

SOCIALIST FIGHT

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Build a fighting left in the unions and ALP.

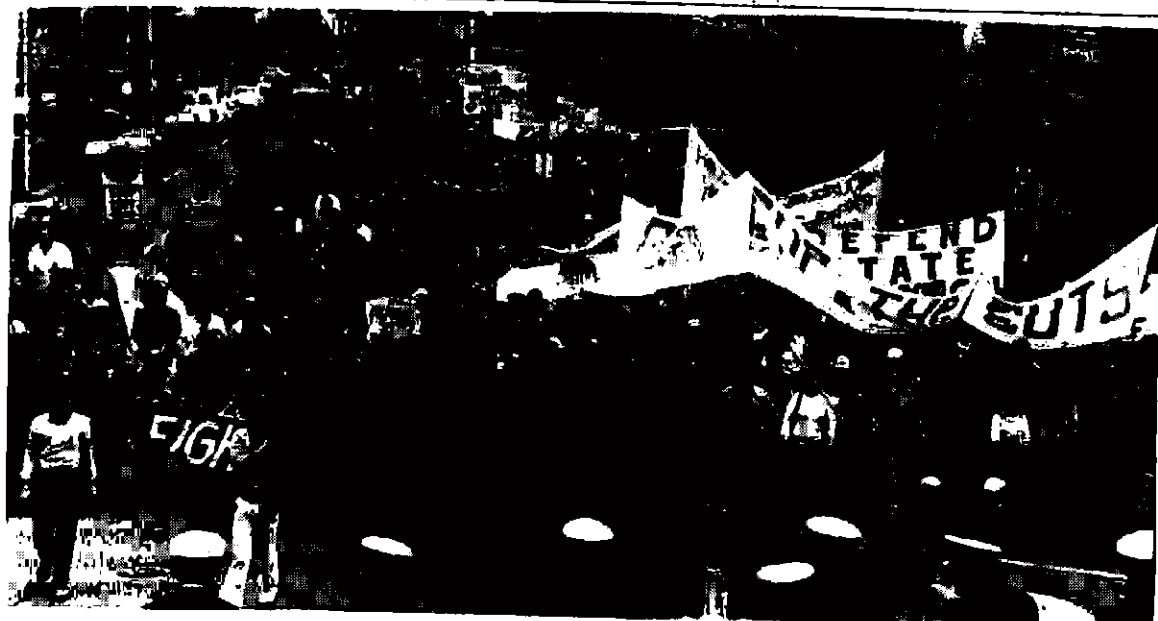
No. 7, September/October 1987

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SOCIAL CONTRACT: NO DEAL

FOR ALL THEIR EVASIONS AND WINDOW-dressing, the Hayden/Hawke proposal of a 'prices and incomes policy' looks like nothing else but a repackaged version of the old discredited 'Social Contract' con-trick.

The proposal was launched by Hayden at the ACTU Congress in early September. He developed it jointly with Hawke and ALP economic spokesperson Ralph Willis. It had been discussed with ACTU President Cliff Dolan and other union leaders before the Congress.

"What the Labor Party is offering is a climate in which government, unions and employers can cooperate in a wage fixing system that is fair, systematic and responsible", said Hayden announcing the proposal. He claimed it would "bring justice and, above all, harmony back to the whole community".

Put simply, Hayden and Hawke are offering workers a deal. They promise that a Labor government would restrain health costs (including doctors' and dentists' fees), lower taxation, reduce interest rates and boost welfare. In return, we're supposed to allow a Labor government to effectively peg our wages.

WILFUL

Hayden introduced his remarks by trying to prove that classes no longer exist in Australia. *"The fact is that any interpretation of current industrial relations that relies on the old class consciousness and class distinction is ignorant and wilful nonsense,"* he alleged.

If he's right, then a Social Contract makes sense. In reality, of course, he's a million light years away from the daily lives of working class people. Classes most definitely do still exist in capitalist Australia. That's why all social contracts are just a giant con. Every time they've been tried — both in Australia and overseas — they've invariably resulted in wages being kept well below the inflation rate.

In fact, it's precisely in times of economic recession that bosses and capitalist politicians start pushing most vigorously for wage restraint. Why?

Because they want us to foot the bill for their economic recovery.

THREAT

Hayden combined cajoling with outright threats at the ACTU Congress. He made it clear that if trade unions didn't buy the deal he was offering them, *"the only alternative will be the blunt, unselective tool of monetary and fiscal policy which bears down unfairly on those least able to bear it."*

Dolan declined to comment on Hayden's proposition, but hardly gave the appearance of opposing it. In fact, it would be highly inconsistent of him to do so. As recently as August, he urged Fraser to consider a deal on budgetary policy, in return for union moderation on wage demands.

INDEPENDENT

Both Dolan and Hayden spoke out strongly at Congress against an all out fight to restore what's been lost under Indexation. Dolan's role in the debate around wages policy is reported elsewhere in this issue (See Page 2...) For his part,

cont. on p. 12.

Familiar Pattern in CAPSC

A familiar pattern is beginning to emerge in Victoria's Campaign Against Public Sector Cuts.

It goes something like this: after a mass movement has had at least a couple of highly successful mass demonstrations, then a section of it works to dissipate all the militancy and energy that's been generated.

Instead of building bigger and better mass actions, elements in the given mass movement suddenly discover that anything similar in the near future would be 'premature'. As an alternative, these conservative forces (at the head of which members and supporters of the Communist Party of Australia almost always seem to appear) advocate that the movement slip into reverse gear.

DE-MOBILISE

Without actually saying as much, the CPA strategy once this point is reached amounts to a perspective for the movement to *de-mobilise* and *de-radicalise*. It's for anything but strong militant action: innocuous suburban 'community-based' protests; lots of aimless conferences where all the trendy sociological analyses can be wheeled out; and tiny media stunts which the media ignore, but which help break up the militancy inevitable from centralised ongoing mass mobilisations.

Most of the decisions of this month's ACTU Congress held in Sydney's Town Hall hold little hope for the working class of this country.

The mass media hailed it as the dullerest congress in recent times, and a victory for the 'moderates'.

While employers and the Federal government are in the middle of a savage and many pronged attack on wages, conditions and public spending, our national union leadership (the ACTU Executive) came up with a plan to try and thwart the wages push begun by communications and transport workers.

By a vote of 601-389 Congress voted down a left wing amendment to by-pass the Arbitration Commission graveyard of wage claims. The left wing union bureaucrats led by John Halfpenny of the AMWSU sought to ride the current wave of worker militancy but they were defeated by Centre and Right wing moves to forge a "Social Contract" with a future ALP Federal government.

The result is that the ACTU is organizing what is thought to be a \$30

From the demonstrations against the Vietnam war onwards, attempts to cripple mass movements in this way have always emerged when a mass movement is at a peak in militancy and activism. CAPSC is no exception. Its overall enthusiasm was at a high point following the highly-successful 31 July and 19 August mass anti-cuts demonstrations in Melbourne.

As much as they might deny it, though, that's just the sticking-point for the CPA. After all, a viable, militant and highly visible anti-cuts mass movement was the last thing that the CPA's friends in the 'Left' trade union bureaucracy or amongst some elements in the Victorian ALP's Socialist Left faction wanted. So if the CPA wanted to remain prominent in CAPSC, this had to definitely be nobbled.

That's why perspectives offered by CPA members since 19 August have been for everything under the sun except another CAPSC mass demonstration. True, there's been no CPA opposition to CAPSC supporting the 18 September demonstration against cuts to women's services, called by Women's Mobilisation. But they could hardly expect to have any credibility in either CAPSC or Women's Mobilisation if they'd obstructed support from CAPSC for 18 September.

In place of more mass action — this time using the criminal squandering of

Torilio Urgan,
Sydney

catch up claim. This is to be done on an industry by industry basis without a nationally co-ordinated campaign. With Wage Indexation buried by renewed rank and file militancy, the way was clear for a real fight back.

But no-one at Congress put forward a plan for such a fight back. For instance, we should have heard demands for a sliding scale of wages based on an index determined by unions and consumer groups. Such a system, if won, would automatically and regularly compensate workers' pay packets for losses due to price rises.

However the ACTU in its haste not to embarrass the ALP rejected even the left bureaucrats' move to have a nationally co-ordinated series of strikes to push for the proposed catch up. Hence we come to the real objective of John Moore (president of the Arbitration Commission) in abandoning wage indexation.

His aim was to pressure the union leadership into going back to square one — i.e. faith in the totally discredited Arbitration Commission. The ACTU knuckled under to the bosses pressure as applied via John Moore. In this case their pious hopes were backed up by a mystical belief that a future Hayden Labor

public money at CHOGM as a focus — the CPA has dusted down its time worn demobilisation strategy.

They've proposed a weekend conference (which is useful — but only if it can actually review recent mass actions and plan more to follow up), and small suburban protests against local cuts (which are also useful — but only as part of an organized build-up to more mass action).

Most significantly though, CPA members fought bitterly to oppose another mass demonstration. Instead, they counter-posed a pathetic media stunt "involving a dozen or so people". It was "too soon" after other mass demonstrations, we were told.

And when SF supporters and International Socialists' members proposed that the demonstration be held jointly with one already planned to support the Irish hunger strikers, the CPA's opposing arguments included the gem that 'people who oppose the cuts might not like to be expected to support the IRA'!

