

R E V I E W

# Take Off Your Hats

**Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.** Directed by Steven Spielberg. Written by George Lucas. Reviewed by Lyndell Fairleigh.

If the cap fits, wear it. And there's many a hat, cap and fez denoting character types in the latest Indiana Jones adventure. A particularly battered stetson is still the trademark of Dr Henry Jones' alter ego, Indiana, along with the now famous dirty brown leather jacket and stockwhip. Malevolence and evil still stalk in Nazi peaked caps, and the crimson fez can be relied on to add local colour.

Enter into this now familiar world the rather unworldly, if not downright idiosyncratic, plaid hat of Professor Henry Jones, Indiana's father. In this, the latest modification of the tried and true Indiana Jones formula, the heroine fades into the background as the relationship between father and son forms a focus.

Now, a plaid hat is something of a disappointment when it comes to role models, and so it was to the young Indiana. Not only that, but his father's scholarly lack of interest in anything other than mediaeval manuscripts actually thwarted the young Indiana's heroics, according to a 'flashback' prefacing *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. (The very cliched, cinemagraphic qualities of this episode heighten its obvious boyish subjectivity.) The preface also reveals

the origins of Indiana's hat, once the possession, it seems, of a gang leader who (significantly a dead ringer for the adult Indiana) wins the spoils but, in a gesture to Indy's heroism, hands over the hat.

This preface is also a doffing of cap from the man in the director's cap to the matinees of his youth which have



inspired his own film values both in style and content. Of course, Spielberg's stylised, self-conscious use of the medium is not confined to that first episode of *The Last Crusade* but shades meaning in all the Indiana Jones features. At other times, however, self-indulgence shows its full-blown colours.

Which reminds me of hats ... Spielberg's investigation of a father-son relationship is not especially profound, but it does make for some

lively and entertaining comedy. Indeed, humour as much as action moves *The Last Crusade* along at a marvellous cracking pace. Sean Connery is excellent as Professor Jones, whose scholarly values make him particularly invulnerable to any admiration for the 'man of action'. He is a cynical commentator on his son's macho posturings (though events prove that 'a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do'). There's nothing so deflating to Indiana (the name he's chosen for himself) than his father's habit of calling him 'Junior', and it can gall him into peevish, even violent, behaviour.

Unfortunately, the humour fades in the last twenty minutes of spectacular violence, sentiment and special effects. It's very much like a re-run of the finale to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, in which Nazis and Christian mythology were also central. Is this where Spielberg loses his self-conscious grip of the medium, a kind of commentary itself on the film's actions and values, and lapses into self-indulgence? Has he, like Professor Jones, finally entered into the action, lost one hat for another, and found what the Professor calls 'illumination'? And how much has faith, either of the religious kind or in something as nebulous as humanity, even love, got to do with it?

Returning to Spielberg's use of the medium; the way he deploys hats (if not clothes) to make the (wo)man; the irony he can extract from the extravagant; the loving attention to detail and to the texture of the medium itself which can renew cliché at the same time as saying, yes, this is cliché, self-conscious or self-indulgent. It is almost as if he were artefactualising: creating an artificial product that nonetheless rings 'true': like a well-crafted, if modern, replica of an ancient church bell. His delight in the medium is very close to his heart. Quite possibly he's indulging both.

# Paradigm Found

**Tools of Change**, by John Mathews, Pluto Press, 1989. \$14.95. Reviewed by Don Sutherland.

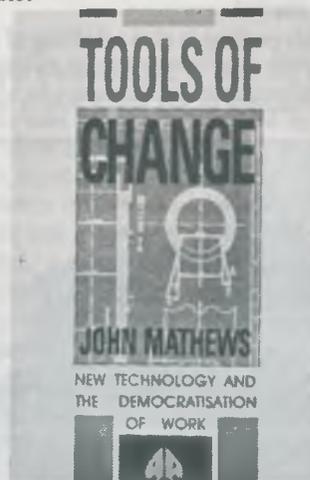
*Tools of Change* comes at an important time - a time when the issues addressed in this book are at the heart of the unfolding negotiations around award restructuring. Arguably, it is one of the most important books for activists in and outside the union movement published for many years.

