This issue of ALR has smaller pages resulting from a new method of production adopted to combat continually rising costs of printing. The number of pages has been increased to compensate for the reduction in size, and we aim in this way to expand rather than reduce service to readers as a result of the change. Subscribers will also benefit from receiving their posted copy in a flat envelope rather than rolled in a wrapper.

The bulk of this issue is made up of material on workers' control, which is also the subject of the editorial comment.

The cover and four centre pages are reproductions of works by Picasso, the great artist who died this year and whose work is commented upon by Richard Cornish.

The issue is completed by a penetrating and thought-provoking analysis of the situation in Northern Ireland by Paul Mursey-Bray.
The movement for workers' control, which has only recently begun to grow in Australia, presents many opportunities and poses many problems for socialists. This is evident both from the wide range of opinions about the significance of the movement and from the articles and interviews printed here.

Our purpose in this editorial comment is not to repeat what is said in them. Rather, we wish to discuss briefly the relation between workers' control and revolutionary strategy -- in particular, the "counter-hegemonic" strategy for socialist revolution which we espouse.

Within the revolutionary movement and the left generally, the different attitudes to workers' control largely reflect different conceptions of what socialism is or should be, and different strategies for socialist change. Those who have an authoritarian view of socialism where everything is decided ultimately by top party and state leaders will hardly be enthusiastic about workers' control, although for tactical reasons they may pay lip service to it. Those who think that the socialist revolution will come about through the economic collapse of capitalism will not see the long-term strategic importance of movements such as workers' control in preparation for both the socialist revolution and the future socialist society.

Those who hold such views, or some less extreme modification of them, tend to see workers' control as a diversion from the mainstream of revolutionary activity. For them the main area of the class struggle is the traditional economic struggle between labor and capital -- the fight for better wages and conditions. Whether such people operate within the trade union bureaucracy or are critics of that bureaucracy, they have a narrow view of the role of trade unions and a limited conception of what the class struggle is. They fall into the old trap which has so often caught the revolutionary movement -- that is, to exaggerate the revolutionary consequences of current economic struggles and to fail to realise the need to inject a socialist content into those struggles and to develop alongside them other struggles which challenge the capitalist system in profound ways.

In this connection it is important to recall that the socialist revolution in Russia was preceded by years of struggle for democracy at all levels of Russian society. In 1917 an important part of the struggle for power was...
a highly developed workers' control movement which, by November, controlled considerable areas of economic activity. Further it should be noted that an important part in the decline and degeneration of the Russian revolution was played by the rise of bureaucratic control in the factories, workplaces and institutions. When the workers either could not or did not continue to exercise control, when power was centralised in the hands of a bureaucracy, the stage was set for the distortions of socialism so typical of the Stalin era.

Against these sorts of views, we hold that workers' control and related movements are very important, indeed essential, contributions to revolutionary activity. We believe that the class instinct of the bosses who rage against any idea of workers' control is surer and more correct than that of its doctrinaire critics. (see "Viewpoint"). They see both that workers' control is diametrically opposed to the basic economic structure and power relations of their system, and that it tends to generate the consciousness that can lead to making a challenge to that structure and power a reality and not just a wish.

In our view, the importance and role of the workers' control movement can only be properly seen in the context of a counter-hegemonic strategy for revolution. Essentially, a counter-hegemonic strategy places the main emphasis on the preparation of the conscious human forces needed for revolution. It recognises that at present, in Australian conditions at least, the central problem is not that workers are basically kept from revolution by the force of the capitalist state, or even by those within their ranks who mislead them, but rather that the ideas and values of capitalism are too widely accepted.

The domination by capitalist ideas and the capitalist world-view of most spheres of life, the lack of sufficient mass resistance to this domination, and the containment of alternative revolutionary ideas -- these are the crucial problems for revolutionaries in situations such as ours. This does not mean denying or neglecting the problems of breaking the economic and state power of capitalism. Rather it means to assert them against reformism, and doctrinaire views which so often, for all their words and phrases, never really confront the problem of power at all. Our strategy sees the problems of overturning the economic and state power of capitalism as being posed in reality in the course of solving this initial problem of consciousness.

A counter-hegemonic strategy involves realisation that:

† As long as sufficient numbers of the working class and other strata do not want radical social change, such change will not come about.

† Revolutionary activity must therefore be based on helping to awaken and develop those needs which are suppressed or buried by the hegemony of capitalist ideas and the capitalist power structure. In particular, the aim should be to awaken strivings and needs which people are prepared to struggle for because they believe that their satisfaction is both essential and eminently reasonable. If such demands also threaten the very existence of capitalist property and power relations, then they become a very potent force when and if they "grip the minds of the masses". In our view, it is the instinctive realisation of this which makes the bosses, bureaucrats and politicians so fearful of workers' control ideas, even when the movement is still in its infancy. They know how readily the fabric of capitalist society can be torn if people get "the wrong ideas" and begin to act on them.

† While there are inherent features of capitalism which pose various problems of existence, these problems will not inevitably be reflected at any given time in the consciousness of those who suffer from them. A revolutionary movement is needed to voice the oppressions and repressions of society and to pose the alternative.

† While there are these many areas in which dissenting and socialist ideas tend to be generated, as long as these ideas remain isolated and fragmentary, the struggles in which they find expression will also represent only a partial challenge to the basic power structure and will therefore be "contained".

† Consequently, particular attention should be given to the relation of a given area of struggle to an overall view of society and the world and to an overall view of revolutionary change.

† Deep commitment to ideas and causes is reflected particularly in feelings about what is right and what is wrong, what ought or ought not to be -- that is, commitment to values and a philosophy. This is not to be seen
as an alternative to “politics”. In fact, it is part of politics, which informs and broadens the scope of daily political activity and struggle.

† We agree with Lenin that “politics cannot but have precedence over economics”. (Selected Works, Vol. 9, p.54). This is so because socialist revolution is essentially a political struggle aimed at instituting a totally new and different power structure so that the economic relations, amongst other things, can be transformed. This is what “economists” and determinists of various kinds have never grasped. But just as the economic struggle, with all its importance, is by itself too narrow to generate the required revolutionary consciousness, so too are the struggles taking place over other deep-seated issues such as women’s liberation, workers’ control, the ecology, etc. On the other hand, all these are the necessary basis, in life as it is actually experienced, which provides a foundation on which such an overall view can be developed.

To recognise this is not to minimise the power of existing ideas as disseminated in family, school, church and mass media. But it is to refuse to concede complete power to these agencies, for to do so would be both to negate experience of actual dissent, and in effect to abandon hope of change. David Sallach discusses some of these problems in his treatment of the “inculcation” and “institutional” theories of hegemony.

No more than any other partial movement by or in itself, does workers’ control provide the means of revolutionising consciousness or avoiding containment, but it does embrace many features essential to this process:

† It is not an invention which utopians are attempting to foist on the workers from outside, but expresses some deeply felt needs and strivings. This is shown not only by the angry reaction of employers but by the rapid spread of these ideas among the workers themselves -- rapid, that is, considering how recently it has been taken up.

† It challenges the existing and accepted power relations within enterprises and institutions, thereby providing a basis for building up a challenge to power relations in the wider, social sphere. And it does this by challenging the accepted ideas of what is right. How important this is, is shown in the symposium, where a number of contributors acknowledge the existence of a widespread view among workers that the bosses should have powers of control. How could workers thinking in this vein ever be expected to mount a challenge to capitalism in the fields of state, political power?

† While often associated with economic demands (e.g. 35 hour week), workers’ control begins to go beyond acceptance by the workers of their condition as mere sellers of the commodity labour power, arguing only over the terms of that sale. It involves revolt against complete subservience to machines and the division of labour (the Ford strike), asserts a concern with the process of production as whole and its purpose (the “green bans” by the Builders’ Laborers). It also raises questions as to the economic function (or lack of such a function) of bosses and large portions of the “executive staff”, and the accompanying subordination and subservience which has generally been accepted though often resented.

† Since workers’ control is impossible without a really active, participatory democracy at grassroots level, it is a much-needed corrective to the bureaucratic tendencies so evident in organisations, including organisations of workers such as unions and parties. This does not mean advocating replacement of such organisations, though views to this effect are raised and need discussion, but of their revitalisation by close association with, and control by, their members and supporters. The workers’ control movement also raises the perspective of new movements acting alongside existing organisations and institutions.

† This also is particularly relevant to the kind of new society which will be built by people committed to workers’ control and women’s liberation principles, related as they are to self-management, the fullest development of people, and the radical transformation of existing human relations. As Marx long ago pointed out, people must remake themselves -- rapid, that is, considering how recently it has been taken up.

We hope this issue of ALR will inform and stimulate discussion of these and related issues, and invite further contributions from readers.
“The Australian Labor Party’s critics try to say that the party is soft on unions. We’re not. But we do understand them. And if the Australian Labor Party is elected to Government it is that understanding which will avoid most strikes before they even start... The picture in this advertisement is interesting for a couple of reasons. It shows the man who is probably going to be our next Prime Minister ... and the man who is probably going to be our next Minister for Labor ... around a conference table with the President of the ACTU. “The fact that this picture could be taken at all demonstrates an ability to communicate. It is difficult to imagine the current Prime Minister and his Minister for Labor working with the President of the ACTU. They work against him.”

-- From an ALP election advertisement.

* During the 1972 election campaign, Mr. Whitlam returned again and again to the theme that the Labor Party represented the whole community, that only a Labor Government could bring about co-operation between business, unions and government for national development and a more equal society. This theme of a tripartite co-operation of capital, labor and government could perhaps have been dismissed as an image-building exercise of moderation, as it was linked with an assurance that a Labor Government would lessen industrial strife by reversing the confrontationalist anti-union policies of the Liberal-Country Party coalition.

However, Mr. Whitlam again returned to the same theme in his speech at the recent ALP Federal Conference, which elected Mr. Hawke as ALP Federal President. The Prime Minister issued a clear, though low-key, warning to the unions that he believed widespread strike action threatened the Labor Government. The workers’ movement has surged to new levels since the elections, showing a healthy scepticism towards the idea that all workers’ problems will be solved if only these are left to government action from on top. Given the intractable reality of capitalist society, workers’ action is likely to increase.

Mr. Whitlam may have expressed his basic philosophy at the ALP Conference when he said that “the Government does not want to control the unions, any more than it wants to control business.” Yet the issue of control is increasingly coming to the fore as a major question in many industrial struggles. It will certainly be present as an issue at the September ACTU Congress, whether or not it emerges very clearly or openly.

More and more frequently, control forces itself into workers’ consciousness -- NOT as an abstraction, but as a necessity precisely in order to wage the fight for the workers’ industrial and social demands. In a capitalist economy, the balance of power between “business” and workers is not at all even; almost all the advantages lie with capital. If a Labor Government is not going to control business, then the workers have to exert their own control, which means forcible intervention on a number of issues. These include not only wages and hours, but also conditions of work (e.g., the pace of work on production lines). Workers’ rights, as people, to human dignity and to a say in control of their own labor are becoming major issues. Even more radical demands are projected: workers’ control over the purpose and goal of their work. These are only just beginning to grip workers’ minds, sparked off by the NSW builders laborers’ actions which give industrial muscle to the grassroots movements by people to control their own environment and living. The vast potential of this type of independent workers’ action strikes fear into the hearts of those who own and control the economy.

It is therefore timely to examine some of the experiences of the workers’ control movement and the responses to this in the various social classes, and in political trends of Right, Left and Centre. The ruling class is quite clear: they correctly see the work-
ers' control idea as the worst menace of all. Yet there are at least two trends of thought evident in ruling class opinion -- the fundamentalist and the integrative.

The fundamentalists want flat-footed confrontation to fight and smash the idea, the movement and those who advocate it. When the NSW power workers creatively controlled the generation and distribution of electricity in pursuit of the 35-hour week, Mr. John Darling (executive director, NSW Employers' Federation) put the fundamentalist position very precisely.

Darling appeared on the ABC radio session PM, along with Jock Syme, a rank and file power worker, who showed clearly that these workers were deciding upon and supplying adequate power for industry -- and so the Askin Government's restrictions were deliberately designed to lay off hundreds of thousands of workers. Darling reacted angrily:

"That is not your prerogative; your job is to do what you're told."

A recent Rydge's Journal article on the struggle for permanency in the building industry put the issue just as starkly:

"The issue, stripped bare of its polemics, is simply a matter of who is to run the building industry."

The article outlined the elitist ideas which are basic to the resistance to workers' control:

"... the beginnings of high rise office blocks, which spawned a new industrial grouping in teams of laborers needed to wheel, lift, shove and generally muscle materials around projects which have been masterminded well in advance by brain power which is largely absent after the construction work gets under way." (Emphasis added.)

In conclusion, the article quotes Mr. Martin of the Master Builders' Association, that the MBA has "... given the lead to other industries facing worker control and anarchy ... "

The fundamentalist approach perfectly expresses the capitalist class instinct that they face a new and serious threat in the worker control movement.

More sophisticated capitalist thinking sees the need to meet the new demand by absorbing it. "Worker participation" and "job enrichment" are its catchcites. This thinking is part of the new strategy for industrial relations, the "package-deal" industrial agreement which concedes certain demands as inevitable, tying them to industrial peace guaranteed by the unions, and striving to introduce forms of economic sanctions. This integrative strategy is more dangerous than the fundamentalist.

Another article in Rydge's Journal (May 1973) discusses this approach in relation to the NSW power workers' claim for the 35-hour week. Criticising the flat-footed rejection of the 35 hours claim by the NSW Industrial Commission, the article puts the alternatives this way:

"... what this (the power industry) judgment has done is drive a number of claims for the 35-hour week into the field of direct action. Even the moderate NSW Labor Council was staggered ... advocating a campaign in the Electricity Commission which 'would inevitably involve workers in direct industrial action.' Realising that a 35-hour week was inevitable, sooner or later, on the wharves, employers made the most of the situation by conceding it in a package deal that had as much in it for themselves as anyone ... It is obviously more desirable to grant concessions this way than for an employer, his back against the wall after a long series of industrial unrest, to make such an offer as a last resort."