Fortunately for the anti cuts fightback, CAPSC has been convinced by a majority of the wide variety of forces apart from the CPA which compose it, to build a mass demonstration on 30 September. It's vital for the future of the mass movement that this mobilisation is successful. To ensure that, it's absolutely imperative that it's built systematically in the ALP and trade unions:

TOO WEAK TO FIGHT?

government would not be too hard on wage claims.

Just how much trust can be put in leaders such as these? Charlie Fitzgibbon moved the Executive recommendation which consciously rejected any reliance on the collective strength of their union members. Fitzgibbon thinks that any other course of action would simply "show up the weakness of the trade union movement".

This sort of cynicism also underlies the attitudes of left wing careerists such as John Halfpenny. They come up with plans which are hitched to waves of worker militancy but which don't provide a permanent solution to the steady decline of working class living conditions.

There were perhaps two bright spots to the Congress. Firstly, was the amalgamation of the peak union council for the public service (CAGEO) with the ACTU. This brings a total of nearly 2.3 million workers under ACTU leadership.

Given the otherwise fragmented nature of Australian unionism this is certainly a step in the right direction. This is especially true given the angry mood of public service workers in the face of Razor Gang cuts and the push to keep wages down.

Secondly, the Congress has voted in Socialist Fight No. 7, September/October 1981

SL'S MARK OF CAIN

by Paul White

Whichever way you look at it, the decision to replace Frank Wilkes as Victorian ALP leader with John Cain is thoroughly disastrous.

The net result of the whole sordid affair is that the Socialist Left faction now appears to be strongly politically committed to politically backing a man who is quite evidently opposed to everything the SL is supposed to stand for. John Cain, like Frank Wilkes, has never been aligned with any other force in the Labor Party than its right wing, whether of the 'Labor Unity' or 'Independent' variety.

Another consequence has been a significant worsening of the SL's internal political and ideological crisis. Motions censuring the SL Executive have been debated in several local SL groups. A Special General Meeting of the whole SL is also being held, due to rank and file concern.

favour of the right of working women to have "free, safe, legal abortions".

N.S.W. Labor Council Secretary Barrie Unsworth didn't want such "devisive" issues heard by the ACTU, but was defeated 528-392 on this. Meanwhile even further on the Right was Anne Connelly of the Federated Clerks who thought that abortion had nothing to do with "legitimate" working class and trade union interests. Cliff Dolan voted with Unsworth, calling abortion murder.

Fortunately on this issue Congress sided with the view that it was working class women who suffered most from anti-abortion legislation. Also they saw no difference between this divisive issue and others which the union movement has pursued, e.g. opposition to the Vietnam war and to uranium mining.

By the end of the Congress all of the main issues which confront the working class got dumped into the 'too hard' basket. The decline in real wages, public service cuts, unemployment all went under that category.

But even more effort went in ignoring the need to grapple with a strategy to defeat this capitalist onslaught. The main job of an ACTU Congress remains to be done.

Cain's push for power only became a reality when the SL Executive decided to back him. Some SL Executive members — especially those identified with former MP Bill Hartley — claim that the decision was made in what amounts to an under-hand manner.

CONTROVERSIAL

Specifically, they allege that the controversial decision was made at a meeting when many of the union officials on the Executive were in Sydney for the ACTU Congress. They say there was no indication prior to the Executive meeting that the matter was even going to be raised.

At least one thing is quite clear about the decision; it was made without any consultation with the SL rank and file. Supporters of the decision argue that the Executive was empowered by an SL General Meeting resolution to decide on behalf of the Faction as a whole whether to support either Cain or Wilkes.

But that General Meeting was held in November last year, in response to a specific crisis at that time. It's ludicrous for the Executive to maintain that last year's resolution should still stick — especially when it's remembered how internally controversial it was at the time.

Socialist Fight believes that a Special General Meeting of the SL should have been called by the Executive, if it considered that compelling reasons existed for changing horses in the leadership stakes. So far, no credible reasons have been advanced to explain why Wilkes had to be moved against in favour of Cain, without an SL General Meeting being first called to canvass rank and file Factional viewpoint.

UNDEMOCRATIC

Even more fundamentally, we believe that the Cain Coup highlights the undemocratic manner in which the Party's leaders are selected. The position of State (or Federal) leader is enormously powerful. She or he is much much more than Labor's parliamentary front runners. Parliamentary leaders are notorious for the way in which they so frequently — and so brazenly — flout Conference policy decisions.

Yet only MPs vote on who takes this job! Rank and file Party members just don't get a look in. For reasons of self-preservation, MPs are forced to consult with a select few individuals at the top of the Party power structure — the 'numbers men' who dominate the established factions. But the rank and file don't even get consulted.

Small wonder, then, that a growing number of SL members feel it's futile to



John Cain

work hard in Policy Committees and Conference for socialist policies, while these might well be 'interpreted' beyond recognition so easily.

ACTIVIST

It's high time that the SL put its house in order, if it expects to play a serious role in transforming the ALP into a socialist activist party. A series of organizational reforms need to be carried out, to restore rank and file control of all decisions. Most important of these is the reintroduction of monthly General Meetings.

In addition, rank and file members — whether they're on Policy Committees or not — must be involved in SL policy formulation at all levels. And for that matter, a wide-ranging discussion on what exactly the SL as a group understands by socialism would not go astray.

Finally, the whole SL needs to turn towards active involvement in working class struggles against government cuts. If the SL resolved to put the same amount of energy into the anti-cuts fight that it did into the anti-war movement of the late sixties and early seventies, it could help bring literally thousands of people into active struggle against the Liberals — and quite possibly into the Party as well.

The SL must organize to ensure that the entire resources of the ALP are plunged into the fight against the cutbacks. Industrial action by workers resisting the cuts and every demonstration opposing them must be vigorously supported by the Party. And the SL must insist on militant socialist policies in this fightback, as an alternative to Fraser's monetarism.

by Janet Gurney

Recent upheavals in the NSW Nurses Association reflect the feelings of rank and file nurses in opposition to the cuts in health funding being implemented by the NSW Labor Government at the behest of the Federal Government.

Nurses are demanding better pay and conditions, and have been taking action against loss of jobs and the closure of hospitals. Rank and file nurses have found that their Association officials have been dragging the chain on all counts. Two new groups have emerged this year, to take up these fights.

The Defeat The Health Cuts Campaign was launched as a result of a motion by Janet Bonser of the Socialist Leadership Group which was passed at NSW Labor Women's Conference. It held a successful public meeting in May with ALP parliamentarians and health workers on the platform. They have just held a weekend conference at the end of August.

Health workers are involved from all unions and associations, including the 2 major health unions, the NSW Nurses Association and the Health and Research Employees Association. Both are traditionally conservative unions. The H&REA was one of the first unions in which Groupers defeated Communist Party officials. The Defeat the Health Cuts Campaign has also published one issue of a paper called *Health Worker*.

In the meantime, The Nurses Association application for a wage increase 2 years ago, finally resulted in a 10% rise. However nurses at Newcastle were alert to the fact that the wage rise carried with it a possible reduction of annual leave from 6 weeks to 4 weeks. They petitioned for a Special General Meeting of the Association, requiring 100 signatures.

This meeting was held on Thursday 9 July 1981, and was attended by over 2,000 nurses despite a last minute change of venue. A motion of no confidence was moved in the General Secretary, Mary Heneln, and in the Assistant General Secretary, Patricia Lloyd-Lucas, prompted by their attempts to get nurses to accept the agreement containing the reduced annual leave provision.

The officials tried bureaucratic manoeuvres, such as ruling the no confidence motion out of order. However it was eventually carried by about a 10 to 1 majority. Predictably the officials refused to resign, making all sorts of statements contemptuous of the membership. They rushed through an issue of the Association journal *The Lamp*, in an effort to undercut their opposition.

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The rank and file are responding with a call for a postal ballot of no confidence in the officials. The Association officials have superior resources available for their own campaign but the present level of industrial action by nurses could be a good enough opportunity for raising the issues effectively and widely in the Association.

A fortnight after the Special General Meeting a Nurses Association Reform Campaign was launched by rank and file nurses including members of the Defeat the Health Cuts Campaign. The Reform Campaign went on to obtain sufficient signatures to hold a further Special General Meeting of nurses, to decide on action to support a further pay claim.

The Reform Campaign pointed out that the recent 10% rise was swallowed as soon as it was granted, by taxation, cost of

The same arguments will be used against wage increases for nurses as in defence of the health cuts. Wran took a gamble in announcing the cuts to the Mater Hospital before the NSW election. But its well known that there is a hit list of hospitals for closure after the election.

The nurses' experience of industrial action now, along with the growth of the Nurses Association Reform Campaign and the Defeat the Health Cuts Campaign, indicate that the NSW Labor Government will be facing tough opposition and strong demands that it refuse to implement Fraser's cuts.

The Nurses Association Reform Campaign, for example, has suggested that nurses should refuse to collect the \$15 fee for service which Wran announced for public hospitals from September 1.

RANK & FILE NURSES ORGANIZE

living increases and loss of indexation rises. "Even with the 10% rise we are still 20% behind the average weekly earnings. We should push for the Health Commission and the Courts to bring down a decision for a favourable increase within the coming months. If there is no favourable increase in that time, then we should consider using our industrial strength and withdrawing our labour!" (emphasis in original).

