Foreign Policy Debate
Shop-floor Organisation
Gladstone: Problems of Growth
The details of the working and living conditions of a new industrial growth area may be a revelation to some readers. In this issue, Hugh Hamilton deals with the prospects and problems of development and the special case of Gladstone, Queensland.

A celebrated case of industrial-political victimisation gives Gerry Phelan the opportunity to examine how strong workers' grass-roots organisation can shift the power balance in the factory.

A *Rinascita* interview with a former "Red Army Faction" activist on some of the pitfalls of political terrorism has been summarised by Dave Davies.

Philip Herington has interviewed Barbara Marsh and Barry Carr about the recent ferment in the Mexican Communist Party.

Mavis Robertson has written a defence and foreign policy commentary introducing two abridged speeches made in the Australian Parliament by Minister for Defence, Jim Killen, and Leader of the Opposition, Bill Hayden.

Mike Donaldson reviews Ian Cummins' *Marx, Engels and the National Movements*; Roger Coates comments on Donald Horne's *Winner Take All*; and Toni Stephens writes on Michael Sexton's *War for the Asking*. 

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The Prospects and Problems of Growth

Based on a paper delivered by Hugh Hamilton, State Secretary, Building Workers' Industrial Union, Queensland, to the Industrial Relations Society of Queensland Convention held in October 1981.

In dealing with the effects of Queensland's spectacular growth in the 1980s, we should view development as part of the big wide world. A wider horizon - a world outlook - suggests that the 1980s are a period in which enormous problems will be confronted by the world's people. Above all, there is a real danger of nuclear war, a threat which hangs over the head of every nation. Economic indicators show that the world is still in the throes of an economic slump which commenced around 1974. Without revolution or wars, countries and the people in them seem to be becoming more prone to violence.

These aspects of the world situation, along with the exponential growth of technology, the micro-electronics revolution, visual display units, robots, computers and automation are going to make the future of many of the world's people very difficult.

In Australia the 35-hour week campaign is one worker-trade union response to the new reality. Struggles against mining projects, against uranium mining, for conservation, for green bans are also signs of concern.

During the 1980s the world of the worker will be one of further alienation and isolation. A process that has been underway for several years will be speeded up. Critical intelligence and conceptual faculties, a past historical requirement for the worker, will become even more deadened or diminished because of the impact of technology. The new technology does not require the same critical craft intelligence from the workers as technology did, say, three or four decades ago.

The technology of the 1980s will no longer require the worker to have the skills of the past. To a degree these skills appear to be passing to a host of managers, engineers, supervisory personnel, planners, etc. The new materials and specialisation that are so much a part of the new technology, limit the application of established skills, and they have had massive effects on the political consciousness of the workers. Through the division and sub-division of labor, workers have no common employer and no perceived common enemy.

Specialisation has led to fewer workers
Gladstone workers at the meeting where they decided to strike over conditions in "boom town".

working for more employers, to subcontracting and self-employment. This has the effect of alienating the workers from each other and creating a sense of isolation. It certainly doesn’t reinforce a collective trade union spirit; it creates "loners". Because of fragmentation and alienation at the shop-flool level in certain circumstances, what could be referred to as the class consciousness of the workforce during the 1930s and 1940s has been greatly weakened.

Despite a high level of industrial disputation, this lack of working-class political consciousness has had its effects on the trade union movement. In Queensland, and throughout the nation, the trade union movement has become a very conservative body.

Of course, people’s consciousness — political, social, moral or otherwise — is not just determined by their part in the process of production. There are many other external factors that contribute to that consciousness.

Karl Marx’s prophecy that the socialisation of the productive forces of modern capitalism would develop a class consciousness among the workers, which would make them the grave-diggers of capitalism, hasn’t been fulfilled in advanced industrial countries. It is certainly not happening in Australia. On the contrary, modern capitalism and its enterprises have become, or are becoming, the graveyards of human energy and aspirations.

The system seems to reinforce feelings of powerlessness, anxiety, lack of identity and social isolation. This is expressed in many different ways in the workforce and in the struggles in which workers are involved.

Examples such as the Weipa dispute, a relativities dispute which lasted twelve weeks;
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the current three months’ dispute of the metal trades in the mining industry, a relativities dispute; a recent dispute at Wivenhoe where the metal unions went on strike over a safety issue, and where building and other civil workers met and carried a decision condemning the metal workers, all show the inability of construction unions in Queensland to reach an agreement on procedure for negotiating collective agreements which had been the norm for major construction projects in the past ten years. Negotiations are held up because of arguments about relativities. Demarcation disputes are worse still. One has only to reflect on the Omega dispute or, more recently, the action of the New South Wales Labor Council in expelling the Builders Laborers Federation.

None of these disputes lays a basis for the unity of the trade unions, let alone for developing a working-class consciousness. They don’t create a united force of trade union power against the employers.

In the community generally, the effects of alienation, isolation and social inequality are reflected in the riots at Brixton and elsewhere in Britain, the Star Hotel riot in Newcastle, the frustrations and traumas that people in Queensland have had in the struggle for democratic rights, in the “Right to March” movement, for example. The proposed legislation to give special powers to the police for the Commonwealth Games will have the same effect, particularly on Black Australians.

The resources boom

The boom in Queensland and the projected spectacular growth of the 1980s is energy-oriented. It is a result of the world energy crisis which followed the establishment of OPEC. Australia, rich in minerals, particularly coal, attracted foreign developers who, as owners of these resources, promote them in the world markets. It is also due, in part, to a restructuring of the western world’s economy by major multinationals, assisted by governments in countries where the multinationals have established enterprises. Within a decade or less, this restructuring may have extremely harmful effects on Australia.

The resources boom does provide a certain number of jobs in the construction, and then in the operation, of mines, smelters, berths, oil rigs and so on, as well as, sometimes, in the construction of towns. But most of the resources projects are heavily capital intensive. It is not unusual to see a production workforce of only one worker for each $1 million of capital expenditure. This is the case with most open cut mines, and it will be the case with the smelters now being built. Only multinational and large-scale capitalists, backed by foreign bankers can make that type of investment. It is not John or Jane Citizen, the small Australian investor, buying shares in major Australian companies.

The investment in the resources boom takes place at the expense of Australia’s manufacturing industry. The resources boom will make Australia a major exporter of energy resources and aluminium, with multinational companies holding a dominant position.

The value of the boom in terms of dollars and cents was outlined by Dr. Llew Edwards, Deputy Premier of Queensland, at a recent seminar:

Only two decades ago, the value of this state’s mineral production was only some $100 million.

In 1968, the value of production broke the $200 million barrier.

In 1976, the value of mineral production topped the $1,000 million mark and last year (1980 - H.H.), it reached a record $1,813 million. Last year’s figures would have gone close to the $2,000 million mark had it not been for the protracted coal industry strike and other disputes.

Over the same period, there has been a commensurate increase in state revenue from mining royalties and rail profit. In 1979-80 the state received mining royalties of $73 million and rail profits of $86 million. The net effect is that the burden of providing government services and facilities is greatly reduced for the taxpayer. The benefits of the resource projects are thus being made
available to all Queenslanders, and at an increasing rate as the development continues.

At a time when the states have been asked to tighten their belts, the revenue from mining activity assumes increased importance.

**Manufacturing industry**

I do not agree with Dr. Edwards that benefits of the resources projects are being made available to us all. In order to make our trade equitable, this enormous export of resources means there is tremendous pressure on Australia to import goods. We are importing manufactured goods which we could be producing ourselves, but are not. The controllers of the global economy of the western world, that is, the multinationals, have decided which countries will produce particular products. They have already closed down sections of our manufacturing industry, or transferred these sections to cheaper Asian areas with which Australian factories cannot compete effectively. The multinationals have set up "Free Trade Zones" with host countries in Asia.

Much of the Australian manufacturing industry that has served us well in the past will soon no longer exist. Some sections of manufacturing, such as factories producing rubber goods, footwear, textiles and clothing, have already been seriously weakened. Their continuing decline acutely aggravates the unemployment crisis.

Australia's self-sufficiency and national independence will suffer from all this. The plaudits of Bjelke-Petersen, Fraser, Anthony, Lang Hancock and others for what they call the "great resources boom" cannot compensate for de-industrialisation of our economy. There will be short-term benefits confined relatively to a few. But little is being said of the consequences which are being, and will be, experienced by many people.

Certainly, we should share our resources with those who need them in other countries. But we should not do this at the expense of self-sufficiency, independence and community well-being.

One cannot scoff at the potential investment in the resources boom. The current and projected capital investment in the resources boom is mind-boggling. The potential investment for Western Australia is $10 billion. This includes over $4 billion for the North-West Shelf. Queensland’s potential resources investment is $8,790 million in Central Queensland Mines (Queensland coal mines are 84 percent foreign-owned), smelters and other projects. New South Wales has a projected potential of $7,230 million, South Australia has an estimated $2,642. Back in the field is Victoria, the second most populous state, with an investment estimated at about $2,770 million.

It wasn't all Hamer's fault that the Victorian economy is in bad shape. The rich resources are found outside of Victoria, and this state is suffering from the restructuring and de-industrialisation of manufacturing industry. There has been a 13.2 percent reduction in the workforce in Victoria's manufacturing industry; 13.2 percent equals 68,500 people. Some of these may come to Queensland looking for the big money that is allegedly floating around on major resources projects. But a significant percentage would be older workers who very seldom are prepared to travel to start all over again. When they lose their jobs, either they remain unemployed or else they find other jobs, usually lower-paid and very often outside the industry in which they are experienced and skilled.

Any shortage of skilled labor condemns those in control. Skills can be lost forever. In 1974, for example, the workforce in the building industry was reduced by some 70,000 workers, a number of whom were highly skilled. Despite the fact that the building industry has now picked up and needs more skilled workers, many of those employed until 1974 have not returned to the building industry.

**Construction projects**

The construction of projects associated with the resources development requires worker mobility. To obtain this, the employer attempts to attract the worker with higher wages.
A typical project construction worker is male and under the age of 35 years; generally, he does not belong to the town, locality or area where the construction is situated. He comes from out of town, often from out of the state. There is a big complement of Victorians and New Zealanders working on major construction projects throughout Queensland.

Usually, the construction worker has a young family. Families are often domiciled in the town closest to the site, but that can be up to 300 kilometres away. Ten per cent of families live on the site in company caravan parks.

Single workers are accommodated in what are called "dongas" — on-site camp accommodation. If he is a building worker or civil worker involved in constructing the camp foundations, site or road preparation, he is required to be even more nomadic and mobile than other project workers. He spends about five or six months on each project. A metal worker can expect employment in the one place for a period of 12 to 18 months, or longer.

The construction of major projects for the resources boom sees frequent shifts of workers and their families from one site to another. This usually means time lost between jobs, and no wages. Some of what is supposed to be such good money — a building worker receives $68.25 over-award payment — is eaten up in the lost time between jobs and in the cost of travelling to rejoin families at weekends. The killer in the resources area is not unsafe practice on the job, but death on the roads getting from town to the job. And boredom or lack of worthwhile entertainment on the construction sites can add to the pressure to spend more money than might be normal on drinking and gambling.

Now let's consider in some detail the accommodation available to construction workers. For single men, the air-conditioned "dongas" are now the norm. There are eight rooms in each unit. Each room is approximately 2.5 metres by three metres, with a bed, a table, a chair, a built-in wardrobe and the air-conditioner. Air-conditioning did not come about by the good grace of the employers. They agreed reluctantly to this facility after seven or eight years of fairly intensive struggle and argument.

Even now there are a few employers and major clients who want to argue their way out of the agreement by suggesting that the heat at, say, Hay Point may not be as great as at German Creek, and therefore fans will do instead of air-conditioning units. Some don't supply accommodation at all.

And now consider the site. Most of the mines are built in the desert; there is nothing there except open country where cattle and bullocks graze, where roads have to be built, water has to be piped, electricity and rail lines constructed. The sites are often situated hundreds of kilometres from any major centre.

The camp site

The camp site is laid out so that each "donga" opens onto an open verandah which is referred to as a "breezeway". This is a covered way between two rows of "dongas". There can be anything from 16 to 32 "dongas" facing one another with a central breezeway. At the end of each breezeway there is an ablution block with toilets, wash basins and showers. Each camp also has a couple of laundries, a mess hut, a community building and a wet canteen. Most of these units are transportable. They are shifted from camp to camp.

A married man with his family on a construction project is offered a caravan site. This consists of a concrete pad for the caravan annex and the provision of lighting, ablutions and laundries. To help compensate for living in caravans and not requiring the companies to spend any money on feeding them, these workers receive a $30.00 allowance per week.

Permanent camps are built on site by the construction workers for the production workers. These are of higher standard. Single men's accommodation is equivalent to three-star motel accommodation. Houses are built, too. But none of these are made available to construction workers. The powers-that-be
have decided that "dongas" and caravan sites are good enough for them.

To date, the employers and clients have got away with this situation, but I don't think that will be the case for much longer.

It is timely to reflect on the earlier resources boom in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the construction of the Q.A.L. Alumina plant at Gladstone, the berthing facilities built at Hay Point and the construction of the Greenvale Nickel plant, quarry and rail line. At that time, the major clients, employers and the state government thought they had little or no responsibility for the accommodation of the construction workforce and their families.

Quality of life

Gladstone reached a situation in the early 1970s where one in four people lived in a caravan park. The local council had to introduce by-laws to allow temporary accommodation in the local showgrounds, while the Bole Street caravan park had 1,250 people living almost on top of one another.

A similar situation developed in Mackay during the construction of the Hay Point berthing facilities. The showground had to be opened up to construction workers because the employers accepted only token responsibility for accommodation.

In the first years of the 1970s, the Townsville Council had to make the decision to shift hundreds of construction workers who were squatting on the Esplanade. This was during the early period of the Greenvale Nickel project. The construction companies couldn't accommodate these workers nor could the town.

We have learned some lessons from those days, but serious problems remain.

To examine the social impact and quality-of-life issues associated with the resources boom, one has to differentiate between projects such as mines built in entirely new areas, and projects built in established areas.

In the case of the construction of a new mine, it is usual that a new town is also built. Mines built at German Creek, Gregory, Saraji, Peak Downs, Norwich Park, Oaky Creek, all have new towns that service them — mostly nice little towns with a good environment and a very pleasing community atmosphere. But these are often hundreds of kilometres from any major centre and, therefore, far away from parents, sisters, brothers and friends. Such isolation contributes to physical and mental trauma experienced by young workers, especially young parents.

The construction of a township lags many months behind the construction of a mine. The first houses built in the new towns are made available to the management and top staff of the construction authority. Other houses that come on line remain empty until the occupancy is taken up by the production management and staff. Houses are never made available to construction workers, but the company makes them available to the production worker at a subsidised rent. The occupant is urged to buy the house, and many do so.

In some of the major project areas, a very heavy lobby is beginning to surface among the workforce, both in construction and in production, for the temporary camp sites and the permanent camp sites to be built in the environment of the closest town rather than at the site of the project itself. The construction workforce at the Gladstone smelter should be accommodated in the Gladstone environment rather than at Boyne Island, 30 kilometres from town. This would provide the possibility of a variety of activities outside of working hours.

Gladstone

But all is not well in Gladstone itself. The conditions it is experiencing are a classic example of what happens to a town and its people when they are associated with rapidly developing construction and production of major enterprises. The shocking social consequences prompted the Building Workers Industrial Union to initiate the research for, and the publication of, a booklet on the effects of the resources boom on the town. Appropriately named Busting with the
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Boom, this booklet is available from the BWIU, Queensland Branch, or from the Trades and Labor Council of Queensland.

Up until 1960, Gladstone was a fairly placid town with a population around 7,200. In 1963, the Gladstone Meatworks (Swifts) which was part of the United States-based National Meat Group was abruptly and callously closed down. Lots of people thought it was the end of the town but several years later Gladstone developed into a major port and the world’s biggest alumina plant was constructed on the site of the former meatworks.

In the mid-1960s it wasn’t possible to foresee the development about to happen around Gladstone. This failure to anticipate the future was one factor contributing to Gladstone’s low quality of life during the construction of Q.A.L. and such other major facilities as the coal loaders and shipping berths.

It was possible to imagine a temporary boom until the completion of Q.A.L.; then construction would move on. But it didn’t; it transferred a mile across the harbor to the site of the Gladstone power station.

Whatever the excuse for the 1960s, there is no excuse today. We now know what is in store for Gladstone. While the population in 1960 was 7,288, in December 1979 it was 26,250. The estimate for 1985 is 46,200 and a population of 62,500 is projected for 1990, and these projected levels are based only on developments now under construction or in the late stages of planning. With this knowledge we should be able to plan properly for the needs of Gladstone’s people. Growth of population needs a corresponding growth in services and facilities. So far, the services and facilities have not been provided.

**The current situation**

The current situation in Gladstone is one where more and more people have to live in caravan parks. Some houses are being built, for example, the owners of the new smelter are building a considerable number of houses at Boyne Island. But these will only be made available to production workers when the smelter starts to come on line. They are not available for the thousands of construction workers who make up the town’s population at present.

And some people are cashing in on the housing shortage. Two-storey buildings are going up all over the place. The weekly rent for a unit is around $120, with a month’s rent in advance and a $250 bond — the landlords don’t want what they call “riff-raff”.

