

QUEENSLAND POLITICS

Murray Broad



The analysis produced by the broad left and the CPA in Queensland presents that state as being in the forefront of a vast, national ruling class offensive. We regard Queensland as a testing ground for anti-democratic assaults to which the rest of the Australian bourgeoisie often looks for guidance.

This view of Queensland as a pacesetter in a national campaign of reaction directly counterposes itself to the old notion that Queensland is a stagnant backwater, dragging its feet behind the rest of Australia. Such a naive assessment was accompanied by the idea that Queenslanders were somehow innately different from other Australians.

However, the old jokes about Queensland have been quickly muted as recent actions by the Court and Fraser governments have strikingly paralleled the established pattern of the Petersen government.

I would contend, therefore, that an understanding of recent developments in Queensland politics is vital to correctly assess the emerging pattern of events across the continent.

Moreover, because of the intense state of struggle in Queensland and because of the

already mentioned implications of that struggle for Australian politics, the Queensland experience can be a useful meter of the effectiveness of left and communist strategies. For example, there have been many important experiences in the establishment of a broad alliance capable of meeting the ruling class offensive, and campaigns such as civil liberties have provided the acid test for working relations of different sections of the left.

This article covers four broad areas:

1. It briefly analyses the forces forging a restructuring of Australian capitalism;
2. It examines the historical development of the Queensland political conjuncture;
3. It examines the way in which these same forces for economic restructuring have inflicted themselves upon that political conjuncture and explains (I hope) why Queensland has become a pacesetter for the reactionary offensive;
4. It looks at the actual state of political struggle over the last two years, particularly with regard to the civil liberties movement, and attempts to spell out the possibilities for struggle in 1980. -

**I LOVE A STRIP-MINED COUNTRY
A LAND OF TOURIST RESORTS,
OF POLICE ATTACKING STREET MARCHERS,
OF SWOLLEN JAILS & FLOODED COURTS...**

Now this is a very complex task and necessarily my analysis is far from complete. In fact, the very pace, complexity and depth of struggle of Queensland politics over the last few years has blurred the senses of many who have tried to understand it.

Yet there is a method to the madness of Queensland politics and to uncover it I shall first turn to a description of the basic forces shaping Australian economic and political life. (For many people this section will be "common knowledge" but I think the necessity to site Queensland in the overall context of Australian capitalism is obvious.)

The Australian economy is situated in a well-integrated world market. The form of capital which has come to dominate this world market is crystallised in the multinational corporation.

The Australian economy is heavily influenced by multinational corporations, largely based in America, Britain and Japan. (1) Over 50 per cent of all company profits are payable to foreign shareholders.

But Australia itself reflects a miniature version of the world pattern. Out of 30,000 registered Australian companies, some 200 account for half the total production. Some of the largest maintain a mini-imperialism in the South East Asian area. Most of what's left after 55 per cent of profits goes overseas, goes to the 10 per cent of Australians who own 60 per cent of our wealth and receive 92 per cent of the income from that wealth.

So it is not really the extent of "foreignness" that matters. It is the monopoly position of the largest companies which leads them to behave in an economically common fashion, regardless of their country of origin.



This overall situation is having drastic effects on the Australian economy. The development of a global market, not just in goods produced, but in labor itself, has put Australian workers in an extremely poor bargaining position. Many labor-intensive sectors of Australian industry are being transferred "off-shore" to low-wage countries.

During 1973-74, some 1.4 million people were employed in the Australian manufacturing industry but today, this has dropped to 1.17 million — a decrease of 16.5 per cent in five years. This situation is redressed in only three areas:

1. **Extractive industries.** Multinational corporations have to take minerals

where they are found and consequently Australia is becoming a major world mineral exporter.