An interesting footnote to this comment is the result of the elections in the Sydney Branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation. John Healy and Rick Divers handsomely won two of the four fulltime positions contested, as part of a team whose program proclaimed "Amend Contract NOW is main election issue."

Issues raised by the worker control movement also concern the various trends in the labor movement. Mr. John Ducker has become an advocate of job enrichment and the overcoming of alienation through participation. This had the humorous sidelight of Mr. Ducker quoting from Ken Coates and other British advocates of workers' control in his speech to the NSW ALP Conference, while supporting the industrial report presented to the same Conference -- which strongly condemned workers' control.

The Dunstan Government in South Australia has taken up workers' participation. The report prepared by a committee appointed by Dunstan has received the support of employers and Liberal Party leaders. Some of the ideas advanced by the ACTU leadership, including joint union-capitalist business ventures, also tend in the same direction.

Clarity on the issues posed by workers' control -- and ruling class responses of outright confrontation and integration pursued simultaneously -- is very necessary in the Left. There are quite different attitudes here, too. One is Left-fundamentalist: workers' control is only possible when the workers have taken political power; its advocacy as a tactic in the class struggle under capitalism is adventurism, anarchism, trotsky-
ism or whatever label represents the user's pet phobia. This Left conservatism is best represented by the SPA group, pursuing its brand of anti-communism and its strategy of the united front on top, through the opening to the "Centre-Left" in the union movement.

Other revolutionary trends tend to discuss workers' control from the viewpoint of doctrinal purity. Some see workers' control as a danger or at least a diversion cutting across or replacing other forms of struggle. Theoretically this is discussed in terms of it being conceived as a strategy rather than a tactic, thus deluding the working class into believing they can destroy the power of capital in one factory at a time. Some rather esoteric debates are conducted on these lines, without ever really affecting the workers' movement.

These debates recall Lenin's quote from Goethe: "Theory, my friend, is grey; evergreen is the tree of eternal life." Insofar as this particular debate examines actual experience, it concentrates on one aspect: the fight against layoffs (Harco, South Clifton, the Opera House struggles in NSW; the UCS struggle on the Clyde). Leaving aside the extremist fringe which sees "stalinist plots! and "reformist betrayals" as the only obstacles to general strikes and/or revolutionary uprising, the real problem lies in failure to see the movement for worker control in its actual development, in life and not just as an issue in doctrinal disputes.

An important illustration of the potential in the workers' control idea is to be found in the NSW power industry. This is still going on, and it is not yet decided. Whatever the outcome, this struggle is a new and qualitative advance in the power of the worker control idea, and its value as a means of struggle NOT just against sackings but in pursuit of industrial demands.

The power industry is a natural for the 35-hour week; as long ago as 1969 an ACTU Congress selected it as one of three industries to make the breakthrough on hours. Its technology and productivity are very advanced, and therefore its capacity to pay for increased leisure; and the need for shorter hours is obvious, both as a measure against redundancy and also to meet the new strains upon workers produced by technological advance.

Well over two years ago, power workers began a purposeful action campaign to win the 35-hour week. By a variety of means, it was thwarted: by the Electricity Commission's use of professional engineers as strikebreakers, and finally its diversion into arbitration. After 18 months of costly and solemn legal argument, the answer was a flat NO (justified by flagrantly dishonest arguments).

Power workers learnt a lot from this experience, and not just about arbitration. They also learnt the inadequacy of Right-wing methods, the need to rely upon their own strength and how to apply this creatively. Through thinking deeply about the ideas of workers' control - at a key meeting of delegates held at Newcastle, speakers constantly referred to booklets about Harco and UCS struggles -- power workers developed the idea of taking over and controlling power generation and supply. In a genuinely democratic way, from below, salaried and wages division employees worked out their own tactics of struggle. These have still to be recorded in all their richness and variety. In essence, the method used was reduction of power supply and control over its distribution. To achieve this, the workers had to meet and defeat the use of professional engineers as strikebreakers, the tactic used by the Commission to some effect previously. This was done by a work-in at Munmorah power station which obstructed and finally ended this strikebreaking. Police were brought in to protect the engineers but this was met with disciplined courage that won through. This phase of the struggle was reported in Tribune in several issues in June and July. The Sydney Morning Herald (July 17) published extracts from a "confidential document," issued by Fife (NSW Minister for Mines and Power) which tells the story from the government side (with all the expected emotive exaggerations, including "sabotage"). The report stated:

"The document lists more than 300 instances of strike action, some accompanied by intimidation, violence and sabotage, in the past four months in the unionists' campaign for a 35-hour week. The document issued by Mr. Fife says: "The actions resorted to by the men have gone beyond anything previously encountered and are similar to those advocated by the so-called 'worker control' groups which have recently emerged.'" The document adds: 'The theme of the (Newcastle Workers' Control) conference was the development of tactics which would "encroach upon the prerogatives of management" by means of "work-ins," "sit-ins," and other acts of defiance." These tactics have been followed in the
power stations and there have been several cases in which employees stood down for refusal of duty have refused to leave the site.

"At other times, large numbers of men had remained within the premises after finishing time to harass supervisory staff engineers and set up pickets."

From the Munmorah work-in on, the struggle proceeded through effective workers' control over power generation. The Askin Government responded by introducing savage restrictions on industry and domestic consumers. Hundreds of thousands of workers were laid off; government, employers and the media tried to use this as a weapon against the workers (and also as a political stick to beat the Labor Party). But two events exploded this provocation in the face of Askin and Company. The power workers broke through the media blackout, proving that they were producing enough power for industry to run. Then the NSW Branch of the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union called on its members to demand their jobs, in a press advertisement which appeared on Thursday, June 28.

That night, the Government lifted the restrictions. They very correctly estimated that this would spread like wildfire; on the Monday, this would have happened at hundreds of workplaces. This was a new and potentially mass explosive assertion of workers' control. There was nothing else for Askin to do but retreat, or face mass civil disobedience - showing how even a struggle of a relatively few workers can spark off a mass movement which challenges constituted authority.

Strength of the elemental impulses pushing workers' control forward - arising out of the depths of intensifying and even new contradictions of capitalist society - is illustrated in other struggles of recent times. These include the steelworkers' action against BHP (also reaching a crucial stage as this is written) and the Ford struggle which exploded at Broadmeadows in mid-June.

Steelworkers' massive rejection of the official recommendation imposed by Hurrell and Short of the Ironworkers to accept a miserably inadequate offer cooked up between Judge Cahill and BHP dramatically illustrates the new temper abroad in the worker's movement. It is no exaggeration to say that a revolt of the low-paid and largely immigrant workers has begun, shown by the Ford and BHP workers. A component of this revolt is social as well as industrial. This new development will strongly impact the whole movement; those who fail to understand its deeper causes and its significance will lose out. The Right has already dropped behind; no one is assured of keeping abreast without serious efforts to understand and help unleash the powerful forces locked away in the immigrant workforce.

Still another example is the looming clash between General Motors-Holden and its employees at Elizabeth (South Australia) over GM-H management's decision to transfer its Elizabeth assembly line to Dandenong. This has been challenged by the workers, who have banned all dismantling work. This is a fundamental challenge to the sacred "rights" of management, and to one of the most arrogant and biggest monopolies in the world; it is another assertion of workers' control.

This struggle highlights another issue; the relationship between the trade union movement, job organisation and the worker control movement. The Sydney Morning Herald (July 17) reports:

"Militant car industry shop stewards have taken control of the General Motors-Holden dispute from the SA Trades and Labor Council and their unions. The Labor Council's secretary, Mr. J. E. Shannon, ... said he had learned only this morning that the shop stewards had reimposed a ban last Thursday on the transfer of tools and equipment.... The convenor of the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union shop stewards, Mr. E. Gnatenko, said the shop stewards, and not the Labor Council, were running the dispute."

"Senior Labor Council sources (sic) said the GM-H dispute ... was shaping ominously like the two-month-old strike at Ford's Broadmeadows plant in Victoria."

This raises anew an issue which has long bedevilled the Australian trade union movement - the relationship between the official trade union movement and the workers' job organisations. This assumes a new dimension as the ideas of worker control develop. A clash took place in 1960 over the role of the shop committee movement, particularly in Victoria. Albert Monk, then ACTU President, resisted the shop committee movement and forced through the 1961 ACTU Congress a "Charter for Shop Committees," which restricted the shop committees' initiative and powers. At the Garden Island Naval Dockyard in Sydney, where the Navy-dominated ma-
agement sticks rigidly to the ACTU Charter, the workers, on the initiative of their Vigilance Committee, are currently discussing a new draft Constitution which not only expands the democratic rights of the workers and their organisation but poses a militant challenge to the so-called rights of management.

The essential issue here is union democracy. It is encouraging that the Federal ALP Conference upheld the principle of membership election of officials, in place of the collegiate principle. But the right to vote in union elections every three years or so, without effective participation, activity and control no more ensures union democracy than a similar right to cast a parliamentary vote ensures real democracy in capitalist society as a whole.

Even more important, a single union or the whole union movement can never be really powerful and effective without strong and effective grassroots workplace organisation, involving its members consciously in all aspects of union activity and decision-making. Those who try to scare the union movement by the Broadmeadows experience only show they have learnt nothing of the real lessons it bears for union movement.

This whole issue will almost certainly find expression in some way or another at the ACTU Congress in September. It will need serious discussion before, at, and after the Congress, because it is central to the future advance of the Australian workers' movement. In the past, individual militant unions had to assert the right to struggle for workers' demands free of restrictions by Rightwing-controlled ACTU or Labor Councils. This enabled unions to make big advances in wages and conditions (e.g., over-award payments), and also helped to tip the balance in the ACTU itself. And the most effective of these struggles were by those unions which were based upon strong workplace organisation, and in those industries where workers of all unions came together in shop committees and stewards' organisation.

A major need is to strengthen workplace organisation. This should receive all-out support by the Left at the ACTU Congress, contesting the issue with the Right and all those who find affinity with the idea of a top-directed and tightly-controlled workers' movement. Mr. Hawke's statement of principle is welcome, that, should there be a conflict between his ALP presidency and his union position, he would stand by the unions. It is even more important that the union movement be independent and strongly based upon workers' self-action.

The dialectical relationship between the union movement and workers' control will constantly arise as the worker control movement develops. This is many-sided and complex. On the one side, there is a fear that workers' control is "anti-union," held as a matter of faith by the Rightwing and shared by some who consider themselves Left. On the other side, some see the workers' control movement as an alternative to the trade union movement, regarded as hopelessly bureaucratic and conservative. Serious revolutionaries should tackle development of interaction between the two real and vital movements, both theoretically and practically. The builders' experience in NSW shows that the two are by no means incompatible, just as it shows how the new militant unionism can become a powerful force in building a coalition of industrial workers and other social groupings which challenges the powers of entrenched authority.

From this can come the necessary and genuine independence of the workers' movement in the present period of a Labor Government within which different policies and ideologies are still contending. Without this independence of the workers' movement, no effective challenge to monopoly capital can develop. The main targets and direction of the workers' movement should always be the capitalist class and the reactionary political forces. In this struggle, it will more and more become clear that the Labor Government cannot be neutral between capital and labor, that a choice must be made. Nor should the Left treat the clear differences within the ALP as unimportant or trickery. They are real enough; even more decisive, workers in action regard them as important. The decisive thing is to fight out the real issues which life continually presents, as monopoly capital puts on the pressure with all the resources and levers it commands, within Australia and from outside.

The revolutionary Left has to challenge the basic hold of bourgeois ideology upon all society, including the working class and all potentially revolutionary social groups. We cannot even begin this challenge effectively without that combination of theory and practice which transforms theory into a material force, so that movements crystallise around new concepts which challenge the bourgeois ideas maintaining the system and its power structures.
symposium ~

workers' control

Following the Workers' Control Conference held at Newcastle, NSW, in April of this year, ALR asked a group of workers some questions about the significance and prospects of this movement. The questions, and the answers to them, appear below.

QUESTION: Have you any direct experiences of workers' control activities? How do you evaluate them, especially in regard to the questions raised in this symposium?

ANSWERS

Joe Owens: I have been connected with a number of worker control activities on building jobs. With two exceptions, the workers generally regarded the action as a means to gaining a short-term aim although individuals in the struggle began to think about the "outer limits" of workers' control. The two exceptions tested the "outer limits" with differing degrees of success, and some failures.

The symposium conducted by ALR has made me question more deeply the experiences I have undergone in these struggles. It has not provided any quick answers -- indeed that is not its function -- but it is searching in its approach, and therefore of great value in the arena of continuing debate on this subject.

Judy Gillett: Being a teacher and a member of Women's Liberation, the only direct experience I have had of workers' control activities has been in close connection with teacher/student relationship and the combating of sexism and elitism in all its forms in schools.

I believe this type of action to widen and improve the quality of control over one's work area and, ultimately, one's life, is a vital one, both in its role of establishing successful experience of one's own worth and ability and its subsequent effect of breaking down bureaucratic, authoritarian organisational forms and challenging capitalist hegemonic ideas of authority, experience, division, leadership, submissiveness, complacency, cynicism and alienation.

John Wallace: Two jobs I have worked on -- the Sydney Opera House mechanical stage project and the Johnson and Johnson factory at Botany -- have seen actions where workers have gone beyond traditional trade union dispute tactics into the territory of workers' control. The workers at the Opera House exploited their particular situation and gained great financial rewards, at the same time eclipsing one management completely and forcing the second into playing little more than a nominal role.

Two points of extreme importance -- first, the two unions involved, the Builders' Laborers' Federation and the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union -- fully backed and gave valuable leadership throughout; second, the removal by the workers without reference to the official leadership of the unions concerned of demarcation barriers. This break-
down of craft barriers, once authoritarian pressure had been removed, was remarkable, and perhaps the most important contribution to the debate around workers’ control. The Opera House workers became, for all practical purposes, a community of workers where each man could be judged by his individual effort rather than by his acquired skill.

The dispute at Johnson and Johnson was quite different. The fitters (AMWU and ASE) and electricians were only a small percentage of the total workforce and were involved only on maintenance. The bulk of the workers at Johnson and Johnson are process workers in the Shop Assistants’ Union whose officials were extremely hostile to us and our actions.

