

**Political Resolution adopted by the 8th Congress of the Socialist Party of Australia,
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INDEX

Introduction
Globalisation, the TNCs and imperialism
The scientific and technological revolution
Uneven development
Change of tactics
Military force
Corruption and Crime
Trade and foreign policy
Economic rationalism
Deregulation
Privatisation
Consequences of economic rationalist policies
Resistance
The socialist states
The developing countries
The Non-Aligned Movement
The United Nations Organisation
Australia—a middle-sized imperialist power
Australian-based TNCs
National sovereignty and independence
Australian foreign policies
Australian society
The fightback
The trade union movement
Trade union action
The Labor Party
The Liberal-National Party Coalition
The Australian Democrats
The Greens
Community organisations and single issue movements
The progressive women's movement
A future for Australian youth
Migrants, multi-culturalism and racism
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
Democratic rights
The environment, jobs and the capitalist system
Building Unity
The left and progressive political alternative
Build the Socialist Party of Australia
Recruitment of new members
“The Guardian” and the “Australian Marxist Review”
Finance
Education in politics and ideology
Ultra-left, sectarian ideas
Rightist ideas

Our socialist objectives and principles
Building communist unity
Conclusion

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Introduction

Throughout the world there is an upsurge of struggle between capital and labour; between independence movements and those attempting to impose a new colonialism; between those who are striving to build socialist societies, on the one hand, and those who want to perpetuate a system of exploitation on the other.

These struggles are around many issues—democratic and trade union rights, wages and pensions, jobs, privatisation, the environment, poverty, homelessness, education, housing, health services, the rights of women and students, land rights, peace, independence and many others.

They take many forms including mass demonstrations, marches, protest meetings, strikes, pickets, boycotts, hunger strikes, petitions and armed conflict.

They will continue to be a main feature of the political life of many countries in the period ahead. Trade unions, community organisations, single issue movements, student and women’s organisations, indigenous people, political parties and individuals are all taking part in the great, world-wide upsurge of these mass actions.

Capitalism remains in crisis as a result of its insoluble contradictions. In this era of the transnational corporations (TNCs) these contradictions remain and new ones emerge. All are intensifying.

National borders, government regulations and laws, elected governments, trade unions, taxation regimes, trade barriers, restrictions on foreign investment and capital flows, public ownership and the “welfare state” are “barriers”, hindering the operations of TNCs. The TNCs see the whole world as their market place and are endeavouring to sweep these barriers away.

Imperialism’s attempts to resolve the new crises and contradictions associated with globalisation and the scientific and technological revolution (STR), are at the expense of the working people and the environments of all countries. While the growth of the newly industrialising countries offers imperialism new opportunities for expansion and new sources of profit, capitalism has no other solutions than the economic rationalist policies (also known as “neo-liberalist or “economic fundamentalist”) being forced on people around the world.

These policies are being worked out by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an organisation which includes all the developed capitalist countries. The OECD is the main “think-tank” of the capitalist states and it works out the policies required to implement the demands of the TNCs. Its policies are being applied in practically all countries.

Imperialism is the highest stage in the development of capitalism and more and more social problems are arising to which the capitalist ruling class has no answer for the people of the world. Despite the advances in science and technology capitalism cannot provide the necessary health services, jobs, education, food and housing needs of the people nor protect the environment not even in the wealthiest industrialised countries. Capitalism, with its priority of private profit making, is inherently unable to solve the problems of the people. The intensified exploitation of the working people results in greater impoverishment and hardship, famine and wars and threatens the future of the human race.

Never before has the need for a change in direction away from the traditional policies of the major capitalist parties been so apparent. Never before has the need for socialism been greater. Only in a socialist society can people achieve lasting economic security, political democracy and social development. A new kind of economics and a new kind of state—a people's state—is required.

In the past the strength of socialism, the struggles of the working class and national liberation movements forced many concessions from the ruling class in many countries. These gains are now under strong attack and many have been lost. Capital must continually expand to survive and does so by intensifying the exploitation of the working people.

Globalisation, the TNCs and imperialism

Imperialism is, first and foremost, the investment of capital by the capitalists of one country in the economy of another country, subjecting its people and resources to foreign exploitation and control. There is an inseparable relationship between the intensification of the exploitation of the people of other countries (imperialism), the growth of the TNCs and the globalisation of their operations. TNCs have grown out of big monopoly concerns and are giant accumulations of finance and material assets spread across many continents. They control sources of raw material, manufacturing, marketing, etc, in the production process.

The newly emerging "global economy" is being dictated by transnational corporations. In 1995 the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated that there were 40,000 parent TNCs with 250,000 subsidiaries. The total of foreign investments controlled by these 40,000 TNCs was US\$2.6 trillion. The growing importance of foreign investment is illustrated by the fact that the global sales generated by the foreign subsidiaries of TNCs (US\$5.2 trillion) in 1992 exceeded worldwide trade of goods and services (US\$4.9 trillion) by US\$300 billion.

The economic rationalist policies of governments, with the assistance and coercion of US-controlled international institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, OECD and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which has replaced GATT, have played a critical role in the rapid growth of foreign investment as well as trade. Trade and foreign investment barriers have been lifted, currencies deregulated and the public sector opened up through privatisation for TNCs to plunder. Mergers, takeovers, alliances, cartels and joint ventures have all contributed to the accumulation of the vast assets that they control. Power and wealth is concentrated as never before in the hands of a small minority of the 40,000 corporations.

TNCs and their subsidiaries account for two-thirds of world trade. While there are many small and medium-sized TNCs, the top 100 accounted for one-third of world trade in 1993

and about one-sixth of accumulated foreign investments. These figures understate the real situation, as they fail to illustrate the power that monopoly capital has over the smaller corporations that do business with them. The myth of “free trade” pedalled by the economic rationalists is false. “Free trade” gives free reign to the large TNCs. The relation between a large TNC and a small business is an unequal one.

The economies of many countries are increasingly dominated by a relatively small number of giant TNCs whose investments not only reap huge profits but enable them to control the economic and political life of countries. The TNCs take advantage of lax or non-existent labour and environmental laws and access to cheap, abundant natural resources. They are increasingly determining the restructuring of national economies. “The governments involved allowed restructuring to happen, including by letting [TNCs] phase out some firms or industries while letting [them] phase in others...”, says the UNCTAD, “World Investment Report” of 1995.

The World Bank speaks in terms of a “transformation of rich countries from industry-dominated to services-dominated economies.” Services include health and community, legal, accountancy, education, telecommunications, electricity, gas and water, wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and hotels, transport and storage, finance and insurance, property and business services, government administration and defence, culture and recreation.

Services are traded as “commodities” in the same way as wool, radios or oil and many services which were provided in the past by Federal, State or Municipal governments are being taken over by private enterprise. Those who work in service industries are exploited in the same way as blue collar workers in manufacturing.

In Australia the services sector now accounts for almost 80 per cent of employment, more than 70 per cent of GDP and 23 per cent of exports. Services are a major focus of domestic and foreign investment in Australia. Employment in manufacturing has sharply declined from 35.5 per cent in 1973 to 13.36 per cent at the end of 1995. Mining accounts for only 0.97 per cent, while agriculture, forestry and fishing employs 5.1 per cent of the total workforce. Services account for over 22 per cent of world trade and are subject to the same processes of globalisation and domination by TNCs as is the more traditional area of trade and investment in manufactured goods. As well as the wholesale and retail trades and the hospitality and tourism industries, the services sector includes such strategically important areas of the economy as warehousing, transport, communications and finance.

As well as national economies being restructured to fit in with the global plans of TNCs, production itself is being internationalised, with the manufacture, assembly, research and design, marketing, accounting, legal work and sales being carried out by affiliates or subcontractors in different locations around the globe. A new division of labour is occurring, as TNCs direct investments and components of production to the most attractive locations. As well as capital moving around the globe, millions of “guest” or immigrant workers from poorer countries are working in foreign countries, repatriating income to their families at home.

The TNCs also impose their control over economies through agencies like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, OECD, GATT and now the World Trade Organisation. Their interests are being increasingly served by the United Nations Organisation.

The creation of regional trade blocs like the European Union, North American Free Trade Agreement, ASEAN Free Trade Area, the CER between Australia and New Zealand and others also serve the economic and political objectives of the TNCs.

Conservative and social democratic governments alike have pursued economic rationalist policies and see the future development of the economy as dependent on attracting foreign capital. As a result governments have done their best to create an attractive investment climate by liberalising trade, lifting restrictions on foreign investment, deregulating labour markets, offering low wage, non-unionised work forces, low corporate tax regimes, tax incentives, cheap and efficient infrastructure, relaxing or ignoring environmental protection regulations and a “stable” political environment to enhance the operations and profits of the big corporations. “World best practice” and benchmarking are tools in this process.

Contradictions and struggles arise as governments pursue policies in the interests of the TNCs. Local industries, small farmers and small businesses in particular can no longer rely on government intervention or protectionist measures (like tariffs or subsidies) to assist them. Workers are increasingly competing against the workers of other countries, particularly in low wage, non-unionised countries where the most intense and brutal exploitation of workers occurs.

The obsession of governments with foreign investment and production for export has distorted domestic economies and failed to meet the needs of the people. This is also causing environmental devastation which has been particularly damaging in poorer countries.

As economies are increasingly subjected to the interests of international capital, the independence of countries is undermined. They lose the economic levers and controls that could have been used to protect industries and the environment, create employment, fix interest and currency rates, fight inflation, provide services, etc.

TNCs are directly taking over some functions of government as publicly-owned enterprises, services and government departments are privatised, implementing the OECD slogans of “small government” and “rolling back the state”.

The financial sector has become more powerful with vast sums of money being used for speculative purposes rather than production. Capital has become more and more parasitic, feeding off itself to make huge profits. The big corporations have their eyes on Asia and see development in terms of profits made—not whether people are fed, housed, clothed, have safe drinking water or jobs.

The slogan, “Workers of all lands unite”, takes on a new imperative with the new global division of labour and operations of TNCs around the world. Globalisation requires international solidarity between workers, particularly within specific industries and those who have common employers.

The scientific and technological revolution (STR)

Very big and rapid changes are taking place in all societies with a major factor being the scientific and technological revolution (STR). It has expanded production, communications and trade across the borders of sovereign states.

The structure of the working class and the character of work have changed considerably as science and technology have come closer to the point of production. The majority of Australian workers are no longer engaged in manufacturing. They are now found in white

collar employment and service industries. The intellectual component of many occupations has increased while the physical component of many “blue collar” jobs has shrunk or even vanished. Computers, technology and mechanisation have taken over, eliminating much formerly arduous manual work.

While the latter is to be welcomed, it has also meant the elimination of tens of thousands of jobs and, although new jobs and skills have been created, the new technology has overall eliminated more jobs than have been created. These changes are a factor in the increase in unemployment and are making it harder to organise workers into trade unions.

The STR has enormously increased the productivity of labour. Many fewer workers produce much more in less time. This results in a considerable increase in the rate of exploitation of labour power. From each worker a greater profit is made. This justifies a substantial reduction in the working week, higher wages and better working conditions. However, the opposite has happened. The working week of full-time workers is being increased, the real wages of many workers have been reduced and working conditions worsened.

The STR has also resulted in a greater concentration of capital and ownership of the means of production. Smaller companies which cannot afford the cost of new technology are either taken over, closed down or become bankrupt.

Patent laws treating technology and information as private property (referred to as “intellectual property rights”) are being introduced and enforced. As a result, third world countries in particular are denied access to technology and research, thus hindering their development and ensuring their dependence on the developed capitalist states.

New technology has brought major changes in telecommunications, in information transfers and in the surveillance of individuals. The protection of the rights and privacy of individuals has become a very important democratic rights issue.

Significant changes have also occurred among farmers which are, in part, related to the STR. As more and more machinery is introduced into agricultural production, the capital cost of farming has risen. Other production costs such as for fertilisers, irrigation, pest controls and interest payments to banks have also risen. As a result, small farmers are being driven out and their farms taken over by either bigger farmers or big corporations who have turned them into capitalist agri-businesses.

Uneven development

Despite the growth of TNCs and the globalisation of communications and production processes, the uneven development of the major capitalist states results in some becoming stronger while others weaken. The balance of power between the major centres changes, generating conflicts over the division and re-division of the world into spheres of influence.

However, the struggle for spheres of influence is not limited to a contest between national governments. The giant size of many TNCs and financial institutions means that they have become a direct and potent factor in this struggle. Although TNCs retain a “national” base, they increasingly see themselves as “global” with their field of operations encompassing the whole world. In some industries the global markets have been carved up, each group or cartel operating in its own sphere, eliminating serious competition and ensuring monopoly profits.

The contradictions between the major capitalist groupings have sharpened and come into the open as socialism was weakened by the setbacks in the former USSR and the east European socialist states. While the US still remains economically and militarily the most powerful force, its position is declining relative to other leading economic centres and its authority is increasingly challenged by the European Union and Japan. Sharp conflicts of interest between these three major imperialist centres have intensified.

In addition, countries such as India, Brazil and Argentina also exercise considerable influence. China as a rapidly developing industrial and commercial power and Russia as a major industrial country, although weakened, add to the number of major powers in a more multi-polar world.