2. Some industries such as the building industry are "naturally protected". For example, if a house has to be built for an Australian worker, labor must be employed in Australia to build it. There is also a building boom associated with the construction phase of mining projects.
3. Highly energy-intensive processes are being shifted into Australia because of our abundant cheap energy. For example, a host of aluminium firms are planning, or have already commenced, to build new smelters in Australia.

Apart from these areas, the future of employment in Australian (particularly manufacturing) industry looks exceedingly grim.

A second major feature of today's Australia is the impact of the scientific/technological revolution which is intimately tied up with multinational corporations. In fact, it was the development of modern transport and communications which made it possible for corporations to organise their operations on a transnational scale in the first place. Now these same forces are being turned against Australian workers, resulting in the loss of further jobs and tighter control over those that remain.

The important thing to realise is that the impact of multinational corporations and their associated technology are rapidly developing tendencies which show signs only of becoming stronger. The future we can look forward to, 10 or 20 years hence, is one in which perhaps the majority of present employment has been eliminated.

How do smaller Australian capitalists who do not have the option of moving their operations "off-shore" respond to this state of affairs — those that have traditionally been the backbone of Liberal Party support?

Their only option is to stay put and try to become more competitive internationally by reducing labor costs. That is, by sacking some workers and lowering the wages and conditions of those remaining.

Hence, all major fractions of the ruling class have a common interest in increasing

the rate of exploitation of Australian labor, and for smaller, indigenous capitalists, this is absolutely essential if they are to coexist with their multinational competitors.

So, when Malcolm Fraser says that Australian labor must become more competitive, he is not talking about lowering wages a few per cent. To compete with the workers of the world's most brutal military dictatorships, Australian wages will have to be cut 80-95 per cent.

But, in doing this, the conservative forces necessarily come up against the very extensive and well organised (if somewhat conservative) system of Australian unions. If the Australian economy is to be restructured in line with the needs of international capital, then the whole structure of wages and living conditions which has been won through more than 100 years of struggle, must be broken down.

Hence, for the ruling class, the act of restructuring the Australian economy must take place concurrently with the destruction of the means by which working people can defend themselves. It is at this level that we see the intimate connection between economic and industrial struggles and the struggle for democratic rights. For without the democratic rights to organise in trade unions, to conduct strikes, to picket, rally, march, leaflet, speak at public gatherings, etc., the working class lacks its principal organisational means for fighting back.

It is in this context of the present rapid intensification of the struggle between labor and capital that Queensland must be sited because that struggle has reached its greatest development in Queensland. Queensland has been the pacesetter for attacks on trade unionism and democratic rights.

Before I go on to examine the list of attacks on democratic rights I'd like to look at some basic features of the Queensland political economy which show why these attacks occurred in Queensland first.

Australia has been dominated by industrial capitalism since before the depression, but in Queensland the manufacturing sector was secondary to primary production up until 1966 when the Queensland government proudly proclaimed

that manufacturing production had passed that of the primary sector.

During the 1960s, both the number and size of factories was increasing faster in Queensland relative to the rest of Australia. This manufacturing growth was accompanied by the "minerals boom" of the late 1960s and 1970s. Queensland now is the greatest export earner of all Australian states. In coal alone, \$6,000 million worth was mined between 1956 and 1978. Of this, however, only \$123 million was paid in government royalties — a mere 2.2 per cent of the total value to mining companies.

This period also saw a concentration of rural holdings with smaller land-holders being gobbled up by larger ones, largely due to the pressure of wage rises. This has important social and political consequences.

Self-employed proprietors are threatened by rising labor costs for rural workers and are either forced to work harder themselves or go further into debt, or both.⁽²⁾ This makes them very anti-labor and embittered by the "easy life" in the cities. It is from here that the National Party gains most of its support.

The striking feature of Queensland is that until recently it lacked a strong industrial sector and its consequent economic backwardness contributed to a long history of bitter class struggle.

The strikes of the 1890s spread to Queensland and saw the successful mobilisation of the ruling classes throughout eastern Australia against the rural workers. This defeat acted as a catalyst for the formation of the Labor Party which held office from 1915-1957 except for the years 1929-32.

