## THE WOMEN FOR JOBS MARATHON: a question of stamina

For those who like their numbers crunchy: the Wollongong Jobs for Women campaign has now entered its sixth year. Hearings before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal have just ended after one year. Veritable mountains of paper (formerly known as trees) have been filled with submissions, replies, claims, counter-claims, surveys — hundreds of pages and thousands of words.

For those more interested in the principle of the matter, there is good news already. Several of the "complainants" have just been re-employed, and others have begun to receive workers' compensation payments.

It will be another few months before the tribunal brings down its decision. Meanwhile, the case has brought to light a range of employer/management practices which are, at the same time, depressing and hope-giving.

They are depressing because they show the severity and depth of male reluctance to accept women even as potential equals. The positive side is that obstacles have now been identified. One of the company's mainstays in its defence has been section 36 of the Factories, Shops and Industries Act which imposes weight restrictions on males (to age 18 only) and all female workers. But, as John Basten put forward on behalf of the complainants, such restrictions are intended to protect workers' health once they're on the job. It "doesn't allow a company to refuse employment to women".

The gross under-representation of female employees at AI&S cannot be explained (away) by section 36. To show some figures: between June '77 and April '80, 4,289 ironworkers were employed, of whom a mere 58 (1.35 percent) were female.

Between 1 July and 22 August 1980 another 468 workers were hired, of whom 71 were female (15.2 percent). But, on 10 September 1980 there were still 2,000 women listed as applicants, and only 47 men.

Surveys done by Chloe Refshauge on behalf of the complainants show a consistent imbalance in favour of the men throughout the job classifications. The exceptions are in cleaning (even of cranes) and canteening, and (surprise?) in jobs classified as "female assorters". Women can be "storemen", but men are never "female assorters". Apart from section 36, the remarks made by personnel (mainly male) constitute a large part of the argument and make for some gripping reading.

Superintendents of departments have volunteered opinions varying from "over my dead body", "it's too dangerous, actually" and "16 kg is only part of the story". The 16 kg reference is to the weight restriction for females over 18.

The company's defence is that "attitudes" and "behaviour" are not one and the same, meaning that those opinions have not invluences recruiting patterns.

For feminists and women generally who want a job, the consistency of these remarks and female un(der)employment can only be interpreted as discrimination. Their shock value may differ, depending on individual and collective experience.

A range of material which makes sweeping judgments about the inability and unsuitability of women as workers has been presented. Problems with shift work, overtime and women's reluctance "to work alone in isolated areas" are all posed as innate female inadequacies. In fact, they are based on "family commitments" (which male workers obviously don't have) and fear (unspoken), but have not, until now, been regarded as responsibilities to be shared by men and women, employers and employees.

Many references to work as being "arduous" and weights as "heavy" have only now been "forcibly" substantiated (put to the test by the campaign and anti-discrimination legislation).

As late as December 1984 (!) the employment office had to undertake a massive survey of the steelworks, department by department, to obtain relevant information simply in relation to "point of entry" jobs. For the first time, objects were actually weighed. The company also tries to defend itself by saying that its aim is to produce steel, not paper. The latter refers to the lack of written policy since the anti-discrimination laws have been passed.

But, as pointed out by Basten, a change in occupational health and safety legislation did prompt management to inform employees. It goes without saying that 10,000 employees can only be managed on the basis of written directives, i.e. firm policy statements. AI&S cries poor, too, saying it can't be "required to undertake capital expenditure in order to be able to employ women".

The case of *Najdovska v. AI&S* (which includes categories of complaints/complainants regarding non-employment, retrenchment, workers' compensation and damages) cannot but contribute to change in management and union practice, as well as a change of mind in all who learnt about it. The case shows a backwardness of attitude in regard to women which can only be compared with that of 19th century industrialists to the labor movement.

"Being a man" is not a genuine qualification where the essential nature of the job calls for physical strength or stamina: and that is only one of the conclusions presented to the tribunal. Now it's public knowledge.

***Maike Lef.***

## THE NEW RIGHT MOBILISES

At the time of writing, the immediate outcome of federal government moves to bring the sacked Queensland electricity

workers under a federal award is not known However, it is clear that these moves will not, of themselves, force the Queensland government to re-employ the workers. The struggle to reinstate them, and to defeat the draconian anti-union laws introduced earlier this year, will have to continue, relying mainly on long-term political and industrial work.