In an attempt to strengthen their position against competitors each of the main capitalist groupings is establishing groups of nations which are bound together by economic and trade ties. The principal blocs are the EU, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association) and the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). There are a number of other regional agreements in Africa, the Americas and the Middle East, taking in smaller countries which are uniting to strengthen their position. Most such agreements are primarily economic. Similar, if wider, objectives are behind the formation of the APEC bloc. Efforts are also being made to form a bloc of countries in the Indian Ocean region.

The process towards economic globalisation is at present being expressed in the formation of these regional economic organisations. These blocs, while at first seeming to run contrary to the global approach of GATT, complement the GATT objectives of liberalising trade and investment by accelerating the process within these regional groupings.

Imperialism may also act to dismember countries as a way of imposing its economic and political control. Yugoslavia is an example. This process does not contradict the trend towards forming regional blocs.

The inherent problems and contradictions of capitalism remain and will remain unresolved and the world-wide struggles of the people in support of many demands will continue. As capitalist crisis intensifies, these struggles will take on a more militant, revolutionary and socialist character. The general crisis of capitalism, which capitalist apologists claim had been resolved by the setbacks to socialism, continues. The conflict between capital and labour, capitalism and socialism and between national independence movements and imperialism has not abated.

Change of tactics

Whereas in former colonial times the imperialist powers exercised direct political rule over their "subject people" they now attempt to exercise control through a subservient "local" government prepared to carry out policies in the interests of the big corporations. French colonial possessions are almost the only ones which remain under direct colonial administrations.

Subjugation and exploitation is now primarily achieved by economic pressure and blackmail and through the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and the policies of the OECD and the G7.

Economic "assistance" is made conditional on the adoption of policies laid down by these organisations. If such conditions are not accepted or implemented, measures such as the manipulation of currencies or a "flight of capital" out of the target country are taken.

Another weapon is economic boycott such as the US has imposed against Cuba for over 30 years. Similar economic boycotts were imposed in the past against all socialist countries. But trade boycotts or the threat of them are not limited to socialist states.

The change in tactics on the part of the major imperialist powers is a response to the bitter struggles of the people of the former colonies to throw off colonialism and win political independence. Indirect forms of control are less obvious and more subtle and are passed off as "assistance". However, they result in the same exploitation and control as direct forms of colonialism.

Australian corporations have the same ambition to exploit the labour and resources of other countries as the corporations of Japan, the USA and other imperialist countries.

Whatever its source, capital is the enemy of labour and the people of countries striving for their independence.

Military force

It would be wrong to assume that imperialism has given up use of military force to impose its domination. This has been demonstrated in the war waged against Iraq and the use of NATO military forces in Bosnia. The use of French military forces in some African countries and the South Pacific is another example.

To the north of Australia, three "low intensity" military conflicts are being waged in East Timor, West Papua and Bougainville. Underlying each conflict are the economic interests of big mining and timber exploiting companies active in these countries. The military forces of Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and, to a lesser extent, Australia are involved in these attempts at conquest and subjugation.

The conclusion of the Australia-Indonesia Security Agreement which concentrates on the development of the military forces of the two countries is another indication that the military weapon is retained ready for use.

The Australian government's willingness to play the role of Pacific policeman has already been seen in Malaysia, Korea, Vietnam and Bougainville.

The refusal to give up the use of military power for conquest is also to be seen in the determination of the US, Britain and France to retain nuclear weapons into the distant future.

In addition, sophisticated subversion and covert operations are widely used to interfere in the internal affairs of countries.

The TNCs and the governments which serve them are determined to prevent progressive, democratic, national liberation and revolutionary forces from threatening the dominance of capital anywhere in the world and will use any method to ensure their continued domination.

Corruption and Crime

Endemic corruption and economic crime is now a major feature of all capitalist societies. It is inherent in the capitalist system which gives absolute priority to making money which is promoted as the most desirable achievement, giving both status and power. It is inevitable that with this aim and example before them, many resort to any means to acquire wealth.

Leading individual businessmen, politicians and police forces have been exposed for corrupt practices, theft, money laundering, sale of drugs and even murder. In South Korea, Japan, Italy, France, Britain, India and many other capitalist countries major corruption scandals have erupted. In some countries corruption has become so widespread that capitalist governments have become unstable over long periods of time.

In Australia widespread corruption has been exposed in the police forces of a number of States. Leading businessmen and politicians from both major parties have been involved in corrupt practices involving the misuse or misappropriation of millions of dollars. But what has been exposed in Australia and in overseas countries is only the tip of the iceberg.

The fight against corruption is at the same time a fight to establish higher principles of social morality which can only be fully achieved by the abolition of the source of corruption which is to be found in the system of capitalism.

While supporting the exposure of corruption and the setting up of the necessary investigatory bodies and courts to prove and penalise corrupt practices, it is necessary to guard against the misuse of powers or the establishment of surveillance and investigatory mechanisms which infringe the democratic rights of ordinary citizens.

Trade and Foreign Policy

Trade has become an important arm of foreign policy, enabling governments to achieve political objectives by threats of trade boycotts, trade penalties, use of so-called "aid" for political purposes, denial of loan funds except for specific purposes and under specified economic and political terms.

While it is inevitable and necessary that countries trade with one another, it is vital that trade serves the overall interests of the people rather than the interests of the big corporations and financial institutions.

Australian governments have given support to the concept of "free trade" and substantially cut tariffs on the import of goods from other countries. The ill-considered reduction of tariffs has resulted in a steep increase in the import of products formerly made in Australia. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost and whole industries undermined.

The World Trade Organisation has been set up to regulate international trade but it remains dominated by the bigger capitalist powers (China is excluded from WTO membership) and has powers of enforcement which over-ride the independence and sovereignty of individual countries.

A world-wide trade regime based on equality and mutual benefit is desirable but until these principles are adopted by all countries, the big and powerful TNCs and financial institutions will continue to dominate.

There is, at present, no such thing as a "level playing field".

Economic rationalism

Economic rationalism is a comprehensive set of policies reflecting the demands and interests of big business and facilitating the globalisation process.

Economic rationalist policies drew on the “free market” monetarist theories of Milton Friedman. They were applied in Chile, and further developed by Thatcher and Reagan and have been adopted by capitalist ruling classes around the world.

Economic rationalism constitutes a marked departure from the Keynesian policy of government intervention that prevailed during the three decades of post-WW 2 economic expansion. It seeks to further intensify the exploitation of workers and take back the many concessions that were won during that period. Economic rationalism centres around economic deregulation (including trade and foreign investment); privatisation; “small government”; and attacks on trade unions and workers’ rights and entitlements. It relegates the nation state, including over-riding sovereignty and independence.

Governments have set about divesting the state of its responsibilities for the provision of education, health, housing and other services. The welfare state is being destroyed and replaced by the ideology of “self-provision” or dog-eat-dog. The political objectives of economic rationalism include strengthening the direct rule of capital by such means as privatising publicly owned enterprises and institutions, functions of government, public services and the “hollowing out” of existing democratic structures and procedures.

Economic rationalist policies are being implemented by:

- a sustained assault on the working class, their organisations and rights and the conditions of work and community life which have been won in struggle over many decades.
- the creation of a two-tiered workforce with one part relatively highly trained and paid and employed full-time. The second tier comprises relatively unskilled workers on low pay and available to supplement the first tier as required. Many would be unemployed for long periods.
- “small government” achieved by privatising many government departments and the removal of the state from many areas of public administration and service. “Competition policy” is another means to achieve these objectives.
- policies such as “Quality Assurance Accreditation” and “World’s Best Practice” which are used to intensify exploitation and globally pit worker against worker.
- slashing welfare and all government expenditures not directly assisting big business.
- de-regulation of all aspects of the economy and social life. The repeal of laws and regulations which impose health, safety, social and environmental obligations on big companies.
- restructuring the taxation system to further reduce taxes paid by companies and the rich.
- removal of measures which protect small businesses from the ravages of TNCs.
- elimination of small farms and their replacement by agri-businesses.

Australia’s ruling class and the major political parties are implementing economic rationalist policies.

Deregulation

All capitalist governments are eliminating many of the remaining economic regulations and controls previously exercised by them. Currencies have been “floated” and interest rates are largely fixed by “market forces” and alleged “competition” between large financial institutions. Only a limited regulatory role has been retained by the Reserve Bank of Australia which remains under government ownership but in practice is under the control of the representatives of big business on its board.

Regulations concerning safety, food standards, meat inspection, environmental protection, health matters and much else have been handed over to the “market” and left to “self-regulation” by companies.

There are now few limits on the inflow and outflow of foreign capital. Former limits on the percentage of foreign capital allowed to be invested in particular industries have been mostly lifted. The big corporations also demand the deregulation of the labour market, meaning that workers’ wages, conditions of work, safety and health conditions, etc., should not be regulated or legally enforced by awards or other government or court agencies. They argue that labour conditions should be “freely” negotiated between employers and individual workers, that is, by individual work contracts. A main aim of labour market deregulation is the elimination of class conscious, militant trade unions. They claim that the best and most natural way to regulate an economy is by the free exercise of the “market forces”—the uncontrolled play of supply and demand. Governments pursuing these naive policies claim that “competition” will result in the best possible outcome for the community as a whole. The reality is that the “market” is controlled by the rich and powerful.

Economic rationalist policies became widely accepted, including by most trade union leaderships. This opened the way for large-scale attacks on the wages, conditions of work and the rights of trade unions and individual workers. On the other hand, super-profits are made by the big corporations.

Privatisation

Privatisation of publicly-owned enterprises is another major policy of the economic rationalists.

Using the catch-cries of “competition”, “efficiency”, “choice”, “de-regulation”, “small government”, “rolling back the state”, and “market testing”, privatisation is being aggressively pushed by many governments throughout the world. In Australia, both Liberal and Labor governments have undertaken extensive privatisation. The aim is to hand over to private enterprise all publicly-owned enterprises and institutions. Even government departments and services are not spared. These include local government services, hospitals, schools, water, electricity, universities and public housing. Existing publicly-owned enterprises and services are a considerable area into which private capital can expand to make super profits.

If this is permitted to happen, all areas of the economy would come under the complete and direct control of private enterprise. Privatisation not only limits the ability of governments to provide necessary public services but, if taken to its logical conclusion, will represent the take over by private capital of aspects of government itself. The democratic rights which have been won in decades of struggle by the people will be seriously undermined. The forms of privatisation in Australia vary from outright sale (Commonwealth Bank and Qantas) to “contracting out” some aspects of an enterprise such as is happening with Australia Post, Telstra, public transport, some government departments, and local government services. Corporatisation and contracting out are often the first step in the preparation of an enterprise for sale.

Publicly owned enterprises under state monopoly capitalism are designed to serve the interests of big capital. They have Boards of Directors who are, in the majority, representatives of the monopolies. These Boards ensure that the policies adopted conform to the interests of such monopolies. However, public enterprises have a

progressive aspect and they serve important social objectives and needs. There is need therefore to struggle to expand such enterprises along democratic lines so they serve the people and not the wealthy few.

Profitable publicly-owned enterprises are a source of government revenue which assists funding of other services and welfare needs. Publicly-owned enterprises are accountable to the government and hence the people, while private enterprises are accountable to their shareholders only. Trade union membership is usually higher in public enterprises and the possibility of democratic worker and public representation in the management of publicly-owned enterprises is greater.

The expansion of public ownership can weaken private capital ownership and its control of the economy. Public ownership of key economic sectors gives the government greater control over the economy as a whole, making forms of economic and social planning possible.

Successful publicly-owned enterprises show by example that an alternative form of ownership is available and is capable of providing better services at lower charges than privately-owned enterprises.

Consequences of economic rationalist policies

Some of the main consequences of the policies being implemented under the developing dictatorship of the TNCs are:

- a marked disintegration of societies and an intensification of conflicts on economic, social, religious and ethnic grounds.
- a sharp decline in the living standards of the majority of the people. A widening gap between rich and poor.
- dismantling of welfare systems.
- increasing and mass permanent unemployment.
- a growing impoverishment of developing countries.
- the pollution of the environment, the destruction of forests, deterioration of the land and seas, serious changes in the atmosphere.
- the spread of neo-colonialism with the loss of the independence of countries.
- the expansion of economic and social areas open to exploitation and control by foreign capital.
- attacks on democratic rights, especially those of working class organisations.
- a huge waste of financial and other resources on military build-up.

Economic rationalist policies and their consequences are extremely unpopular and are being strongly resisted by the working class and other social forces in the industrialised and developing countries. Strike struggles, demonstrations, pickets and mass movements using a rich variety of tactics are fighting the policies of privatisation, deregulation, sackings, cuts in wages and welfare payments, policies which favour the big corporations and weaken the labour movements.

In a number of European countries such as Spain, France and Italy, in New Zealand and, more recently in Australia, governments (both conservative and social democratic) pursuing structural adjustment programs have been defeated, only to be replaced by governments continuing the same policies. While not yet strong enough to win government, the left and progressive forces in developing, as well as developed countries are growing stronger. Left-oriented parties have been elected or have won substantial votes in Cyprus, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Nepal, India and some other countries.

