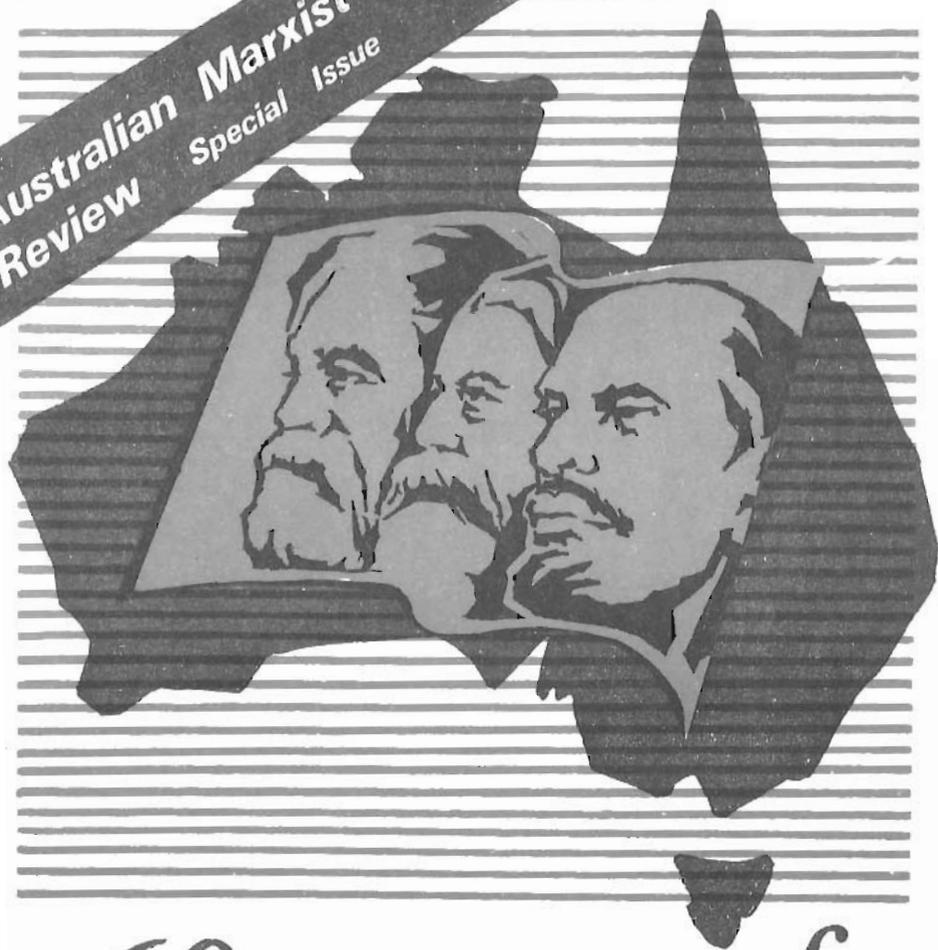


Australian Marxist
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*60 years of
struggle for*

SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

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Left unity and the struggle for peace

The preservation of world peace has been a central feature of the struggle for scientific socialism across 60 years. It has been a foremost issue in the decade since the foundation of the SPA.

Today the world faces the most serious danger since the dawn of human existence. It is therefore appropriate that in this issue of the *Australian Marxist Review* featuring articles on the 60 year struggle for scientific socialism in Australia that we introduce the urgent question of preservation of peace.

Scientists confirm that a nuclear war fought with modern nuclear weaponry could render the human race extinct. Apart from those immediately killed, countless hundreds of millions would continue to suffer slow death in the radioactive aftermath. As Nigel Calder writes in *Nuclear Nightmares* beyond the war zones neutral people will develop cancers, give birth to malformed babies and the whole globe will suffer incalculable effects of destruction of the Earth's ozone layer exposing all life, plants, animals, human beings to deadly ultraviolet rays.

Awareness on the need to take a stand for peace is reaching new dimensions in Australia. Labor Party forces are voicing increasing

concern at the grave danger of nuclear calamity. New potential is developing for broad unity of action of all forces of the labor movement as a basic part of Australian action to preserve peace.

Possibility for new levels of common action by the left in the peace movement has emerged in recent discussions between the Socialist Party of Australia and the Communist Party of Australia.

The joint statement of the SPA and CPA called for "development of a stronger, broader anti-war movement uniting all forces opposed to militarism and any return to the cold war."

The statement declared that the two parties would campaign for:
Resistance to the Fraser Government's new arms drive;
Removal of foreign military bases from Australian soil;
Support for national liberation movements;
Peaceful coexistence — the peaceful settlement of disputes between nations — respect for equality, national sovereignty and independence — non interference in internal affairs — mutually advantageous trade, scientific and cultural exchange.

While both parties recognise that ideological differences still exist on fundamental issues, and that both parties have distinct approaches on the peace issue, the foregoing points of agreement give wide scope for united action on this crucial issue of global life or death.

The SPA policy for peace advances an overall call for detente, peaceful-coexistence and an end to the arms race.

It stands for building the broadest possible peace movement of all sections of the people regardless of class, political standpoint, race or religion. Peace in the nuclear age is everybody's business. The SPA will play its part in helping bring such a world movement of great mass breadth into existence.

The SPA believes that such a broad people's movement is an essential need in order to ensure that the world calamity of nuclear war never happens.

At the same time, the SPA policy for peace has certain distinctive features.

While not neglecting national and regional questions such as removal of foreign bases from Australian soil and establishing zones of peace in the Indian and Pacific Oceans the SPA sees defence of peace as indivisible. It takes up the struggle for peace on a global basis and supports action on the Middle East war danger and all other danger-points with special attention to stopping the build-up of US

nuclear arms and military bases in Europe. Europe was the flash-point of two world wars and is currently being prepared as the major nuclear battleground for World War III by the US military industrial complex.

The SPA warns against the spurious theory that "both super-powers are to blame" and that "both are guilty of building military blocs." The Soviet Union has made over 70 serious proposals for disarmament since World War II and has recently cut its troops by 20,000 in Western Europe and offered to cut them by another 20,000 if the US reduce their forces by 13,000. We point to the hushed up fact that the Soviet Union has ratified SALT II and is ready to move to SALT III (actual reduction of arms as against mere control) while the USA is still stalling the SALT II agreement in Congress.

The SPA takes its stand for peace along with the repeated offers of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries that all military blocs be dismantled, for positive measures to end the arms race and move on to destruction of existing stocks of nuclear weapons and ultimately, conventional weapons.

The Soviet Union has declared that it will agree not to be the first to use the nuclear weapon and has called for a mutual declaration on these lines. These facts are also suppressed.

In contrast, the new Carter doctrine 59 for "limited exchange" is actually predicated on the concept of a Pearl Harbour-type decision by Washington to launch a "first strike" against the Soviet Union.

In short, the SPA takes its stand on the ground that the world must be told the truth that there is no Soviet threat and that this is no more than resurrection of the Hitler lie used to launch World War II.

Despite areas of difference in the peace movement the key task in building broad unity for peace requires that these differences be bridged and that different ideological and class standpoints do not become a barrier.

While taking its own definitive stand on peace issues the SPA recognises that the task of unifying all forces is a common responsibility in the broad movement.

The establishment of areas of agreement is of fundamental significance. This truth was proved at the time of the Vietnam Moratorium and the great movements which forced a retreat from the cold war by the imperialists in the 1960s. An even bigger movement is needed today to stay the hand of the warmongers.

As the SPA-CPA agreement states: “Where a different approach or estimation arises, both parties record their willingness to discuss differences in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and to continue to search for points of agreement.”

The SPA welcomes the level of unity so far achieved and expressed in the joint SPA-CPA statement. It is an important part of the far wider unity that is yet to be built and necessary to win the peace and force disarmament.

The SPA will do all it can to build and broaden unity on this crucial issue among all possible sectors of the Australian people.

The Sixtieth Anniversary

by P. SYMON

Social change has been taking place with great speed during this century and while 60 years is but a snap of the fingers historically, it is quite a long time in conditions of world-wide social upheaval and revolution.

Into the 60 years of struggle for scientific socialism in Australia are packed many struggles and campaigns both big and small which have all had their particular impact. Literally thousands of individuals have thrown in their efforts in the communist movement, some dedicating a lifetime, others less.

It is not only the campaigns and activities but also the ideas which must be considered when assessing the achievements of these 60 years.

The CPA was formed following the world's first successful socialist revolution in 1917 and it was this event as well as the experiences of the participants in the life of the Australian labour movement which impelled a small group of convinced socialists to come together on October 30th, 1920 to found a new party called the Communist Party of Australia.

Like many other acts which are subsequently accepted as events of historic importance, it no doubt seemed small at the time and not one

to which the community at large paid much attention. None-the-less, it was an event whose anniversary will continue to be celebrated and, in a socialist Australia, the founding members will be highly honoured.

One of the first acts of the new Party was to issue a Manifesto to the workers of Australia. How have the aims of the Manifesto been fulfilled in the following decades?

This can be tested by examining the results of the six decades under a number of headings.

Firstly, internationalism. The Manifesto immediately declared its identity with the Communist International which had only just been formed and spoke of the “coming international communist revolution.”

Representatives of the CPA took their place on the Executive Committee of the Communist International and received advice and gave solidarity assistance to other contingents of the world’s working class.

These were the years of imperialist intervention against the young Soviet Union and the new Party launched a “Hands off Russia” campaign and conveyed to the Australian workers the significance of the Russian revolution.

International solidarity became a firm tradition and despite Australia’s isolation and insularity, there are many fine acts of solidarity with the existing socialist countries, the workers of many nations and the national liberation movements.

