the USSR (SSI).

(Editor, **AMR**)

The dialectics of priorities

"The revolutionary, democratic and progressive forces fighting to find a way out of the crisis-ridden blind alleys in the development of civilisation, above all to prevent nuclear catastrophe and ensure human survival, are expanding and becoming more active...Joint action by today's progressive

forces is based on universal human values central to the very existence of society. They have priority over the differences rooted in class or national interests. Does the recognition of this priority mean that we are giving up our class-based positions, the class struggle and the revolutionary nature of the communist party? In pondering an answer to this question one must not lose sight of the fact that in this nuclear and space age, the priority of the interests common to the human race is essential to social progress...In this connection it appears necessary to reflect on the system and order of priorities, tasks and values inherent in the struggle of the working class, of the communists."

(From the SSI paper)

Unni Krishan, India

I agree with the authors of the paper that priority should be accorded to universal human values, first and foremost to peace, to human survival. This is a problem in whose solution everyone has a stake, no matter what his or her social background. But don't we often interpret this concept in a much too abstract way? Take the Third World problems. Here, social questions come to the fore. They cease to be above-class global issues. Hence, while according priority to the problem of preservation of human civilisation, communists should not contrapose this struggle against social and class questions, but strive to link it with the struggle for democracy and social progress.

Bert Ramelson, Britain

I cannot accept the idea of some supraclass values. Every class has its own values. Of course, there are areas where different interests converge — say, preservation of peace, or environmental problems. In those areas, co-operation is possible. But the value orientations of classes and social systems will remain different. It is true that ours is an integral and interdependent world. Within it, there are interests common to both capitalists and socialist countries. but can Marxists speak of any universal ideology?

Essop Pahad, South Africa

I am alarmed by the use of the word "civilisation" in the broad sense of the term. For instance, the racists use this word to justify the colonial oppression of our people. We must distinguish clearly between the communists and other forces in our ideology, practical policies and organisational structures. The communists have their distinctive features, interests and goals. We are fighting for socialism. I agree that for us in South Africa it is not on our immediate agenda. But it should always remain our stated objective — otherwise we will be no different from other forces.

Jaime Barrios, El Salvador

In the given context, the raising of the issue dealing with the priority of universal human values transfers the class struggle onto a plane of abstract

humanism in which the convergence of positions held by different social forces has priority over the struggle for revolution and socialism.

Ahmed El Tayeb, Sudan

In the nuclear and space age, the priority of the interests common to the entire human race is essential to social progress. But the reverse is also true: the class struggle is essential to the preservation of universal human values. Our parties express the interests of working people and, guided by Marxism-Leninism, conduct the class struggle both nationally and internationally. One can hardly imagine what would have happened to, say, the Communist Party of the Sudan had it abandoned the class struggle during the 16 years of military dictatorship. It would have simply ceased to exist. Let me stress, however, that this position of principle does not reject the idea of co-operation with all anti-war forces to prevent nuclear catastrophe.

Jose Regato, Ecuador

We are all in the same boat, and we must keep it afloat. But in the Third World, where every year hunger and disease kill as many people as would a dozen nuclear bombs, the very choice between a nuclear disaster and the tragedy of day-to-day existence is regarded as absurd.

Donald Ramotar, Guyana

I agree that maintenance of peace is particularly important to us. But I don't think that peace can be ensured through a policy of appeasement or by allaying the class struggle in this or that country or region. I think that defence of peace is an integral part of the overall class struggle we are waging in our countries.

George Kwiatowski, FRG

West German peace activists say that peace is not everything, but without peace everything comes to nought. Indeed, we all know that aside from defending peace (which is the prime issue of the day), there exist a number of problems which must and can be solved, which should be tackled now in a way that would benefit the working people — the overwhelming majority of humanity. I am referring to the issues of securing economic, social and political rights for all individuals and all nations. That means overcoming unemployment, hunger and poverty, developing the Third World, banishing acts of aggression and regional conflicts, promoting genuine democracy and asserting the principle of equality and mutual respect in international affairs. It is therefore a matter of the ideals and principles of a world that would meet the interests of the overwhelming majority of the human race and isolate the more reactionary, militaristic and pro-fascist forces.

That is why the search for the right combination of the struggle for peace and the drive for democratic social progress is becoming increasingly impor-

tant. The working people are asking what an integral international community should be like. We the communists are to offer our answer and to explain how this world can be built.

Hugo Campos, Paraguay

The peace movement is inseparable from the class struggle. One cannot oppose one to the other. It is not true that the former weakens the latter. Devising one's strategy and tactics at a given specific stage is a matter for every communist party to decide independently. However, no party should lose sight of the international situation or of the key task of the day — that of saving the human race.

Hector Mujica, Venezuela

The USSR is doing all it can to preserve peace and achieve disarmament. But I cannot even contemplate the idea of the CPSU urging, say, the Farabondo Marti National Liberation Front to lay down their arms or the Chilean communists to accept Pinochet's regime for the sake of universal peace and disarmament.

Antonio Diaz Ruiz, Cuba

Can the modern world with its common features and interdependence neutralise the aggressive nature of imperialism? Can capitalism survive the elimination of neocolonialism and continue to operate within the framework of a new international economic order? These complex questions should be analysed in depth. As to the Third World, its distinctive problem may be summed up as peace and development. These two factors are essential to each other. I think that that would be a dialectical approach to the issue. I like this formula better than the one contained in the paper and referring to the order of priorities within the system of objectives, tasks and values inherent in the class struggle.

From violence to accommodation

"The question of the Marxist position with regard to the forms of the revolutionary struggle adopted in individual countries also needs to be studied. It is possible to use force now that domestic and international developments are growing ever more interrelated? Does this situation motivate the trend towards national reconciliation which has surfaced in regions where revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces are in armed conflict? And generally, how does the use of revolutionary force fit into the concept of a non-violent world?"

(From the SSI paper)

Orel Viciani, Panama

I think that the specific historic methodology underlying the Marxist-

Leninist theory dealing with forms of struggle remains fully topical. It would be a big mistake to interpret the present situation to mean that it necessarily calls for some definite forms of struggle. At the national level, this may imply the use of only non-violent forms and a renunciation of armed ones. Naturally, one should always pay attention to the international situation which is now marked by a struggle for human survival. But one should avoid oversimplification and the use of rigid models. On the contrary, the time we are living in calls for a flexible combination of diverse forms of struggle to secure peace, national liberation and social emancipation, for bold and novel political decisions, and for the simultaneous use of different modes of action. Only by paying attention to the distinctive conditions of every country and every region can one conduct a policy leading to a world without nuclear weapons, without wars — or, as the paper says, to a non-violent world. One should remember that this phrase applies to international violence. Generally, violence can disappear only with the elimination of antagonism between classes.

Jaime Barrios, El Salvador

In fighting for human survival, we cannot question the use of revolutionary force because we live in a world brimming with counter-revolutionary violence. A non-violent world is so far a dream and, frankly, I don't think it will come true soon.

We the revolutionaries of the Third World set great store by the great revolutionary experience of this century, and we draw lessons from it. We believe that the experience of the revolutions in Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua is closest to us. Those peoples clashed head on with imperialism whose counter-revolutionary role increased after World War II. On the other hand — and I am now speaking with a full sense of responsibility, in a spirit of brotherhood and respect — we have long been unable to borrow anything or next to anything from the experience gained by political movements in developed capitalist countries as far as the struggle for socialism in the distinctive conditions of the Third World is concerned.