The socialist states

The setback to socialism and the process of reimposing capitalism in the former Soviet Union and the socialist states of eastern Europe has had a widespread negative effect both on the people of these countries and throughout the world. The CPA's views on these events have already been set out in the resolutions adopted by the special Congress of the CPA held in 1990 and by the 7th Congress held in 1992. A further contribution was made in the CPA's submission to the Athens conference of communist and workers' parties in June 1995.

The CPA does not retreat from a recognition of the necessity and validity of socialism as the alternative to the exploitation, instability, corruption and the outright crimes of capitalism. Our confidence in socialism has been confirmed by the renewed swing to the left taking place in a number of countries. Elections in former socialist countries are returning left-oriented governments while communist parties are regaining influence.

China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba remain socialist states. Considerable progress has been made in these countries in improving the life of the people as their economies grow and the richness of their cultural life expands.

The developing countries

The people of most former colonial countries, as a result of decades of struggle against colonialism, gained political independence following WW 2. Most of the newly independent countries, under the influence and intervention of their previous colonial masters and other imperialist powers, took the capitalist road of development and, as a consequence, failed to gain their economic independence. Economic independence is vital if they are to become truly independent and able to implement policies in the interests of the people of their countries rather than those demanded by the international financial institutions and corporations.

In the present situation, the super exploitation of the developing countries has intensified. Hundreds of millions of people live in perpetual poverty and their number is increasing. They are denied education, health services and housing. Unemployment runs into the hundreds of millions. Most have no prospects of escaping the poverty trap. The impact of the super-exploitation of the environment is disastrous. The TNCs, the IMF and the World Bank impose economic and political conditions which keep most developing countries subservient to the more developed industrial countries. Nonetheless, some former colonial countries have been able to develop industrially and this has created a working class. Trade unions and working class revolutionary parties have been formed. This is an inevitable process and is the key to their being able to win, eventually, complete political and economic independence and liberation.

Demonstrations, strikes and other forms of struggle have assumed major proportions in many developing countries, particularly against the consequences of the economic policies which have been imposed. The anti-imperialist, national liberation struggle remains the central struggle in most of these countries and requires the alliance of the oppressed classes against imperialism and its local agents. The defeat of apartheid in South Africa was a victory of historic importance not only for the people of that country but for the whole of Africa and the world.

The Communist Party will continue to extend solidarity to all the struggles of the people in developing countries and believes that all other progressive organisations, particularly the

Australian trade union movement, should continue and increase solidarity and support. Much has been done in this respect in the past by the Australian working class.

The Non-Aligned Movement

Over 100 developing countries joined the Non-Aligned Movement which was formed in the 1950s. This movement gave leadership in the struggle against colonialism.

Developing countries formulated a program for a New International Economic Order which was adopted by the United Nations in the 1970s. Its aim was to free developing countries from imperialism and enable them to develop their economies and democratic political life in the interests of their people.

The NAM was consistently supported by the socialist states but was weakened with the defeat of a number of socialist governments, especially in the Soviet Union.

New efforts are being made to again strengthen the NAM as an anti-imperialist and independent voice of developing countries. A revival of the Non-Aligned Movement will renew the demand for the implementation of the New International Economic Order. The alternative for developing countries is to remain the victims of the economic and political subjugation of imperialism.

The United Nations Organisation

The United Nations Organisation is another arena of struggle between two different policies. Either the policy of intervention and economic and political pressure dictated by the big imperialist powers or a policy based on the peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference, equality, recognition of the sovereignty of all countries and mutual advantage. The second alternative is supported by the majority of the UN member states.

The resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations are generally progressive. A good example is the consistent votes of the majority of the UN General Assembly against the US blockade imposed against Cuba. But the UN General Assembly does not have the power to enforce its resolutions and the major powers, who wield veto powers in the UN Security Council, consistently ignore the decisions of the majority.

The change in orientation of the UN from "peace-keeping" to "peace making" and "peace enforcement" is a most serious development. The role of the UN during the Gulf war and the UN decision to hand over to NATO military forces and governments the so-called "peace-keeping" mission in Bosnia are dangerous precedents which could have far-reaching and bad consequences. This not only represents an abdication of responsibility by the UN but signals its replacement by the aggressive NATO military bloc of the main imperialist states in this region.

The intervention of the UN in military conflicts, except in a "peace-keeping" capacity, and its involvement in the internal conflicts of countries, must be stopped. A negotiated settlement of international disputes must be insisted on.

While the UN World Health Organisation and the Food and Agricultural Organisation have contributed to a better world, there are many examples of their work being undermined or ignored, particularly by the major powers.

It is also a scandal that some of the largest and wealthiest countries (principally the US) refuse to pay their subscriptions to the UN on time. This is a deliberate policy designed to

keep the UN in a financial position which prevents it from carrying out its work or places it in a position in which certain big powers may exercise financial blackmail.

There are widespread calls for a reform of the United Nations and many proposals have been advanced. The Australian Labor Government made proposals for UN reform but they have the aim of perpetuating the domination of the UN by the major Western powers. There are also attempts to “corporatise” and “commercialise” the UN. If these proposals are ever adopted, the UN would be effectively handed over to private enterprise to run and control. The Communist Party supports the reform of the United Nations Charter incorporating the following principles:” 1.” The powers of the UN General Assembly should be strengthened so that its decisions are binding and can be enforced. General Assembly agencies need to be set up to ensure this. At the same time, the powers of the UN Security Council should be reduced and the right of veto by the big powers eliminated.

2.” The Security Council should be enlarged by the inclusion of permanent member countries from the Asian, African and Latin American continents.

3.” The various agencies of the UN, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), should be strengthened and fully funded to carry out their work, with priority given to environmental problems related to human survival.

4.” The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation should be brought under UN control and democratised. The former UN centre for the study and regulation of TNCs should be re-established.

5.” All member countries should be obliged to pay their UN contributions on time and be accountable to the UN General Assembly for any failure in this regard.

The Australian government should support the strengthening of the United Nations on the basis of its existing Charter objectives while supporting its restructure on the basis of the above principles.

The principles, rights and conditions in the interests of the peoples of all countries, established in the decisions of the World Environment Conference, the World Congress of Women and similar world conferences, despite their weaknesses, should be incorporated into Australian law.

The UNO remains an important arena for cooperation between states, for the solution of international problems and the promotion of progressive policies. Its Charter, which was written in the aftermath of the struggle against Nazism and fascism, sets down important principles and objectives which should govern the relationships between states. They remain valid today. The UN should be strengthened and not weakened so that these principles are enforced.

Australia—a middle-sized imperialist power

Australia is a field for the investment of overseas capital while Australian-based corporations and financial institutions are investors in other countries. Australia is both a victim of imperialism and also a middle-sized imperialist power imposing its economic and political will on others.

The main sources of capital investments in Australia are the US, Britain and Japan with France, Germany, Singapore and South Korea controlling smaller but rising shares. Figures from the Foreign Investment Review board indicate that only a small percentage

of foreign investment adds to Australia's productive capacity. The overwhelming proportion of foreign investment is used for acquisitions—the purchase of power stations, breweries, electricity companies, financial institutions, hotels, stevedoring companies, factories, etc, which already exist. Such foreign investment makes no new contribution to job creation while the capital borrowed, the interest payments and export of profits add to Australia's large adverse balance of payments and huge net national debt (\$183 billion).

There is also considerable foreign investment in resource-based extractive industries which constitute a significant danger to Australia's already seriously threatened environment. The total stock of foreign investments in Australia is \$401 billion, as against \$141 billion of Australian-based capital invested overseas. (FIRB, June 1995)

Australian-based TNCs and financial institutions have spread their tentacles into a number of branches of industry in other countries. Although Australian-based and registered and using Australian capital, they often include capital from other countries as well.

This makes Australia one of the imperialist powers although not numbered among the larger imperialist centres—the US, Europe and Japan.

Australian companies are making super profits by exploiting the cheap labour of developing countries and forcing governments to give them huge tax concessions and other privileges. The majority of Australia's overseas investments have historically been in the USA, Canada, Europe and New Zealand, but more recently their sights have been set on South East Asia—economically the most rapidly growing region in the world.

Australian-based TNCs are also involved in the exploitation of the people and resources of Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, the Timor Sea and the South Pacific Island nations. They are ripping out the resources of these countries, often causing huge pollution and environmental problems, dislocating local populations, depriving them of their livelihood, and causing great social and economic problems. An example is the BHP's activities at Ok Tedi in PNG where the gold resources are being ruthlessly exploited, the environment laid waste, entire societies disrupted and the livelihood of many of the indigenous people destroyed.

Australian-based TNCs

BHP:" which describes itself as "a leading global resources company with a history of growth". It ranks number 86 on UNCTAD's list of the top 100 TNCs. It has investments in minerals, steel, petroleum, and service companies (sea, road and rail transport, engineering, information technology, insurance and superannuation). It boasts \$30 billion of assets and operates in 157 overseas locations in 80 countries.

BHP's total sales revenue for 1995 was \$17,739 million of which \$6,096 (34 per cent) came from overseas investments. It has a workforce of 49,000 and a record operating profit(*) of \$4,583 million in 1995 -- \$93,000 profit per employee.

FOOTNOTE AT BOTTOM OF PAGE.....

(*) Operating profit is profit before taxation and interest on borrowings have been paid. It reflects the exploitation of workers—the amount of surplus value created.

BHP's drive to intensify its exploitation of its employees is reflected in the increase of productivity of steel in its Australian operations from 178 tonnes per employee in 1983 to 618 tonnes per employee in 1995 -- a rise of 369 per cent. CRA:" (which has recently amalgamated with RTZ to form the largest mining conglomerate in the world) has

investments in iron ore, coal, copper, diamonds, gold and base metals, uranium and salt. CRA describes itself as “one of the world’s largest iron ore producers” with \$9.2 billion in assets in Australia, Indonesia, Argentina, Papua New Guinea, Laos, New Zealand, Japan, USA, Hong Kong, Chile and its mine on Bougainville, which remains closed. Twenty-six per cent of its \$5.8 billion sales revenue in 1994 came from its overseas operations, 55 per cent from exports and 19 per cent sales on the Australian market. CRA’s exports constitute almost six per cent of Australia’s total exports. 4,400 of its 17,900 employees are overseas. Its 1994 operating profit was \$921 million. It makes a profit of \$51,452 from the work of each of its employees.

Santos:” has investments in energy, oil and gas—all capital intensive. It has assets of \$1.5 billion, including Elang and Kakatua oil fields in the Timor Gap, oil in Canning Basin, the Gulf of Mexico and onshore USA and gas from the North Sea. It is carrying out exploration in East Timor, Papua New Guinea, the US, Malaysia and England. Santos made an operating profit of \$250 million in 1994 with a workforce of 1,492 employees, that is, \$167,000 profit per employee.

National Australia Bank:” has \$147 billion assets of which 42 per cent are invested overseas in New Zealand, Scotland, England, Ireland and the US. It has 52,567 employees and an operating profit of \$2.9 billion, a profit of \$55,167 per employee.

Burns Philp: is a global food ingredients company with operations in 32 countries spanning North America, South America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, and customers in over 60 countries. It has 16 per cent of the world market for yeast, eight per cent of the western world market for spices. In 1995 its assets stood at \$3.3 billion, it was raking in sales revenue of \$2.6 billion and had an operating profit of \$188.7 million. Fifty per cent of its 9,933 employees are employed overseas. The profit made per employee is \$18,997

Mayne Nickless:” has investments in transport, health and security services spanning 14 countries, predominantly in Europe, North America and Australia. In 1995 it reported \$2.7 billion in assets, sales revenue of \$3 billion, and an operating profit of \$180 million, that is, \$6,000 from each of its 30,000 employees, reflecting the labour intensive nature of the services it provides.

CSR:” is “One of the world’s largest building and construction materials companies... We are the largest company in the Australian timber industry and in the Australian sugar industry and one of the largest North American construction and building materials companies. We are developing substantial operations in selected areas of China, Taiwan and South-East Asia”, says the company’s report. CRA has \$7,174 million in assets, one third overseas, mostly in the USA. Sales figures for 1995 were \$5,922 million, with an operating profit of \$716 million. Its 23,000 employees work in 13 countries and each made a profit of \$31,130 for the company.

While all the above TNCs are registered in Australia, their actual ownership is sometimes unclear. For example, major BHP shareholders are listed as Nominee companies in which the identity of shareholders is secret and may obscure foreign shareholders. A 1995 survey of leading Australian transnational enterprises in manufacturing and services made by the Bureau of Industry Economics (BIE) says that the manufacturing companies surveyed would invest 63 per cent of their capital investments overseas between 1994 and 1999, compared to the 1987-94 period when the figure was 43 per cent. In services there would be an increase of investment from 19 to 24 per cent overseas. The BIE says that the TNCs now pursue “global strategies” rather than “autonomous” and “dispersed” objectives.

These overseas investments cost many Australian workers their jobs while companies reap super-profits from the exploitation of under-paid workers in other countries.