That Special General Meeting voted for 2 separate 24 hour general strikes of nurses, leaving skeleton staffs only, to be followed later by an indefinite walkout if the Health Commission does not deliver the goods. This means that during September and October we could well be seeing unprecedented levels of industrial action by NSW nurses.

The lack of opposition from ALP and union leaders to the total destruction of Medibank, and the downgrading of health care, is outrageous, considering the massive effect this will have, and is having on working people. The mounting opposition to the health cuts in NSW among rank and file health workers, could show the way forward for an effective opposition to all the cuts of the Razor Gang.

We must move motions of support for the nurses in our ALP and Union branch meetings. We must demand that the NSW Labor Government refuse to do the dirty work of the bosses in cutting health care, and instead that it mobilise the ALP and the unions to back it spending the necessary money to improve health services.

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NSW Labour Council Expels BLF.

by Janet Gurney

ON THURSDAY 27 August 1981, the NSW Labor Council carried out what is probably its first expulsion of a union, in its 100 year history.

The Federated Ironworkers Association and the Australian Workers Union were the main unions behind the expulsion. They accuse the BLF of poaching their work and members, particularly in the Hunter Valley, scene of the developing "resources boom".

This follows from an earlier bitter dispute between the FIA and the BLF over who would build the Omega communication tower in Gippsland. The High Court awarded the work to the BLF. Earlier this year, since the High Court decision, the NSW Labor Council suspended the BLF over a demarcation dispute with the Plasterers Federation.

The expulsion comes at a time when the Federal Government is moving to de-register the BLF, and can only assist the Federal Government in this. The BLF is correctly boycotting investigations into its affairs by the Government.

fighting

Steve Black, NSW Secretary of the BLF is partly right in saying that the Labor Council "will do anything to get rid of a fighting union". BLF awards are generally better than those of the FIA and AWU. BLF members have taken more industrial action to defend their conditions. And this means it is in the employers interests to deal with the FIA or the AWU and not the BLF.

However the main motivation of union officials on both sides has little to do with a genuine desire to promote the interests of even their own members, let alone workers generally.

The High Court ruling awarding Omega to the BLF, gave BLF officials the idea that a lot of jobs in the "resources boom" which have not previously fallen within the definition of BL work, would now be open to the BLF. Norm Gallagher, Federal Secretary of the BLF, estimated that this could increase the unions membership from 30,000 to 50,000.

Such a massive increase would obviously give Gallagher more power and resources. The better conditions for BLs promised success in winning workers to the union. FIA and AWU officials have their own power base threatened, both by

Rank & File BLs slam Gallagher's scabbery in 1974 — now he faces similar attacks.

loss of members, and because members who remain in their unions might nevertheless question why their unions haven't won conditions comparable to the BLF's.

Belonging to the Centre Unity faction of the ALP, the FIA and AWU officials have plenty of chums on the NSW Labor Council, enough to win the expulsion vote by 217 to 56.

If FIA and AWU officials were really interested in the conditions of workers, they should have been more than happy to see workers joining the BLF and improving their conditions. If the BLF officials are really interested in promoting the conditions of all workers — why didn't they ask BLF members to support FIA riggers in the Hunter Valley, who were striking for wage rises to give parity with the BLs?

reactionary

Norm Gallagher is a supporter of the slavishly pro-Peking CPACML, who support Australian nationalism and an alliance with the USA against the USSR, i.e. Fraser's reactionary foreign policy of support for anti-working class regimes in the colonial countries.

Many militants will also remember that it was Norm Gallagher who did a good turn for the Master Builders Association in 1975, by smashing the militant NSW Branch of the BLF. The NSW Branch at that time had been active not only in securing improved conditions for its members, but also in mobilising members to take a stand on social issues such as the rights of women and homosexuals, and on environmental issues.

Various charges of corruption were trumped up by the Federal officials against about 20 BLF members including Jack Munday, Joe Owens and Bob Pringle, who were then expelled. Munday and Pringle have been campaigning amongst rank and file BLs for readmission. It seems that Pringle may have been successful, but not Munday.

It is ironic that socialists now have to defend the BLF officials from the same kind of attack they themselves made on unionists in aid of the bosses only 6 years ago. However, it is not the interests of the officials which we aim to defend when we support the readmission of the BLF to the NSW Labor Council.

The deregistration of the Federation would be a victory to the government and bosses in pushing down conditions in the construction industry, and thus a blow to all workers involved. Workers should not have to pay the price for bureaucratic faction fighting between union officials.

A joint campaign to raise all conditions to the best available should be being organized by FIA, AWU and BLF officials. There is little chance of this occurring, unless class conscious militants in the construction industry can mobilise rank and file pressure for such a campaign.

It is disgusting to see union officials encouraging workers to fight one another for the limited number of jobs capitalism provides, instead of uniting workers to fight for jobs for all. An immediate target must be the readmission of the BLF to the NSW Labor Council.

12 Months Of Junta Terror

12 SEPTEMBER marks the Turkish military junta's first year in power. On that day last year, the Generals — led by General Kenan Evren — seized power in a military coup.

The coup was the product of a long period of escalating martial law and increasing political and economic crisis. Turkey's economy was in a state of national bankruptcy, with more than \$16 million owed to Western governments and credit organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The black market thrived in the midst of acute shortages of basic commodities. Inflation reached three figure levels and unemployment pushed beyond 20 per cent as production slumped. The murderous activities of a mass fascist movement, the Nationalist Action Party of General Alparslan Turkes, and reprisals against it had brought a death-toll of around 2000 in the previous 11 months alone.

The Generals' Security Council junta has brought 12 months of dictatorial repression and torture. The country's economic situation has drastically worsened and the political crisis has deepened.

At least 120,000 political prisoners are

held in the junta's jails. Many of these are trade unionists, including about 500 officials of the militant DISK union federation.

DISK

DISK (the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions), was founded in 1967 as a breakaway from the collaborationist TURK-IS federation. The General Secretary of TURK-IS has been appointed Minister of Social Security in the military junta. TURK-IS covers about 1 million workers, while DISK stood at around half a million strong at the time of the coup.

The junta tortures all political prisoners as a matter of course. G. Ulyger, leader of the DISK - affiliated miners' union, has been systematically tortured since 10 June. Y. Okenoglu, an executive member of the DISK metal workers' union, has died as a result of torture. Many other trade union activists have died due to junta torture.

1768 people have been tried for political offences with the prosecutors demanding the death penalty. 52 of these are DISK officials. 8 people have been hanged so far — including a 16-year old boy.

Many others have been murdered by state forces. These include Kenan Budak, leader of the DISK leather workers' union. Budak was shot dead by police on 26 July. Kamer Tayhat, leader of the DISK metal workers' union, was wounded in a raid on his house by state

forces. He and his wife have suffered systematic torture since their arrest on 1 July.

Since seizing power, the Generals have also: dissolved parliament; banned all political parties; shut down DISK; outlawed the right to strike and increased the period of detention without trial to 90 days.

But a tremendous popular explosion awaits the junta.

INFLATION

According to the Generals' economic spokesperson, Turgut Ozal, "production has increased, prices are coming down, the rate of inflation is decreasing, foreign currency reserves are increasing, exports are increasing, new credits are found." In short things are going pretty well.

On the other hand according to the IMF, internal production has slowed down, the level of inflation is at a much higher level than world standards, the foreign currency shortage is still continuing and unemployment is very high.

The IMF report notes the difficulty of assessing the real inflation rate, due to the inadequacy of price indexing. Rent, for instance, is not included in price indexes, even though it is rapidly increasing.

The inflation rate in 1980 according to different sources is 80 per cent. The Ministry of Commerce estimates it to be 107 per cent per annum, while some

AFGHAN GOVT. DUMPS LAND REFORMS

by Paul White

The Russian-backed government of Barbrak Karmal has finally dropped all pretence of carrying out any sort of real land reform.

When Karmal's People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan seized power through a military coup in April 1978, land reform was one of the key points in its thirty point "modernisation program". The PDPA pledged radical land reform, "in order to eliminate feudalism in the isolated mountainous regions". Millions of acres were scheduled to be seized from powerful landlords for distribution to landless peasants.

Sadly, this was not to come about. The PDPA tried to force through its reforms in an elitist, bureaucratic and sometimes brutal way. The rural poor were not organized by the regime — but by feudal and Muslim reactionaries, who cashed in on resentment generated by the govern-

ment's methods. Armed resistance to the regime began to develop.

The rural revolt had not reached any serious proportions before the PDPA's factions started shooting at one another as well. Government morale collapsed. Purge followed bloody purge. On 14 September, 1979, President Nur Mohammed Taraki was ousted by his Prime Minister, Hufizullah Amin.

Amin's coup was apparently a 'pre-emptive strike', to forestall his own demise. Taraki had decided to remove Amin, following Kremlin pressure.

Then, in the last week or so of 1979, Amin was executed by advance forces of the Russian army. The Russians then moved in, in force, following an invitation from the new President, their puppet Barbrak Karmal.

One of the Russian bureaucrats' excuses was the 'defence' of gains made by the Afghan masses since April 1979, such as land reform.