In the pre-planning for the smelter, the unions proposed that houses be constructed prior to work commencing on the smelter, but no houses were made available. Following discussions with the constructors of the smelter, single men’s accommodation was provided for 100 workers and a caravan park was made available to accommodate 60 people, but this was for a workforce which the company knew would peak at 1,700 plus 300 or more employed in ancillary workshops around town.

Less than six months into construction, the company got into difficulties accommodating employees. A temporary camp was used to accommodate a further 50 workers, and negotiations took place with the Calliope Shire for more land to extend a temporary camp for another 150 workers.

The easy way out for some companies is to pay the employee a $98 living-away-from-home allowance in place of free board and accommodation. But such a policy causes enormous hardships in the community. It forces up rents and other charges. And, of course, the companies always want to argue that the workers have “local status” since these workers are not entitled to any allowance. It is not easy to define a local in a community whose population increased nearly four times in fifteen years.

In 1980, a survey in Gladstone showed a majority of these interviewed thought accommodation, rents, the cost of living, transport, child care, recreation facilities, schools and work availability all unsatisfactory to very unsatisfactory.

Gladstone, like other towns affected by resources development, also offers few
employment opportunities for women. Sexist attitudes prevail at all levels, including in the unions. Women are seldom considered for employment on construction or production.

Action

On March 4, 1981, I made the following statement to the *Gladstone Observer*:

“We (the BWIU — H.H.) feel that all future major construction should be halted until such time as accommodation (houses, not caravans) and other facilities are available, and a scheme is worked out to give more relief to local residents from high rents and other service charges.

Should the government refuse to co-operate, the Trades and Labor Council should call a stopwork meeting of all members of all unions on all projects and other workplaces in the Gladstone area, and also extend invitations to community groups and citizens to attend the meeting.

Such a gathering could be the beginning of a large protest movement demanding that the people’s quality of life must come before so-called development.

Gladstone’s mayor, Col Brown, responded:

Although I don’t condone such action, it might be a definite means of gaining attention from the governments.

He indicated that only a short time before he would have considered such a call for action irresponsible, but lack of response from both state and federal governments had changed that.

The mass meeting took place on July 1. A public debate preceded the meeting. It was advertised through the distribution of 5,000 leaflets and a half-page advertisement in the local press.

The resolution before the meeting said:

This meeting of Gladstone workers resolves to ban any further major construction in the Gladstone environment until assurances are given by state and federal governments and companies that adequate finance will be made available to overcome infrastructure and community service needs of the area to the satisfaction of the executive of the Trades and Labor Council of Queensland in consultation with the project unions and the Gladstone Trades and Labor Council.

Major projects shall be defined from time to time by the executive of the Trades and Labor Council of Queensland, in consultation with the project unions and the Gladstone Trades and Labor Council, having regard to the capital cost and to the impact any resultant labor force increase, construction and/or operations, would have on the Gladstone social structure.

The mass stopwork meeting was called by the Queensland Trades and Labor Council, with the support of the Australian Workers Union, the Gladstone Provincial Trades and Labor Council, the Council of Australian Government Employee Organisations and almost forty individual unions. It was held in the showground — the former emergency caravan park.

The people in Gladstone know from experience the shortcomings and lack of facilities in their town. In 1972, the *National Times* has described Gladstone as: “A slum with the world’s biggest alumina plant”. Until now, however, many residents have felt unable to do anything effective. They are aware of the awesome wealth and power of the companies — including offshoots of such multinationals as Kaiser of the United States, Rio Tinto Zinc Corporation of the United Kingdom, and Sumitomo of Japan. There have been divisions, of greater or lesser degree, among the community — between workers and others, between “locals” and workers from elsewhere.

Mass meeting

The July meeting may well have transformed that situation. It brought together workers from virtually all jobs and callings: a group of hotel service workers stood alongside a knot of workers who had come straight from the smelter construction site. About 4,000 people were present. Labor Council president, Harry Hauenschild, who chaired the meeting, called it a “historic gathering”.


Union speakers stressed that they do not oppose development, but they are against anything which, in the name of "development" worsens the lifestyle or the environment, or both, of the local communities. They oppose multinationals which take huge sums in profits out of the community but allocate only relatively minor and quite inadequate amounts to meet the needs which their operations have created.

The first speaker, a metalworker from the powerhouse, was against the motion, he saw it as a threat to jobs. The next speaker, who had come to Gladstone from Western Australia, was also against. Then others spoke. A construction worker in a Jackie Howe singlet told of the effects of caravan life and other conditions:

Mum suffers, the kids suffer and dad is glad to get away from it for eight hours a day at work.

He said that the multinationals were affecting Australia.

So let's do something about it; it's our bloody country. Vote for your own future, the futures of your wives and kids. Vote for Australia.

It came eventually to the time to vote. There was to be a count if the voting was at all in doubt. In fact, a forest of hands, thousands of them, were raised in favor of the motion; a mere sprinkling of hands was against.

The workers, fed up with social inequality, decided overwhelmingly to be part of the decision-making process on development in the area. Wherever union members gathered after the meeting — in the pubs, in the street, and back on the jobs, there was animation and jubilation. And this spirit flowed through to other sections of the community. There was a feeling that, after years-long frustrations and exasperations, something decisive was now on the agenda which could compel action to end the notoriously dismal housing situation and other social conditions, in what Premier Bjelke-Petersen has audaciously called "the glamor development area of Australia".

The mass meeting was a first step, but a big step. Consultations will be held with the whole community to ensure a concerted and co-ordinated common effort. Co-operation will be sought from governments and the companies.

**Press reaction**

Next day the *Gladstone Observer*, in its editorial, said:

The revolution has come.

Gladstone is a city in revolt.

The Gladstone workers who voted overwhelmingly at a mass meeting yesterday to ban major construction work until the city gets aid have issued governments and big companies alike with the final ultimatum.

The ultimatum is simply this: Pay up or stay out.

The problems of boom city have long been aired in the national media. The boom has brought big companies to Gladstone in search of big profits but the rapid influx of workers has also placed big burdens on local facilities and amenities and dramatically forced up the cost of living. Accommodation rentals have gone through the roof, real estate prices have skyrocketed, rates have soared, and social welfare facilities have been strained to the limit and beyond.

The cost of living in boom city has prompted many people to label it "doom city", forced lower income earners and pensioners to head for the hills. Local residents have complained about the industrial pollution problem and conservationists have warned that worse is yet to come.

The description is apt. While the revolution hasn't arrived, a further comment from the *Observer* sums up the attitude of Gladstone’s workers:

But at the very least, their actions will serve as a gesture of disenchantment, a symbol that a boom is only a boom when all reap the benefits.
For wage- and salary-earners involved in vehicle assembly, class is not a dead issue. It does not present itself as an intellectual problem, as a matter of the nice determination of class boundaries, and it is not a subject that would normally be discussed over lunch. Rather does class present itself as an expression of the experience of living human beings. That experience is a day-by-day event, five days a week, of routine activity which yields a pay packet which in turn gives them access to life, to the pleasures outside work. In a normal working day the dominant activity is work, preparing for work and travelling to and from work. There is little choice about the work: what is done is done for others, the way they want it, at the quality and at the rate they set.

For an assembler, there’s no room for creativity. The mind is separated from the body. Doing the job requires the body not the mind, and so the mind just exists. There are times though, in some of these routine days, when the mind does link up with the body. At such times, for those involved, mind and body become alive — the plant becomes alive. It is an industrial action that the two are fused.

The power of the employer is felt in the daily work-routine and felt just as much when industrial action is being used to improve some aspect of that routine. There is some power up there, and the workers don’t have it. That is to say, normally they don’t have it. But when, collectively, the workers become determined to change something, they become powerful. Power then is, apparently, a conditional thing. It resides where it does because everybody concerned considers it right and proper that it should. It is a collection of daily practices and thoughts about these practices which express the class character of the relations between those involved in the vehicle industry.

The object of this essay is to detail some of the specifics of class relations and to highlight the importance of workers’ organisation on the shop-floor as a flexible and effective tool in their mediation. The focus throughout will be on the people at the workshop floor to try to understand something of their daily working life and some of the responses they make to it. Other important details will be mentioned only
where they serve that purpose. Therefore little attention will be paid to the structure of the industry or the manner in which the main working-class institutions (the trade unions) interact at the state or federal level with the employers inside or outside the Arbitration Commission.

II

The over-riding management consideration in vehicle-manufacturing and assembly plants is that actual production should meet the targeted production level on any given day. It is the target level in combination with the division of labour which is the bane of existence of the vehicle assembler. The assembly line, which usually attracts the blame for the problems of the industry, is merely the scapegoat. By focusing on the technology of the line attention is diverted away from the social system of the factory, of who controls whom to do what, when and how. The assembly line, which is a technology of the line attention is diverted away from the social system of the factory, of who controls whom to do what, when and how. The assembly line, which is a technologically primitive mechanism, facilitates that control. It does so by precisely locating, and limiting the mobility of, the assembly workers within the plant and specifying the universal minimum rate at which they work. The target affects workers in the manufacturing plants too. For example, the target at Broadmeadows determines the daily output of the presses producing sheet-metal body panels miles away at Ford's Geelong plant. A loaded train leaves Geelong each night to arrive at Broadmeadows by the following morning. One plant is dominated by assembly lines and the other is not.

The target

Both are dominated by the target. The power of the target is not confined to the plants of the major companies. The vehicle industry is characterised by a large number of small satellite companies supplying components to the industry such as wheel rims, wiring harnesses and bumper bars. Although they may be geographically remote from the assembly plants the target reaches out and touches them too.

The greater the division of labour the smaller the task; the smaller the task the smaller the amount of time needed to complete it and the faster the assembly line can be driven. But with smaller tasks more people are needed to produce the finished article hence greater division of labour, faster line speeds, longer lines, larger workforces and bigger factories tend to go together. And so it is that at Broadmeadows in Victoria some 3300 people, typically, produce some 350 vehicles per day on a job-cycle time of about 1½ minutes whereas at the West Heidelberg plant of Renault some 450 people produce about 40 vehicles per day, on a job-cycle time of about 15 minutes. The division of labour and the de-skilling of the worker tend to go together with two effects: (i) The education level of new employees is lowered, thereby broadening the unskilled base from which the employer can find “spare parts” to labour on the assembly line. (ii) The more these processes occur the wider the scope for the introduction of industrial robots.

Skill and responsibility

At the same time, there is a contradictory tendency: the companies’ marketing strategies, in widening the range of vehicles and increasing the number of options available, mean that in any one eight-hour shift a line worker could be required to install quite different items of equipment on to one of several basic vehicle models. Hence there is an increasing need for alertness and flexibility on the part of the employee, and in these circumstances the VBU, the union which has coverage of most of the workers in the industry, has been successful in having the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (CAC) accept the argument that such factors have “required increased skill and responsibility in the work of assemblers, welders and metal finishers”.

With the introduction of a new model the employees experience the following three phases of the drive to achieve the target with each phase producing its own particular pressures: phase 1, the drive for volume; phase 2, the drive for quality; phase 3 the drive for efficiency.
Initially the work force has to learn how the new model goes together and what the parts look like. During this learning period the main requirement is to see that completed vehicles come off the line, that is, “to get volume”.

As the new model is introduced the foremen/forewomen will be required to work out how the work of their sections can be performed and how many employees they'll need to do it. While car bodies are coming down the line it will be the task of the leading hands to instruct the line workers how to do their respective jobs. If the line workers don’t speak English (or the language of the leading hand) then the instruction proceeds by way of signs and gestures. There are many workers in the industry who speak little or no English. The VBU has been concerned about the issue and has been pressing the vehicle companies for the past five years to provide paid time off work for employees to learn English. The companies continue to refuse the claim. It was only last year that agreement was reached and then with only some of the companies, that international safety symbols be used in Australian vehicle plants. Apart from the importance of English for safe-working, let alone the essentially human aspect of being able to speak to, and understand the people around you, the multiplicity of vehicle options now available means that the cars coming down the line won't all be exactly the same. The particular differences will need to be read by the line-worker from the computer-printed job card attached to each car. An inability to read English could mean that a foreman/woman would have to re-allocate his/her staff and perhaps upset work routines and work relationships that have taken some time to develop. If the foreman/woman has no English-reading employee who can be switched he/she will try to obtain one from another section. But employees are often reluctant to go to a new section in surroundings that are new to them under the control of supervisors they may not know. Perhaps more importantly, they will be required to achieve almost immediately, and maintain for the entire shift, the level of output of the other workers in front of and behind them in the production process. While for some employees, being switched to a new job, perhaps in a different section, would be a welcome relief, for others it only adds to the pressure and is therefore resisted.

Whereas in phase 1 the object is to obtain finished vehicles, during phase 2 much more attention is paid to the quality to the finish produced. Phase 3, the drive for “efficiency” is the speed-up phase. This is the period when the time-and-motion-study men arrive at the shop floor with stopwatch in hand. Their task is to reduce the number of employees without losing volume or quality. To call it efficiency is a bad joke. Assuming corporate optimism about the trend of vehicle sales, corporate profits depend on two main factors: 1) having the productive capacity to meet demand; 2) reducing costs of production wherever possible.

Productive capacity cannot be achieved overnight. There are long lead times involved in the design, construction, testing, and installation of new production equipment. Any particular plant management might not be able to do much about updating the plant’s productive capacity; such expenditure might have to take its place in the global carve-up of corporate funds. But where the local management can make its contribution to global profit is in reducing the labour content of its cost of production. In other words, they’re stuck with the plant but they can off-load the workers! And that’s where the time-and-motion-study people come in.

Reducing the cost of production is not confined to them. In the design departments of the corporation, engineers are continually searching for ways to use less labour and less capital in the production of a car. And they are successful. When Chrysler’s Valiant was in full production at the Tonsley Park plant in Adelaide in the 1960s it was taking something of the order of 70 hours to produce a complete car. As the fuel crisis began to bite and buyers showed an increasing preference for smaller four-cylinder cars Chrysler began to produce
the Centura, then the Sigma, from the same plant. But the materials used in production and the way they could be assembled meant that the Sigma could be produced in approximately 25 hours. Production time for the Colt is expected to go down to 19½ hours. By being in the plant for less time, each completed vehicle in 1981 uses much less of the manufacturer’s capital stock and labour than it did in 1965. The jobs are simpler and can be done much more quickly.

III

In an assembly plant there is a marked contrast between the situations faced by those working on moving production lines and those faced by the skilled tradesmen such as electricians and fitters who maintain the plant. The contrast is especially evident where these latter employees are involved in modifications to tooling.

The need for such modifications will usually become evident through the inspection system which will reveal, for example, some unsatisfactory fit between body panels, involving the assembler on the line in spending more than the allotted time for the job, thus crowding the employee on the next work station. A white-collar draughtsman/woman and a blue-collar fitter would soon be put onto the job; a foreman/woman would not normally be present. In the interests of keeping close control over the work of each employee and thereby ensuring that the work was being done as efficiently as possible the foreman/woman could, of course, instruct the skilled workers to do the job in a certain way. The responsibility for it would shift then to the foreman/woman leaving the workers with little freedom to plan.

The degree of freedom has important implications for both employee and employer. For the employee it allows him/her to put his/her own order onto his/her own particular job, to exhibit to himself/herself at least his/her particular skills. The job is his/her domain and he/she is the controller in that domain. This is in marked contrast to his/her role as servant in any other relations he/she has with the employer. The role of servant, the do-as-you’re-told role, is clear from the moment he/she walks past the employer’s security guard at the gate as he/she enters the plant in the morning.

From the time he/she punches the Bundy clock he/she is “theirs” to do with as “they” please. Never mind the purpose of what he/she is asked to do, never mind whether or not it makes sense, just do it. “Their” plant, “their” rules. But his/her job, his/her rules. That’s different!

Perhaps this is hardly worth becoming excited about. After all, when the fitter lifts his/her head he/she will be aware again that he/she is in a plant of a multi-national vehicle producer and his/her degree of freedom will appear pitifully small. Nevertheless, as shown earlier, it will be more than the production line worker has!

IV

For the employer, any freedom the employee has in the doing of the job lessens the employer’s control over the operation of the entire plant. From the employer’s point of view the employee might, in exercising his/her degree of freedom, actually perform his/her job in the least costly way but on the other hand he/she might not. The uncertainty surrounding the question can be lowered by reducing the amount of work and constraining the kind of work the employee is required to perform. This implies both the substitution of machine tools for human labour and the simplification of production machinery so that defective parts are not repaired but are simply scrapped and replaced. Taking the above course might not be the least costly from the employer’s point of view but it does increase the predictability of, and thus the employer’s control over, the plant-wide operation. The implications of predictability for budgeting, for materials supply, for production scheduling, for delivery of finished vehicles to new-car salesrooms and ultimately for cash flow and for profit are obviously important.

Aside from the technical/economic
implications considered above there are industrial/political implications of employees having any freedom to move about the plant, which are even more important to the employer. Such freedom could be the basis on which events such as lunch-time union mass meetings are organised, and from which could flow interruptions to production far more serious and far more unpredictable than any deriving from the technical considerations mentioned earlier. The experience gained by the workers in engaging in on-the-job collective action is invaluable in shaping the way they handle future industrial problems with the employer. The employer, of course, realises this and does whatever he/she can do prevent such experience being gained.

