



# Australian Marxist Review

Theoretical journal  
of the Socialist  
Party of Australia

- ★ *Peace and Class Struggles*
- ★ *What is New Thinking?*
- ★ *Proletarian internationalism*
- ★ *Changing consciousness*
- ★ *Political essence of wages struggle*
- ★ *International Women's Day*
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- ★ *Contribution to a branch meeting*

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# **Australian Marxist Review**

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# The Dialectics of the Peace and Class Struggles

by Alan Miller

**The dialectical relationship between the struggle for peace and the class struggle for socialism is a complex question to which communists must repeatedly return.**

Objective reality constantly gives rise to the new and, if we are to keep abreast of such changes, our thinking must continuously go through a process of new development. This applies to the peace struggle-class struggle relationship.

Military technology has taken a qualitative leap with nuclear weapons. The planet can now be destroyed whereas previously this possibility did not exist. Therefore, a new contradiction has arisen — the contradiction between destruction and survival.

The new contradiction is connected with the basic contradiction in the class divided world — that between the imperialist and socialist systems. The imperialist system gives rise to the threat to the planet. The socialist system stands for the planet's survival.

In a certain sense, the new contradiction has priority. We must survive if we are to have world communism. However, we cannot divorce the new contradiction from the basic contradiction between the two world systems. To concentrate on the peace struggle to the exclusion of the class struggle

would deprive us of the chance to end the imperialist cause of war and bring about the socialist solution. To ignore the peace struggle would be to distort the class struggle. Both errors would open the way for the destruction of the planet, and end the possibility of communism.

The new contradiction between destruction and survival does provide the basis for a widening of allies in the fight for peace. Some favouring survival would come from imperialist circles, those not so closely connected to the military-industrial complex and appreciating the advantages of trade with the socialist countries. Obviously not all peace allies would support socialism. However, the political climate created by a broadly-based peace struggle would objectively favour the advocates of socialism.

While the struggle for peace is essential if we are to solve the basic contradiction between imperialism and socialism in favour of socialism, the struggle for peace on its own is inadequate for this task. In this regard, the class struggle for socialism remains the key.

Solving the basic contradiction in favour of socialism is required to put the security of the planet beyond doubt. Meanwhile, efforts must be made to maximise security by the combined peace and class struggles.

Solving the basic contradiction in favour of socialism cannot be put off. It is a law governed process. It is the path to human progress, although it is associated with and, indeed, conditioned by the struggle for survival.

It is useful to compare the handling of contradictions in today's peace struggle-class struggle relationship with the handling of contradictions in the period of the struggle against the fascist powers of Germany, Italy and Japan.

With the rise of fascism, a new contradiction appeared — the contradiction between fascism and democracy. Fascism, of course, was a bitter enemy of socialist democracy, but it was also opposed to bourgeois democracy. The new contradiction was connected to the basic contradiction between imperialism and socialism. It was imperialism which gave rise to fascism. While socialism placed socialist democracy above bourgeois democracy, it also defended bourgeois democratic rights against fascist attacks.

For a period, the contradiction between fascism and democracy took priority. Fascism was the immediate threat to the world. The international communist movement was able to take advantage of the contradiction between the fascist powers and the western imperialist democracies to defeat the fascist forces. There was a victorious anti-fascist alliance particularly between the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States. The defeat of fascism helped the struggle to solve the basic contradiction between imperialism and socialism in favour of socialism, although at a terrible price.

The solving of the basic contradiction, with socialism's victory over

imperialism, will put the question of protection against fascism beyond doubt. Meanwhile, successful action against fascism is both possible and necessary.

In today's situation, the new contradiction between destruction and survival takes priority. The threat to survival, of course, is the ultimate threat. The contradictions between the imperialists concerning the peace issues are helpful in the struggle for survival and, in the long run, objectively favour the struggle to solve the basic contradiction.

Any effective examination of the dialectics of the peace struggle-class struggle relationship must take into account the concept of peaceful co-existence, a concept associated very much with Lenin's name.

Peaceful co-existence was connected with Lenin's theory of the uneven development of capitalism and the possibility of socialism breaking through in one country. For a relatively long period, the two diametrically opposed social systems of capitalism and socialism would exist side by side and some form of relationship between the two had to be established.

The new relationship had to take account of the law governed revolutionary process and the need to provide the best conditions for that inevitable process to continue. This approach was in the interests of the working class and, associated with those interests, the forward march of humanity. There was no question of maintaining the status quo.

The continuation of the revolutionary process would include armed struggle. However, the concept of peaceful co-existence had to rule out war *between* the two opposed social systems. Such a war could only be a counter-revolutionary war. Socialist revolution flowed from internal contradictions, e.g. the socialist revolution in America would be brought about by the American working class defeating the capitalist ruling class.

The idea of export of revolution was not part of the reasoning of scientific communism. However, export of counter-revolution was part of the desperation of capitalism in holding back revolution, in any particular country. In view of this the concept of peaceful co-existence, ruling out war between the two social orders, had a revolutionary essence.

Peaceful competition between the two systems, particularly in the area of the economy, would be a key part of the struggle for the new world order. The ideological battle would, of course, be a feature of the contest between capitalism and socialism.

Peaceful co-existence itself would have to be brought about mainly by class struggle, although some forces not committed to class struggle would help the struggle for peaceful co-existence.

Peaceful co-existence, generally speaking, would have to be imposed

upon the capitalists. In view of the aggressive nature of their own system, and their dread of socialism, the capitalists would not readily accept the new relationship.

Peaceful co-existence, however, did not rule out forms of co-operation with the old world. Lenin on one occasion insisted on an economic deal with an American capitalist concern which had a reputation as a vicious exploiter. The point was that the deal served the needs of the new Soviet Government. This was in the interests of the working class of the world and social progress generally. Such an approach was not class collaboration in the sense of betrayal of working class interests. Rather it was part of the dialectics of the struggle based upon the law governed revolutionary process and taking into account the contradictory factors at work.

Looking at the processes at work in the concept of peaceful co-existence, it is clear that it has a dialectical relationship to the class struggle for socialism. The participants in the struggle for peaceful co-existence are communists committed to such class struggle and non-communists who are not so committed.

Communists will continue the struggle for socialism within each country where antagonistic class divisions exist and also on a world scale. They are aware of the connection between socialism and peace, and imperialism and war.

Because of the dialectical relationship between peaceful co-existence and the class struggle for socialism, communists regard peaceful co-existence as a specific form of class struggle.

Non-communist peace-fighters do not regard peaceful co-existence as a form of class struggle. This understandable point of view has to be respected. Such forces make a contribution to peaceful relations between the two social systems and that is important.

Today, peaceful co-existence is an absolute necessity because of the nuclear war threat. This does not end the laws governing the revolutionary process. Nor does it sever the connection between peaceful co-existence and the class struggle for socialism. The new situation does affect the way the struggle for socialism and the struggle for peaceful co-existence are conducted.

Today's complex situation requires greater capacity by communists for using dialectics. Greater skill is required in handling all aspects of the combined struggle for socialism and peaceful co-existence. Special attention is required in the economic, ideological and diplomatic areas. While peaceful methods of struggle are used, and are desirable, the logic of the class struggle is such that armed struggle is still an option which, on occasions, has to be used. Often it is an application of both peaceful and non-peaceful methods.

All this requires both skill and a sense of responsibility.

The question of co-operation between the two systems has taken on a new dimension. The interdependence of the world has gone through a qualitative change. There are world problems affecting both capitalism and socialism. All this must cause us to apply some new ideas. In today's interdependent world, there are two contradictory processes at work. The basic contradiction between imperialism and socialism exists. The class divided world pulls human society apart. On the other hand, interdependence brings human society together. We must, however, solve the basic contradiction in favour of socialism if we are to unite human society.

Interdependence, above all, shows the need for communism and this is a powerful factor favouring the influence of the international communist movement.

Interdependence also puts a certain pressure on imperialist circles to co-operate in dealing with world problems. It makes it easier to isolate the most aggressive section of imperialism associated with the military-industrial complex, those which are set against all forms of co-operation and inclined to push the nuclear button.