In fact, the PDPA program of land reform was a farce from the start. Less than 10 per cent of Afghanistan's rural land was redistributed before the program collapsed, six months after it started.

And now the Afghan government has finally announced complete abandonment of the program. Tribal leaders and Mullahs — in other words the largest landlords — have been formally excluded from land reform, provided they support the government's fight against the insurgents.

Meanwhile, forcible conscription to the Afghan army continues, to compensate for its massive desertion rate. Several reports have surfaced of school students being taken out of class and shanghaied directly into the army's ranks. The Russian army's methods include strafing and napalming villages and towns.

The Russian army is clearly performing no progressive role in Afghanistan. They should get out now.

industrialists' organizations put it at about 120 per cent.

Obviously, what the junta would like everyone to believe is contradicted even by the IMF.

In the first six months of 1980, 515 small business, with a total capital of 250 million TL, (\$1AUST = TL) closed up shop. And in the first half of 1981, 40,000 building contractors in Istanbul alone have gone bankrupt.

On the other hand, the large monopolies and banks are making astronomical profits. In 1980, one of the major banks, IS BANK, made a profit of TL2.8 billion the second largest conglomerate KOC HOLDING made a profit of 500 million.

CONSUMPTION

One of the main policies of the junta is squeezing consumption. The minimum wage of workers has been raised by 85.2 per cent since 1979, whilst the inflation rate was 170 per cent.

Meanwhile, the prices of many basic necessities increased considerably. The consumption of most necessities (and also of the products of the assembly production, like house-hold goods, electrical appliances, cars, etc) has fallen dramatically.

Unemployment has reached record levels. Thousands of workers are being made redundant in public sector industries, to make these profitable. Thousands are sacked as a result of security investigations. Seasonal workers, especially in construction are becoming permanently unemployed because of the collapse of this sector.

Turkey's foreign trade deficit is rapidly increasing, despite the Generals' hopes of attracting substantial foreign aid.

In 1980 total exports amounted to 2,910 billion dollars whereas the import bill of

Many left militants are tortured on Gen. Evren's orders.

only petrol was \$3,150 billion.

In 1980 the military government has predicted an increase in exports up to \$3,200 billion, yet the cost of petrol has increased to \$4,250 billion.

MISERY

The economic situation presents a very clear picture. On the one hand there is unemployment, price rises, falling production, lower wages, and on the other a golden year for big business and banks. The result is a situation where everything is only for big business and misery for working people.

The political situation reflects this same philosophy of everything for big business.

The junta is reviewing the entire state structure. All the political, judicial and cultural institutions which have become an obstacle for big business in the past are being completely reorganized. Every measure is taken to prevent any kind of legal channel for opposition to the regime.

On the judicial level measures are being taken to destroy any independence.

All the judges plus the members of the appeals court will from now on be elected by a commission appointed by the head of state and directed by the Minister of Justice.

According to the new trade union law it's prohibited to form new unions. Unions are forbidden to engage in any kind of political activity, nor will they be able to affiliate or give support to a political party.

But institutions which are kept outside politics become instruments of the dominant ideology. The way to make the unions an instrument of the government is to keep them out of politics.

A new Constituent Assembly is being formed, to 'legalise' the constitutional

changes. 25 per cent of this Assembly will be appointed by the junta, and the rest by local governors (who are themselves appointed!) Clearly it will be no more than a puppet.

Until recently, the military were successful in imposing their will. But cracks are beginning to appear in their totalitarian monolith.

HUNGER STRIKE

A hunger strike started on 6 July by about 500 prisoners in the Mamak prison in Ankara. The prisoners have 3 simple demands:

- An end to torture and beatings.
- An end to the military training imposed on the prisoners.
- Free access to daily newspapers and books [Up to now, only books on Turkey's national hero from the 1920s Ataturk, have been allowed].

On the second day of the hunger strike, they were severely beaten by soldiers — and one male detainee is reported dead.

The majority of the detainees were severely wounded, and were carried to hospital by open military trucks.

The families of the prisoners witnessed this and staged a protest outside the prison. Later, they handed in petitions to the Head of State demanding information on the conditions of their relatives.

The hunger strike is still continuing, despite frequent beatings and a ban on detainees seeing their relatives.

The resistance has also spread to Istanbul. In Hasdal and Metris military prisons, the women detainees have started a hunger strike, later joined by the men.

The junta's inability to solve Turkey's economic ills, coupled with its extensive terror and repression means that it will not be very long before Turkey's workers and poor peasants rise to break its power.



SEAMUS COSTELLO, leader of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, was murdered with a sawn-off shotgun at point-blank range as he sat in a parked car in Dublin on October 5, 1977.

He was a man high on the British Government's lists of its opponents in Ireland. Eight years ago the Little John brothers, two gangsters who had infiltrated the Official Republican movement, testified in a Dublin court that they had been instructed by the British Secret Service to get close to Seamus Costello — and then to murder him. Though Costello had many enemies, Republicans have accused the British Army of responsibility.

Costello joined the Republican movement in 1955 when he was 18. Very active in the IRA Border Campaign of the late 50's, he was interned for a time in the South. He was a central leader of Republicanism for 15 years, from the early 1960s.

Costello was foremost in advocating a less purely military orientation for Republicans, and he opposed the Provisional breakaway in 1969 — yet the IRSP, which he formed at the end of 1974, worked closely with the Provisional IRA and on the eve of Costello's death it was reportedly negotiating a closer alliance with them.

Costello's career exemplified and embraced the complex realignments of Republicanism since 1962.

In the '40s and '50s Republicanism had shrunk into a single issue crusade for a united and independent Ireland — which it proposed to achieve by armed struggle only. The economic and social concerns of workers and farmers on both sides of the Border were held to be no business of pure Republicanism.

After the failure of its Border Campaign and the declaration of a ceasefire by the IRA in 1962, then men and women who had inherited the Republican tradition — the living revolutionary tradition in which waves of Irish social revolt and protest have been expressed since the end of the 18th century — attempted to re-define that tradition in modern terms.

They reflected on the weaknesses of Republicanism. To the question, why had the Republican movement been unable to rouse the Irish people, Costello and others were soon to offer the answer: because it did not have a revolutionary social program, and because it stood aloof from class politics.

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The IRSP and the dilemmas of Republicanism

The reality of the 26 County state was sufficient evidence, for those willing to see, that Imperialist exploitation did not depend on having a foreign army in occupation, but could just as well operate by capital investment protected and guaranteed by the 'Independent' 26 County government.

Socialist Republicans like James Connolly had understood this many decades earlier, and his writings now helped re-educate a new generation of Republicans.

Turn Left

The Republican movements began to turn left under the leadership of Cathal Goulding, Thomas MacGiolla, and Seamus Costello. It began to concern itself with housing conditions, working class problems, and the denial of civil rights to the Six County Catholics. It became interested in using elections to advance its politics.

The turn provoked dissent and much suspicion. Old-line Republicanism had elevated the gun and abstention from 'politics' into a principle, and the charge of 'treason', 'Free State-ism', and 'reformism' was voiced by many old Republicans (and also by some Irish Trotskyists). In fact there was reason for suspicion, and some truth to the charges. By the mid-60s there was heavy Stalinist influence within the Republican leadership.

In August 1969 anti-Catholic violence erupted in the Six Counties — partly triggered by the success of the Republicans' housing and civil rights agitation in mobilising the Catholics. The situation found the Republican movement unprepared and almost disarmed, incapable of defending the Catholic ghettos.

Impatient Republicans blamed this on the turn towards politics, and denounced the Stalinist influence. In December 1969 the Provisional IRA split off.

Formally this was a right-wing political trend, anti-communist and militarist. It was to move far to the left after 1971.

The Provisionals recruited on a policy of simple opposition to British imperialism — especially the British Army, present on the streets of Northern Ireland since August 1969. They rapidly organized and gave military training to hundreds of Six

The execution of Airy Neave and the recent deaths of H-Block hunger strikers have placed the small but tenacious Irish National Liberation Army in the public eye internationally.

The INLA is the military wing of the Irish Republican Socialist Party. The

Counties youths.

After internment in August 1971 and the creation of no-go areas following Bloody Sunday in 1972, the radicalisation picked up where it had broken off in 1969. Many of the young radicals of 1969 joined the Provisionals.

The social reality of the Six County Catholic communities, the logic and power of the ideas of the socialist Republicanism of James Connolly, and the example of revolutionary movements like those of Cuba and Vietnam radicalised the Provo rank and file in the North. Under the formally right wing platform staked out by the Provisional leaders in 1969, militant left wing currents developed.

The split, however, proved irreparable. After mid-1972 the majority of the Officials began to veer towards abandoning Republicanism. The radicalisation within the Provisionals has remained confined to segments of a politically unclear movement, essentially bound together by commitment to the military struggle

Socialist Fight No. 7, September/October 1981

by
John O'Mahony

IRSP was founded in 1974, by a split from Official Sinn Fein/IRA.

In what follows, JOHN O'MAHONY reviews the politics of the IRSP, and how it differs from both the 'Officials' and the 'Provos'. He also looks closely at the role its founder Seamus Costello played in guiding it to those politics.

abandonment of the goal of Irish national independence.

At the end of 1974 he led a split from the Officials, which became the IRSP. It was the second hiving-off of people wanting to preserve the revolutionary side of Republicanism, and its all-Ireland nationalist goal.