V

The “Gnatenko case” illustrates some of the points from the previous sections. Fedor (Ted) Gnatenko, at the time of the incident described below was a tool-maker at GMH, Elizabeth, South Australia, and had been employed by the company for over 20 years. He was sacked on 20 November 1974 for taking part in an unauthorised union meeting at the plant on the same day. As with most industrial disputes this didn’t arise “out of the blue” but was one of the more visible manifestations of a continuing series of events.

The principal element in the situation was probably the fact that in the latter half of 1974 motor vehicle sales were sluggish. By the middle of October, Elizabeth workers reckoned GMH had 40,000 vehicles “on the grass”. In these circumstances one obvious move would have been for the company to lay-off production workers. While this had often been done in the industry, it was a move which always brought much political disfavour and soured relations with the unions, both officially and at the plant-floor. A better move from the company’s point of view would have been for some group of workers to go on strike. But how can an employer precipitate a strike? Sacking a leading shop-floor activist is one way. The strike (which would be almost certain to follow) would provide the pretext for laying-off a large number of workers. This way the blame would be shifted and, moreover, another opportunity would be created to set the unions squabbling amongst themselves. This was the better strategy, but to analyse it requires some understanding of the pattern of unionism in the industry and the institutionalised forms of conflict accommodation created by the State. Thus we will be looking at the situation at three inter-penetrating levels: the relations in production, relations between the union organisations and the industrial arbitration bodies.

Ted Gnatenko

The company had plenty of scope for a sacking: some 1500 workers had attended the November 20 meeting and of course Gnatenko was amongst them. He was unique. As convenor of the AMWU shop-stewards he was co-ordinator of stewards activities in a union which organised at the shop level around a strong shop-stewards system. His 20 years of working for the company, his continuous involvement in union activities both on and off the job and his some-time membership of the Communist Party of Australia meant he was a man of considerable relevant experience. Being convenor of the AMWU brought him into contact with shop-stewards of other unions on the job and amongst them and their members he was widely-known, popular and highly respected. In addition, his being Bulgarian by birth with a fluency in several languages made him someone who could, and did, communicate with many of the foreign-born workers who made up the bulk of the assembly-line workforce.

So from the company’s point of view Gnatenko’s sacking could have been expected to produce a strike by certain key workers. It was more than possible, too, that, by making Gnatenko the target, his standing in the shop would lead to strong feelings by the VBU production workers and members of the other trades’ unions, that they should show solidarity with the AMWU and go out too. Moreover, if his sacking could be made to
stick the company would be well rid of a most capable unionist.

The second element in the situation points up the complexity of inter-union relations and the tensions with which the workers at the plant had to deal; nevertheless it is difficult to estimate the degree to which events were influenced by it. In March 1974 tool-and-cutter grinders, members of the Australasian Society of Engineers (ASE) and the AMWU employed by GMH at Fishermen’s Bend in Victoria, struck for about a month in support of a claim for increased wages. In consequence, VBU members on production in the Body Assembly division at Elizabeth were stood-down for about three weeks. During May and June members of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) at Elizabeth struck for about six weeks in support of a wage claim. Again VBU members at Elizabeth were stood down, this time for about four weeks. In other words, VBU members lost seven weeks pay because of disputes they were not involved in and from which they could receive no benefit.

Following these events some VBU officials began agitating for a closed shop agreement, ie that all workshop employees should be members of the VBU. When the Gnatenko sacking took place it would have been reasonable to expect that at the very least there would have been a plant-wide strike of AMWU members. Again VBU members would have been stood down and again would have lost money. The Gnatenko sacking involved the important issue of victimisation. Nevertheless it is possible that some VBU officials were keen to be rid of a situation in which, with their union the biggest in the industry and potentially the most powerful, it was seen to be, particularly by the members, the most quiescent. One way to bring this to a head, which would have led to very substantial financial and other long-term gains for the VBU, would have been to let the expected AMWU strike over Gnatenko run its course. At its conclusion VBU officials would use the lost wages of their members to mobilise a VBU strike around the demand that the company recognise the VBU as the sole union in the industry, and until that was achieved there would be no return to work.

The third element in the series of events surrounding Gnatenko’s sacking is more directly tied in to the company’s production planning. The workers at Elizabeth had become concerned at what they understood to be a company decision to phase-out production of the Australian-made Torana and launch instead a Japanese-made car, the Gemini. The vehicle would be manufactured in Japan and imported to Australia in a completed knocked down (CKD) form, ready for local assembly. From normally reliable sources in senior management the workers reckoned that, across Australia, 5000 employees would lose their jobs if the company’s plans went ahead. Gnatenko was quoted as saying that “1000 workers might go from Elizabeth”. On this issue the company had done nothing to allay the workers’ fears. Rather than scotch the rumours altogether, its officials told a meeting of Elizabeth shop-stewards that “only 15,000 cars” would be imported, not 50,000 as the workers thought. In addition, they gave “only vague replies to union enquiries concerning employment after Christmas”.

Plant Committee

It was against the foregoing background that the Combined Shop Stewards’ Committee representing members of the VBU, the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen’s Association (FEDFA) and the AMWU called a lunch-time meeting of all members on November 20th to discuss the employment consequences of the introduction of the Gemini. About 1500 workers turned up to the lawn area within the plant, the place where mass meetings were usually held. Also present were officials of both the VBU and the AMWU. Before the meeting Gnatenko was warned by a company official that if the meeting were to take place he would face serious consequences; he was requested to call the meeting off. His response was that the decision to hold the meeting was made by more than 50 stewards on the shop committee (of which he was but one) and any
decision to cancel would have to be taken by either that committee or the mass meeting itself. It went ahead and the first item of business was a report on the company's warning to Gnatenko; the second was the question of where the rest of the meeting should be held.

It was moved and seconded from the floor and unanimously decided that the meeting should proceed forthwith right where it was. After some discussion the meeting adjourned without any decision being reached. At 3:30 that same afternoon Gnatenko was sacked. The following morning an 8 am stopwork meeting of the AMWU's 400 members at Elizabeth decided to stop work for 24 hours in protest. For the unions involved the issue was serious since it could flow to all GMH's operations in Australia.

It put the workers at Elizabeth, and more particularly the AMWU members, in a powerful, but politically and industrially difficult, position. Nevertheless the support of the AMWU's official apparatus for the shop committee was strong with the SA state secretary, John Scott, asserting, following the 24-hour strike, that "the shop committee would be organising whatever follow-up action was required". Nevertheless the matter was not left entirely with them. Two days after the sacking Scott filed an application in the South Australian Industrial Commission for Gnatenko's reinstatement and engaged a QC to present the case. On the same day the union held a lunchtime meeting of its 200 members at the company's Woodville, Adelaide plant. By this time the Minister for Labour and Industry in South Australia, Mr McKee, had said publicly that he hoped Gnatenko would be reinstated and that "it (was) natural for people in the industry to want to discuss matters concerning their future, and one would not have expected the company to take such drastic action over a lunchtime meeting in view of the problems confronting the industry".

The company's position was clear too; the union had been told that "Gnatenko would not be reinstated in any circumstances". The company's response to the union application was to apply to the Supreme Court for an order prohibiting the S.A. Industrial Commission from hearing the matter. The order was duly given on 21 January 1975 by Chief Justice Bray who referred the matter to the Full Court. Bray's order was met with an immediate walk off the job by 20 AMWU stewards at Elizabeth who met at the union's city office the following morning and then demonstrated outside the Supreme Court. They sent the following resolution to Bray:

This emergency meeting of the GMH Elizabeth AMWU shop stewards committee, meeting with the full approval of the State Council, registers its strong protest at the action that GMH management has decided to take to prevent the case of the dismissed AMWU convenor Ted Gnatenko being heard by the State Industrial Commission. On many occasions and in relation to many issues in the past representatives of GMH management have urged us to take our case to arbitration. On this issue, when that is precisely what we have done, the company is demonstrating its hypocrisy by taking every legal step to prevent the case from being heard and the question resolved speedily.

Direct action

It was two months before the Full Court heard the matter and when it did, on 27th March, it decided in favour of GMH. With that decision AMWU members at Elizabeth and Woodville re-introduced an industrial tactic they had used so successfully before — the "guerilla" strike. The direct action began on Wednesday, 9th April, when 22 workers from the maintenance, jig, body and welding sections at Elizabeth went out at noon on what they said was an indefinite strike. At 2 pm that same day 12 workers in the tool sharpening area at Woodville walked off the job. Contrary to expectations strikers from
both plants returned to work the following morning. On the 10th April, three maintenance fitters walked off the job at Elizabeth when two assembly lines broke down. The company thereupon stood down 130 production workers (VBU members) and had no idea when the conveyors might be repaired. The fitters decided to do repairs on the night shift of the same day so the Vehicle Assembly Plant (VAP) could begin work at the normal starting time of 7.30 am the next day. A joint meeting of stewards from the VBU, AMWU and FEDFA was held on the 10th April and endorsed the metal workers' actions. While all these actions were being discussed and decided on at the shopfloor level, the State branches of the various unions were indicating their support. For example, the walk-off by the three AMWSU maintenance fitters on 10th led to the company's approaching the VBU to see whether that union would allow any of its fitter members on night shift to do repairs normally done by AMWU men. The VBU refused and the VBU State executive pledged its support and endorsed the actions of the AMWU in its efforts to get Gnatenko reinstated. The State officials of the ASE, the rival union to the AMWU, also rejected the company's approach.

Shop-floor action

In the face of this build-up of shop-floor action and inter-union support the company continued to maintain its November 1974 firmness. Notices posted in the Elizabeth plant on the 10th April said: “The company has again advised the AMWU that it will not enter into any discussion regarding the reinstatement of Mr Gnatenko.”

As the dispute proceeded the workers at the shop-floor continued to disrupt production. They were not prepared to be fobbed off by company declarations that it would not talk. They had won against similar attitudes by GMH in the past. They also knew that as this struggle moved into the courtroom and out of their hands, it would be particularly important to let their feelings be known. There is considerable feeling throughout much of Australia's trade union movement that decisions in court rooms reflect the power struggle in the office or plant. This is not to say that decisions of Industrial Courts or Commissions are irrelevant — far from it! It is rather to acknowledge that, often, justice is a matter of power. The aim of the shopfloor disruption was to get the company to talk. At the time of the Gnatenko sacking there existed in the Award a stand-down clause which provided that “The Company shall have the right to deduct payment for any day an employee cannot be usefully employed because of a strike or through a breakdown in machinery or a stoppage of work by any cause for which the Company cannot reasonably be held responsible”.

Lightning strikes

This could have been expected to be a brake on industrial action but, in practice, as the following section makes clear, the workers at the shop floor found a way around the clause. The main tactic was the short-duration, on-the-job, lightning strike first in one section of the plant then in another; as one group resumed work another would stop. A typical incident would be as follows: the four VBU members spot welding in the side-gates section would fail to resume work after the morning tea break and would stay off the job for about two hours, ie at 11.30 am they would re-appear, pick’up their welding guns and set to work. While they were off the job their workmates down-the-line from them could continue to work until stocks were exhausted and then they would stop too. When the welders returned perhaps two or three painters in the spray painting booth would leave the job, and the line feeding them would have to stop. The production superintendent had no idea which section would be on strike next, for how long or how many employees would be involved. Because those who were on strike, and those who had no materials to work with did not actually leave the plant they were able to circulate amongst the other workers and tell them what was happening. All this added to the high level of co-ordination between the shop stewards in the various sections and made for the constant monitoring and review of the
situation by the workers. The effects of this sort of industrial action on production were severe. Although this form of action had been determined by the combined shop committee involving both production and maintenance workers, it did not lend itself wholly to centralised co-ordination by the combined shop committee executive. The VBU stewards were much more familiar than the maintenance stewards with the way the process of production was integrated, and therefore knew the strategic points, and so they were given the authority of the combined shop committee to plan and set the strikes in motion.

Thirty per cent Over-award

This form of action was not new to the workers at Elizabeth. In the early 1970s they had launched a campaign to force GMH to convert the existing over-award payments, into an all-purpose rate and to remove all the penalties attached to these over-award payments. This campaign became known as the 30 per cent over-award campaign, and the series of lightning stoppages resulted in not one completed vehicle coming off the assembly line for the whole of one working week. Vehicles came off the line, on wheels, with engines in, but each one had parts missing, enough to prevent it going to the dealer's sale room. In this period the lightning strikes were being staged all over the plant but the particular circumstances of each work section required that tactics be tailored to suit. For example, in the VAP the situation was different from other sections, because there, bodies could be stockpiled off the line on trolleys and could be pushed onto the line if there was an interruption to production in the body building area or the paint shop, for example. This meant the VAP could be kept going independently of these other lines. Because the VAP was working two shifts at this time, ie a day and an afternoon shift, there was every chance that the workers on day shift could deplete the entire stock of bodies thus making it unnecessary for the workers on the afternoon shift to clock on. It was here, especially, that the workers were in danger of giving the company the chance to use the stand-down clause.

As mentioned above, if, at the time a new shift was to begin, there were insufficient materials available to keep the shift going for the eight hours, the company could decline to start them. The stewards in the other shops therefore had to ensure that on any particular day, there was enough body stock available for the VAP afternoon shift to start and in addition, if they put on a lightning strike, there would still be enough stock for the following day's day-shift to start. This all required a good knowledge of the production process and a nice balance between the needs of stock buildup and the effects of industrial action. But they did it, for a week — everybody employed and no saleable vehicles produced! The workers who engaged in the lightning strikes had their wages docked by the company but on-the-job collections fixed that. Ultimately the campaign had the desired effect; the 1974 GMH Award set a new standard in wages. The arbitrary nature of wage elements such as merit money and attendance bonus was eliminated by being written into the Award. No longer were these payments tied to whether or not the employee had kept his/her nose clean with the foreman/woman. As such payments were formerly approximately 30 per cent of the weekly wage, to have them assured was a significant gain.

A shop-floor campaign

This campaign was important because it was initiated by workers at the shop-floor. The full-time officials soon came in behind it but because they did not actually work in the industry and therefore were not subject to the arbitrariness of the penalties they quite misread the feeling of the membership in the run-up to the 1974 Award negotiations. Whereas officials were pressing for Award wage increases in their discussions with the membership as to what should be in the log of claims, the membership was insisting that a priority claim was that the penalties had to go. It was with this sort of experience behind them that the workers at Elizabeth launched
into their industrial action to have Gnatenko reinstated. They realised it would be a battle of wits as to whether or not they would lay themselves open to the company’s use of the stand-down clause. They realised it was just another weapon in the company’s industrial arsenal, which, like all the rest, would be used to divide, intimidate, cajole, entice or reward the workers and could be used whether or not the company had alternative work available. As can be seen from the 30 per cent campaign the shop floor workers demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the production process and could be expected to offer an informed view of any company claim about available work. The acting secretary of the VBU at the time, Mr D Foreman, referred to the stand-down clause’s control implications when on Friday, 11th April, he announced, with respect to the stand-down of 130 workers on the previous day, “the union members dispute the company’s claim that they could not have been gainfully employed”.16 Foreman was giving notice that the union would be lodging a claim in the Arbitration Commission for payment for the time stood down.

At this stage Mr Laurie Carmichael (Assistant National Secretary of the AMWU) asked Mr Clyde Cameron (then Federal Minister for Labour) to arrange for a member of the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (CAC), to be made available to bring the parties together. Bringing in the Federal Government did make it that much more difficult for the company to continue to refuse to talk and siting the discussions in the CAC was consistent with the company’s original contention that the SA Industrial Commission had no jurisdiction and that the CAC was the appropriate forum.

The proceedings began before Commissioner Clarkson in Adelaide on Monday, 14 April 1975, and continued for five days. On the Monday Clarkson directed GMH “to reconsider its refusal to discuss (Gnatenko’s) re-instatement”.17 On the following day more than 300 AMWU members at Elizabeth walked off the job at 8.30 am for a 24-hour strike, many of them going to the CAC hearing to witness proceedings. On the Friday Clarkson varied the GMH Award so as to enable employees covered by that Award to come under the reinstatement provisions of the South Australian Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act.18 The variation was made retrospective to November 1st of the previous year, ie before Gnatenko was sacked. Two and a half weeks later, on May 8th, GMH appealed, and the very next day the AMWU’s shop stewards in Elizabeth held a lunchtime meeting to discuss what they would do next.

Closer organisation

The recent events had broadened the dispute, and the unions were quick to see that Clarkson’s decision applied not only to Gnatenko but represented a significant advance for all GMH’s employees. It constituted a turning point in that now all employees stood to lose if the company’s application was successful. Stewards from the VBU and FEDFA joined with AMWU stewards in a meeting a lunch-time on the following Monday, 12th May, outside the plant gates. In other words, at the shop-floor level workers from those three unions were moving back into a combined form of organisation. The lunch-time stewards’ meeting decided to send a delegation of stewards from the three unions to tell company officers that, because of the appeal being lodged, they could expect lightning strikes. The strikes followed while the newspapers were given, and published the Unions’ case. Subsequently (March, 1976) the High Court rejected the GMH appeal.

The purpose of this account has been to show some of the details of the day-to-day situation of both production and maintenance workers in the vehicle industry. The details will differ from plant to plant and company to company and will bear the marks of particular individuals but, by and large, the size of plants, the number of people involved, the pressure of work and, particularly, the way the workforce is controlled, all operate to produce the kind of effects described.