Interdependence then is connected to the struggle for socialism but also to the struggle for peaceful co-existence and forms of world co-operation.

Associated with the question of the dialectical relationship between the struggle for peace and the class struggle for socialism, is the question of human interests and values.

Communists recognise the objective reality of a world divided on a class basis. Therefore, they take a class approach and seek the victory of the working class throughout the world in order to bring about the communist classless society. Based upon this scientific approach, communist interests and values are human in the deepest sense of the word. They include peace, co-operation, civil relations between people, a world without greed.

Such interests and values contrast to those of imperialism which are anti-human. These include war, selfishness, bestiality, greed. Communists work for human interests and values and against the anti-human position of imperialism. In this regard, communists work with those who do not share the communist viewpoint but also support human interests and values. Communists work genuinely with such forces, at the same time taking a critical approach to all non-scientific theories which offer no real solution to human problems.

Certainly the human problem of survival has priority, otherwise there is no chance of solving other human problems. This, however, does not alter the fact that the solution to the problems of survival and the other problems of

human society, the advancement of human interests and values, are dependent in the final analysis upon the successful application of the scientific communist approach to the class problem and its final solution by such scientific means.

Taking into account all the matters I have raised in this contribution, I would take issue with a statement by Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev in his book *Perestroika*. He writes:

"It may seem strange to some people that the communists should place such a strong emphasis on human interests and values. Indeed, a class-motivated approach to all phenomena of social life is the ABC of Marxism. Today, too, such an approach fully meets the realities of a class based society, a society with opposing class interests, as well as the realities of international life which are also permeated by the opposition. And up to the most recent time class struggle remained the pivot of social development, and still remains as such in class divided countries. Correspondingly, Marxist philosophy was dominated — as regards the main questions of social life — by a class-motivated approach. Humanitarian notions were viewed as a function and the end result of the struggle of the working class—the last class which, ridding itself, rids the entire society of class antagonisms.

"But now, with the emergence of weapons of mass, that is, universal destruction, there appeared an objective limit for class confrontation in the international arena: the threat of universal destruction. For the first time ever there emerged a real, not speculative and remote, common human interest — to save humanity from disaster.

"Changes were introduced in the spirit of the new outlook into the new edition of the CPSU Program adopted by the 27th Party Congress. Specifically, we deemed it no longer possible to retain in it the definition of peaceful co-existence of states with different social systems as a 'specific form of class struggle'." (*Perestroika. New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, Mikhail Gorbachev. Collins, 1987 pp 146-7)

This statement clearly says that a class-motivated approach remains valid for individual countries with opposing class interests as well as for the international scene. However, the statement goes on to suggest that while class struggle remains the pivot of social development in class divided countries this is no longer the case internationally. With the appearance of weapons of universal destruction, class struggle is now replaced by a common human interest to save humanity as the pivot of social development on an international scale.

To deny class struggle as the pivot of social development internationally is

to deny that the contradiction between imperialism and socialism is the basic contradiction in a class divided world. It is to suggest that the basic contradiction in a class divided world is now the contradiction between human destruction and human survival.

One can agree that the contradiction between destruction and survival takes priority in the sense that the struggle for peace must be won. However, to suggest that it now replaces the contradiction between imperialism and socialism as the basic contradiction internationally is another matter.

As for the dialectical relationship between the destruction-survival contradiction and the basic contradiction between the two social systems, the statement is far from being clear. True, it speaks of class struggle still being a valid factor internationally. However, the imperialist threat to the planet and socialism's contribution to survival are blurred over. Instead, destruction is simply linked to military weapons and survival to common human interests.

The statement says that the new edition of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Program no longer defines peaceful co-existence of states with different social systems as a "specific form of class struggle".

Peaceful competition is a form of class struggle and is part of peaceful co-existence. Ideological struggle is a form of class struggle and is not ruled out by peaceful co-existence. The struggle for peaceful co-existence itself rests heavily upon class struggle. Even co-operation which is part of peaceful co-existence does not eliminate class struggle.

In line with the thinking that peaceful co-existence is no longer a form of class struggle, Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev in his book *Perestroika* makes the following series of references to international matters:

"While we do not approve the character of current relations between the West and the developing countries, we do not urge that they should be disrupted." (p 239)

"I have explained on many occasions that we do not pursue goals inimical to Western interests. We know how important the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, other Third World regions and also South Africa are for American and West European economies, in particular as raw material sources. To cut those links is the last thing we want to do, and, we have no desire to provoke ruptures in historically formed, mutual economic interests." (p 178)"...we do not at all want the process of working towards a settlement (*in the Middle East-AM*), or the very goals of this process, in some way to infringe upon the interests of the United States and the West." (p 174)

"We are not going to exploit anti-US attitudes, let alone fuel them, nor do we intend to erode the traditional links between Latin America and

the United States.” (p 188)

The above statements suggest the need to apply the reins to international class struggle and to be content with the status quo. This is hardly acceptable.

In another reference to the international situation, Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev writes:

“The states and people of the earth are very different, and it is actually good that they are so. This is an incentive for competition. This understanding, of a dialectical unity of opposites, fits into the concept of peaceful co-existence.” (p 148)

The statement suggests there is merit in a class divided world. While one can acknowledge the objective reality of such divisions, it is another matter to approve of them.

The statement suggests that states with different social systems form a dialectical unity of opposites. In fact, they form a dialectical unity and struggle of opposites and it is the struggle which is decisive. As a result of the struggle and final victory of world socialism, the contradiction between imperialism and socialism will be resolved. There is merit in this.

The statement that differences in the world are good and stimulate competition suggests that the unity of opposites is what should be stressed. The statement that such unity fits into peaceful co-existence therefore suggests that peaceful co-existence is simply the maintenance of class divisions in the world. I suggest that none of these positions are acceptable.

The dialectical relationship of the peace struggle and the class struggle for socialism, as I indicated in opening this contribution, is a complex question to which communists must repeatedly return.

I have attempted to examine some aspects of this problem for consideration. However, the subjects needs ever deeper examination.

# What is New Thinking?

by Peter Symon

**Every day is a new day and, while carrying forward the past, it is in itself unique. It brings new phenomena into existence and this is, consequently, reflected in our thinking as well. The concept of “new political thinking” is therefore thoroughly dialectical.**

The *Dictionary of Philosophy* says that thought is an active process through which the world around us is reflected in concepts, judgements and theories and is expressed in speech, writings, actions, etc. (*Dictionary of Philosophy*, Progress, 1984 p 422)

If we fail to take into account the fact that the world around us is in constant change, our thinking will become ossified, out of date and incorrect. This is one source of dogmatic thinking, which holds on to concepts long after they have ceased to be relevant.

There is usually a lag in our comprehension because the changes in objective reality are in advance of our thinking, which reflects that reality.

It can be said, however, that an understanding of the laws of development of society enables Marxists to estimate the likely future direction that social change will take. It was this knowledge which enabled Marx and Engels to foresee fairly accurately the future development of capitalist society and its inevitable replacement by socialism.

One of the main dangers is that thinking will lag behind the changes that are taking place and communist parties are not immune from this danger.

It was this failure which resulted in the stagnation in economics, politics and

ideology in the Soviet Union which has been so strongly criticised. Recognition of the actual state of affairs led the CPSU to introduce "new political thinking".

In a way "new thinking" is an attempt to catch up with the present day reality in both domestic and foreign affairs. It calls for and makes possible many new policies. It is in this context that "new thinking" is new. It is thinking which accords most closely to today's realities, is able to analyse them, estimates properly the direction in which things are going and, taking into account all these factors, works out correct policies.

What is correct thinking today may, however, become tomorrow's dogma. A philosopher declared once that one cannot swim in the same river twice.

Every party putting Marxist dialectics into practice has to establish the realities in which it works.

The Socialist Party of Australia is constantly faced with new developments, some small and some which have far-reaching consequences.

For example, the scientific and technological revolution has brought substantial changes in the composition of the working class. The number of industrial workers has declined significantly while those engaged in white collar and service industries have increased. Many more workers have a high school or tertiary education.