Mathews seeks to convince us that work (he writes, of course, about *paid* work, of which more later) as mass drudgery must be changed through democratisation and that we are at a point in history when, in fact, it can be changed.

He argues that we have reached the limits of the "Fordist" approach to work. "Fordism" is the system of production first developed by Henry Ford in the early part of this century. Its essential characteristics are mass production by large and ever-expanding corporations; the assembly line; the intensive division of work into infinitely fragmented tasks, into bits so simple a monkey could do them, and producing a separation of thinking from doing, command from operation; all reinforced by a systematic authoritarian approach to management.

Mathews argues that the character of new technology, with its emphasis upon and requirement for flexibility, offers the new opportunity to renegotiate the way work is done. The central element of all negotiations to change work must be the infusion of democracy into all aspects of the work process - not just ballot box democracy, or representative democracy, but a continual process of democracy in the control of work. He

argues further that this must be an essential element of a wider political strategy to create a democratic alternative. However, Mathews' arguments concerning the capacity of modern technology to provide this opportunity sometimes move perilously close to the "technological determinism" which he is so concerned to refute.



The analysis starts with the origins and content of Fordism as the dominant ideology of work and its management in the twentieth century, and the reasons for its crisis.

A number of primary reasons are mentioned: the worker and student revolts of the late 'sixties; the rise of Japan, Korea and Taiwan; the floating of exchange rates; simultaneous inflation and stagnation (the latter two leading to limits on the mass market). And others are referred to: the rise of environmental concerns, workers' health concerns, concern over the pace of technological change. There is no mention in this list, however, of the rise of the women's liberation movement and the impact it had, and continues to have, upon the worlds of paid and unpaid work, public and personal life - an absence with significance for other aspects of the book.

Mathews identifies its characteristics as signals of an inbuilt contradic-

tion in Fordism: that "emulation is easy". The "solution" to the crisis of intensified mass production in low wage havens, rationalisation and computerisation "quickly comes up against structural limits in the form of poor quality goods or inflexibility of supply. The divorce of conception from execution ... represents an absolute *limit* to productivity growth in complex computer-integrated manufacturing systems, where worker flexibility and power of innovation are at a premium."

The character of work, having reached the limits of Fordism, can develop in two possible directions. The first is the "neo-Fordist" scenario in which the division of labour is intensified in a different form with the expansion of unregulated part-time work, sub-contracting and individual employment contracts; a situation in which authoritarian management is reinforced; and the rewards for work are even more unfairly and unevenly distributed. This is the New Right scenario, and Mathews' attack on it is rich and compelling.

The second scenario envisages the democratisation of work, built around human-centred uses of advanced technology and directed towards the integration of thinking and doing in the labour process. This strategy must focus upon the interactions between technology, work organisation, skills and industrial relations. These are his "tools of change". However, this scenario can only prevail if the labour movement chooses to orientate its claims and strategies towards it. Mathews' treatment of these dimensions of work is provocative, at times exciting, and at others frustrating.

His examination of new technology and management methods is typical. His review of the current developments in production technologies is crisp and comprehensive, focussing on manufacturing but then, also, on the service, communications and publishing industries. It is here that he develops most clearly his views about the implications of these technologies

- their inbuilt requirements for an educated and skilled workforce, and a flexible approach to their application; and, as a result of that, a real potential for the labour movement to renegotiate work. Unfortunately, however, his exploration of the implications of the new management techniques - just-in-time, total quality control and value-added management - is somewhat shallow in comparison.

In his discussion on work organisation, to take another example, his focus is on Ford Motor Company's struggle to improve quality through employee involvement in the 1970s. Yet he makes no mention of the strikes at Broadmeadows in 1973 and 1981 which were, particularly in 1973, strikes against Fordism. I suspect it is still early days to be predicting a new era at Ford around "employee involvement". However, these chapters are replete with clues about the type of claims which could be pursued by unions to transform the way work is done and the way it is imposed upon them. The chapter on skills development for the current claims on award restructuring is particularly significant. Mathews proposes a "skills formation ladder" based on continual training for all workers to oppose the use of new technology to intensify and deskill work. This is akin to the career path claims in award restructuring.