A contrary trend began to emerge in the leadership of the CPA in the 1960s. Instead of solidarity with the Soviet Union, anti-Sovietism gradually came to dominate, instead of unity with the international communist movement a critical, divisive, negative trend emerged, instead of a world outlook, a regional outlook prevailed. This departure from long held positions was cloaked by an exaggerated and one-sided concept of “independence.”

It was the Socialist Party of Australia which restored the historically accepted positions of relations of solidarity and mutual assistance with the world communist movement and with the socialist community of nations.

Proletarian internationalism is a responsibility of every communist in every country arising from the universality of the struggles and interests of the working class.

In their attempts to undermine the international solidarity of the working class the imperialists use anti-Sovietism as their main weapon.

We categorically reject anti-Sovietism. Not only is the Soviet Union the first socialist state, but she remains the main base of socialism, the main embodiment of socialist practice and theoretical achievement and the main material base of the socialist community of nations and the liberation and revolutionary movements of many lands.

In the great historic struggle for the defeat of imperialism and the transformation of our society to a socialist one, defence of the existing socialist community of nations and of the Soviet Union is a responsibility of all real internationalists. In taking this stand the SPA is upholding the principled position of those who formed the CPA in 1920.

Secondly, the struggle for scientific socialism. The Manifesto invited the men and women of Australia to “study communistic ideas, to understand them properly” and arranged communist study circles.

Unfortunately, the lack of attention to study has been and remains one of the weakest aspects of the life and work of communists in Australia. There is a belief that a rule of thumb pragmatism is good enough. There is a veritable contempt for theory. This view is reinforced by the fact that economic and social gains have been made by the working class through the trade unions and other progressive organisations, not infrequently under communist leadership. But communists have been elected to the leadership of trade unions for their militancy and dedication to the workers’ cause rather than for their socialist objectives and outlook.

The ever-deepening economic, political, social and moral crisis of capitalism is going to pose more sharply the need for fundamental change not partial reforms and in the struggle for the transformation of society to socialism, scientific socialist theory will be more clearly understood and accepted.

This is not to say that nothing has been done in the first six decades, but not enough.

The fact that two splits, in 1963 and 1971, took place and that in periods of sharp political struggle not a few members have been disoriented by events are clear indications of a lack of firm ideological grounding.

The widespread acceptance of out-and-out revisionist ideas, virtually without question by many, also confirms the fact that real understanding of Marxism-Leninism is not only limited but not even regarded as very important.

The Socialist Party has sought to raise to first place among Party

members, the study of scientific socialism, but a tremendous amount of work needs to be done. The communists will not be able to rise to their full potential nor lead the people to socialism unless the Party is equipped by the enlightening, guiding and liberating ideas of Marxism-Leninism.

Thirdly, the class struggle. The Manifesto said, “We hold it as a fundamental principle that it is only by the mass movement of the working class as a whole that our emancipation can be won...The Communist Party sets itself to abolish the (capitalist) system, to overthrow this class monopoly and to abolish the private ownership of the means of production.”

There have been countless class actions as the workers and other progressive forces have acted for a better life, democratic rights, peace, security, jobs and so on. Step by step concessions have been wrung from the monopoly exploiters. The workers’ organisations have grown. Experience has accumulated.

None-the-less, the capitalist class remains strong in its citadels of power, holding the means of production, land and resources and the state power firmly in its grip.

It is necessary to unite revolutionary ideas with the spontaneous actions of the workers if these citadels are to be stormed. There needs to be perspectives for social change and not merely the relatively small immediate gain.

All too often, in fact, Australian communists have devoted great efforts and even achieved spectacular results in the daily struggles only to neglect the decisive task of building revolutionary organisation and consciousness.

This must be the conclusion after 60 years which finds a numerically large working class, a relatively highly organised and active labour movement but a relatively small communist movement soundly based on scientific socialism.

The communists have by no means won conviction among the broad masses for the ideas of socialism, for public ownership rather than private ownership, for working class political power rather than capitalist class power, for a workers’ state and not a capitalist state.

The propagation of socialist ideas, aims and principles together with the never-ceasing class struggle is as necessary and relevant as the day when the Australian communists first declared for a “new economic and social system.”

Fourthly, for a fighting socialist Party. “The Communist Party is

essentially a fighting organisation and not a debating club," said the Manifesto, "...the social revolution will be only possible with an intelligent following of the Communist Party by the masses at large."

For the first four and a half decades, the party was guided by the concepts of a revolutionary Party first set out by Lenin and which proved their validity in the Russian revolution and the subsequent monumental task of consolidating Soviet power and building a socialist society.

The program adopted by the CPA in 1964 declared that "the Party is responsible to uphold the principles and the correct application of Marxist-Leninist theory and to join battle with opportunist ideas of all kinds." But, within three years, in 1967, the CPA declared that it was necessary to "re-examine our approach to socialism." Marxism-Leninism became "marxism" and even that was regarded as just one of a number of theories.

Again it was the Socialist Party which picked up the banner of the founding members and continued the fight to build a revolutionary Party based on the only ideology which has proved its validity in the struggle for working class power and a new socialist society.

Today, the building of such a party is a decisive task. Faced with great class struggles for peace, democracy, national independence and socialism there is not likely to be a successful outcome if there is not a Party with the capacity to guide the working class.

Fifthly, features of growth. The Communist Party has experienced two main periods of growth. The first was in the conditions of the 1930 depression. Hundreds of thousands were unemployed and those in work experienced intensified exploitation and oppression. Most leaders of the Labor Party sided with the exploiters in their attempts to find a solution to the crisis.

The real life exposure of the crisis of the capitalist system led many to turn to a Party which stood unreservedly on the side of the exploited and advanced a socialist alternative to the deprivations so many were experiencing.

The second period of major growth came during the Second World War when the communists were associated with the great national cause of struggle against fascism and the threat to our national independence coming from the fascist powers.

This was the period of the greatest and most rapid growth and has not been equalled or even approached at any time in the 35 years since then.

These two experiences carry their own lessons. In periods of economic deprivation and when the communists are seen to be upholding the national interests of the people, they will give their political support and join the Party.

Australia is entering the decade of the eighties in which these two streams may well join. The capitalist economic crisis has come to stay. Massive technological change, plus economic dislocation will increase unemployment and impoverishment. At the same time the great, urgent task of preserving peace, of standing up for Australia's already **prejudiced national sovereignty and the need for policies independent** of imperialism confront the people with national issues no less momentous for our survival than were those of World War II.

The first 60 years of struggle for scientific socialism comprise our apprenticeship. The next decade can see conditions develop which will create both the circumstances and the need for a mature communist **movement capable of fulfilling in their entirety the profound thinking** of that small band of men and women who boldly wrote such a visionary Manifesto to the Australian workers in 1920.

The best honour we can pay them is to heed and uphold their words.

The united front —

essential feature of communist work

by PAT CLANCY

From its inception in 1920 the Communist Party has had firm links with the Australian labour movement and a rich experience has been accumulated in the application of united front policy.

From its close ties with the trade union movement the young party was able to influence the Labor Party.

The victory of the Russian Revolution, the post war revolutionary upsurge that followed, the formation of the Communist Party of Australia all combined to influence the Labor Party to adopt, in 1921, its socialisation objective.

In 1924 the Australian Labor Party's New South Wales Conference decided, on the casting vote of the Chairman, to accept the affiliation of the Communist Party.

But the Labor Party rules required such decisions to be carried by a two thirds majority and the anti-communist forces under the leadership of the NSW Parliamentary leader, J.T. Lang, had the affiliation decision rejected and included rules which prohibited members of the Labor Party being a member of any other Party.

Adoption of this rule later on led to the exclusion from the Labor Party of a number of leading communists who, under the previous rules, had been able to apply the principles of the united front of the Communist Party with the Labor Party by being active members of the Labor Party.

The stormy events of the depression years in the course of which a number of Labor Party leaders showed weakness and betrayal, saw a fierce struggle between Communist Party members and the ALP bureaucracy in the Labor Party and the unions.

Inevitably sectarianism developed with the emphasis on exposure and attack on the Labor Party. There was a failure to differentiate between the right-wing leadership elements and the Labor Party rank and file. This resulted in weakening the united front.

This policy led to clashes between the misguided followers of the then Labor Party leader, Jack Lang and CPA activists. All too often this led to the isolation of CPA members.

L.L. Sharkey, former General Secretary of the Communist Party, in his lecture notes on the history of the CPA pointed out that the analysis of the demagogic nature of the Lang leadership, which thundered out denunciation of the capitalist class while at the same time betraying the workers, was correct but the tactics were wrong.

We should have joined with the Labor Party followers of Lang in calling upon him to fulfil his promises and in the process of active work with the Labor Party members built the united working class and exposed the Lang machine's betrayal in the process, Sharkey said.

Consideration by Australian communists of the profound report of Georgi Dimitrov at the 7th Congress of the Communist International, "The united front of the working class against fascism" brought about a dramatic change in CPA industrial tactics and led to a substantial strengthening of the trade union and working class movement.

The basic principles of the united front were creatively applied in the trade unions and the mass movement. Communists began to be elected to leading positions in a number of trade unions.

In Australian conditions where there is a long history of a reformist policy and where reformist ideology exercises the dominant influence in the Australian working class, the advice of G. Dimitrov in his report on sectarianism was very much to the point.

Dimitrov said, "sectarianism consists precisely in over-estimating the speed at which masses abandon the position of reformism."

When one examines the experiences of the Labor movement in Australia it becomes very clear that, when this advice has been heeded, the movement is strengthened and when it has been forgotten or ignored and sectarian tactics have been applied very considerable losses have been suffered by the working class.

The period from the 7th Congress, up to the end of World War II, was one of continuing success in the application of the united front.