Of the \$47 billion invested overseas by Australian-based companies in 1994, 39 per cent went to the UK, 21.8 per cent to the US, 14.7 per cent to New Zealand, 5.9 per cent to ASEAN countries, 4.5 per cent to Papua New Guinea and 2.8 per cent to Hong Kong. Investments in Asian countries are now increasing. The transfer of capital has been greatly facilitated by the establishment of world-wide electronic communications which make it possible to transfer funds to and from any part of the world in seconds. One estimate has it that as much as \$US1 trillion is being transferred in this way every 24 hours. The big corporations and financial institutions demand that there should be no restrictions on the inflow and outflow of capital from one country to another in their chase after maximum profits.

National Sovereignty and Independence

The Australian ruling class, through its links with foreign capital, undermines Australia's independence and sovereignty as does the extensive control of major areas of production, finance, resources and services by foreign capital—mainly American, British and Japanese.

The world-wide interconnection of stock exchanges and money markets mean that at any time pressure can be put on a government which adopts policies not to the liking of the big corporations and banks.

The spread of technology in production and communications is inevitable and will bring about greater integration of economies. However, economic changes should be made only within the framework of the interests of the working people of all countries and without undermining the political and economic independence and national sovereignty of any country.

The ANZUS alliance with the US and the siting of US bases on Australian territory also seriously limit Australian independence. Australian governments do not have any effective control over US bases and their activities could result in counter-strikes being directed at Australia for actions over which Australia has not even been consulted. Our country has been dragged into international conflicts on a number of occasions arising from these commitments.

The establishment of Australian independence and sovereignty calls for the building of a powerful people's movement against Australian monopoly and foreign capital, the removal of US bases and the abrogation of the ANZUS Treaty.

Australian foreign policies

Relations between countries should be based on the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes, recognition of the right of sovereignty, independence and the territorial integrity of all countries, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality of all countries, mutual respect and mutual advantage and the right of all people to decide their own social system. These principles, taken together, comprise peaceful co-existence. It is in the interests of the Australian people to develop genuine friendly relations with all countries on the basis of these principles. So far, they have not been adopted by any Australian government.

A cornerstone of the foreign policy of both Labor and Liberal governments is the American alliance. The long-term position of the United States is weakening and Australian governments are increasingly concerned at the gradual withdrawal of the US from the region. They are attempting to ensure that the US stays in the region as the pre-dominant power. These efforts will not succeed as the power of the US will continue to weaken while the strength of Asian countries, which are following independent policies, will grow.

Australian governments support the operation of Australian companies overseas and protect their capital investments and trade interests. The Australian government's role in the Asian-Pacific region confirms this claim.

In the South Pacific Forum (made up of South Pacific Island nations, Australia and New Zealand), the Australian government's role is that of "big brother". It attempts by political and economic measures to determine the policies adopted by the independent governments which have been established in South Pacific Island countries.

Gordon Bilney, the former Labor Government's Minister for Pacific Island Affairs, made this view of Australia's role clear when he told Pacific Island nations in 1994 that they should undertake "public sector reform and private sector development". He said that potential investors "will only choose Pacific Island countries if they can be confident of operating in an environment which is positive, predictable and profitable".

Australia's involvement in Papua New Guinea and in Bougainville, where Australian money and military supplies are involved, supports the interests of the mining and logging companies with investments in the region, with the overall objective of developing the region in a way that is acceptable to the TNCs. Such development has caused great environmental damage and has disrupted societies, compelling the indigenous landowners into conflict with the exploiting foreign capital. The conflict on Bougainville has been described as the region's "first environmental war".

The Australian-Indonesian "security" agreement is another piece in this big picture. It is primarily a military agreement which provides for intervention if the ruling circles of the two states believe that their "common security interests" are affected. While the agreement does not spell out what the "common security interests" of the two countries are, they clearly include the exploitation of oil in the Timor Sea. A major reason for the Indonesian invasion and continuing occupation of East Timor, with the support of successive Australian governments, is the exploitation of oil.

Nuclear weapons testing not only endangers peace in the region but also its environment and the health of its people. Recognising this, the demand to stop all nuclear weapon tests and eliminate all nuclear weapon stockpiles is now supported by the overwhelming majority of the world's population.

The ruling by the International Court of Justice in July 1996, is a major contribution to the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons. The Court ruled that "the threat and use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and particularly the principles and rules of humanitarian law." The Court unanimously ruled that there is "an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". The report of the Canberra Commission on the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (August 1996) outlines a concrete step by step plan to eliminate nuclear weapons. The G21 group of non-aligned states has put forward a 24-year timetable for nuclear disarmament. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted by the UN General Assembly in Sept 1996 means there is now a global ban on test explosions of

nuclear weapons. In that sense it represents a recognition that nuclear weapons must never again be used in any circumstance. However, the treaty preserves the inequality between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states and sidesteps any commitment to a timetable for global agreement on the permanent elimination of nuclear weapons. The CTBT will not cap the development of new nuclear weapons. The US is expanding its already vast laboratory-based infrastructure to ensure its overwhelming nuclear weapons superiority well into the 21st century by preserving the capacity to maintain, test, modify, design and produce nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapon states retain the right to withdraw from the treaty in their "supreme national interest" to conduct more tests. The CTBT will not affect the tens of thousands of nuclear weapons that are already deployed.

The failure of governments to declare clearly and unequivocally for the complete elimination of testing and stockpiling of nuclear weapons exposes their intention to retain nuclear weapons in the hands of those powers which currently have them. The development of existing weapons and the creation of new ones will continue. This shameful deception needs to be resolutely condemned.

The campaign for a complete ban of all types of nuclear weapon tests must be continued and a timetable adopted by all nuclear weapon powers for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

Some main objectives before the Australian peace, disarmament and solidarity movements include:"

- Adoption by governments of the principles of equality of all nations, non-interference in the national affairs of other countries, respect for national independence and sovereignty, mutual advantage in trade relations and a commitment that all disputes be settled by peaceful means.
- Ending the hosting of US military-related bases on Australian soil and the termination of the ANZUS Treaty. Termination of the Australia-Indonesia Security Agreement.
- Reducing the military budget. Planning for and implementation of conversion of military-related industries to socially useful and environmentally sustainable production with the consequent creation of additional employment.
- The total prohibition of land mines.
- Changing the aggressive policy of "forward defence" to one based on defence of Australia's sovereignty and independence.
- Ending the supply of military equipment and the provision of military training to or joint military exercises with repressive regimes. Support for national liberation movements.
- Lifting the criminal US blockade of socialist Cuba and support for the conclusion of a peace treaty between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the USA.
- Changing overseas aid policies. Increasing the share of Gross Domestic Product allocated to the most needy countries. Development policies to place priority on sustainability and helping developing countries break out of their economic dependence and debt crisis.
- The conclusion of mutual non-aggression agreements and collective security arrangements to replace the military related alliances which could embroil the region in conflict.

Australian society

Australian society is divided into classes and social groups. The working class is the most numerous while the capitalist class is small numerically but powerful because of its control over the economy. Holding an intermediate position between big capital and the working class are small business people, self-employed, professionals and part of the managerial personnel. They are also substantial in numbers and are influential in certain sections of the economy. Individual farmers who own and work their own land have sharply declined in numbers but play an important role in the economy. More farming is now being done by agri-businesses. The main factor which determines each person's class position is his or her relation to the means of production of goods and provision of services. These include land, raw materials, machinery, means of transport and energy supplies, the means of providing financial and other services, etc. There are those—the capitalist class—whose wealth and power is based on their ownership of these means of production of goods and provision of services.

The overwhelming majority, the working class, do not own or control any part of the means of production or the products they make. Their income is dependent on working and being paid a wage or salary by those who own the means of production. About 85 per cent of those who work within the production process are wage and salary earners. Only about ten per cent of those engaged in production are members of the employing class as a result of their ownership of the means of production. It is the struggle between the differing interests of classes, primarily between workers and capitalists, which underlies the political life of society. Those who work have different interests to employers who receive un-earned income as shareholders. Top employers amass great wealth as a result of their ownership of industries, banks, services, etc, which have been accumulated by exploiting the workers employed by them. This thread of class division and class conflict runs through the whole political, economic and social life of Australian society. There are many other factors which influence society but the conflict between the different interests of classes is the main factor determining events.

The working class plays a central role in the economic life of society. No other strata or social group experiences the exploitation of capital so directly. No other social group can influence the production process so decisively.

Historically, the working class has an objective interest in abolishing the system of private ownership of the means of production and building a society based on public ownership. As a result of the struggles waged by workers and other sections of society, many changes for the better have been achieved. A parliamentary form of government, voting rights for women, democratic rights, federation, trade union rights and many social and economic conditions have been won during the course of these struggles.

To break down the outlook and organisation of workers on a class basis, attempts are being made to turn Australian workers into "shareholders" in many companies. It is not intended to give any effective control to worker shareholders over the operation of companies or to elect company Boards of Directors. Small shareholders have no effective control over a company because voting rights are determined by the number of shares held and not on the basis of one person, one vote. The big shareholders have the decisive control.

The widespread introduction of individual work contracts is another means to tie workers to a particular company and create the illusion that by becoming "staff", they have achieved a special status.

The objective behind these attempts to turn wage workers into “partners” is to break down their class consciousness by creating the illusion that they are now “part of the company” and have become small capitalists with a stake in preserving the capitalist system. It is also a means to increase the tempo of work and to persuade workers that they should accept lower wages and worse conditions of work to “help the company”. Encouraging workers to be more productive and to sacrifice wages and conditions, in the name of the “national interest”, “international competitiveness” and “attracting investment” are other ways the ruling class tries to dull class consciousness, reap greater profits and discourage workers’ struggle. Employers, governments and the media keep up a constant campaign of blackmail against workers, continually asserting that wage rises are responsible for unemployment, inflation and rises in interest rates.

They also attempt to undermine working-class militancy and unity by promoting such divisive issues as racism, sexism and attacks on unemployed workers, welfare recipients, sole parents, Aborigines and others.

However, these arguments do not change the reality that all workers remain wage and salary earners whose labour is exploited in the course of production. On the other hand, the big capitalists make all the big decisions and make profits from the exploitation of wage and salary earners.

The fightback

It is from the working class and other groups in society which are exploited by capitalism that the fightback against the present policies is coming.

The working class is numerically and organisationally the most powerful and has a fundamentally important and indispensable role to play in the struggle against big capital. It is not alone in this struggle and can win the support of other progressive social groups in society.

The fightback comes from left and progressive political parties, the trade unions, a large number of community organisations such as those speaking for the environment, public ownership, migrants, Aborigines, women, youth and welfare groups, solidarity organisations and others.

The trade union movement

The trade unions remain the primary class and mass organisations of Australian workers. However, the last decade has witnessed a serious reduction of their membership and influence. This has arisen for a number of reasons. Included among them are:

(a) The sustained campaign by employers, right-wing organisations and the capitalist controlled mass media directed against trade unions. There is need to guard against the down-playing of class struggle in any guise.

(b) The adoption by the main leadership of the trade union movement of consensus politics and the down-playing of the class struggle as the way to defend living standards, working conditions and the rights of workers. The deterioration in workers’ living and working conditions has led to a lack of confidence in trade unions on the part of many workers. © The steady replacement of the award system with enterprise bargaining has divided workers even within single industries, weakened trade union organisation and led to the loss of conditions in a number of areas.

(d) A failure to oppose the spread of individual work contracts which provide employers with an opportunity to not just weaken the trade union movement but, in some enterprises, to eliminate trade union organisation altogether.

(e) The acceptance in practice of economic rationalist policies which reversed many traditional trade union policies. An example is the acceptance of the assertion that wage rises cause inflation and unemployment. Instead of wages being related to the cost of living, it became accepted that wage increases were only justified if there were trade-offs and increases in productivity. A class struggle approach was replaced by acceptance of the existence of "common interests" between labour and capital. (f) The strong push to concentrate control of unions, their finances, their decision making and capacity to initiate industrial action into national union offices and the ACTU. (g) The amalgamation of unions from "on top" has resulted in widespread internal conflicts in the amalgamated unions. The amalgamation of unions out of political considerations and the selfish interests of some union officials has resulted in many unprincipled, unhappy and unsatisfactory "marriages". The principle of amalgamation is correct but the objective is to create industry unions using democratic procedures. Such a course would have strengthened the trade union movement overall. (h) While recognising the sharp fall in trade union membership, which is resulting in severe financial difficulties for a number of unions, the measures taken to enroll new union members overlook the main reasons for the decline in the first place. What is required is a return to the class policies of the trade unions. When unions are seen as fighting for and defending the interests of their members, workers will join.

(i) The distancing of unions and their leadership from the members and a significant reduction in the participation of members in the functioning and decision making of unions.

(j) The shift away from ordinary members of unions becoming the organisers and leaders of their union and higher union bodies such as the ACTU.

The intensification of attacks on working conditions and trade union rights will create the conditions for the struggle and trade unions to grow.

Some main points of struggle are:"

1." The maintenance of the award system. Awards should cover all the main issues of wages, working conditions, annual leave, health and safety issues, job security, etc, and not be regarded as providing only "safety net" minimum standards on a limited range of conditions. Abandonment of enterprise bargaining except as add-ons to awards.

2." Strong opposition to individual work contracts. Individual contracts and collective awards covering all workers are mutually exclusive.

3." Resumption of the struggle for a shorter working week of 32 hours without loss of pay for all workers. Shorter hours and restriction of overtime are two ways to reduce unemployment. Implementation of a genuine job creation program.