Mathews argues in the book's final chapters, that this democratisation of work can only be achieved on the basis of "a new form of co-operative industrial relations" or, what he calls a "framework of co-operative accommodation", rejecting an "adversarial mentality":

*...Multiskilling, teamwork and flexible deployment are bound to fail if they are not accompanied by changes in prevailing industrial relations systems.*

Now, Mathews does not intend that capitalist relations of power should remain undisturbed. He is a clear and convincing advocate that workers should encroach upon and wrest away "management prerogative", its "sacred rights" to control and make

the decisions as to what should be produced, how, and by whom.

However, it seems to me that there are limits to the successful pursuit of this strategy through "co-operative accommodation". The essence of the argument is that we must "co-operate to compete". The co-operation is to be between national capitalisms and between firms/workforces. To argue, as Mathews does, that this paradigm is the only alternative to the neo-Fordist transformation of work, teeters on the brink of a kind of "technological determinism".

There are, moreover, inherent inconsistencies in all this.

Firstly, it is uncritical of competition between units of capital, whether these units be firms or nations. Mathews does not face up to the fact that, in competition, someone wins and someone else loses. If an Australian manufacturer becomes so competitive that it gains a market or market share previously held by someone else, then the workers in the latter firm either lose their jobs or are subjected to a more intensified rate of production in order to regain that market share, or establish a new one. Are we to be unmoved by this?

Secondly, this paradigm is also uncritical of co-operation. It may be possible, indeed is probably necessary, to have truces ("accommodations"?) in which a temporary balance of power is codified in the form of an award but, even there, the overwhelming experience of shop stewards and union organisers is one of constant struggle to preserve and implement the terms of their award. "Co-operation" from the employer is never volunteered, it can only be "forced".

My doubts about the co-operation paradigm are hardened somewhat by the assumption in this book: "workers and their unions have traditionally stood back from work organisation issues, seeing them as the employer's responsibility". I do not think it is quite as simple as this. In fact, we do not have to dig very far to find a rich history of struggle against Fordism and, especially since 1968, there has

always been a "line" in our union movement which has struggled to extend the fight around wages and conditions to include a challenge to management's control over the work process.

The outcomes of these struggles can only be judged against the character of the response from employers and the state to them. Space prevents a thorough review of them here, but a few examples are the struggle over the speed of the line in the car industry, the Green Bans and numerous factory occupations and work-ins. (In fact, such struggles against Taylorism date back to the First World War.)

Since the late 'sixties many of these coincided with the emergence of modern feminism which is also very much about control - the capacity and rights of women to exert greater control over *all* dimensions of life.

Together, these movements brought a sharper focus upon the interactions between the technical and social divisions of labour. The workers who saved the Whyalla glove factory in 1974 by occupying it were mainly women. The ethnic and social divisions of labour interacted with the revolt against the technical division of labour to ignite the frustration and anger at Ford, Broadmeadows in 1973 in a way that was barely comprehended by management and union officials alike. These interactions are not dealt with satisfactorily by Mathews. The section on "Women and Work" is tacked on at the end, almost as an afterthought.

Socialist strategies, programs and priorities must not divorce the worlds of paid and unpaid work. There is now a vital opportunity, including through award restructuring, to re-evaluate the types of paid and unpaid leave arrangements that exist, and the discriminations and inefficiencies inherent in them. The best defence against attacks on holiday leave and long service leave may be to enlarge the amount of paid leave available to *all* of the workforce through a combination of new entitlements - paid maternity and paternity leave, paid education and

training, particularly - and restructuring, possibly including some modest reductions of existing entitlements like holiday, long service, sporting and academic leave.

These concerns do not render invalid John Mathews' central arguments. His fundamental tenet that we are at a turning point in history when the way work is defined and done can

be renegotiated to the benefit of all is most important. For those activists in the union movement who are looking for something better than pragmatic reasons to take award restructuring seriously, this book is essential reading.

DON SUTHERLAND works for the Trade Union Training Authority in Adelaide.

---

## Thinking Reeds

**The Thinking Reed: Intellectuals and the Soviet State from 1917 to the Present** by Boris Kagarlitsky. Verso (New Left Books imprint), London, 1988. \$39.95 (hardback). Reviewed by Denis Freney.