Cases like Gnatenko’s or a 30 per cent
campaign don't bob up every day, nevertheless there is almost always some industrial matter at issue in the plant. Even for these smaller issues the workers are better able to handle them if they have some form of shop-floor organisation, some group of colleagues to whom, on the job, they can turn for advice and support, some group of colleagues in whom can reside the accumulated wisdom of the plant's industrial experiences. A Gnatenko case makes the need for such an organisation even more compelling.

The ability and the preparedness of the shop-floor organisation to plan and act was the principal reason the Gnatenko sacking didn't stick. Another significant reason for the workers' success was the extent to which the union officials supported the Elizabeth workers.

The implications of the situation of the Elizabeth workers are highly significant. An industrial struggle throws light on facets of the employee/employer relationship previously unrecognised by many employees including the lengths to which the company is prepared to go to defend its interests and the relative power of the employer and employees. Most importantly, it shows the possibilities of challenging the employer's power once the workers are resolved to do so. An industrial struggle shatters the superficial calm of the factory, jerks people out of their privatised industrial life, and places a premium on thought and discussion. In so doing it increases consciousness, perhaps generating class consciousness, and throws into relief the relative importance of the forces of production and the relations of production. 19 But such questions do not even arise if, in the first place, there has not been developed a self-acting organisation at the work-shop floor.

NOTES

1 The writer is indebted to many people. In particular to Albert and Gloria Laird whose determination to fight has been an inspiration; to Bob Connell for encouragement and patience; to Dominic Foreman, Ted Gnatenko, Dick Grozier, the AMWSU vehicle-industry shop stewards in Adelaide, and especially to Brian Mowbray.

2 The information was gained over several years by visits to nine vehicle-manufacturing or assembly plants in Australia, discussion with shop-floor workers and management personnel in the plants, off-the-job discussions with officials of the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union (AMWU) which, after its amalgamation with the Federated Shipwrights' and Ship Constructors' Association of Australia, became the Amalgamated Metal Workers' and Shipwrights' Union (AMWSU).


5 The Advertiser, 9/11/74, p.3.

6 The Advertiser, 9/11/74 p.3.

7 Ibid

8 The Advertiser, 22/11/74, p.3.

9 Ibid

10 Ibid

11 The Advertiser, 22/1/75, p.6.

12 The following section draws heavily on The Advertiser of the period.


15 Gnatenko was active in this campaign and such activity was part of the "continuing series of events" referred to earlier in this section.


17 The Australian, 15/4/75, p.3.

18 This Act is the only legislation in Australia which can order an employer to reinstate a sacked worker if the dismissal was harsh, unjust or unreasonable. To justify the sacking, an employer can be ordered to "open the books" for examination. The inclusion of the Acts as part of the Award was therefore of very great significance.

FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE

It may seem strange that *Australian Left Review* should publish a speech made in the Australian Parliament by the Minister for Defence and a reply by the Leader of the Opposition, more especially because these speeches* were made several months ago. At the time they received little media coverage. Their importance lies in the fact that they represent a certain evolution in foreign policy discussion.

In his speech, Mr. Killen is conciliatory; there is an overwhelming impression that the government wants the opposition to maintain the traditional bi-partisan policy of support for the United States alliance and for ANZAS. The Minister agrees with the Leader of the Opposition that, in certain conditions, some military installations, that is United States bases in Australia, could become military targets. He admits that the alliance means our possible involvement in which we would prefer not to be involved, and we cannot always expect to influence the United States to behave as we might wish. No one on the left would argue with this. But in the long run Mr. Killen continues to see the world as a contest between the two super powers with the United States carrying the burden for the free nations of the world. He asks Mr. Hayden, and presumably the electorate at large, to judge the United States in terms of intent.

Mr. Killen's views are a mirror image of those who place all their hopes for the future in the Soviet Union. If policies cannot be understood immediately or explained satisfactorily, one is invited to have trust.

Mr. Hayden, who had recently visited various United States bases and installations, expressed his reservations to parliament about the bases. His chief concern is the base at North-West Cape. He repeats a statement made earlier to the National Press Club that Australia has a sovereign right to ultimate control of affairs on her own territory, that the present arrangements covering North-West Cape are unsatisfactory and should be renegotiated. If the United States refused, Mr. Hayden, without equivocation, pledged that the US would be asked by a future Labor government to wind down its operations.

Mr. Hayden's speech reflects a growing disquiet as the United States moves towards a first strike nuclear capacity. He does not want Australian foreign policy options pre-empted or determined by the United States. He makes a plea for nuclear disarmament.

**Hayden's views**

Mr Hayden’s views are still a long way from reflecting all the concerns of those who believe that all foreign bases should be removed and that the road to security requires a break with the US alliance in favor of non-alignment; it would be easy to dismiss the speech. Yet, for all its limitations, it represents a significant change. Foreign policy will not be reversed overnight, in any case, and foreign installations could not be removed at the stroke of a pen, even if there was a much wider acceptance of the dangers inherent in all such installations.

But each base and installation is the subject of a particular treaty and each treaty could, and should be reviewed instead of being automatically renewed. A genuine review of the treaty concerning North-West Cape could lead to wider consideration of all other bases.

Mr Hayden has called for an informed and

* The texts which follow have been edited and slightly abridged. The complete texts are in *Hansard*, May 5, 1981.
persistent discussion and debate in Australia in relation to American nuclear strategic policy and implications. A public review of all treaties would be one way to generate this debate.

Since May, when these speeches were made, further moves away from the former bi-partisan policy are evident. The Labor Opposition and the Democrats have opposed an Australian involvement in the United States-sponsored force for the Sinai, and a Labor Party defence policy, more in keeping with the genuine defence needs of an independent and non-aligned nation than one which depends on the United States, has been outlined.

**Foreign policy**

Of all the questions debated in the left, foreign policy receives the least detailed consideration. For the Labor Party as a whole, it is conventional wisdom that foreign policy is not a good election issue; indeed, foreign policy issues (it is thought), helped keep conservatives in office throughout the '50s and '60s. While it now seems ridiculous, a major electoral ploy of those times was to threaten the populace with "Chinese hordes", and it seemed to work. A majority in the community seemed to feel the need for great and powerful friends.

The Liberal-Country Party coalition has always argued for, and acted on, policies which tie Australia closely to the United States. The coalition, under various leaders, established the United States bases and installations, offered both volunteers and conscripts to aid American wars and planned a defence capability based on American military hardware. The latest examples of this policy are the granting of landing rights to B-52 bombers at Darwin, the offer of troops for the Sinai, and the proposed purchase of F-18 Hornets. Based on this co-operation, the assumption has always been that, in times of need, the United States will reward her faithful ally with protection.

Until now, except of course as the Viet Nam war dragged on and opposition to Australia's involvement grew into a majority, Labor has generally concurred with this approach, if somewhat uneasily.

Within the radical left, including within the Labor Party, moral positions have often been passed off as policy. Disregarding the fact that most people in the Australian community believe there are external dangers—a view which is generally misplaced but persists—the left often projects an "all or nothing" approach in its opposition to military bases and the US alliance. But opposition to foreign bases and the US alliance based on moral principles convinces very few. And the left, having recognised that much war hysteria is built on anti-communist, anti-Soviet and, in the past, anti-Chinese propaganda, often appeared merely as an apologist when it sought to counter these views.

In general the left can agree that most of the running in the arms race has been initiated by the United States and most of the proposals to diminish tension have come from the Soviet Union. But it should not give the impression that all blame lies with one side and all virtue with the other.

Another factor, which does not assist the credibility of the left when foreign policy is considered, is the tendency to "spend" defence allocations over and over on proposed hospitals, nursery schools, pensions, etc. This approach adds to the impression that opponents of traditional defence policies are unconcerned with the legitimate defence of Australia. That more money should be allocated to social services is not the issue, but proposals which sound like zero spending on armaments will never find acceptance. Indeed, one price of independence and non-alignment may be increased defence spending.

Some efforts have been made to develop a coherent policy of independence and non-alignment, but the need for an adequate defence policy to back this foreign policy has hardly been raised until now. The concept of non-alignment has been bogged down in discussions of the nature of the non-aligned movement, as if to be non-aligned is to identify with every member of that very heterogeneous movement.
The basis of non-alignment is to refuse to join either great power bloc. The key elements for a non-aligned Australia would be to end automatic acceptance of United States military policy, withdrawal from military pacts, and evidence that foreign military bases will be dismantled. When most of the bases and installations were established in Australia there was little public debate and even less information. In contrast, when landing rights for B-52s were established in 1981 there was much debate, considerable opposition and large protest actions in Darwin. While there are differing estimates on the role of installations such as Pine Gap, Nurrungar Smithfield and Omega, there is a growing understanding that all foreign bases limit sovereignty and invite nuclear retaliation.

**CND campaign**

This understanding has triggered off the massive European nuclear disarmament campaign. When United States military and political leaders indicated that limited nuclear war was under consideration, many Europeans understood that this is a policy which would put them in the front line. The concept of limited nuclear war is a fantasy since it assumes that the Soviet Union, a European power, would play the game according to some United States rule book. But the European movement has begun to demonstrate its opposition to all nuclear weapons systems and nuclear bases which make Europe a prime target. Australia may not be quite as vulnerable but the bases it hosts make it a target too. In Europe, most bases are in heavily populated areas, while those in Australia tend to be in isolated regions. Perhaps this explains why some of the more significant actions against foreign bases have centred on areas which perceive a distant threat — Darwin (the B-52 facility), Alice Spring (Pine Gap) and Adelaide (Smithfield).

Even if bases are not close to most cities, community awareness is growing that there is too much arms building in the world and an almost total absence of negotiations for disarmament. In the run-up to the 1980 US Presidential election the United States refused to ratify SALT II (not a disarmament measure, but a useful aspect of the process of arms control). Since the election, President Reagan has embarked on a program to increase US nuclear capacity and the options for a "first strike" have been canvassed.

**UN disarmament session**

Some negotiations are planned for later this year and pressure for meaningful negotiations will increase as the United Nations prepares for its second special session on disarmament to be held in the middle of 1982. The Soviet Union has recently proposed that nuclear weapons states should sign a declaration prohibiting the use of such weapons, a change from an earlier position when it abstained from voting in the United Nations on a similar proposal. But the European disarmament movement is not relying on the goodwill of any nuclear power. It is developing against the deployment of the SS-20 missiles by the Soviet Union, and the planned deployment of new Pershing missiles, the Cruise, the Trident submarine and the manufacture of the neutron bomb.

In Australia, and the region, a diverse and independent movement is growing for a nuclear-free Pacific. The movement connects concerns over the arms race, the fact that nuclear weapons and/or delivery systems are tested in the region by the United States, the Soviet Union, France and China, the problems arising from nuclear power and nuclear-waste dumping and the mining of uranium which fuels the nuclear-weapons industry.

There is no easy route to disarmament; indeed, the enormity of the task immobilises many, but the debate reported here is an opening for all concerned Australians. In future issues of Australian Left Review the discussion and debate will continue. Your views on **how to achieve an independent Australian foreign policy and contribute to halting the arms race** would be welcome.
Joint Australian-United States Defence Facilities

Mr. J. Killen, Minister for Defence

Honourable members will know that recently the Leader of the Opposition (Mr Hayden) spoke to the National Press Club about joint Australian-United States defence-related facilities in Australia and associated questions.

A good deal of the statement accords not only with my own views but also with views of Ministers over many years in governments from both sides of the House. I welcome and value this continuing bipartisanship in regard to these important matters. I welcome particularly the honourable member’s statements about the facilities at Pine Gap and Nurrungar and that the requirements of his party’s policy are met at both facilities. The honourable members said: ‘In certain conditions, industrial centres and military installations in Australia could — I repeat, could — become nuclear targets. Pine Gap and Nurrungar would be unlikely targets and, in our view, Smithfield not at all’. I agree with this assessment. The honourable member very properly reminded his listeners that he and his deputy were bound by the restrictions on public disclosure about the facilities at Pine Gap and Nurrungar and that the requirements of his party’s policy are met at both facilities.

There is no secret treaty as stated in the Press. That is a fabrication. There is a document entitled ‘Agreed Minutes of Interpretation’. It is dated 9 May 1963 and was signed by the then Australian Minister for External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick, and the then United States Ambassador, Mr William Battle. The minutes are not ‘secret’. They are unclassified. The fact of their existence has been public knowledge since 21 May 1963, when the then Minister for External Affairs affirmed their existence to the then Leader of the Opposition. Why the minutes were not tabled since is that their significance is purely formal. Let me deal with the first minute, which refers to Article 4 of the main agreement. The minute says:

Any use of the station by third countries would be a matter for agreement between the two governments. However, communications originated by a third government and accepted into United States channels elsewhere than in Australia would be United States defence communications in the context which I believe to be lacking real substance.
of this agreement. The minute deals with the use of the station by third countries. There was and is nothing new in this.

Before the Second World War Australia’s defence communications system was linked with the systems of the then British Commonwealth countries. During the war Australia became associated also with the United States communications network. It has remained so since. Through its association with the United States and United Kingdom communications systems, the Australian communications system has been associated with the communications systems of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries, to which the United States and United Kingdom are allied. There is nothing secret about this. It has been general public knowledge for decades.

Australia has received, as it continues to receive, the reciprocal advantage of worldwide access to other parties’ communication facilities. When the North West Cape station was established, there was certainly no suggestion that this co-operation between allies should cease. Already in May 1962 the then Prime Minister told this House that the purpose of the station would be to provide radio communication for United States and allied ships over a wide area of the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific. In March the following year, he stated that such use was intended for allied submarines as well as for allied surface ships.

For the sake of completeness, perhaps I should add that the North West Cape station will also assist merchant ships in putting their messages into the civil network if they cannot themselves gain access to that network, or if they are in distress. That a NATO or New Zealand message might occasionally be transmitted through North West Cape does not seem to me objectionable.

Except in the broadest sense that members of the communications network are countries that share certain attitudes regarding global strategic issues, use of facilities in a member country does not involve that country’s endorsement of the traffic through those facilities and related activities. Concern in that respect fails completely to comprehend how modern communications work. Once a message has been accepted into the system — and access is automatic for countries such as Australia which participate in the standing arrangements — it is normally handled by computers rather than individuals, and sent to its destination with little or no human intervention. The actual route taken by a particular message could be traced only afterwards, not predicted before or detected at the time. In large, sophisticated, highly automated highfrequency networks like the US defence communications system and those of its allies, messages are not necessarily transmitted by the shortest route but by the speediest and most reliable. Deliberately created redundancies in the system mean that there are a substantial number of alternative routes available. So even the originators of the message, let alone other countries, do not know how it might be relayed.

**VLF communication**

I want to say a few words about very low frequency communications to submarines. Third countries’ use of North West Cape’s very low frequency transmission without Australian knowledge or consent would be possible only if the third country had suitable reception equipment and also access to US cryptographic key material. It would not otherwise be possible for third countries to have access to the VLF channels without Australian knowledge because they would have to use the Australian channel. I leave it to the House to consider to what countries the United States might pass its cryptographic key material, given that this would enable the other country to read all US traffic on that channel.

The statement that, in the circumstances I have described, the North West Cape station could become a naval command post in some conflict between third countries is another absurd fabrication. It also ignores the
elementary fact that the North West Cape station is simply a relay station. It does not originate messages and could not act as a command post.

I turn now from these peripheral issues to the central theme of my honourable friend’s statement. This was a demand for new and more extensive Australian control over the transmissions of the North West Cape station because of a ‘dramatic change taking place in nuclear doctrine’. The honourable member’s description of trends in United States strategic capability and doctrine contained what I would describe as some rather elementary misconceptions. In essence, he said that the United States is moving from a doctrine of mutually assured destruction to the use of nuclear weapons as a normal part of the conduct of a war. He even speaks of the United States moving towards a first-strike capability, that is, a pre-emptive strike that effectively destroys an opponent’s ability to strike back.

In Soviet military doctrine, the distinction between the use of conventional and nuclear weapons in war is unclear. For decades, therefore, United States policy has been concerned to establish deterrence across the whole spectrum of possible nuclear assault. The United States cannot credibly deter limited and selective attack against United States military targets by threatening to wipe out Soviet cities — especially when the response might then be to wipe out United States cities. The Soviet Union has been making immense allocations of resources to the development of larger, more accurate and harder-hitting inter-continental ballistic missile forces — a highly important fact that my honourable friend failed even to mention, let alone assess in his statement to the National Press Club. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will shortly be in a position to destroy the bulk of the United States intercontinental ballistic missile force with only a part of its own. Should the United States then respond with its submarine and residual bomber force, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would still have capability for a further devastating strike. What United States President would press that button having regard to those circumstances?

United States strategy for deterrence must demonstrate to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that there is no level of attack that would not result in at least a matching loss by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Also it must demonstrate that even after attack on its inter-continental ballistic missile force, the United States would still have the capacity to take out targets of value — be they military, industrial or politico-administrative. The basic concept of ensuring that a President has a wider range of response than national suicide goes back twenty years or more. Far from being a new and dramatic change, as my honourable friend believes, Presidential Directive No 59, issued by President Carter in late 1979, was merely the latest in a long series of statements of this doctrine. Directive 59 updated basic doctrine more directly to current and prospective conditions. Four important points in the doctrine are: It does not aim at a first-strike capability; it does prepare the United States to respond to a limited Soviet nuclear attack in ways other than automatic, immediate and massive retaliation; it does not, however, assume that nuclear war could be kept limited; but it does aim to avoid automatic escalation.