Essop Pahad, South Africa

The paper speaks about building a non-violent world. But let us recall the concept of just and unjust wars. That is not only a Marxist-Leninist concept: in different ways, it is recognised by other ideologies too. As for South Africa, not only the socialist conries but also, say, the World Council of Churches recognises our right to armed struggle. Of course we would like the world to be non-violent, especially in terms of coexistence between the two systems. But at a national level we cannot make an absolute out of non-violence. We cannot turn the other cheek if our adversaries resort to the use of open, naked terror and mass repression.

Sergei Semyonov, USSR

The scientific and technological revolution is making society ever more complex and its class structure, ever more diversified. The changes in the composition of the working class, the addition of new social groups to it and the advent of new generations alter the character of working class interests. Scientific and technological progress is imposing limitations on the means that can be used by classes to further their interests; in turn, the means influence the objectives too. That which could previously be accomplished through the use of revolutionary force on a global scale, regionally or subregionally is now unattainable given the existing alignment of forces. This makes it necessary to resort to a certain — naturally, not unlimited — degree of accommodation, not to surrender to nuclear blackmail. Revolutionary practice demonstrates that the forms of the class struggle, of the national liberation movement are becoming increasingly civilised under the impact of the efforts to uphold universal human values. Today, it is impermissible to make an absolute out of armed force, the way the ultra-leftists do. They underrate the struggle of the masses, the importance of acquiring a broad range of allies, and they deny the need for political accommodation. The other side of this coin implies a right opportunist renunciation of the prospect of the working class winning power.

Semou Pathe Gueye, Senegal

I cannot accept the idea that the scientific and technological revolution must necessarily lead to compromise and weaken the class struggle. On the contrary, this revolution aggravates all contradictions — within the capitalist world, between capitalism and socialism, between imperialism and the dependent countries. Capitalist modernisation exacerbates unemployment and affects the interests of the working class. The optimum use of socialist relations of production against the background of the scientific and technological revolution should enhance the positions of socialism in the competition between the two systems. As for the Third World, the more access it has to science and technology, the less will imperialism be able to dominate it.

Jose Arizala, Colombia

Any local conflict may lead to a global disaster. One should therefore resort to a degree of compromise and mutual concessions. At any rate, the revolutionaries should choose the forms of their struggle so as to prevent a nuclear catastrophe from breaking out as a result. However, one should also remember that imperialism has made the situation in the countries dependent on it so explosive that instead of diminishing, tensions keep growing. One cannot rule out the possibility of armed conflicts continuing or breaking out anew in different parts of the world.

Can the class adversary be a partner?

“Today, revolutionary tasks should be tackled in the context of the struggle for survival, and this struggle concerns all people regardless of their class affiliation...In order for progress and, consequently, for the solution of social and class problems to remain possible, joint action and compromise involving social forces divided by class barriers are in order...Paradoxically, the class adversary should become a partner in the efforts to solve this universal problem. Hence the need to look for such forms of class confrontation as would be adequate in this situation. In order to survive, the two opposite social systems must compete only peacefully...”

“The need for joint action by the international community to tackle global problems puts the methods of the ideological struggle in a new perspective. Ideology has a class-based character. It is an area of confrontation between classes. However, is it not true that the integrity of our contradictory world generates universal ideas promoting intellectual, ideological and ethical contacts which cannot be reduced to an ideological rivalry?”

(From the SSI paper)

Jaime Barrios, El Salvador

Can the paradox of the class adversary turning into a partner in saving mankind from destruction lead to class collaboration, a deviation which the Communists have always combated? What kind of compromise should be reached between social forces divided by class barriers so as to preserve the possibility of progress? Can this type of compromise help in the attainment of class-based, social objectives?

Lenin did not deny that the advocates of the proletarian revolution should, under certain conditions, accept a compromise or agreement with the capitalists. But he stressed that one can and must distinguish between an agreement which is legitimate from the viewpoint of the proletarian revolution and a treacherous sell-out.

Bert Ramelson, Britain

Partnership between imperialism and socialism is a concept from the right-wing vocabulary. That sort of lasting unity is unattainable. The right-wing social democrats may be satisfied, but the communist party will end up losing everything it has accomplished in its fight for the hegemony of the working class.

Sergei Semyonov, USSR

When Latin America tries to solve the issue of the foreign debt, the effort calls for joint action on the part not only of peoples but also of governments, for co-operation with those sectors which, while not distinctly anti-imperialist,

are ready to act in common on specific demands. In the course of this effort, contact is established with representatives of the Latin American bourgeoisie and even with some transnational corporations whose interests in the continent's markets are affected by the protectionist policies of other imperialist monopolies.

Jose Regato, Ecuador

The issue is that of linking such joint action with the tackling of our revolutionary tasks, with our day-to-day struggle for democracy, social progress and, in the final analysis, socialism. The bourgeoisie may enter into an alliance with the working people to take on the problem of the foreign debt, of combating unfair trade practices. But is it ready to yield its class interests of its own free will? It is not. Everything will be decided by the alignment of forces.

Jose Lava

The formula "the class adversary as a partner" ignores the existence of a pigheaded minority in the midst of monopoly capital — of the military-industrial complex. These people are rabid anti-communists, and their political objective is to secure superiority over the Soviet Union with the help of SDI and to keep socialism from perfecting itself peacefully by drawing it into the increasingly costly arms race. At the same time, among those who have been poisoned by anti-Soviet propaganda there are many people who are looking in earnest for answers to the pressing problems of our age. Dialogue, co-operation, joint action and, if possible, even alliance with them is the communists' duty.

Said Salem, Jordan

For forty years our party has been fighting underground. The authorities suggest that the communists abandon Marxism-Leninism and dissolve their organisation — then, they say, you will be left in peace. That's the stand of the reactionaries in Jordan. How can one conduct a dialogue with these forces?

Gerry van Houten, Canada

While we support every effort of the Soviet Union to advance the struggle for peace and nuclear disarmament through arms control agreements with the United States and to solve other common problems through co-operation between states with different social systems, it does not necessarily follow, as the paper says, that co-operation between states with different social systems can be translated into co-operation between social forces divided by class barriers in the solution of social and class problems. During World War II, some communist leaders in the USA concluded that, because the USSR and the USA were allies in the war against Nazism, it was possible to extend that co-operation in relations between opposing classes. This class-collaborationist conclusion led to the temporary liquidation of the US Communist Party and hindered the struggle of the communists in that country.

Hegemony, Not Hegemonism

"The new approach to alliances and to the interaction of progressive and democratic forces raises the issue of who should possess hegemony in these alliances. Some obsolete notions concerning the hegemony of the advanced class — notions that link this hegemony with claim to domination by a single party — should perhaps be revised. Today's broad and contradictory interaction of diverse socio-political forces rules out all claims to leadership, no matter who may voice them. A vanguard, advanced role of the communists in this interaction of heterogeneous forces should be earned through practical efforts, through thorough, day-to-day work aimed at rallying these forces together on a democratic basis and by democratic methods. Instead of the organisational and political hegemony of this or that party or organisation, we have the hegemony of the values held by a particular social class, the values that express the imperatives of human survival and progress as fully as possible."

(From the SSI paper)

Jaime Barrios, El Salvador

The fact that the paper rejects "claims to leadership" calls into question, as it were, the vanguard role the communists are to play in popular movements. Hegemony is not something pre-ordained, it does not appear by itself; all the more so, it cannot be imposed by decree. It results from the experience of the masses. The issue of the vanguard is connected dialectically with the hegemony of the working class and with the policy of alliances. One of the dogmas that played a negative role in the past is that the communist party was expected to become the vanguard of the revolution almost automatically. But in actual fact, no party, however revolutionary its propaganda image, can win the respect of other political or social movements if it fails to act as a tangible force.