It reached a particularly high level in the period of the people's war against fascism, with communists and labor party workers uniting together in the common effort to defeat fascism.

The trade union movement recovered from the set backs of the depression years and was re-built both in numbers and organisation.

The influence of the trade union movement was very strong and by good work many communists won leading positions in large unions.

This was the period when the application of the united front in the work place led to the building of a strong and wide shop committee movement.

In the Labor Councils in most States the policy adopted was a positive and militant one and the Australian Council of Trade Unions responded to the strength of militant unionism.

In the 1945 ACTU Congress the left militant forces won a number of executive positions and exercised a decisive influence on the Congress.

The Australian trade union movement decided to join in the post-war formation of one single world trade union body and leading communist Ernie Thornton, was elected as one of the three man delegation to attend the inaugural conference of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Paris, in October 1945.

The onset of the cold war period in 1946 and a departure from the general application of the united front led to serious reverses in the period 1946 to 1950.

Some very important strike struggles were conducted in this period, with many examples of heroic participation by masses of workers, but alas also a re-emergence of the sectarian tactics.

Some of the big strike struggles were subjectively directed more against reformist leadership in government and in unions than against the employing class.

In the cold war circumstances, where extreme right wing forces in the labor movement were given considerable support by the governments and capitalist class, the united front should have been consolidated and extended.

Instead of that there was a resort to grossly left sectarian methods of work, with abuse of ALP leaders, domination of union positions by communists and their close supporters and even in some cases a direct refusal to apply the principles of the united front.

The trade union and labor movement became divided and disunited. In a number of unions Communist influence was either eliminated or seriously diminished.

In 1949, the Chifley Labor government was defeated by the outright representatives of reaction led by Prime Minister Menzies.

This was the beginning of over 20 years of government rule by the direct representatives of reaction, Prime Minister R.G. Menzies openly proclaimed a policy of "war in three years" and embarked on a campaign of attack upon the communists.

In 1950 the communist party Dissolution Bill was introduced. Under cover of attacking the communists this was, in fact, a neo-fascist bill which attacked all democratic rights and liberties.

This was met by a resurgence of unity in the trade union and labor movement and a number of trade unions successfully challenged the Bill in the High Court securing its defeat.

Menzies then introduced a Referendum aimed at securing endorsement by the Australian people of this repression of democratic rights.

The referendum campaign for defeat of Menzies' undemocratic measure was a brilliant exposition of correct application of the principles of the united front.

Agreement was reached at all levels of the labor movement that this referendum must be won; that the attack on Australian democracy must be defeated.

The nature of the Bill was explained to the people in a variety of ways, with real creativity being used in getting the message across.

The policy of the Labor Party and the Communist Party in its attitude to the Referendum was identical and this led to considerable strengthening of the unity of Communist and ALP forces below.

While the extreme right wing forces in the labor party, then operating under the title of the Labor Party "Industrial Groups," tried to sabotage and play down the united campaign, the very strength of unity prevented them having any real effect.

Victory in the Referendum by the forces strengthened the move to militant left unity and laid the basis for the defeat of the Industrial Group forces in the ALP in 1955.

The lessons of the referendum continued to be applied and the principles of the united front began to be accepted and applied on a wide scale, on each occasion with beneficial results for the labor movement.

To quite an extent the labor movement of the 50 and 60's were fighting on the defensive. In these circumstances the united front policy was accepted and an important part of labor movement tactics.

In the mid 60's the central leadership of the CPA departed from Marxist-Leninist theory and policies. A number of basic Communist principles came under attack from both a left sectarian and right opportunist approach.

Significantly, two of these principles were, the international unity of the working class and the unity, or united front, of the labor movement in Australia.

Attacks were made upon Communist leaders in the trade union movement, under left sectarian slogans.

Communist leaders seeking to build broad unity of action were attacked for allegedly advocating "unity for unity's sake."

Efforts were made to depict CPA members who believed in and exercised a policy of united front as "conservative." This line of personal attack was extended from Communist trade union officials to personal attacks on various Labor Party figures.

Subjectivist tactics of left sectarian abuse and denigration were used rather than objective analysis of the actual position.

In some unions, particularly in the NSW Builders Labourers Federation, sectarian methods of struggle were adopted. The objectives of union action in support of 'green bans' and broader community issues were good and positive but reversion to old leftist, vanguard 'go-it-alone' methods instead of developing a united front in the building industry was divisive and destructive.

Despite some early successes, this line of the CPA leadership finally led to the defeat of the capable Communist leaders of the NSW BLF. Their leadership capacity was lost to the industry and the NSW branch of the BLF was taken over by Maoist forces.

This sketchy outline of the experiences of work for the united front in Australia could be added to by other many examples, but in my view the basic conclusion would not be altered.

This conclusion is that when the principles of the united front have been correctly applied the movement has been strengthened and united and the influence of socialist ideas has been widened.

When the united front has been abandoned and left sectarian methods of work applied the whole movement has suffered and the standards of Communists and their influence has declined.

Since it was formed in December in 1971 the Socialist Party of Australia has based itself upon development of the united front of the working class to unite all progressive forces in defence of the people's fundamental rights, for preservation of democracy, for social and economic advance and for world peace.

In the circumstances of Australia the basic and broadest expression of the united front is agreement in action between the Marxist forces and members and supporters of the ALP.

In the period since departure from Communist principles and practices by the CPA central leadership in 1971, the left forces in Australia have been divided.

Ideological struggle around a number of important Marxist principles, including the united front, has been a feature of these years. In the process of re-debating these formerly well established principles the left forces have been divided. The work for the united front has suffered; the effectiveness of the labor movement has diminished.

To cite but one example among many, reaction was able to overthrow the progressive Whitlam Labor Government in 1975 and impose a reactionary government on Australia.

Despite tremendous potential to carry out Whitlam's call to "maintain the rage" the fundamental requirement of mass labor movement unity was missing.

The history of sixty years of struggle for scientific socialism has

demonstrated that it is absolutely essential for the left forces in Australia to become united and to work for the development of a much wider united front.

At its Third Congress the Socialist Party of Australia emphasised the necessity for the development of the unity of the "left" forces with particular attention to be paid to the trade union movement as an essential requirement for the development of still wider unity of all progressive forces.

Since its Third Congress the Socialist Party has applied that policy with some successes being achieved.

Emphasis has been placed on the need for the political unity of the left on the basic issues of action to defeat the reactionary government, to campaign against its economic policies and to give paramount importance to building the broadest united peace movement in Australian history.

The lessons of the 60 years of Communist activity are at present being discussed with the labor movement and the experience in the work for a united front has given consideration in these discussions.

There is much to be learnt — and much has been learnt.

Today there is a much wider acceptance of the necessity for unity and the prospects ahead are bright for a further strengthening of a united labour movement in Australia.

A Party of Communist science reborn

by W.J. BROWN

The range of basic Communist work for peace and social progress and the level of national and international recognition achieved by the Socialist Party of Australia within the nine years of its first decade stands as a remarkable contribution to the struggle for scientific socialism in Australia.

It is the more remarkable considering the complex circumstances which made the refounding of a Party of Communist science essential in the Australian labor movement.

By the end of the 1960s a Party firmly based on Marxist-Leninist and proletarian internationalist principles had ceased to exist in Australia.

Across almost five decades from 1920 to the mid-1960s the Communist Party of Australia had given outstanding service to the best interests of the Australian working class and progressive people and had won a well-earned reputation for its consistent working class internationalism.

By the seventies the objective need had emerged for the rebirth and rebuilding of a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party.

Edgar Ross, former Central Committee member of the CPA defined the position reached by the CPA central leadership at the 22nd Congress in 1970 as a “hotch potch of reformism, anarcho-syndicalism, trotskyism and libertarianism... the CPA is the **only** Party claiming to be communist in the world that has embraced the position of those setting out to revise Marxism, where known trotskyists have reached its leading circles and their trotskyist views officially accepted.”†

As Ross stated, this degeneration was “associated with the decline and death of the Party’s General Secretary L. Sharkey and the emergence of the new leadership of the Aaronses.” (The Aarons brothers: Laurie, succeeded L. Sharkey as general secretary. Eric Aarons succeeded L. Aarons and is joint-general secretary with Bernie Taft at this writing — 1980).

The Communist Party of Australia was not a party in which a new leadership had simply lapsed into transitory political or tactical errors. By 1970 it was a Party fundamentally transformed in character from a Party of Communist science firmly based on the working class, to a multi-class, petty bourgeois radical party under acknowledged Trotskyite influence.¹ It was a party that had abandoned the united front in the struggle for socialism for a mixture of right and left opportunism. Internationally it had adopted anti-Soviet, anti-socialist country and anti-international communist movement attitudes in petty bourgeois quest for a new “national image” of so-called “independence.” In short, the CPA was no longer a Communist Party based soundly on the science of Marx, Engels and Lenin.‡

Examples of the opportunist policies advanced by the CPA leadership testify to the extent of the problem. These policies began to vacillate between left and right extremes. A Democratic Rights Charter put forward in March, 1968 gave a non-class assessment of Australian capitalist society asserting that it was a “well-functioning democracy” with an “independent judicial system.” It also advanced the **unqualified** prediction that Australia had “every reason to expect a peaceful transition to socialism.”

From this rightist position, the CPA leadership swung to left extremes such as the urban guerilla style seizure of the Sydney Stock Exchange (for one hour) and the go-it-alone left-adventurist policies that brought disunity and disarray into the building industry for six turbulent years from 1969 to 1975.

The thesis was adopted at the CPA’s 22nd Congress that there were no socialist countries — only “socialist based” countries.