Since the split the Officials have moved rapidly along the road to explicit abandonment of Republicanism. They believe that the Provo campaign in the North has proved by its failure to force British withdrawal that traditional Republicanism is bankrupt — and instead they opt for reformism.

Today the Officials — 'Sinn Fein the Workers Party' — support majority rule (that is, Protestant rule) in the Six Counties. Thus they completely accept Partition.

Not so Seamus Costello. The IRSP (despite its eclecticism) has set out to create a revolutionary socialist Republican movement opposing both British Imperialism and Irish capitalism on a day to day basis, both sides of the Border. It concerns itself with the workers' struggles in the South much more seriously than the Provisionals do, and tries to link those struggles with the struggles in the North against Britain.

[Editors Note: To be fair, the Provos are paying more attention to these struggles nowadays than they used to.]

The especially savage repression with which the 26 County state has treated the IRSP testifies to the alarm which was felt at even an attempt to create an all-Ireland political organization, concerned to fight on both sides of the Border with whatever weapons appropriate.

But the pressure from the military and police north and south of the Border, together with the fact that the Provisionals were the established Republican force in most of the North and were often no less radical, has meant that the IRSP has remained small.

The 26 Counties has seen not only police repression, but a thoroughgoing onslaught on Republican ideas, with the intention of completely eradicating them. For decades the 26 County bourgeoisie has presented its state as the legitimate result of centuries of struggle for Irish independence.

The principal ruling party, *Fianna Fail*, have presented themselves as Republicans; and in a sense the Provisional leaders in 1969 (like the entire Republican movement for quarter of a century) could rightly have been described as *Fianna Failers* with guns.

The existence of a general diluted Republican sentimental nationalism of *Fianna Fail*, has been a source of support for the Republican movement, for example aiding the Provisional IRA in its rapid growth in 1969-70.

It has also been a source of Republicanism's weakness as a revolutionary doctrine capable of defining the present conditions of real Irish liberation and independence. The political battles between Republicans in the last 15 years have been concerned with just this problem, with separating out a revolutionary way forward for Republicanism.

Now the 26 County bourgeoisie, troubled by the struggle in the North, are denouncing the entire revolutionary nationalist tradition as irrational and harmful.

Fury

And indeed if the existing Irish state and the Six Counties are the legitimate outcome of the historical struggle of the Irish people, then much of that history is 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'.

More necessary than ever for Republicans is James Connolly's understanding that the centuries-old struggle could only by brought to a successful conclusion today through workers' power, and that anything less would be a mockery of the past struggles.

What bourgeois politicians like Conor Cruise O'Brien now say about the nationalist struggle restates Connolly's opinion from the bourgeois angle.

Costello's death was not only a grievous blow to the IRSP — as it was no doubt intended to be. It removed from the scene at a critical period a committed revolutionary of immense experience, whose political history is one of tenacious effort to create a Republican movement that was socialist as well as revolutionary.

Others have taken up the fight to build a revolutionary socialist-republican party. In Costello's activity they will not find the answers, but they will find all the major questions posed and grappled with.

NEXT MONTH: The Provisional Sinn Fein

against the British Army in the Six Counties.

Costello opposed the Provisionals and especially their bombing campaign against economic targets in the Six Counties. He believed that the 1960s' moves to the left and out of the straitjacket of political abstention were major gains for Republicans.

Bombing

In 1970 the armed wing of the Officials was reorganized, and from the gun battles with the British Army in the Falls Road in July 1970 to July 1972 (when it declared a ceasefire which has lasted since) it combatted the British Army and defended the Catholic areas. Costello found himself in opposition to the Goulding-MacGiolla faction after 1972, as the Officials began to move to the right, eventually opting for reformism.

Though he had been one of the foremost advocates of a 'political turn' Costello opposed and fought the drift of the Officials to exclusive reliance on the ballot box and their

THE ACOA

The ACOA REFORM GROUP is probably the oldest, most successful and best known rank and file group in Australia.

Over the past 5 years, the Reform Group (RG) has played a key role in breaking the strangle-hold of pro-NCC stooges in the leadership of the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association (ACOA - the union covering Second and Third Division Commonwealth public servants).

While ACOA is still far from being a militant union, it has nevertheless caught the public eye by swiftly transforming itself from a servile 'staff association' into a genuine trade union. RG members have been in the front line of this struggle. They've been prominent at ACOA mass meetings, strikes and protest marches.

Three RG members are now on the union's Victorian State Executive, having replaced a group of officials generally regarded to be in the pocket of Bob Santamaria's National Civic Council. One of the Reform Group Victorian Branch Officials — Branch President Ann Forward — is also the union's National Vice-President.

Yet, despite the Reform Group's electoral successes, an examination of the problems it confronts only serves to further underline the basic fact that truly independent rank and file organization is absolutely indispensable for ACOA (or, for that matter, any union), to effectively resist ruling class attacks.

TRADE UNIONS

The need for workers in all unions to organize unofficial rank and file groupings inside their unions arises from two inter-related problems confronting all unionists.

Firstly, there are the structural limitations inherent in the unions as they are currently organized. And secondly, there is the existence of a layer of privileged officials, the trade union bureaucracy, at the peak of these organizations. Let's look at how this affects trade unions in general, and ACOA specifically.

The Administrative and Clerical Officers' Association (or as it was originally known, the Australian Commonwealth Public Service Clerical Association) was formed in 1913. Like other unions, the Association was the most elementary organized self-defence of its members against the capitalist class.

Unlike the bosses, we don't own what we produce.

As a consequence, we can only sell our ability to work. By combining in trade unions, public servants, like other workers, seek to maximize the price of their ability to work.

To put it plainly, the trade unions are firmly rooted in the status quo. Instead of seeking to eradicate capitalism, the unions attempt to obtain bigger crumbs from the bosses' table, through working inside the system.

The structure, scope and modus operandi of trade unions reflects this commitment to capitalism. Not all workers are in unions, and very few are organized on an industry-wide basis, but on a narrow craft basis instead. Public Service unions are an obvious example of this.

Instead of all Australian government workers being in one big union, we're split up into different unions, whose scope directly reflects the Public Service caste structure of Divisions, Grades, Classifications, Levels and Increments.

And, in even the most democratic unions, the most disadvantaged groups like women, gays and national minorities are generally grossly under-represented in their union's leading bodies, and their special problems given inadequate attention at best.



Racism is a long and dishonourable tradition of the Australian Labour Movement.

As well as all these limitations, most trade unions never seriously attempt to organize conjointly with the non wage-earning component of the working class — people like the wives or husbands of their members, most Blacks and the unemployed — who are excluded from

union membership through capitalism's inability or unwillingness to provide them with the right to work.

The trade unions intervene even less in the international area. Instead, counter-productive chauvinist attitudes predominate — attitudes such as those behind protectionism: "sack Jap car workers not Aussie ones."

This divides workers into nationalities, and results in worker fighting worker, instead of unifying to fight our common class enemy — capitalists of all nationalities. The multi-national character of huge corporations makes this even more necessary today than ever before.

BUREAUCRACY

An obvious question now arises: how can rank and file workers allow this to go on? Surely ordinary workers have only themselves to blame? The logical answer might seem to be "yes" to both these questions. Indeed, this is a view shared by many in the labour movement, including some in the ACOA RG.

The Marxist view is different. Marxists consider that the main problem in transforming trade unions into adequate working class instruments is not that workers are incurably backward or stupid. Certainly, workers — like everyone else in modern society — are full of prejudices imbibed from the bosses' media, their schools and churches.

But simply making this rather apparent observation does not explain why things are as they are. Leaving the explanation at this point leads to a rather static view of society with a consequent cynicism regarding the activity for workers to change, and ultimately ends in demoralization and inactivity. To substantially change the conditions of workers' lives, we need to go beyond this point.

Marxists believe that the trade union bureaucracy is a distinct social layer which represents its own interests, not those of workers. And the bureaucracy's interests lie in leading workers against individual capitalists to some extent, while chaining them to the system as a whole.

ACOA is not an exception to this rule. In fact, it's a rather odious confirmation of it, in many ways.

The overwhelming majority of its members are Clerk Class 4's or below; most are probably Clerk Class 2/3. Yet all ACOA's full time officials enjoy salaries and conditions equivalent to those of top Management personnel.

Many officials — from Industrial and Research Officers right up to the Federal Socialist Fight No. 7, September/October 1981

REFORM GROUP

Secretary — have hardly ever been employed as ordinary Public Servants. This applies both to the "pro-ALP" wing of ACOA officialdom and the "pro-NCC" wing.

However, since there's no argument about the nature of the NCC, let's examine a member of the faction opposing them, the current Association Federal Secretary, Paul Munro.

Paul studied Law at university. After graduation and a 5-year stint in the New Guinea Public Service, he worked as Industrial Advocate for the Public Service Association of Papua-New Guinea for two years. Back in Australia following this, he was employed in a professional capacity by the Crown Solicitor's Department on a temporary basis, for about two and a half years.

He then became Federal Secretary of CAGEO for eight years, and worked two years full time as a Commissioner with the Coombs Commission. After this, and a period in a private law practice, he was elected National Secretary of ACOA.