It is true that the workers concerned debated at length the work-in tactic eventually agreed upon. I and another metal worker “worked-in” over a period of two days and were finally arrested under the NSW Government’s Summary Offences Act.

The dispute lasted for about five weeks and, during that time, the workers became increasingly unhappy about the situation. This was to be expected, however, as Johnson and Johnson had no history of industrial struggle and, in fact, the company (wholly US-owned) was very paternalistic, wages were reasonably good and the conditions were excellent.

However, the fact that these workers did take a “work-in” decision, and later worked a 35-hour week for two and a half weeks (despite provocation as a result of which 12 out of 63 fitters left during the dispute) shows that workers will respond to new ideas, particularly when a principle is involved.

This may not sound like a successful dispute, but I still feel that workers at J & J gained something which will guide them in future disputes. One point in particular was that the almost complete reliance, in the very early stages, on the advice of the union official from the AMWU (the only union which involved itself at official level) gradually lessened as the workers became more confident and competent in debate at meetings.

Once again, it must be said that the AMWU fully endorsed all the actions taken, and on the arrest of their two members arranged legal representation and set in motion a campaign against the Summary Offences Act in conjunction with other unions (BLF, FED&FA, Teachers).

Max Ogden: No, except to the extent that such actions are specifically discussed at shop stewards’ schools. In that regard, there seems little doubt that the morale of stewards and workers involved is certainly good, and such examples are very effective as an indication of the potential for other workshops.

Dave Lofthouse: The immense financial power of a multi-national corporation, and the remote and bureaucratic management, have forced workers to realise that old traditional forms of struggle have become inadequate.

The commandeering of the Pillar-NACO plant by the workers a year ago proved to be a blow to the management’s confidence and a boost to the struggling workers’ morale. It was one way of attracting the attention of the Australian people to what was going on in pursuit of profit. The occupation of a plant discourages would-be scabs.

The main weakness in our efforts was the lack of contact between shop stewards and shop committees throughout the Rio Tinto Zinc empire in Australia.

What is the main reason in your view for the importance now being attached to workers’ control? Do you see it mainly as a tactic (e.g., a new tactic in pursuit of the aims of the trade unions), or as a strategy to bring about social change?

Joe: The importance attached to workers’ control is because it is recognised as part of the wider political movement for self-management. Care must be taken to avoid workers’ control being restricted to narrow tactics aimed at achieving traditional trade union demands. We must also be careful to ensure that whatever measure of control has been achieved through the struggle is not handed back upon “victory.” Workers’ control must be used in conjunction with other grassroots movements as a vehicle for radical social change.

Judy: I believe the main reason for the importance now being attached to workers’ control is the increasing awareness (of radicals and revolutionaries in industry and elsewhere) of the necessity to encourage workers to counteract the all-pervading techniques and ideologies of capitalism which maintain the alienated and subservient ethic of workers.
Workers' control is a real attempt at challenging this very basic ideology in an aggressive and positive, not defensive and negative, way. When seen as a first stage in developing counter-hegemonic strategy it has very real potential for social change. I believe trade unions should become involved in workers' control struggles as I believe it is in those struggles that a real revolutionary platform can be established by them.

John: Perhaps many workers see workers' control tactics (occupations, work-ins, etc.) as another weapon in their armory to achieve traditional trade union aims and, in fact, the use of these tactics in disputes can be highly successful.

For many years, the revolutionary party (parties) have endeavored to change the political consciousness of workers through propaganda and by trying to convey to workers the political implications of their struggles. Newspapers, pamphlets, political meetings have, to my mind, not basically changed workers who have continually sought more material wealth -- as they have been conditioned to do by the far greater and more sophisticated power in the hands of authorities in our society.

I am convinced that, almost overnight, people, not only in their working situations but in community situations also, change dramatically when involved in attempts to encroach upon "normal" prerogatives of the employer or political authority. No one can possibly be exactly the same again, and the more these actions around workers' control continue, the more aware the people involved become. The workers and the people in community action groups are arriving at a point where social change can, and I think will, accelerate over the next few years.

Pierina Pirisi: I think that, apart from the general shift to the Left in the Australian political scene, the various work-ins (UCS, Harco, Opera House, etc.) and the actions taken by the builders laborers and residential groups in defence of the environment and for control over production have done a lot to popularise the concept. In recent times, the Master Builders' Association has got out a lot of publicity on the workers' control movement in their attacks on the builders laborers.

I think, also, it has something to do with the development of movements like that over the environment and the liberation of women which are, in fact, asking for the same rights as the workers' control movement, though in a different context.

I see workers' control both as a tactic and as a strategy for social change; but, in my view, its long-term importance as a strategy is far greater than its short-term value as a tactic. I think it is valid as a tactic in pursuit of trade union aims if it does not confine itself to that.

Max: From a revolutionary viewpoint its importance is as a strategy for social change. However, it can't be divorced from normal trade union demands, and control-type actions are, in fact, more effective anyway in achieving union claims. Therefore, there are numbers of examples of such actions used by workers as the most effective action for their particular problems. Quite a deal of this is not necessarily new, but what is new is the recognition by revolutionaries of the great potential for politicisation which challenging for control offers, and hence the need to widen the movement and give it a clear anti-capitalist perspective.

Dave: In this age of the giant corporation in the Western world, with its bureaucratic remote control, geared to the accelerating technological revolution to make the maximum profit regardless of consequences to the people in this country or others, there is a growing realisation by working people that they must control the mode, purpose and quality of the production process which governs their livelihood and holds the key to their children's future. This growing awareness developed workers' control concepts and will develop the movement to be a force for social change. Workers will require their unions to assist and encourage this movement in short-term tactics, and a long-term strategy for the running of industry by the people for the benefit of people.

What connection, if any, do you see between workers' control and more traditional trade union issues and forms of struggle on the one hand, and newer issues and movements on the other?

Joe: There is a world of difference between workers' control and traditional trade union issues and struggles. The aim of workers' control is to place the running of factories and workplaces more and more into the hands of
the workers, whereas the traditional trade union struggle in the past has been for a bigger piece of the cake, but still leaving the lion's share to the boss.

There is a distinctly similar character to workers' control and other movements such as Women's Liberation, Aborigines, environment groups, etc., in that they all seek to control their own destiny. As I said in answer to the first question these important struggles are all part of the movement for self-determination, and each one is related to the other. I feel there is a tendency for individuals within all groups to be parochial, and this must be avoided. We must recognise our inter-relationship.

Judy: There are very many similarities between the struggle for workers' control and other forms of social struggle, e.g., women's liberation and environmental struggles, etc., which also are struggles for self-determination, anti-authoritarianism, anti-exploitation and anti-divisiveness. Like workers' control, these are also counter-hegemonic struggles.

Pierina: Traditional trade union issues and forms of struggle, if we mean by that struggles around wages and working conditions in the narrow sense, can be easily contained, as we can see in our everyday experience, because they don't challenge the basic power structure of capitalism. In fact, the need for trade union collective bargaining is readily acknowledged by bourgeois economists as a form of the competition which is the basis of a capitalist economy.

This does not mean that these issues should not be taken up. Apart from the value they might have in themselves, the facts are that many workers have not, as yet, developed a trade union consciousness, let alone a revolutionary one.

I see it as a task for the workers' control movement to try and inject new values into these issues, take them further, and transform them into a challenge, having in mind the necessity of developing workers' control as a strategy for social change, as I said earlier. Connections between the workers' control movement and other movements (environment, women's liberation) are very deep, because, in fact, they are asking for the same rights: the right of workers to control their own work, the right of women to control their own lives, the right of people to control their own environment. I realise this is an over-simplified picture and all these movements have a complex character and can't be easily defined in a few words, but what seems common to them is that all of them, in their different ways, demand as a right that people control their own lives. Therefore, I think that cooperation and discussion between these movements is essential in the struggle for social change.

Max: I have answered this to some extent in the previous question. To carry it further, I would say that workers' control, if it is to emerge as the main tactic of the workers' movement, must first be built out of the normal union issues around which struggle develops. Experience, to this stage, seems to indicate that control-type actions tend to develop around issues other than wages struggles, e.g., hire and fire, safety, attitude of managers, etc. This could indicate a point of departure from traditional union actions and wages issues. Workers' control, precisely because it tends to break out of the limiting wages area, can develop a logical affinity with environment issues, women's liberation and the like. This is not inevitable, but will only happen to the extent that these movements, and revolutionaries, set out to link up and identify each others' interests.

Dave: The workers' control movement can and will modernise the thinking of the unions to enable them to meet the challenges of the '70s and '80s. Without this modernisation in thinking, the unions will fail to protect and safeguard their members. The failure by the unions to adequately pursue issues related to the survival and democratic entitlements of their members will necessitate the workers' control movement doing the job. Pollution of the environment and the energy crisis will not go away by ignoring them, and the first people to feel the effects are the working people. They will demand and devise methods of solving these problems.

What relationship do you see between the workers' control movement and the established trade union organisation? Do you see the movement influencing preparations for, and decisions at, the coming ACTU Congress?

Joe: I believe that workers' control is supplementary to trade union organisation. It assists the development of a strong grassroots union movement. Workers' control with its inbuilt checks, balances and changes such as tenure
of office, etc., represents a threat to opportunism in the unions, and the greatest opposition comes from those unions or officials who seek to perpetuate their stay in power for opportunistic and political reasons. The rifts in the "Left" are being widened by differences of opinion on workers' control.

The resolutions and debate at the ACTU Congress on workers' control as opposed to worker participation will sort out "who's who in the zoo." The aim of the reformists will be for containment, and whilst no one expects any revolutionary decisions, the debate on worker control resolutions will be a highlight.

Judy: I believe that workers' control movement and established trade union organisations could and should be supplementary, i.e., I feel both are compatible if the interests of the workers are seen as primary. The fact that reformist trade unions are afraid to extend their areas of struggle into the arenas of direct confrontation with the very bases of capitalist organisation and control, in a permanent and consciousness-raising struggle, is one which radicals and revolutionaries are conscious of. I believe the movement will influence the coming ACTU Congress because it is posing direct and unavoidable questions and problems for the trade union movement: problems about capitalism's ability to contain workers' struggles, wage and price fixation, exploitation of the environment, industrial pollution, 35-hour week, etc. How far can the ACTU envisage struggle going without an ultimate challenge to the very form of society which perpetuates the conflicts of workers?

John: Already I believe the support for workers' control and the growing debate around it have moved some trade unions towards encompassing workers' control policies. The AMWU shop stewards' charter is a move to force upon employers far greater respect for "on the job" union representation. The bans placed on undesirable projects by the BLF, FED&FA, and the AMWU are a recognition by these unions that workers should have a voice in what, where, and how they should build. The Port Phillip Bay pipeline ban by the AMWU is another example of union action that is a workers' control action.

So we can say that:

a) workers' control tactics in disputes of a traditional nature (wage claims, sackings, etc.) change workers and highlight what is really possible if they had control;

b) when this situation occurs, and it has, pressure is applied increasingly by the workers on the unions for official adoption of more far-reaching policies and claims for workers' control;

c) as unions move into the field of workers' control they must link up with community groups seeking democratisation and liberation.

The workers' control movement must be a force which will change the attitudes, tactics and, eventually, the goals of trade unions, and also embrace other claims by growing liberation groups in the community.

Pierina: I don't think the workers' control movement should become the property of the trade unions, but I don't think it is practical to say that it should become an alternative to them. In my view it should develop independently and try to influence the trade unions to change from passive and bureaucratic bodies into active and democratic ones; from their defensive position into an offensive one. Workers' control of the unions should be one of the first demands and slogans of the workers' control movement.

The only practical solution, where Right-wing unions are involved, is to try to get the workers to change the union leadership, and put into practice the ideas of workers' control through the union. I don't say this is easy, or even always possible, but I can't see any other solution.

I think the preparations for the ACTU Congress would be influenced by the developments in the workers' control movement, maybe not so much following the Conference in Newcastle, but even more because of the present disputes in the building and power industries and elsewhere.

Max: This is a complex question, but as I said earlier, to imagine a workers' control consciousness arising without utilising and, at the same time, changing, the unions, is a dream. The relationship must be a complementary one whereby the unions protect the workers while they learn to mount offensives against the boss, and as such experience develops, the unions, in turn, will be strengthened and radicalised by the workers. Much of the ideas and action can and will be assisted and initiated from outside the union structures, but to do this without considering the
position of the union or unions would be disastrous, although there will undoubtedly be times when opposition to the unions, especially Rightwing unions, will be required.

In particular, if workers' control is to get anywhere, then special attention needs to be paid to the regeneration of the shop committee movement, and the attitudes of the unions will be crucial on this issue.

Dave: The relationship will be determined by the conditions and circumstances of the time, and the principled or otherwise stand either movement takes. The unions should assist and encourage the development of the workers' control movement.

Women participants at the Workers' Control Conference expressed criticisms of it. What was the nature of these criticisms, how do you evaluate them, and how were they, or should they be, received?

Joe: The women's criticism of the Workers' Control Conference was aimed at the inflexible procedure adopted by the conference which clearly showed male, trade union dominance. Many matters such as women's liberation, Aborigines, BLF environmental green bans, and their relationship with workers' control were not adequately discussed because no allowance was made for this in the agenda. It may have been better if the conference had broken up into commissions to allow deeper debate on such issues. I cannot stress to highly the inter-relationship that all these struggles have in the spectrum of workers' control.

Judy: From what I have heard, women participants at the conference expressed criticism of the way in which discussion was organised via the "Standing Orders." They felt, and I believe rightly so, that highly structured and organised gatherings tend to, and in fact do, inhibit those who are less articulate and less conversant with formal meeting procedure. This applies especially to women workers, and very often conscientious, enthusiastic male trade union officials forget this. However, I think that women's liberation experience is showing that the best way to combat this problem is to encourage women workers to learn and understand democratic meeting procedure, and to utilise it for their own improved experience, not to do away with organisation, but to use it democratically and responsibly. I think the domination of discussion at the Workers' Control Conference by an articulate, active few showed that some sort of democratic control is essential for the protection of the rights of the less articulate.