Their nationalist line as an "independent" Communist Party opened opportunities for CPA leaders to appear on the bourgeois media as a "respectable" Party playing the role of "rebel" in the international Communist movement.

The CPA leaders had forgotten or rejected the lesson of the three internationals and the contemporary international Communist movement that "Capital is an international force and to win the fight against it, to accomplish the transition to socialism... loyalty to its international duty by the proletariat of all countries is essential." ††

Imitating the "new left" in its local policies the CPA began chasing a variety of fads. The central leadership lapsed into fostering divisive "youth-versus-age" concepts. They gave support to the "women-versus-men" concepts of the Women's Liberation movement in place of the class unity of men and women in struggle together. They gave credence to the "black power" concept in place of the Aborigine' people's basic need for black-white unity in class terms. In short, a clear Communist lead was no longer being given for class struggle against monopoly capital based on developing a united mass movement regardless of age, sex or race.

The increasingly pressing need for re-establishment of a Party based on Marxist-Leninist and internationalist principles was met at an interstate "Conference of Communists" in Sydney on 4-5 December 1971. A Party of Communist science was re-born.

The first Congress of the Socialist Party of Australia was held on 29 September- 2 October 1972 with delegates from all mainland states.

The decision to found the SPA was not taken lightly. It was supported by the substantial force of over a third of the CPA membership. This included the majority of leading CPA figures in the trade union movement and nine Central Committee members. Among the nine CC members there were two National Executive members, one of whom was a joint secretary to the secretariat.

Some 317 CPA members made an appeal to the CPA leaders in a "Declaration for building unity of action for peace, democracy and socialism," (published September 1970).

On three occasions, the CC members who opposed the anti-united front, anti-internationalist, Trotskyist-oriented line of the inner central leaders urged establishment of a "Unity Commission" to seek means

of preserving a united Party on a principled basis.

The proposals were not accepted and 10 CC members of the CC opposing the central leaders' line were removed at the 22nd Congress (March, 1970).

A former National Executive member of the CPA, John Sendy who originally supported the Aarons leadership subsequently wrote a book. In it he states that after leading figures on the CC were "voted off" over their opposition to the new line he began "to have misgivings about the methods being adopted..." He confirmed that the approach of the central leaders, which he came to oppose, was to flatly reject the unity commission proposals and to tell the opposition "to get out and form its own Party, and the quicker the better."††

This division-oriented course found expression in a wave of expulsions of leading advocates of adherence to united front and international solidarity policies. The expulsions reached into interstate and inter-district branches. The administrative measures resulted in the significant example of the Maritime Branch in Sydney of over 100 members (the biggest industrial branch of the Party) being disbanded and its members being denied their Party cards unless they accepted the CPA leaders' new line.

A contradictory position of the central leaders at this time was that known Trotskyists were accepted into Party ranks and promoted while long-standing Communists advocating firm adherence to basic Marxist-Leninist principles were being removed from Party positions and the Party itself.

Rejection of any form of unity commission and the line of "get out and form your own party" left no alternative...

From its foundation, the SPA quickly proved that a Party soundly based on Communist science and international principle was a fundamental, objective necessity in the Australian labor movement.

Across its nine-year existence (1971-1980), the SPA has based itself on building the united front, developing maximum possible unity of the left in the Australian labor movement and helping build maximum unity with the international labor movement. (This has included an initiative by the Socialist Party of Australia in 1979 for dialogue with the Communist Party of Australia for united action on specific areas of agreement which will be elaborated in a concluding summary).

After some early caution, once the sound national and international

line of the SPA became known, the SPA won wide and rapid recognition in the international Communist movement and among existing Socialist countries.

At the first Congress (September 29-October 2 1972) Communist greetings came from eight parties, the New Zealand Socialist Unity Party, Communist Party of the USA, CP of India, CP of Greece, Progressive Party of Working People of Cyprus, CP of Finland, CP of Canada and CP of Bangladesh.

At the second Congress (13-16 June 1975) greetings totalled 24 including the parties of eight socialist countries, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mongolia, Bulgaria, Cuba, German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland.

In February, 1976 General Secretary P. Symon and CC Secretariat member W.J. Brown attended the 25th Congress of the CPSU, and by the 3rd SPA Congress (29 September-2 October 1978) a total of 39 greetings were received. Further testimony to the now strong international recognition of the SPA was the attendance of a delegate from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the Communist Party of Lebanon and the New Zealand Socialist Unity Party.

The distinctive policy of the SPA for building maximum working class unity both nationally and internationally was clearly established from the Party's first Congress in 1972.

The Party's first Program pointed out that working class unity of action was "the cornerstone of correct revolutionary strategy" and that building of the united front is "a complex task, requiring daily attention, much patience and skill..."†††

On international unity the SPA program was comprehensive and clear. It called for unity and solidarity with the international Communist movement, solidarity with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and for "full support for the World Peace Council, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the Women's International Democratic Federation, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the International Organisation of Journalists."†††

The first Congress declared its support for the 1969 international meeting of Communists and Workers' Parties held in Moscow making it clear that the SPA stood in solidarity with the world Communist movement and that it recognised "the world socialist system as the main barrier against imperialism."

The relevance of any Party of Marxist-Leninist science in any particular country of course, is tested not only by its international support but by the soundness of its policies in regard to its specific national conditions.

Decisive proof of the correctness of the SPA line in relation to Australian political issues can be shown over a wide range of issues including work in the trade unions and the labor movement generally work among women, youth, Aborigines, migrants and its consistent support and assistance to building the broadest possible support for a national and internationally oriented peace movement. In the confines of an article, it is possible only to trace some experiences briefly:

Examples of the correctness of SPA mass work for the broadest possible unity of action are most markedly evident in the contest between the line of the SPA and the CPA among the organised working class in the trade union movement.

This emerged with particular clarity in the struggle against the left sectarian and adventurist line introduced into the building industry by Sydney-based leaders of the CPA Central Committee in the late sixties and early seventies.

The line for a vanguard, "go-it-alone" approach was implemented by the NSW Builders Laborers' Federation (then led by Jack Munday, CPA CC member). This was posed against the united front line put forward by leading SPA members Pat Clancy, Tom McDonald and Stan Sharkey.*

Under CPA influence, the BLF leadership based itself on advanced militant vigilante groupings. This inevitably led to isolation from other sections of the BLF which made up the majority of the union membership.

Taking a leaf from Luddite history, "violence to bosses' property" became elevated to the level of a new "theory" in CPA publications.

Under Munday's leadership good work was done by the BLF on "green bans." This included banning of building or demolition projects which would in some way harm the environment or new projects which would deprive the people of their national heritage.

However, the positive was marred by the sectarianism of the CPA line. Other unions were often not consulted before action was taken on given projects. There was inadequate effort to build a united building union front.

* Clancy, McDonald and Stan Sharkey were leading officials of the Building Workers Industrial Union. Clancy is President of the SPA. McDonald and Sharkey are Central Committee members.

As part of the left sectarian line, the CPA policy, the Builders' Laborers Union was made a testing ground for the "new" CPA policy of compelling union officials (and Communist Party officials) to return to industrial work after two terms in office.

To the applause of the monopoly-owned media, Jack Munday resigned his post as BLF State secretary after his second term.

Far from being "new" the line advanced by the Aarons' leadership was merely a throwback to the old line put forward under Jack Kavanagh's leadership in the twenties that "every Communist must return to work in industry after two years in office."††††

The seemingly "new" and "innovative" line of the CPA merely led the BLF leaders and their supporters into increasing isolation and disarray.

By April 1975, after a disastrously divided 12 day strike the NSW BLF leaders, on their own decision, recommended dissolution of the NSW branch and voted themselves out of office.

Munday, who had resigned as secretary earlier in accord with CPA policy, and his successor, Joe Owens (another CPA member) were both capable and courageous unionists.

Directly because of the erroneous policy and tactics of the central CPA leaders both were cancelled out of office. Their undoubted talents were lost from the leadership of an important union.

The NSW BLF passed into the control of the Melbourne-based Maoist group where it remains today.

The CPA line of violence, vigilantes, vanguardism and vacating of union positions resulted in a serious setback not only for the CPA but for the working class generally.

As a Building Workers' Industrial Union pamphlet summed up "For a time they (the builders' laborers' leaders) made successess, even spectacular successess, always with significantly widespread publicity from the bosses' media. But basically it was a divisive, disruptive course containing the seeds of self destruction... the CPA attempt to use the BLF as its guinea pig was doomed to failure."††††

The CPA and the BLF leaders had ignored the profound warning of Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto that the real fruit of the

victory lies not in any immediate gain but in the “ever expanding unity of the workers.”†††††

The BLF experience in the early seventies under CPA influence is rich in valuable lessons. Unfortunately, it still remains uncritically evaluated in CPA circles. As late as mid 1980 the CPA was still presenting the period in uncritical terms as “the most exciting and positive episodes of Australian unionism.”†††††

While not denigrating the well motivated and positive aspects of the BLF leaders’ work in this period, facts show that the most important, enduring gains in the building industry in 1969-75 were won by the united front line advanced by the leadership of the BWIU in collective, united front effort with the Building Trades Group of unions.

From a Party political standpoint, two lines had produced two results — one, left sectarian isolation, and disarray and an important union beheaded. The other, durable gains and stronger unity for wider, ongoing objectives under sound united leadership.

This clear confirmation of the correctness of the united front line of the SPA showed that the SPA was, indeed, the continuer of the sound, scientific policies which had been developed by the Communist Party leadership of previous years, (particularly in the fifties). It confirmed the relevance of the SPA to the basic struggles of the Australian trade union and labor movement.