Ahmed El Tayeb, Sudan

The communists should consolidate their leading role in alliances through day-to-day practical struggle, by seeking to unite different social strata on a democratic basis. The experience of the Arab countries shows, however, that in many cases broad alliances eventually lead to the domination of a single party or group. Therefore, the communists should be more vigilant and see to it that genuine democracy be practised, that the interests of all partners be taken into account, and that a hegemony detrimental to the communist party and its struggle not arise.

Gerry van Houten, Canada

We do not demand hegemony as a party in alliances we might form with other parties and social forces. But we do recognise that social progress, and

ultimately the achievement of socialism itself, can only be achieved under the hegemony of the working class. The role of the working class in alliance with other social forces is central to the struggle for political and social change in Canada, but the role played by the communist party depends on concrete historical conditions and on the activities of the communist party itself.

George Kwiatowski, FRG

There are, of course, tasks common to all partners, above all in the struggle for human survival. But in any alliance, the communists must preserve their distinctive identity at all times.

Essop Pahad, South Africa

The paper connects the hegemony of the advanced class with “claims to domination by a single party”. Do the authors apply their call for a revision of this approach to the socialist countries where the leading role of the ruling party has been institutionalised?

Bert Ramelson, Britain

Who are the “progressive and democratic forces” the paper refers to? Can one really advocate indiscriminate alliances with the social democrats? Of course there can be fairly close relations between the communists and some social democratic quarters. But social democracy also comprises forces that are closer to imperialism than to us. Abstract formulas of this kind especially those that include representatives of the ruling class, serve merely to confuse the issue.

Francisco Gamboa, Costa Rica

I think that the form in which the authors of the paper examine the question of hegemony produces a confusing effect. In an attempt to abandon obsolete, sectarian views, they confuse the general theory of working class hegemony with hegemonism. That trend has destroyed many alliances. The sectarian deviations that led to hegemonism must be uprooted resolutely. Conversely, the issue of working class hegemony in the revolutionary struggle is becoming increasingly clear to other progressive forces, and I think its future is assured.

Essop Pahad, South Africa

It seems to me that the SSI paper is too abstract and therefore ignores the concrete experiences accumulated over many decades by fraternal parties. In South Africa, for example, the African National Congress is the leading force in the struggle for liberation, and the communists are doing all they can to preserve the movement’s integrity, cohesiveness and unity. They form part of the ANC and of the people’s army, and they strictly observe these organisations’ rules and regulations. We have gained a rich store of experience in joint

action and alliances against apartheid. We accept co-operation with those who do not share the views of the Communist Party and even of the ANC.

As members of the ANC, communists meet and discuss issues with diverse and wide-ranging political organisations, religious and cultural bodies and solidarity and peace movements. In these meetings we do not water down the positions of the revolutionary alliance in order to win new friends. But by an objective analysis and clear-cut, reasoned arguments we convince many doubters that we are pursuing the correct tactics and strategy.

Donald Ramotar, Guyana

The paper produces the impression that past actions of the communists were all wrong. It is implied that we failed to establish relations of dialogue with the social democrats, and we are virtually blamed for the lack of international working class unity. I won't say that we have always been right, but we weren't mistaken all the time either.

In Guyana the attempts of the People's Progressive Party to build working class unity were thwarted by the present ruling party — the People's National Congress — which chose to work with US imperialism, British colonialism and the internal ultra-right forces which placed them in power in 1964. And today too one of the reasons why a firm left front is not yet formed is because, in my view, those who claim to uphold social democratic positions are hoping to emerge as a classical compromise as the present struggle for democracy and free and fair elections unfolds.

Abandoning old notions

"Human civilisation is encountering crisis-related phenomena and developments — the growing danger of nuclear self-destruction, the hopeless plight of the third world and the deterioration of the environment. These phenomena and developments are projected onto the main essence of our age, changing the Marxist view of the rates, content, directions and motive forces of the world's revolutionary renewal...It is this historical responsibility that prompts the communists to critically reappraise their past views of themselves as an infallible force which has a monopoly on truth...We must dispense with nomologues, learn to listen to what others are saying, see the logic of their reasoning, marshal convincing arguments in support of our views and adjust these views as the situation requires...The communist movement is working hard to comprehend and analyse today's realities. Many questions are waiting to be answered. At the meeting (in Moscow) Mikhail Gorbachev noted that our party and its theoreticians and scholars have gotten down to studying these questions in earnest, abandoning notions and patterns born of a different period, of different opportunities".

(From the SSI paper)

Stanislaw Wronski, Poland

The need to renew our theory raises a number of questions often voiced by those working in ideology and by party activists. What are the specific elements of theory we should abandon in order to be up to the demands of the day? Which principles or doctrines are meant? Which of them are now obsolete? What is it we lack? These questions are usually answered in very general terms — but they must be clear and precise. Without such clear answers, one cannot understand what's new in new thinking and in what direction we should develop our theory.

Bert Ramelson, Britain

The only consistent thing about this paper is that its authors express ideas leading away from Marxism. The impression is that for the sake of new thinking, we should renounce the class struggle and that social change in the contemporary world should no longer take the form of revolution. As a Marxist, I cannot accept this interpretation.

The struggle will go on, and that should be taken into account when we discuss new thinking. Class struggle cannot be turned on and off like a tap, and that is equally essential to grasp in analysing new problems that have been recently produced by the scientific and technological revolution and by the nuclear threat. These factors, ie, change as distinguished from rate of change, have been with us for decades. The changes they caused were reflected in Marxist theory, although many communists could not grasp the serious nature of these changes. The heart of the matter is that the Soviet Union itself has changed its attitude to dogmatism, acknowledged past mistakes and begun to correct them. That is the new element.

Jose Lava, Phillipines

We should be more consistent in our Marxist-Leninist analysis of the class struggle at the national and international level, of the values and interests of the working class, of the communists. I think that the concept of new political thinking implies certain defects and gaps in historical materialism. But if we have identified them, is it not enough simply to get rid of them, of a dogmatic attitude to the principles of socialism? Is it not enough to apply the ideas of Marxism-Leninism creatively, constructively and in accordance with the specific conditions of every party? Why talk about something new all the time? A distinction between new and old thinking may result in a prejudiced view of the classical ideas and encourage revisionism.

Gerry van Houten, Canada

Our party lays no claims to a monopoly on truth. The paper says that we should dispense with monologues. For us, that is belaboring the obvious. If we Canadian communists resorted to monologues, we would immediately lose our hard-won positions.

SPA Contribution to the *World Marxist Review* Conference

*In April of this year the Editorial Board of the **World Marxist Review**, which is made up of about 70 communist and workers' parties, had its 4-yearly conference. Ninety-three parties attended. The Socialist Party of Australia was represented by its General Secretary, Peter Symon.*

*The Conference participants were particularly invited to discuss proposals for the future work of the **World Marxist Review**. It was proposed that the journal should be open to:*

- *“the theoretical ideas, political concepts and practical experience of all communist and workers' parties;”*
- *“comradely and open discussion which is essential to the development of Marxist ideas; **WMR** will therefore give coverage of different opinions, viewpoints and theoretical postulations of Marxist ideologists and scholars;”*
- *“all the ideas and concepts of the Social Democrats, pacifists, ecologists, believers and other non-communists that promote new political thinking.”*

“We will promote the culture of dialogue to meet today's circumstances, and that dialogue should be productive. We will conduct polemics promoting mutual understanding, including objective Marxist criticism”, said the report of the Editorial Board.”