The 1912 Brisbane general strike lasted one month and spread to all of Queensland. Peter Murphy says (in his as yet unpublished thesis on Australian coal mining):

It was defeated and so was the politics of militant industrial action. The AWU established its dominance over the Queensland ALP and maintained it ever after. Its dominance has always been challenged by the Trades Hall group of Brisbane craft and trade unions which represented the industrial working class of Queensland; the AWU represented all rural workers in one massive union.

The AWU domination made rural interests the prominent matter of the Labor

government's initiatives. And it also involved these governments in the characteristic contradiction of representing workers and maintaining a backward capitalist economy.

Because of the failure of strong manufacturing development, a strong and united industrial fraction of capital never emerged and a strong industrial working class likewise never gained hegemony over the workers' movement. Within this stagnant economy, many conflicts between unions and governments erupted.

In the 1920s the railway and public service unions had to fight the state Arbitration Court for pay and conditions. In the post-war years, big struggles were undertaken by the ARU to gain simple flow-ons from federal awards.

The 1948 railway strike was a bitter contest between left forces in the ARU and the workshops' unions, and anti-communists in the AWU, Catholic elements in the Queensland government and the ruling classes.

Finally, in 1957 the Gair cabinet was expelled from the Queensland ALP by a coalition of the AWU and the Trades Hall group. The Queensland ALP has never recovered from the split, but it is interesting that Ed Casey who has led the recent swing to the right by the Queensland ALP is moving to reorient the party towards rural elements once again. In this case, Ed Casey and Co. may be seen as a regrouping of the old "Grouper" forces.

The Queensland Country Party was formed in 1915 but because of Labor's agrarian orientation it found difficulty in organising politically. After reorganising in 1944, the Country Party sought ways of joining forces with the emerging Liberal Party. The opportunity arose in 1957 when the Labor split opened the way for a Country/Liberal win. The famous Labor gerrymander in 1949 favored the Country Party and only discriminated against the Liberals. Thus, the Country Party has been able to dominate the Liberals ever since.

To quote Peter Murphy again:

In the 1960s and '70s the objective economic criteria have changed. Now it is the manufacturing sector which dominates the productive forces. This is remarkable when it

is considered that the state has been under Country Party domination during this period, though in coalition with the Liberal Party. The tensions within this coalition have increased as the economy has developed. This has involved the transformation of the Country Party to the National Party, Queensland Branch, and its attempts to seize decisive control of the parliament, and the bureaucracy.

The Country Party has held decisive control through the portfolios of Premier, Mines Minister and Primary Industries Minister. In 1971, the Co-ordinator General of Public Works was reorganised and put into the Premier's Department. The Co-ordinator General became the top public servant and the Premier, through the Co-ordinator General, directly oversees all major projects in the state.

In 1974, the Premier established a Priorities Review Committee in his own department. This allowed the Treasurer of the time, Gordon Chalk, to be overruled and the Treasury was reduced to an accounting body. This led to Chalk's retirement in 1976.

The conclusion to this logic is that the Country Party changed its name to the National Party in 1975 and projected itself as the one conservative party of Queensland, capable of representing both rural and urban interests. It had been riding high in the parliament after its victory in the 1974 election when it captured most of the seats Labor lost, and came close to being able to govern alone.

The Liberal Party has so far been unable to overcome the National Party forces, but the tide may be turning. In attempting to characterise itself as the one and only conservative party to manage a developing Queensland, the Nationals appear a bit too "modern" for their rural power base. Sensing this, the Liberals have decided to conduct three-cornered electoral contests and the struggle seems to be on in earnest.

Unfortunately, the Queensland ALP has not capitalised on the recent expansion of the working class. One important reason for this is the destructive role that strong anti-communist sentiments have historically played in the Queensland labor movement. This anti-communism is epitomised by the strength of extreme rightwing organisations such as the NCC and the League of Rights.