In fact, the labour movement is up against a long-term strategic offensive of rightwing and conservative forces. After the initial honeymoon period of the Hawke government, these conservative forces have remobilised with a vengeance around several key issues, with a clear long-term strategy to destabilise the political situation, undermine and push back progressive reforms, and prepare the way for the return of conservative governments which would make Malcolm Fraser look like a moderate.

The most reactionary of these forces do not aim merely to replace Labor governments with Liberal/National ones. They want conservative governments of the Thatcher and Reagan ilk. They want to destroy or weaken the power and effectiveness of the labor and progressive movements, and they want to "change the political agenda" through an ideological offensive along Thatcher/Reagan lines.

The Queensland government's onslaught on unions is not just designed to whittle away and eliminate traditional rights of workers and unions. It is also the opening shot in a long-term campaign to undermine the very basis of industrial unions by enforcing and encouraging contract labour and non-unionism wherever possible, as has happened for the moment with some workers in the power industry.

The Queensland moves are being closely watched by conservative and reactionary forces around the country, as a test case for possible further wide-ranging attacks against unions and the labor movement nationally.

These forces would like to undermine and weaken the unions along the lines of Reagan and Thatcher. The US "model" is especially attractive, with union numbers there down to 17 percent of the workforce, contract labor rampant in industries such as building, and where the unions couion't prevent Reagan's destruction to the Air Traffic Controllers union some years ago.

The aim is not just the traditional one of taming unions in times of economic crisis. Conservative forces also want to cut off the possibilities opened up by the Accord, in which the union movement has widened its horizon of interest to a broad range of social and industrial issues beyond the traditional wages and conditions.

Powerful corporate and political forces do not want to see the possibilities for union and workers' involvement in decision-making around these issues realised, especially involvement in economic planning and industry policy, the traditional preserve of capital.

Nor do they want the unions to gain further public stature, preferring to push them back into the union-bashers' mould of disruptors of essential services.

Perhaps the most significant element of the conservative revival, at least in the longer term, is a carefully-planned ideological offensive. This is not being directed by rightwing academics or politicians and their advisers, but by some highly conscious corporate chiefs and their paid ideologists.

Chief among these is Hugh Morgan, Managing Director of Western Mining Corporation. A recent *Sydney Morning Herald* article described him as "at the centre of a large and growing network of activists who are seeking to reshape the political agenda in this country".

Morgan astutely observes that "you won't get change through politicians". Politicians, he notes, can only accept what is accepted in public opinion polls. "So you have to change public opinion."

Morgan's way is to finance and to be a patron of various conservative "think tanks" such as the Centre for Independent Studies in Sydney, and Melbourne's Institute of Public Affairs.

The Sydney centre has an annual budget of $350,000, mostly supplied by corporations and individuals. Its director, Greg Lindsay, says: "We are seeking to change public opinion by producing well-researched material."

Morgan and his allies have selected four broad targets for their ideological bullets: the education system, the growth of the public sector, the power of trade unions, and the arbitration system.

(Interestingly, he sees the last as Australia's greatest single problem.)

He blames Australia's economic problems on what he claims are the enormous powers of the unions, "not subject to limitation". He cites opinion polls which show a great majority of Australians believe union power is too great.

The connection between the Morgan ideology and current Queensland events is clear from Bjelke-Petersen's remark to *Business Review Weekly* (March 29): "The balance between employers and unions is now fair for the first time in years and we'll be seeing it stays this way."

These reactionary and conservative forces are at present not fully united and co-ordinated, and are certainly not yet winning the day. However, the possibilities are being created for a concerted destabilisation campaign with similarities to that waged during the second and last term of the Whitlam government.

The labor and progressive movements will have to develop broad and effective responses if they are to avert the 1980s equivalents of November 11, 1975, and Malcolm Fraser's eight-year rule.

***Brian Aarons.***

## *40TH ANNIV— ERSARY OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI*

History repeats itself?

August 6 will mark the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima by

the United States (the first act of nuclear warfare), and repeated days later on another Japanese city, Nagasaki.