The social base upon which the communist movement was built in the past, that is, the industrial or "blue" collar working class, has contracted. This change calls for an approach to the white collar workers and the technologists, scientists, educators and cultural workers whose numbers and influence have greatly increased. This change is not yet sufficiently reflected in the ranks of the party.

The serious damage being done to the ecology makes the environmental movement more important and this also demands the attention of communists. Originally, the environmental movement was dismissed as a petty-bourgeois movement as the activists largely came from those having this social background. This was a mistake which failed to see the importance of many environmental issues for everyone and that these questions too are a class issue. The destruction of the environment is often a direct consequence of the profit hungry policies of the monopolies.

Australian capitalism has also changed. Although our independence is undermined by the foreign capital investments in Australia, Australian capital investments overseas, in South Asia, the Pacific and in some of the developed capitalist countries, have turned Australia into a more significant imperialist power in the region. This development calls for recognition and response by the communists.

The negative consequences of the divisions in the communist movement of Australia demanded that this direction be changed. The SPA, therefore, stepped up its attention to this problem and has worked out in much greater detail its approach to overcoming this state of affairs. These policies are summed up in the term "left unity".

All of these developments, and there are many more, demanded new political thinking, new tactics and so on. But they had to be worked out in the framework of Marxist-Leninist theory and practice. This called for an application of dialectical materialism, the class interpretation of society, an understanding of political economy and so on. Our ideology, the tools we use to work out our policies and tactics, were not new but the issues themselves were.

Faced with these self-same problems, some used the opportunity to proclaim that Marxism was no longer adequate and that a "new" ideology was needed. It turned out to be the rather old ideology of class collaboration and liquidation of the party and of Marxism-Leninism.

Experience has shown conclusively that the changes within capitalism and the changes in the working class did not dispose of the contradictions within the system nor the necessity for the workers to struggle for their interests, whether they be "blue" or "white" collar workers or those with a higher education.

Those whose "new thinking" led them to dispose of the class struggle very quickly ran into difficulties as life demonstrated that capitalism remains capitalism and is dependent on the continued exploitation of all labour. Capitalism with a "human face" — projected by those trained in the schools of business management which taught them to "handle" the workers — was no less interested in maximum profits than their less sophisticated predecessors.

Internationally, the term "new political thinking" is often specifically used in connection with the danger facing humanity created by the existence of nuclear weapons. For the first time in all history, humankind invented a means by which all life on earth could be destroyed. It presented everyone with an urgent danger and the need to act to eliminate the danger by scrapping all nuclear weapons.

"New thinking" in this context called for a more flexible and vigorous foreign policy and this has been ably demonstrated by the present leadership of the CPSU in particular. It called for the still further broadening of the world-wide peace movement, the strengthening of all progressive forces, their greater unity and cohesion. All those factors have helped to push the world back from the brink.

One could go on and list many other developments which call for new think-

ing on both big and small issues.

In every case, the issues are specific and the truth in relation to them is concrete. There cannot be “new thinking” in general, although our outlook must be one in which our minds are, as a matter of everyday practice, open to that which is new and developing in the world around us.

It is not a good idea to use the term “new thinking” as a catchy slogan for all occasions, as today’s fashionable fad.

Many will recall the emergence of the “New Left” in the late 1960s. Much use was made of the term “new” as against what was claimed to be “old”, “conservative” and “dogmatic” thinking. There was a grain of truth in some of the assertions of the “New Left” but underlying their sloganising was an attempt to do away with the fundamental truths of Marxism-Leninism. However, they have not been rendered out-of-date simply because they were first elaborated by Marx and Engels more than 100 years ago.

The “New Left” recycled some old ideas, gave them a new coat of paint and hung out the “new” sign.

No one talks about the “New Left” any more and many of the personalities who led this movement in the 1960s have come to terms with the capitalist system. Although the New Left attacked Marxism as being out of date and claimed to revise it, its advocates really were putting forward some old, petty-bourgeois ideas.

This is what can happen when the word “new” is used as a slogan and is attached to any idea to make it sound more profound even though it is an old idea.

The term “new political thinking” can only justify itself by being specific and a result of the application of dialectics to every situation. Our study of each reality may reveal new characteristics in the objective situation, which calls for new thinking, new policies, new strategy and tactics and so forth.

New thinking also calls for recognition and repudiation of that which is out of date and no longer in accordance with the facts.

New thinking, providing it is an application of dialectics, will help to reveal the truth and give us correct answers to today’s developments and problems. Anything else will be partially or wholly in error and will bring, inevitably, negative results.

# Proletarian internationalism revitalised and active

by Gus Hall  
General Secretary  
Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA)  
from *Political Affairs* (May 1988)  
theoretical journal of the CPUSA

**The significance and basic essence of May Day can be summed up in one word — unity, working-class unity in the class struggle.**

May Day was initiated as a day of protest and demonstrations of working-class unity in the struggle for the eight-hour-day in the United States. But it was not too long before it was adopted, not only as an expression of working-class unity nationally, but proletarian internationalism worldwide.

Working-class internationalism has its roots in the history of the class struggle. At first, workers fought against their exploitation as individuals. When the futility of the individual worker against the company reached a certain point, the struggle was raised to the shop and the local level. Then, as the class struggle intensified, it was forced to become national in scope and, finally, working-class solidarity encompassed the workers of the world. When the class struggle was forced to deal with class exploitation on a global scale, proletarian internationalism became a historic necessity.

## **The content**

Working-class internationalism has a lot to do with tactics, with solidarity, with united actions. But it is more.

Proletarian internationalism is one of the main pillars of working-class ideology. As a cliché, it can be empty rhetoric and even a convenient bromide. It has meaning only as a live, active, vital force.

Internationalism is an extension of class consciousness. It adds an important dimension to class unity. There is no vacuum in the ideological arena — no different, neutral or middle-ground positions. Whenever a vacuum, silence or neutrality arises, there also arises an intense struggle between opposing ideologies to fill the gap.

When working-class internationalism is absent, the gap is filled with the opposite, capitalist currents. Working-class internationalism is the irreconcilable opposite of national chauvinism, jingoism, racism and petty bourgeois nationalism. When internationalism is missing, the gap is filled with all this capitalist baggage.

To make room for the new, the old ideological currents have to be purged. That is the very essence of the ideological struggle that reflects the class struggle: one ideology justifies the exploitation and oppression; the other opposes, guides and mobilises the struggle against it.

### **Power base of class struggle**

The struggle against capitalist ideological currents is effective only when there is a meaningful alternative. It is not enough to say something is wrong, harmful or counter-productive. When we work to convince people to reject bourgeois ideological concepts they will logically and justifiably ask: what do you offer that is better? If one idea is wrong, then what idea is right? Working-class internationalism is the better idea because it fills the needs of the working class. It provides the galvanising power-base for the class struggle.

The working class can fulfill the role history has assigned it only if it is rooted in and sustained by working-class internationalism.

As the class struggle continues to move to centre stage, purely-instinctive, conditioned-reflex internationalism is transformed into conscious, conditioned-reflex internationalism.

When the headquarters of the International Workingmen's Association was transferred to New York, Karl Marx expressed his commitment this way, "No, I am not withdrawing from the International. And the rest of my life, like all my endeavours in the past, will be dedicated to it."

When the Association was disbanded Marx did not see it as the end of internationalism when he said, "More suitable conditions will once again bring

together the workers of all lands under a common banner.”

And further, “The course of events and the inevitable developments will spontaneously ensure the rising again of the International in an improved form.”

## **Revitalising for today**

The first step in revitalising an active working-class internationalism is to stop apologising for it and to start promoting and advocating it.

This question comes up constantly: Do the present developments call for some new forms through which proletarian internationalism can be expressed, forms through which it can become a more active, effective uniting force?

As Marx put it, “Does the new course of events ensure the rising of the Internationalism in an improved form?” Are we now living in the “more suitable conditions”? I believe we are.

Working-class internationalism is an indispensable class weapon. It provides the glue for class unity. It is an essential ideological ingredient for the unity of our multiracial, multinational working class.

Internationalism has the power to burn out and replace racism, chauvinism and nationalism. It is an important additional dimension to class consciousness, to class-struggle trade unionism. It is an antidote to counter-productive ideas of class collaboration.