Ideologically, the only real force opposed to this has been the CPA and its strength was drastically depleted during the Cold War.

So far I have dealt with the overall factors forcing a restructuring of Australian capitalism and of the specific historic composition of Queensland's political life upon which these forces have superimposed themselves.

It is this interaction of restructuring forces with the particular fabric of Queensland politics which has allowed the rightwing offensive to take on so quickly here.

We have established that Queensland already had a long history of repressive government, a labor movement which was ideologically conservative and a strong, extreme rightwing element.

The National Party has a long history of political dominance and, while its electoral base is very conservative, the Nationals see themselves in a progressive role, developing the State of Queensland.

Thus, when the first signs of the overall restructuring of the Australian economy hit Queensland in the form of the minerals boom, the National Party grasped the nettle and went all-out to encourage massive corporate investment. As resistance to the effects of this investment grew, the Nationals moved quickly to silence it.

In the face of all the facts, and against great public opposition, the state government allowed the giant CRA to build a powerhouse at Tarong when the contract should have gone to a smaller Australian consortium which wanted to build at Millmerran.(3)

There have been many attacks upon the living conditions of Aboriginal people for the sake of minerals concealed beneath their land. In country areas of Queensland, Blacks are likely to be herded onto reserves and used for cheap labor, while in the cities they are subject to brutal police harassment. This state of affairs is legislatively encouraged through the infamous "Queensland Acts".

Companies like Comalco and Utah had railways, townships and entire ports built for them (at public expense) by the state government. Comalco's Gladstone alumina refinery purportedly gets some of the world's cheapest electricity (0.5 cents/kh.). I say

purportedly because the exact figure is a state secret.(4)

The sale of a large tract of land on the coast near Yeppoon to the Japanese millionaire/industrialist Iwasaki, attracted mass, public resentment.

In its attack on working class organisation, the Petersen Government has employed many means to divide and suppress working people.

The patriarchal nature of Australian society is reinforced through an education system so conservative that a small, rightwing pressure group headed by Rona Joyner can silence even slightly progressive material like MACOS and SEMP. Twelve per cent of Queenslanders have more than 9 years' schooling, compared with a national average of 18 per cent. Forty-three per cent of 16-year-old Queenslanders are still at school, compared to 57 per cent nationally.

In and out of school, Australia's most repressive abortion and rape laws act to keep many Queensland women politically inactive

Queensland's drug laws are extremely severe, giving police the right to enter and search without a warrant. Many young people live in constant fear and remain politically inactive because of the threat of police action.

Union organisation has come under increasing attack from Petersen who takes every opportunity to use his well-oiled publicity machine to decry the "red Menace". Yet when more subtle forms of coercion have failed, Petersen has never baulked at using blatant force.

Queensland has a long history of repressive use of the police and the law. The Mt Isa strike of 1964-65 is a notable example where police were mobilised to back up the State Industrial Commission. The Nicklin government on that occasion had to back down in the face of nationwide protests.

States of emergency were declared over an eight week lockout by MIM in 1961 and again over the Springbok Rugby tour in 1971 when 1,000 police were mobilised.

More recently, police involvement at Cedar Bay, in street marches and in union and anti-uranium pickets have shown that the



government sees a well-controlled working class as a prerequisite to big investment programs.

Hence, in the latter half of 1977, Queensland was seething with discontent. Political sensitivities had been numbed by almost daily outrages. There was no credible parliamentary alternative (and no possible one, given the gerrymander), no legal vent to the frustration and anger that was building up in the population.

Then in September 1977 on the eve of the 5,000-strong Ted Zaphir trade union rally and under conditions of a rapidly growing anti-uranium movement, Petersen banned political street marches.

Almost every country newspaper, no matter how small, is circulated with copies of the Premier's press statements and there is scarcely one country town he does not visit in the Government aircraft.

