BEATRIX CAMPBELL and STUART HALL are two prominent British Marxists in Australia this April to take part in events marking the centenary of Marx’s death. BEATRIX CAMPBELL is a socialist, a feminist, a journalist and co-author of SWEET FREEDOM, a history of the British women’s movement. STUART HALL is an academic, originally from Jamaica, whose numerous writings focus on race relations, media, popular culture, ideology and class.

Beatrix Campbell will be a featured speaker at the marxist centenary forums, Marxism and Beyond, sponsored by Australian Left Review, in Sydney on April 8, 9 and 10 and in Melbourne on April 15, 16, 17. She will also speak at a number of women’s meetings in Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Stuart Hall will be in Australia from April 8 — 17 to speak at the Marxism and Beyond seminars in Sydney (April 8-10) and Melbourne (April 15-17). He will be undertaking a number of additional seminars and speaking engagements in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne.

Everyone can expect that, in the year 1984, much will be written about George Orwell and his predictions.

One person who does not intend to leave the debates about the future, or the present, to Orwell is Beatrix Campbell. Campbell, who is visiting Australia to participate in activities to mark the centenary of the death of Karl Marx, is presently completing a book due for publication early in 1984.

If Orwell is best known for his uncanny and gloomy predictions for 1984, he is also well known for The Road to Wigan Pier. Campbell has written The Return to Wigan Pier.

An act of inspired commissioning by the Left Book Club in the 1930s involved the despatch of Orwell, then an angry young man, to the hinterland of industrial England. He was an old Etonian, a former member of the Indian Imperial Police, an International Brigader during the Spanish civil war, a journalist and a self-confessed "revolutionary snob".

His mission was an "urban ride" among the people and places of the great depression of the 1930s. The Road to Wigan Pier is an eyewitness account of how the other half lived.

Orwell was an exile from his own class. He shared its taste, but declared himself against its interest. He became an explorer amidst an exiled class, the poor, who seemed to him to be stranded in their satanic situation, seeing socialism as simply more money and less work. In short, they stank, but he was on their side.

He measured precisely their incomes, their homes, their food, their work. But this was more than simply a sociological survey of poverty — his book scrutinised the socialist politics deemed to be these people’s salvation, and found it wanting.

Britain is now living through a new depression. This time the traveller is a woman, a secondary school girl, a northerner and, like Orwell, a journalist and a socialist; but unlike Orwell, Beatrix Campbell is working class and a feminist.

She has made a return ride to the people and places on the hard edge of the recession. She has visited hostels, refuges, deprived housing estates and townships destroyed as the economy is destroyed.

Just as Orwell divided his project between data and polemic, so Campbell monitors the actuality and reviews the political theory and practice available to its subjects.

But where Orwell assumed a single working class, Campbell sees several, divided by skill and sex. Where he saw a symmetrical family, she sees instability. Where he saw a single socialism, she sees many. Men held centre stage in The Road to Wigan Pier. Women are in full view in the new Wigan Pier.

Campbell, who was born in 1947, has worked for Morning Star, Time Out and City Limits. She helped establish one of the earliest socialist-feminist journals in Britain, Red Rag, and has contributed to History Workshop.

She co-authored, with Anna Coote, the best seller, Sweet Freedom. A bibliography of Stuart Hall’s work fills many pages. The diversity of topics is amazing — Politics, crime, the media, photography, pop culture, ideology, education, racism, democracy, the labour movement and marxist theory have all received his attention.

Stuart Hall was a Rhodes Scholar of the University of the West Indies. He graduated from Oxford and then taught in Secondary Modern schools in London. His knowledge of racism is not a matter of theory.

As part of the early "new left" he helped found Universities and Left Review and became the first editor of New Left Review.

Subsequently, he became Director of the Centre for Contemporary Social Studies at the University of Birmingham until taking up his present appointment as Professor of Sociology at the Open University. He is widely regarded as one of the foremost marxist scholars in Britain today and as a brilliant polemical speaker.