The goals of working class internationalism cannot be limited to benefits for the workers of one’s own country. It must be based on the concept of fighting for the interests of all workers in all lands. It must be based on the principled position that workers will make concessions and even sacrifices for the common good and interests of all workers.

Working-class internationalism must contain some elements of a more advanced, humane spirit of the collective, rather than the selfish, so-called “rugged competitive individualism” that all exploitative societies promote.

Working-class internationalism means supporting the struggles, empathising with the setbacks and celebrating the victories of the workers of other lands as if they were our own. In this sense, in addition to the political and ideological content, internationalism has an emotional quality, a sense of class pride that encompasses the workers of all countries.

Proletarian internationalism means to be actively concerned about the morale, the fighting spirit and firepower of the world movement. It must influence the way questions are presented. And it means being sensitive to the problems and sentiments of workers in different countries.

## **The future course of history**

More than at any time in human history, there is a need for proletarian internationalism. It can influence and, yes, even determine the present and future course of history.

The nuclear arms race and the ever-present nightmare of nuclear overkill has raised the question of an emergency today. In fact, it is the most serious question in the history of all civilisation. It is nothing less than the question of the existence or non-existence of our planet and human survival.

It is a fact of life that it is only the working class, actively applying working-class internationalism, that can secure and insure the future survival of civilisation as we know it today. The threat to the existence of life and nature is a new kind of challenge for proletarian internationalism. Thus, world working-class unity has become a historic necessity.

The working class must lead the struggle because it is the vanguard class and because working-class internationalism is the only ideological current that makes it possible for all classes, all nations and all peoples to swim in the same mainstream.

## **Taking on the class enemy**

Today the class enemy of all working people is made up of worldwide conglomerates. Never before has the capitalist class been so adept and successful at pitting the workers of one country against the working class of another.

A plant shutdown, even the threat of closing the plant gates in one country and transferring production to another country, has become a powerful, persuasive weapon in the arsenal of the transnationals.

Only conscious, consistent, organised and active working-class internationalism can shape a force that can meet this intimidating challenge by the multinationals. Today the multinationals have become a monstrous, lawless and awesome force to be reckoned with. They are making it necessary to forge a new link between the workers who work for the multinationals on both sides of the ocean.

As the defense of the interests of society, and indeed civilisation as a whole, relies ever more on the working class, simultaneously the need for and the role of working-class internationalism grows in proportion.

Working-class internationalism is the ideology and practice that makes it possible for the interests of the working class of each country to come together with the working class and peoples of the world.

It is the ideological current that can most effectively unite the forces that will lead simultaneously the struggle to preserve humanity and fight for a better life; the struggle for world peace; the struggle against capitalist exploitation,

oppression and imperialist aggression.

The working class, galvanised and activated as a force for international solidarity, is not and should not be structurally frozen. In the past, the form and content have always responded to the needs of the times. Thus, today it must also develop the forms and the content to deal with the forces and problems of the new moment.

As a vigorous, active force, internationalism can take root and flower only as a result of interrelations, interactions and consistent contact between the workers of many countries.

Internationalism becomes energised into a material force only in struggle. As an active force it needs the input of exchanges, debates, deliberations, probing into conflict of opinions, controversial discussions and international gatherings. To the extent that such exchanges have not taken place, working-class internationalism has been weakened as an effective fighting force and the bourgeois ideology of chauvinism and nationalism has seeped in.

### **Many levels, many forms**

Working-class internationalism should be active on many levels and in many forms.

There is a need for new forms of exchanges between trade unions on a world scale.

There is a need for global solidarity.

There is a need for all the workers of the huge transnationals and their trade unions to unite on a world scale through conferences, forums, communications, information and exchange delegations. Active working-class internationalism can be a decisive factor in the struggle against imperialist policies.

There is an urgent need for the workers' and people's movements of the imperialist countries to develop more active, ongoing contacts with the workers and people's movements of countries that are the targets and victims of imperialist aggression.

Proletarian internationalism must become a more organised, more constantly active force.

### **Principles of world communist unity**

Proletarian internationalism is a necessary and powerful ideological and political weapon of, and within, the world communist movement. It can influence a communist party's work in many ways.

For example, the communists of an oppressor nation cannot do what is

necessary to educate the working masses of their nation in the spirit of internationalism without waging a resolute struggle against the oppressive policies of their own bourgeoisie. This must include, above all, a struggle for the right of complete self-determination for the nations oppressed and kept in bondage by the ruling class.

If the communist parties of the oppressor nation do not wage this struggle, they will not be able to help the working people of the oppressed nations overcome their nationalistic prejudices.

As a principle, communists are irreconcilable, resolute opponents of bourgeois nationalism, no matter under what guise it appears. On the other hand, we are not supporters of national nihilism. One of the fundamental task of every communist party is to educate the workers and all working people in the spirit of proletarian internationalism.

### **The questions raised**

Communist and other revolutionary working-class parties are the only organisations that have no regular, organisational world ties. Trade unions, churches, socialist parties, political organisations, YMCAs, fraternities, business associations, etc, all have regular forms of contact and exchange between them.

As the world becomes more interdependent, the need for world exchanges increases. The subject of regular exchanges between communist parties raises a number of questions.

Do international exchanges and contacts infringe upon a party's independence? There is no honest argument that they do. All parties would continue, as they do now, to determine their own policies, their own programs and tactics based on their own national conditions, developments and needs.

Does active internationalism in any way interfere with each party's sense of patriotism, its pride in the progressive features of its own people? On the contrary, it deepens the healthiest aspects of patriotism. Without the feature of internationalism, patriotic pride is vulnerable to elements of national chauvinism and jingoism.

Does active working-class internationalism add or detract from a party's ability to influence the movements and struggles of its own country? Without question, it adds a great deal. Internationalism cannot be measured only by the numbers involved. It has its own inner dynamic that is greater than just numbers. The concept of unity acts as a magnet. Unity takes on the material force of power. And this power in unity attracts ever greater numbers.

Also, in this period, unity of all the people's forces has acquired a new power. The dynamics of unity have emerged as the main function of tactics — unity of the new world peace majority, unity of the working class, unity of the

revolutionary anti-imperialist forces, unity of the world communist movement.

Just as the people's movements and the trade unions need a new level of unity, so the working-class parties need a new level of unity, a new level of working-class internationalism and world communist unity.

Internationalism must be a live, active force. Unity-in-struggle is the very essence of internationalism. And there can be no real unity-in-struggle without meetings and conferences. Without getting together there can be no worldwide initiatives in struggle.

## **New forms of unity**

Does the new movement argue for a repeat of old organisational forms of world communist unity? It does not. But there is an argument for forms that reflect the new balance of forces and the new levels of development.

The Communist International was a political and ideological force. But it was also a form for organising, moulding and solidifying communist parties. Today, there is no need for such forms or structure. However, this should not rule out all forms for all time. The truth is, today there is a need for some forms. This is especially so in the ideological arena.

The key elements, in considering appropriate forms of unity, are regularity and planning. The greatest weakness result from the fact that there are no regular exchanges, for example, in the area of ideology.

Thus, there is a need for regular, organised and planned forms on ideological questions, including a discussion on proletarian internationalism.

Another serious weakness is related to the lack of regular forms in the area of solidarity. Besides regular forms, there is often a need to call for united emergency actions. There is a need for regular, regional forms and exchanges.

Thus, all communist parties, big and small, whether in the advanced, industrialised capitalist countries, in the third world developing countries, or in countries building socialism, would benefit from such regular forms.

Theory tends to become stale, even to stagnate without such international exchanges of theory and practice. The *World Marxist Review* and the exchange of materials, proceedings and documents are helpful. But they cannot substitute for direct exchanges.

For communists the advocacy and struggle for active, vigorous working-class internationalism is, of necessity, related to the struggle against opportunism because the greatest firepower of capitalist ideology is directed against unity of the working class, against working-class internationalism. Opportunism is a form of capitulation to such bourgeois pressures.

Our party and our class will benefit greatly from worldwide exchanges on these matters and many others. The “more suitable” conditions that Marx predicted “will once again bring together the workers of all lands” are indeed close at hand.