John: Some women participants were extremely critical of an apparent male sexist attitude by the National Workers' Control Conference committee and some male delegates. They made points very strongly and although perhaps arousing some antagonism at the time, must have stimulated much re-thinking among other oppressed groups as well as women. No criticism, particularly from workers who endorse workers' control, can be ignored, and the people involved in the workers' control movement must continually be re-evaluating attitudes and policies as long as these criticisms arise.

Pierina: As far as I understand it, women at the conference did not approve of the Standing Orders being prepared beforehand by the Planning Committee. As it was a conference on workers' control, they thought it more appropriate to let the workers themselves decide what kind of standing orders were needed, as it would have been a good experience of workers' control for them. I think it is very important that this question has been raised, not so much because of the standing orders themselves, which I have not seen, but because I think it is a good experience for people to realise that they can make their own rules, and in my opinion the workers' control movement should try and establish the widest possible form of workers' control among its own ranks. I think people don't feel so much a part of a meeting when rules are handed out to them, or not as much as they would had they made their own rules. Therefore, I don't think it would have been a waste of time to let people decide what kind of standing orders were needed in the circumstances.

Max: The criticisms of the women participants are no doubt bound up with the problems which women's liberation is all about, and so there are no simple solutions unless males are suddenly changed overnight. However, the tokenism of having a woman in the chair for example must be done away with, and the serious consideration of the problems of women workers must be the issue. Things like the lack of child care facilities at the conference, and the rules of debate, are issues which can be solved quickly in the future, and would not exacerbate the already glaring
problems of women workers. Obviously, the workers' control movement needs to consider questions like the rules of debate, as the old union formats can be manipulated, and may be a whole new approach can be designed. The union movement is as yet a male movement and this was reflected in the conference to a large extent. It is obvious therefore that the workers' control movement has, as one of its major tasks, the development of equality in the workers' movement.

What obstacles, in the thinking of the workers, do you see to the development of the workers' control movement? What, in your experience, is the actual response to ideas of workers' control?

Joe: I believe the biggest obstacle to workers' control is adherence to traditional trade union procedures. Trade union leaders are generally wary of new actions which give the rank and file a large measure of control, and try to channel energies into well-beaten paths. There is a lively response to workers' control by the rank and file generally. The initiative released by such experimentation improves the calibre of workers in struggle, and this has created more interest and healthy debate than any other trade union issue. The recent switch-on of power by metal workers during the so-called power shortage in NSW is a highlight in this direction. Whilst there is a growing acceptance of the work-in, etc., I think that the average militant still regards it as a good industrial tactic, and here lies the need for political understanding and aims to be projected more into the debate around workers' control.

Judy: I think most negative reactions by workers to workers' control have been rooted in capitalist ideology expressed as the inability of workers to compete with intellectuals (staff) who know how to run industry, schools, etc. There are other factors, too, which add up to the same thing -- a defeatist and cynical attitude, perpetuated by society. Another great danger is the wooing of workers to the ALP's "worker participation" schemes and all that they imply. In my experience, the actual responses of teachers to workers' control concepts have been mixed. Radical teachers are becoming very vocal and active in areas of education which involve direct challenges to the system, i.e., the school's role as conditioner for capitalism. They are directly challenging the old concepts and organising around new counter-hegemonic ones such as alternative schools, community schools, the ending of streaming, grading and assessments, control and organisation of schools by students and teachers, breaking down the institutionalised concept of education, and broadening it into a continuous education throughout life, as part of an interaction with, and for, the community.

John: All workers, in my experience, have not fought well, or at all, unless they have been able to relate directly to the demand made upon the employer. Traditional union demands for more money or conditions on the job can be easily seen, but beyond these narrow confines there is seldom any movement.

However, one important issue for which militant workers will enter dispute is that of preserving another worker's job when it is jeopardised by management. This control of firing is a workers' control demand. Workers generally see themselves as consumers, and the individual ownership of goods and property is their aim. They do consider that the boss should have many rights and it is difficult to persuade even the most militant workers to enter disputes for more control, or use what I would call workers' control tactics.

Pierina: As far as my experience goes, apathy, lack of desire for control and belief that the boss should have certain rights, are usually combined. Adherence to traditional trade union procedures and reformist ideas also occur together. About actual response to ideas of workers' control, I have no direct experience, but from what I know about workers' struggles, both here and in Italy, I think it is easier to get a practical response to ideas of workers' control as they arise around particular issues than to get workers interested in the theory of it. What happens is that workers don't really see these struggles as struggles for workers' control. I know, for example, of very advanced struggles which have taken place in some factories in central Italy, where they have factory councils directly elected by the workers which have won very important concessions on control of working conditions, dust and noise levels, speed of production lines, etc. But as far as I can understand from what I
read in an interview with the delegates on these jobs, there was no long-term perspective; these struggles were not seen as struggles for power. And I think there is a real danger in this, because these types of "directionless" struggles, advanced as they may be, can be and are being absorbed by capitalism into schemes of workers' participation which don't challenge, in fact, the basic power structure of capitalism.

Max: I think there are considerable grounds for optimism, and where the issues are argued out, the radical view usually wins out. However, undoubtedly the biggest obstacle is the mental blockage many workers confront when the challenge goes beyond certain limits. Ideas of the bosses' rights are deeply ingrained in workers, and this cannot be overcome in one go. Nevertheless, where this barrier is breached, whole new horizons open up and the potential is enormous.

Dave: Workers respond favorably to the logical argument for workers' control. The technological revolution, the recurring money crises of the Western world generated by the speculative binge of the multi-national corporations, the obvious pollution of our environment which already affects the quality of life, are examples of the failure of the promoters of the so-called free and healthy private enterprise. The seriousness of the situation has not yet hit home because so few have been directly affected, and therefore most avoid spending the time and energy needed to implement workers' control.

Do you see any problems or dangers in the development of the movement? For instance, attempts to divert it into schemes for "workers' participation" as in some European countries; dangers from success where factories are handed over to workers; diversion from the struggle for State power, etc.? How can these problems be overcome?

Joe: Attempts are already being made to divert the concept of workers' control towards "worker participation." Alternative ideas of union capitalism, job enrichment, seats on the board, etc., are simply a cloak to cover old ideas, and to seek to divert the struggle towards reformist concepts.

To avoid these pitfalls, political debate must take place with every struggle instituted. The constant theme of self-management, with the ultimate aim of State power in the hands of the workers, should be repeated. Care should be taken that successes, such as workplaces taken over, do not fall back to the status quo when attractive concessions are dangled. Control won must not only be held, but must be extended. There is no doubt that concessions will be made by both employers and governments when success is imminent (as was the case at the Sydney Opera House), and political understanding is necessary if workers are to withstand the sophisticated onslaught which is aimed at containment.

Judy: I believe the "worker participation" concept is perhaps one of the most serious problems. With teachers and students, the ideology of "democratic involvement" has an infamous history. Student councils and teacher involvement in decision-making, like any good "participation" scheme has succeeded in siphoning off some of the radical elements and alienating others. Its overall technique has been to deceive students and teachers into a false feeling of democracy and control, whilst the school and hierarchy still preserved and protected (often viciously) the role of education and the school system in perpetuating capitalist society.

John: Already the "workers' participation" lobby in the Labor Party and the trade unions is moving in strongly with participation schemes and speaking out against workers' control. Workers' control is being portrayed as a form of "mob rule" (I think Ducker called it the dictatorship of the proletariat.) Workers' participation on the other hand is seen as a movement to form a binding partnership between the two sides of industry -- the junior partner, of course, will be the worker. I think the Australia Party will come up with a participation scheme and possibly some so-called "small I" liberals in the Liberal Party may do this also.

Workers' participation schemes cannot be ignored, but we must ensure that any such scheme, in fact, becomes a further step on the road to socialism under workers' self-management. All aspects of workers' participation schemes so far in operation (in Europe) must be analysed, their faults pointed out -- particularly the alienation of the workers from their supposedly elected representatives. Employers, certain union officials, and politicians can negotiate on a workers' participation scheme, but the result must be a
Pierina: The danger of struggles for workers' control being contained through schemes of workers' participation is very real. Therefore, the movement should try to analyse every concrete situation and see it in the light of the struggle for social change. It might seem a very unrealistic way of putting the question, but I think we should not underestimate the ability of capitalism to adapt itself to changes in the thinking of the workers, as long as they don't challenge capitalism's basic power.

As far as dangers from success are concerned, I think it is clear that workers' control does not mean that the workers own the factories where they work. In fact, society as a whole should be the owner of the means of production. However, when work-ins take place, we are faced with the problems of workers having to run a factory in the interests of the community while, at the same time, being subject to pressures and competition from capitalists. I think this situation can't be handled over a long period, and if the factory is eventually handed over to the workers, they will be faced with the fact that they have to become like the capitalists if they want to survive in a capitalist economy.

As for workers' control struggles being a diversion from the struggle for State power, I don't think this is the case. I don't mean that there should not be a struggle for State power, but if we want the people to have State power, not just a particular party, workers' control is an essential part of the struggle for State power. Struggles to gain access to Parliament are also important in the struggle for State power if seen in that perspective, but not the most important in my view. On the other hand, State power without workers' control means, in my opinion, a bureaucracy which is little better than capitalism.

Max: There can be no doubt that the workers' participation schemes are being developed precisely as an antidote to control demands. The movement will need to be vigilant as many of these schemes will have the support of workers, and will be attractive. Our task will not simply be to attack them, but to put forward, and fight for, radical programs which expose and go far beyond the shams of participation, but are still seen as reasonable and winnable by the workers.

It will be impossible to avoid all participatory schemes, as these will be reforms within the system and often won by struggle. It is also often difficult to work out what the effect of many reforms will be, as some will tend to radicalise, and others tend to integrate. Providing the movement is flexible, and critically examines all experience, it should be possible to go past workers' participation, but most importantly, where possible, to creatively use such schemes to further broaden the horizons in challenging for control.

The direction of the movement so far in Australia has tended to create confrontations with the State machine in a most effective way and so this has been positive in exposing the machine rather than being a diversion, e.g., when police have been called in during occupations and the like. Providing the direction of the movement has been maintained, it will play a positive role in exposing and challenging the State.

Dave: I can see the Establishment trying every method in the book to defeat the strategy of workers' control, from union officials on boards to saddling workers with obsolete plants. These moves will have to be seen for what they are and countered by the creative initiative of the workers on the job, according to the circumstances. Those who involve themselves in workers' participation, as in some European countries, will finish up as alienated from the mass of rank and file workers as the present management of the plant. Through control struggles, workers find out that they have been giving management credit for special skills which never existed and this experience will help workers to assess the value of the capitalist system itself.

How do you see the relations between the workers' control movement and the struggle for socialism? In what way do you think the movement will influence the kind of socialism achieved?

Joe: The relationship of the workers' control movement to the struggle for socialism is based on the concept of self-management. In developing towards socialism it will lay bare the rootless structures of modern multi-national capitalism as an institution of the people. The influence of workers' control lies in its depth, democratic methods, and its direct involvement of all concerned within it. This will have
a profound effect on the kind of new society achieved. It will certainly avoid the mistakes which have led to the shallowness of present-day socialist regimes. Along with the other grassroots movements in our society, one cannot over-emphasise the importance of workers' control as a guideline and a means to the future of socialism.

Judy: The relationship between the workers' control movement and the struggle for socialism is very basic. It is possible to achieve some kind of socialism where State power is still run by bureaucrats, but the workers' control movement, I feel, very basically shows workers that grassroots organisation and control is not only possible and practical but it ensures the maintenance of true democracy for those who form the majority in society, the working class; that their hegemony is the one which fully satisfies the needs of a socialist society.

John: The struggle for workers' control must be, ultimately, a struggle for socialism. Where the socialist politician fights in Parliament and in his party for socialist policies, the success of his struggle will depend a great deal on the demands being made outside by the community and the workers.

The workers' control movement has to ensure that increasing demands for greater democracy at work are made. What is the use of a nationalised industry if a board of State bureaucrats are appointed by the government to run it without workers having any say even in the day-to-day "on the job" decision-making? This would merely replace private capitalism with State capitalism.

By making demands now for more control workers will eventually gain the necessary confidence and ability to play a meaningful role in a socialism which they have not only helped bring into being but which they themselves formed along the road.

By forcing employers to concede authority in areas presently held to be "sacred," if and when industry is taken over by the State, those workers who would have fought and gained so much in the enrichment of their lives could not conceivably be expected to hand back this control just because the State had become the new owners.

Pierina: I don't think there can be any kind of socialism without workers' control, and in my view, only if workers' control has been developed to its fullest extent throughout the whole of society can it reach its conclusion in a self-managed socialist society where the State power really belongs to the people. Development of workers' control theory and practice is essential in establishing a revolutionary counter-hegemony, because it really represents an alternative to many of the basic ideas and values of capitalism.

Max: The relationship is crucial as I cannot see how an overall challenge to the system can be made without first laying the ideological and organisational basis in the workplace, and workers' control makes this possible. In particular, workers' control takes socialism out of the realms of distant dreams and posits it right in the everyday experience of workers. This is important as many people support socialism as a principle, but because the task appears so formidable, quickly shrug it off and go about the day-to-day problems. Workers' control, however, opens up concrete alternatives which not only make socialism practical, but give it an urgency which distant dreams don't have.

Workers who have won control over ever-wider areas of the bosses' prerogatives, leading up to the beginnings of socialism by long, arduous, democratic struggle and organisation are not going to hand it all over too easily to a handful of bureaucrats and, therefore, such tactics have an inbuilt potential for a democratic socialism to emerge.

Dave: I consider that any efforts to wrest control of a plant from the management, whether over minor matters such as how a boss treats or speaks to workers, or over major matters such as the management of the plant, what it produces and whom they will serve, is a step in the right direction.

I think unionised shops will play a major part in the struggle for control of industry and for a socialist system in Australia. There will be a need for an independent workers' control movement under a socialist State, for while the capitalist system has encouraged a payola-oriented, no-opinions, no-ideas, suck-hole type yes-man management machine, there is a danger of this type developing and Worming their way into a socialist system.