Many who had experienced the Second World War saw the bombings as a merciful act saving the lives of untold thousands of Allied troops in the defeat of Japanese fascist militarism. History has proven otherwise, with the exposure of American deception and lies. The United States had rejected Surrender-Peace initiatives made by the Japanese, Soviet Union and Switzerland. The United States military intelligence knew of the imminent collapse of the Japanese defence effort following massive defeats inflicted by the allies upon Japanese land forces, including the near total destruction of their naval capacity (and the impending entry of Soviet forces would have opened up an eastern front through China). These factors have put paid to the military rationale for the bombings, propaganda still peddled by the USA. Further disclosures of the USA's real motives included the ruling out of a "no-death" demonstration of nuclear bombs in favour of effective, quick deployment on civilian populations, mainly for the purposes of experimentation. This assisted the USA's efforts to achieve military superiority over its ally, the Soviet Union (in effect, the first move of the '50s cold war).

The legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is not just its victims and the survivors (or Hibakusha, as they are known in Japan), but the realisation that the Second World War was the *first nuclear war*, and that a second would wipe out humanity as we know it.

In the words of Wilfred Burchett, the first western reporter (and an Australian) to view the destruction, both physical and psychological, that was Hiroshima, "Hiroshima never again".

The adage that history repeats itself, first as tragedy, secondly as farce is a haunting reminder that only the apostles of Armageddon will win the next nuclear war.

The unity and strength displayed by the peace and disarmament movement around Australia in the March 30 Palm Sunday rally, is the primary objective of the Sydney Hiroshima Day Committee. Planning is well under way. the focus of the commemoration will be a central city march and rally on Saturday, 3 August. The committee is also acting as a co-ordinating body for local and regional groups' activities leading up to (and around) Hiroshima Day.

This is particularly important for local peace groups, church congregations, councils, community and solidarity groups. One such example is the targeting of Sydney's western suburbs for a major action. Support for the Sydney City Council ceremonies and peace group activities such as the People for Nuclear Disarmament Art Exhibition will be an important part of the committee's activities, as well as the highlighting of the peace movement's campaigns for a Nuclear Free Pacific and Indian Ocean zone, with support for the independence and integrity of the New Zealand Labor government's stand on nuclear warships

Both individual and group sponsorships are urgently required to build the broadest unity into action and to finance central and local commemoration activities.

***Contact:*** NSW Hiroshima Day Committee, C/- Box 32, Trades Hall, Goulburn Street, Sydney, or ring the Australian Peace Committee on 267.6741. In South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria, Queensland and Northern Territory, contact your state peace offices of the Australian Peace Committee, People for Nuclear Disarmament, United Nations Association or the Australian Council of Churches.

***Ian Lisser.***

## PROSPECTS FOR THE VICTORIAN A.L.P.

The milk run enjoyed by the Cain Labor government in its first term of office in Victoria is unlikely to be repeated through its second term. The Opposition made up enough ground during the March elections to put it within a one percent swing for government — the closest in four years. It has already begun the process of destabilisation. The undoubted influence of both National Party and Liberal Party members among some dairy farmers in the milk war is a continuation of this.

The Opposition will also take every opportunity to exploit the deteriorating economic conditions facing governments in coming years. The Cain government can no longer afford the luxury of continuing the "don't rock the boat" approach of its first term. The electorate will be looking for a more imaginative approach which will involve some hard decision-making, particularly in the area of manufacturing, which may not be to the liking of big business interests.

It may no longer be appropriate to see the Victorian electorate in terms of how one Cain staff member put it: *Sure, our approach is moderate, it is conservative. But that won't hurt us in Victoria because this is a conservative state .... Victorians don't take risks."*

This is not to say that the Labor government has been idle in the area of reform since first coming to power in 1982. Improvements in public transport, greater opportunities for women through programs such as affirmative action, and a more sympathetic approach to social welfare are achievements to point to. Other important reforms in occupational health and safety and workers' compensation have been delayed through Opposition control of the Upper House in Parliament.

Labor, for the first time, will not only have a second term in government but may have control of both Houses of Parliament. From 14 July, Labor's Upper House majority will be two, but it could lose control if the Supreme Court upholds a Liberal Party appeal against the result of the Nunawading seat which saw Labor awarded the seat through a lottery after a tied vote.