# An overall task changing consciousness

by Brian Rooney

**The overall task for our party is to change consciousness. We have to change the present existing “mass consciousness” to that of class consciousness, and this will not happen spontaneously. It has to be acquired — introduced into the working class from outside, outside the economic struggle, outside of that sphere of relations between the worker and his employers.**

The degree to which working class consciousness is developed is not directly nor solely dependent upon the industrial advance or even upon the dissatisfaction felt by workers in relation to capitalism.

We are up against “mass consciousness” which is formed spontaneously under capitalism.

The starting point for us is to recognise what this mass consciousness is that we are up against. The basis of social life under capitalism is private property. That fact creates the dominant system of material, spiritual and social values which in turn determines people’s interests and motivates their behaviour.

There is the continual pursuit of profit, the psychology and morality of individualism, the terrible fear of the competitive struggle — all are attributes of

the capitalist way of life and have an important bearing on every individual, including the worker.

Most of us are drawn into the general merry-go-round of bourgeois mass culture which imposes a psychology of consumerism and an egotistical point of view, making many apolitical and fatalistic. In that sense our consciousness is corrupted.

The "I'm alright Jack" attitude, consumer psychology and money-grubbing are a natural consequence of the dominance of material relations over relations between people under capitalism.

Wherever private property dominates as it does in our country, material wealth symbolises power. But this power is not shown clearly as relations of dominance and subordination, nor as a political category reflecting class subordination or class antagonisms. It **appears in a distorted form as the possession of material values and the ability to acquire and accumulate them.**

Therefore, it is natural that we are faced in the main with individuals who are brought up on the principles of consumerism as a way of life. The only thought is to increase prosperity within the framework of capitalism, measured by the possession of property and commodities, rather than as concern for the individual and collective action against that system.

In reality, individualism and egoism lose any moral dimension and become principles of vital self-indulgence. What we end up with is a situation whereby satisfying one's personal demands and advancing one's career become opposed to class interests and demands for radical social change.

This does not mean that communists are unconcerned for the material needs of people. Far from it. A principal aim of the struggle within the capitalist system and the purpose of changing the system to socialism is to satisfy the demands of the people for a better life — including their material wants. But there is a difference between this aim and vulgar consumerism.

The bourgeoisie having created mass consciousness are able to easily manipulate it. Our lives are influenced in every aspect, our consciousness, feelings, our emotions, our will and morals. The bourgeoisie claims that there are no antagonistic classes in society — just a mass of amorphous, faceless, anti-socialist masses who consist of various groups which sometimes come into conflict with one another but which possess a uniform bourgeois understanding of political reality.

Changing bourgeois mass consciousness to working class consciousness does not mean that a worker has to merely think of himself as a worker. Most workers recognise that. They know that they are not employers. Nor does a class conscious worker merely see his or her employer as an enemy who is

out to get as much production as possible for the least possible pay. Most workers are well aware of that fact.

What a worker has to understand is the need to get rid of the entire system of capitalism, rather than just combatting some of its worst effects. The working class has to recognise the possibility of doing this task themselves by organising as a class against capitalism, leading other segments of the population in a successful revolution and constructing a working class state to replace the capitalist one. Full class consciousness requires identifying the system of capitalism as the main enemy and being prepared to take a leadership role in changing that society. Central to the achievement of that task is the activity of a Marxist-Leninist Party.

If we are to change consciousness, we have to talk about our propaganda. In as much as ideas are spread by political propaganda this too is strictly determined by class positions. There can be no unified or universal propaganda. There is bourgeois propaganda and socialist propaganda. The bourgeoisie call their propaganda "information".

Political propaganda is a specific form of ideological activity in the course of which certain ideas and emotions are communicated to the audience with the goal of stimulating a reaction in the shape of practical action.

Our aim is to bring the ideas of the working class into correspondence with its objective position in life, to explain to the workers and the working people generally their basic interests, and prepare them for the struggles for the practical realisation of those interests. It is in this respect that many of our present methods of propaganda are inadequate.

We have to admit that living in a capitalist country as we do, we face numerous, seemingly insolvable problems in the task of lifting our propaganda work. We will have to be systematic and persistent in raising our professional approach.

We cannot ignore the fact that modern propaganda is at a very high level. It is very professional both technically and in its methods and is developing at a rapid rate. Our opponents are sophisticated, strong and cunning. We need a scientific approach to propaganda, a systematisation of knowledge, and more importantly, a mastering of the laws of the propaganda process.

For our part, there is a need to gain extensive knowledge both in the theory of Marxist propaganda and in its practice so as to fulfil the task of raising consciousness.

It cannot be approached by a "hit and miss" attitude. Suggestions that we "could save money by restoring the old spirit or roneo machine" or that the message in the propaganda is understandable to us and, therefore, should be understood by everyone are inadequate in this day and age.

# The political essence of the wages struggle

by Dennis White

**Trade unions have always had a role to play in the area of political activity, and this historical fact is confirmed by many past struggles.**

However, some forces work to restrict the political activity of the trade unions or to virtually eliminate it altogether. Some restrict the trade unions to affiliation with, and mere support for, the reform policies determined by a particular party.

All these efforts are aimed at maintaining the existing order of society and obtaining support from the unions for that aim.

Presently, these forces are having marked success in directing the trade union movement along a political path that is against the interests of the workers who make up the trade union movement. This process is being accelerated not only through the entrenched affiliation with the social democratic party but by a trade union leadership which is often anti-communist and holds principles which are in essence anti-working class.

Notwithstanding this present abandonment of the interests of the trade union membership by its leadership and by the political party in government to which it is affiliated, the Socialist Party of Australia recognises the important role of trade unions in the labour movement. Sections of the trade union movement are even now resisting the political and industrial aspirations of the current leadership. This is welcomed and needs to be further developed.

Our task, if we are to adopt a true revolutionary position, is to win the trade unions for the socialist transformation of society.

Within the framework of trade unions waging the day to day struggle for political rights and economic conditions is the more fundamental task of winning the trade unions for the socialist transformation of society. The wages struggle is one such avenue whereby such an opportunity exists, particularly within present circumstances.

The approach to the trade unions by communists and their political organisations and the objectives pursued in their trade union activities is not and never has been a secret.

It was spelt out clearly by Marx, Engels and Lenin in writings and speeches. The SPA's position is reflected in the party's Program and Constitution.

Marx, Engels and Lenin did not regard the economic struggle, which is the main aspect of trade union activity, as something standing on its own, to be conducted apart from the general class struggle and the political struggle for socialism.

The present day circumstances relating to the decline in living standards, and the attacks being mounted upon wages and conditions along with the role of social democracy, highlight the political necessity for a "united political left" to engage in this task to achieve a qualitative change to the present direction of the trade union and labour movement.

Presently, the left has little impact on these events. This unfortunate reality was reflected at the 1987 ACTU Congress where out of approximately 1,100 delegates, representation from the "left", as we would define it, could have been counted on both hands.

The task within the trade unions is to direct the energy of the masses to struggle against the causes of exploitation while recognising, at the same time, the importance of the struggle against the effects, as outlined by Marx in his pamphlet *Wages, Prices and Profits*.

Marx dealt with the question of the scope of trade union action, the value and the limitation of the trade union struggle and the value of strikes.

Marx explained the relationship between the three economic categories of wages, prices and profits, and his views remain valid to this day. They enable us to combat the view that wage levels are the sole or a main cause of price levels, of inflation and economic instability.

He forcefully supported strikes by the trade unions for wage increases, and pointed out that without such strikes the level of wages would be constantly depressed.

How true is this analysis when applied to our situation since the early 1980s. Industrial action around wage demands have been virtually non-existent and wage levels have been correspondingly depressed.

Marx stated: "At the same time and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights increasingly springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes on them, the present day system simultaneously engenders the *material conditions* and the *social forms* necessary for an economic reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work' they ought to inscribe on their banner the *revolutionary* watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system'".(emphasis in original) (K Marx *Wages, price and profit* p 77-78)

While attaching tremendous significance to the economic struggle of the proletariat and the trade unions, Marx always stressed the primacy of politics over economics.