The workers' control movement also has the potential for overcoming the problem of isolation and alienation through constant rotation of responsibility.
The National Workers' Control Conference in Newcastle was in many ways a milepost in the history of working class struggle in Australia, and it is the clear duty of the revolutionary left to support the new militancy and self-confidence displayed there. But, in itself, that support is insufficient. Gramsci described the revolutionary party as "the general staff of the working class". By that he meant that the party must familiarise itself with every relevant aspect of the class struggle -- the historical conjuncture, the strength and the strategies of the enemy and the fighting strength of the working class itself. Using this Knowledge, it must produce a clear strategy for the class whose instrument it is, and it must do everything in its power to popularise and implement that strategy.

This was the way in which the CPA perceived its role when it first raised the demand for workers' control. In an article based on the report he delivered to the national executive meeting which adopted the demand, Bernie Taft said:

The demand for workers' control has only real significance if it fits into and is part of a wider revolutionary strategy. It will only get accepted and succeed in its aims if it is seen in this light. (1)

Unfortunately, there was little evidence of the CPA's "wider revolutionary strategy" at the Newcastle conference. Consequently, the
conference suffered from a real lack of political direction and debate about the relation of workers' control to other forms of activism.

In this article we will suggest some of the issues which ought to have been raised then, and which ought to be raised now. In the first part we will criticise four ideas which figure prominently in the current literature on workers' control. In the second part, we will present a viewpoint on an historical fact of great importance -- the ALP Government. In the third part, we will look at various forms of working class activism, including workers' control. Our aim throughout is to combat two tendencies -- the reduction of workers' control to an abstraction, and its euphoric celebration as "the answer". In this way, we hope to give it revolutionary concreteness.

I. INADEQUATE IDEAS -- OR OLD TRUTHS REVISITED

We are not arguing for the rejection of the four concepts discussed in this section, but we are insisting on their clarification.

a. Alienation. The essence of capitalism is the generalised production of commodities and the extraction of surplus value from the working class. Capitalism is not a relation between things; it is a relation between people. The relationships in capitalist society are the relations of production, that is, they are class relations. Capitalism is maintained and defended by the capitalist class which derives its class power from its ownership of the means of production. The project of overthrowing capitalism is therefore the struggle to break that class power. It would be entirely false to pose the project as the attempt to eliminate alienation.

Alienation is not fundamental to the capitalist system; it is a necessary by-product of that system. Its importance in revolutionary theory is due to its being seen as a lever in the process of developing revolutionary consciousness within the working class. Because it arises from the relations of production, it is a social rather than a psychological phenomenon, and thus cannot be eliminated at the level of the individual or that of the individual enterprise. It is misleading for revolutionaries to claim that workers' control -- or anything else short of socialist revolution -- can "cure" alienation. That would be to confuse the symptom with the disease in the same way as bourgeois apologists do for workers' participation schemes.

b. "The boss is the enemy: Challenge Authoritarian Control in the Factory!"

The capitalist system works as a totality, and the capitalist class acts as a totality, organised around an indivisible class interest. To suggest that the individual boss is the enemy is to suggest that the capitalist class is no more than a collection of individuals and that its social power is no more than the sum of these individuals' power. Individual bosses do not lay off workers, conspire to worsen the conditions of their workers, or contrive to go out of business out of personal spite! They are merely the appendages of capital, and their actions merely reflect the contradictions of the system as a whole.

Authority relations in the factory are just one aspect of bourgeois class power. The state and social hegemony are the more significant expressions of that power, but these are simply overlooked in the formulation we are criticising.

c. "Through their experience of work-ins etc. the workers will achieve a higher consciousness"

The successful management of a factory by workers demonstrates to them that it is their skill and labour alone which produces social wealth, and that "entrepreneurship" is just another word for parasitism. Besides, if the particular struggle they are waging is successful, it will add to their self-confidence and organising ability. (Of course, if it is not successful, it could be profoundly demoralising, which is why the work-in must only be used if it is suitable in the particular circumstances). But this higher consciousness must not be confused with socialist consciousness. The struggle for socialism entails much more than the seizure of individual productive units, and socialism itself entails much more than self-management by the workers in those units. Socialist consciousness must include insights into the nature of class power in general and its exercise through the state, and these insights do not arise spontaneously out of experiences in the factory. Rather, they are a product of the dialectic between experiences in the factory and the historical and international experiences of workers, distilled and projected -- as theory -- by the
d. Hegemony.

Workers' control is often posed as a "counter-hegemonic demand" which challenges the ideas -- or the ideological system -- which justify bourgeois rule. Gramsci, who inspired this idea, posed the problem of hegemony with a static analogy. According to him, bourgeois power is like a fortress surrounded by many forward trenches, and these trenches must all be captured before the fortress itself can be stormed. But the ruling class does not simply defend its territory; it, too, must manoeuvre, to adapt and modify capitalism so as to preserve it from its own self-destructive contradictions. Moreover, there is no such thing as a sufficient rate of exploitation: capital is constantly on the offensive to squeeze the working population for all it can get. In the next section, we will discuss its present plans to do just that. In elaborating our strategic perspectives, we must not fail to recognise the fluidity of class struggle.

Nor must we forget, in the fray of "the battle of ideas", that the working class is daily engaged in a struggle against the naked class power of the bourgeoisie: it must incessantly fight to preserve its own share of the social product and the conditions it has already won, and it must struggle for every inch that it encroaches on the privileges of its adversary. Workers' control must be a weapon in this arena as well.

In his essay "Americanism and Fordism" in The Prison Notebooks, Gramsci presents a very important analysis of new techniques of "industrial relations" introduced into large-scale US industry in the '20s and '30s.

The introduction of these techniques, he said, represented the descent of bourgeois hegemony from the realm of the ideological superstructure down into the structure -- into the factory itself. The fact of class power was to be disguised at the point where it was most directly articulated. Now that "industrial relations" has been elevated to the status of a bourgeois "science", its fruits -- productivity deals, workers' participation schemes, etc. -- are gaining wide acceptance by the ruling classes of advanced capitalist societies. They must not be seen as reforms, but as the dangerous extension of bourgeois hegemony into the production process. In the next section, we will make this point more concretely.
The OECD stresses the need to gain the cooperation of the trade union movement in the acceptance and implementation of an incomes policy. Further, it states that an incomes policy ought to go hand in hand with the integration of the trade unionist rank and file at the point of production, by means of productivity deals (known more politely as “job enrichment schemes”) and worker participation schemes. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that these are the main recommendations just made to the South Australian government by Dunstan’s committee on workers’ participation (9), recommendations which met with high praise from Federal ALP and Liberal Party leaders alike.

Productivity bargaining.

The English experience of productivity deals is well summarised in the British Institute for Workers’ Control pamphlet, Productivity Bargaining and Workers’ Control. Here, Tony Topham points to the actual deterioration of earnings where productivity bargaining occurs, even though wage rates are increased. It also exacerbates division in the working class, contributes to unemployment, and most importantly, it undermines the authority of trade unions and shop stewards. The aim is “to use productivity bargaining to destroy workers’ control on the shop floor, to limit or reduce wage-costs in the interests of higher profitability, and to establish greater managerial authority over the use of labour.” In the Australian context, Professor E.A. Russell has calculated that if wages here had been pegged to productivity rather than the rise in the cost of living between 1946 and 1964, the proportion of the national income going to the working class would have dropped sharply (10).

Workers’ participation is the other tactic recommended for consolidating the bourgeois hegemony in the sphere of production itself, and it is the more topical in Australia today. It relies most heavily on the myth that “there is more to unite us than divide us”; or, in the words of the Dunstan committee, “each side gains and learns from the other’s point of view and is more willing to find joint solutions”. Also, the old “might is right” philosophy has been dropped, and the bourgeoisie has taken to parading around a new-found humanitarianism which likes to talk about unhappiness, alienation and human relations in the workplace as being the fundamental problem of “industrial relations” (11).

In absorbing workers and their representatives into pseudo-managerial functions, it is hoped to undermine their class identity and the legitimacy of their class institutions without any real sacrifice of the decision-making power of management. Perhaps more immediate objectives of the workers’ participation ploy are to divert workers away from economic and workers’ control demands, to counteract the increasing proportion of industrial stoppages over questions of job organisation and to cut down absenteeism, industrial sabotage and other manifestations of “job dissatisfaction”. In case some elements of the ruling class get scared off by the humanitarian rhetoric or begin to wonder what workers’ participation has to do with profits, the Dunstan committee assures them that the net effect will be “increased stability, decreased absenteeism, increased quality of workmanship, better service to customers, the elimination of production bottlenecks and increased productivity”.

This new threat to the Australian working class goes hand-in-hand with a much older one: the integration of the trade unions into the state apparatus via two institutions -- the ALP itself (as the political arm of the trade union movement) and the arbitration system. The ALP is not only constrained by its presiding over the bourgeois state to advance the instruments of capital. There is ample evidence of an anti-trade union stance by ALP leaders on “industrial relations” questions and other issues. A glaring example of this was the recent move to reduce trade union representation at the recent state ALP conference in Adelaide.

In light of the above, we must seriously re-examine the thrust of fashionable left critiques of the ALP in government and its plans for the supposed improvement in the workers’ lot. These critiques are usually to the
effect that ALP policies are “merely” reformist and therefore won’t work. It is plain that these policies are not reformist, but positively detrimental to the position of the working class. And they can work -- for capital! Secondly, most critiques have approached ALP policies as if they were piecemeal, and have therefore failed to perceive their essential unity. A third error prevalent in communist circles is the belief that it is “sectarian” to vigorously criticise the ALP. Avoiding sectarianism, and observing the usual constraints on realistic political propaganda can never limit our duty to advance a socialist perspective and combat bourgeois ideas at all times. To fail in that duty is to collaborate in the project of delivering up the workers bound hand and foot to the juggernaut of capital.

III. WORKERS’ CONTROL IN PERSPECTIVE

The CPA established its general approach to industrial questions at its 22nd Congress (1970) in these words:

The new unionism based on wider aims, would recognise that the workers’ movement faces a more powerful adversary than the individual capitalist -- a close-knit monopoly-arbitration-government structure which works on general strategy. The essential aim must be to meet this with an overall strategy for social change, which involves a total challenge in all domains to the influence, domination, power and authority of the owner, controller and manipulator of our society.

Topham adopts the same project for the British Institute for Workers’ Control:

Our aim should be nothing less than a coherent and co-ordinated counter strategy to the techniques of management and the state. (14).

We agree wholeheartedly with these formulations, which implicitly warn against the raising of a single demand or advocacy of a single tactic in an abstract manner, to the exclusion of other options. Workers’ control is thus neither a universal panacea nor a substitute for strategic clarity. In looking at tactical options, we must avoid seeing them as mutually exclusive. Further, a tactic is not in its elf revolutionary or non-revolutionary: that test can only be applied at the level of strategy and of the structural significance to the system of specific strategies.

Before commenting on work-ins and workers’ control, some remarks on two other aspects of working class struggle are called for. Perhaps the most important development in this area is the shop committee. The tendency for trade unions to become integrated into the state apparatus and to collapse into bureaucratism has been offset by rank and file militancy which is often in conscious opposition to trade union officialdom. This militancy has led to the election of a large number of shop stewards and the establishment of shop committees. In Britain, for instance, there are now 200,000 or more shop stewards directly elected from the shop floor (2,000 of these are full time) as against only 3,000 union officials (15).

It would be hard to exaggerate the potential for effective working class struggle that shop committees represent. In being elected from the shop floor, they directly express worker militancy on the spot, free from bureaucratic inflexibility and remoteness. By their very informality, they are not susceptible to repression or integration by the state. In Richard Hyman’s view (16), the importance of this spontaneous resistance to integration lies in two fields. Firstly, forcing the management of individual enterprises to bargain with shop committees successfully outflanks wage restraints and creates a “wage-drift” in favour of the working class. Secondly, it challenges the legitimacy of two repressive authorities imposed on workers -- the boss and (often) the trade union hierarchy.

A dramatic illustration of how shop committees can work is contained in the NWCC pamphlet, Workers’ Control and Shop Committees, which discusses the struggles at the GMH plant at Elizabeth in March 1970. Not only did the shop committee in that case demonstrate the advantages already referred to in organising the fight. In developing into a Combined committee it defused the demarcation disputes and inter-union factionalism which so often leads to the defeat of industrial actions. In the Australian situation, the Combined Shop Committee is crucial for this reason alone.

Shop committees are a flexible instrument for both economist and workers’ control struggles. Their neglect by the revolutionary left is therefore baffling, especially since the militants who form them, much more than trade union officials, represent the essential strata of advanced workers in the leninist
theory of organisation. And it is around the shop committee that the CPA's concept of "unity at the bottom" must take shape.

Present thinking on the Left about economist issues is also inadequate, and often does not go much further than the reiteration of two truisms: a) militancy around purely economic issues can never of itself bring working class consciousness to a point where it challenges the foundations of capitalism itself, but (b) economic struggles must be waged to defend ground already won. The inference is often drawn that revolutionaries ought to get involved in economic struggles, but in so doing they should attempt to "raise" the consciousness of workers by leading the struggle into non-economic issues.

Ernest Mandel states the assumption that underpins such a policy: wage increases are always absorbable by the capitalist system. We believe that this assumption should not go unchallenged or unqualified. Hyman states that: "It is reasonable to argue that the integration of trade unions within capitalism is possible only where the available margin (for concessions in a given economic context) is sufficient to absorb the minimum concessions acceptable to organised workers." How great these "minimum concessions" will be depends on the workers' combativity. In contemporary Britain, Hyman notes: "The economic context is such as to minimise the margin of trade union reforms. First, virtual stagnation entails that improved wages cannot be financed painlessly out of economic growth. Second, redistribution of income towards labor is unacceptable: the requirements of accelerated investment and the pressures of international capital mobility point rather to the need for an increase in the share of profits. And third, problems of external balance limit the opportunity to finance money wage increases out of price inflation. Thus it is arguable that even the traditionally limited activities of trade unions are no longer tolerable within British capitalism." (18)

While we ought not get carried away by comparisons between the condition of British capitalism and our own, it is nevertheless true that Australia's growth rate is also sluggish and that Australian capitalism already bears the burden of relatively high wage rates. Moreover, Whitlam's promise to achieve a 7% growth rate is incompatible with any rise in real wages. Finally, the kind of economic issues and struggles that are called for in Australia now go much further than "the traditionally limited activities of trade unions." They extend to a determined campaign against an incomes policy as such, and this, we feel, will demand and develop political consciousness and organisation in advance of traditional trade unionism. The same must also be said about the related phenomena of shop committees and "wage drift" if and when the ALP introduces its incomes policy. Revolutionaries would thus be making a grave mistake if they under-estimated the importance of economic struggles today.