Premier John Cain

The result of a likely by-election will determine the reforming road will come from the Socialist Left faction will now has 12 of Labor's 23 Upper House seats and six ministers.

directions available to the Cain government. If Labor retains control of the Upper House, the path to greater reform is open to it. Pressure to take the

Apart from the two industrial reform packages mentioned above, the left will be pushing for implementation of the party's social justice policy which includes setting up a new Human Resources Department. This department would be responsible for reforms in education, health, aged care, housing, law and civil rights, police, community welfare, corrections, consumer rights, youth, women, ethnic groups and the Aboriginal community.

Apart from Opposition attempts to sink the ship of state, the other destabilising factor within the Labor Party will be efforts to change policies by the incoming rightwing delegates from the recently readmitted NCC/IAC influenced unions.

While their readmission will take some time to have effect on policies, Labor Unity and the right could use delaying tactics to prevent radical legislation until those policies are changed.

All these factors point to hectic and rough sailing ahead for the Cain government. Certainly, basic and fundamental changes won't be forthcoming. That's not what Labor governments are on about. But a calm sailing approach in rough seas will make the government a sitting shot for the Liberals.

***Brian Murphy.***

## OVERSEAS STUDENTS

It's on again. Tuition fees for tertiary students resurfaced recently in the May mini-budget only to be knocked down after a public hue (read electorate) reminded the government that, once again, its slip was showing.

Yet even Education Minister, Senator Susan Ryan, will publicly admit that there is the ultimate possibility that she will be defeated over the reintroduction of fees for Australian students. Of course, overseas students didn't fare quite so well.

Since 1979, when Fraser introduced the "visa charge" for foreign students, there have been steady fee increases from both Liberal and Labor administrations. These fee hikes have been matched by an equally vigorous publicity campaign by the media, some academics, politicians, government officials, and groups like National Action who have variously claimed that overseas students are "displacing" Australian students, costing the taxpayer "too much", causing racism and that educating overseas students is only educating the rich anyway.

Nevertheless, all these claims have been dispelled through two government reports, the *Jackson Report* and the *Goldring Report* with the latter stating, "the major factor in reducing the capacity of Australian educational institutions in providing places for all qualified applicants has been the decline, in real terms, of government funding over the past few years".

Under the new government policy, overseas students will be required to pay 30 percent towards the "cost" of their fees, with the introduction, as the *Jackson Report* favours, of full-cost fees after 1988, as well as facing tough new entry quotas in universities. On top of this, a steering committee will be set up to draw up guidelines which would allow tertiary institutions to offer additional places, at full cost, in courses specifically tailored for overseas students.

When Senator Ryan finally took the razor gang's fee proposal to federal caucus and secured a reaffirmation of ALP policy of "no fees", she helped maintain, in appearance at least, that Labor's commitment to a free and equitable education system, is intact. But is it?

There are now clear signs that not only is Labor developing its education policy via a secreted and back-door route, the Overseas Student Program (OSP), but that this flatfooted approach to the delicate foreign policy implications of the OSP will prove disastrous for Australia's relations with Southeast Asia.

Successive governments have commissioned reports into overseas students and foreign aid/trade. Under Fraser, the *Jackson Report* was set up to consider policy on overseas students in the context of development assistance and trade benefits under the Australian overseas aid program. Under Labor, the *Goldring Report*, entitled "Mutual Advantage", was formed to review private overseas student policy.

Ironically, Labor has favored the recommendations arising from the Liberals' report, the *Jackson Report*, proposing full-cost fees, and premised upon education as a marketable export commodity. Goldring states, "if you are going to retain the principle of free education in Australia, there is no way you can have fees for some students and no fees for others .... " According to Steven Gan of the NSW Overseas Students Collective (NSWOSC), a group representing OS from Sydney University, NSW University, Macquarie University, University of New England, Australian National University and NSW Institute of Technology, the government is looking towards an education "package" for overseas students, similar to those in the UK and the USA, being sold to the third world via private universities based here, "It was part of the *Jackson Report* to say that Australia does have very good educational facilities, and that it could, with some packaging (more development oriented courses, etc.) be sold to the third world," he said. Goldring goes on record as saying, "The consequences of imposing full-cost fees, even if accompanied by a scholarship scheme, would outweigh the goodwill and other benefits flowing to Australia from the program ....