This confirmation was to be carried forward in the continued united front work for which SPA forces became noted at ACTU Congresses and the ACTU executive where Pat Clancy represented the building unions from 1969 to 1979 (with a break of two years).

In the arena of parliamentary politics, a good instance of the SPA’s consistent advance of the united front approach was a letter sent by the General Secretary P. Symon to the then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam on May 12, 1975.

Mr Symon’s letter set out a nine-point foreign policy program advanced by the Central Committee Executive.

In a positive reply, Mr Whitlam set out Labor support for detente; for a World Disarmament Conference; for generous aid to Indo-China; Nuclear Free Peace Zones; good relations with socialist and third world countries; for holding a European Security Conference and for opposition to proliferation of nuclear weapons.†††††

A feature of the SPA leadership and its policies was its capacity to give a clear political lead in basic class terms.

In the now internationally acknowledged coup that removed the Whitlam Government on November 11, 1975, *the Socialist* was the first paper to unequivocally charge that Governor General Kerr and Opposition Leader Fraser were guilty of conspiring to overthrow the democratically elected Labor Government and to demand a full public inquiry.

Since the overthrow of the Whitlam Government, the SPA has come out for a clear united working class line for defeat of the Fraser Government; for election of SPA candidates to parliament and, while critical of aspects of Labor Policy, for return of a Labor Government.

This capacity for basic clarity on working class policy was well displayed when the Soviet Union, in accord with treaty obligations gave solidarity assistance of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in January, 1980. The SPA was the only Australian political party which declared full support for the Soviet action as a legal and correct measure to help the Afghanistan people to advance out of feudalism and consolidate their Democratic Republic against outside interference.

A central feature of SPA activity over its first nine years has been its consistent work for world peace expressed in its distinctive policy for ending the arms race, building detente and peaceful co-existence. In this most vital field, SPA policy has combatted tendencies to narrow peace activity to limited national or regional concepts. It has come out for a policy embracing global, national and regional peace issues rather than pose one against the other. Its peace policy has also been distinctive by its rejection of the "both super powers are to blame" attitudes. It has been the only political party to give an objective presentation of the consistent Soviet peace proposals in contrast to the US State Department's repeated initiation of new rounds of the arms race.

From its first years, the SPA played a forefront role in solidarity action with the Vietnamese people in their fight against US-led aggression. It combatted the left-sectarian narrowing activities of the Trotskysts and other pseudo-left trends in the peace movement.

With the magnificent victory won by the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the SPA played a prominent role in solidarity work for aid to Vietnam. In 1980 the SPA established official fraternal links with the Vietnamese party, people and government.

A major contribution of the SPA to work for peace in Australia was its assistance in founding the Australian Peace Committee and helping to build a coalition of Labor Party, SPA members, clergy, youth and women's movement forces with close connections with the World Peace Council.

A fundamental strength of the new movement was its strong support from the trade unions under a leadership reflecting a move towards broader united action for peace in accord with the best days of the Australian peace movement.

While avoiding tendencies of the past to dominate or impose policies on the peace movement, SPA members, particularly leading trade union figures have played a positive role in these developments.

As recent as July 1980, again in the spirit of national and international union unity, SPA figures in the trade union movement gave a great positive lead in the fight against the Fraser Government's attempt to strike a blow at peace and internationalism by its boycott on the Moscow Olympic Games. Among many highlights the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers staged a half-day strike. During the strike, a highly successful free-for-all a foot-race was staged at which generous donations were handed to Australian Olympic athletes by Maritime and other union officials.

Due to sound united front work by SPA members, links with organisations like the WFTU, the World Peace Council, the WIDF are broader and more solidly based in Australia today than ever.

SPA President P. Clancy has made a particular contribution in building international trade union unity. From close association with the WFTU dating back to 1959, in 1978 Mr Clancy was elected to the General Council and to the Bureau of the WFTU at the 9th World Trade Union Congress.

Since then, with other union colleagues of different political standpoints he has played a leading role in founding the Committee for International Trade Union Unity comprising 25 Australian unions. This Committee has taken up the work of building regional trade union unity.

Within the scope of even a long article, it is impossible to do justice to the really remarkable range of work carried out for the objectives of peace, higher living standards and socialism across the Party's first nine years.

Full analysis must await the writing of an overall history.

Finally, at this writing talks between the SPA and CPA are proceeding around common points of agreement. At this stage these have been confined to unity of action to defeat the Fraser Government, to defend and improve living standards and to preserve peace. The SPA has specially proposed serious discussions on the two parties seeking to find closer unity in common campaigning for peace to meet the urgent needs of the time.

Re discussions among the Australian left, John Sendy in a small pamphlet, *The Communist Party, history, thoughts and questions*, makes some observations which merit thought. (See page 30).

He calls for "a degree of tolerance, an abandonment of dogma, a downgrading of bigotry and prejudice" and asks who will start the regrouping of the fragmented socialist forces and how?

A start has been made in the SPA 1979 initiative for talks regarding unity on specific issues.

A discussion between all sectors of the left including CPA and SPA representatives at a "Communists and Labor Movement Conference" held in Melbourne August 22-24, 1980 showed that areas for unity of action between the Parties exist. But it also confirmed that areas of basic difference remain.

These include differences on such fundamental questions as proletarian internationalism, the leading role of the Party, the Marxist-Leninist theory on the role of the state, the rejection of Trotskyism as a trend hostile to the revolutionary movement, consistent effort to build the united front and clear recognition of dialectical and historical materialism as the guiding philosophy of the national and international communist movement.

In the area of philosophy an important point of difference is the approach to specific national conditions and universal principles of Marxism-Leninism.

Lenin long ago put forward the theses that Communists in other countries should take that which has universal application from Russian experience while rejecting blind imitation of Bolshevik tactics. He urged all parties not to eliminate diversity but to "correctly adapt and apply the basic principles of Communism to national and national-state distinctions."††††† This is the SPA position.

Despite continuing ideological differences with the CPA and the Labor Party, the SPA is at all times, prepared to discuss policies and tactics

in the non-dogmatic framework proposed by Lenin.

As a Party seeking to base itself consistently on the principles of communist science the SPA proposes to continue in its efforts to help build maximum possible unity in the Australian labor movement around common policies that will benefit the immediate and long term interests of the Australian working class and its allies.

This will be the enduring line of the SPA as it moves into its second decade.

- † E. Ross, Split in the CPA, Australian Marxist Review, September 1972 Vol 1, No 4.
- ‡ For elaboration of the above see What Happened to the Communist Party (1970) and A False Philosophy exploded (1971) booklets by W.J. Brown.
- ‡‡ Outline History of the Communist International, p 8.
- ‡‡‡ Sendy Comrades Come Rally — 1978 pp 186-187.
- ‡‡‡‡ SPA Program, section: Working class unity.
- ‡‡‡‡‡ Ibid, International section.
- ‡‡‡‡‡‡ Notes on Party History by L. Sharkey, P5. Cited by E.W. Campbell, History of the Australian Labor Movement, p 124. NB: This so-called "new" line of the CPA had been standard reading as a left sectarian mistake of the 1920s in Campbell's material for over 25 years. The lesson was obviously never learnt. Anarchism was dressed up and presented as "new" thinking by leaders at the 1970 Congress.
- ‡‡‡‡‡‡‡ Six Turbulent Years, lessons from the rise and fall of the NSW Builders' Laborers leadership and building industry struggles 1969-1975) — p 9.
- ‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡ Communist Manifesto, Marx, Engels — Section 1.
- ‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡ The Green Bans, *Tribune*, June 18 1980 by J. Munday.
- ‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡ See the two letters — *The Socialist* **October 22, 75**
- ‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡ Lenin, CW, Vol 31, p 92.

Sixty years of struggle by Communist women

by INA HEIDTMAN

In celebrating 60 years of struggle for scientific socialism in Australia, the Womens Committee of the Socialist Party of Australia pays tribute to communist women who have over the years dedicated themselves to the advance of the Australian and international working class, national liberation struggles and the work for peace and socialism. Many outstanding women come to mind. Women who played an important role in the communist movement and who were involved in such movements as the Militant Women's Movement of the '20's, the New Housewives Association and the Union of Australian Women of the mid 40's and early 50's, equal pay committees, trade union women's committees and auxiliaries throughout those years and later, peace and anti-Vietnam war, anti-conscription movements including the Save Our Sons Movement of the 60's and the prices action groups such as the Campaign Against Rising Prices, child care committees, feminist groups, solidarity groups, committees in preparation for International Women's Year, work around the International Year of the Child, and the United Nations Decade for Women of the 70's and in this year of the mid-term Review of the United Nations Decade for Women. No doubt many more initiatives could be mentioned.

Communist women's involvement in the struggles of the trade unions, in the factories, canteens, shops, restaurants and hotels and their involvement in the P and C and school committees, progress associations and within the local community was also significant.

A feature of early activities of communist women, was the interest engendered in the celebration of International Women's Day which was seen as a day of peace and solidarity — solidarity with women of all countries, with women suffering injustice, oppression, misery and the effects of war, struggling for their rights to equality, for a happy future for their children which was seen as inseparably linked with the struggle for peace and national independence. From the early 20's communist women initiated demonstrations, meetings, petitions, deputations and other militant activities for women's rights, better living standards and for peace. Their influence in many organisations and committees was recognised.

Throughout the period of the second world war, more and more women came into the workforce and the industrial movement. Women contributed to the anti-fascist war effort. This period saw the emergence of the equal pay committees directed towards winning wage equality for women. A number of outstanding communist women were involved. As more and more women entered the workforce and became part of the industrial working class this had a significant influence on the political and industrial outlook of women. They became involved in strikes and other struggles of the trade union movement. Women commenced to play a prominent, although inadequate role. They developed as leaders of the trade union movement, such as Flo Davis, a prominent communist who became Secretary of the Hotel, Club and Restaurants Union.