The following is the contribution made to the conference by the SPA and it should be read on the background of the above proposals.

Comrades,

The letter of invitation to the Conference suggested that attention be given to the proposals in the report concerning the work of the journal and its future direction. We accept that invitation and put forward some views.

The report defines the main goals of the journal at the present stage, its orientation and content.

It seems to us that the proposals will radically alter the character and even the purpose of the journal.

The issue is not whether there should be change, but what the direction of change is to be and where the changes lead to.

In the opinion of our Party the criteria suggested will eventually turn the magazine into a discussion journal, with a confusion of ideologies and policies and without any clear orientation.

The earlier part of the report says that the journal had in the past “illustrated the relevance of Marxism-Leninism and discussed the methodology and political theory of Marxism”. The report also speaks about the parties “relying on the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin”. The 1984 report spoke of “the viability, abiding relevance and scientific value of the great ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin...” and “the need for a class approach”.

We think that the *WMR* should continue to fight for the relevance and the truth of Marxism-Leninism and in making a definitive statement about the goals of the journal this should be clearly and unequivocally stated.

The wording used at present is not clear and, in fact, gives emphasis to “different opinions”.

It is true that the operational circumstances of parties differ, but it is also true that the generalities of dialectical and historical materialism, of the class struggle and political economy — to draw upon the three fundamentals of Marxism put forward by Lenin — have universal application to human society and nature as a whole.

We are in favour of “comradely and open discussion” but how is this to be achieved in undoubtedly difficult and complex circumstances? Open discussion not only implies agreement but also differences and it is the differences that are hard to handle.

The proposals say that the journal will conduct polemics promoting mutual understanding but hastens to add that the “polemics should in no case touch upon the policies and tactics of fraternal parties”. This reservation seems to rule out all but anaemic polemics unless it is interpreted in a broad way.

The journal will become lively and much more relevant to the real issues of the day and more valuable if polemics are encouraged. Our Party has had some inner-party experience of handling difficulties. The limits we imposed related to mutual respect between those holding contesting ideas, the impermissibility of personal attacks, and equality. The criteria put forward in the report could be used — “trust, equality and genuine solidarity”.

Our most serious reservations concern the proposal to open the journal to “all the ideas and concepts of the social democrats, pacifists, ecologists, believers and other non-communists that promote new political thinking”.

Some steps have already been taken in this direction and we want to draw on one published article to illustrate our reservations.

The *WMR* of June 1987 published an article submitted by P Robson. He is a member of the Australian Labor Party and a trade union official.

The article was factually inaccurate in some of its detail and put forward an evaluation of the situation in Australia with which our Party disagrees both on political and ideological grounds.

How can we deal with such an article? Can we engage in a direct polemic contending with the facts and the politics or would that be regarded as an attack on unity and the need for good relations with social democrats?

We decided to do two things. Firstly, to submit to the editor of the *WMR* for information only, a detailed criticism of Robson’s article and, secondly, to submit our own evaluation of the political and economic situation in Australia without directly mentioning Robson’s article.

Our Party’s article has not been published. In these circumstances the political and factual errors of Robson’s article remain uncorrected and the possibilities of a discussion on the not unimportant issues raised, which also concern other developed capitalist countries, has not occurred.

This same dilemma is likely to arise again and again if the pages of the *WMR* are opened up in the way suggested.

Another point. We do not need to go to the pages of the *WMR* to read the views of the social democrats, ecologists, believers and so on. They are readily available in a score of publications in Australia and in other capitalist countries as well.

We do not raise this because we are afraid of dialogue, of discussion or polemics — it goes on constantly in our circumstances. We have to fight every day for our convictions, for our ideology, very often against the very people it is proposed to give a platform to. We look to the *WMR* to help us deepen our ideology, to help solve our problems and to find answers in the current ideological struggle.

This will not be achieved, in our view, by printing one article by a communist and another by a social democrat and calling that discussion. There has to be a synthesis out of discussion and how is that to be achieved unless there is a criticism and a rejection of one or the other idea?

Lenin was a master of polemics and a whole generation of Bolsheviks was brought up on his arguments with many others on every topic relevant at the time. His polemics incisively sought clarity and truth. It was his generation of communists who achieved the greatest revolution in all history. His often sharp polemics did not damage the revolutionary cause. It was his categorical rejection of error and falsehood that brought success.

Dialogue, discussion and polemics are not objectives in themselves but are the means to truth and a correct application of Marxism-Leninism in all things.

However, the formulations put before us seem to make discussion and dialogue the aim. The *WMR* will create "the culture of dialogue", we are told.

The Australian communist movement experienced what seems to us to be similar ideas and language many years ago.

In the 1960s the Communist Party of Australia abandoned the *Communist Review* in favour of a broad, "popular" journal. Its editorial board was expanded to include people of other ideologies and political views. The content was diversified. The term Marxism-Leninism was abandoned in favour of Marxism. After a time it became marxism with a small "m". Now even marxism is not mentioned. The leaders of the CPA now ask, "What is Marxism-Leninism?" Who is to say what it is?

This course was pursued in the name of "renewal", making communism relevant, bringing it up to date, making it "broad", opening up discussion with others, and so on.

In the early period of their changed course the Communist Party published a *Discussion Journal*, in which some flowers and many weeds grew. The outcome was not clarity but confusion. It effectively destroyed the predominance of Marxism in the Party. Criticism of Marxism became, in fact, the promotion of petty-bourgeois ideology.

After more than twenty years it is possible to evaluate the results.

The Communist Party became split. There have been many splits. Far from a "renewal", the Party became progressively weaker. Communist influence in the trade unions and other mass organisations withered. The rightwing social democrats became stronger in the Australian Labor Party and in the trade unions.

Today, the once influential Communist Party is in a state of almost total disintegration. Unfortunately, the revisionist ideas which brought this about have

created widespread confusion and are a serious barrier to Marxist-Leninist ideas.

Discussion, dialogue, polemics and diversity are by themselves not a virtue. They can be a means to either clarity or confusion.

We think that the main purpose and goal of the *WWR* should be the elaboration, enrichment, substantiation, popularisation of Marxism-Leninism and the experience of its application in the work of the parties in their varied circumstances.

We support the similar point made by Comrade Jim West, (CP USA) including his reference to new political thinking, a term which we find in the given context to be vague and open to various interpretations.

It may be argued that the course suggested is made imperative because of the nuclear dangers confronting humanity and that the journal has a responsibility to give voice to all who support disarmament and a peaceful, non-nuclear and non-violent future.

Our Party has declared peace and disarmament to be its main task and Party organisations do a lot of work to achieve this aim, to build and broaden the peace movement and deepen peace sentiments among the people.

But how are we to achieve the peace objective?

The communists have been the heart and soul and the main organisers of the peace movements. They are, of course, not the only force and in terms of numbers the churches or the social democrats may in some countries bring more on to the streets.

We have declared openly that the socialist countries and, in the first place, the Soviet Union and its leadership, the CPSU, are the main force for peace in the world.

The socialist countries are class formations expressing the rule of the working class. The working class in turn expresses the aspirations of all the peaceloving and progressive people for peace, freedom, security and so on.

The enemies of peace, freedom and security are to be found in imperialist circles. The danger arises from the imperialist system itself. Imperialism is also a class formation. And it is these enemies of peace and disarmament that have to be overcome in the struggle for peace.

This fundamental division in the world and this fundamental truth about the struggle for peace, should not be relegated or replaced by what are regarded as universal human values.