What I have been describing does not amount to any ‘dramatic change’ in US nuclear doctrine, such as the honourable member claimed was changing the whole basis and justification for our cooperation in the North West Cape station. The basic principles of US nuclear strategy have been unchanged for decades. The technological developments the honourable member spoke of are in the future, and uncertain. It is not acceptable to read into them now a fundamental change in US nuclear doctrine. In any case, the Leader of the Opposition is falling into the basic error of confusing capability with will and intent. I do not deny for one moment that Australian controls are required concerning North West Cape. We must always be able to judge whether the operation of the station risks our security or associates us with policies and operations contrary to our interests. But the whole point
of our arrangements is that US strategic policy is not to be assessed simply in terms of technological capability, but more essentially in terms of intent. It is common ground, I believe, that no control measures can be effected at North West Cape. It is a relay station, not an originating station. My predecessor in this portfolio, the honourable member for St George (Mr Morrison), said in August 1975:

...the practical, realistic and effective mode of monitoring and control is certainly not a matter of intervention in the operations of the station. The proper focus of our effort is the United States global policy. If we know what that is about, we will have an accurate understanding of the type of message being transmitted through North West Cape.

**Control of North West Cape**

I agree with every syllable in that statement made by my honourable friend some six years ago. The statement very accurately comprehends the essence of Australia’s control over North West Cape. It comprehends the limitations on Australian control in respect of practical measures. It understands the requirement for us to judge the impact of developing US policies upon Australian interests at an earlier stage, and in a more substantial way. My honourable friend, however, wants ‘Australia’s consent to be mandatory for all orders to initiate military action which flows from the station’. He also wants us to be ‘Given firm and convincing assurances that the Station will not be used to send orders for a first-strike nuclear attack nor to initiate a limited strike.’

These demands can be expected to arouse some unthinking support. Let us look at them more closely. What these demands amount to is an Australian veto over US use of the North West Cape station. Is it reasonable to expect the US to cooperate in such a veto? Would it be sensible and acceptable for Australia to seek it? My answer to both questions is no. The US carries enormous risks and responsibilities in the global relationship with its Soviet adversary. Australia, a US ally, remote from the central theatres of strategic confrontation, cannot realistically say to the US: ‘Now every time you want to send a signal through North West Cape initiating military action you must first secure our permission’. The NATO countries do not have this arrangement. The formula applying to US initiation of military action from their territory is ‘notification time and circumstance permitting’. Yet they are far more directly exposed and vulnerable than is Australia.

Look at the practical implications of my honourable friend’s demand. The US Defence Communications System is built on a network of redundant capacity. If one link goes out or becomes less efficient for any reason, including enemy action, other links are automatically selected by the switching equipment. There is no way, therefore, that we can select our messages coming through North West Cape. Messages, and particularly important messages such as those initiating a military action, will travel through multiple channels and facilities. The only sure way of stopping a message transiting North West Cape would be to stop all messages coming to North West Cape. In effect, we should have to close the station down. How else could we be sure, also, that our demand was being met?

Does my honourable friend understand that if the station closes down, our own communications will severely suffer, and at a time when fast and reliable communication would probably be of first importance to us? Has my honourable friend paused to reflect on how he would deal with some possible consequences of the demand he wishes to make of the United States — for example, a demand from the United States that we expose our own national traffic to its monitoring and consent, or a denial of access to the allied communications network and consequent disruption of our defence communications beyond Australia?

**Trust in the United States**

When we and the Americans agreed on the establishment of the North West Cape station we acknowledged and accepted the common and enduring security interests that shaped
our cooperation.

That was some two decades ago. We have seen some very large changes in the international situation and our own strategic circumstances since then. Our present perspectives and policies give far more emphasis to our independent national interests and responsibilities. Yet all parties in this House continue to acknowledge the fundamental importance to us of our alliance with the United States. We accept that the alliance still assumes a substantial community of interest and a substantial degree of mutual trust. The alliance can involve risks to our security, although I agree with my honourable friends that the risk presently associated with the joint facilities is not significant. The alliance can risk our involvement in matters in which we should prefer not to be involved.

All these positive and negative factors have to be weighed. There is scope — quite significant scope — for us to influence our ally’s policy. We cannot, however, expect that we shall always be able to influence it to the extent we believe desirable. We have to make a judgment then, and a choice. This is really what I am saying to my honourable friend. I am saying that he cannot leave his choice to the last minute as he seems to envisage. This is not sensible, realistic or practicable politics. He has to make it earlier. Nor can he, even at an early stage before the pressure of a developing situation is upon us, say to the Americans ‘Give me your assurance now about no military use and limited nuclear attack and all will be well between us,’ because, for the reasons I have explained, he will not get this assurance. So he has to ask himself the fundamental question: ‘Has the time now come when the disadvantages of the alliance outweigh the advantages, when the risks of association with some policy we disapprove of outweigh the benefits of our continuing co-operation in security matters?’

I can see the logic of his reasoning about knowledge and consent. I respect it. But I do not for one moment accept that the time has arrived or is in prospect when we need to contemplate the closure of North West Cape, of which he speaks so lightly, and the effective reduction of our alliance with the United States that this would most certainly entail. I believe, and I have sought to demonstrate, that the argument that has led him now to this extreme position is ill-founded and unsound. I do not believe that it would be in this country’s basic security interests to close down the station. Our protection against major threats ultimately depends upon the efficacy of the United States deterrent.

The honourable member rightly demands that Australia not behave as a servile client state of the United States. Surely, however, that is what his own policy involves; for he seeks to retain United States protection while reducing United States capacity to provide that protection. He seeks to retain United States protection while freeing Australia from risk and requiring all risks to be borne by our protector. This is not the attitude of an independent ally prepared to make its contribution and to accept its share of the risks.

I ask my honourable friend most earnestly to think again. I ask him to weigh the rhetoric of his fine sentiments — and let him claim no monopoly of nationalist sentiment — against the substantial national interests involved in the ANZUS alliance. I ask him to let the House know, to let the nation know, whether he believes that the time has now come in respect of North West Cape station for the alliance to be reduced and our practical co-operation with the Americans dismantled. There is no ambiguity about the Government’s attitude. We believe the United States carries an enormous burden on behalf of the free nations. We believe that through the ANZUS alliance we can continue to help in the discharge of that burden. This is precisely what we propose to do.

Mr. W. Hayden, Leader of the Opposition

Quite recently the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr Lionel Bowen) and I visited several joint facilities in this country — Nurrungar, Pine Gap, North West Cape and Smithfield. Clearly this was the most
intensive investigation ever undertaken by representatives at least of the Opposition — probably it was equal in intensity to any investigation undertaken by any members of this Parliament — into the functions, purposes and implications of these centres. At a Press conference at Smithfield I said that it was my hope that the product of our visit would be an informed and persistent discussion and debate in Australia in relation to American nuclear strategic policy and its implications. I pointed out that Australia is very much involved in the implications of that sort of policy as a consequence of a number of factors, the most dominant of which is the operations of these bases.

I have expressed my views in relation to three bases — Smithfield, Nurrungar and Pine Gap. They have been stated again clearly and correctly by the Minister for Defence (Mr Killen). I have expressed also my reservations about the lack of control, the lack of knowledge, and the absence of procedures for Australia's consent in relation to the way in which the North West Cape base operates. Nothing that the Minister said today in any way diminishes that concern. Everything he has said reinforces the justification for the worries which we — that is, my colleague, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and I — have expressed in relation to the centre. Today's statement does not contribute to the informed debate which I had hoped would get underway following our visit and the statements which we made.

Control of North West Cape

I wish now to declare the attitude of the Australian Labor Party on this matter. The inescapable fact remains that Australia has a sovereign right to be in ultimate control of affairs on her own territory. In these circumstances we find present arrangements covering the North West Cape unsatisfactory. We would seek to renegotiate the North West Cape agreement to provide, firstly, that Australia's consent is mandatory for all orders to initiate military action which flow from the station; and, secondly, that we be given firm and convincing assurances that the station will not be used to send orders for a first-strike nuclear attack or to initiate a limited strike. If the United States would not accept these reasonable provisions designed to protect our national sovereignty then we would ask it to wind down the operations of the North West Cape as rapidly as possible. I make no apologies for that declaration of principle and policy.

The North West Cape facility operates under circumstances dramatically different from those which applied less than a decade ago. Military equipment, hardware — especially strategic nuclear equipment — command control and communications systems and early warning systems are all profoundly more effective and efficient than they were several years ago. We have reached a point where we are moving into a new generation of nuclear armaments with greater accuracy and a capacity to take out hard targets such as reinforced concrete silos containing inter-continental ballistic missiles. We are seeing America's nuclear capacity moving more towards a first-strike force. That, in turn, will contribute to a degree of instability in super-power relationships. I do not deny for a minute that at the same time Russia is rushing headlong towards improving her nuclear capacity and effectiveness.

But the fact remains that the North West Cape communication facility operates in circumstances of greatly enhanced military and nuclear capacities. At a time when we are moving towards a new generation of nuclear missiles with a first-strike capacity. It is operating in different circumstances. We are moving towards a point where the deterrent role of the United States nuclear force is about to be superseded apparently by a first-strike capacity. In those circumstances we have a profound obligation to ensure that the operations of the North West Cape facility or any other facility under our control, that they proceed with our consent and so that we know what is happening. Should we wish for certain things not to happen we should be able to regulate such operations. To argue for anything less than that is to surrender in the most craven way the sovereignty of this
country. That we will not accept.

I point out another factor. The North West Cape facility could be used also for more conventional engagements should that be the wish of the United States. There could be circumstances in which America might conclude that its interest was such that it should undertake certain things, for instance conventional engagements. It could do so in an area where we had a major self-interest which was somewhat different from that of the United States of America. In those circumstances we do not want the course of development of our foreign policy preempted and then determined by actions initiated by the United States of America, as powerful and as important an ally as she undoubtedly is to us. There can be no quibble on the part of members of the Government that they share this view when it suits them. They were the people, after all, who professed much commitment to the Americans at the time of the most regrettable incarceration of diplomats in Iran. But they were much less than enthusiastic in the support they gave to trade embargoes. That support fell considerably short of what the United States sought. Self-interest for Australia determined a different level of response from that which the Americans believed was appropriate in terms of its sovereignty.

Naval exercises

Secondly, we recall a public announcement in the course of the last election that, after the election, there would be major naval exercises involving units of the United States and Australian fleets in the north-west Indian Ocean. In the upshot, once the election was safely out of the way, the Australian units exercised separately and quite distantly from the American units. The reason was that the Australian Government had concluded that it was not in our best interest to be seen so closely involved in those sorts of exercises with America, given the volatility of conditions in the Middle East and the possibility of certain difficulties arising for Australia in terms of both foreign relations and trade relations. What we are proposing in principle is no different from the policy the Government pursues when it suits it. We are concerned that messages can be transmitted through this facility without any knowledge by the Australian Government and in circumstances which would determine a course of events over which we would have no control, either nuclear conflict or more conventional conflict.

Sinai

I give another illustration of why there is a need for Australia to be alert to this matter, to take a very keen interest in the role and implications of this facility and to ensure that our best interests are at all times preserved. It is unfortunate that these things receive such scant attention in this House. When they do they are usually the victims of frenetic propagandising to the effect that 'The Russians are coming' from members of the Government, especially the most obsessive and manic member. It does not contribute to a better understanding about major developments in the world in which we are directly implicated. It is equally unfortunate that the media finds little interest in this matter. It is proposed that America should establish a peacekeeping force in the Middle East. I refer to an article in the Washington Post which was reproduced in the Guardian Weekly of 29 March this year. It was headed 'Smuggling US Forces Into Mideast'. It stated:

The problem is how to establish an American 'strategic presence' on the ground in a way that would deter — or conceivably defend against — Soviet penetrations without embarrassing the host nation and/or unnerving the neighbourhood.

The solution: Smuggle it in, so to say, in the guise of a peace-keeping force to supervise compliance with the terms of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

I put to one side my very genuine concern that it has been consistently proposed by America that Australia should provide military support to such a deployment. That is a matter for another occasion. I suggest, so that we can clarify the issue, that it is most
unlikely that there would be a direct Russian military penetration into the Middle East for a number of reasons which have been extensively canvassed publicly by intelligent, informed, concerned analysts — people who support the West. What is more likely is some sort of Middle East conflict involving Arab states and, perhaps, Israel. But again, here is a classic instance of when, should this project go ahead, messages could be communicated through the North West Cape facility without any awareness on the part of Australian authorities with extraordinary implications for this country which we would want to resist. Therefore, I put the argument that our concern is entirely justifiable and consistent with protecting the national interest and preserving our sovereignty.

We recall what happened in 1973. The North West Cape facility, with other facilities in the world, was put on a red alert at the time of military engagement between the Israelis and the Egyptians. We knew nothing about it until it was over. The Minister, in his statement, argued that it is wrong of me to suggest that there has been change in nuclear doctrine in recent times. On page 12 of the statement which was distributed to members of the House, as distinct from the way in which it will appear in the Hansard, he stated:

The basic principles of US nuclear strategy have been unchanged for decades.

He also said:

Presidential Directive No 59, issued by President Carter in late 1979, was merely the latest in a long series of statements of this doctrine.

That is palpable nonsense. There has been a succession of changes over the decades in the conceptualisation and projection of American nuclear strategic doctrine. To the 1960s the John Foster Dulles doctrine was massive retaliation. He said that the war would be all over in a few days. In the 1960s McNamara evolved a policy of mutual assured destruction. Nixon advocated a policy of flexible response and escalation control. President Carter issued presidential directive No 59 which, incidentally, is secret and is not known in all its detail to the Government. All the Government knows is what other honourable members and I know from informed reading from public sources in the community. The presidential directive conceives that a protracted nuclear war could be selective and controlled. I refer to what Defense Secretary Brown said on this matter in his Fiscal Year 1982 Annual Report. He said:

In addition to providing the ability to devastate the full target system of the Soviet Union, the countervailing strategy gives the President a wide range of options, including more selective, lesser retaliatory attacks....

The Minister said that was nonsense, and that there is no such thing as controlled, restricted or limited nuclear war. He said that there would be inevitable escalation. I suspect that he is right but there is a schizophrenia if he is right and the President of the United States is saying something to the contrary. The point I am making is that in the succession of American Executives there have been changes in nuclear doctrine on the part of the United States of America.

(Note: Mr Killen interrupted Mr Hayden to make the point that Mr Killen agreed with this. Mr Brown did say that he doubted very much indeed that there could be such a thing as a limited nuclear war. Mr Hayden then continued.)

The point must also be taken on board that Harold Brown returned to that point of view, which was one he expressed before he became Secretary of Defence, only in his final statement when the game was up and he knew he was on the way out. The American Executive believed otherwise. There is no indication of any changes. I am making the point that there has been a succession of changes in American doctrine of substantial order. The Minister admitted that there is a need for control. On page 13 of the statement he said:

I do not deny for one moment that Australian controls are required concerning North West Cape....

But the whole point of our arrange-
ments is that US strategic policy is not to be assessed simply in terms of technological capability but more essentially in terms of intent.

He agrees that there should be control but then says that it is a matter not of capability but of intent. The Government does not believe that the Americans have this intent. I do not believe that they have either. I believe they would honestly assure us that they do not. But the history of mankind is littered with the distress and vicissitude of countries that made the mistake of believing that another country's good intent would always be there to preserve them from difficulties of some form or another. I repeat that America in 1973 put North West Cape on red alert and did not advise us. At the time of the abortive exercise aimed at rescuing the imprisoned diplomats American went into Iran through Oman airport without the authority of the Government of Oman. This created great difficulties in the relations of the Oman Government with its neighbours. Of course, we need control. We need effective control. But it is wrong of the Minister to suggest, as he does on page 17 of his statement, that we are opposed to the military use of these bases. They are military bases. We are saying that we have a right to know, we need to know what is happening. There needs to be knowledge of what is taking place and there needs to be consent.

**US-Soviet Military Strengths**

I jump back to page 11 of the statement where the Minister implies that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics may be overhauling the United States in terms of strategic capability and that by implication we have a great obligation to be perhaps less questioning in this matter — more compliant, as it were.

(Mr Hayden then presented the following table prepared by the Defence Department on the relative strengths of the two major nuclear power.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Predicted levels for 1985</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present levels</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SALT II limits</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIRV'ed ICBM's 820</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIRV'ed SLBM's 1,200</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bombers with ACLM's 1,320</td>
<td>...</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,070</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Landbased</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missiles with single warhead or MRV's ICBM 2,250</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Seabased</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Missiles with single warhead or MRV's SLBM 2,250</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombers without cruise missiles</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total operational delivery vehicles</td>
<td>1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total warhead numbers</td>
<td>9,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The figures for delivery vehicles ('Present Levels' and 'With SALT II') are much more accurate than those for total warhead numbers and the 'Without SALT II' columns which depend on a large range of assumptions.