Although the change to the legal code was slight, it served as a vent for public feeling and the civil liberties movement quickly became an extraparliamentary focus of opposition to the state government.

I'm not going to try to recap on the whole history of the civil liberties campaign. Most importantly, it has served as a pivot of opposition by progressive forces and has taken that opposition into a qualitatively new form by physically confronting the Queensland state and its police force.

It has exposed Petersen's real intentions where they are most blatantly obvious — on the streets.

The movement has scored some observable political victories. Notably, it strained the coalition relationship to the point where 13 Liberals crossed the parliamentary floor over the destruction of a pub called the Belle Vue. The movement helped remove "Right to Work" laws from the political agenda. Since the beginning of the campaign the National Party strategy of moving into metropolitan electorates has been completely defeated through the loss of the seats of Wynnum and Redcliffe. (A 12 per cent swing was recorded against the National Party in Redcliffe.)

Also, it has built a stronger and more active left in Queensland and has helped build an understanding by the left nationally of the nature of the rightwing assault. There have been over 2,000 arrests to date and over \$100,000 in legal costs.

I think, the Australian political experience in recent months has completely borne out the analysis presented so far. Nationally, there has been a rapid escalation of the ruling class offensive.

Recent events in Western Australia (a state economically most similar to Queensland) have been a kind of political *deja vu*.

The arrests of unionists which sparked off a national stoppage were initially portrayed as a foolish blunder by the Court government. In 1977, the move by the Petersen government to ban street marches was seen likewise.

The law which allowed the arrests of Marks and Carmichael was one piece of a host of undemocratic legislation.

The 1974 "Fuel and Energy" Bill gives state-of-emergency powers to the West Australian government to intervene in industrial disputes in these areas. Recent changes to the Police Act make interference with state government property an offence punishable by six months' jail or \$1,500 fine. This manoeuvre directly resulted from protests against a new alumina refinery. The Education Department has been given powers similar to those of the Morals Committee for assessing graduating Queensland teachers.

Other big sticks in Court's legislative arsenal include the Flour Act (1977), the Essentials Foodstuffs and Essential Commodities Act (1979) and the industrial Arbitration Act Amendments Bill (1979).

Clearly, the Court government is conducting a multi-faceted anti-democratic assault similar to that seen in Queensland over the last two years.

The Fraser government has extended its nation-wide front of union bashing laws with the Commonwealth Employees Employment Provisions Act (CEEP), the Commonwealth Employees Redeployment and Retirement Bill (CERR), Industrial Relations Bureau legislation, new ASIO Acts and the latest amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act which brought protests from Deputy President Staples and all 25 commissioners.

These measures have accompanied economic policies which have already significantly reduced the living standards of Australian workers.

Since 1975 the real value of wages has decreased by more than \$25 per week. Partial indexation has pushed down the wages share of the national income by at least four per cent. Social welfare programs have been drastically cut. At last year's Premiers' Conference, the states received, in real terms, 38 per cent less for welfare housing and 20 per cent less for works programs.

Figures for the NSW economy suggest that this state will be \$900 million down in revenue, forcing it to borrow heavily on the overseas (multi-national dominated) money market.

Meanwhile, tax concessions to the biggest corporations rose from \$280 million in 1974 to over \$900 million in 1978.

Even at official government level, the realisation that unemployment is growing in direct proportion to the destruction of jobs in manufacturing industries receives *de facto* recognition.

Nationally, the working class response to these economic and anti-democratic assaults has reached levels unprecedented for many years. We have seen national stopwork action over the West Australian arrests. Telecom workers have taken national action

and Commonwealth government employees have been involved in national disputes around the CERR and CEEP Bills. Indeed, the militant stand taken by so-called "white collar" workers is one of the most heartening aspects of the present industrial scene.