4." The protection of full-time permanent work. 5." Pursuit of wage rises based on cost of living increases in addition to improvements in productivity. Rejection of attempts to create a two-tiered workforce with substantially differentiated wage rates, rights and social standing. 6." Opposition to privatisation of any and all publicly-owned enterprises, institutions and services including contracting out of work and functions of public enterprises and government. 7." The repeal of all anti-trade union legislation of Federal and State governments.

8." Abandonment of economic rationalist economic theories and class collaborationist policies which have been the main cause of the loss of trade union membership and influence.

9." The adoption by trade unions of independent positions serving the interests of their members.

10." Campaigning to re-establish the necessary government regulation of the economy and implementation of economic planning.

11." A concerted and sustained campaign to increase trade union membership based on the militant struggle for the above program.

Trade Union Action

To give effect to the above issues of struggle the Communist Party supports:" * The pursuit of the rights and conditions of workers by trade unions in their struggles against employers;

- Full participation of trade union members in the affairs of the union, including in the decision making process and the filling of leadership positions;
- Building on-the-job trade union organisations of shop committees and shop stewards;
- Promotion of members understanding of the need for unity within unions and solidarity with workers nationally and internationally;
- Regular contact between union leaders and organisers and workers on the job so that all officials maintain a first hand understanding of the problems and concerns of members;
- The independence of trade unions to pursue the interests of their members. This does not rule out support and cooperation with other organisations on issues in the interests of the working people;
- The re-invigoration of state and regional union councils to assist the development of inter-union unity and activity;
- Cooperation and joint action between trade unions and progressive community organisations. Union members to be encouraged to be active members of the communities in which they live.

The Labor Party

The Labor Party was founded in 1891 largely by the trade unions of that time. Having suffered serious defeats in the 1880s and early '90s at the hands of the employers and the then conservative governments, many workers and trade unionists believed that by electing worker representatives to parliament it would be possible to adopt laws in the interests of workers and ensure that the police, the military and the courts would not be used against them and their trade unions.

Since the foundation of trade unions in the 1850s, many bitter struggles for wages, shorter hours of work, trade union rights, the extension of parliamentary democracy, the right of women to vote, etc., had taken place. It was on this background that the Labor Party was formed.

The Labor Party's platform called for the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange and many publicly-owned enterprises and services were established by Labor governments in the 1920s and '30s. These included the

Commonwealth Bank, an Australian shipping line, a national airline, publicly-owned airports and a number of manufacturing enterprises.

The Labor Party supported the Federation of the Australian States, the formation of a Federal parliament and the adoption of a Commonwealth Constitution. In the nearly 100 years since Federation, the powers of Federal governments have been progressively strengthened.

Over time, Labor governments introduced progressive legislation in areas of education, health, transport, customs and trade. The Labor Party was responsible for introducing Medibank and then Medicare. In the 1970s a Labor government introduced free tertiary education and other reforms.

These reforms were both a response to the demands of the working people and the infrastructure needs of an expanding capitalist economy.

Although on paper the Labor Party retains a “democratic socialist objective”, it is no more than a paper aim. The Labor Party neither propagates socialist ideas nor does it make a class analysis to formulate its policies. Some individual members of the Labor Party genuinely retain the Party’s democratic socialist objective but the ideology, dominant policies and structure of the ALP prohibit the implementation of this objective. The 100 year history of the Labor Party, during which time it has formed a number of both Federal and State governments (sometimes for many years), shows conclusively that the Labor Party accepts the continued existence of capitalism and presents itself to the capitalist class as a better manager of capitalism than the conservative parties.

In past periods of economic growth, the Labor Party has supported reforms which improved the livelihood of the working people. In periods of economic downturn, it is equally capable of attacking workers’ conditions and rights.

Social democratic parties, such as the Australian Labor Party, have moved substantially to the right in recent years. Many of the policies adopted in earlier times are now being thrown out. The Labor Party is increasingly recognised as one of the alternative parties of capitalism (the Liberal-National Party Coalition is the other) which the ruling class is prepared to support and have elected to government in certain circumstances. Social democratic governments are implementing economic rationalist policies, have de-regulated the economies of their countries, are attacking the conditions and rights of the working class, privatising public enterprises and adopting other policies very similar to those pursued by the conservative parties. They are assisting the growth of the TNCs and their domination of all important aspects of the economy. These policies have disastrous environmental implications for future human survival. Social democracy is incapable of leading the working class in an organised, consistent struggle against economic rationalist policies.

The leadership of the Labor Party shifted decisively to the right in the early 1980s when economic rationalist policies were adopted. This flowed from the basic ideological and political position always occupied by the Labor Party and as the severe difficulties faced by capitalism on a world scale, intensified. Although the Accord partnership between the Labor Party and the ACTU was presented as a great thing for the working people, it has led to workers’ awards being undermined or relegated altogether in favour of enterprise agreements and individual work contracts. These are weakening the collective essence of trade unionism. In the period of the Accord the trade union movement has been critically weakened—not strengthened. Trade union membership fell from 50 per cent in 1983 to 35

per cent in 1996 (26 per cent in the private sector). The former “true believers” were betrayed.

In foreign affairs, the top Labor Party leadership strongly supports the American alliance and most of the foreign policies of US governments.

While some environmental measures have been taken by Labor Party governments, generally the Labor Party put the interests of companies ahead of the environment. Labor governments failed to deal adequately with soil and water degradation, urban pollution, salination, logging of irreplaceable forests, woodchipping and loss of bio-diversity. The Federal Labor Government did not meet the international commitments it had made to introduce controls on greenhouse gas emissions.

For many years it has been said by some left-minded individuals that the Labor Party is a “two-class” party, meaning both a workers’ party and one that serves capitalism at the same time. This concept helps to maintain the illusion that by concentrating on reforming the Labor Party from within and strengthening the genuine worker and socialist elements, it will be possible to turn the Labor Party into a genuine and committed socialist party. The reality is that, although it contains among its members a number of workers and others who work for progressive policies and some who are committed to a socialist objective, the party’s basic political and ideological position is one of a non-socialist party committed to the maintenance and continuation of capitalism.

The experience of Labor in office has seen a fierce commitment by the leadership to right-wing policies and their retention of the top positions in the party.

Others support the Labor Party as the “lesser of two evils” or declare that there is “no alternative”. Both these ideas, while admitting the limitations of the Labor Party, hinder the building of a left and progressive political alternative committed to policies which really serve the working people. Some argue that it is necessary to elect Labor Party governments to “expose” them or that parliamentary struggle is irrelevant. Both views prevent sections of the left from independently participating in the parliamentary struggle. These ideas harbour a sectarian and cynical approach which has not worked in the 100 years since the Labor Party’s formation.

Others, while recognising the Labor Party’s limitations, are overwhelmed by its electoral support and do not see any possibility of an alternative winning the support of the majority of the people. Such a view, while being highly critical, ends up accepting the domination of Labor politics. This is reflected in such slogans as “Elect a Labor Government with socialist policies” and “Elect a Labor Government strengthened by communists”. Many loyal Labor voters retain a lifelong belief that it is the workers’ party. Reacting to the consequences of the policies which have been followed by the Labor Party in government many workers have become disillusioned and are increasingly looking for an alternative. Recognition of the need to build such a political alternative is slowly gaining ground among left and progressive political parties, trade unions, community organisations, single issue movements and among a number of progressive individual campaigners.

There is a place in the creation of such an alternative for members of the Labor Party who break with the right-wing, economic rationalist policies which were implemented by the Labor Party leadership in its 1983-1996 term of office.

Members and some leaders of the Labor Party have played significant roles in many progressive mass campaigns and in the struggles of the workers. This must be recognised and Labor Party members encouraged to support progressive policies and struggles. As in the 1996 Federal election, Labor governments have been invariably replaced by

Liberal-National Party Coalitions and vice versa. This cycle—the two party system—has to be broken if Australian society is to move forward in a new direction with the adoption of policies which give first priority to the needs and interests of the working people.

The 1996 Federal election results showed the experience of 13 years of right-wing social-democratic government had led many working class people to look for a more progressive alternative, while others voted for the conservative candidates. The election result reinforces the need to work hard and persistently to move Australia's political life to a left-progressive position. We must take advantage of this new political situation to further the building of a left and progressive political alternative.

The Liberal-National Party Coalition

The Liberal-National Party Coalition combines the interests of big capital, big landowners and agri-business. Its policies express the class interests of these groups which comprise only about ten per cent of society.

The Coalition fully supports economic rationalist policies and vigorously implements them.

However, by clever but hypocritical propaganda when in opposition, the Coalition presented itself as a party of the people and even claimed to represent workers. Some workers have become members. Nonetheless, the Coalition is anti-working class and anti-trade union in principle, regarding the working class as being subordinate to big business. The Coalition and the capitalist ruling class it represents regard themselves as the “natural” and “born to rule” leaders of society.

The Coalition parties support wholesale privatisation, the removal of all regulation of private enterprise, reduced taxation for business enterprises, user-pays principles, the relegation of trade unions and the re-establishment of a “master-servant” relationship between employer and employee. Their approach to the environment is exploitative and predatory, putting short-term profits before long-term human and ecological survival. In cultural matters they are extremely conservative and support the most puerile and empty outlooks.

By and large, the Coalition parties support the continuation of the monarchy and oppose Australia becoming a Republic. They oppose progressive change, regarding it as a threat to their power and class interests.

In the face of a rise in the popular movement, the Coalition parties resort to anti-democratic measures, particularly directed against workers and their trade unions. The extreme anti-trade union legislation adopted by the WA and Victorian Liberal State governments and the Federal industrial relations legislation, are examples.

Internationally, the Coalition identifies with similar conservative and imperialist governments. It is a staunch defender of the American alliance and looks with suspicion and fear on the national liberation and revolutionary movements in former colonial countries. Its outlook is influenced by racism. The Liberal-National Party Coalition and the forces of big business which maintain it are strong, not because of their policies, but because of the power of money and the control of the economy by private enterprise.

The Coalition is a committed enemy of the progressive and the revolutionary working class movement. It must be exposed and defeated if the working class and other anti-monopoly sections of the community are to make gains and implement progressive social, economic and political policies.

The Australian Democrats

The Australian Democrats were formed in 1977 as a small “l” liberal break-away from the conservative dominated Liberal Party. The Party sees itself as standing between big business and big unions, asserting that Australia’s economic future lies in the hard work of small businesses and farmers, not hampered by government regulation and red tape. The Australian Democrats work for a “fairer”, economically independent Australian capitalism, opposing the excesses of TNC incursions into the Australian economy.

The Party does not make a class analysis of society but advances many progressive policies on a wide range of issues including the economy, environment, social security, foreign affairs and trade, women, health, Aborigines, ethnic affairs, agricultural and rural affairs and on some occasions plays a positive role in industrial relations.

The Democrats oppose a totally deregulated economy and foreign control. The Party calls for reconciliation in industrial affairs. It supports cost of living adjustments to wages plus a productivity component.

The Australian Democrats do not have an ideological commitment to the public sector but oppose the sell-off of both public and private assets where there is “no guarantee of net economic benefit to Australia”. They do oppose privatisation where publicly-owned enterprises and services provide essential services or where cross-subsidisation is necessary on equity grounds. They opposed the privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank, QANTAS and Telstra.

With a number of representatives in the Senate and in some State Upper Houses of Parliament, the Democrats have played a generally progressive role. They rely more on parliamentary work than on encouraging mass action outside parliament.

The Communist Party sees the Australian Democrats as a political organisation with a number of progressive policies. Their implementation can make a significant contribution to a change of direction in Australian politics in a left and progressive direction.

The Greens

The recognition of the importance of environmental issues by the community and the many struggles which have taken place provided the basis for the formation of The Greens (WA) and the Australian Greens. The Greens are both action oriented and participate in parliaments.

Each State and locality organisation of The Greens has considerable autonomy but they are united on ecological sustainability, social and economic justice, grassroots democracy, peace, disarmament and non-violence. Green candidates have won representation in the Senate, in a number of State parliaments and on Municipal Councils.

The Greens parties are committed to social change and have many progressive policies on social and economic as well as environmental issues. For example, The Greens have played a significant role in the struggle against privatisation, the Workplace Relations Bill, on East Timor and Aboriginal land rights. The implementation of their policies can contribute to bringing a new direction to Australian politics giving priority to the interests of the ordinary people.

The Greens parties do not make a class analysis to formulate their policies. This has sometimes led to error. For example, increased taxes on leaded petrol were mistakenly welcomed by some as environmental measures, not seeing such moves as revenue

raising and impacting mainly on the working class. At the same time, many campaigns taken up by green groups challenge the rights and privileges of big business.

Community organisations and single issue movements

Many community organisations (non-government organisations) work to implement progressive policies. There are women's, youth and student, pensioner, migrant, environmental, educational, peace and solidarity, welfare and church groups, and trade unions. Strong and dynamic progressive single issue movements also arise from time to time, such as those opposing the privatisation of a particular hospital or enterprise, those campaigning on particular democratic rights issues, those combatting unemployment, some peace campaigns, etc.

The activities of the community organisations and the single issue movements have done much to force governments to implement progressive demands and provide an important means to organise and mobilise the struggle of the community for progressive policies. In recent years, single issue and community groups have been the main organisations bringing people into activity and politicising them.