If it were true that every human heart beats only for peace the problems of disarmament would have been easily solved and the numerous and stubborn

conflicts going on now would immediately stop; the Israeli Zionists would stop beating Palestinian children with clubs.

The Dictionary of Scientific Communism says that “Communists are fighting to implement genuine social justice in opposition to the anti-humanistic essence of capitalism. They approach humanistic ideals from class positions and do not consider them in an abstract way. Communists are in favour of an alliance with those representatives of non-Marxist humanists who participate in the struggle for peace and democratic freedoms”. (*Dictionary of Scientific Communism*. Progress Publishers. p 110)

This co-operation, however, should not lead us to an abandonment of our class positions or our ideology. For us to do so will not strengthen the peace movement nor lead to disarmament.

Consequently, the *WMR* should remain a journal which is the voice of the communists. We need now, more than ever before, a journal that upholds and fights for Marxism-Leninism.

In our contribution to the *WMR* conference in 1984 we drew attention to the substantial migrant communities in Australia. People from more than 150 nations have migrated to our country, none-the-less, we have one working class. We expressed the view that there should be one Marxist-Leninist party for that one working class and believe that our approach is based on the principles of proletarian internationalism.

We suggested in 1984 that the *WMR* consider organising appropriate discussion on this question. Unfortunately this has not been possible.

In the spirit of comradeship and solidarity, but also in being completely frank, we have to say that we are not in favour of some fraternal parties organising their former nationals, now living in Australia, into branches of their communist parties. There are at least seven organisations of this type, seven communist parties in Australia organised on the basis of national origin.

How is it possible to unite the workers let alone the communists when overseas parties organise their former citizens into national groups.

Lenin fought against this when he opposed the Jewish Bund. He said, “...one who has adopted the standpoint of nationalism naturally arrives at the desire to erect a Chinese wall around his nationality,... he is unembarrassed even by the fact that by his tactics of division and dismemberment he is reducing to nil the great call for the rallying and unity of the proletarians of all nations, all races and all languages”. (*LCW* Vol 6 pp 520-521)

Lenin went on, “...we must act as a single and centralised militant organisation without distinction of language or nationality...”.

What we experience is an expression of nationalism which does not con-

sider the needs of the working class or the communists of Australia but only the national interests of those countries who adopt this approach.

The world-wide spread of the communist movement has occurred at a time in history when nationalist currents remain strong. Nationalism undermines internationalism and consequently our movement. We do not think that this problem should continue to be swept under the carpet.

We repeat our request to the *WMR* to consider organising an appropriate discussion or round table on this question.

Keating's economics — deregulating the economy

by Anna Pha

Treasurer Paul Keating described the contents of his May economic statement (May mini-budget) as “far reaching economic reforms that will take our nation into the 21st Century”. He spoke in terms of a “a complete and comprehensive strategy, big-brush economic changes reinforced by sweeping strokes to the micro or industry level... What we have been after is a full picture — not something half finished.” The May mini-budget almost completes the “big-brush economic changes” of the full picture.

While Keating and Hawke, with considerable assistance from Ministers Dawkins and Button, have painted the picture, the frame and sketch were supplied by their masters at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The picture is one of structural adjustment, and the techniques come from the monetarist schools that produced “works” by Reagan and Thatcher and are being copied throughout the developed capitalist world.

The policies of structural adjustment are aimed at overcoming the serious economic problems that confronted monopoly capital in the mid-1970s and still continue to plague capitalism. These include a period of economic stagnation, an intensification of trade wars, persistent high levels of unemployment and the failure of industry and other branches of economies to realise

the full potential (for profits) expected from the scientific and technological revolution (STR).

Keynesian economics were replaced by policies advocating greater reliance on “market forces” and “small government”. The OECD identified a number of obstacles to the operation of “free markets” and set about guiding governments as to how they should open up their economies and create even more favourable conditions for their unfettered rape and plunder by the monopolies.

These policies included privatisation, economic deregulation, “small government” with cuts in the public sector and reductions in government social expenditure, removal of protectionist measures, lower taxes, encouragement of export oriented industries, improving international competitiveness, lower living standards, greater labour market flexibility, productivity wage fixing, and the subordination of education to economic needs.

The Hawke Labor Government has been pursuing such policies since it came to office. It has had before it a clear strategy — that full picture Keating referred to. Privatisation, tax reductions, mainly for companies and high income earners, cuts in public expenditure and so on. These are the big brush strokes.

The new measures announced in the May economic statement almost complete the picture of structural adjustment. All that remains according to Keating is deregulation of the labour market.

“Small Government” and privatisation

For the third year in a row there will be cuts in government expenditure. The Minister predicts that in the three years to 1990 the government will have cut expenditure by seven per cent — and boasts this is a record for any Western government.

Government expenditure has been reduced from 30 per cent to 26 per cent of GDP. The budget deficit has been transformed into a \$3 billion surplus. This economic “miracle” has been and will go on being paid for by the people.

This process of “small government” and cuts to the public service is accompanied by privatisation by stealth. Government departments are contracting out more and more of their requirements and responsibilities to the private sector. The “user pays” principle is creeping in. Areas where public enterprises previously had a monopoly are being opened up and the lucrative areas creamed off by private enterprise.

The May economic statement continues this process. It restructures a number of public enterprises on a corporate basis, paving the way for their total or partial sale. Organisations such as Telecom will lose previously held monopolies. The main thrust is for greater “efficiency” and competitiveness.

While efficiency and competent management are important, these should not be to the detriment of the social role that public enterprises should play. For example, the Commonwealth Bank should be providing the working class with affordable housing loans, even if this reduces the profit margins of the Bank.

Capital for investment

There is a continuation of the government's strategy to create more capital for investment in production. Special tax provisions for employee shares, announced in the May statement, are another method of encouraging workers' savings into capital investment. They also serve the purpose of making workers feel more tied to their companies and less anxious to strike.

New tax arrangements for superannuation funds seek to redirect investment of workers' retirement funds into the purchase of shares on the stock market. No regard is given to the speculative nature of such investments.

The reduction of the official corporate tax rate from 49 cents to 39 cents in the dollar will boost profits. However, economic deregulation will deny the government the very controls required to ensure that the billions of extra profits are invested in the creation of new jobs.

The Bonds and other corporations will be free to take their additional bounty offshore to Chile or where ever else they can find cheap, repressed, non-unionised labour.

Deregulation

Economic deregulation is continued with the acceleration of the removal of tariffs and other forms of protectionism. On the surface such moves would seem highly desirable. Afterall, no one can defend inefficiencies and poor performance. However, the question is far more complex than one of just weeding out the unprofitable and less competitive industries.

Some forms of protection may well be highly desirable and even necessary, e.g. where other countries dump products at below cost prices. The question is far more complex than one of whether or not to prop up poor performers. For example, thousands of jobs will be lost as the reduction in tariffs is accelerated. The interests of the longterm development of the economy and its social role must not be neglected.

While the debate rages on the question of the level and forms of protection, little attention is paid to the real objective of this drive for "free markets". The economic deregulation, of which the removal of tariffs is a part, is opening up even wider markets and industries to the manipulation and plunder of the transnational corporations.

They will increasingly dictate the price of goods and services. They will

decide which jobs and industries are expendable. The so-called “freeing up” of trade actually leads to a greater and greater dominance of the market by the monopolies and transnational corporations.

Taxation

The tax system has become increasingly regressive with successive “reforms” reducing corporate tax and the marginal rates for those on high incomes. The failure to fully index the tax rates has resulted in low income earners paying at rates previously reserved for the rich. The budget does little to eliminate tax avoidance and evasion which allow billions of dollars to be syphoned off every year.