Serious splits have appeared in the ranks of the coalition parties at the federal level and in most state branches. One of the most interesting features of the present crisis is that all major political parties are experiencing severe internal tensions. Divisions among the conservative forces can be exploited by the left but only if the left itself has a proper understanding of the nature of those divisions.

Not to be outdone by the actions of the Fraser and Court governments, Bjelke-Petersen's National Party has unleashed a new wave of undemocratic legislation in recent months.

After months of threats by Bjelke-Petersen against power workers campaigning for a 35-hour week, the Essential Services Act finally became law in October 1979. It is not possible here to give a detailed account of the circumstances of its introduction.

Ostensibly it bans strikes in essential industries which are defined as — transport; fire brigades; hospitals and ambulances; electricity and water; garbage, sanitary, cleaning or sewerage services.

But cabinet can declare any industry to be an essential service.

Once any union rejects an Arbitration Court decision and continues industrial action, a Period of Emergency can be declared in that industry.

During the Period of Emergency:

- * the union or unions involved can be deregistered or fined \$10,000 and union officials can be sacked;
- * individual unionists can be fined \$1,000 but will be sacked automatically if they strike for more than 24 hours;
- * individuals and unions refusing to pay fines can have their property confiscated;
- * special agreements between unions and employers are prohibited with a maximum penalty of \$100,000;



- * strike funds are banned;
- * anyone who suffers damage or loss through "unlawful" strikes may sue the union(s) involved;
- * scab labor is protected and employers are required to keep records of those who scab so that strikers can be blacklisted;
- * state government employees can be directed to act as strike breakers;
- * the Minister appointed to control an essential service has dictatorial powers to direct all the operations of the industry, including requisitioning property and authorising entry on land;
- * union members quoted in the press as supporting a strike are breaking the law; they are automatically guilty and must prove their innocence;
- * judicial notice is to be taken of every national television station, every national broadcasting station, every commercial station in Australia, placing great limits upon the freedom of the press.

The Act bypasses and overrules the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and the Industrial Court. It gives emergency powers, not to parliament, but to the Governor-in-Council (that is, cabinet plus the Governor).

On September 25 last year, Sir William Knox, the Queensland Health Minister,

foreshadowed legislation to close the few so-called loopholes in Queensland's anti-abortion laws which are already the harshest and most restrictive in Australia.

The government's proposed legislation is aimed at closing Queensland's only abortion clinic. It aims to make abortions available only in public hospitals, but this in no way means that abortion will be readily available. Under present Queensland laws, hospitals have already been geared to make abortions available only in exceptional circumstances.

If the legislation is passed, only women in imminent danger of death will be able to have legal abortions. Pregnancy as a result of rape or incest will not be considered sufficient reason for an abortion, nor will exposure to rubella. All this will be done under the liberal pretence of attempting to stop backyard abortions. The government's "concern" seems to overlook the fact that backyard abortionists are only able to flourish if abortions are not freely available.

While this rightwing offensive was reflected indirectly through the election of Ed Casey to head the Queensland ALP, Casey has consolidated his own position by isolating and attacking the socialist left, using undisguised "red baiting" as an ideological cover.

A member of the Right to Life organisation, Casey tried to "out-Joh" Joh, by presenting a petition to state parliament calling for the closure of the Greenslopes abortion clinic.

He has failed to show any real opposition to the Essential Services legislation and has refused to support the strikes by power workers which prompted the legislation in the first place.

In a period when the expansion of the urban workforce, combined with mass resentment of the state government, offers Labor a militant base of support, the ALP strategy revolves around recapturing the conservative rural vote, which it lost over 20 years ago.

Again Queensland represents only the most advanced phase of a process which is going on nationally. I am referring, of course, to the growth of the right wing in the labor

movement and particularly in the Labor Party. For example, around Australia, the conservative press has given full support to Bob Hawke in his bid to take control of the federal ALP. The capitalist press will always support members of the labor movement who talk in terms of "the national interest" rather than from a class point of view — they find it far easier to allow the labor movement to be neutralised through rightwing leadership than face an all-out confrontation.