Gleb Kargalitsky was 24 when he was imprisoned in 1982 for producing an oppositionist *samizdat* journal, *The Left Turn*. He was released 13 months later. In August 1987 he was elected co-ordinator of the Federation of Socialist Clubs, a 'Red-Green' spectrum of left oppositionist groupings. They combat the forces on the 'right', from the stalinists and the bureaucratic conservatives of the Ligachev style to the neo-fascists of the anti-semitic *Pamyat*.

In the Philippines under Marcos, and in Chile under Pinochet, for instance, the Catholic Church remained the one institution independent of the totalitarian regimes. The Church provided a sanctuary and a platform for democratic and left opposition, but it couldn't in the Soviet Union. Under Stalin and his successors, cultural and scientific life provided something of a haven but, as Kagarlitsky so well shows, Stalin and his successors sought to squash any sign of independence.

The old Russian intelligentsia, with

its democratic and socialist traditions, had been decimated by the Revolution and Civil War. Yet the pre-stalinist years saw a flowering of intellectual endeavour. Intellectuals who survived and accepted the Soviet state were allowed to work in a 'politically neutral zone'. Independent and semi-independent journals continued to publish, even though independent newspapers did not. While Lenin, Trotsky and Bukharin did not hesitate to express their preferences in the creative arts, they never proposed any state intervention against a particular trend.

Stalin faced two potential 'oppositions' - the Old Bolsheviks, and the intelligentsia which had maintained its creative independence. Despite even the bloody holocaust of 1937, intellectual traditions continued. Manuscripts were written, hidden, even memorised. Soviet readers - and censors - became expert in reading between the lines.

Khrushchev's 1956 'secret speech' to the CPSU 20th Congress, exposing Stalin's crimes but not explaining their root causes, quickly led to the 'Thaw' and beyond. Some intelligentsia hoped Khrushchev's speech signalled a democratisation of the leadership while others saw it as simply more deception. Among students, the first oppositionist groupings and *samizdat* appeared. The radical youth returned to the Bolshevik tradition and studied the east European experience

of Yugoslavia's self-management, Nagy's Hungary and Gomulka's Poland. Opposition from the right also emerged.

Khrushchev swung wildly in his reactions. He allowed Solzhenitsyn to publish *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which immediately established him as one of the living legends of Soviet literature, but indulged in abusing the abstract artists. *Novy Mir*, the literary journal of the radical 'liberal-democrats' survived until 1970 under Tvardovsky, but its demise as an independent journal marked a radical change in the oppositionist intelligentsia. The 'delusions' of the 'liberal-democrats' were crushed, according to Kagarlitsky, while the 'rightist' tendencies, represented by Solzhenitsyn, gained ground.

The 'New Left' which took inspiration from the rise of the western New Left, the turmoil of 1968, and the Prague Spring, also went into decline. The 1970s were times of stagnation and of reaction. Yet the outright terror never re-emerged. The 'historic compromise' of the Brezhnev period allowed some room for 'careful' dissent.

In the 'seventies, Mikhail Shatrov's plays showed Lenin as human, not an icon, clashing with the newly-emerging bureaucracy. Shatrov added "a little of the official falsehood" in depicting those with whom Lenin debated, but nevertheless broke new ground. Alexander Gelman in his plays looked at the workplace, exposing much of the incompetence and creeping corruption of the bureaucrats.

Sociologist Fedor Burlatsky carried out real sociological research rather than 'quotation digging', while philosophers began to push to the limits the official Suslovian-stalinist *Diamat*. The Medvedev brothers wrote. Zhores was forced into exile, while Roy was barely tolerated in the borders between the 'legal' opposition and the 'illegal'.

All these 'critical marxists' are now in the forefront of *perestroika* and

*glasnost*. Kagarlitsky's chapter on the years of stagnation give us the best understanding yet of the intellectual roots of much of what is now commonplace in the USSR. Most of the 'legal marxists' found the way of putting their views, with some care, in legal publications, while also using *samizdat* to develop their views more fully and openly. Brezhnev and Suslov could not persecute all those using *samizdat*, hunting down only the most 'outrageous' while occasionally launching a major 'campaign' against convenient if innocuous scapegoats.