It (the table - editors) shows very simply that the arms capabilities of the two powers is about equivalent. America has about 9,000 warheads and Russia has about 8000.
matter that ought to be pursued in this House with more vigour than we have the opportunity to do, namely, the overwhelming case for pursuing SALT II — the strategic arms limitation talks — detente, world disarmament, peace — things that do not belong to starry-eyed idealists but things of concern to people genuinely worried about the future of mankind. This table shows that with SALT II the number of warheads available to the United States will go up to nearly 12,000, to Russia to about 9,000 but that without SALT II the number will go up to nearly 14,000 for the United States and up to 12,000 for Russia. That is a mad escalation to self-destruction. We have an obligation to ensure that to the extent that we make a contribution in terms of the nuclear deployment between the super-powers, it is a contribution towards deterrence, not one that in any way at all might facilitate a first strike. That is what we are constantly talking about. Harold Brown in the statement I quoted from — I acknowledge that the Minister arranged for me to receive this — said of the effects of any nuclear exchange between the super powers:

For massive nuclear exchanges involving military and economic targets in the United States and the Soviet Union, fatality estimates range from a low of 20-55 million up to a high of 155-160 million in the United States, and from a low of 23-24 million up to a high of 64-100 million in the Soviet Union.

That is massive slaughter of mankind. In those circumstances we have no compunction at all about declaring our determination to do everything we can to regulate the nuclear race between the super-powers to ensure that to the extent that it exists it is a mutual deterrent role and beyond that to work for eventual nuclear disarmament.

The other matter that the Minister invites me to take up is that of ANZUS. There is some implication in what he says that there is perhaps a doubt about the strength of our commitment to the alliance, perhaps even nascently a betrayal of the American alliance, of ANZUS by these sorts of questions. The Curtin Labor Government 40 years ago established the Australian-American alliance. On that occasion Curtin was condemned by the conservatives for betraying Great Britain. The criticism never ceases. I want to say only one thing on that matter. It is my concluding point. I invite the Minister and his colleagues to respond. The Minister sees great difficulties with what I am proposing. He believes what I am proposing is impractical and unreasonable. Overriding all that the Minister states quite categorically that the proposal is a threat to the effectiveness of the ANZUS alliance. Does he know what the two most senior people in the American Embassy, apart from the Ambassador who is yet to arrive, have declared to me, to members of my staff and to at least one of my colleagues that they find no problems with what we are proposing. They understand completely our concern about national sovereignty. They believe they can work with the proposal. We are up to date with what the ANZUS alliance means. We are not prepared to be servile. We do not see it as a master-servant relationship but one of equals. We are determined to make it work but it will work in circumstances where there will be areas of disagreement. That is clear.

The final point that I want to make on the strength of the ANZUS alliance comes from Admiral Synnot who said yesterday:

...the ANZUS defence treaty with the United States did not guarantee security.

He continued:

......the US would help Australia if it were under fundamental threat—

Whatever that is—

but he told a Commonwealth Club luncheon in Adelaide there could be many other occasions when Australia might have to deal with lesser though very demanding threats on its own.

That seems to me to be a sensible assessment of what it is all about. That is what we are about — national self-respect, a determination to preserve our sovereignty to work, in spite of all the differences which are going to arise from time to time, in a self-respecting way, not a servile or demeaning way, with our major ally.
MEXICO'S COMMUNISTS

In the midst of the unfolding Central American and Carribean liberation struggles stands Mexico, an oil-rich country. Its anti-imperialist foreign policy combined with sharp repression at home is just one of the many paradoxes of the Mexican scene.

Mexico is also a country where the recently legalised Communist Party (PCM) is in the midst of a ferment of ideas and activity as it seeks to define its role in the 1980's. Recently this redefinition has included a dramatic dialogue with other political groups.

Two Australians, Barry Carr and Barbara Marsh, recently spent six months in Mexico studying the Mexican Communist Party. The author of several books in Spanish on the Mexican workers' movement and currently writing a history of the PCM, Barry Carr attended the 19th Congress of the PCM in March 1981 as an observer. Barbara Marsh and Barry Carr were interviewed for Australian Left Review by Philip Herington.

There have been some pretty dramatic events on the Mexican left in the past few months?

Well, the unbelievable seems almost about to happen; it looks as though most of the parties of the left for once are going to unite to form a single party. In the middle of August the four parties that form the Coalition of the Left, namely the PCM, the PPM, PSR and MAUS* agreed to merge with the biggest party outside the Coalition, the Mexican Workers' Party, (PMT). The exact details of this merger are not clear yet.

Although there has been talk of forming a loose united party for the left in previous years there was nothing in the deliberations of the 19th Congress of the PCM, or for that matter in the life of the Mexican left as a whole earlier this year, that signalled how close such a dramatic event was.

What was the significance of the 19th Congress?

The 19th Congress is symptomatic of the tremendous changes which have occurred in the PCM since, at the 13th Congress in 1960, it turned its back on twenty years of crisis and disintegration. The 13th Congress took place when the party was underground and when the workers' movement as a whole was suffering tremendous repression. In 1958-9 there had been a wave of strike activity involving railway workers and telegraphists and the party was involved in some of these actions. In those days the party was so small that the 13th Congress took place in a private house in the southern suburbs of Mexico City without the public interest that surrounded the 19th Congress.

The 13th Congress was held in a former brothel which was one of the few houses that the PCM could rent for the Congress. Old timers recall the alarm caused by furious knocking on the door during the Congress proceedings. What could very easily have been a foretaste of a police raid turned out to be some clients of the brothel who hadn't realised that the premises were being put to a different use.

Contrast this scene with the 19th Congress STOP PRESS: A special Congress of the Mexican Communist Party was held in October to discuss a new political formation. As a result, the MCP dissolved and formed, with other political groupings, the united Left Party.

*PMT (Mexican Workers Party); PPM (Party of the Mexican People); PSR (Revolutionary Socialist Party); MAUS (breakaway from PCM).
THE MEXICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

which was held in the congress centre of a luxury hotel, the Hotel de Mexico, in the full glare of publicity, with observers from many areas outside the PCM able to attend virtually every session. This was a Congress with 290 voting delegates (plus hundreds more without a vote) representing some 15,000 members. The Congress debate was incredibly frank and lively with relatively few signs of that tradition of communist congresses where the issues are decided in advance by the leadership and where the Congress itself is relegated to a largely ritual role.

Anyone familiar with Mexican communism in the 1940s or '50s and '60s would be amazed at the CPM's current relationship with Mexican society as a whole. The party has a qualitatively greater presence in civil society. At certain times, if you turn on your radio or TV set, you are able to tune in to the party's programmes. They are jammed in between the sentimental soap operas and ranch-style music that fill the programming most of the time.

In the Chamber of Deputies, not a body with much political power in Mexico to be sure, there is an eighteen-member Coalition of the Left of which half the deputies are members of the PCM. The party was able to win three-quarters of a million votes in the national elections of 1979. So today you have a party which has inserted itself deeply into Mexican life and one which has also undergone a very major internal transformation, a real process of democratisation at a number of levels.

Until the mid-1960s the PCM was one of Latin America's most stalinised parties. Not only did it have an uncritical relationship with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union but its internal structure was excessively centralised. Not even the Central Committee could exercise a decision-making role effectively. It was a party with a tiny membership of a few hundred, largely isolated from the working class and peasantry and with an unhealthy reputation for subservience to the state and to the ruling party in Mexico, the PRI. Its legality was always unclear and the party went through a long period of electoral abstentionism, arguing that the widespread political corruption and all encompassing power of the ruling party made electioneering pointless.

The PCM had suffered an incredible amount of political repression, which partly explains its relatively marginal status in the 1950s and early 60s.

It used to have a very narrow vanguardist conception of its role and was never able to transform itself into a mass party. It also saw itself as the sole interpreter of marxist theory and practice in the country which obviously had a bad effect on its relationship with other sectors and parties of the left.

Yet in the last ten years the party has grown considerably and changed in the process.

What are the consequences of this change?

First, the party's attitude to other groups on the left has changed dramatically. The PCM no longer sees itself having a monopoly of marxism; it's simply one of a number of focuses of socialist action. This isn't just a change of style, but it's flowed through to the party's practice, its strategy of alliances and so on. Of course, most recently this has led to the proposal to form a single party of the left. It has also led to short-term agreements with the major trotskyist party, the PRT, although the current moves to consolidate the Mexican left don't seem to be receiving much support from this group. Still, in a country where Trotskyism has been so bitterly denounced (the PCM explicitly recognised its role in the persecution and murder of Trotsky in a book published by one of its great leaders, Valentin Campa, a few years ago), this is quite an achievement.

What sort of presence does the party have outside of elections?

Despite the major role the PCM played in worker and peasant organisation in the 1920s and 1930s, today the party's presence in the mass movement is rather weak. In the 1960s the party began to insert itself into university unionism. This is rather different from Australia. In Mexico, the university trade unions include academic, manual and
administrative workers. Outside of the university unions, the party has scattered pockets of support in mining centres, metal-producing works and in the railway system and among school teachers.

But the party's influence has grown mainly among the intelligentsia, professionals, students and so on. This has given rise to quite a lively debate within the party over the last couple of years over whether the party is in crisis or not as a result of its changing sociological composition. There is talk of a 'crisis of growth' following the party's legalisation in 1976 and '77. A movement of 'renovators', questioning the party's strategies, developed, at first in the Central Committee and then at lower levels within the party. The debate became public for the first time in November last year (1980) with the publication of a letter in a leading Mexico City newspaper signed by thirteen members of the Central Committee. The letter was titled 'For the renovation of the Mexican Communist Party'.

Could you say something about the Congress; how it was organised; the main issues?

Well the first thing I should say is that there were no boring ritual discussions and no opportunities to fall asleep. The level of the debate was of a very high quality and everything was up for discussion. There were four committees to discuss the party's statutes, programme, theses and the secretary-general's report. The last two days were dominated by the plenary sessions which met to discuss the conclusions reached by each of the four committees. I suppose the main theme of the Congress was an unintended one — a struggle between different perspectives on the party's future. Involved in this struggle were issues such as the legality of currents of opinion within the party, the scope of the Central Committee's prerogatives as well as more general issues such as the party's position on the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What were the issues raised by the 'renovators group'?

First, its important not to see them as forming a homogeneous grouping; there are differences among them on many issues. Broadly, though, they are critical of what they regard as the party's uncritical embrace of parliamentarism which has led the party to divert resources from mass work. A second theme in the renovators' platform is a call for greater democratisation in the party's practice including a definition of the power of the Central Committee and the legalisation of horizontal contacts between different organs at the base level. Another theme is concern over the way in which, according to the renovators, the party has become a 'party of opinion' rather than a mass party. In other words that the party has used its legal status to influence public opinion, penetrate the daily press, etc., rather than involving itself more firmly in mass action. The particular criticism was linked with the renovators' concern over the party's very limited involvement with the Mexican working class and peasantry at a time when the country was going through a deep process of proletarianisation.

How did the leadership respond to these views?

It went more or less as follows. The renovators are said to be a minority of intellectuals guilty of a return to the anti-parliamentarianism of the party's past when anarcho-syndicalist views were much in evidence. The way they are emphasising the need for mass struggle, etc., is tantamount to the development of a workerist current which ignores the increasing importance of middle-sector groups, the intelligentsia, state employees, radicalised petty bourgeoisie, etc. Lastly the manner in which the renovators put forward their position raises legitimate fears of the emergence of factions within the party.

How was the debate resolved?

The renovators remained a minority both within the new Central Committee and within the Congress as a whole. However, on many issues the renovators were supported by delegates who were not identified with the overall position of the renovators. This meant, for example, that the Congress agreed to legalise horizontal contact in the party and
the Central Committee lost its automatic right to vote in the Congresses. In the future, assuming that the PCM will still exist as a separate party after the 'merger' of the parties of the left projected for next year, members of the Central Committee will have a vote only when elected as delegates to the Congress by a basic party organisation. On the big issues of the day the relationship between the party and workers' and peasants' movement, the role of parliamentary work, the strategy of alliances with other groups on the left — nothing was really resolved mainly because the inner-party struggle diverted attention from these issues.

What I think was most important was that this dispute was not resolved through expulsions and splits as has happened in the past. This is a tremendous achievement and so is the vigour and depth of debate within the PCM.

One remarkable aspect of Mexican society is the enormous interest in marxist theory and writings. What impact has this had on the debate in the PCM, and is there any reflection of the much discussed 'crisis of marxism'?

There's no doubt that the PCM's enormous growth over the last five years or so has got a lot to do with the growth of marxism as a whole. Marxism is almost hegemonic among the intelligentsia. There are probably more marxist magazines printed in Mexico today than in any other comparable Third World country. The bookshops, even of a commercial variety, are chock-a-block with marxist literature, old and new. Of course since 1973 Mexico has become a refuge for thousands of exiled leftists from all over Latin America and this influx of talent has transformed the universities and public debate in the country. However, bourgeois ideologies, particularly notions of class collaboration and corporatism are still influential in the workers' movement, still largely tied to the official party, the PRI, through a network of mass organisations which drastically curb working-class autonomy.

I suppose the 'crisis of marxism' is reflected in another sense too. The PCM's rapid growth has meant that the party has had to assimilate very quickly a large number of people with very varying perspectives and relationships to marxism. The party's ability to integrate all these people into its basic party activity has been limited, and the range of perspectives brought into the party is vast, contradictory as well as exhilaratingly unorthodox. So there's both great intellectual excitement as well as intellectual and ideological diversity or what some people have called a tremendous intellectual 'dispersion'.

Is there a conflict between traditional worker-based sections of the party and newer intellectually trained members?

So far I don't think that this is the area of disputation except possibly on the issue of sexual politics. This is an area which is relatively new to the life of the PCM and in Mexico as a whole - certainly quite different to the situation in Australia.

Is the PCM the Latin American flag-waver for Euro-communism (EC) as is sometimes suggested?

I must say I am very sceptical; in fact I wouldn't agree with that characterisation. First, it is very difficult to decide precisely what a Euro-communist party is. The differences between the Spanish, French and Italian parties are enormous. They reflect the different political histories of those countries and different social structures. I would say that the PCM is not a Euro-communist party because EC was an attempt to come to terms with the application of marxist political practice to advanced capitalist societies. It involved the questioning of models which had been uncritically assimilated from the experience of the Soviet Union and from leninist practice of a different era. For all its burgeoning capitalist economy, Mexico cannot be considered a member of the advanced capitalist 'core region' like France or Italy. It is not like these other societies for a number of reasons.

At the same time, if you look at EC as the sum of a number of characteristics then you certainly can find some of these features present in the PCM. For example, the
relationship between national communist parties and the international communist movement. There is no question that the PCM shares the Euro-communist position on the importance of autonomy and non-interference of the movement in the affairs of the national parties. This has been demonstrated time and time again — beginning with the Mexican party’s condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and more recently Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

There was a very vivid debate at the 19th Congress over the appropriateness of the concept ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’. The arguments used in the debate were very similar to those used in Western Europe, but the resolution of the debate is somewhat different. At the 19th Congress the delegates very narrowly approved the leadership’s decision to eliminate the term from the party’s programme and it was replaced with a new phrase ‘democratic workers’ power’. In other words the essential content of the term was retained. The change didn’t have anything to do with the strong ‘pluralist’ tradition within the Mexican working class because such a tradition does not exist. It was dropped because of the unfortunate connotations of the term ‘dictatorship’ in a country with a very authoritarian political system. Since the PCM saw its role as being part of the struggle against effective one-party authoritarianism and for the achievement of autonomy for the mass organisations of workers and peasants, it was thought that ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ didn’t emphasise sufficiently the democratic character of the state in the transition stage.

In terms of internal organisation and structure, in terms of democratisation, the PCM does feed into a number of the currents active in EC. There is a much more authentic interpretation of democratic centralism, a rejection of vanguardist notions and a rethinking of the party’s position towards other left parties and groups. The logical extension of this last point is the recent decision to work for the formation of a new united party of the left, even if this means the abandonment of the party’s separate name and existence.

But despite all these similarities with EC there is at the same time a profoundly held belief, and this cuts across the different currents of opinion within the party, that EC has limited relevance to Mexican conditions. This is not based on any purist prejudice about where EC has led some of the European parties but is based on an assessment of the differences between Mexican society and the structure of the advanced capitalist world. It is based on the fact that in Mexico the state, more obviously so than in Western Europe, exercises its authority through the use of violence than through a more broadly articulated hegemony in civil society.

Therefore some of the conceptions of EC, which are the result of a concrete analysis of the peculiarities of the state in advanced capitalist society, do not apply in the Mexican case. It is also based upon a characterisation of the nature of the working class and popular movements in Mexico. In Europe we have working class movements that are very old. They go back to the beginnings of the 19th century — movements that have struggled for over a century for the franchise, for democratic rights; movements in which the more progressive elements of bourgeois democracy have taken very strong roots as a result of the struggle of popular movements. In Mexico this is not the case. The popular movements of workers and peasants have never been successful in forcing the establishment of a regime of liberal democracy. On the contrary, as far as Mexico is concerned, the parliamentary system is synonymous with corruption, serious violence, manipulation and fraud.

There is no broadly based identification with parliamentary democracy. On the contrary the major concern of the popular movement is with much more basic issues such as a struggle for the autonomy of the trade unions and peasant associations, a struggle for union independence and democracy.