PROFESSIONALS

Quite evidently, the man is, to quote the words of Sydney journalist Russell Schneider (*Weekend Australian* 12-13/7/1980) "a professional bureaucrat and unionist." In other words, a person capable of moving with polished ease and — to give him his due — skill, from one side of the fence to the other, in one professional capacity after another.

The predominance of a substantial layer of "professionals" in full time union positions is common practice these days in trade unions, including ACOA. This phenomenon is not new, especially in public sector unions, as Gerald Caiden observed in his authoritative work *"Career Service"*, page 11:

"between 1915 and 1950 a dozen Association men (from various Commonwealth Public Service unions) figured prominently in the affairs of the Service personnel system and came to be consulted by Cabinets.

"Their ability was demonstrated as arbitration advocates, in planning High Court action, in pressure-group strategy, and in outside academic and business success. They were appointed to Royal Commissions and Committees of Inquiry not necessarily connected with the Service; one of them became a Commonwealth Public Service Commissioner and two others became Conciliation Commissioners."

Some more contemporary examples of this game of musical loyalties are George Slater (who was concurrently both APTU Federal secretary and a Postal Commissioner) and Ken Turbet, who was concurrently both ATEA Federal Secretary and a Telecom Commissioner before his members got jack of this, and forced him to resign from the latter. Fraser then came to his assistance, by appointing him an Arbitration Commissioner.

And then, of course, there's Des Linehan, formerly a Victorian Branch Secretary of ACOA and then its Federal Secretary, and now a life member of the Association and Director of the anti-union IRB.

PRESSURES

Marxists don't underestimate that serious pressures exist for officials — especially full-time officials — which create powerful tendencies towards the bureaucratization of even rank and file militants.

George Slater, for instance, was once a rank and file PMG worker, a militant and, by his own lights, a socialist. Yet now he identifies with a "management" style approach and does aggressive hack work for the right wing of the A.L.P. Yet he was originally elected on an "anti-Grouper" platform.

Among these pressures are the isolation of officials (including, to a lesser extent, part-time officials) from everyday contact with rank and file members and not having to experience the same daily problems as these members. Moreover, most officials would rather keep their

positions at any price, rather than end up on the office or shop floor, where pressures and insecurity are most immediate, and where there is little, if any, job satisfaction.

The result of this and the complementary danger of having to spend long hours in unavoidable negotiations and litigation with Management is that officials tend to consider legalistic humbug to be a superior strategy to rank and file activity.

That is, in return for a Commissioner's ear, they undertake to "act responsibly" and keep the rank and file "under control". This, of course, is much reinforced when a sector of the membership is conservative and would prefer not to upset the applecart, no matter what the price.

This is the situation in ACOA at present. We can expect its officials to attempt to keep militancy under strict control. For them, court action will be the first option, regardless of what impact that may have on any present campaign, or on the militancy of members in the future. These tendencies are accentuated for officials in unions covering public sector workers, since they are forced in every instance to deal with the sophisticated red tape and legalized hypocrisy of the State apparatus employing their members.

Management-level salaries further add to these pressures, especially for those officials who have never really been rank and file workers, or haven't been so for a number of years. High salaries worsen the situation by further encouraging officials to consider themselves "professionals", therefore with interests separate from those of their members.

Because of their high salaries, the vastly different nature of their work, the very different milieu they move in and their access to the upper echelons of our society, their whole life-styles, values and general world outlook are vastly different from our own.

Even officials who come from militant sections of the rank and file, such as George Slater, often end up with similar views. This causes officials to believe they have a certain community of interest with other "professionals" — like top Arbitration officials, top management, management advocates, etc. — and this results in them trusting these enemies of our movement. They become guided by this group of people regarding what is "possible" to achieve, instead of being guided by their rank and file.

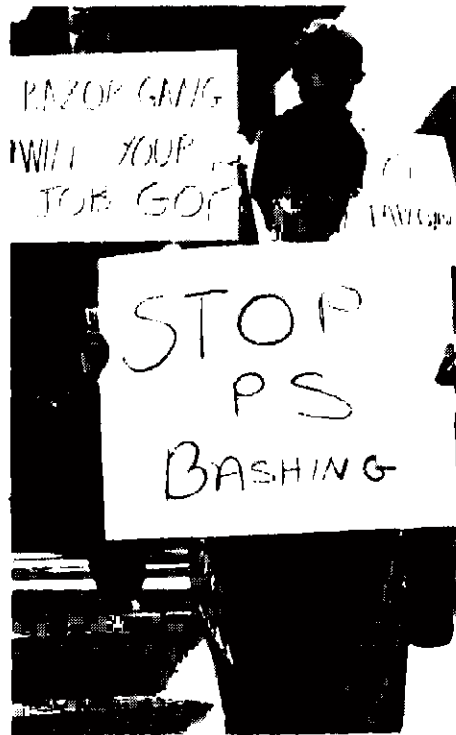
Unless, that is, the rank and file act to counteract this.

Rank & File Strategy

Such degeneration is *not* absolutely unavoidable. Positive steps, some of which are supported by the Reform Group, can be taken. These include, to list but a few, rules requiring *all* officials to be paid no more than what most of their members earn, to be elected and to be subject to quick and easy recall.

Rules can also be modified to provide for membership access to *all* union meetings, and prohibiting "confidential" negotiations behind the backs of the rank and file. It can also be laid down that mass meetings of members, not Executive bodies isolated from those they purport to represent, make *all* major decisions in an industrial campaign.

It is the officials' job to make sure these are *fully informed* decisions. Above all, an active, fully informed, openly independent and openly critical rank and file is needed to counteract conservatizing pressures, and, at present, make it all happen.



Changes to ACOA such as those outlined can and should be made. If carried through, in that union and others, they would help to radically transform the face of unionism in this country. But the sad fact is that they will never be achieved without a bitter fight with the bureaucrats.

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It is true that a reformist bureaucracy is more sensitive to the membership than ACOA's old NCC leadership. Undoubtedly, it is not as opposed to such changes in principle, as a NCC leadership is. Nevertheless, whether we like it or not, we've got to face the fact that *all* officials — including the hardworking and most "anti-Grouper" ones — lead a privileged middle-class existence, as detailed earlier.

Also, the access to upper echelons and secret meetings leads even these officials to believe that they "know better" than the rank and file, who are never told what goes on in these encounters.

Those officials who object to this analysis ought to answer one very simple question: are you willing to personally forgo your privileged existence, and continue in office subject to full report-back to members and to absolute membership control, with material incentives no greater than the paltry sums doled out to the vast majority of your members?

It's not hard to work out what the answer would be, in 99 percent of cases, due to the bureaucrats' traditional reluctance to part with their privileges — directly material or otherwise.

DEFEATISM

How, then, is this tiny minority so powerful? Do they just spread their back-sliding ideas and convince everybody? No. They do spread these ideas, but the chief way they maintain their own dominance, and through that the capitalists' dominance, is by actually structuring workers' activity and experience according to their own bureaucratic ideas.

When workers develop self-confidence and militancy, for instance, the bureaucrats instinctively feel that their own personal domination (and the material privileges flowing from this) is threatened. But instead of merely arguing defeatism, they deal with this more by leading workers to defeat.

In November 1975, for example, a real extra-Parliamentary mass movement was possible in the working class, through the development of a general strike movement to reinstall Whitlam. The bureaucracy moved in to stomp on this movement and divert it into Parliamentary channels. When Labor lost the election the bureaucrats blamed the working class, and then used Fraser's victory to adopt an even more right wing stance.

We are only now really breaking out of the demoralization of that period. For the bureaucracy defeats are very glibly explained: "blame the members" — conveniently forgetting their own bureaucratic role in subverting militancy.

Similarly, ACOA officials — including the 3 nominally Reform Group officials — supported the cessation of industrial

action just as it was beginning to bite, in last year's Australian Public Service pay case. The final result of that campaign was totally predictable.

After over 2 years of bitter struggle, ACOA public service members were left with a miserable total of 6.5 percent in their hands. The original claim was for no less than a 20 percent increase.

ROUTED

In short, ACOA was thoroughly routed. That this happened not due to membership weakness but due to official connivance is nothing short of disgraceful. And it's a vivid illustration of how reluctant even "progressive" and "anti-Grouper" officials are to rely upon independent rank and file activity.

They prefer instead to prostrate themselves before the bosses' courts, in the vain hope that Arbitration will move a millimetre or two in response to the bureaucrats' "responsible" argument and willingness to defuse industrial action.

The recent pay campaign by ACOA members in Telecom is in danger of repeating this same sorry story. Telecom members — previously amongst ACOA's most conservative — made national news by their tenacious and highly effective selective stoppages and revenue bans.

Telecom management and Malcolm Fraser were at the end of their tether, when ACOA's National Executive graciously came to their rescue. In return for a government pledge to 'expedite' the claim at Arbitration, ACOA officials recommended to mass meetings of Telecom

belgium, Italy: attacks on the sliding scale.

Bosses in Common Market countries are trying to break down the hard-won system of wage indexation — the sliding scale — that operates in many of these countries.

A letter was sent in July by the Common Market bureaucracy to the governments of all member states, urging 'modification' of existing

SOCIAL CONTRACT

cont. from p1.

Hayden bitterly canned the idea of pursuing wage increases outside of Arbitration, through collective bargaining.

but it's only by relying on our own strength that we've ever won anything. When has *any* employer — or any government — ever granted a wage rise that wasn't backed up by industrial action?