The basic working class principle of a progressive tax system, long held by the labour movement in Australia, has been abandoned. Instead of reducing corporate tax, there should have been increased rates for companies making large and super profits. Tax reductions are long overdue for those on low incomes. The token gesture of lifting the tax-free earnings of pensioners will not alleviate the hardship they face trying to survive below the poverty line.

The government estimates it will lose \$1.45 billion through the corporate tax cuts. Only \$400 million of this will be recouped from the corporations by other measures. The rest will be paid for by the poorest in the community, through cuts in social expenditure.

The mini-budget will reduce living standards even further by direct and indirect means. There will be more wage restraint. Keating is trying to blackmail unions with a vague promise of personal tax reductions conditional on a further reduction in real wages. — another tax-wage trade-off — which will leave workers worse off.

Savage cuts to the States will be passed on in the form of cuts in health, education, housing, public transport and welfare.

At a time when our national wealth is increasing and the STR provides the potential to improve the quality of life, living standards and the security of the people are declining.

Monopoly capital is pursuing solutions to its problems at the expense of the people. “Small government”, privatisation and deregulation all involve an abrogation of the responsibility to collectively provide basic services and security to the community. Instead of “user pays” and the dismantling of social and other public services, there should be an expansion of centrally provided community services and increased access to basic rights such as health, housing and education. Government revenue should be raised and collected according to ability to pay.

The government’s reductions in expenditure and low corporate tax rates substantiate Keating’s boast that his government could implement the

policies big business expects from the Liberals. Keating also claimed that he could not only manage the economy better than the Liberals, but could also “deliver up” the labour movement in the process. ACTU President Simon Crean’s endorsement of the Budget and the failure so far of the labour movement to take any serious action in opposition to these anti-working class policies confirm that Keating is no idle boaster.

The Hawke Labor Government has set out to make Australia 100 per cent pure capitalist. It makes no pretence even that these policies are for any other purpose than serving the interests of big business. Those supporting such policies claim the benefit will flow down to workers in the form of more jobs “at the end of the day”.

There is absolutely nothing in these policies for the people. They run contrary to everything that organised labour has stood for and struggled for. The full picture, painted by Keating’s big-brush strokes, is designed according to the finest traditions of the anti-working class school. It is clear for all to see.

Unity in the student movement

by Spiro Anthony

The early part of the 1988 academic year saw the emergence of militant forms of student activity in reaction to the Federal Government's move to impose a tax on university students.

The vigour of the demonstrations was unexpected by Government authorities and the public, yet resentment among students had been growing since 1986 when university fees, in the form of an administration fee, were introduced.

As was obvious to students at the time, the administration fee was just the first step in the implementation of the Government's philosophy of making higher education a lesser responsibility for society as a whole.

It was a step towards the introduction of the "user pays" philosophy, cutting down on the Government's commitment to education and privatising as many aspects of education as possible as is now occurring on a wide scale in tertiary educational institutions.

The attacks on student rights, which students now see face-to-face, present challenges to student activists to maintain the momentum of protest and to develop organisational structures to meet the demands of the day and the longer term interests of students.

Processes in the development of unity of action in the left political movement in Australia have relevance to and bearing on the student scene. However, concepts of unity need to be assessed and developed in terms of the specific realities in the student area.

Unity of all students

An important issue in the development of the student movement as a whole, has been and continues to be the question of a national student union.

The formation of the National Union of Students (NUS) was a significant and welcome event, after a period of absence of a central union body following the demise of the Australian Union of Students (AUS) in 1985.

The rise of militant student action this year will hopefully serve to encourage the fledgling NUS to set a straight and determined course towards the major objective of defending student rights.

But by no means have the problems that beset AUS been overcome or simply eradicated because there is a new organisation with a new name.

At one level it can be said that the demise of AUS was an offshoot of the general decline of working class struggle and the influence of the left in Australia in recent years. The climate thus created helped right-wing student forces in their attack on AUS using the argument of “no politics in the student movement”, meaning of course, no progressive politics.

On the other hand, the ambivalence and hesitancy towards AUS by many of the more progressive students added weight to the collapse of AUS. Some sections virtually agreed with the right-wing argument, trying to capitalise on it without understanding its essence and purpose.

Others entered the debate by floating ideas about new, “more democratic” forms of student organisation while watching the national union crumble helplessly in front of them.

The stream of campus secessions from AUS undermined the viability of the organisation. But in the final analysis, the crunch came with the failure of student leaders to sit down together and work out compromises to save the national body. It was easy to disagree and part company.

This failure revealed that other things were more important in the minds of student leaders than student unionism.

The basic question of whether there should be a national union and whether student activists are prepared to compromise for the sake of having a union, is the issue that will ultimately determine whether NUS will survive.

The formation of NUS in late 1987 did not arise from a popular demand of the student population. Already some campuses have shown suspicion by voting in referendums not to affiliate.

The onus rests particularly on progressive students to muster widespread support for the national union and to find ways of working with other progressive and non-progressive forces within the union.

Having a national student union is vital because of the role it can play in achieving the fundamental aim of uniting all students in a single mass student movement. The aim is the drawing together of all students so they see their common interests as students and struggle together for those interests.

A national student union does not, in itself, constitute the whole student movement. A mass movement with all its activity, its social psychological features and political perspectives, is more than just an organisational structure. But the existence of a national union would certainly provide a vehicle to help build the movement as a whole.

Conversely, the absence of a national body sets back the movement and makes student rights vulnerable to attack, which is what has happened in the past few years.

It is far easier for each student grouping to go its own way or to have national union organisations for each separate political trend, as is the case in several European capitalist countries, for instance. But is this in the best interests of students?

Recognition of the importance of having a national union means agreeing to include student activists with different political orientations, including conservative forces, depending on their level of popular support.

The principle of universal membership, which is necessary for a union at all levels, means finding a basis of co-operation with all representative forces in order to maintain the organisation.

As with trade unions, it is wrong for members to opt out of or seek to close down a union because of disagreement with the leadership. Universality of membership must be fought for in order to uphold the very concept of having a representative organisation, and at the same time, struggle takes place around the kind of leadership that can best serve the members.

NUS can be consolidated and built if all groups — the organised political forces in particular — agree to have a national union, agree to co-operate and compromise where required at leadership level, agree to be active in gaining campus affiliations and agree not to work for campus secessions.

Working with ALP students

Within the central NUS apparatus, the hostility between groups, particularly between ALP and Left Alliance students, weakens the prospects of NUS gaining credibility and support among students and threatens the existence of NUS.

The ALP student group is not currently headed by the most progressive sections of ALP youth, but in any event, the situation calls for initiatives from the left in finding appropriate forms of co-operation. Such are the realities of

working with social democrats, whatever their political shade.

The attitude of Left Alliance towards the ALP students arises not just from the anti-student policies of the ALP Government, but has roots in the long established political orientation of this group.

While Left Alliance adopted a constitution only last year, the origins of the organisation date back to the late 1960s when the CPA, in line with its general concepts of the communist movement, opted for a “broad left” form of student organisation.

Rather than being an alliance of left groups, it was a loosely-knit organisation which projected, essentially, CPA concepts of spontaneity and petty bourgeois liberalism. In accordance with its theoretical orientation, it did not advocate a political alternative to the major parties and consequently its political perspectives became inextricably bound up with the ALP.

The symbiotic relationship with the ALP, which the CPA continues to hold to this day, formed the basis of Left Alliance’s open and persistent hostility to policies and leadership directions of the ALP.