The third strand of the relationship of
Mexico to EC is to be found in the relationship between Mexico and the United States. In Mexico we are dealing with a highly dependent society, a society which like many other Latin American societies experiences imperialism in a much more direct and crude fashion than the more mature and somewhat more autonomous capitalist countries of Western Europe. In this context a radical break with capitalism in Mexico would signify a much more traumatic break with the inter-American socio-economic system than would be the case in Europe. Or at least, this is the assumption. And I think it would therefore provoke the kind of intervention by the United States that, directly or indirectly, Euro-communist strategy is least capable of dealing with. In other words, while it would be quite wrong to suggest that the PCM embraces a strategy of armed struggle — it is not a party that sees armed struggle as being on the agenda at the moment, far from it, it is a party in which people see the break with capitalism as involving a degree of violence which is qualitatively much greater than we could conceive of occurring or being necessary in the mature capitalist democracies of Western Europe. So it is for these reasons, that despite certain similarities in the programme and in the style of the PCM with some sort of model of EC, there are a number of elements that would clearly mark off the PCM from the Euro-communist parties. The leadership quite firmly abstains from any characterisation of the PCM as Euro-communist.

How does Mexico and the PCM assess the Central American and Caribbean liberation struggles?

Mexico has for a very long time had a foreign policy with a strong anti-imperialist flavour, at the level of rhetoric, largely speaking. Nevertheless, Mexico has been genuinely anti-imperialist and it is easy to see why, given the nature of Mexico’s revolutionary movement and the nature of continuing relations between Mexico and successive United States’ administrations. The discovery of new deposits of oil in the last four years has given this anti-imperialist element greater zap. This can be seen in the current administration of Jose Lopez Portillo, although it is generally regarded as a rather conservative government in terms of its domestic social and economic policies.

The most notable developments have been Mexico’s support for the Sandinista struggle against Somoza and then for the Reconstruction Government in Nicaragua and more recently in support for the FDR in El Salvador. A short while ago the French and Mexican governments issued a declaration announcing their recognitions of the FDR as a ‘significant political force’ in El Salvador. The Mexican government has supplied oil and other resources to Nicaragua at quite reasonable prices by world standards, assisted with the literacy campaign, and in the diplomatic sphere it lobbies hard for the principle of non-intervention in Central American affairs. The ruling party in Mexico, the PRI, clearly sees itself as allied to the position of the Socialist International on most Central American issues.

I think that Mexico and the United States are bound to clash more frequently over Central America in the next few years. Its not only the anti-imperialist content of the Mexican revolution that’s at stake either. Mexico likes to think of itself as exercising a benevolent protectorate over Central America itself. This ‘special relationship’ of Mexico to the region is linked not only to history (the region was originally one unit in colonial times) but to economic questions — to Mexico’s growing investment and trade with the region.

The PCM has always had a lively interest in, and concern with the countries of Central America. In fact the PCM itself helped create virtually all the communist parties of the region in the 1920s and 1930s and the party played an important role in assisting Sandino in Nicaragua during this period. Needless to say the party has argued consistently against imperialist intervention in the region, although its fair to say that there is such unanimity on this subject among all the nationalist and left sectors in Mexico that the party isn’t unique in its position.

Marx, Engels and National Movements is a collection, joined with commentary, of Marx and Engels' observations on the national question. The observations appeared in their lifetime in newspaper articles, lectures, letters and as sub-topics in major theoretical works.

In their writings of the 1840s, Marx and Engels considered that capitalism and national independence went hand in hand since independent national economic development was the *raison d'être* of the bourgeoisie. Capitalism was intimately linked with the emergence of a national capitalist class shaped by and controlling the nation state. Further, Marx and Engels believed that capitalism manifested an objectively progressive character, it compelled non-European lands "to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, ie to become bourgeois themselves. In one word it create(d) a world after its own image" (from the *Manifesto*). This view — that the non-European world was fated to become essentially like Western Europe — was coupled with the view that "everything that centralises the bourgeoisie is advantageous to the workers" (Marx to Engels, July 1866). Bourgeois hegemony they thought, would bring unity to small and fragmented states, and in the long run, this was helpful to the international workers' movement.

**Eurocentrism**

Engels (in 1849 at least) was even sharper in his eurocentrism, talking of "residual fragments of peoples (who) always become fanatical standard-bearers of counter-revolution and remain so until their complete extirpation or the loss of their national character". Such were the Southern Slavs, the Czechs, the Morovians, the Slovaks, the Gaels, the Basques, the Bretons who were peoples who "never had a history". Indeed, Engels' eurocentrism slipped into racism when he posited the existence of "entire reactionary peoples".

Following the revolutions of 1848, Marx and Engels reconsidered their attitude to the small and semi-feudal nations of Central and Eastern Europe, and to India and China. But the reconsideration was based on tactical concerns, each national movement being judged progressive or reactionary to the extent that it might weaken — or even hasten — the crisis of capitalism in Western Europe.

In *Capital* Marx demonstrated that industrial capitalism owed its birth partly to the destruction of nations outside of Western Europe. With the growth of industrial capitalism the conquered territories, initially a source of tribute and raw materials, took on additional importance as markets for manufactures. As the existence of such markets helped to stave off the decline in the rate of profit, a crisis within colonial economies, Marx argued, could have a substantial dislocating effect on capitalism in Europe.

Ireland, English capital's first colonial acquisition, played a vital role in maintaining the stability of the English ruling class. Marx and Engels watched events in India and Ireland closely, in the hope that political and/or economic crises there would have a destabilising effect on ruling class hegemony in England. Their consideration of India, Ireland and Poland remained at this level: that the freedom of subjugated nations remained dependent upon the triumph of the European working class, but political and economic events within the dominated nations could have a crisis-inducing significance in Europe itself.

Events in Poland in 1863 forced Marx and Engels to again reconsider their approach. In that year the Poles rose against Russian Tsarism and were savagely repressed. Elements of the gentry headed the nationalist movement but, as a class, Polish serfs stood to gain more from the continued overlordship of Russia, for territories controlled by Russia had carried through the emancipation acts ordered by the Tsar in 1860. National interest or class interest? — the socialist movement was divided. Some argued that what served the interests of the most oppressed and exploited class most directly and immediately was what mattered. In this case the emancipation of the serfs under Russian domination was better than Polish self-determination coupled with oppression and inhumanity at the hands of Polish landlords and gentry.

Marx and Engels, on the other hand, argued that the cause of national self-determination came first.
Engels sharply criticised those Polish socialists who did “not place the liberation of their country at the head of their programme....In order to be able to fight one needs first a soil to stand on, air, light and space. Otherwise all is idle chatter” (Engels to Kautsky, 1882).

In putting this position, Marx and Engels were again influenced by strategic and tactical questions. Russia was “the great bastion of European reaction”; whatever weakened Russia, objectively served the interests of the European working class movement as a whole.

On reconsidering Poland, Marx and Engels thought again of their position on Ireland. Just as Polish nationalism would weaken Russian hegemony, so too would Irish liberation strike at the heart of British capitalism. Ireland was important to Britain not only as a market for British investment and manufactured exports; it was a source of cheap labour power. Indeed, the importation of Irish workers was fostered by British capitalists in part to divide and weaken the working class. The freedom of Ireland would ameliorate this condition, and furthermore it would deprive the English government of “the only pretext (it had) for retaining a big standing army which....(could) be used against the English workers after having done its military training in Ireland” (Marx, 1870). So important was Ireland to the rule of British capital, Marx concluded in 1870, that the national emancipation of Ireland was a precondition for socialism in England. Marx and Engels no longer considered that the national self-determination of colonial possessions would have to await the victory of the European proletariat, indeed, struggles for national independence might not only trigger revolutionary upsurges in Europe, but might be essential to their success.

In the last years of his life, Marx continued to reappraise his views of the nature of nationalist struggle. His most important theoretical work, Capital, laid bare the workings of industrial capitalism in Western Europe, but did not seek to describe the laws of motion of other modes of production. A revolutionary upsurge in Russia led him to question his view that precapitalist social formations need necessarily be transformed, and capitalism implanted, before the transition to socialism could be effected. Perhaps it was possible for socialism to be achieved in places where capitalism had not become dominant? As far as Russia was concerned, the question was to prove academic. By the late nineteenth century the capitalist mode was well established — even transforming social relations in the countryside. Marx’s encounter with the Russian populists and anarchists of the Narodnaya Volya stirred his heart and set his mind racing, putting him at odds with the pedants among the Russian marxists. Even in old age he did not fear new knowledge and experience.

Cummins is less concise than the above summary of Marx and Engels’ views on self-determination suggests, and this is one of the puzzles of the book which describes at length, and with copious quotation, what Marx and Engels had to say about national movements. But the book stops there. Collections of Marx and Engels on India, Ireland, colonialism and the national question have existed for some time and are well known to marxists with an interest in the third world. So it is difficult to see the use of a further compilation.

All around Cummins rages a debate within marxism on the question of national self-determination. Marxists in the debate have long since ingested the views of Marx and Engels, and indeed the emergence of the Dependency School was partly a reaction to the ritualistic adoption by some Latin American communist parties of Stalin’s rigidification of Marx and Engels’ hesitant, unformed views. For Cummins, it is as if this debate had never happened. He reminds marxists again of the ethnocentrism of Marx and Engels, something worth being reminded of, but to stop there is less than adequate.

Since Marx and Engels, marxist historians and social scientists have made substantial theoretical advances in the analysis of non-capitalist modes of production and their relationship to Western European capitalism. If Cummins should remind us of the origins of this growth and development in order to contribute to it, then one could not complain; but to restate the views of the old masters, as if nothing had happened since, serves little purpose. The restatement of Marx and Engels, in a vacuum as it were, is even more curious because Cummins’ bibliography contains work by Kiernan, H.B. Davis and Draper, three whose writings in the late nineteen sixties and early seventies contributed to the reopening of the whole question of marxism and nationalism.

A reassessment of the contribution of Marx and Engels, in the light of the recent debate, would have been timely especially since Geoffrey Kay has resurrected Marx’s aphorism that “industrial capitalism creates a world after its own image”, arguing that the problems of the third world result
not so much from the exploitation of capital but from the fact that capital did not exploit them enough. Such bold claims bolster the assertion that the problems of the agrarian socialisms developed in China, Vietnam and Kampuchea are at least partly attributable to the stunted and still-born capitalism which preceded them. Such is the gravity of the debate and the importance of a reassessment of the place of Marx and Engels within it. Unfortunately, Cummins does not seem to be aware that it is even taking place.

The scholarly nature of Cummins work is not at issue. Perhaps unfairly I am criticising him for not doing what he did not set out to do. At root, the difference is between one who sees the work of Marx and Engels as a complete and interesting object of study, and another who considers marxism as alive, growing and, above all, useful—the difference between a marxologist and a marxist.

Finally, some comment must be made on the price of the book. At an outrageous $44, each page is priced at more than 21 cents. The whole book could be photocopied for less than $10.


On April 29th, 1965, Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced his Government’s decision to commit Australian combat troops to the war in Vietnam. During the following six years, thousands of young Australians were sent to fight in a war which seemed to have little relevance for Australia. When Australian troops were finally withdrawn by the end of 1971, nearly 500 had been killed and 2,500 wounded. Countless others still suffer from physical and psychological disorders attributable to their time in Vietnam.

Why did the Australian Government decide to commit Australian forces to Vietnam? Was it from pressure from our great protector and ally, the United States of America? Or was it in response, as was publicly announced, to a request from the South Vietnamese Government of Prime Minister Phan Huy Quat? These are some of the questions addressed by Michael Sexton, Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of New South Wales, in his book **War for the Asking**. With access to much relevant correspondence between the United States and the Australian Governments, and other previously unpublished communications, particularly telegrams, between Australian politicians and diplomats in Washington, Canberra and Saigon, Sexton has provided us with a new account of how Australia really came to be involved in Vietnam, which account not only effectively puts to rest certain myths of “external” pressure but also lays the responsibility squarely on our own Government.

In December, 1964, the military position in Saigon was deteriorating and the Americans were faced with a situation of military and political chaos. In addition, international pressure was brought to bear by such countries as France and Britain for the neutralisation of Vietnam. Australia, however, alarmed at any sign of wavering from the United States “set out to use whatever influence it had to push the Americans so deeply into the morass that they would have no alternative but to press on to the end”. The strategy used by Australian politicians, evident from communications quoted by Sexton, was “to arouse concern in the Americans...that their position appeared vacillating or powerless to the rest of the world”. During January, 1965, the situation in Washington remained fluid with no firm decision to put ground troops into Vietnam; nor was any decision made until late February. However, not only did the Australian Government in the three months prior to this decision continually press the United States to bomb North Vietnam and dissuade them from any idea of negotiating with Hanoi, it also pushed for the involvement of Australian combat troops in Vietnam, despite the United States’ request only for instructors.

On 2nd March, 1965, at the direction of President Johnson, the bombing of North Vietnam commenced. On 5th March, US troops landed at Da Nang on the north coast of South Vietnam. At this stage still no formal request was made for troops from Australia, despite constant pressure by the Australian Government for such a formal request. In April, 1965, the Menzies’ Government finally secured approval from the United States for Australian troop involvement and was anxious to immediately make the announcement public; however, the Australian Government insisted that the request be seen to come from Prime Minister Quat. According to Sexton, and supported by evidence from telegram communications, “the last act of this diplomatic drama was to contain some of its most frenetic scenes”, as the South Vietnamese Government had to be “persuaded” of the need not only for additional American troops but also for non-American troops. That the letter from Prime Minister Quat made this quite clear was further evidenced by the fact that it was only finally tabled in Parliament a few months before the last Australian troops were withdrawn.
What were the reasons for Australia's push for involvement in and escalation of the Vietnam War? Has the investment of the ruined lives of many Australian people, not to mention the Vietnamese, paid off dividends for Australia? According to Michael Sexton there were two reasons for this policy — "both unstated and normally obscured by rhetoric about the downward thrust of Asian hordes" — firstly, that it would be to Australia's advantage that America be locked into the South East Asian region by their involvement in Vietnam; and secondly, that by accepting assistance from Australia, the United States Government would feel obliged to protect Australia should it be threatened by any South East Asian source. As Sexton points out, this policy has had precisely the opposite effect: "ten years after the Australian decision to send troops, the Americans had withdrawn from the Asian mainland" — with their tail between their legs, and with total casualties of 55,000 dead and 300,000 wounded (this does not include the 55,000 US veterans who since returning home from Vietnam have committed suicide.)

The decision by the Menzies' Government was taken in a political climate in Australia where the Government in such a strong position was able to effectively gag any real public debate. It is here, according to Sexton, that implications for Australia's foreign policy may be drawn, for as he points out this system of decision-making remains unaltered. "There is, therefore, a considerable risk that decisions as misconceived as that of 1965 will be made in the 1980's — with much more disastrous consequences".

War For The Asking is a compelling book, both in its content and its message. Despite the many quoted texts it is easy to read with Sexton's lucid style and hard to put down once begun. Hopefully many people will read it and notch it up as one more contribution to the public debate that must become reality if the world is to successfully navigate the nuclear waters of the 1980's.


Donald Horne has followed Death of the Lucky Country, his 1976 essay on the end of the Whitlam Era, with another political "quickie" Winner Take All, his avowed aim being to write a short book on the 1980 Federal election and its meaning. In some respects, however, Horne's new book is more about "lack of meaning" than "meaning".

There are four important strands running through the book: the obfuscatory nature of the 1980 election campaign; an analysis of where the Labor Party is at of now; the government-forming process in Australia; and the power of the received wisdom or "common sense" in shaping the political values and judgement of the electorate. Each of these points is well worth discussing.

In a chapter entitled "Heroes, Villains and Fools", Donald Horne draws attention to how election campaigns often fail to come to grips with the important issues facing the community. For a variety of reasons the matters of real substance are played down — or even completely ignored. He argues that the 1980 election campaign was a stark example of this over-simplification of complex issues.

The central economic issue facing Australia last year was the imminent development "boom" and its likely consequences — economic, social, political. However, there wasn't, Horne says, real debate between the government coalition and Labor about these matters of far-reaching importance. Nor was there any real attempt to explain that large-scale unemployment was due to the end of the post-second world war boom; nor to explain why "managed" capitalism had failed.

Money Ethos

The coalition's lack of interest in a serious explanation is obvious enough for Horne not to pursue this point; what is more important is Labor's failure. Here he suggests that the Labor Party is inhibited by its bi-partisan acceptance of the national belief in development and economic growth, which he argues lies at the bottom of the "ruling 'pragmatism' of Australians," a pragmatism that "sees money as the measure of all things." Under the impetus of this money ethos, enthusiasm for "national development" (in the case of Queensland and Western Australia, state development) becomes "a passion for development pursued not in rational terms of cost and benefit but for its own sake", as something inherently good. What the Labor Party needs to do, according to Horne, is to question this philosophy on two levels: first, does it make sense; but more important, to ask who will benefit; who gains, who and what loses?

Apart from these general considerations, development should be effectively taxed and big business concessions abandoned; more of the public money now spent in helping transnational and national corporations could be spent on government prospecting, government mines and government processing-plants.
As well as dealing directly with the development boom, Donald Horne deals with the allied economic and social costs: the manufacturing industry run-down; inflation; cyclical and structural unemployment; and loss of Australian control of Australian assets and resources. He develops an important point which perhaps helps to explain the evolution of his ideological position since the 1960s.