With the end of the war came new hopes for peace and around the world emerged numerous progressive women's organisations. The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) was founded and in Australia the New Housewives Association affiliated. In 1950 the Union of Australian Women was formed and became the national affiliate of WIDF taking up the needs of working class women — women's equality, needs of children, protection of living standards and peace.

The 60's saw vigorous activity by women in opposition to conscription of their sons and participation in the anti-Vietnam war movement. The Save our Sons organisation played a significant role during this time.

Price rises, inflation, economic crisis, unemployment, wage deterioration,

cuts in social welfare and public spending continued to burden, in particular working class women, in the 60's and 70's. Many struggles took place around these issues. Today working class women have continued the fight for proper living standards, for women's rights, for better quality of life and for peace and communist women have been influential. The 70's also witnessed an upsurge in the feminist movement.

The UN Decade for Women has provided the opportunity for increased action around women's issues and the next five years should see even greater activity and progress. Many women activists and some organisations do not fully recognise the peace and international objectives of the Decade, do not see the struggle for women's rights as linked with the struggle for peace. Communist women must continue to raise this and influence the overall women's movement in this direction as well as raising socialism as the final solution to the problems confronting women within our society.

Three years after the victory of socialism in Russia and the establishment of the young Soviet Government, the theory of scientific socialism came to life in Australia. This development had a great influence on the struggle of women which has changed dramatically with the increased involvement of women, not only around women's issues, but around general issues of the working class.

Freda Brown, in her article "Fifty Years on the March for Equality" (March 1958, marking the 50th Anniversary of International Women's Day) stated "Women lost their equality with the beginning of class society, their separation from the means of production placed them in a position of inferiority but with the victory of socialism in Russia, women regained their right to equality in reality as well as legality — the right to equal pay, the equality of opportunity, their right to be elected to all governing bodies was assured....."

The position of women in the first socialist country and then the subsequent winning of socialism in other countries became for women throughout the world a beacon through which to set their sights for the winning of basic equality for women. Women's basic equality in socialist society is an inspiration to millions of women in the capitalist and developing countries.

The growing internationalism of the women's movement is expressed in the response to the international conferences associated with the International Women's Year (1975), the UN Decade for Women — Equality, Development, Peace (1976-85) the International Year of the Child (1979) and the Copenhagen UN World Conference and NCO Forum (July 1980).

In the 60 years of the communist movement in Australia, communist women have played a major role in bringing to the forefront the gains and benefits to women living in a socialist society.

Our women were influenced by that outstanding German socialist Clara Zetkin, founder of International Women's Day (1910) who in 1920, the year of the foundation of communist organisation in Australia said:

“If woman is to have full social equality with man, in truth and in fact, not just with lifeless laws on long suffering paper, and if she, like the man is to have the chance of free development and exercise of total humanness, two main conditions have to be given; private ownership of the means of production must be replaced by social ownership and the activity of women has to be incorporated into the social production of commodities in a system free of exploitation and servitude. Only the fulfilment of these two pre-conditions guarantee that the women can function as a worker and a creator with equal duties and equal rights in a community of workers and creators with equal duties and equal rights and that vocational activity and maternity can complement each other to make up a full life.”

The Socialist Party of Australia has a particular view in regard to women and their role and involvement in society including the position of women under capitalism and the need to ensure that they are drawn into the revolutionary process of ending capitalism and establishing a socialist society. We see the need for policies and forms of action that will attract, encourage and ensure women are actively involved in the struggle towards a socialist Australia.

In “Women and Communism” (1920) Lenin, in conversing with Clara Zetkin, said: “We must not close our eyes to the fact that the Party must have bodies, working groups, commissions, committees, bureaus, or whatever you like whose particular duty is to arouse the masses of women workers and bring them into contact with the Party and keep them under its influence.

“We need appropriate bodies to carry on work amongst them, with special methods of agitation and forms of organisation.”

Communists in Australia have seen the need to establish and maintain such forms of organisation which have been mentioned earlier in this contribution. In line with our theoretical concepts which recognise the basic role of the working class, communists have seen the need to develop basic working class organisation of women closely allied

with the trade union movement and a part of the international progressive working class movement.

The party has a particular responsibility to ensure the all round political development of communist women and encourage them to play a leading and fully participatory role in the party and to guide and assist them to play a role as communists working in the various mass organisations, especially in the mass women's movement.

If we are to achieve a socialist Australia, then we have to influence and win the support of the masses of Australian women. Therefore, communists need to participate in the struggles of the mass of women, in particular in the working class organisation of women. Capitalism has intensified exploitation and subtly manipulated women. Today's overall women's movement is very complex, diverse and complicated. Therefore what is required is continuing analysis in depth and development of concepts that will win women to seeing socialism as the alternative.

The overall womens movement is representative of a multitude of organisations and ideologies from the extreme left to the extreme right. Of significance in recent times has been the growth of the extreme right. As a counter to this there has been a growing unity amongst the rest of the women's groups around women's issues.

On fundamental class issues there are still basic differences between working class women and conservative women. Some women's groups cut across class, concentrating on singularly "women's issues" and seeing them as being primary. There is unclarity and confusion as to the real source of women's equality. The SPA Women's Committee believes that communist women should participate and aim to influence these movements, but with special attention to working class women.

Communits should aim to have women see that capitalism not men is the source of exploitation and women's inequality and the main opponent of women, that the ending of capitalist exploitation will only be possible through the united and joint action of men and women, that women's struggle alone will not change society, nor win women's liberation.

The SPA holds the view that it is not possible to achieve full equality under capitalism, although certain gains can be won. Basic equality can only be achieved with the winning of socialism and with the working class taking power and ending capitalist exploitation. The establishment of a socialist society is impossible without the united

struggle of the working class which means the unity of men and women. To project the view that men are the main enemy is to assist capitalism divide the working class and to stifle not only the achieving of socialism, but the liberation of women.

Due to wrong ideological trends within the Communist Party of Australia (revealed in its ideological incorrect stance on the nature of women's oppression,) it became necessary to establish a new party which emerged as the Socialist Party of Australia.

The first Congress held September 29-30, October 1-2, 1972 declared its support for the World Communist Movement and the Declaration of the Meeting of the Communist and Workers Parties held in June, 1969. In fighting for the best interests of the Australian people, the Socialist Party of Australia saw itself as integrally linked with the struggles of the working class of all countries for peace, democracy and socialism.

One of the initial and important steps of the newly formed Socialist Party of Australia was the formation of a Central Women's Committee recognising the imperative need to involve women in the struggle to work for a socialist Australia.

The scope of its guidelines are:

- ★ to advise the Central Committee on relevant matters concerning the womens movement;
- ★ to make public statements on appropriate issues and actions and prepare statements for publication by the Central Committee.
- ★ to assist in the all round development of particularly women activists at all levels, to give attention to recruitment, particularly of women to the party.
- ★ to pay particular attention to the development of theoretical work on relevant issues.
- ★ to formulate an SPA Program for Women.

With two party congresses behind us, and an initial program, and a redrafted program, the Women's Committee is continuing to pay particular attention to the specific tasks of being acutely aware of and monitoring the needs and actions of women, to closely understanding and analysing the forces of the broad women's movement, to bringing forward policies and proposals for action based on this analysis, to participating in and playing a leading role in the movement of women and assisting in the development of working class women and their leadership in struggle.

The committee's three major priorities are:

- ★ to promote, initiate and develop the party's policies on women through booklets, statements, leaflets IWD Greeting Cards and supplements, by articles in *the Socialist* and the *Australian Marxist Review*.
- ★ To participate in the development of work in the broad women's movement, equipping the SPA with the thinking of women.
- ★ To ascertain the feelings and demands of working class women, seeing them as an essential and vital source of potential membership for our party.
- ★ Attention to education and cadre development of women. This covers education at all levels from the more experienced right through to prospective members of the Party.

The Socialist Party of Australia believes that a socialist Australia would see the end to all the current acute problems being faced by Australian women and their families. Through overall planning of the economy and the wealth created by the people being redistributed to the people for their needs and welfare, a socialist Australia would be able to provide the necessary facilities to assist women participate in the workforce, play a role in the trade unions and the community and in the political life of the country without antagonisms in family life.

The SPA Program for Women calls for:

- ★ The right to work for all women (register if unemployed)
- ★ Full equal pay and job opportunity.
- ★ Protection of motherhood.
- ★ Extended community services.
- ★ Proper child care facilities.
- ★ Paid maternity leave, legal and free abortion.
- ★ An end to all discriminatory social laws and practices.
- ★ A socialist Australia.

(Copies of the SPA Program for Women is available from the SPA Headquarters, 392 Sussex Street, Sydney.)

Marxist-Leninist Science and Youth

by DON McDONALD

The history of the Eureka Youth League (EYL 1942-1967) demonstrates that socialist youth organisation can rapidly develop and rapidly die away.

It shows that it can grow into a mass organisation almost overnight, but on the other hand unless its leaders and members are involved in actual class struggle and deeply grounded in working class politics in addition to having good sporting and social activities it can die away just as quickly.

In the 1920's the Young Communist League (YCL) was formed and continued up until the late 1930's when it became the League of Young Democrats (LYD) largely due to the necessity to build broad anti-fascist youth organisations as the threat of fascism arose.

However the LYD was banned by the Menzies' government in 1940. This led to the formation of the Eureka Youth League in 1942, which grew out of the LYD and the Australian Labour League of Youth (ALLY).

The EYL soon grew in both membership and influence. This was largely due to solidarity work with the war effort against fascism. In addition the EYL took up campaigns for better conditions for young workers.