The attitude, “You have let us down” reflects both the attachment and the antagonism towards the ALP for those who cannot see political change outside the framework of the ALP.

Present day Left Alliance inherited this legacy, which is manifested in expressions of the need to either change the ALP or expose and rid the ALP from the campuses as ways to solve the “ALP problem”.

Politically, there is no future for the left as long as it perceives itself tied to the ALP. On the other hand, acceptance of social democracy for what it is and acceptance that the revolutionary socialist force exists as a separate entity, opens the way for developing relations of co-operation with the ALP.

Such an approach would create better circumstances for Left Alliance activists in the difficult but necessary task of working with ALP students at least for the purpose of keeping NUS an intact and workable organisation.

Progressive unity

The building of the student movement as a whole, of which the consolidation of a national student union is a key element, presents itself as the main task today. The essential task, from the aspect of the internal dynamics of the student movement, is the development of progressive unity and drawing more and more students into action on progressive demands.

Progressive unity involves the co-operation and co-ordination of action of all the progressive student forces on policies which oppose and present an alternative to the right-wing attack on student rights.

Progressive students action points the way forward in the interests of all students and thereby, provides a basis to strengthen the whole student movement in its direction and level of activity.

Student action for a progressive alternative connects to the movement for a progressive alternative to the right-wing trend in Australian political life.

Common ground exists between progressive students on a number of issues. Demands including rejection of the government fees and taxes on students, opposition to privatisation of education in its various forms, demands for higher living allowances, improvements in accommodation and facilities for study, as well as support for world peace, international solidarity, Aboriginal and democratic rights, present the progressive alternative.

The task is to link the various actions to make a stronger and more cohesive force to project the alternative.

Because students are located together in the confines of campuses, communication between the groups ought to be easier than in the wider community.

The make-up of the progressive section of students has, however, become increasingly complex in recent years.

The progressive section include:

- Left-wing political groups — student members of left-wing political youth organisations or political parties.
- Student members of progressive parties, eg. NDP.
- Organisations concerned with specific issues — free education groups, peace, solidarity, environment and some ethnic and overseas students' groups. These organisations have some members who belong to political groups and many who are not politically affiliated.
- Left Alliance. In some settings political groups participate as a unit in Left Alliance and in other settings there is only individual participation by members of political groups together with the many members who are not in any political organisation.
- Progressive student activists not associated with any group, political or non-political.

Adding to the complexity is the fact that the composition and organisational affiliation of progressive students varies considerably from campus to campus.

In these circumstances, the building of progressive unity calls for flexibility in forms of co-operation in order to involve as many groups and individuals as possible. At present, there is no one organisational form that would suit the

situation at all campuses.

Unity processes involve extensive communication between the progressive forces and building relations of friendship and mutual support, all directed towards action in pursuit of progressive demands.

These endeavours, as necessary as they are, do not replace the need to build the unity of the entire student movement. The two objectives need to be maintained as interconnected but dual tasks, otherwise abandonment of one or the other would set back both.

The interconnection can be seen for instance in the recent progressive action of students against government policies, which served to raise the awareness of all students about their common problems as students. Conversely, the consolidation of a national union will assist the progressive cause as it will draw together the mass student population and facilitate exposure of all students to progressive ideas.

In building progressive unity, the involvement of ALP students, particularly left-ALP students, should not be discarded. Youth of the social democratic party in Australia, as in other countries, are generally more progressive than their parent party. To this extent, ongoing efforts should be made to find grounds for common action on progressive demands.

While there is considerable diversity in the organisational structures of progressive students on the campuses, Left Alliance, more than any other organisation, has a position of representing strands of progressive students at higher, including national, level.

Its role as a representative of progressive students will be enhanced by changes in its structure to provide for the involvement of the range of progressive groups.

This would require the setting of policies and strategies to serve not just the views and outlook of the current Left Alliance organisation but also to accommodate other trends.

It can be achieved through a number of possible approaches, any one of which however would require free and open discussion by all interested groups.

One approach is to accept the existing alignment of forces and the various organisational forms at campus level, including the Left Alliance branches as presently constituted, and federate the progressive organisations for representation of progressive students at higher level.

The federated organisation, which would provide for participation of individual activists, could be given a new name consistent with its function as a coalition of progressive students.

A climate of co-operation and sense of common purpose among progressive students is on the agenda. Achievements in this direction will present decisive and long awaited breakthroughs for the student movement.

Left unity

The complex process of building progressive unity will become a clearer and more manageable task if there is understanding and co-operation, in the first instance, between the organised left political student groups.

Left unity, in the current circumstances of division between the socialist forces, is of strategic importance in providing a direction and giving practical assistance for the unity of all progressive students.

Left unity makes an important contribution because the left groups have between them some of the most active and best fighters for student rights. The left has influence beyond the boundaries of its own political organisations which can facilitate co-operation between the various groups.

The left is able to formulate immediate student demands within the context of longer term objectives. It has perspectives from a class viewpoint, which add validity to its analyses, and can point to the need not only for struggle on day to day issues, but for political solutions to student problems.

To this extent, the left contributes something which progressive unity on its own cannot achieve. Mere reactions of students to injustice or other perceived problems, without the input of the left, will remain directionless and spontaneous actions of limited consequence.

Co-operation between the left groups is not just a nice gesture, but a process of profound political significance. Its success will depend in the first place upon the extent to which such significance is recognised by the left groups.

An important initiative was taken recently in Sydney by the holding of a meeting between representatives of three left student groups — the YSL, Resistance and CPA students.

The meeting, which considered specific forms of action against the government's tertiary tax proposal, reflected the recognition that as long as socialist forces remain disjointed in their mass activities there is little prospect of the various progressive forces being cohesive in their efforts.

Further meetings to consider united actions, and an extension into discussion of concepts and strategies around broader issues in the student movement, will give further substance to the left unity process.

Role of the YSL

Developments in the student movement and the now critical stage of get-

ting unity processes off the ground, highlight the importance of the YSL having clear objectives in its student activity and the importance of making the YSL a stronger organisation.

Being a stronger organisation in the student sphere has particular relevance in the current period. It is necessary in order to counter the view spread among some left forces that activity in non-political or mass organisations is paramount and that activity in the political organisations is of no or minimal significance.

There is also in this period the continuing and powerful anti-political trend which blames the existence of political groups, the left in particular, for the problems in the student movement.

Both trends serve to undermine the position of the left. Both have been instrumental in the proliferation of non-political student organisations in pressuring student activists to become "independents" rather than politically affiliated.

The YSL's best answer to these ideological offensives is to strengthen its organisation and demonstrate that activity by the YSL as a political organisation is an effective way to advance the interests of students.

The YSL concept of having a strong organisation also has an important purpose in bringing to the left unity process the message that it is not sufficient for the left merely to pool resources, but to agree to work for a strong and influential left.

The issue at hand is whether the left itself is to be strong as a political force or whether other forces will be allowed to determine the political leanings of students.

The YSL is one of several political groups, but just as the other groups have conviction about their own ideas, we believe that the stronger the YSL the better off students will be.

Strengthening the YSL entails development of its theoretical and ideological understanding and its ability to impart this to others, the ability to assess situations and formulate sound policies, its tactical abilities, and so forth. Strengthening the YSL means increasing the number of members, and having the support of students.

What requires special emphasis in the current period is that in order to become stronger the YSL must function as a **distinct** organisation.

Failure to be and be seen as a distinct organisation will inevitably obscure and weaken its activity among students. If it is indistinct it will have minimal appeal.