The Communist Party supports strengthening the activities of progressive community organisations and single issue movements. The Party respects the independence of these bodies and its members will work together with them to help achieve their objectives.

The progressive women's movement

No social change is possible without the active participation of women. Furthermore, the emancipation of women cannot be achieved without a fundamental change in women's economic and social role in the society.

The progressive women's movement has achieved a number of advances towards economic and social equality. In a period of relative prosperity, a large number of women were able to enter the workforce. This was assisted by the provision of increased child-care as a result of community and union demands. Women workers broke into areas from which they were previously barred. Equal pay in some industries was achieved. But many women are still paid less than male employees.

Due to economic conditions and continuing social discrimination, many women are forced to take the lowest paid jobs which are part time or casual, with poor career prospects. Women workers tend to be concentrated in a narrow range of occupations which are lower paid, have lower rates of unionisation and less bargaining power. Enterprise bargaining disadvantages women and individual contracts will set them even further back. Poverty in Australia is becoming "feminised".

The emphasis by the major political parties on "family values" masks reactionary and moralistic ideas, such as "women's place is in the home", that unemployment can be overcome by replacing married women with males, that single mothers do not deserve financial support, that women should not have the choice of terminating a pregnancy. Those preaching "family values" often refuse to recognise the reality that one in four women suffer domestic violence or rape.

While the right of women to abortion has become well established in the community, and safe termination is available in varying degrees, many Australian States still have outdated

abortion laws that criminalise abortion or confuse its legal status. This violates the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

There is continuing discrimination in work and in society against migrant, Aboriginal, disabled and older women. Migrant women in many cases are paid low wages and deliberately separated from others speaking their language. Because of children and family needs, many are forced to take “out-work” in the clothing industry, for example. This often includes exploitation of children as well. Out-workers are not in a union and have little or no legal protection from unsafe or bad working conditions and the greed of contractors.

Aboriginal women suffer from extremely high rates of unemployment as well as from racial and sexual discrimination. They face economic deprivation, and lack of health services, proper housing and educational opportunities.

An increasing backlash from politically and socially conservative quarters must be resisted if women’s gains are to be preserved and extended. Government cuts fall heavily on these gains, including day and after-school care, women’s refuges, family planning, health, education, culture and community facilities. Australian governments should legislate to implement the Platform of Action and the Commitments adopted at the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Activities by non-government organisations (NGOs), trade unions and community organisations are needed to ensure government action to implement this charter of women’s rights.

The Communist Party supports:

- The right of women to work, to equal pay for work of equal value and to equal opportunities in work, in education, and in all social fields.
- The provision of public, quality child-care, kindergartens, before and after school and holiday centres for children, subsidised by governments and councils.
- The right to free and legal abortion, which should be a health matter and not a criminal offence. Public funded health services, family planning and women’s refuges.
- Action to encourage and enable all women to participate at all levels of government and union life and leadership. The struggle for the emancipation of women is helped when the real reasons for women’s oppression are revealed. Men in and of themselves are not the source of women’s oppression. The principal source is the emergence of private property and the social relations generated by capitalist exploitation. To see men as the enemy splits the working class.

The progressive women’s movement will play a significant part in the building of a left and progressive political alternative to the two-party system and help to elaborate policies and objectives to achieve another big step forward towards the full emancipation of women.

A future for Australian youth

The CPA supports the right of young people to build a better future. Its policies of action and struggle aim to further strengthen the optimism and self-esteem of young people. It assists young people to realise that with their struggle, together with the working people, they are capable of gaining the right to live a full, productive life and build a bright future.

We strongly advocate that united action and awareness should be the answer young people give to the conservative sections of society which desperately attempt to direct young people towards social inactivity, political apathy, defeatism and isolation. The CPA opposes the conservative forces which promote racism, nationalism and chauvinism

among young people, while eliminating the ideals of equality, solidarity and social justice from their radical youthful nature.

The CPA is convinced that the social problems facing today's young people are the result of the conservative policies of Australian governments and their pro-big-business priorities.

Specifically, the CPA stands for:

1. The right of young people to live in a peaceful, democratic and independent Australia;
2. the right to have access to free public education where progressive curricula and equal opportunity constitute the main characteristics of a meaningful public education system reflecting the changing needs of society;
3. the right to work and to secure and productive employment which guarantees that young people have the capacity to address changing social, professional and cultural needs;
4. a better quality of life in a safe environment with adequate leisure time and cultural, sporting and recreational opportunities;
5. the provision of a living income for students and unemployed youth and provision of housing and support services for homeless youth;
6. the defence and expansion of the democratic freedoms and rights of young people at all levels of social and political life, ensuring the pro-active participation of youth in all aspects of life.

Migrants, multi-culturalism and racism

Migration to Australia from other countries has become widely accepted in society. In the interests of the progressive and democratic development of Australia, immigration must be free from racial and cultural bias. In this respect the concept of Australia being a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society has also become widely understood and accepted. Multi-culturalism should recognise and give support to the progressive culture that migrants bring with them from their former homelands and regard its expression as an enrichment of the total Australian culture. Many migrants continue to face discrimination and have limited access to mainstream services as well as to employment and training or re-training opportunities. There are higher levels of unemployment among migrants and some migrants, especially women workers, are paid lower wages particularly in some industries. While some progress has been made in the provision of educational facilities in the English language and in the languages of their former homelands, they remain insufficient. There is a need for the allocation of increased government funding for provision of linguistically and culturally appropriate services to enhance the quality of life of people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

All expressions of discrimination and overt racism must be opposed. Racism is a weapon used by the enemies of progress to divide society by blaming ethnic groups for unemployment, social disturbances, drugs and even some health problems. Racism diverts attention from the real causes of these social evils. Laws against racism should be strengthened and enforced. At the same time, any tendency by migrants to segregate themselves along ethnic lines is also damaging. Migrants should be encouraged to participate fully in the life of the wider Australian society, to join trade unions, political and social organisations. This does not mean that the language and culture of migrants should

be suppressed or ignore but that it should find expression as part of the wider whole and not become separate or opposed to it.

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders

An advance was made in the struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights by the High Court's Mabo decision which effectively overturned the false idea of terra nullius. Up to that time the myth that the Australian continent was empty at the time of white settlement was legally accepted. By adopting the lie of terra nullius the British Crown was able to confiscate all land and dispossess the indigenous people. All land became vested in either the Crown or was sold or leased to white settlers. The Mabo decision was followed by Native Title legislation which provided an opportunity for Aboriginal communities to make claims for land where it could be proven that communities had continuous occupation and use of the particular land since 1788. However, the legislation guarantees the validity of pastoral and mining leases and, as a consequence, no single claim has been settled in favour of the Aboriginal people so far. Criticisms of the Native Title legislation made by the WA Greens and the Communist Party that it extinguishes any claim to title for many communities and that very few claims could succeed under the Native Title legislation have been borne out.

The Aboriginal people continue to suffer very high levels of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and poor to non-existent medical services, housing and education. While programs have been repeatedly announced to overcome these problems, they have not been successfully implemented.

Aboriginal deaths in police and prison custody have increased despite the work and recommendations of the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Royal Commission. The Communist Party demands that the recommendations of the Commission be implemented as a matter of urgency by all governments.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have waged a courageous and persistent struggle which demands that progressive Australians act in solidarity with them.

Fundamental to progress is recognition" of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people not merely as the original owners of the continent, but as two national minorities within the Australian state. It is in this respect that the proposal for reconciliation" is inadequate as it could imply that the Aboriginal people are being called upon to reconcile themselves to the existing state of affairs and that white society be excused for the dispossession, suppression, neglect and outright crimes that have been committed.

Land rights legislation should grant inalienable land rights to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders on the basis of traditional ownership, religious association, long occupancy and/or need. Title to include full rights to minerals and other natural resources and measures to preserve sacred sites. Another measure should be the establishment of autonomous areas for communities on the basis of communally-owned land where Aborigines can, by choice, develop their own economic, social and cultural life.

Democratic Rights

The maintenance and extension of democratic political and economic rights is one of the most important issues facing society. Democratic rights under capitalism have been won through struggle and reflect the relative strength of the working class and its allies. By steadily extending democratic rights the possibility of establishing "people's power" will become a reality.

The popular concept of democracy is usually limited to the right to express an opinion, to demonstrate or strike, the right to travel and to vote in an election. Important as these rights are they ignore the economic sphere. Socialists call for democracy to be extended to economic demands as well and this is decisive because the power of the capitalist class to rule is based on their undivided control of the economy. While this state of affairs continues, democratic rights in the political sphere remain limited and often ineffective.

Some key democratic rights demands are:"

1. Repeal of all anti-trade union legislation which limits or bans the right to organise, strike and picket.
2. Reform of the voting system by adopting the principle of one vote one value and a system of proportional preferential voting for election to all levels of government.
3. Legislation to protect the privacy of individuals, the banning of surveillance in workplaces and in public places, and legislation to prevent confidential information about individuals being passed on through computer networks.
4. Maintenance of the funding of bodies such as the Equal Opportunity Commission and the Racial Discrimination Board which protect citizens against discrimination on grounds of race, religion, nationality, sexual preference, gender, age and political views.
5. Breaking the foreign ownership and monopoly control of TV, radio, and the print media, which are consistently anti-worker, anti-trade union and anti-socialist, is a vital task. The possibility of public expression by progressive organisations and individuals is limited. Murdoch, Packer and Black have a virtual monopoly and their control is being spread into other fields, including mass entertainment and sport. These media monopolies should be broken up by placing the media in the hands of democratic and progressive organisations such as trade unions, women's, youth, scientific, educational and sporting bodies. Defence of the ABC and SBS radio and TV which remain the only partially independent media outlets in Australia but are under constant threat and pressure from conservative political circles. The public funding of the ABC should be maintained and the ABC strengthened as a national broadcaster independent of government.
6. Adoption of a Bill of Rights and its inclusion in the Australian Constitution with rights based on the United Nations' Charter of Basic Human Rights.

The environment, jobs and the capitalist system

Support for the environmental movement and awareness of the extent and seriousness of the environmental crisis is growing in Australia. The work of environmental educators and activists has been splendid.

However, major problems remain. Protection and repair of vital river systems, land care, waste management, urban and workplace pollution, loss of bio-diversity, greenhouse gas emissions and protection of old growth forests are some of the major problems still to be solved. This calls for fundamental re-assessment of many of the economic bases of Australian society, such as consumerism and wasteful, non-recyclable packaging. The long history of unsustainable exploitation of a fragile Australian ecology must be reversed by significantly reducing the areas of marginal farmland open to non-indigenous and damaging commercial animals such as cattle and sheep.

Priorities in the cropping areas of Australia must be reassessed.

Some marginal farmland must be returned to its natural state. Diversification of crops and modification of farming methods must be adopted to cut use of water, artificial fertilisers and chemicals and to eliminate salination, soil erosion and limited crop cycles. A good example may be the replacement of cotton by hemp which is more environmentally friendly.

Powerful vested interests in mining, agri-business, logging and other sectors of the economy still persuade or blackmail governments into putting profits before the environment and jobs. For example, Australian governments have been reluctant to introduce enforceable targets and controls on greenhouse gas emissions.

Some of the “technologically advanced” but environmentally destructive methods in both mining and logging have been developed specifically to reduce the number of workers employed. Studies show conclusively that changes necessary for more sustainable production require more workers, not fewer. However, when workers are faced with changes in their own industry, they are often understandably skeptical. They know only too well that economic changes tend to impact most heavily and negatively on workers. Jobs programs that create environmentally sound jobs need to be developed and support won for them. Antagonisms between workers and environmentalists must be overcome by policies which both protect the environment and provide security for workers. The question is not one of “jobs versus environment” but “jobs and the environment”. Trade unions and workers in all industries affected by environmental problems need to be won over to alternative policies that guarantee jobs and are consistent with sustainable development. Alliances need to be built between small farmers, workers, environmentalists, peace activists and other groups. Sustainable growth and employment can be assured by the process of converting Australia’s agricultural, manufacturing, timber and mining industries into environmentally sound and sustainable industries; stabilising and reversing land degradation and altering the structure and demographics of Australia to decentralise the population; and providing services including transport, electricity, sewerage, water and heating in the most efficient and sustainable way.

The environment movement is an across class, broad-based movement. Both in its analysis of issues and its appeal to working people the absence of consistent class policies is a weakness.

The scale and seriousness of the environmental crisis has generated arguments that it is “a common crisis”, which requires class or social divisions to be submerged in the interests of the “common good”.

The crisis is certainly common to all who live on earth, but not everyone is equally responsible for it, it does not affect all equally, nor is it possible to achieve “common action” to solve it.

This approach ignores the fact that capitalist economies are based on the exploitation of labour and nature. Land, natural resources and energy sources are exploited at one end of the production process and the waste-absorbing capacity of the environment at the other end. Capitalist economies do not want to pay the cost of maintaining the capability of nature to continue supplying the one or to continue absorbing the other. Every environmental struggle—on the job or in the community—comes up against the corporation that owns the mine or the oil wells or the utility, the factory or the forest. This ownership gives the corporation the power to oppose change in the direction of a better environment. That is why there are such inadequate efforts to reduce and repair the effects of pollution.