In discussing Workers' Control, we adopt Bernie Taft's definition: "Workers' control does not mean workers running industry under capitalism. It does not even mean workers controlling industry. It means workers having some say over the way in which capitalists run industry, over their decisions and having a growing measure of control, which encroaches more and more on the sacred domain of the ruling class. It means controlling the controllers." (19) We agree with Taft and Mandel that the demand for workers' control is necessarily antagonistic to capital ("invasion not admission") and that it ought to be seen as part of a program of anti-capitalist structural reforms which "cannot be carried out in a normally functioning capitalist system; it rips the system apart; it creates a situation of dual power." (20) The theoretical setting for this idea is not gradualism but social revolution seen as an antagonistic process whereby the working class builds up an independent power base and at the same time denies the bourgeoisie the necessary room to manoeuvre in defence of capitalism. Workers' control is part of the process of eroding the bases of capitalism rather than the projection of future socialist relations of production. For workers' self-management under socialism is only conceivable in the context of rational economic planning and the initial exercise of class power by the whole proletariat through a new form of state.

So much for the theoretical importance of workers' control. What of its importance here and now? Agitation around this demand, in expressing the real interests of the working class (which must always be antagonistic to
those of capital), exposes the falsity of all arguments for class collaboration. (The whole thrust of ALP policy is towards class collaboration, the liquidation of proletarian interests into those of capital. Its ideology assumes, and therefore reinforces, the lie that there is one “we” in Australia: “we” are all in it together, “we” will all be happier under a regime of workers’ participation, “we” will all be better off if “we” produce more!)

Workers’ control stresses invasion of the prerogatives of capital, rather than admission to the least consequential of these prerogatives under workers’ participation. The antagonism between capital and labor must also be expressed in the slogan, “No responsibility for capitalist enterprises!”, for to take responsibility for productivity, profitability, etc., is to support the rhetoric about the “common good” and to admit the rationality of capitalist production.

The demand for workers’ control must not be confused with the work-in tactic. There is a widespread tendency to see work-ins as conscious revolutionary actions, whereas they are really responses to lay-offs, reduction of overtime, etc., by an individual employer, and are in furtherance of a traditional trade union demand, the right to work. The work-in, in itself, contains no challenge to capitalist organisation of production. It is, of course, important as a defensive tactic, and in Australia at the present time its frequency represents a significant upswing in worker militancy.

We believe that the vigorous pursuit of both economist and workers’ control demands through the institution of shop committees is an essential part of a strategy for labor at the present time. This would not only rip the misleading packaging off the ALP’s package deal, but it would also be instrumental in the working class’ seizing more advanced positions in the fight for socialism.

CONCLUSION

The Australian working class at the present time is facing a grave threat to its standard of living, its working conditions and the fighting capacity of its class organisations. Paradoxically, this threat comes at a time of intensified militancy and the forging of more varied and effective modes of struggle on the part of the class. The elaboration of a strategy to defeat that threat and to channel the new militancy in a truly revolutionary direction is the first duty of the revolutionary Left. With few exceptions, (21) it is not simply failing to fulfil this duty — it is failing to perceive it.

Notes

1. Australian Left Review, no. 6/69, p. 24
2. See Bernie Taft, ibid., p. 25
3. To be published in Intervention, no. 3
4. The OECD is an international agency to which a number of capitalist countries belong. Most of them are advanced western-type economies. The OECD studies the problems of economic stability and growth, and elaborates strategies, based on state planning, for the benefit of the ruling class in each of the member states. Australia joined last year.
5. OECD, Economic Surveys, “Australia”
7. See the OECD publication, “Inflation: the Present Problem”
8. The absurdity of this argument is revealed in the analysis of production costs in Gerry Harant, “Unproductive Consumption,” 40 ALR. The “wage-push” theory works on the well-tried bourgeois formula of “always blame the victim.”
9. See the Report of the Committee for Worker Participation (Private Sector)
10. Quoted by Catley and McFarlane, op. cit.
11. In this context, see E. Mandel, “The Debate on Workers’ Control,” Direct Action, June 9, 1972, and better still, a pamphlet entitled “Workers’ Control” produced by rank and file members of the Queensland Branch. AEU.
12. Ibid., p. 8
20. Mandel, op. cit., p. 8
21. The Communist League is the only exception that comes to mind. “The Militant” despite occasional lapses into sectarianism, has gone a long way towards correctly posing the problem of “programmatic clarity.”
"The artist is valuable to us when he turns up virgin soil, when he intuitively breaks into a sphere where logic and statistics would find it hard to penetrate..."
LUNACHARSKY. (1)

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Picasso is dead.
For artists a certain security has been lost. At the topmost parts of their heads they know now that they will have to create the future of art themselves -- if they can. That no one, not even those who are seemingly immortal, can do it for them.

We now look at Picasso’s paintings differently. Awareness of his death puts his work in a new light. Complete now, it
can evolve no further. No small word or deed of the artist can influence it. Picasso's creative overflowing has become contained by time and history.

Like a fountain in Malaga bursting water that has now become frozen.

Changes in our understanding of the artist's work will in future come from outside -- from society and its shifting values. Much of the meaning of Picasso's work will be governed by interpretation.

The artist is more vulnerable than is often thought. His work is in a sense open-ended. For example the sixteenth century Mannerists have risen in importance only with the frustration, anxiety and intellectualism of the twentieth century. El Greco's greatness for us now lies in the similar despair of our two centuries. Other artists like Murillo have fallen in significance as the twentieth century has come to suspect sentimentality... Once dead, then, the artist becomes more than ever prey to varieties of interpretation, with no right of reply, tossed about by prevailing social currents.

The more significant an artist is, the more he is a gauge of the thought and feelings of his time. Picasso is tremendously important. He starts in his youth as a virtuoso, doing magnificent things in paint; eventually to become the acknowledged master in the West until he dies at the remarkable age of ninety-one (two years older than Michaelangelo; eight years younger than Titian).

Picasso's life and art range over a violent and dynamic era. Interwoven between his creations in stone and paint and ink are the smoke and groans of world wars, shattering discoveries in science, resistance and revolutions, Dada and Surrealism, the new permissiveness and the old conservatism. Picasso lived through it all. He was forced to find harmony in an age that forbade it.

In this he is similar to Bertolt Brecht. Both artists in their epic scale parallel the age they lived through. Both were strangely instinctual, sensitive to the desperation in their changing world. To the black alienation of the pre-war years, to the masses of European victims, and all the horror fading in the new exhilaration of peace and hopes for a new world.

Hope was as sweet to Brecht as a plum tree and a son, to Picasso as a young girl dancing in blue air under the curve of her skipping rope.

Both were filled with an essential humanity. Picasso was part of a generation that could be considered courageous. As an artist he faced problems that now seem insoluble. Born in the last century and maturing in the 1920s, his generation formed in the visual arts the main aesthetic modes that are still with us. Picasso, Munch, Kokoschka and Matisse, Leger to Braque, Chagall, Dali through to Klee and the Constructivists ... they had courage because they tackled all the new subjects of art, and with a bold and forceful imagination.

Picasso was one who could encompass within his range all the new developments, in a way and on a scale that now seem impossible. We seem to have had a failure of nerve. The new iconoclasts are so often technological specialists, followers of fashion, or simply splashing around in their own therapy. Sociological developments have put new pressures on style and manner. As capitalism commercialises and commoditises all the little fragments of people that are left. Picasso protested against this:

"Nowadays, people talk about painting in the same way as they do about miniskirts. Next season it'll be longer, or it'll have a fringe." (2)

The value of Picasso for us is that he is an example of a man of passionate creativity, of vast synthetic genius, of great humility. As an artist he could move between great emotional and conceptual extremes -- could sing a hymn to man, feel personally violated by injustices. He painted harlequines and sadness, in reds and blues he could combine lyrical revelations of love with the moist truth of sex. He was stimulated by the power of paradox, the processes of death, of steel and battle, of white mornings and darkness. The bullfights and the bull-fighter, the tension between female and male. Algerian landscapes and the fine features of a wife. His definite blacks. Even in his old age he could be moved by a child learning to write. The lines of Brecht’s praise of learning could be put under many of Picasso's paintings:
“My young son asks me
’should I study history?’
I tell him ‘no, what is there to
learn?
Bury your head in the sand, my
son,
maybe then you will not burn...
No! my son, study mathematics,
study French, study history,
Learn!”

In Picasso there is the same kind of hu­
man tenderness, so rare in painting now.
It is the positive refusal to be brutalised.

Another quality of Picasso that is im­
portant to us in the movement comes
from his method of spiritual survival. Be­
tween the lover and the rebel (both ro­
mantic in basis) is a deeper, blacker per­
sona -- the jester. Not the comic anglo­
saxon kind, but Spanish and dressed in
the color of shadow, covered with stars.
Brecht too played the part of the clown,
but he kept mainly to the sardonically
grinning revolutionary-cum-scientist. Pic­
asso’s use of a jester persona helped pro­
tect him from the harsh angles of his
age. As his friend Paul Eluard wrote:

“It is the harsh law of men
to keep themselves untouched in
spite
of wars and wretchedness,
With his persona Picasso could joke, be
witty about himself, create paradoxes
with a smile on his face. Do tricks with
his pen, or with electric torches in the
air, for films. Or he could make parodies
of great artists of the past, amusing him­
self with imitations of their styles, as
comic comment. He did this most of his
life. And he performed for the press with
a true jester’s irreverence for authorities.

In another sense, Picasso can be likened
to Charlie Chaplin. Both created a persona
of the “little man” -- pulling larger immor­
tals down to earth and to human scale.
Chaplin satirised Hitler while Picasso did a
portrait of Stalin, the man of steel. But
Picasso would often drop the jester’s mask
and revert to the moral seriousness of the
indignant romantic -- as in the Guernica,
Korean massacre, war and peace themes.
Perhaps Chaplin’s tramp is more objective
than Picasso’s jester -- we are not interest­
ed in Chaplin’s private life as we are in
Picasso’s. The mask of the painter is more
metaphysical.

Picasso’s masks and guises were so fluid
that he is hard to pin down. At times the
persona is extremely Spanish, and mystical.
As he follows the processes of life and
death, of sexual vigor and ageing, of indi­
viduality and role-playing, we are often
not sure which side he is on. Optimism
and life force or the other? He seems so
often to come out in a jesting statement
on the side of anarchy and death. But
his contradictoriness seems to be a method
for challenging our presumptions. Again he
can be compared with Brecht in his inten­
sity:

“He who is defeated cannot but
discover
wisdom. Hold on to yourself and
sink,
be afraid, but sink.
At the bottom the lesson awaits
you.” (4)

Both artists prise with their imaginative
fingernails into the shell of appearances --
to dig into the essentials of things. Often
intuitively, without the aid of accepted
logic or “sense.” They use their persona
to investigate processes, and how these are
related to human values. Like Chaplin’s,
their approach is profoundly dialectical.

The tragi-comic mask of Picasso the
jester helped him to survive, to remain in­
tact during one of the periods of most
total fragmentation known to man. When
even to face reality required tremendous
courage. Picasso is reported to have said:

“One has the impression that everyone
is horribly afraid of reality. If there’s the
tiniest bit of it people are horrified and
get rid of it...” (5)

Caught between violent pressures the
artist has often been violent on himself.
Hence the enormous number of suicides
since Van Gogh blew his brains out in
the yellow cornfields of southern France.
Industrialisation brought romanticism and
despair. It may seem strange to say that
one of Picasso’s great virtues was to have survived,
and in that survival to have con­
tinued to create. Like most of the roman­
tics and their subsequent schools, Picasso
felt like an exile in the twentieth century.
An emigre without a culture or a people.
And classless. For one short period he
seems to have found authenticity and trans­
cendence in the French communist party.
They were good years when he said:

“I ... found the best people there ... I
have always been an exile now I am no
longer one ... I approached the commun­
ist party as a child might approach a fountain.” (6)

And he no doubt was moved by his friend Eluard’s lines:

“They were only a few over the whole earth each thought himself alone. They used to sing, they were right to sing, but they sang how people pillage -- how people kill themselves...” (7)

We don’t know how long the depth of feeling lasted, how long Picasso found himself a place in the communist party. There were problems on both sides. Many of the French Stalinists were pursuing a line of moralising naturalism in art and seemed insensitive to Picasso’s predicament as an artist and a man.

Yet a great part of the conflict lay with Picasso himself. He was a rebel rather than a revolutionary. An anarchist before a Marxist. He had spent most of his life being “against” various forces, and had less clearly defined what he was “for.” Picasso’s rebellion was mainly instinctive.

John Berger (8) has rightly described him as a “vertical invader”; he had great talent and was threatened by all forms of violence. Picasso was an anarchist twisting and turning to find transcendence. His rebellious qualities never had the reasoned edge of Brecht’s. While he passionately followed the threads of processes he could never use Marxist schema for interpreting them. Except for what began with cubism -- and this is a mighty exception -- there is little concrete system-building in Picasso’s work, very little creation of new conventions for others to follow and take the next step. There is more emphasis on “Picassoness.” There are great innovations in stylistic expression of course, but he never became, as Brecht did, in Marxist terms, an architect of the new sensibility.

In a way Picasso was still vulnerable despite his jester’s persona and his passionate romantic indignation. Berger’s argument is that Picasso should have left the decadence of bourgeois Europe and gone to the third world, there to participate in the new flashes of reason and revelation among people in their anti-colonial struggles. There he could have found the themes of which his genius was capable. Picasso’s art needed great themes.