To this extent the YSL must have its own membership, members proud of

the organisation and who actively and at all times seek to recruit others. It has specific demands and campaigns and encourages others to support these. It has its traditions, values, character and identity and openly promotes them.

The scene at every campus provides for, and indeed expects, the open activity of political student groups. This has been and continues to be a feature of student life. As such, restraints on distinct activity of the YSL would be viewed by some as self-imposed.

Is there any truth in the notion that the communists have become their own worst enemy, fearing open activity because of anticipated negative reactions from others?

The point about presenting the YSL as a distinct organisation means that the YSL has a role itself, as an organisation, in the student sphere.

When YSL members participate in the student representative councils or in other student groups, they have a constant task of strengthening the position of the YSL, which is pursued as well as possible in the given circumstances. If the role of the YSL were underplayed, this would be throwing doubt on our own belief that the YSL — its ideas and activities — has an important contribution to make in the student movement.

To this extent, all the YSL members, very much including those who represent the YSL in other organisations, work hard and democratically within the YSL to improve what the YSL has to offer students.

The concept of building the YSL's "mass character" is important for the YSL and the Party. Again, it depends on the YSL being distinct, assertive and aiming for an organisation which can serve the needs and interests of large numbers of youth.

Being distinct doesn't entail exclusiveness, but acting as an organisational unit among students and responding to student concerns. There is no contradiction between being distinct and having close and extensive contacts with the student population, and no contradiction between being distinct and working in alliances with other student groups. Indeed, the YSL's mass work and its inter-organisational activities are enhanced by having a distinct and purposeful character.

To pursue its work on campuses, it is basic that there be YSL branches or clubs, meeting and conducting activities on the campus. This is not a question of convenience, but a fundamental strategy of having the YSL organised at the locus of student activity.

Campus branches or clubs are an expression of how the political organisation relates to the mass movement, for to withhold the organised body from the main arena of activity can serve to reinforce the idea that political activity has a secondary role, if any, in relation to mass struggle.

The ALP National Conference

by Alan Miller

The recent ALP National Conference saw a consolidation of the Right. This was brought about with the help of the Centre Left (read Centre Right) and through the inadequacy of the Left, the latter revealing its reformist limitations.

The root cause of what happened at the Conference was expressed by the Central Committee Executive of the Socialist Party resolution which said in part:

“The Conference showed the inadequacy of a Party which is anchored to the belief that there is no other path but to maintain capitalism, sometimes bringing about reforms but, on other occasions, taking the offensive against the working people, and placing reforms on the back burner.”

The ALP has historically served to unify and consolidate Australian capitalism, where necessary with the help of public enterprise in the form of state capitalism and forms of regulation and, when the situation requires it, direct assistance to monopoly companies. Today, the trend is towards privatisation and, in order to serve that trend, deregulation.

The Right at the Conference represented the Hawke-Keating line of willingness to carry out the offensive against the working people on behalf of big business and direct assistance to big business. The Centre Left (read Centre Right) trailed behind the Right, while the Left represented to some extent the old reform line and reliance on government enterprise and regulative methods of stabilising capitalism. Certainly there was no element of socialist thinking,

not even in the non-scientific, reformist sense in which the term socialist is sometimes used. This was the reason the Left did not put forward a real Left alternative.

The Left grumbled about continuing wage restraint but suggested it was possible as long as there was investment, particularly in manufacturing, through Australian Industrial Development Corporation use of savings, including superannuation funds. Not a particularly hard hitting anti-monopoly reform. The Left declared for a mild form of control to try and stabilise the dollar and made other general references to regulation. The Left spoke of social justice, taxation reform and the need to reduce the foreign debt. It defended public enterprise in a fashion, but did not present itself as a vigorous advocate of building up the public sector of the economy.

The Right was able to steer the Party towards privatisation without announcing that it was doing so. The National Executive will set up a committee to examine funding options for public enterprise which is one way of giving the nod to privateers. True, privatisation opponents kept the Commonwealth Bank and the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories away from the clutches of the funding options committee, but there is little satisfaction in this. The Right will have no trouble in opening up such facilities to private enterprise in the style of Telecom or starving them of public money in the style of Qantas and Australian Airlines.

Free public education at all levels is a profound democratic measure which has been almost an ALP tradition. It was in line with this factor that the Whitlam Government abolished tertiary fees. This tradition has now been abandoned in line with the dominant Right mood of the ALP.

The change in the uranium policy means open slather for private profit making with no regard for peaceful use or safety measures. There was no real demand voiced in favour of public enterprise as a basis to introduce a genuine system of control.

In foreign policy, the Right came through with its open support of the Australian imperialist line of accepting US world leadership, expressed in the US alliance policy. American bases were defended, using the blatantly false argument concerning their need for verification purposes, an argument which covers up their real purpose as part of the US first strike nuclear machine.

The faction-ridden ALP has never had a reputation of a smooth running democratic body, but the National Conference turned bureaucratic practices into an art form. Under the influence of the Right, Conference endorsed Government policy even when it was clearly opposed to previous Conference decisions. So the Cabinet, not the Party itself, apparently is to determine everything. A similar practice is adopted by the ALP Right leadership in the ACTU in relation to previous decisions by the Congress, the so-called sup-

reme parliament of the union movement. The ACTU leadership's support of ALP Conference decisions was in defiance of ACTU policies.

The working people have not broken decisively from the Accord mentality and the anti-people's activity of the ruling class remains threatening and dangerous. However, there are clear signs of growing militancy. As part of this "new mood" there are electoral and other expressions of criticism of the ALP Right.

The whole situation is a tremendous challenge to the Socialist Party of Australia and, indeed, to all the Left Parties. The Left unity process must go ahead so that a genuine Left progressive alternative to both the conservative coalition and the ALP Right is placed before the working people, above all the working class.

Our Party and the Left generally must face the painful fact that we lag behind the needs of the times. For example, it must be said that we have not developed a full-blooded campaign in support of public enterprise, campaigning for its extension and democratisation. Hence, the Right at the ALP Conference was able to carry out its pro-privatisation line with comparative ease.

The role of the Left Parties is clear enough in any Left alternative, but what of the ALP Left? ALP people who think in socialist terms and are determined to remain in that Party must have the chance to contribute to developing the Left alternative. Hence the Left Parties must reach out to these forces. However, it must be said that, if such ALP Left forces place emphasis on the illusion of changing the ALP into a socialist party instead of building the Left alternative with the Left Parties, then they will make a serious mistake.

The main thrust of the Left progressive alternative must be to build a united front of workers, spearheading a powerful people's movement aimed at profound democratic changes to the state monopoly capitalist system, based primarily on public enterprise, planning and wide expressions of people's democracy. The cause of peace and social progress will best be served by such an approach to Australia's growing problems.

It is legitimate to pose the question: "In view of the openly pro-big business policies of the Hawke-Keating leadership, is the ALP still a social democratic Party or is it now simply a second bourgeois party in a similar fashion to the two Party set up in the United States?"

The answer is: The ALP remains a social democratic Party. After all, history offers us other examples of when the ALP has dropped its emphasis on reform and taken the offensive against the workers on behalf of capital. This was the case in the Great Depression.

In some situations, the ALP will emphasise reforms as in the Whitlam years

when there was a need to renovate capitalism after a long period of conservative government. In some situations, the emphasis is on carrying out the capitalist offensive as is the case now under Hawke.

True, Hawke and company have linked up with big business to an extent not seen before, but the basic social democratic character of the ALP has not changed. The Socialist Party must take this into account when dealing with ALP forces as part of the work of building Left unity and combating bourgeois ideology.