He understood primacy over economics in such a way that, in the first instance, he placed the political all-class tasks of the trade unions higher than the private corporate tasks, and secondly, that the political party of the working class must define the economic tasks and lead the trade union organisation itself.

Marx saw the imperative need for a revolutionary political party of the working class as necessary to lead the all-class struggle and saw the need for that party to define the economic tasks. Lenin further advanced and developed these concepts in writings such as *What is to be done* and his articles on trade unions.

There are some in the trade union movement today who claim to be adherents of Marxism but who do not accept the primacy of political activity and who view the class struggle as outmoded and no longer relevant or appropriate to Australian conditions. It is precisely because Marx's concepts are fully applicable today that they are acted on by genuine Marxists in the trade unions and the political labour movement. Activity based on these concepts marks a point of departure between revolutionaries and reformists.

Present Australian governments are vigorously continuing their attacks on wage maintenance. The ACTU leadership is accommodating such a policy, thus deserting the interests of workers.

The consequence of these actions is a loss of faith in their interests being served by either Labor governments or the ACTU. The longer the latter suppresses the aspirations of workers to struggle, the more compounded the situation will become. Workers will, where they have not already, turn their backs on their own trade union leadership.

Unfortunately, in turning their back on social democracy, the workers are not looking to the left for an answer. In essence we are not there for them to look towards. It is our responsibility to change the situation and provide a viable alternative for the workers. All of our work, be it in the trade unions, around wages or other struggles, should be directed to achieving that objective.

The present relationship between the ACTU leadership, major sections of the trade union movement and the Hawke Labor Government is a subject worth analysing, to examine the objective political reasons for the manner in which it was developed. It is not intended to conduct such an analysis here.

Nevertheless, if one accepts that a close political relationship does exist, one of the consequences arising from that state of affairs is a denial of the independence of the trade union movement. This, I suggest, is one of the primary reasons for the trade union movement's lack of political will and capacity to act on behalf of the workers.

It is worthwhile comparing, from an historical perspective, the role of the ACTU in a period of social democratic government on fundamental issues such as the wages question.

After the defeat of the unpopular and conservative Bruce Government in September 1929, there were expectations of a better deal for the working class from the newly elected Scullin Labor Government.

1930 witnessed the effects of deepening economic crisis known as the Great Depression. Unemployment among the working class grew rapidly.

In the preamble to a policy on unemployment adopted by the 1930 ACTU Congress, the cause of unemployment was stated thus:

"Unemployment arises out of, and is inherent in, the capitalist system, which is based on production for profit and not on human needs. Only the socialisation of industry can remove the cause of unemployment."

The preamble went on: "Unless production and the people's purchasing power are made to balance, there must be progressively increasing unemployment since the world's markets are overstocked on the one hand, and on the other hand the waiting consumers for lack of means, are unable to buy."

This understanding of the causes of over-production and under-consumption and the note that unemployment is inherent in capitalism are in sharp

contrast to attitudes taken at the conference on employment, which was held in September 1982, just prior to the election of the Hawke Government.

Delegates to this conference were told by the leadership: "We are not here to debate systems or apportion blame". Delegates were told to "adopt practical measures".

The document adopted on employment referred to "unrestrained wage and price inflation" and to the need "to be competitive as a trading nation" and for a "stable economic environment". The stability referred to in the debate was the need for "wage stability".

It was this approach which led to "offsetting" of a wage increase for national health insurance, the acceptance of the idea that "one man's wage increase equals another man's job" and that wage increases cause inflation which causes unemployment.

Thus, one of the causes of the crisis and consequential unemployment seen in the 1982 trade union policy document was workers' wages. It became accepted that wages should be "restrained" and that workers needed to take responsibility for economic recovery by accepting sacrifices.

In both 1930 and 1982, the ACTU recognised the situation as political and economic but, as outlined above, in 1930 the ACTU blamed the system of capitalism, and in 1982 appeared to lay the blame on government policies and worker's wages — not the system.

Because the causes were seen as different, so were possible remedies.

In an ACTU media release of November 1982, the ACTU Executive stated: "While the above (*current economic position of Australia*) pre-supposes a political situation, the trade union movement has a fundamental responsibility to be effectively promoting policies which restore stability and attack the effects of the current crisis".

In 1932, the ACTU, rather than "attack the effects", proposed an attack on the cause — that is, the system of capitalism — and also called for basic social rights for the victims of the crisis. In the foreword of the policy *A call for action*, produced in leaflet form for distribution to workers, the ACTU called for the "emancipation of the workers from the bondage of unemployment and wage slavery, the twin products of capitalism".

The Congress adopted as an unemployment objective:

"Congress realising that unemployment cannot be solved under the present system of capitalism, calls upon the trade union movement to unite on the basis of replacement of capitalism by the social ownership of the means of life, and the abolition of the wages system, and instructs all branches of the ACTU to work for unity on this basis alone."

In January 1931, the Federal Arbitration Court brought down a decision for a ten per cent reduction of all wage rates covered by Federal awards for a period of at least 12 months. This was followed by a Premiers' Conference, where State and Federal governments agreed to a 20 per cent reduction in adjustable expenditure, including wages.

The 1932 ACTU Congress demanded the restoration of all wage reductions and a 25 per cent increase in all award rates in the belief that "unemployment is intensified by wage reductions and the consequent lower purchasing power of the community".

The response to the causes outlined by the ACTU in the 1930s is in sharp contrast to the position adopted in the 80s. In 1983 the ALP and ACTU leaderships adopted a "Prices and Incomes Policy", often referred to as a Statement of Accord or social contract. It has been the linchpin of all wage policy decisions by the ACTU since that time.

It is based on concepts of tripartism and class collaboration, committing workers to wage restraint, industrial peace and co-operation. The ACTU has delivered to the Hawke Government a compliant and co-operative labour force, with little or no guarantees of any benefit for workers.

This dramatic shift by the ACTU from attacking the "causes" to concern for the "effects" only underlines the present policies of the ACTU which have had such negative consequences for workers' living standards.

It is clear that the fundamentals as outlined by Marx are as relevant today as ever before and have to form the foundation of the work required of us in the trade union and working class movements.

# International Women's Day where should the emphasis be?

by Marie Lean

**The celebration of March 8 as International Women's Day had its origins in the struggles of working class women against the fierce exploitation and appalling working conditions operating in the garment trade in New York at the turn of the century. On Sunday, March 8th, 1908, hundreds of women gathered in Manhattan's Lower East Side to demand the vote and urge the building of a powerful needle trades union.**

At the 1910 Copenhagen women's conference of the Second International, German socialist Clara Zetkin introduced a proposal calling for an annual women's day to be celebrated internationally on March 8th and dedicated to fighting for equal rights for women in all countries.

The right for women to vote was a chief demand then among all women activists. However, Clara Zetkin differentiated between the perceptions of middle class women and those of the working class. Middle class women saw women's suffrage as a natural right to participate in the political process of bourgeois society. On the other hand, working class women demanded the vote not only to defend their economic and moral interests, but to fight against

the oppression of their class by the capitalist class.

Clara Zetkin, like her contemporary Lenin, sought to understand and explain the special oppression of women by placing it within the larger context of the socio-economic evolution of humankind. So it is today when women everywhere celebrate IWD, they have many similar demands, but they approach those demands from a different standpoint which reflects their class position. Just as Clara Zetkin came to the view that it was capitalism's need to exploit and to search for a cheap labour force that had created the "woman question", so socialists today see the woman question not as a fight between the sexes, but as a battle against the political/economic system which exploits both men and women.

Further than that, socialists, while joining forces with others to fight for equal rights for women, present a different view of how such equality will eventually be achieved. A class approach needs to be injected into the immediate demands of the women's movement.

Such gains as women made in the 1960s and 70s hang in the balance in the 80s as the deepening crisis of capitalism threatens the living standards of all Australians. The representatives of capitalism use the fear of unemployment, appeals to conscience about those not as well off and all sorts of other ruses to undermine the militancy of workers.

Not only are wages and conditions, particularly of young people, under attack, but workers are being hampered in seeking improvements, not in the least by trade union support for the Accord.