At this point, I want to turn to a brief examination of the fate of the civil liberties movement.

To commence I should say that the organisation of the Civil Liberties Campaign Group is now essentially dead. There are several contributing reasons for this, and we must cast our minds back over a year to understand why.

December 7, 1978 was a climax for the movement. Over a year of rallies, marches and arrests had finally forced the Queensland Trades and Labor Council to sponsor a confrontation over the street march ban. On that day, prominent ALP and union officials from around Australia came to Brisbane to spend a night in the watch-house. Members of the state ALP were noticeably absent, reflecting the threats of their newly elected leader, Ed Casey.

At this point, it was fully expected that one or two more such confrontations would force the government to repeal the anti-march laws. However, pressure from Casey was sufficient to force the TLC (who are hardly a group of raging revolutionaries at the best of times) to back down from further confrontations.

This produced enormous demoralisation among people who had campaigned long and hard for trade union support. The March 15 demonstration was called off and the April 28 rally voted against marching. Sectarian infighting was rampant and a section of the movement argued that the Civil Liberties Campaign Group (CLCG) should focus the thrust of its attention against ALP leader, Ed Casey.

This approach has been consistently argued against by those in the CLCG who believe that most Queenslanders see the Petersen government and not the Labor opposition as the principal enemy and that

the way to fight Casey is to expose his position in the broader context of carrying on the fight against the Queensland government.

By the time of the July 26 rally and march, total confusion beset the movement, little propaganda work was done and only 2,000 people attended, with trade unionists being notably absent.

Shortly after this, the state government was on the verge of introducing the Essential Services legislation and it issued two march permits in an attempt to defuse the civil liberties movement, which had for two years been its most consistent and dangerous opposition.

The first of these was issued to the Campaign Against Nuclear Power for Nagasaki Day, two days after Hiroshima Day for which they had originally applied and on only a few days' notice.

Both Bjelke Petersen and Charles Porter had earlier claimed the civil liberties movement was dead and they hoped that the short notice and changed date of the permit would produce a small march to back up their claims.

However, over 4,000 people marched that evening and both anti-uranium and civil liberties themes were well understood by the public.

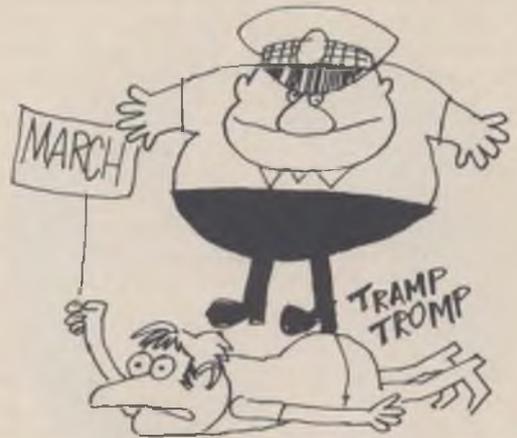
Following this, the government issued one other permit to a student march from Queensland University. This time no chances were taken as the conditions of the permit specified a maximum of 500 people in the march.

As 1979 drew to a close, the Essential Services and anti-abortion legislation became the most important issues facing the Queensland left and the civil liberties issue was overshadowed, if not forgotten.

Thus, a series of factors has contributed to the organisational demise of the CLCG. But it would be quite wrong to suggest that the movement against the Petersen government is dead.

National Party electoral support is at its lowest for many years and for this the civil liberties campaign must take credit.

In *The Australian* of November 11, 1979, the results of an opinion poll were published



which revealed that 56.5 per cent of Australians thought that police should have more power to deal with law and order. Only 16.2 per cent thought that police needed less power. In Brisbane, the figure differed considerably. Only 37.6 per cent thought that police needed more power, and 25.9 per cent thought that they needed less. Brisbane had the lowest percentage of any capital city of people who thought that police needed more power, and the highest percentage of people who thought that police needed less.