Right at this moment, Fraser's internally divided Cabinet is having to cope with the biggest wave of industrial action since 1974. The fightback against Fraser has finally begun. The ALP and

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members that all industrial action cease.

It took only a couple of weeks for the backlog of work built up by the bans and selective stoppages to clear. Meanwhile, the government/Telecom side in the negotiations are manoeuvring around their side of the 'deal'. They want to delay settlement by another few months, at least.

If action is not recommenced very shortly in Telecom — and broadened-out as soon as possible into indefinite strike action — the whole impetus will go from the campaign. The same thing could also happen if public service members aren't brought into action on their pay claim, instead of leaching off the Telecom members' militancy as both the NE and Branch Office want.

INDEPENDENT RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

This irreconcilable antagonism between the functioning of the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct privileged group with its own interests, on the one hand, and the interests of the working class on the other, makes the construction of a viable mass rank and file movement a necessity.

Otherwise, it is hard to see how the bureaucracy can be counteracted and defeated, and the unions serve as instruments of our class. It's difficult to envisage how the unions can be thoroughly renovated and transformed, as indeed they must be, to actively, effectively and democratically involve all sectors of their memberships, and to

indexation systems.

Belgium was singled out for special condemnation. The bosses claim that Belgium's system is 'too rigid'. They want to exclude energy products, petrol and tobacco, from the sliding scale. And instead of automatic monthly wages adjustments, they want adjustments only annually.

Italy's sliding scale system has been under attack for some time. A spokesperson of the Italian affiliate of the Trotskyist International Liaison ACTU leaders ought to be cheering on these struggle, instead of trying to dampen them down.

It's time they came out and did so, by supporting all industrial action against this government and its capitalist backers, and both supporting and organizing a national all out offensive of industrial action, aimed at resisting Fraser's cuts and winning back what we've lost in wages since 1975.

INFLATION

Future wage increases also need to be inflation proofed, by unions winning the fight for a workers' sliding scale. All price



genuinely champion the needs of the whole working class and the oppressed, without such a movement.

Over the past few years, a number of unofficial rank and file and Reform Groups have emerged in several areas — the State and Commonwealth Public Service, in public transport, the building

Committee, the Bolshevik Leninist Group (GBL) commented on this recently:

"The 'scala mobile' has been a big obstacle to substantial pay cuts.

'The Stalinist trade union bureaucracy are currently opposing this attack — as a bargaining counter to get into the government. But the GBL is fighting for a principled lead to defend wages.

'Public sector workers are currently facing a wage freeze, as well as cutbacks in services.'

risers must be immediately and automatically compensated for by wage increases.

Hayden's attempt to bludgeon workers into accepting a Social Contract need to be decisively rejected by the entire labour movement. We must make sure that resolutions condemning the Hayden/Hawke proposal are placed on the agenda at trade union and ALP Branch meetings everywhere.

The last time conservative ALP leaders tried to impose a 'prices and incomes policy' of this sort was in 1973. They were resoundingly defeated by the workers' movement that time. Their present proposal deserves the same fate.

industry, amongst teachers and municipal workers, not to mention caucuses of women and gays in trade unions. The next logical step is the coming together of these groupings in an integrated national rank and file movement.

Such a movement, linking together trade unions, trade union branches shop stewards' committees and Branch Councils and Section Committees from numerous sectors of the union movement, could form a vital solidarity and assistance network for day-to-day struggles, particularly those ignored or opposed by the bureaucracy.

At the same time, a genuine rank and file movement would not seek to counterpose itself to the official trade union structure. Instead, it would carry out a persistent fight inside the official movement for greater democracy, and militant policies and action.

The diverse nature of the industries and unions from which such a mass rank and file movement would be drawn could provide the basis for a broad, informed consideration of the problems facing all working people. This would be a welcome change from the inevitably piecemeal approach possible in a rank and file group based in a single industry. Consequently, the democratically-run conferences of such a movement — in which freedom of speech and political affiliation would be guaranteed to all tendencies in the labour movement — could help unravel many of the problems facing our movement.

The building of a genuine national rank and file movement is the task ahead of us in the longer term. For the moment, we can work towards that goal by seizing every opportunity for joint co-operation at all levels by the various rank and file groups — joint forums and conferences, joint social events and especially joint industrial activity.

But even diligent and enthusiastic activism isn't adequate to create the sort of viable movement we need to build. We'll also need to absorb the lessons of past mistakes and failures. In short, we'll have to try and be as aware of our own history as much as possible, in order to not repeat past blues.

For the ACOA Reform Group this means, among other things, being very clear on its relationship with the 'left' union officials. We must determine firmly that these alliances are tactical — against immediate common enemies — rather than a permanent fixture of everything the RG ever says or does (or sometimes doesn't do).

Such alliances must never be allowed to restrict independent rank and file activity, and the RG's right to act independently. They must never become substitutes for this independence, as they have sometimes in the past.

'WE NEED A WORKERS' GOVT.'

OVER 30 PEOPLE attended *Socialist Fight's* first ever public meeting on 25 August, in Melbourne.

After an introduction from *Socialist Fight* supporter Richard Lane, the meeting heard from Stephen Corbishley, of the *Socialist Organiser* group in the British Labour Party. Corbishley is also a prominent activist in the Civil and Public Services Association, in which he has been a National Executive Committee member.

Civil Servants have just had their 20 week long pay battle sold out — for a miserable offer of a miserly ½ per cent extra "judas money" on top of Thatcher's long-standing (and highly unacceptable) offer of 7 per cent, he told us.

Much of the resistance to Thatcher's cuts was still in an elemental form, he explained. The youth riots were an expression of frustration at the lack of a widespread and successful labour movement fightback.

Youth needed to be drawn into the labour movement, he argued. This hadn't happened so far, mainly due to the treacherous record of the last Labour government. Every attack that Thatcher was now carrying through was begun by the Wilson/Callaghan government.

That government had flouted every socialist policy agreed to by the Labour Party Conference immediately prior to its election.

election.

Socialist Organiser had been born out of the widespread anger and revulsion in the Labour Party and the trade unions for Labour to adopt socialist policies — and for MPs to be bound to these policies.

In the last national elections, 5 Constituency Labour Parties (the equivalent in Australian terms of a Federal Electorate Assembly/Committee), had campaigned for a Labour victory on S.O.'s revolutionary policies.

Socialist Organiser doesn't support Tony Benn's 5 point platform, Corbishley stressed. But it supported Benn's campaign for Deputy Leader. It was important he won this, because his defeat would only be a victory for the ruling class.

Corbishley pointed-out that S.O. has no illusions in Benn. It simply realises that a victory for him would open up the trade unions and the Labour Party to revolutionary ideas. It also raises the question of what — and for whom — the Labour Party exists for.

It's necessary to organizationally and politically renovate the bureaucratic and conservative labour movement. This meant revolutionaries had to organize inside both the Labour Party and the unions, he insisted.

S.O. called for the next Labour government to be a *Workers' Government*. In Britain this was a Labour government which carried out a real offensive against the capitalist class. It would also need to withdraw from resting on the state bureaucracy, the police and army, resting instead on working class organizations.

Amongst other things, a *Workers' Government* would fight for: work sharing without loss of pay; a sliding scale of wages; it would stop defence spending and get out of Ireland; it would support women's demands.

Even if such a government could at least defend workers' basic struggles it could be called a *Workers' Government*.

But the pre-condition for all this was the renovation of the labour movement.

SF IN SYDNEY

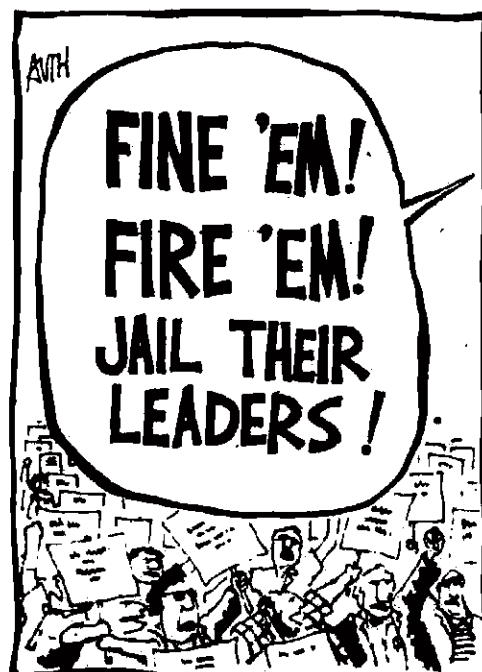
A *Socialist Fight* Supporters' Group has been formed in Sydney, by people who formerly held a discussion group on Marxism and Trotskyism.

These supporters of *Socialist Fight* previously submitted an article to the paper called "What *Socialist Fight* hasn't said" published in SF No. 4. Since then we have seen SF taking a

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wider range of positions, and in practice coming to grips with some of the questions we raised in the article.

While we do not necessarily agree with every position *Socialist Fight* has taken, we consider that working together politically will create a valuable incentive to debate and resolve differences. The development of a revolutionary leadership is not a black and white, either/or process where people are simply either re-



POLISH WORKERS REACH FOR CONTROL

WHAT would an Australian manager think if one day s/he arrived at the office and found a note saying that henceforth his/her "services" were no longer required by the factory workers?