Among Picasso’s last great work is the artist and his model. He began the series in 1954 and each painting forms a history -- of frustration and despair. The model that stands omnipotent before the artist and is unattainable. She is immortal beauty, yet the old artist can only concentrate on trying to draw her, instead of loving her in flesh. Art is here portrayed as single-minded, yet life is complex and rich. The whole series is an expression of the vanities of vanity. There in black ink is a revealing of conscience, of one to whom the whole world has gone stale. In each subsequent drawing the artist becomes more and more absurd. First he adds a mask (showing too how conscious Picasso was of his persona); then the model too puts on a mask. Thus they stare at each other. Paradoxes in identity and in life are suggested. At the end of the series the artist becomes a baboon, seated impotently in front of marvellously naked, unreachable beauty.

The artist with all his talent and cunning has been reduced to pure instinct, to desperate stupidity. It reminds one of the lines spoken at last by Shakespeare’s Prospero:

“Gentle breath of yours my sails Must fill, or else my project fails, Which was to please. Now I want Spirits to enforce, art to enchant; And my ending is despair...”

Was Picasso finally despairing? Was his massive outpouring of drawings, sculpture, paintings a form of ceaseless activity without making significant discoveries? The artist himself once claimed he had discovered nothing. Was this an expression of despair? Yet in a world of evolving one-dimensional people, Picasso is an example of a man who could still -- in an individual way -- enjoy the totality of processes. This seems to me a profoundly hopeful thing.

**FOOTNOTES**

(2) “Picasso Says...” p. 114.
(4) “Brecht,” by Ronald Grey, p. 84.
(8) Ibid.
Throughout the world of Western capitalism, the Marxist Left has been characterised by a growing concern with the role of ideological hegemony in preserving the existing social order. The student movement correctly noted that one major characteristic of advanced capitalist society was its burgeoning ideological institutions -- particularly in education and mass media. Consequently, a major tactical focus of the new Left involved "demystifying" and "exposing" liberal institutions. In recent years, the concern with ideological hegemony has expanded as evidenced by the continuing influence of the Frankfurt school and the growing interest in the thought of Antonio Gramsci.

Unfortunately, the term "hegemony" has been used imprecisely and at least two divergent interpretations have been implicitly associated with the concept. Both interpretations start with the same initial premise (one that is common to almost all variants of Marxist analysis): the capitalist class has control over the means of production (and, consequently, the means of coercion) and thereby controls the ideational/ideological/intellectual/moral forces within capitalist society.

The two interpretations build on this common assumption in quite different ways. The first, which might be called the inculcation interpretation, asserts that the institutional propagation of bourgeois values shapes the consciousness (and sometimes even the need
structure) of the "masses." Consequently, the exploited class (or classes) adopt and consciously accept bourgeois ideology, a process which creates a major prop of the bourgeois social order.

The second interpretation holds that ideological institutions impose parameters on the flow of ideas, debate, discourse, etc. The fabled "marketplace of ideas" is truncated. The result is not an acceptance of a capitalist world view by the exploited classes, but, rather, the circumscription and repression of perspectives which are critical or revolutionary. Within the exploited classes (and within each member of such a class) ideologies and "belief systems" are underdeveloped, fragmented, contradictory and internally inconsistent. The experience of daily life gives rise to dissatisfaction which might lead to class conscious or revolutionary positions, on the one hand, or to cynicism, despair and apathy on the other. The ideological institutions operate in such a way as to forestall and prevent the articulation of class interests. Both within the working class and within individual members of the class bourgeois values and positions hostile to the capitalist order are held side-by-side (in a constantly changing mosaic) with little or no feeling of discomfort. In this view (the institutional interpretation) ideological hegemony is less of domination and manipulation of the minds of the working class than it is a structural condition which inheres in the capitalist organisation of society.

Without attempting any complete evaluation of Marcuse's work, One Dimensional Man is clearly an example of the inculcation interpretation of the concept of hegemony. In that work, Marcuse speaks of a "happy consciousness" coming to prevail, "the self-limitation of thought," and "the effective suffocation of those needs which demand liberation." He also writes, "The novel feature is ... the depth of the preconditioning which shapes the instinctual drives and obscures the difference between false and true consciousness." (1)

It is possible to maintain even more extreme versions of the inculcation interpretation than does Marcuse. Thus Mueller says, "A class which is linguistically deprived would hardly be able to generate, from its own bases, symbols and ideas contrary to the dominant ones... In short, the restricted speech code shared by the lower classes does not permit them to construct a defence system against dominant legitimations." (2)

For Marxists, political activity must be conducted in the context of a precise analysis of the nature of the society and the socio-historical context. Acceptance of Mueller's analysis would appear to lead to despair rather than activity. There are less extreme versions of the inculcation thesis but the point remains: a rigorous Marxist analysis of contemporary capitalism must conduct a critical evaluation of the two conceptions of hegemony insofar as each suggests a different political direction.

INCULCATION VERSUS INSTITUTIONAL HEGEMONY

Unfortunately the classical writings of Marxism offer no basis for evaluating the two conceptions. Marx first articulated the common premise of both conceptions ("the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force...") (3) but has little to say about the form which the hegemonic process takes. Gramsci has written more on the topic than Marx, but his conclusions appear to be ambiguous. On the one hand, Gramsci speaks of a ruling class "losing its consensus"; (4) on the other, he describes common sense as "diffuse" and uncoordinated. (5)

The present discussion maintains that other criteria are less ambiguous than the "classics." In spite of the greater exposure which the inculcation thesis of hegemony has received, it is less adequate than the institutional conception for two important reasons: 1) the latter provides a more accurate description of the hegemonic process in advanced capitalist societies than does the former; and 2) the inculcation thesis is based on a fixed, rigid, non-dialectical conception of consciousness which can be inserted into a Marxist perspective only with the greatest difficulty.

In the light of recent events, it is surprising that a conception of hegemony which is defined in terms of the internalisation of bourgeois values can be taken seriously, modern ideological institutions notwithstanding. Only the imprecision of previous usages of the concept of hegemony has prevented a full, critical scrutiny of such a definition. Certainly the actions of workers at Vauxhall, (6) Lordstown, (7) and four Kansas City mental hospitals, (8) however interpreted, can hardly be viewed as the acting out of internalised bourgeois values. Likewise, the events in
France in 1968, Italy in 1969-70 and Quebec in 1972 all illustrate that the inculcation thesis is more of a capitalist wish than a viable Marxist proposition.

If, in the face of such examples of working class rebellion, the theorist remains unconvinced of the inadequacy of the inculcation thesis, another (albeit unlikely) source of evidence is available. Empiricist sociological studies consistently refute the assumptions which are endemic to the inculcation perspective. (9) Protho and Grigg, for example, discover that what appears to be a general consensus on an abstract level disappears when specific issues are considered. (10) Even more powerful in this regard is the evidence assembled by Mann. (11) After reviewing a number of studies in the area, Mann concludes, "Value consensus does not exist to any significant extent." (12) This finding is further elaborated by two trends which Mann notes: 1) there is a greater degree of consensus within the middle class than within the working class; and 2) working class individuals exhibit less internal consistency in their values than middle class people. From this sort of evidence, Mann constructs two overviews which are quite relevant to the question at hand. First, he suggests that "only those actually sharing in societal power need develop consistent values." (13) Secondly, Mann concludes that working-class compliance with the political order is based upon a lack of consensus (within the class) and a lack of internal consistency that prevent working-class people from translating their experiences into a political framework. (14) Mann’s position may be criticised for its tendency to ignore all of the economic, political and coercive forces which make compliance the pragmatic alternative. Nevertheless, its bearing on the two conceptions of hegemony is clear: Mann finds no evidence of an overall value consensus such as the inculcation interpretation would suggest. He does, however, find a lack of consensus within the working class and internal inconsistency in the values of members of the working class -- precisely what the institutional interpretation maintains.

The other areas where empiricist studies may be relevant is in the documentation of the extraction of "deviant" or rebellious perspectives from ideological institutions. The evidence regarding public schools in the U.S. is clear. Texts (15) and teachers (16) omit controversial perspectives. With reference to the latter, Dawson and Prewitt summarise: "The evidence about the public school teacher in the United States forms a consistent picture. Teachers are expected to, and do, propagate political views and beliefs appropriately labelled ‘consensus values.’ Teachers should not, and generally do not, use the classroom as a forum for discussion of ‘partisan values’ and controversial positions." (17) Thus the educational system eliminates exposure to any political framework which can provide a meaningful account of working class life. It would seem that the result, as has been suggested, may be confusion or disinterest, but hardly a thorough adoption of bourgeois values.

The sociological evidence pertaining to parameters which apply within the mass media is quite bountiful. (18) Morris Janowitz summarises the general point beautifully when he says, "The influence of mass media ... is not in dramatic conversion of public opinion, but rather in setting the limits within which public debate on controversial issues takes place." (19) [Emphasis is mine.] No available evidence contradicts the Janowitz statement.

The force with which such limits are maintained is clearly revealed in a recent study of television producers. Remarking upon the extent to which content is monitored Cantor remarks: "According to several producers, the networks are essentially apolitical and within certain limits seem little concerned with the ideology or philosophy of a show if the ratings are high and the advertisers are satisfied." (20) [Emphases all mine.] The three qualifications contained in this quote give ample insight into how, in Janowitz’s words, limits are set.

Further insight is provided by observing the nature of U.S. government intervention into the broadcast industry. In an illustration of how the "fairness" doctrine is to be applied, the Federal Communications Commission cites an example in which a station broadcast a program entitled "Communist Encirclement" in which it was asserted (inter alia) that U.S. foreign policy, "the alleged infiltration of our government by communists and the alleged moral weakening in our homes, schools and churches have all contributed to the advance of international communism." The station maintained that since it did not know of any communist in its community it was unable to afford air time to...
those who might want to present opposing views.

The FCC's ruling is instructive and worth quoting at length:

"In situations of this kind, it was not and is not the Commission's intention to require licensees to make time available to communists or the communist viewpoint. But the matters listed above raise controversial issues of public importance on which persons other than communists hold contrasting views. There are responsible contrasting viewpoints on the most effective methods of combatting communism and communist infiltration." (21)

The above interpretation of the "fairness doctrine" in no way challenges the assumption that communism (however defined) must be fought or that communist infiltration is a realistic threat to national security. Consequently, the interpretation not only prevents the airing of communist perspectives but also the presentation of the perspective of any revolutionary opposition, not to mention a pacifist perspective. In sum, the evidence presented here clearly suggests that Janowitz correctly described the role of the mass media: to set the limits which that Janowitz correctly described the role of the mass media: to set the limits within which public debate on controversial issues takes place.

It should now be clear that the inculcation interpretation of the concept of hegemony is quite inadequate in its analysis of modern capitalist society. The various workers' rebellions, major and minor, cannot be understood at all if one assumes that the workers involved have thoroughly adopted bourgeois ideology or (in Marcuse's words) been so deeply preconditioned that their need structures have been shaped to reflect bourgeois interests. Further, even empiricist sociology is unable to find the society-wide consensus which would exist if bourgeois values were inculcated. Rather, such studies describe a pattern: the ideological institutions of capitalist society systematically remove any political frameworks which might contribute to the development of class consciousness. Consensual values are, consequently, able to develop to a much higher extent among "only those actually sharing in societal power." (22)

Such a pattern is precisely what an institutional interpretation of the concept of hegemony would allow one to predict. It is an integral extension of the legal apparatus which systematically expelled revolutionaries from the trade unions in the late 'forties and 'fifties -- and for exactly the same reasons.

CONSCIOUSNESS

It is probably not accidental that theorists who utilise the inculcation perspective on hegemony tend to rely heavily on Freudian theory. Freud's emphases on early character formation and the role of instinctual drives create a rather static view of personality which lends itself to an inculcation interpretation.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that a static view of personality is unique to the Freudian Left. The entire process of abstraction and generalisation exerts pressures to construct a stable image of consciousness which can thus be used in shorthand form: this sector of the working class is conservative, that sector of the working class is militant. Such summaries of mass consciousness are inevitable and necessary. Their value is undermined, however, the moment that revolutionaries forget such terms are only shorthand terms to refer to what appears to be the most important characteristic of a specific group at a specific point in time and that this shorthand abstracts from and obscures a far more complex world. In the latter, we find that conservatism in this worker does not mean the same thing as it does in that worker, that it applies to voting but not to shop floor issues (etc., etc.), that it has different characteristics today than it did yesterday, that the same person may hold apparently inconsistent views with no visible sign of discomfort. Such complexities could be listed endlessly. Therefore, although abstractions are necessary to make sense of complex phenomena, one cannot forget that the richness and complexity of lived experience is partially lost thereby (this is the lesson that positivist social science has never learned). It is when the complexity of real history is forgotten (or ignored) that theories lose their roots and drift off into meaningless abstraction. It makes sense to describe the dominant ideology of seventeenth century Europe as Christianity if the geographical and temporal variations, the religious conflicts (and their relationship to national and class conflicts) and much more are not forgotten or ignored in the process.

The preceding considerations apply to con-
sciousness as well as ideology. Human consciousness must always be viewed as a complex and historical creation. Because it continually interacts with its social and material environment it is constantly in flux. Because of the diversity of social experiences it is never totally uniform or integrated (not even among Marxist revolutionaries) and therefore can never be totally described and understood. (23) It is precisely these characteristics which allow for the radical reinterpretation of events that results in a Vauxhall revolt or a France of 1968.

To interpret human consciousness in this manner is, of course, only to treat it in a Marxist manner: to analyse it as an historical creation which emerges from concrete circumstances and which is ever in flux as it is dialectically related to changing circumstances. Lenin understood this dialectical relationship when he remarked: "Cognition is the eternal, endless approximation of thought to the object. The reflection of nature in man's thought must be understood not 'lifelessly,' not 'abstractly,' not devoid of movement, not without contradictions, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their solution." (24)

However, a view of the hegemonic process which relies upon inculcation (whether Freudian or not) has a necessarily rigid and fixed conception of human consciousness which is more positivist than Marxist. In the institutional view of hegemony a dynamic consciousness interacts with its social environment a major part of which is the capitalist social structure which attempts to suppress political and class issues.

POLITICAL DIRECTION

At the outset it was suggested that the two conceptions of hegemony suggested different political directions. One possible direction which flows out of the inculcation perspective is inaction in one of its various forms: despair, cynicism or apathy.