After the war the EYL became very active in supporting the International Youth Festivals for Peace and Friendship.

The EYL also organised sporting and cultural activities to attract young people. A combination of all of these activities beside the impact of the victories of the Red Army on Australian youth resulted in the EYL becoming an organisation of considerable membership and influence by the early 50's, but due to the cold war it had rapidly declined by the late 50's.

The League had been reduced to mainly the sons and daughters of communists who had in the main graduated from the Junior Eureka League (JEL). Very few had been won through class struggle. Thus, it was quite narrow, cliquey and relatively divorced from youth in general.

Because of the cold war there was a tendency to concentrate on social activity or politics on the lowest common denominator although the League did retain a dedicated core of cadres who were able to rebuild the organisation fairly rapidly again in the early 60's after the cold war had eased off.

A fair number of these cadres obtained their dedication and training through their membership in the JEL, proving the importance of a progressive children's organisation.

Although the new success of the League was due to a combination of activities such as holiday camps, sporting clubs etc., it was the setting up of suburban organisation in the form of "Coffee and Politics Nights" which really rebuilt the League.

These nights were based on a session on current affairs and then a session on social activity. Another factor was the spirit of competition which was developed in building the League in the form of Mr. and Miss Eureka Competitions which were based on issuing points to the branches for new members, finance raising, selling *Target* (the EYL newspaper) mass work etc.

These competitions would culminate in a Mr and Miss Eureka Ball where the results would be announced. At the same time the holiday camps played a major role as they provided cheap holidays based on opportunities to make new friends which was a big problem among young people.

The camps were based on concerts and sporting activity, working class films, mass sales of *Target*, political discussion, debates etc.

The JEL had camps as well, which generally followed on from EYL camps using the same facilities.

During the early 60's the League developed an aggressive approach to selling its newspaper *Target* to win mass sales. It set out to involve all the membership. This not only lifted sales but encouraged all to participate as it was a social outing as well.

The League had considerable success in developing gymnastic classes and basketball teams which were very popular and provided a number of State gymnastic champions.

Although the League had grown to about 600 in NSW very few members were won through participation in class struggle. The League was still unable to make any real gains among young trade union activists.

Most League members' commitment to Marxism or socialism had not been tested under pressure. This was due to its relative isolation from the main class struggles in the trade union movement. There was no proliferation of "left" or "marxist" groups like there are today. It was more simply the left and the right.

There was also a tendency for League members to make the organisation their total life, to build a world in isolation from the real world. Despite this, there were attempts to overcome these problems by developing Marxist-Leninist study courses and trade union youth bulletins such as *Doing Time* for Apprentices and *Early Birds* for young working girls.

To its great credit, the EYL organised the first demonstrations in opposition to the war in Vietnam.

The internal structure of the League was based on democratic centralism through which it was able to involve its members in the decision making and at the same time demonstrate the power of organisation.

Although there was no real left opposition in the early to mid 60's there was a handful of Trotskyists based on the CND campaign for nuclear disarmament.

Every time the EYL organised a function they would do nothing to rally support. They would just turn up and hand out leaflets to the people the EYL had brought along. They also tried to develop debates on anti-Sovietism. They had read all Marxist-Leninist classics. They knew it all parrot fashion and could run rings around most EYL

leaders regarding dates, names, places, etc, on Soviet history.

As a result they succeeded in confusing and winning some League members to their organisation. This problem was contributed to by the lack of League members with any real experience of working class struggle, who could judge issues more clearly on a class basis.

Most members had rather grown to accept the ideological outlook of the Communist movement not under contest but because they were the sons and daughters of communists.

Communists were very much aware of the important role of formal education. There was a tendency for League members to educate themselves out of the industrial working class by going to University and joining the well paid professional occupations.

As the EYL at the time was also a major source of recruitment for the Party, it is obvious how the developments in the EYL played some part in influencing the CPA to move away from the industrial working class and base itself on petty bourgeois policies of nationalism. This was expressed in its so called independent position in regard to the international movement, super militancy, "short cuts" to revolution and elitism while abandoning the theory of the united front. Issues were no longer judged on a class basis.*

The EYL was organisationally independent from the CPA but, as its constitution stated, it accepted the ideological guidance of the CPA and based itself on Marxism-Leninism.

This meant that the EYL had the last say if it had any differences with the CPA. At the 1967 Congress a great struggle took place which brought about the end of not only the EYL but its successor the Young Socialist League, YSL. On the issue of the relationship of the League to the Party I think I was the only member of the outgoing national council which fought to maintain the relationship on the basis as outlined above.

The rest supported the view of Mavis Robertson, the outgoing National Secretary, which was that the League should not only be organisationally independent, but ideologically independent as well.

The majority of delegates supported my position, though this was overturned the next day on a rescission motion. Another incorrect decision made at the 1967 Congress, which was to have a negative impact, was the decision to change the name to the Young Socialist League.

This tendered to wipe out the socialist tradition and influence that had been built up in the name of the EYL.

As the Trotskyist movement developed, the League, EYL and YSL lapsed into increasing ideological uncertainty. This was added to by the development of petty bourgeois policies in the CPA. This led to many League members joining the Trotskyists or simply dropping out.

There are today a very large number of activists of the labour movement who were former EYL members including many leading trade union officials. A vast majority of former league members adopt a progressive position. Although many are not members of a political party there are large numbers who are active in various fringe organisations of the progressive movement.

There is no doubt that the EYL and the JEL made a very positive contribution to the labour movement in Australia. The EYL was a source of political skills for young people. It demonstrated the power of organisation. It gave a sense of belonging and a purpose in life. It gave to young people a method of doing something about political and social questions. To do something about things.

It developed ideological understanding and personal character through criticism and self criticism. It made an important contribution to winning recognition of equality for women in all levels of activity. Above all, it gave young people a sense of responsibility to their class and an understanding of the historic role of the working class as the basic force in the struggle for a socialist future.

In the struggle for Socialism it is decisive for a party of the working class to support the creation and existence and development of a youth organisation based on the same principles and traditions as the Eureka Youth League.

This lesson of the past is fundamental for the future of the Socialist Party of Australia.

* See examples in the pamphlet "Six Turbulent Years."

The Communist movement and the national question in Australia

by DR. HANNAH MIDDLETON

Karl Marx: "Labor in the white skin can never be free while labor in the black skin is in chains."

In October 1920 the Communist Party of Australia was founded. This was the first and most fundamental step taken by the Australian people to formulate and implement a scientific socialist national policy relating to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

From its foundation the CPA was concerned with the national question but its first draft program on the Aborigines was not issued until September 1931.† In this document, entitled "Draft Program of Struggle against Slavery," the CPA declared that:

"Hitherto, the conditions of the Aborigines have not been considered by workers in the revolutionary movement but henceforth no struggle of the white workers must be permitted without demands for the Aborigines being championed; no political campaigns without political programs applicable to our fellow exploited — the Aborigines — being formulated."

Fourteen demands were put forward in the draft covering social, political and legal rights, wages and working conditions, education, development of traditional culture and land rights. Point 14 stated:

“The handing over to the Aborigines of large tracts of watered and fertile country, with towns, seaports, railways, roads, etc., to become one or more independent Aboriginal states or republics. The handing back to the Aborigines of all Central, Northern, and North West Australia to enable the Aborigines to develop their native pursuits. These Aboriginal republics to be independent of Australian or other foreign powers. To have the right to make treaties with foreign powers, including Australia, establish their own army, governments, industries, and in every way be independent of imperialism.”

By the early post-war years many Australian Communists had in one way or another been in direct contact with the Aborigines and had experience of their struggle. The CPA had also established a Minorities Committee which dealt with the struggle of both the Aborigines and the Torres Strait Islanders.

One of the fruits of these developments was an unsigned article, “A New Stage in the Development of the Aboriginal People,” published in *Communist Review* September 1954, which resolved a number of theoretical problems including the sectarianism of the 1931 draft.

The article recognised the developing struggle of the Aborigines and their white supporters as part of an objective process taking place on a world-wide scale. It analysed the processes of ethnic consolidation and national formation occurring among the Aborigines as tribal and local boundaries are gradually replaced by wider loyalties and it raised the critical point that:

“There has been a tendency to regard the Aboriginal question as merely a class question, to consider the Aborigines as merely a severely exploited worker. This attitude completely ignores the national characteristics of the Aboriginal people, and plays into the hands of capitalist ‘assimilators’ who wish to deny the Aborigines the right to develop their own national culture. Again, the Aboriginal problem has often been regarded as a racial problem, ignoring the class position and class composition of the Aboriginal people, and treating them as an undifferentiated mass, whether tribalised, pastoral workers, settlement natives, etc.”

These developments in Communist analysis of the national question

were consolidated in two further articles. S.M. in *Communist Review* March 1961, offered detailed information in support of the criticism of the tendency towards a one-sided approach and two years later A.L. presented an overview of CPA theoretical work in an article, "The Aboriginal National Minority" (*Communist Review*, February 1963). This latter article also looked at evidence of Aboriginal consciousness and ideology, concluding that:

"Although there are individual exceptions, a most important aspect of the life of both full and part-Aborigines is related to the fact that they belong to a self-conscious national minority with its own culture. This factor often appears to be more important to the Aborigine than his membership of the working class when he happens to be working. Consequently, these national characteristics can never be ignored even when the very important working class aspects are emphasised."

The article called for the "preservation of existing cultural ties" and for political autonomy (although not for smaller groups in well populated areas) and stressed the need for security of land tenure and economic development through the establishment of cooperatives.