The increasingly dangerous environmental situation will not be reversed until the development of the Australian economy starts to be measured by criteria of environmental sustainability, human development and fulfillment of social needs.

Fundamental change is needed to meet the global environmental threats in any significant way. Fundamental change means new politics. The capitalist ruling class exploits both workers and the environment. They cannot be allowed to put profits before humanity's interest any longer.

Building Unity

The mass movement for change in defence of the people's interests can become much stronger and more effective if unity is developed between all the social forces and people's organisations which are struggling against the interests of the transnational corporations.

The core of the mass movement has to be a strong and unified working class. A united trade union movement, dedicated to working class interests, is essential. The working class becomes much stronger by involving community organisations and other social forces as its allies in its struggles and, in turn, offering its solidarity and strength to these same social forces who are exploited by and struggling against big business interests.

The unity of the working class and unity between the working class and other exploited sections of society are two key requirements for a powerful mass movement fighting for the people's interests. It is only on the basis of such a mass movement that the alternative political forces prepared to change the direction of politics in Australia in favour of the people, can be successfully built.

The left and progressive political alternative

The failure of the main political parties over a long period of time to look after the interests and needs of the majority of the working people and the similarity of their policies and programs makes it more imperative than ever to build in Australia an alternative political force which will be capable of establishing a new type of government and implementing policies in the interests of the people.

Even though both major parties always claim that they are representing the interests of the Australian people as a whole, experience does not bear this out. Their first commitment is to the needs and demands of the big corporations. This is so obvious as to be beyond argument.

A realisation of this situation is inducing more and more people to look for other political organisations to support and vote for. This tendency has been revealed in one election after another over the last decade or more. Ten, 15, 20 and sometimes up to 25 per cent have bypassed the existing two main parties and voted for Greens, Australian Democrats, the No Aircraft Noise Party and progressive independents. For the last 100 years Liberal or Labor has been the only choice. Now another choice is needed. A number of left and progressive political organisations now exist which can, in time, provide a part of the left and progressive alternative.

We propose discussions to find a range of common policies held by left and progressive parties, organisations and individuals and the formation of a coalition or alliance to campaign collectively to implement agreed policies, to win seats in parliament and,

eventually, to form a new type of government. We support alliance building rather than the creation of a new party.

The Communist Party puts forward some principles of co-operation which we think are necessary to govern the relationships between parties in a coalition. They are:

1. That every organisation and the individuals involved must approach others on the basis of equality, mutual respect and honesty.
2. There must be consultation at each step of the unity building process to ensure agreement on policies, tactics and actions. 3." An atmosphere must be created in which the results of agreements and steps taken are frankly discussed and evaluated. Mistakes will be made which should be recognised and corrected during the course of work.
3. Agreements by co-operating organisations must be reached by consensus. Voting should be resorted to only as a last resort and be limited to procedural matters.
4. Where agreement is not reached on an issue, this issue must be put aside with each organisation free to express its view on the issue using its own facilities.
5. Once agreements are reached, all organisations must help to popularise and carry them out.
6. Ideological differences should not stand in the way of co-operation on issues held in common.
7. A contest of ideas between co-operating organisations is natural and inevitable. This contest or any criticism of one organisation by another should be stated in a manner which does not undermine the unity achieved on agreed issues but should contribute to clarity and to strengthening the developing unity. 9." Each organisation must be free to publish its views and carry out activities in support of its own policies which are not the subject of agreements.
8. Discussion and agreement at leadership level must be backed up and deepened by co-operation at all levels of the organisations involved.

The working out and adoption of a common program of policies is a matter for discussion and negotiations between co-operating organisations. As a first step and to stimulate discussion, the Communist Party puts forward the following points which we believe could provide a basis for widespread agreement by left and progressive organisations:

- (a) That economic and social policies based on the interests of the working people of town and country rather than the interests of the big corporations be a matter of principle.
- (b) The maintenance and extension of public enterprises and services.
- (c) The protection of the environment, preservation of old growth forests, the phasing out of wood chipping, programs of land and water conservation.
- (d) Effective implementation of Aboriginal land rights. Recognition of the Aboriginal people as the prior owners of the Australian continent.
- (e) Repeal of all legislation which infringes on the right of the individual to privacy. Repeal of repressive trade union legislation. Adoption of a Bill of Rights.
- (f) Support for a Republic.
- (g) Equal pay for work of equal value. Equal opportunity for women to participate in all fields of economic, political, social and educational life.

(h) Opposition to all forms of nuclear testing and the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Abrogation of the American alliance. Adoption of the principles of equality, non-interference, respect for the independence of all nations, mutual benefit and the peaceful settlement of international disputes as the basis of foreign policy.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive and includes only some of the issues and policies which need to be the subject of much wider discussion.

A strong coalition of left and progressive political organisations and individuals bringing together the working class and other democratic and progressive social forces is essential if the economic, political and social problems which have accumulated are to be tackled. Such a coalition must set its sights on winning representation at all levels of government, breaking the two-party system. The mass movement must take up the fight for a new type of government which really represents the people.

Alternative policies which bring lasting solutions can only be implemented by establishing people's power. This means a people's government backed by a united and militant mass movement. From such a position of strength the Australian people can defeat the power of big business and start to build a new society giving priority to the needs of the people.

Build the CPA

The Communist Party has reaffirmed its belief in the validity and necessity of socialism and the need to strengthen the struggle for a socialist Australia.

The intensified exploitation imposed on the working class by the transnational corporations, their attack on democratic rights and their sell-out of the national interests of the country mean that the class struggle and the people's struggle will continue and intensify.

The development of this struggle to the point where the people are no longer prepared to accept the dictates of the transnationals and governments that do their bidding is an inevitable result of their policies. The question of a new form of society, which can only be a socialist one, will arise more forcefully before the working class, farmers, small business, art workers, technologists, educators, doctors, managers and other sections of society. There will be a struggle for new policies and a new direction. The winning of working class power is a necessary condition for the building of a socialist society. We see the first main stage in the process to win a socialist Australia as the need to win a left and progressive government which will introduce a far-reaching change of policy in line with earlier sections of this resolution.

A main objective in the period ahead must be to achieve a decisive growth in the communist movement in Australia. We should work to take advantage of the more favourable opportunities. We must build the Communist Party into a really strong and influential organisation whose membership is more active in the life of the Party and in the working class and community organisations and movements. In this regard, priority should be given to building Party organisation in the workplaces. We must extend the ideological knowledge of all Party members so that they become better able to find the right answers and policies to meet the complex issues which constantly arise. To be involved in the Party means taking an active part in the life of the Party Branch to which each member belongs—attending meetings, taking part in discussions, taking responsibility to help fulfill Branch plans and decisions. This is not only a right of Party members but also a responsibility. It is necessary to improve each Branch's ideological and organisational

capacity, to strengthen the leaderships of Branches, and to activate Branch members and supporters in public campaigning. Branches must become influential centres of political action and discussion, well known and respected in their areas of operation.

To be involved in the mass movement means to be active in one's trade union or the many community bodies such as ethnic organisations, school committees, anti-privatisation committees, movements in solidarity and friendship with other countries and many others. Members of the Party should belong to one or other of such organisation and be active in their work. They should report to their Party Branch, raise any policy issues that are of interest and from which others could learn, and seek the assistance of the Party branch to find answers to problems which arise.

A priority must be to strengthen the organisations of workers. This means helping to build trade union job or shop committees as part of the trade union structure, setting up Party branches in workplaces and/or other forms of militant organisation with other like-minded workers. The appropriate form will depend on the specific circumstances, but in every case the organisation will be committed to the interests of the working class.

An important question is to maintain a correct relationship between the Party and community organisations and trade unions. These latter organisations have specific aims which have to be understood and respected. They are independent organisations. They cannot be substituted for the Party nor can the Party be a substitute for them. There should be a fraternal, cooperative relationship between one and the other. The respect and influence of the Party and its members can be achieved by commitment to the struggle, a continuity of effort and the correctness of policies put forward.

In addition to being involved in the daily life of such organisations, an essential contribution is to help formulate policies and extend the knowledge of all activists by showing the links between one struggle and another, between the local and the national and between the national and international. It can be shown that success in the work of one organisation can help to achieve successes elsewhere.

At the same time as being an activist in one's trade union or community organisation, it is every member's responsibility to participate in the life and work of the Party, help recruit members to the Party, sell Party publications, raise finance and undertake study of the Party's policies and ideology. While giving priority to the struggles of the working people of Australia, the CPA sees itself as part of the international communist and workers movement and supports the anti-imperialist struggles of peoples around the world.

Recruitment of new members

Arising from the more favourable situation, sustained efforts must be made to substantially increase the membership of the Party, particularly among the working class.

The most likely place to find recruits to the Party is from among those with whom we are active on a regular basis and among those who are readers of "The Guardian" and other Party publications. People join the Party because they want to do something about the many problems facing the working people. A well organised, publicly active Party organisation is more likely to attract support and new members.

The most consistent activists should be asked to become members of the Party. Unnecessarily high standards should not be set. There are no "ready-made" communists. On the other hand, the Party does not extend an open invitation to anyone to join. Over a period of time a new member's understanding of the Party's policies and

ideological outlook will be extended. It remains an obligation that members accept the Program and Constitution of the Party.

“The Guardian” and the “Australian Marxist Review” “The Guardian” is the Party’s main public voice and the means by which the Party’s views and policies can be conveyed to a wider audience. By drawing attention to Party policies and the struggles which are taking place, “The Guardian” can assist every member in their work, fulfilling the tasks of organiser, educator and agitator. It is, therefore, necessary for every member to buy and sell “The Guardian” and report stories of interest.

The “Australian Marxist Review” is the Party’s theoretical journal. All Party members are invited to contribute articles, discussing Party policy and strategy, national and international developments, and other questions of Marxist-Leninist theory. Both “The Guardian” and the “Australian Marxist Review” provide a wealth of material for discussion by Party organisations. Both publications should be utilised in the ideological and political education of Party members. The circulation of our publications is inadequate and severely limits our influence and the effectiveness of our policies. An increase in circulation is every member’s responsibility. There are no shortcuts to improving circulation. The priority is the creation of individual delivery rounds in a suburb or workplace. Regular contact with a “Guardian” customer provides an opportunity to talk about the Party and daily issues, obtain financial support for the Party and is a source of new members.

At present, there are some members who do not sell the Party’s publications and do not get them even for themselves on a regular basis. This state of affairs must be changed.

Finance

Party finance is a fundamental responsibility of each member. In addition to payment of dues which is a membership condition, each member is asked to undertake a regular additional contribution to sustain the work of the Party. Without adequate finance the Party’s work becomes limited. In the emerging situation, with many big campaigns unfolding and an increase in activity by the working class and people, the Party’s work needs to be expanded. Finance raising via both members’ contributions and among the people is therefore a political question.

Education in politics and ideology

The Communist Party has maintained its adherence to the concepts of scientific socialism as developed mainly by Marx, Engels and Lenin.

It means basing our analysis and work on the application of dialectical and historical materialism, political economy and the reality of the class struggle.

In the course of activity, new issues and problems constantly arise. Members will be able to find correct answers and work out the best policies if they have an extensive knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and are able to apply it to the specific circumstances being faced.

It is necessary at all times to combine theory with practice, testing theory and policies against daily events. Enhancing theoretical understanding by drawing theoretical conclusions is a never-ending task. Practice without theory is blind, while theory without practice is sterile.

The education of Party members in basic Marxist concepts, in the Party program and in contemporary political events is a foremost responsibility of every Party committee. At the present time insufficient attention is being given to this task.

Regular study organised by Party branches, by State and District Committees and by the Central Committee must become a principle feature of Party life in the future.

Party committees should impress upon Party members the importance of individual study, which can be undertaken in conjunction with objectives set by Party organisations and linked to life and work.

Two main departures from Marxism-Leninism have often asserted themselves in communist parties and need to be discussed and overcome. The first is dogmatism and sectarianism and the second is a rejection of both the class struggle and the need for a communist party.

We believe that attention needs to be paid to the following errors in method and approach when working in the movement.

Ultra-left, sectarian ideas

(a) A rejection of the fight for reforms as a legitimate part of the struggle for fundamental social change. Those who engage in the struggle for reforms are accused of “selling out”, “sowing illusions among the workers” or “compromising”. In Australia these concepts have often been expressed in a call to turn every strike struggle into a general strike or even revolution without preparation and necessary support. If “advanced” and revolutionary sounding demands and slogans are put forward which are beyond the understanding or willingness of workers to struggle they will result in confusion and retardation of the development of a progressive workers’ movement. Their use to win over a section of the membership in a populist way, can over-extend expectations of strength and support, resulting in disunity and defeat.

George Dimitrov, the Secretary of the Communist International in 1935, referred to those who put forward simplified methods of solving the most complex problems of the working class movement as those for whom “mountains are mere stepping stones.” This approach was also castigated by Lenin when he spoke of the “revolutionary phrase which leads to the death of the revolution”.

(b) A variant of this idea is the concept of “permanent revolution” which often masks a rejection of the necessity for stages in the revolutionary process. It is a denial of the fact that change takes place by both “evolution” and “revolution”. The call for “permanent revolution” is often a call for the situation to be kept in a state of continuous revolution. This idea has nothing in common with Marxist dialectics.