It would be like a declaration of civil war.

In Poland, the opening salvoes of such a civil war sounded over a year ago — when workers on the Baltic, occupying their shipyards and factories, raised the entire working class to its feet against Stalinist rule.

From one crisis to another, each following the next in rapid succession, the Polish workers have kept the bureaucracy reeling, without a moment's respite.

From the factory occupation and mass strikes, the workers moved to more partial fights. Now the question of press freedom, then political prisoners, the next day fights on food shortages, price rises, democracy within the Communist Party and the elimination of corrupt bureaucrats and careerists.

volutionary or not. Political activity is a process of development and change.

We are in full agreement with the overall aims of *Socialist Fight*. The present labour movement leadership is showing itself unable to even defend working class living standards, let alone to lead a mass movement for the real liberation of workers and the oppressed.

The construction of an alternative leadership must be carried out by participation in the struggles of the labour movement in conjunction with theoretical study and international

Socialist Fight No. 7, September/October 1981



After the major demonstration of the last few weeks against price rises and food shortages, the focal point is now once again moving back to the terrain opened last summer — workers' control.

This looks like shaping up to a new spate of attacks on the bureaucracy's control (and sabotage) of economic life.

Some western observers vaguely hope that the Solidarnosc movement will lead to a restoration of what they term the "free world" (read capitalism), but the logic of the Polish workers' fights leads to exactly the opposite direction.

It points towards direct workers' power in the factories, the direct control of foreign trade and the right to control the country's means of information.

In recent weeks, Polish papers have been repeatedly prevented from being printed in protest at television slanders of the workers' movement.

What would Polish workers make of the slander and vitriol which the media in this country heaps on any workers' struggle? Or the chaining and imprisonment of American trade union leaders?

They must be distinctly unimpressed by the "free world".

debate on labour history and the problems of the construction of a revolutionary leadership.

We plan to contribute to the building of a fighting left in the ALP and the unions, taking up issues of the immediate needs of working people and the oppressed both in Australia and internationally. We hope to be able to contribute to, comradesly debate and the advancement of revolutionary socialist political consciousness.

Sydney Socialist Fight Supporters Group can be contacted at P.O. Box 183, Waterloo, 2017.

FREE THE CHINESE DISSIDENTS

Events in China have turned a full circle since the "Peking Spring" of 1978, when the Democracy Wall, wallposters, journals and discussion forums flourished in all of China's major cities.

Today, the same leaders in the Chinese Government who (for their own reasons), encouraged democracy and supported the criticisms against bureaucracy, are now ruthlessly repressing the democratic movement.

Since the well-publicised trial of Wei Jing-shen, who received a 15 year sentence, the Chinese regime has arrested 21 leading editors of unofficial journals throughout the country, and persecuted all activists in the movement. They have also victimised leaders of students' and workers' strikes.

The 21 arrested belong to China's first generation of working class youth since the 1949 Revolution. They consider themselves to be defenders of democracy and fighters against bureaucracy and imperialism. In no way could they be branded as right wing counter-revolutionaries.

Their activities are legal under China's constitution which guarantees freedom of press, speech and free association. On the

contrary, by harassing and holding them in custody without trial, it is the Chinese Government who have acted contrary to the Chinese Constitution.

The Chinese democratic movement in their journals have saluted the struggles of the Polish workers; all those in Australia who support the Polish struggle should also give their solidarity to those in China who are fighting the same battle.

Socialist Fight urges all our readers to support the Chinese democratic movement. While we support the nationalized property relations in China and would defend China against capitalism and imperialism, we are opposed to the repression of these dissidents in China today. We call on you to support the Chinese dissidents by doing the following:

- 1) Sign the petition, and urge others to do so. (Spare copies available from S.F.)
- 2) Send urgent messages of protest to the Chinese embassy in Canberra.
- 3) Raise the question in your organization.
- 4) Write to GPO Box 1729P, Melbourne Vic. 3001, if you are interested in helping form a committee to defend the Chinese dissidents.

We the undersigned, strongly protest against the sentence of 15 years imprisonment passed on Wei Jingsheng (October, 1979) and the recent arrests of activists of the Chinese Democratic Movement and editors of unofficial journals throughout China.

We therefore demand:

- 1). Chinese citizens should have in practice, their constitutional right to freedom of speech, freedom of press, association and procession.
- 2). Chinese citizens should have the right to strike, and the right to form independent political parties and unions.
- 3). The ending of harassment by the Chinese Government of striking workers and students and organisations of the democratic movement.
- 4). We call for immediate and unconditional release of: Wei Jingsheng (arrested March 1979), Liu Qing (November 1980), Chen Erjin, Zhang Jingsheng, Chu Jianbian, Liu Eran, Yang Zaixing, Wang Tanyuan, Ye Zhongwu, Liu Liping, Xing Daku, Peng Guangzhong, Qin Xianchun, Wang Xishe, Yang Qing, Xu Wenli, Fu Shenqi, Zhang Yulin, Zhong Yuegul, He Qul, Sun Feng and Wang Yungjing (all arrested April 1981).

NAME	ADDRESS	POSITION

Return to: GPO BOX 1729P., MELBOURNE, VIC. 3001.

WRAN.... BOSSES MAN

In his policy statement Wran argued that there is only one thing that jeopardises renewed prosperity, full employment "and the full fruits of what we have achieved together over the past 5 years", and that is the policies of the Fraser Government.

Fraser's response to the crisis in the capitalist economy has been to make the working class and oppressed pay. In NSW, contrary to Wran's rhetoric, the Labor Government has implemented policies which are in many ways consistent with Fraser's strategy.

This has meant that Wran has opposed, rather than encouraged the kind of industrial action which could challenge Fraser. The Labor Government has implemented cuts in public spending — involving staff ceilings, closures, reduction of services and opposition to wage claims from State employees.

Closures of hospitals are planned, beginning with the Mater casualty ward. Hospital budgets are cut, meaning understaffing and reduced services. Community health services are being consistently pruned.

The \$15 fee per service for outpatients will force people from hospitals to private health funds and GPs. Nurses' opposition to hospital closures, and demands for wage increases have generated unprecedented industrial action.

The Government intends to close a number of State high-schools, while it increases funding to private schools. Five CAEs have been amalgamated to reduce staff levels.

Massive numbers of teachers, through their Federation, have supported industrial action to reduce class sizes and for catch-up wage rises. Wran, Bedford and Lands have responded with determination to carry out the Fraser initiated cutbacks.

Public transport workers have received a Liberal-style union bashing from Wran and Cox. In return for a \$20 pay rise, their right-wing union officials are pressuring them to agree to a disputes procedure which would stop them defending their wages as inflation eats them. This type of agreement is being foisted onto nurses, and should be opposed by the entire labour movement.

The NSW Public Service has been subjected to a recruitment freeze. The severe problems caused by this have forced the Government to advertise vacancies again.

Housing problems include growing waiting lists for Housing Commission homes, shortages of accommodation for rent or purchase, and rapidly rising costs

for both, so that home ownership is possible for fewer people.

The State Government has not frozen interest rates, implemented rent control, nor protected tenants from eviction. Its housing construction program is inadequate. Government properties which could be made available as homes, lie in disuse, intended for profitable redevelopment.

We support the legal recognition of rape in marriage, but this will have only a minor impact on women's lives. Even though the new rape laws mean homosexual rape is a lesser crime than homosexual acts with consent, the Government did not allow even a debate on the repeal of anti-homosexual laws.

The investigation of an abortion clinic by state police, and the prosecution of gays highlights the need for repeal of anti-abortion and anti-gay laws.

Violence in NSW prisons, police verbals, Special Branch political police, and the Hilton bombing cover-up have all been dealt with ineffectively. Instead of putting an end to these things, the Government has increased police department funds and power.

A report on Aboriginal land rights has been favourably received by the black community. The Government must be forced to implement its election promises based on this.

MANAGER

In NSW the ALP has proved itself to be a better manager of capitalism than the divided and inept coalition parties. However, only an ALP Government offers the possibility of defending workers living standards, because the ALP is based in the working class. The advancement of the 35 hour week in NSW is the most positive result of this relationship.

Socialist Fight calls on every worker to vote Labour. But we must fight to make the ALP break with Fraser's strategies. We need leaders that will fight for and with the working class, in government and out. And we need an active democratic labour movement, capable of calling the leaders to account.

The fight won't finish with the election. The power to run society does not lie in parliaments, but with the ownership of industry and the organization of the army, police and state bureaucracy.

That is why we need to fight to create a really socialist movement, that will break this power. We need to replace the chaos and anarchy of the profit system with a society run by the working class and democratically planned to meet our needs.

The NSW elections on September 19 will see the return of the Labor Government. But what sort of government will it be?

In 5½ years, Wran has not resisted Fraser's onslaught against workers' living standards, and there is no indication that this will change. However, one crucial thing distinguishes the ALP from the other parties.

It is the mass party of the working class, built by the trade union movement to be its representative in parliament. It is, accordingly, the party through which the vast majority of workers will express their hatred of the Liberals.

Most workers will rightly want to vote Labor, not because of Labor's record, but in order to keep the Liberals, the representatives of the bosses and the wealthy, out of government.