INTRODUCTION

Most of the articles in this issue of *Australian Left Review* concern the relationship between art and politics, cultural workers and the production of culture. The issues are not new to the left, but at this time of deepening crisis, after two decades of comparative silence, they are being debated again. The people speaking here, are practitioners rather than theoreticians, toilers at the face, as it were, of cultural production. Their concerns are immediate and practical: What does it mean to be a politically conscious art worker during a period of crisis? How should one produce culture and for whom? What should be produced and why?

Tom Appleton, in New Zealand, reports on Komikabaret, a theatre group seeking to bring politics to theatre-goers in the form of a Brechtian revival. Komikabaret seeks to encourage those on the left who may have little time for theatre to become more appreciative of that art form, while at the same time it introduces more regular patrons to a different content.

A central concern of Laurel Quillen and the Newcastle Cultural Action Group has been for whom performances are undertaken.

In accepting that the playhouse can be an alien place for working people, Quillen and fellow-activists have promoted performances in more familiar environments such as the Workers' Club. Like Komikabaret, Quillen is less concerned with the nature of theatre, and more preoccupied with where and for whom it is undertaken.

The content of the Newcastle Cultural Action Group's performances, like that of New Theatre, is oriented towards presenting working class audiences with a positive self-image. Marie Armstrong's and Miriam Hampson's account of New Theatre draws on a rich working class cultural tradition; New Theatre has an experience of almost fifty years.

Peter Corris gave up a promising academic career as a historian to write popular fiction, and in large measure his choice was predicated on the belief that intellectual and cultural work should have a popular form and mass audience. Corris has written three novels based around the Cliff Hardy character, a private-eye and Sydney-sider.

The problems of form and content are sharply posed in a private-eye genre, which contains aspects of social criticism and a pervasive human warmth, but is rooted in, for example, sexism. How does a socially concerned writer cope with a genre the definitive characteristics of which are in part anti-socialist?

Gregor Cullen and Michael Callaghan who constitute RedBack Graphix are two professional artworkers who, concerned over the lack of mass access to the products of their "genre", lead them to reject it. After five years at a College for Fine Arts and some time working as a canvas artist, Cullen decided that canvas painting was not economically viable for most art workers and politically inappropriate for a cultural activist. Commitment to class struggle has meant for Cullen not the rejection of craft and professional standards and skills, but a search for ways in which they could be more directly utilised for the labor movement. Cullen seeks a mass audience through poster art and art work for widely distributed leaflets and booklets.

*Australian Left Review* believes that these issues are as important in our times as they were previously. We welcome the interest of our contributors and would welcome just as much any further contributors reporting other experiences or commenting on the points-of-view already expressed.

— Mike Donaldson, for the Editorial Collective.