In the late 1960s the Australian business class failed the test of maintaining the national interest. It is part of the further development of Horne’s “Lucky Country” thesis that Australian business derives a sense of self-importance from its old and new imperial connections; and an accession of foreign money is a measure of national importance regardless of the effect of national independence Horne won’t have this. So he now casts Australian business as a comprador class prepared to sell out completely.

Despite an Australian belief that Australians are on the same side as the exploiters of other people’s resources, what has been happening to Australia is a degree of Latin-Americanisation. Western Australia and Queensland are more than a little down the path of becoming banana republics: what matters is keeping the foreign companies happy. Horne stresses that it is not at all fanciful to point out that big transnational mining companies have been known to favour secessionist movements (for example, Katanga), that at least in the case of the United States, political interference by big corporations can be linked with overt diplomatic activity and covert intelligence activity.

The Labor Party

Donald Horne is decidedly ambivalent about the Labor Party. On the one hand, he suggests 1980 saw the resurrection of Labor; in electoral support, if not in seats won, the Labor Party came within one percentage point of being preferred by a majority of Australian voters. On the other hand, he stresses the extraordinary fragility of Labor’s apparent relegitimisation and how Labor fears policies and actions (for example, the pre-election mobilisation), that will put at risk its ability to form a “legitimate” government. Is Labor merely tolerated on Liberal terms as part of a two-party system, or is it a quite independent party with its own distinct policies?

Nowhere is this dilemma clearer than in the areas of foreign and defence policies. In this connection Horne writes of the long debilitation of the Labor Party and its timidity in taking an independent, Australian stance. Yet, he is timid himself about Labor repudiating the American alliance. The odds are too great. In any case, the alliance with the United States is “common sense”, even if unpalatable “common sense”.

Donald Horne believes that the American alliance is based on two related factors: first, Australia’s “traditional vassal’s view of the world”; and, second, fear of having to fend for itself. Through their long-standing association with Britain and then America, Australians, although subordinate, see themselves as part of the dominant group that runs the world. But by accepting a separate Australian identity and separate interests, they would move outside the dominant group and put their national existence at risk. All this is “common sense”. Hence, the American alliance is “common sense”.

Non-alignment and the American Alliance

When discussing this vital issue Horne veers between optimism and “realism”; but ultimately he shows a preference for the “realistic” option. While he acknowledges the possibility of certain contrary strands in a viable, alternative strategic imagination — the danger of great power entanglements, the virtue of non-alignment, etc — he leaves one in no doubt that in his opinion Labor has little choice about the American alliance. It is part of the dominant “common sense”; repudiation will bring terrible economic retribution; the importance of the United States’ Australian bases is just so great that American intervention, perhaps in secret, will stop the election of or throw out a Labor government. In addition, if there is a divided loyalty, ASIO’s adherence to the United States intelligence community transcends loyalty to an elected Australian government. So Horne seems stuck on the horns of his own dilemma. He urges independence on Labor vis-à-vis the Liberals, but when it comes to the Liberals’ international backers, the United States, he just cannot bring himself to visualise an effective Labor challenge.

In searching for an answer to his own puzzlement about why in Australia the Labor Party is seen to be a threat to the natural order of things, Horne follows many predecessors into what is a pretty vain discussion about turning the Labor Party into a “genuine liberal party”. He, like others, buys the idea that if only the Labor Party severed its links with the trade unions and abandoned socialism completely, it would be acceptable to a wider spectrum of the electorate, and so not such a different case as other social-democratic parties. (In other sections of the book Horne tends to contradict this judgment).
particular, the Labor Party would be more receptive and acceptable to the “new class” — bureaucrats, technocrats, teachers, publicists, artists, intellectuals, performers, promoters and students, as well as keepers of corner stores, small farmers, owners of small businesses, etc. However, Horne forgets that the Whitlam Labor Party of 1966-72 had a significant following of these people; and in fact the Labor Party has always had the support of some shopkeepers, farmers and small business people. It has always been a social coalition, if based on the trade unions.

**Australia and the United States**

Horne makes comparisons between Australian and American societies, but the differences are more significant than the similarities. For example, the United States before World War I had a far stronger socialist movement than Australia, although there was no American Labor Party. And where is the genuine American liberal party? One of the saving graces of the Australian Labor Party is that it has many militant union affiliates. Through these affiliations there are many radical and progressive inputs into Labor Party policies; to a large degree this is what makes the Labor Party what it is — gives it its “class basis”, if you like. If the Labor Party was dissolved, then another Labor Party would be formed. Moreover, Horne is a bit inconsistent on this point. In discussion the Labor Party’s difficulties due to the prevailing “common sense”, he stresses the urgent need to create a new Labor common sense, and he also describes the trade unions as the “greatest strength of the labour movement”.

Despite Donald Horne’s pessimism about Labor’s chances of forming a government with a really independent foreign policy, he seems to believe genuinely that voting in elections matters, even if it may be largely for the sake of appearances. Horne is concerned that the 1980 election — like especially the 1954, 1961 and 1969 elections — wasn’t fair. In 1980 the winning coalition of parties, with a margin of one percent of the votes, obtained twenty per cent more parliamentary representatives. So, under every normal heading of political reform, Australia as a liberal-democratic society is uniquely unsatisfactory in terms of fairness.

**Democratic Government**

Not particularly enamoured of government, even representative democracy, Horne is inclined as a democratic ideal towards anarchism. Short of a complete radical reform towards social and participatory democracy, however, we are left, he recognises, with the need to elect a government. Under these circumstances we need fairer voting systems, public funding of elections, fixed terms for parliaments and constitutional amendments in order to entrench responsible government. Then a government supported by a majority in the more democratically elected part of parliament could not be brought down between elections by an upper house or an elected executive person.

Horne favours multi-member constituencies, providing a proportionate representation, which would come close to reflecting exactly the voting support for parties and groups. Hence, any government formed from this sort of politically representative system would be a politically democratic government — at least as far as formal rules can go in making it possible. But, as Horne readily acknowledges such changes could occur and there still may not be the possibility of a genuinely democratic government: there are powerful constraints, one of which is the power of “common sense”. It is in this area of ideology and culture that we can see an important novelty in Horne’s thinking.

**Common Sense**

In dealing with why so many people believe that unemployment is caused or aggravated by “dole-bludging”, Horne gives a simple, lucid exposition of the Gramscian marxist concept of “hegemony”...

.... the attitudes of those who command the economic system and control the economic surplus are likely to permeate society so widely and deeply, in ways of behaving as well as ways of thinking, that for many or most people these attitudes are “reality” and “common sense”. People “naturally” think and act in ways that suit the dominant class. Certain ways of behaving seem the only way to behave (p.32).

Leaving aside the point that he uses “common sense” in a not strictly Gramscian way but more or less as a synonym for “hegemony”, Donald Horne’s introduction of a Gramscian mode into his thinking is perhaps the most striking single feature of his new book. This novel strand in his thought suggests both Horne’s openness to fresh ways of viewing the reality, that he is probing, and the evolution of his ideological position. There is still a bit of the old pragmatism, but the strength of his analysis is sharpened by a distinct partisanship, for which he apologises, but in which he persists, often most eloquently.

Horne divides the dominant “common sense” into five subdivisions: the notion of Australia as a modernised, industrial society; Australia as a capitalist society; Australia as a liberal-democratic
society; a strand of the prevailing "wisdom" based on older, pre-industrialist values, especially the Christian religion and moral code, sexism and racism; and the strand of British colonial leftovers, royalism, etc. He then illustrates how the Liberal-Country Party coalition has drawn on this "common sense" to undermine constantly the legitimacy of Labor as an independent alternative government, although the Labor Party has sometimes been its own worst enemy by upholding elements of the dominant "common sense" such as mindless economic growth, racism, sexism etc.

The Media

The dominant "common sense" according to Horne, is part of the dominant culture, and the media dominate the public culture; they are "the principal storytellers of our modern life", offering "their visions of reality, of human values and national priorities and of 'common sense'". Horne considers the different ways business and trade union news is handled in the media; the unions, "the greatest single strength of the labour movement", are constantly represented as a threat to consumers and to society. Yet he does not very fully examine the role and importance of the media, generally, or, in particular, in the 1980 election. One of the conspicuous features of the recent Federal election campaign was the "fair go" that Labor received in some sections of the media. So much so that Mr Fraser felt obliged to chide some newspapers for their lack of support for the government. Although Horne recognises the uncertainty of Labor's legitimacy, he could have more deeply considered the function of the privately owned media in creating this state of affairs. How does the media operate in helping to create this marginal Labor legitimacy?

In place of what could have been a searching analysis and some bold prescription, we have a discussion of the role of the Canberra press gallery and a case for national affairs commentators — writers who produce regular analyses of different parts of society, seen as an interrelated whole, of which they try to make some sense. There is a critique of the narrow concentration on politics as viewed from parliament house in Canberra, "hard" news and crises such as the Khehmani fiasco of 1975, and personal and factional rivalries, that the media dramatise. But this is of little consequence in serious media reform. What needs to be considered are genuinely competing media outlets, either reformed or new, that create the possibility of a real development of Labor common sense.

Donald Horne recognises that it may be devastatingly difficult to change some aspects of Australia's dominant "common sense". After outlining a number of fairly modest institutional changes that Labor might initiate, Horne remarks that if these be thought revolutionary, then why don't we have such a revolution. Providing through collective or communal action, the sort of labour-intensive, low productivity quality-of-life programmes needed to overcome the social effects of high-productivity advanced technology would require a social revolution and a new kind of common sense. Horne urges a struggle for a new social morality of co-operation rather than the present one of competition and exploitative "growth", a morality in which what is praised as free enterprise is the free enterprise of the many expressions of human dignity — not a mere exaltation of greed".

Slight as it is, in some ways Winner Take All is Donald Horne's most important book. While many of its best ideas lack sufficient development, nevertheless it could be the start of public discussion of several important and valuable notions. Horne has come a long way from his days on the Observer and The Bulletin, when he sometimes espoused or fostered strongly conservative views. However, there were some hints of his present analysis at least as far back as the first edition of The Lucky Country (1964) which seems to have been a sort of bench mark — a perceptive and prescient book. Nonetheless, looked at from Horne's current ideological position, it now seems quite moderate. What strikes you about Winner Take All, even compared with Money Made Us (1976), is the much greater analytical thrust that has come with partisanship and commitment. Above all Horne comes across as a strong Australian patriot with a powerful belief in a better Australia.

Whereas in the 1960s he was a social critic probing Australian attitudes and beliefs but not strongly questioning capitalism, he now sees Australian capitalists as failing to fight for Australian independence and Australian advancement. He has largely lost hope in capitalism as a progressive force. He now looks to the labour movement, specifically the Labor Party, for national leadership in the work of creating an enlightened society. Where once he was inclined to describe pragmatically, now he comments forthrightly. Even if Winner Take All finally falls short of complete satisfaction, it has laid the basis for further important developments.
BIRTH AND DEATH OF THE "RED ARMY FACTION"

The "Red Army Faction" or "Baader-Meinhof gang" as it was generally called, caused a series of sensations in West Germany in the middle-seventies. Their actions included kidnappings, bombings, robberies and various raids for political ends. A number of their main leaders died in prison in circumstances which led to controversy as to whether they committed suicide or were murdered.

Horst Mahler, a former member of the group, was interviewed earlier this year in the Italian Communist weekly Rinascita. He discussed why such a group arose in a country like the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), what their motives were and why they became isolated.

A small group of intellectuals, members of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) formed the Red Army Fraction (RAF) in 1967-68. They were concerned with issues such as the war in Viet Nam and the way in which their country was playing a subordinate role to US imperialism, and set out to create a more critical public opinion.

At the same time it was becoming increasingly clear that, while playing a very important role, the students were only of limited significance in the situation. We debated who would make the revolution, and this led to the first split in the student movement.

Mahler explained that some, close to libertarian and anti-authoritarian positions, denied the leading role of the working class. In spite of the struggles going on around them, they argued that there wouldn't be a revolution in the industrialised countries. The other side of the debate maintained that the workers would be the main force in any revolution while the students could at most carry out the function of a "detonator".

The next step was organisation: the aim was a party of cadres and revolutionaries with an emphasis on excluding any deviations from the "correct line". In this way, the atmosphere of open debate and comradeship which had existed in the student movement was destroyed.

Finally there was the decisive step — to decide on what concrete forms of struggle to adopt. Our analysis of victorious revolutions — from the Chinese to the Algerian or Cuban or Vietnamese — indicated to us that the central subject was not the classical proletariat and that it was possible to make the revolution outside the classical scheme.

Consequently, the only thing that counted was to decide on revolution and make it. But in Europe, at least, a mass, popular revolution could not be organised, so we had to form small, resolute groups able to show that it was possible to resist
and a revolutionary example. These were the ideas which led to the choice of the urban guerrilla warfare tactic.

Asked about early terrorist actions, Mahler told of an early split which developed in the "armed struggle movement". It arose from some unsuccessful actions and the decision to plant a bomb in the Berlin synagogue to protest against the repression of the Palestinian guerrillas. You can imagine what that meant for some of us who had grown up politically with the guilt complex of our fathers regarding the Jews.

I was strongly opposed to such tactics. I did not oppose armed struggle in principle, only certain applications.

During this period we tried to elaborate our strategy. There were two main conflicting perspectives for our future. The majority maintained that although the people showed no interest in revolutionary struggle, it was nevertheless necessary to build links with the masses, to weave relationships and anchor ourselves to reality. The minority, however, saw our role only as a component of the revolutionary movement of the Third World and wanted RAF to be a kind of "fifth column" of the national liberation wars. They had an extremely negative view on the possibility of the masses in Western countries playing an active role. Neither was there any desire to take account of the psychology of the population of our country. Thus the group that gave rise to RAF began with "basic work" in Berlin.

Mahler believes that the entry of Andreas Baader into the organisation increased the tempo.

There is no doubt that he played a key part in the evolution of RAF. This was not only because of the influence of his activism and decisiveness, but also because the first terrorist action of RAF was intended to free Baader from prison in Berlin. During this operation a worker was seriously injured and from that moment on we became fugitives, isolated from everyone and particularly from the Left. This forced us to change our line. It became impossible to conduct mass work and in this way any relationship with reality was lost. The minority line then appeared to us by a process of psychological rationalisation, to be the correct line. The only way that remained was that of violent action....

Mahler was questioned about the fact that the explosives used in the first actions were provided by a counter-espionage agent who had infiltrated their ranks. Did they ever have any idea that they were being used by others, to act as a convenient tool of reaction. He replied that he understood the point of the question very well but thought it would be "too convenient" to hide behind it.

It explains almost nothing. Certainly not the internal dynamics of a terrorist group. In fact the secret service agent played no decisive role, at least as far as the ideological choice of armed struggle or the kind of actions undertaken. He was "used". He certainly provided information about us and contributed to the arrest of Baader, but he alone could not have convinced us to take the road of terrorism.

Regarding the use made of terrorism by the Right — we knew very well that there was a long tradition, in France for example, of infiltration of revolutionary movements by the police to push them into blind alleys. Yet this was not enough to make us refrain from what seemed to be a necessary choice. At the beginning however, we did seek to follow a strategy which would make it impossible for us to be used.

Mahler then spoke of his disillusionment with RAF's strategy:

My break with the RAF, when I was already in prison, came after the attack on the Hamburg skyscraper, the headquarters of the Springer press. It was an attack which I knew had been organised by the left. But the negative effects were such that it could well have been initiated by the right.

From then on, everything became clearer; the things the RAF organised were indistinguishable from the things for which the right sought to blame us, so wrong and suicidal was our strategy.

Asked to explain the growing number of disillusioned terrorists, Mahler said:

The failure of terrorism, not only in West Germany, is now clear. It is not just a technical-military defeat, leaving the hope that better results could be achieved with a different organisation, but a failure in principle. I believe it was a disastrous
policy of a certain component of the left and of the theoretical-political premises on which their actions were based.

It is a failure of what I would call “the politics of the Advent” (the coming of Christ — D.D.) with its mystical idea of revolution and transformation of the world. If we look at the reality around us, is it really possible to think of achieving our ends with ideas like that of urban guerrilla war?

Mahler concluded by saying that the left, or at least part of it, is confronted with the need to re-examine itself and the principles on which it has based its existence.

To produce the great event of revolution we must have the courage to apply our strength and our consciences in a different way.

The alternative to this is the degeneration of political action into blind activism, into purely criminal action without prospects, like the rock song which says, "macht kaputt was euch kaputt macht!" (Destroy that which is destroying you!).

ALR price to increase

Rising costs of all kinds, including postage and the new sales tax, have forced us to increase the price of Australian Left Review to $2 as from the next issue, March 1982. However, we also hope to increase the size of ALR from 48 to 64 pages as from the same issue.

The price of ALR has stood at $1 for four years now (since March 1978) so we believe that the new price will still be good value for money.

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Here is a unique social document where Polish men and women speak for themselves about the great issues being faced in their country today. The voices are sometimes strident, sometimes cautious, and mostly optimistic. They offer different versions of events which have been in the headlines over the last year. Taken together, they express history in the making.

Denis Freney, who visited Poland in August 1981, interviewed this cross-section of Polish society.

*Polish Voices*, published by *Australian Left Review*, price $3.00 plus postage.


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**MARXIST SUMMER SCHOOL**

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