It's with political dexterity like this that the government has been able to develop both the administrative bureaucracy and policy capable of levying fees, and viewing education as a commodity, without any real public debate or recognition. "I think Australian students should realise that it is a step towards the privatisation of the education system," says Steven Gan. And as one overseas student newssheet described it, "The overseas student fee is not a separate issue, overseas students ***are paying*** tuition fees".

Labor needs cuts in items like education in general, and overseas students in particular, to finance its deficit. May's mini-budget arrived minus any of Finance Minister Walsh's big item slashes like tertiary fees (estimated to be worth between $180-230 million) or Medicare. The federal caucus has compromised with Senator Ryan on an alternative to fees. Instead, they want a "performance audit" on expenditure priorities within tertiary institutions to combat what is perceived to be "wastage and misuse of taxpayers' funds", as one MP put it.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition, John Howard, has described the budget cuts as "illusory". In some respects he may be right for, as *The Financial Review* has pointed out, they are generally cuts to the "forward estimates". In other words, most of the funding will be restored ***before*** the next election, but not before Labor has demonstrated to big business that it is serious about reducing the deficit.

There is nothing "illusory", however, about what the budget tells us about the development of education policy: the government has been moving decisively and quietly in but one direction. At a recent meeting between Senator Ryan and overseas student leaders in Canberra, they were informed that the government's policy on overseas students was not open to negotiation. Senator Ryan, flanked by five male advisers in what was described as an extremely "hostile meeting", responded to the students who raised the issue that OS were still being "victimised" by allegedly replying "That may well be the case". She offered neither support nor solutions. One student present at the meeting said "She virtually said that if we didn't like it we should just go home".

And if present policy continues, overseas students may do just as the minister suggests. Surveys conducted across campuses indicate that as many as 84.5 percent of students will return home without completing their courses because of financial hardship. Late last year when the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mr. Mahathir, visited Australia, he expressed concern at the imposition of fees on Malaysian students who currently constitute 56 percent of the 11,000 or so foreign students studying here. During his visit, masked Malay students demonstrated against his repressive home rule, and particularly the anti-student *Universities and University Colleges Act* which severely curtails students' rights to organise themselves.

The *Goldring Report* has highlighted the delicate foreign policy implications of the OSP. Overseas students spend $105 million annually in Australia, exceeding by $20 million the estimated $85.4 million the government outlays on overseas student education. Foreign governments have indicated that they do not take kindly to the myths of the

"cost" of educating overseas students. In 1983 the Malaysian government initiated a "Buy British Last" campaign to protest at the U.K.'s imposition of fees on foreign students. Such a campaign could conceivably be levelled against Australia.

And there are now more cracks in Labor's new education plan. They appear to be centring around the issue of internal academic autonomy. At its May meeting, the Professorial Board at the University of NSW passed a series of resolutions affirming that "admission to all Australian universities ought to be determined by each university primarily on the relative academic merit of applicants".

The success or failure of overseas students in resisting these policy developments will depend partially on the responses of the broad student movement. Overseas students have been organising autonomously since the collapse of the Australian Union of Students last year. After the National Overseas Students Conference held in Sydney in mid-May, two groups will be operating separately in the future. "NSWOSC will be concentrating on fees, quotas and racism," said Steven Gan, and has already placed a list of demands before the government, while a conservative grouping from Victoria will campaign for a freeze in fees. Following the conference, a co-ordinating committee has been set up to look into the formation of a National OS "Network", the latest catchword of the student movement.

In 1981, students successfully lobbied the Democrats and eventually Labor in the Senate to halt the reintroduction of fees under Fraser. The current situation is obviously a more sophisticated and disguised one; Labor has already imposed tertiary fees on overseas students and, in doing so, has fully accepted the principle of "user pays". Additionally, structures and policies are either being formulated or implemented to privatise the education sector, and a simple transfer of these principles and policies is all that's needed so that they apply to all students. With the final demise of AUS last year, and no alternative national structure in the offing, who will save us from the Laberals now?

***Wendy Carlisle.***