The subject of my remarks is one aspect of the developing place of the state and the relationship of this with the development of socialism. Only to a very limited extent during the major part of what I have to say will I speak of what I think must be the principles of socialism in the twenty-first century.

First, then, a few proportions about the presently developing place of the state. The two principal arenas of conflict within society are that of the determination of the proportion of the society's product which is devoted to the maintenance and reproduction of labor power and that of what is done with the surplus product. The two arenas overlap, of course. For example, struggles by unions over wages and supplementary payments and campaigns for a more progressive determination of the proportion of the surplus product to win partial workers to command some portion of social services are in part attempts by workers to command some portion of the surplus product, to win partial control over the disposition of the surplus. There is a good deal of ambiguity in campaigns for the greater expenditures by the state in social security payments, though there is less ambiguity in campaigns concerning the basis of taxation, at least because there is a secondary but nonetheless important social dispute over how big a role the state should have in determining the form of the sustenance and reproduction of the population and its social development — the importance of patriarchy, the nuclear family and so on. It is not at all clear, in other words, just how what is called "the social wage" could be substituted for what is called "the industrial wage". But to return to the two principal arenas of conflict: increasingly it is the state which contains or enables the periodic settlements of conflicts in these arenas.

The second proposition is that, in the arena of the disposition of the surplus, the state's role is becoming increasingly particularistic. State governments in Australia have for a long time been particularistic in their regulation of industry, in determining charges for electricity or rail freight, for example, or in legislation regarding takeovers and direct subsidies; the federal government is becoming increasingly so. The third proposition is that the increasingly particularistic interventions may not be consistent with each other.

The fourth and fifth propositions have to do with how the possibility of inconsistencies, which are costly in terms of the overall accumulation of capital, are handled. On the one hand, the machinery or apparatus of the state must be kept as spare as possible and the part of that apparatus which deals with social security and social services must be weakened in case the people involved should be successful in commanding for themselves or for their "clients" some share of the surplus product. By the same token, an attempt must be made to weaken those instrumentalities of the state which are or have become the servants of special interests in the business community. On the other hand, it is sensible to devise some overall planning or programming apparatus. In one country this may take the form of a planning commission for which personnel have been trained in Ecole's Nationales d'Administration, in another it may take the early form of a clumsy image of himself as national conciliation.

The sixth proportion is that, whatever the form of the overall programming apparatus, it will be outside any parliament constructed in the liberal democratic tradition.

The final proposition is that each regulatory activity of the state, each particularistic intervention, should be understood as establishing a contract between two or more fairly tightly specifiable parties, including the state itself (as instrumentality). The contracts are the settlements of disputes. The term "social accord" is to be interpreted as an agreement about what terms of settlement are to be regarded as legitimate. The legitimacy of various terms of settlement of social disputes is alternatively established, though, in the course of negotiating the particular contracts. Both of these processes are important.

Gavan Butler
appropriate objectives in particular circumstances: the shape of socialism is unlikely to be traceable in latter-day dogmas, any more than the general interests of capital are likely to be served by the proponents of a return to competitive capitalism.

So far I seem to have ignored the fact that 35 or 30 or 40% of the labour force are employees of the state and, especially, that large numbers of us are employed in the provision of health, education, social security, recreation facilities and so on. Many of the people involved devote enormous proportions of their energy to their jobs and have little left over to give effect to equality in sharing the care of home and family, let alone to be able to engage in local protest actions, the affairs of whatever party, union organisation and swelling the numbers visible to TV cameras at rallies. Least of all is there energy for the development of socialist strategies. Our work is of value to others in the community but never unambiguously so. We must continuously seek to open the agencies for which we work to the needs and priorities of those people for whom the agencies ostensibly serve, to effect concomitant changes within those agencies, and to alert those people within whom we have contact through our jobs to the place of the agencies of the state in the social order as we see it. While we are at it we might think with a considerable sense of urgency of how to open up the control of public enterprises, perhaps in part by breaking some of them into smaller enterprises, since there is little point in moving towards the public ownership of strategic industries while that signifies as it does at present, the impenetrability of an electricity j

One thing that is inevitable is that those engaged in the socialist movement today will not be around when people gather to consider Marx 200 years after his death. More to the point is whether anyone will then be around, that is, will the world and human society survive. Marx and his contemporaries could not have contemplated an important part of present day reality — the ever-present danger of nuclear war. Marx may have been less of an optimist if he could have foreseen that part of the pay-off in humanity’s struggle to control nature is the existence of nuclear weapons.

If there is to be another 100 years, or even 10, a priority has to be given to achieving nuclear arms control leading to disarmament. This is not to suggest that everyone drop every other concern and concentrate on the disarmament movement. This would be an impossibility, not only because there are always pressing and immediate concerns, but because a force capable of achieving disarmament will only exist when it is connected to the everyday concerns of ordinary people.

In this connection, I believe that it ought to be recognised that almost everyone is aware of the nuclear danger. Indeed it is a matter for optimism that opinion polls show this, together with a significant Australian opposition to nuclear war. Of course not everyone who is aware of the nuclear danger can rattle off all the facts and figures or string together all those symbols like ICBM, MAD, MIRV, ACBM. Expertise in technical arguments, so loved by military strategists and arms control negotiators and often taken up with such vigour by men in the disarmament movement may just be one more way to make ordinary people feel that they are inadequate to the task, that we may be safe with experts who “understand” and that we must accept to live with the bomb.

It might be worth saying that in some disarmament actions where women predominate, much of the technical argument is set aside and words are given a more human meaning. As an example, in the early arrests at Greenham Common, women were “bound over to keep the peace”. Some refused on the logical grounds that their actions were to keep the peace while those who arrested them and brought them before the courts had something other than keeping the peace in mind.

My point is that movement activists sometimes display a certain arrogance towards all those people out in the community who don’t come to demonstrations. We assume that they don’t know the facts or don’t care. But