The one-sided approach which had regularly occurred in Communist documents was still evident in A.L.'s tendency to overemphasise the national aspect of the Aboriginal question. For example, it was suggested that broad organisations were important in the task of educating white Australians but were secondary "to the organisations with membership which is wholly or largely of Aboriginal people." He did not mention the equally important role of multi-racial organisations such as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders which was operating most effectively at that time and he undervalued the crucial question of black/white unity in action.

The program adopted by the 21st Congress of the CPA in June 1967, **Full Human Rights for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders**, was a further important scientific socialist document on the national question in Australia.

It analysed historical developments and current conditions among Aborigines and Islanders and set out a list of immediate demands. In its concluding sections it stated:

"Those who benefit chiefly from the wage-robbery of Aboriginal and Island workers and from the theft of Aboriginal lands are the big (mostly foreign) pastoral and mining concerns...."

“The struggle for Aboriginal and Islanders’ rights therefore, is an important part of the struggle of the Australian people against monopoly and its governments, for radical social change and for socialism.

“For this reason, the fight for Aboriginal and Islanders’ rights should be regarded as an important aspect of the whole political struggle in Australia, not as a matter for a few well wishers, but one to be taken up by all progressive people, by all true patriots.

“The majority of the Aboriginal and Island peoples has been converted into a particularly oppressed section of the working class. Their economic problems are therefore the direct concern of the working class and its unions.

“Their problems as oppressed national minorities are also the concern of the working class, which is called on by history not only to emancipate itself but, in so doing, to help emancipate all other sections of the people.”

By the end of the 1960s, however, the leadership of the CPA had adopted left extremist policies which were reflected in their attitudes towards the national question. They began to support and promote the ‘super radical’ trends and ideas of black separatism which were actually dividing black and white and weakening the struggle for black rights.

At their 1974 Congress the CPA adopted a resolution which played down the position of Aborigines and Islanders as members of the working class but stressed their exclusiveness and separation. “Communists fully respect the independence of the Black Movement and offer it unconditional support and aid.” “Emergency survival programs” replaced the demand to complete equality in every field, and elementary trade union demands such as equal pay and conditions and unemployment benefits were not included.

The responsibility for developing the scientific socialist policy on the national question in Australia was taken up by the Socialist Party of Australia after its foundation in December 1971. Policies were adopted at its first and second congresses and a number of articles appeared in the *Australian Marxist Review* culminating in the program, **The National Question in Australia**, adopted at the third congress of the SPA in September/October 1978.

The document analyses the processes of class and national formation among Aborigines and Islanders and puts forward an action program dealing with general rights in employment, housing, health, education,

culture and the legal system and with special national rights covering communal inalienable land rights, control and communal or national rights over minerals and other natural resources, ownership and control of sacred sites, the establishment of Aboriginal and Islander autonomous areas, and Aboriginal and Islander participation in funding and policy decisions.

The program calls for unity in action to be built between black and white Australians, stressing that:

“If the Aboriginal and Islander struggle is to be won, it is essential that the ideological issues are understood. The working class movement must realise that part of their movement is made up of Aboriginal and Islander workers and that the national liberation and working class movements are allied. The revolutionary and anti-monopoly content of the land rights campaign is as important for the white workers as it is for the Aborigines and Islanders.

“At the same time/it must also be recognised that the Aborigines and Islanders are not only workers, they are black workers. They are more than members of the working class for they are also members of oppressed national minorities. Failure to recognise this and to fight for their national rights can only strengthen imperialism in Australia.”

The policies of Australian communists during the last sixty years have been guided by an understanding that in our historical conditions the class struggle of the working people merges with the struggle against national oppression and the struggle for socialism with the anti-imperialist national liberation movements.

National liberation movements are part of the mass struggle against monopoly capitalism and imperialism. The actions of oppressed nations and nationalities in themselves do not destroy capitalism but they do, as Lenin pointed out, “help the **real** anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene.”

The working class led by the party of scientific socialism fights for the elimination of all national oppression and for the equality of all nations, nationalities and national minorities, principally in the interests of consistent and genuine democracy. Its national program is part of the struggle to end exploitation and oppression in general. Its struggle for the best possible solution of the national question is connected with the struggle for its own emancipation.

The main aim of the Communist national program under capitalism is to build a united revolutionary front of the working people of all

nations and national minorities. Applied to Australia this means unity in action between the Aboriginal/Islander liberation movement and the working class movement. Any weakening of this ideological and practical unity can only serve the interests of imperialism and thereby hold back the emancipation of both black and white Australians.

† . Published in the *Workers' Weekly*, 24th September 1931. I am deeply indebted to Andrew Markus for drawing my attention to this document.

Do we need a worker-farmer alliance

by VIC WILLIAMS

In countries where the peasants are a majority of the working people, it is easy to understand the necessity of worker-farmer alliance in the struggle for socialism.

In Australia, where even at the turn of the century a majority of the population lived in cities and towns, and today when 80% are urbanised and those directly engaged in primary production would be about 6% of the workforce, the working class need for this ally is not so clearly seen. In the workers' economic struggles this need is seldom felt, but unions on strike do turn to working farmers for support in terms of food. It is more often in political struggle that the workers seek farmer support.

The Australian farmers are the best organised, industrially and politically, of the middle class. In the 50's they produced 80 per cent of the exports and in 75-76 they produced 44 per cent. A very considerable, but now lessening part of the Australian workforce has been employed servicing the needs of the farmers and there are nearly a million of these in the countryside. The recent threat of boycott of trade in wool, wheat and meat with the Soviet Union and Iran was blocked by the still considerable political strength of the farmers' organisations,

but the immediate interests of workers, particularly those closely involved with agricultural production and export, were also threatened.

Farmers need working class support in the struggle for overseas markets, particularly against the stranglehold of the Conference Lines. The interest of Australian workers, in building and manning Australian ships for overseas trade is also in the interests of farmers as a whole.

The pressure of monopolies, through markets and other means is forcing farmers off the land. In 1930 there were 500,000 self-employed and on wages on farms, in 1971, 300,000 and by 1977 they were down to 250,000. In WA in the 70's the number of farmers fell by 15%. In these times of growing unemployment it is in the immediate interest of workers to see these farmers remain on the farms and do not come onto the labor market.

The working class and the farmers have the same exploiter, capital, though the exploitation has different forms. Using these differences, the ruling capitalist class have set out to divide them, and to a big extent have succeeded. This was done over the issue of the export of live sheep. While it meant markets for farmers it meant lost jobs for workers. These divisions can and must be overcome, and the fact that many Australian farmers have been workers before can help in overcoming this disunity.

There have been considerable examples in Australia where the workers and sections of the farmers have acted together, but mainly based on their immediate needs and not from a principled class position. This is not an alliance, which needs the agreement between some organisations of the classes.

The worker-farmer alliance cannot be established spontaneously but only from conscious activity initiated by the working class organisations. The Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism Page 475 point out the changes in the worker-peasant (or worker-farmer) alliance.

“Its objective content is changing from anti-feudal to anti-monopolist and anti-imperialist.”

The class interests of Australian farmers as a whole are attacked by the growth of monopolies in exploiting agriculture. Private and public incorporated companies are a quarter of the agricultural enterprises producing over \$200 million, but only one twentieth of all the enterprises. These companies and the biggest farmers are very often involved if not part of the big business, and they betray the interests of their class. The small farmers, approximately three quarters of the total, are being more and more involved in the struggle against the multinationals, the agricultural companies and the activities of the Liberal Governments.

Half of the 176,000 economic and producing agricultural enterprises in Australia are owned by sole operators or family partnerships and produce under \$20,000 a year.. In 1971 only 50,000 employed labor on farms, and the proportion would be less today.

These working farmers have before and will again develop their own industrial and political organisations in opposition to the farmers organisations dominated and controlled by big farmers and the companies. An alliance can begin with agreements for united action between working class organisations and small farmers organisations.

Because so much of Australian exports of agricultural products going to markets in the major imperialist countries are savagely exploited by price cutting, their struggle takes on an anti-imperialist character. A particular example of this exploitation is in freights by the Conference Lines.

The victories of the Aboriginal people for land rights, with their co-operatives on the stations, has added a new and significant section to the ranks of the farmers. These had recently been wage workers on the stations, but the change in their economic position has changed their class interests. The struggle for land rights, and their struggle to hold what they have won is against foreign multinationals and Liberal Governments supporting the multinationals in the main. This, and because their struggle for national liberation is part of the world-wide anti-imperialist struggle emphasises their position as anti-imperialist.

The very good relations between these Aboriginal groups and the trade unions and the fact that many of the unions are actively fighting these foreign multinationals, shows this as a valuable area to build worker-farmer alliance.

It is on the anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist character of the Australian farmers interests that the working class can consciously build the worker-farmer alliance. The farmers as the best organised and cohesive part of the middle class have an important influence on the middle class as a whole. Mistakes in building the worker-farmer alliance will weaken the approach to the middle class as a whole. Socialism can only be won and consolidated when the capitalist class is completely isolated and sections of the middle class support the working class and other sections of the middle class are at least neutralised in their opposition to the working class. Not only must the working class see itself as the liberators of society, but the middle class or at least a majority of it must see the working class as its liberator from imperialism and monopoly capitalism.

This will need as a basis for action the consistent and principled approach to the farmers in building the worker-farmer alliance, the overcoming of the prejudices of many workers towards farmers. When the class interests of the farmers are attacked by monopoly capitalism and imperialism the workers need to be prepared to support them, to see each issue in relation to the over-all question of worker-farmer alliance, to develop the struggle against monopoly and imperialism in the direction of socialism. This calls for the development of theory and the particular knowledge of the situation of Australian agriculture, nationally and internationally.

Only a Marxist-Leninist Party can give this guidance and leadership necessary, but only on the basis of consistent theory, research and practice.