In his conclusion, written in 1982, Kagarlitsky is optimistic: "The Soviet Union stands on the threshold of democratic socialism". The working class in the Soviet Union is now 'hereditary', that is, it has existed for several generations. A class consciousness is beginning to emerge, he says, "and the statocracy possesses no means of halting that process."

He ends with a rather traditional rallying cry: "social transformations are impossible unless the working class participates", quoting the Polish experience as evidence.

Kagarlitsky earns his own self-definition of 'left' by such reliance on an ill-defined 'working class'. He too easily slips into the western marxist tradition of treating the working class as a homogeneous whole with a predestined 'revolutionary mission'. The working class, particularly in Soviet conditions, is differentiated, and often in ways that contrast with that in the West. The most underprivileged layers of workers, for example, are the white collar, tertiary-trained (teachers, doctors, etc.) while the blue collar workers have been relatively privileged in terms of salaries and status.

The latter are more likely to develop a 'trade union consciousness' in defence of those privileges, one that can be exploited by conservative demagogues. The 'professional', tertiary-educated workers, however, gain from modernisation, have links with the intelligentsia and form a fruitful sector for social change.

In the book's final chapter - an interview with the *New Left Review's* Alexander Cockburn in late 1987 - Kagarlitsky says the Left has set up a group called the Campaign for Just Prices "trying to show that price rises are not only unnecessary and unjust but anti-reformist". It's hard to see how price rises can be avoided when today's prices represent nothing but creative accounting on the part of the bureaucratic machinery. Kagarlitsky does, however, advocate "some movement towards the market" alongside "producers' democracy", with the market serving as "an indicator of the quality of our decision-making".

If the 'left' is to argue, somewhat demagogically, that there should be no price rises, it will play into the hands of the stalinist wing of the bureaucracy. The debate among those Kagarlitsky calls the 'liberal-democrats' is much more in line with realities. They advocate a market-determined price structure, combined with the break-up of state monopolies and social adjustments through state intervention to lessen the pain of the lower paid.

In Poland, Solidarity agrees in principle on the need for a price reform as part of a total economic reform package, but demands input into its content and democratic control over its implementation. The Polish opposition is obliged to develop its own very concrete economic and social, as well as political, alternative project. The same task awaits any serious political grouping in the USSR itself.

Much has happened in the past year. The 'liberal-democrats' around *Moscow News* have 'gone to the left', as Kagarlitsky would put it, and are concentrating on the critical economic issues. As Kagarlitsky himself acknowledges, the dividing line between the 'legal' and 'illegal' has almost disappeared - he himself has some limited access to the official media, in particular *XX Century and Peace*, the Peace Committee monthly on which former 'left' dissident Gleb Pavlovsky works as a journalist.

Whatever divides the 'left' and the 'liberal-democrats', there's no doubt much more unites them. They have a common enemy, and in this they find common ground with Gorbachev himself. Elsewhere, Kagarlitsky has criticised the 'liberal democrats' of *Moscow News* for defending the publication of Solzhenitsyn's still-banned works, including *The Gulag Archipelago* which is full of the author's far-right nationalist prejudices.

Yet, as Lyudmilla Saraskina, a 'radical democrat' on the 'left' on many issues, said recently on ABC radio's *The Europeans*, Solzhenitsyn is the greatest living Russian author and the Soviet readership must be able to judge for itself his politics as well as his literature. Saraskina, who has nothing in common with Solzhenitsyn's ideological position, speaks for a wide range of the intelligentsia.

Kagarlitsky would probably support the publication of all of Solzhenitsyn's work in the USSR, if only to expose his political views better. But he certainly feels no pressure to make this a central demand. It is more urgent, he argues, to publish Bukharin and Trotsky in full and allow a critical examination of their roles.

"The future of culture is the future of the country," Kagarlitsky argues in his preface. Culture for him is not confined to the creative arts, as central as they are, but is more general, including, in its political aspect, 'habits' which become the norm. *Glasnost* then is not only journalistic and artistic freedom, but the basis for such a political culture in which debate is as normal as sunrise.

Unless the economy can be put on an even keel, however, which requires a 'revolution' in economic, social and political structures, then, as Kagarlitsky and other supporters of democratisation say, the country will suffer enormous, even irremediable harm. And not only in the Soviet Union - the failure of *perestroika* would make the world a much more dangerous place.