Sufferers from RSI, which particularly affects women as operators of modern, faster keyboard equipment, are being publicly ridiculed to deter them from making claims for compensation. Meanwhile, big business benefits from this greater exploitation which multiplies productivity and profits as it slowly cripples workers.

Women are still in the lowest paid occupations and destined to stay there as their latest hope, the ACTU Comparable Worth case, has foundered in the court. Lack of child care and other amenities promote the demand among women themselves for part-time work, keeping them captive in a vicious circle of exploitation. This low paid, part-time, casual or intermittent work puts women at the bottom of the heap when it comes to superannuation — a very good reason why they should be at the forefront in opposing schemes which seek eventually to replace government paid age pensions with worker paid super.

Affordable child care had come to be recognised by many politicians as a right to enable women to participate fully in production and education. Now instead of subsidising child care, the term is turned around to become "sub-

sidising families” to use child care, and they must feel grateful for it! Child care is again presented as a personal responsibility; the contribution made by women to the national economy goes unmentioned.

There are many parallels for us in Australia today with the life and times of Clara Zetkin. As revisionism spread in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), Clara came into conflict with those who followed Bernstein’s view that capitalism was developing in a direction opposite to that foreseen by Marx and had acquired a capacity for adjustment which ruled out serious economic crises for the future.

She fought the conservatives in the party for their reliance on parliamentarism, lack of enthusiasm for the mass strike and the Russian Revolution of 1905, and was one of the foremost opponents in the SPD of the revisionist interpretation of imperialism and militarism. She fought a tireless battle against involvement of workers in the imperialist war of 1914 and openly denounced those Social Democrats in the Reichstag (parliament) who voted for the war credits.

Despite blindness, illness and Nazi threats on her life, she came out of hiding and took her rightful place as the senior member in the Reichstag to open the first session of the new parliament in August 1932, not long before her death. In a speech lasting over an hour, she vehemently attacked fascism and appealed for a united front of all workers to bring about its defeat.

Clara Zetkin worked tirelessly to involve women workers alongside men in their struggle against the capitalist system. Above all, she believed in mass struggle, informing women by her written and spoken word and involving them in activity. Her main attention was directed towards working women, helping to organise them to fight exploitation and teaching them about socialism, without which there could be no real liberation for men or women.

Today in this country, we see the watering down of the class struggle; faith in the ballot box and legislation as the means of advancing women’s position in society; and the same confusion concerning the causes of war and poverty.

The mass involvement of working class women around the aims of IWD is what is lacking today. Much energy goes into meetings, conferences, discussions of legislation and social issues by a host of women’s committees and organisations, but none of this has brought into activity the mass of working class women around their needs. Nurses are among the few to be seen publicly waging war on the system.

The issues are surely there! Crippling mortgage repayments, low wages, insufficient jobs, unequal opportunities, lack of child care, to name but a few. Mobilisation of women in the class struggle is the challenge facing socialists on IWD 1989.

# Aboriginal rights and the Bicentenary

by Hannah Middleton

**Bicentennial year began well for Aboriginal rights. The air was full of politicians' platitudes and promises and public awareness and sympathy for the Aboriginal cause was growing. Organisation for protest action united Aborigines from around the country and hopes were high. Those hopes have been replaced by new, largely defensive campaigns. The Bicentenary year came to a close with Aboriginal rights under sustained attack, part of the right wing's widespread offensive spearheaded by the NSW Greiner Liberal Government.**

At the beginning of the year, Pat Dodson from the National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations said: "We believe that 1988 is a chance to enlighten Australia. One of the great challenges to non-Aboriginal Australians will be to grow up and come to terms with us.... We expect that Australia will be held internationally accountable for the fact that it is the only former British colony which has yet to make a proper settlement with its indigenous people.

"But 1988 will be worse than meaningless if we do not lay solid foundations for a proper and just reconciliation between Australia and the Aboriginal people."

He was speaking before the January 26 Aboriginal march in Sydney which was a high point in Aboriginal action and organisation. *The Guardian* reported at the time:

"The integrity and dignity of the Aboriginal position, the unity and confi-

dence of the people, the maturity and restraint of their leaders all revealed the movement's great strength, born of long years of struggle and reflected in the proud cry: *'We have survived'*. The Aboriginal movement will never be the same again.

"Some placards highlighted the fact that the Aboriginal struggle is 200 years old. It is the longest running movement in Australia's history, starting with guerilla warfare after the 1788 invasion and developing into today's strong political movement, the Aboriginal national liberation struggle.

"The Aboriginal call for solidarity from non-Aboriginal Australians reflects an understanding that both have a common cause in the struggle for democracy and social progress and that winning Aboriginal land rights will bring significant benefits to all the people of Australia, black and white."

## **Deprivation**

These developments took place against a background of continuing deprivation for the great majority of Aborigines — a world of disease, unemployment, homelessness, poverty and premature death which, according to the latest UN study, rivals conditions in the Third World.

Unemployment among Aborigines averages 25 per cent but in some areas rises to 80 per cent. The Australian average is 8.7 per cent. Only 18.9 per cent of Aborigines who are employed work in white collar occupations compared with a figure for the total population of 44.4 per cent.

Infant mortality among Aborigines is 26.2 per cent compared with just under ten per cent for the general population. Life expectancy for Aborigines is 20 years less than for other Australians — 55 years compared with 75 years. The general Australian figure for people in jail is 67 per 100,000, but the figure for Aborigines is 775 per 100,000.

An independent task force reported that one in eight Aboriginal children between the ages of five and nine did not attend school or pre-school and one in six of those aged ten to 15 did not have access to appropriate schooling. Beyond 15, Aboriginal participation in education was three to five times lower than for the community as a whole. Aboriginal students frequently face discrimination and alienation in schools and other educational institutions and education is often not delivered in a way which fully meets the needs of Aboriginal people.

## **Climate of racism**

As the Bicentenary year developed, right-wing forces worked to develop a climate of racism. In February, Hugh Morgan and other leaders of the New Right launched a new racist offensive, responding to the stirrings of conscience in the community over the genocide and injustices committed in the 200

years since the British colonial invasion of the Australian continent. (Morgan waged a successful racist campaign a few years ago to prevent Aboriginal land rights legislation being introduced in West Australia.)

Later in the year, John Stone and John Howard took up the running in the racist campaign, helped by Professor Blainey and others. The issue was immigration and the content of the Liberal-National campaign was racist. They were joined in September by newly elected RSL President Garland who suggested that part-Aborigines prove their ancestry before becoming eligible for social service benefits.

## **NSW Incorporated**

NSW under the new Greiner Liberal Government has become a test case for many features of the current right-wing offensive. Aboriginal rights have been no exception. A new Office of Aboriginal Affairs in the Premier's Department replaced the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Australian Democrats and Fred Nile's Call to Australia in the Legislative Council combined to defeat Greiner's first move to repeal the NSW land rights legislation and abolish the Aboriginal Land Councils. But the NSW Government did not give up.

Premier Greiner then announced regulations which would bring the land council finances under his control. This was defeated by a legal challenge mounted in the Supreme Court by the NSW Land Council.

Under the 1983 NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act, local and regional land councils each year receive 7.5 per cent of NSW land tax. In 1988 this was about \$25 million. Half the funds provided must be invested. After 15 years, in 1998, an estimated \$500 million will be invested. The interest from these investments will replace funding from NSW land tax. Aboriginal communities will then be self-sufficient, with new jobs, profitable community enterprises, dignity and self-determination.

Aboriginal unemployment in NSW is 75 per cent for men and 60 per cent for women (according to a Sydney University study published in October 1987). At least 1,000 Aborigines have been employed as a result of the Land Rights Act and a further 4,000 jobs would have been created by 1998.

## **Zammit Report**

The next stage of the Greiner Government's attack involved a report prepared by Liberal MP Paul Zammit, the Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Premier on Aboriginal Affairs, and entitled "*New Directions in Aboriginal Policy*".

The Zammit paper offered options for discussion. Option A apparently left the Aboriginal Land Rights Act as it is. However, it is hard to believe this is a

serious option for the government since in the same paper, the government said it would “replace the present Aboriginal Land Rights Legislation”.