(c) Much criticism has been levelled at socialist countries based on the idea that it is not possible to build socialism in a single country. This arises from lack of confidence in the power of the revolutionary movement and, on the other hand, an over-estimation of the power of the remaining capitalist powers. It suggests that no socialist revolution can be successful and, therefore, should not be attempted until the working people of other countries are ready to struggle for and win power and start to build socialist societies.

To follow this argument to its logical conclusion means that the Russian and Chinese revolutions should not have been undertaken, not to mention Cuba, Vietnam and other countries. Life itself has exposed the argument that socialism cannot be built in one

country even in circumstances of capitalist encirclement. Cuba is a prime example of the falsity of this argument.

(d) A refusal to work in alliances with non-revolutionary groups, claiming that alliances with reformists or sections of the middle class in particular circumstances and for particular objectives are “betrayals” of the revolution. This reflects a failure to see anything except the ultimate objective of socialism. It is a refusal to accept the struggle for partial demands or to work in alliances except with those who share similar, sectarian attitudes.

The different roles of the party, trade unions and community mass organisations are mixed up and an attempt is made to impose revolutionary objectives on any and all organisations, irrespective of their aims and objectives. For example, leftist organisations have in the past put forward the slogan of “Electing a Labor Party Government with socialist policies”. The Labor Party is not, however, a socialist party and has never worked for that objective. It was an unrealistic proposal.

(e) Some on the left refuse to work in a democratic manner and on the basis of mutual respect and equality with others who have a different outlook on some questions. They refuse to accept that others may be in leading positions because of their relative strengths. This reflects an over-estimation of their actual contacts and contribution.

(f) Another mistake to be avoided is the concentration on what divides the left and progressive forces to prove the “purity” of one’s own organisation and policy. A principled approach to other forces entails giving emphasis to and finding points of unity around which action in the interests of the working people and progressive forces can be developed.

(g) There is, on the part of some, a refusal to extend the mass struggle into the electoral arena. Taking part in elections is branded as “parliamentarism”, that is, a reliance on elections as the sole means of achieving change.

We see the parliamentary arena as an important area of struggle against reactionary policies in which much can be done to unite the working class and other social forces. At the same time, parliamentary work has to be based on work outside parliament to build the mass movement.

(h) Another error is to pose the membership against the leadership of an organisation. This happens especially in trade unions, where all trade union officials are seen as “bureaucrats” or “misleaders of the workers”. A correct approach to work in trade unions should have the overall aim of strengthening the militancy and unity of the union as a whole.

This entails developing organisational structures in unions that result in members full participation including supporting union actions in the interest of the workers, taking part in elections and involvement in making union decisions and policy. A never-ending campaign against “bureaucracy” is often used as cover for libertarian demands for absolute freedom for themselves in other organisations resulting in the watering down of the effectiveness, strength and respect for the organisation’s democratic processes and forums. At the same time, these ultra-democratic principles are not extended to others in those organisations in which they have leadership.

(i) Some leftists pursue a policy of flooding into other organisations with a mass influence. The aim is to “use” that organisation to build up their own strength and is a kind of parasitism. Having gained maximum benefit for their own narrow objectives, they shift their resources to another target. (j)” Another serious issue is the development of

nationalism. Some on the left raise national separatism to an absolute principle. It was just such a wave that contributed to the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and brought a grave setback for socialism throughout the world. The promotion of nationalism is a weapon widely used by imperialism against socialist and progressive governments. Nationalism, when raised to an absolute, downgrades internationalism and the necessity for international solidarity with genuine struggles for national independence against imperialism.

Ultra-left trends have appeared in all countries from time to time. In the main the working class movement is repelled by sectarianism and narrow-mindedness. Ultra-left groups have never been trusted with the leadership of the revolutionary movement in any country, nor have they provided leadership for the victory of socialism in any country. On the other hand, they have often done great damage to revolutionary movements by building false hopes and misguided expectations which often result in burn-out and cynicism.

Rightist ideas

(a) Rightist ideas are also present in the working class and revolutionary movement. They lead to the abandonment of the class struggle and the liquidation of the revolutionary party. Such ideas often arise from defeatism and are a capitulation to the economic power, influence and ideas of the ruling class. The class struggle is replaced by proposals that society is motivated by “common interests” or “universal human values” which apply to all, irrespective of their class position in society. The class struggle is condemned as “crude”, “doctrinaire”, “mechanistic”, “confrontationist” or “outdated”.

The ruling class campaigns ceaselessly against recognition of the existence of classes in society for such a recognition would expose the minority status of the capitalist ruling class. It has, however, not abandoned the class struggle and continues to attack workers' wages, conditions of work and the trade unions. It fights the class struggle while advocating that workers should abandon it.

It was the relegation and denial of the class struggle that led to the adoption of the Accord by large sections of the trade union leadership including some who professed to be communists.

(b) Rightists idealise the democratic rights existing in capitalist societies and present them in a non-class way and as superior to the democratic rights existing in socialist societies. A super-critical attitude is adopted towards existing socialist countries. There is a failure to publicise the achievements of socialist countries for fear of being labeled as supporters of “undemocratic regimes”. This has not only weakened the struggle for an extension of democratic rights in capitalist societies but also weakened the struggle for socialism. © There are those who downgrade and belittle Marxist ideology and theory, declaring them “out of date”, no longer “relevant” to present day society, and “dogmatic”. Marxism is often supplanted by so-called “new left” ideas which are neither “new” nor “left”. They advance as “new”, ideas which have been contended with in the communist movement even in the time of Marx and Engels. The ideas of the “new left” are non-revolutionary and are a repudiation of the scientific socialism of Marxism. They originate from a non-class view of society and are an unprincipled compromise with capitalism. Some who advance these ideas become defeatist, become adherents of social democracy or join the capitalist class as advisers.

Some on the left and the right view history from the point of view of individuals rather than seeing individuals in the totality of their social role. No better example of this is the

unending personal denigration of Stalin as the repository of all evil. What is needed is an objective analysis of historical circumstances and the positive and negative role played by individuals.

Rightists abandon the class struggle, the need for a revolutionary party and the objective of socialism. Left-sectarian ideas reduce a Marxist party to an isolated, narrow sect continuously shouting allegedly “revolutionary” slogans while failing to do the necessary work in the ranks of the working class and the people.

Socialist objectives and principles

In reaffirming its commitment to winning a socialist Australia, the Communist Party of Australia believes the following main objectives and principles need to be implemented during the construction of a socialist society:

1. In the course of the development of the struggle for socialism, the maintenance of the democratic gains already won in capitalist society by working class and people’s struggle is an important task.

The first main stage in the transition to socialism is closely related to the development of people’s democracy through the democratisation of the mass media, improved electoral laws, including proportional representation, re-establishment of effective, strong and militant trade unions, the strengthening of community organisations, the institution of a republican form of government and the extension of the public sector in industry. A number of political parties will continue to represent different sections of the people with their cooperation consummated in the form of a strong coalition. In the first stage the direction of Australian politics will be changed and a people’s government pledged to a program of far-reaching reforms will be established. In struggling to implement, defend and further these reforms, the coalition of parties will move forward to win and build a socialist society.

Even after the establishment of a socialist government, capitalist opposition will continue to exercise a strong influence and remain a threat. A protracted struggle will be necessary in the areas of ideology, the economy, politics and state power, to defeat such a force while building and consolidating socialism.

The struggle for the extension of both political and economic democracy is absolutely essential in the struggle to win and then build a socialist society.

The transition from capitalism to socialism represents a fundamental change in class power—from capitalist class power based on the predominance of private ownership of the means of production to working class power based on the predominance of public ownership.

2. While a socialist society would be based on the predominance of public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, particularly of those enterprises which are major or key factors in the economy, other forms of ownership would continue to exist for a long time. Other forms include co-operative, private, joint public and private. A socialist society presupposes the planning of economic and social development. It is necessary to eliminate the booms and slumps which are characteristic of capitalism. It is also necessary to change the criteria for development and ensure that steps necessary for sustainability are strictly observed. Mechanisms to plan economic and social development can take a number of forms—a planning authority and the use of various economic levers such as taxation, interest rates, import and export controls, price controls,

etc. The use of supply and demand factors in the market will also be used. However, this does not mean that the market and only the market would determine all things as in capitalist society. Macro-economic controls, planning and the market would be combined in a socialist society. It is necessary to encourage the participation of workers in all economic matters, not only through their elected parliamentary representatives, but also through the activity of worker committees established in enterprises.

3. A socialist government would educate everyone in an attitude of concern for, and a lifestyle which protects the environment. Measures to protect the environment will demand constant vigilance and public awareness together with democratic involvement and accountability. Community environmental organisations would be encouraged and supported. At all times, the effects of human activity on the environment would be carefully monitored and research carried out to deal with problems as they arose in agriculture as much as in industry.

The atmosphere, the oceans and the land would no longer be treated as a garbage bin. Waste would either be recycled or used as the starting point for other processes. A program of research would be undertaken to ensure that present and future industries were environmentally sustainable and resources protected.

4. A major task in a socialist society is to extend the interest and knowledge of people in political, cultural, scientific and social affairs. Socialist principles of co-operation between peoples, opposition to racism and narrow nationalism, support for peace and humanitarianism, a scientific understanding of society have to contend with capitalist ideas which are widespread in present day society. Individualism, racial superiority, greed and selfishness, use of force to achieve an objective, belief in a supernatural and so on hold back the understanding of individuals and may be destructive of social harmony and stability. Such ideas will persist for many generations and a constant struggle must be waged to overcome them. This task cannot be neglected without endangering the progress and even the maintenance of socialist society.

5. Experience confirms that a socialist society has not been built anywhere without a communist party playing a foremost role in helping to work out policies, inspiring and organising the struggle to win working class power and then build the new society. While asserting that the communist party would play a significant and leading role in the construction of socialism, we see it working in coalition with others who are committed to building socialism.

Experience also shows that it is necessary to clearly define the role of the communist party in society and in government. Lines of demarcation need to be established between the party's responsibility in government and its role as a force in the community.

The party must recognise and strictly maintain the demarcation between the party and non-party community organisations such as trade unions, youth and women's organisations. For example, the primary role of the trade unions is to protect the interests and rights of the working people who are its members and there may sometimes be a conflict with decisions of government. Where possible, these differences need to be resolved in mutual discussion, recognising that a socialist government and the working people have common over-all interests. Nonetheless, popular mass actions by the people in support of their demands will continue to be recognised as a democratic right. Bureaucratic tendencies will inevitably arise and these have to be fought against both inside and outside government. They are best met by the development of the democratic participation of the working people at all levels of government and society. 6." The time to

be taken to build a new socialist society in all spheres—political, economic and educational—must not be underestimated. While some economic changes can be instituted relatively quickly, the development of political, scientific and cultural convictions takes much longer. An under-estimation of the time necessary to bring about such changes and neglect of the work to be done in education was a factor in bringing about the setbacks to socialism in the Soviet Union and the countries of eastern Europe.

Building communist unity

The divisions within the Australian communist movement over many years have seriously weakened the work and the public attractiveness of the left. In addition, the difficulties and setbacks in the communist movement internationally have taken their toll.

The Communist Party of Australia must patiently but resolutely undertake the task of bringing about a better state of affairs within the communist movement than currently exists. The 1995 commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the CPA served a useful purpose in bringing together many former members and activists who have become scattered and un-organised as a result of the numerous splits in the movement.

This, coupled with talks and joint activity between left parties which is a feature of our Party's work at various levels, provides a good opportunity to continue the work of overcoming misconceptions and breaking down barriers between people and parties.

There are, in Australia, a number of branches or sections of communist or workers' parties of countries other than Australia. We will seek to arrange discussions between comrades from these parties and our own Party as a part of our communist unity work. There are two main aspects of this communist unity work. The first is to carry out joint activity either at a Party level or as members of a trade union or community organisation. The second is to find political and ideological common ground.

The process of building unity between communists calls for a great amount of discussion with others and agreement as to how this process should proceed.

Differences of opinion on policy and ideology were the main reason for the splits and divisions in the communist movement over the years.

There will inevitably be differences on policy and ideology and while they may not be overcome, even with properly conducted discussions, it is desirable to seek common ground, giving time for understanding to be reached. The alternative is to try to achieve quick results by polarising differences of opinion and creating a situation of confrontation.

Conclusion

Capitalism can no longer meet the basic needs of the people for work, security, democracy, housing and medical services, peace and a healthy planet, and is plunging into deeper crisis. Mass struggles have spread to every corner of the world—from Polynesia to Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas.

These struggles are inevitable so long as capital exploits labour and attempts to deprive the working people of democratic, economic and social rights. Marx pointed out more than a century ago that capitalism creates its own grave-diggers. This remains true.

It is these struggles which are the motive force for social progress and for eventual change to a socialist society. The communist parties remain in the forefront of these struggles in many countries. They have learnt much from both the positive and negative

experiences of the past. They are becoming more mature, sophisticated and capable of providing the ideas and leadership necessary for society to take the next big step to its liberation into freedom and a secure, prosperous and stable society—a future of socialism.