It is obvious that the constant conflict between police and demonstrators in the streets of Brisbane has had a poor effect on the public image of the police force. It also appears that the majority of people in Brisbane resent the way in which the police are used by the government to implement unpopular laws.

The civil liberties movement has highlighted and exacerbated rifts in the coalition. It has united broad sections of the left and progressive movements against actions of the government. It has formed links with the trade unions and many other organisations, and developed alliances which will exist for some time to come, if we work at encouraging this unity.

The problem which confronts us in Queensland today is one of finding a new and more appropriate organisational form for the movement against the government. Now that the initial outrage over the banning of street marches has subsided, civil liberties can no longer be presented just as a

high and mighty principle. We must point out to people how the issue of civil liberties affects them personally.

Over the coming months, I have no doubt that you will see a growing movement of extra parliamentary opposition to the Queensland government. The main thrust of this movement will be the Essential Services Act, the anti-abortion legislation and the 1980 state elections. Every time this, or any other progressive movement, takes to the streets in a mass way it must confront the ban on street marches. The civil liberties issue in Queensland, therefore, cannot die — it will simply be reborn in new forms.

What does the future of Queensland politics hold?

We have an embattled National Party, struggling to be seen as the one political force capable of carrying through the economic development and modernisation of Queensland. But it is in a growing void as the need to stress the mining and manufacturing sectors places it increasingly out of step with its rural power base, as the manufacturing sector itself faces growing international competition and as popular discontent with its rule grows.

We have a Liberal Party which has finally decided to compete with the Nationals electorally in an attempt to wrest power from them. But, the Liberals are still caught by narrow, Brisbane-based support and by the fact that although the excesses of the National Party offend the morality of many Liberals, the success of the anti-union, anti-democratic assault by the Nationals is crucial to the economic survival of those same Liberals.

And we have a Labor Party which is totally, politically disoriented. Rather than come to grips with the new realities of economic life, it opts for increasingly conservative solutions. Because it does not want to change the system but merely to administer it better than the coalition, it never challenges basic economic conditions and is simply a pale shadow of state government policies. The ALP has successfully destroyed its leadership of its own class base.

As the need for a working class counter-offensive to the growing rightwing push becomes even more obvious, so does the

vacuum of political leadership for that counter-offensive.

I believe that the only possible form of leadership is that of a broad alliance of forces, including progressive sections of the Labor Party, communists and other sections of the left. For these groups to work together effectively will entail a reduction of the sectarian mistakes of the last two years and the only way to achieve this is through the common acceptance of a realistic analysis of Queensland politics.

Such an analysis should lay the basis of a left strategy, one part of which would be mutual assistance by campaigns for democratic rights in most states and nationally.

The Australian left cannot blind itself to the reality of Queensland politics.

For as long as that state is seen as a laughable anachronism, the politics of Queensland can only deteriorate and the rest of Australia can only become more like Queensland.

REFERENCES

1. Indeed, much of Australia's post-war economic history can be explained in terms of the hegemonic struggle between contending British and American capital — a struggle which American capital won in the 1960s.
2. Earlier this year, the Petersen government received wide condemnation when it threatened to introduce a political watchdog into the State Industrial Commission who would oversee the activities of the other five. This was directly precipitated by a State Industrial Commission decision to grant higher wages to rural workers.
3. One of the major partners in this Australian consortium was Thiess Holdings. After denying Thiess work on the big powerhouse contract, Petersen has turned around and attacked the bid by southern-based CSR to take over Thiess.
4. In the last three years, the state government has taken both the Electricity Authority and the Water Board from the Brisbane City Council and placed them in its own departments. These were attempts to centralise the production and distribution of power in anticipation of the expansion of energy-intensive industries, particularly aluminium smelting.