Option B would change the Land Rights Act by reducing the number of land councils and increasing the influence of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, giving it a more active role in all areas.

Option C included abolishing land rights and present arrangements in NSW Aboriginal affairs (perhaps including abolition of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs.) A new State Aboriginal Affairs Act would be introduced which would include a commission. All Land Council assets would be transferred to the Commission. Option D basically suggested that land rights be abolished.

## **Mainstreaming**

The Greiner Governments intends to “mainstream” Aboriginal services, eliminating the special services for Aborigines and making them part of general services. Assimilation policies would replace efforts to provide services which reflect specific Aboriginal needs. “Mainstream” services rarely cater to Kooris\*; and few Kooris use “mainstream” services.

NSW Aboriginal activist Wilma Moran commented that “mainstreaming” is intended “to re-introduce the discredited 1930s policies of assimilation which promoted cultural genocide. It aims to destroy all independent Aboriginal organisations and any policies that recognise the unique and disadvantaged situation of the indigenous inhabitants of this country. It destroys any notion of land rights as a central demand of Aboriginal people for autonomy and management of our own affairs.”

## **Black Paper**

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council issued a Black Paper in response to the Zammit Report. This quotes the Zammit document as admitting that “mainstream” government services to Kooris are “duplicated, fragmented, overlapping and counter-productive”. The Black Paper says: “Over the last ten years, the Commonwealth and the NSW Governments have spent at least \$1.2 billion on Aboriginal affairs in this State. That is \$3,000 for every Koori child and adult in the last year. Despite that high spending, most departments have failed. The police, however, have worked overtime....”

“Take employment. Almost eight out of ten Koori men are unemployed. By comparison, only one out of ten non-Aboriginal men is unemployed. Take health. On average, Kooris die 17 years earlier than non-Kooris. Given this poor record, why does the Greiner Government want these departments to run Aboriginal affairs?”

## **Federal**

At the Federal level, the Hawke Government has never resisted the ideological attack from the extreme right (above all the mining monopolies).

Its main contribution during the Bicentenary was to emphasise the concept of a treaty with the Aboriginal people. This idea reached its peak following the Prime Minister's commitment to more than 10,000 Aboriginal people gathered at Barunga in the Northern Territory.

Mr Hawke said the government was committed to a treaty and would provide financial help for Aborigines to gather, consult and formulate their view on the issue. However, he then qualified this by saying that the government would "receive and consider" the Aboriginal treaty proposals. The media emphasised the *symbolic* importance of the treaty, a way to ensure that it gives nothing of real value to the Aborigines.

Since that time, little has been heard of the treaty. The main government emphasis has been the restructuring of the administration of Aboriginal affairs planned by the Federal Minister, Gerry Hand. Aborigines are divided on the issue. Many political activists are opposed but there is a groundswell of support for Hand's propositions from grass roots communities.

The Aboriginal people are facing greater pressure with the right-wing attack on alleged financial malpractice, incompetence, unconventional recruitment and patronage in the Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC) and Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA). An investigation into the ADC and the sacking of DAA Secretary Charles Perkins have followed as Liberal and National MPs exploit some errors of judgement — not unusual in government departments — to undermine Aboriginal funding and self-management.

## **Fight back**

A new coalition of Aboriginal organisations has been formed in NSW to link up with all other progressive forces to take on the Greiner Government's reactionary policies. Representatives of State, Regional and Local Land Councils and education, health, legal and children's services, employment and housing groups, the Committee to Defend Black Rights, and Aboriginal workers in State and Federal Government departments are involved.

In an editorial in *The Guardian* in January, the Socialist Party said: "One of the most important current task is to win land and political rights for the Aboriginal people". This is more urgent now. The good beginning for Aborigines apparent as the Bicentenary year opened was blunted by the right-wing counter offensive. The struggle continues.

The word "Kooris" (or "*Koories*") is being used increasingly as a general name given to the Aboriginal people in NSW. In South Australia, the word "Nungas" is similarly coming into general usage in that State.

# Contribution to a branch meeting

by Arthur Christophorou

**In Greece, the direct influence of the Party on a working unit directly links the Party more closely to the people. It enables Party work to be more effective on the spot and increases the responsibility of each Party member for his or her work.**

The Party has always needed every effort each Party member can contribute. The Party cannot accept passivity and indifference. If you are a communist, it is your duty not to encourage backward attitudes but to be a politically conscious and active fighter of the Party in the workshop, social activities and everyday life.

The strength of the Socialist Party of Australia lies in the activity of its members. The more active the comrades are, the greater is the ability of the Party organisation to cope with its tasks.

Party work is essentially made up of the different jobs carried out by Party members which gives them a feeling of responsibility for the common cause.

Our Party is the Party of the people. It has no interests other than the interests of the working people. That is why the Party can achieve success only if it is supported by the people.

Lenin gave a theoretical explanation of the Party's close ties with the people and showed that the strengthening of these ties raised the people's socialist consciousness and united them in the struggle to bring about revolutionary changes.

The Party exists for the people and it is in serving the people that it sees the purpose of its activity. Experience has shown that socialism can only be built under the leadership of a Marxist-Leninist party.

The Party will be able to play a leading role only if it has strong primary organisations which are the mainspring of its life and work.

We need more branches in industry and workshops to care for the needs of the people who are facing mass unemployment, high inflation, interest rates going up and the Prices and Incomes Accord.

It is the priority now for our Party to establish workplace branches and this is also the firm basis of support for militant policies in the trade union movement.

Our Party can only be strong and really influential among the working class if it has its organisations among workers in factories, industries, institutions and all workplaces.

The task of building Party branches in workplaces remains the responsibility of all Party organisations and committees, Branch Executives and members.

This requires raising the ideological and political level of members, their work in non-party bodies, their fulfilment of all Party tasks. Party work is extremely broad and diverse in scope.

All Party members should have permanent or temporary assignments and report how they tackled their Party duties. I think that such reporting and discussion stimulates the activity of Party members.

The Party is the most resolute opponent of monopoly capitalism, a vanguard fighter for peace. It is the Party of the working class which works tirelessly for a socialist Australia.

The great strength of the Party lies in its scientific theory, in its consistent work to build unity in defence of the economic and political interests of the working people.

The SPA works to build a far larger party which will include tens of thousands of industrial and white collar workers, working farmers and intellectuals in the fight for peace, democracy and socialism.

The monopolists and their agents are implacably hostile to the Party and use all the weapons at their disposal to prevent its growth and to destroy its influence.

They fight its ideas, try to split its ranks and isolate it so they can smash the organisation which can lead the people's struggles against the monopoly capitalists.

A communist must remain a communist and worthily bear the lofty title of member of the Marxist-Leninist Party.

Only the SPA, tested by time and tempered in its long struggle for the interests of the working people, can lead the mass movement to realise its ultimate goal.

The SPA carries out its policy, which has been formulated with the participation of the working people, through its primary organisations, the branches. Through them, it influences the minds, work and life of the people.

The primary organisations have always formed the basis of the Party. They are the units where communists develop into active fighters, where they mature ideologically and politically.

All the activities of the branches are carried out directly among the working class and the people.

Peace is the most important aspect of our program of action, including material in bulletins and distribution of leaflets and posters in localities around major peace events.

The US imperialists have already worked out a military strategy of "preventive war", a term used to cover up the policy of striking the first blow with nuclear weapons.

They quite openly calculate the possibility of hundreds of millions of deaths and seek to justify this by the idiotic slogan of "better dead than red".

Nuclear war would not only make debris of imperialism but would also destroy hundreds of millions of working people, wipe out the main centres of civilisation and the accumulated productive wealth of generations, and render much of the earth uninhabitable for many years.

To set out to prevent war before the bombs begin to fall, to restrain the imperialists and prevent them from launching war, is the only line which is in accord with communist theory.

The burning determination of the peoples can prevent nuclear war and this is in the interests of the earliest possible achievement of a socialist world.

The struggle for peace, for general and complete disarmament assists the struggle for national liberation. In turn the national liberation movement greatly helps the struggle for peace and disarmament.