A second possible direction involves what has come to be called "consciousness raising." The rationale is as follows: since workers (and others) have adopted bourgeois values it is necessary to win them away from their present consciousness through a process of argument, study and proof. The difficulty with such a strategy is that it sever theory from practice, or, to put it another way, it recreates the bourgeois separation between intellectual activity and practical activity.

Marx, himself, took a very dim view of such a strategy. He observed that the Young Hegelians viewed the products of consciousness as "the real chains of men" and therefore they "have to fight only against these illusions of consciousness." (25) What the Young Hegelians forgot, however, in Marx's view was "that they are in no way combatting the real existing world when they are only combatting the phrases of this world." (26)

In contrast, acceptance of the institutional conception of bourgeois hegemony means that activities are not geared toward winning workers from coherent, internalised bourgeois views but toward building a coherent interpretive scheme (theory) that makes sense of the concrete life experiences of the class. Such a theory is not pre-given and cannot be built individually or in isolation from practice. From the first, the building of revolutionary theory (and revolutionary organisation) is a collective enterprise which must involve more and more of the class in the attempt to understand (and change) its concrete existence. Through its collective and practical/critical form it counters bourgeois institutions. To be successful, such a project must culminate in a society built upon the democratic control of the state and the economy. Without such institutional means, the rule of a class of tens of millions is impossible. In the same sense, we can now understand what the hegemony of the working class will look like. Whereas bourgeois hegemony requires the overt and covert monopolisation of ideational institutions by a tiny capitalist class, the hegemony of the working class will allow and require the democratisation of ideational institutions. Whereas bourgeois hegemony requires the one-directional communication flow, proletarian hegemony will occur through the opening of ideational institutions. The numerical superiority of the working class will outnumber (and overwhelm) the shattered remnants of the tiny bourgeoisie. Only in this way can the movement Marx described as "the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority" (27) safeguard its victory.*
FOOTNOTES

5. Ibid.
7. The well-publicised revolt of young Ohio auto workers against GMAD, the new GM management team.
8. In 1968, the Kansas Health Workers Local 1271, after administrators refused to negotiate, assumed administrative control of the four Topeka hospitals and maintained control of them for 12 hours. See A. Efthim, 'We Care in Kansas: The Non-Professional Revolt,' 'The Nation,' August 5, 1968.
9. Insofar as empirical sociology has tended to reify collective attitudes (see footnote 6), it would seem that the failure of such studies to find consensual attitudes should be taken seriously.
12. Ibid., p. 432.
13. Ibid., p. 435.
14. Ibid.
16. Fred I. Greenstein, 'Children and Politics.' (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965);
23. In the words of Alfred Schutz, 'The stock of knowledge at hand at any particular moment of our conscious lives is by no means homogeneous or integrated. Its elements are neither consistent in themselves nor necessarily compatible with one another.' 'Reflections on the Problem of Relevance.' (New Have, Yale University Press, 1970), p. 76. For a critical introduction to Schutz, see David L. Sallach, 'Class Consciousness and the Work of Marx and Schutz,' 'Insurgent Sociologist,' forthcoming.
26. Ibid.

( -- The above is a modification of a paper presented to the Conference on the Thought of Antonio Gramsci at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, on February 4, 1973.)
At first sight it would appear that in Northern Ireland sectarianism is the principal problem and the major determining factor in the evolving course of events. Intra-class conflict within the working class is rife. Normal horizontal class cleavages are subordinated to the vertical sectarian divide that cuts a swathe of suspicion and hatred through the middle of society. Despite appearances, however, the basic contradictions that establish the parameters of the developing situation are not based on sectarianism. The two main contradictions underlying the conflict in Northern Ireland are firstly the fact that Ulster is a unique type of colonial situation, and secondly the nature of the evolving social formations in the Province, at a time when the anachronistic paternalist style of capitalism that still exists there is at last being forced to come to terms with the monopolistic managerial style of capitalism that is dominant in the rest of the United Kingdom and Western Europe. On this basis it can be seen that sectarianism is a manifestation of the underlying contradictions, and, while important, its presence and its ramifications can be explained in terms of these basic contradictions.

THE SECTARIAN DIVIDE

The importance of sectarianism as a crucial feature of the Northern Ireland situation must not be underestimated. The Province is split down the middle, with two communities opposing each other on either side of a vertical sectarian divide. The lines that are drawn are associated with religion, and each community identifies with a religious grouping, either Protestant, that is Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist and Paisleyite, or Catholic. But co-existent with a religious identity is a national identity, and a consciousness of a certain political role. There is a joke, common in Belfast and now hoary with re-telling, that concerns a newly arrived Moslem. "Are you a Protestant or Catholic?" he is asked. "I am a Moslem," he replies. "Ah sure, but are ye a Protestant Moslem or a Catholic Moslem?" The question points not only to the overriding preoccupation of the population of Northern Ireland, but also to the fact that the terms Protestant and Catholic do not simply connote a religious identity. The Moslem is not being asked his religious affiliation but his political alignment.

To be Protestant is to be a member of the ruling class, even if a working class member, identified through a variety of symbols such as the sash, the pipe-band, the Orange Lodge, and, before its demise, Stormont, with the position that "Ulster" is an integral part of the United Kingdom, that all Catholics are rebels bent on overthrowing the established order and that the relatively privileged position of the Protestant community has been earned and must be defended. The advantages gained in 1690 at the Battle of the Boyne must be safeguarded at all times. It is the unique achievement of the Unionist movement, founded in 1886, to organise resistance to the Home Rule plans of Gladstone, to have welded together landlords, industrial bourgeoisie, petit-bourgeoisie and working class into one bloc with a common consciousness and political stance. As Peter Gibbon notes: "The integration of the Protestant working class into this ultra-reactionary bloc is the specific miracle of Unionism." (1)

To be Catholic is to identify with the ideal of a United Ireland. It is to feel that the "Six Counties" are an integral part of an Irish nation, to regard the Tri-colour rather than the Union Jack as one's flag, and to feel a greater sense of identification with the Irish Republic than with the government at Westminster. It is moreover to feel acutely the injustice of being a deprived minority in a Protestant state that, for the 50 or so years since partition, has
actively discriminated against Catholics, and to see relief from this situation only in the overthrow of that state. A sure measure of the degree of discrimination in job opportunities, housing and the like is the fact that, despite the higher birth-rate of the Catholic population, they still only represent one-third of the population of Northern Ireland, the same proportion as in 1921. Emigration has done well by Unionism, but not without incentives.

Obviously not all Protestants and Catholics would fit the above characterisations. They are characterisations of communities rather than individuals. What is clear, however, is that a great divide runs through Northern Ireland, bifurcating it into two distinct communities. Catholics and Protestants live in separate areas in the Province and in the major urban area, Belfast. There was some mixing prior to 1969, but one effect of the ‘troubles’ has been to polarise the communities with regard to housing. Catholics in Belfast have moved from mixed areas into Catholic ‘ghetto’ areas within the city such as the Falls Road, Andersontown and Ballymurphy. They fear a Protestant backlash such as occurred in 1969 when Catholics in a mixed area in Divis Street were burned out.

Members of each community can identify members of the other by name and, it is claimed, by accent. Protestants and Catholics go to different schools, colleges, sports clubs, social clubs and frequently different places of work. The only unsegregated institution is Queen’s University, but, on the one hand it provides only for an elite group, and on the other opinions even there are polarising as tension mounts. Segregation is incredibly thorough. Inter-marriage is rare and where it occurs it is often followed by emigration. In Belfast today it is physically dangerous to ‘walk out’ with a member of the other community. It was found by research teams from Queen’s University Medical School that there is a statistically significant difference between the blood groups of the two communities.

The result of all this segregation and division is suspicion and animosity. Thus one does not find a unified and class-conscious working class, as one would expect in the most underdeveloped area of the United Kingdom with an ailing economy and the highest unemployment rate in the country. Instead there is a working class divided on sectarian lines, indulging in intra-class conflict of the most vicious kind. Most of the political murderers, the bombing of pubs and small shops occurs within working class areas. The basic sectarian division cuts across working class alliances and splits the class into seemingly irreconcilable camps. It is a situation that has led some theorists of conflict resolution, such as Richard Rose, (2) to posit a classic polar situation which is not susceptible to being resolved by any compromise position. Conflict and polar division are inevitable. To see the situation in such static terms is, however, mistaken. Such a view does not take account of the underlying contradictions that will continue to dictate change.

**THE COLONIAL DIMENSION**

Northern Ireland cannot be understood unless it is seen as a colonial situation where the pressures of evolving social formations are intensifying the contradictions associated with colonialism. The view, promoted by Unionist politicians, that the troubles in the Province are an internal problem for the United Kingdom, is a misrepresentation of the facts. The fact is that Belfast is an Irish city in an area of Ireland artificially established as a separate statelet which is dominated by a settler community. It is a settler community that has been there for so long that the identity of its members as settlers is no longer apparent either to themselves or to others. The Manichean division between settler and native has been subsumed into religious categories. As Conor Cruise O’Brien notes:

‘Basically, religious affiliation was -- and is -- socially, economically, and politically significant, for it distinguishes, with very few exceptions, the natives and their children from the seventeenth-century settlers and their children.’ (3)

To state that the fundamental problem in Northern Ireland is colonialism is not, however, to suggest that the solution is a United Ireland. In the present context of events such a suggestion would be both facile and utopian. But once Northern Ireland is seen in the light of a colonial situation a clearer and more cogent analysis becomes possible, and many aspects of the conflict there, such as sectarianism,
become explicable. However it is necessary
in the first instance to understand the
nature of colonialism in Northern Ireland.

Ireland as a whole has been subjected
to various types of colonial rule since
the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169 made
Henry II Lord of Ireland and established
the Pale. Over the centuries however dif­
ferent types of colonial rule evolved in
the North and the South of the island.
The colonial presence in the South was
largely confined to an elite class of Ang­
lo-Irish landlords, to the establish­
ment of the Church and to English admini­
strators. Ireland was cynically and ruthlessly
exploited. (4) It provided a source of
cheap labor, rents and a market for Bri­
tish goods. The position of the colonial
power with regard to the native Irish was,
in the South, similar to Britain’s position
with respect to other settler-free colonies,
such as Uganda or Ghana (Gold Coast).

When the time came when it was expen­
dient to pull out Westminster was able to
make the appropriate decisions and dis­
mantle the political structure of colonial­
ism. As too with other colonies exploita­
tion continued, after nominal political in­
dependence had been achieved, through
the agencies of international monopoly
capitalism and the process of neo-colonial­
ism. The Republic of Ireland today is
still heavily dependent on British capital;
it is an important market for British goods;
and, through a unique relationship with
the United Kingdom, Irish labor is freely
available to British industry.

Colonialism in Northern Ireland proceed­
ed along different lines because of the ex­
istence of a settler class; settlers who were
encouraged to take up land and make
their homes in Ulster. James I instigated
the first Plantations in 1607-9, specifically
because Ulster was the most rebellious
province. Twenty or so Plantation towns
were set up, and 100,000 Scots and 20,
000 English were paid to settle. Later
more settlers, Scots in the main, moved
into the area. The victory of William of
Orange over James II, and the Catholic
Irish who had supported him, at the
Battle of the Boyne in 1690 apparently
confirmed the title of the settler Protest­
ants to the land that had been taken from
the native Gaels. Protestant ascendancy in
Ireland as a whole was established for the
time being, and the foundation stone of
a future Northern Protestant state was
laid. (5)

In the North of Ireland a colonial situa­
tion developed that is analogus to that
of Algeria or Rhodesia. The differences
between Northern Ireland, as it was es­
blished by the Government of Ireland
Act of 1920, and other settler-colonial
situations are firstly, by virtue of a con­
venient partition that left three of the
historic counties of Ulster outside North­
er Ireland, the settler population out­
numbers the native population in a ratio
of two to one. (6) (Although it must be
noted that by 1920 the Protestant settler
community made up a substantial pro­
portion of Ireland’s total population,
about 25% in fact. The same is true to­
day.) Secondly centuries passed before
the British Government had any doubts
about supporting the settlers in the North,
by which time they were so firmly en­
trenched that they could virtually dictate
their own terms. Sir Edward Carson de­
clared in 1912: ‘We must be prepared --
and time is precious in these things -- the
morning Home Rule passes, ourselves to
become responsible for the Protestant pro­
vince of Ulster.’ (7) There was a lot of
support among officers in the British ar­
my for the Loyalist cause; and rumors
that they would not lead their men against
the Protestants. Moreover in July 1914
‘Ulster Protestants had a stock of more
than 40,000 rifles, with ammunition and
men organised ready to use them.’ (8)
The 1914-18 war intervened, but in 1920
the same pressures forced the British gov­
ernment to accede to the demands of
Protestant Unionism and to partition Ire­
lan.

**COLONIALISM AND IDEOLOGY**

Once the Protestant community is seen
as a settler group then many aspects of
sectarianism become explainable. Common
to all settler groups is a natural cohesiveness
that unites varied classes in a common
attitude towards the natives. What is true
for the Boers or the White Rhodesians is
ture for the Protestants of Northern Ire­
land. Their attitude towards the Catholics
is inevitably hostile as a result of a defensiv
mentality in a colonial situation. The
defensive or laager mentality of the Pro-
Protestant community must be seen in the light of the fact that until the partition they did not form a majority in control of a Protestant state, but a minority, if a substantial one, in Ireland as a whole. Behind every Protestant Ulsterman's majoritarian claims today lurks an uneasy awareness of this minority position.

There is also a need felt by a settler community to find a justification for its existence and its history. This justification usually finds expression as a racial rationale that belittles the status and capability of the despised native. Sectarianism for the Protestants of Northern Ireland is racialism in clerical garb. As Russel Stetler remarks: 'If the setting were Algiers, rather than Belfast, the differences of skin color would lead us to identify racism as the core of the problem. But in the Irish setting, religious affiliation, rather than skin color, has marked the social identities of the two groups, colonisers and colonised.' (9) It is a racialism that has produced stereotypes that closely resemble racial stereotypes elsewhere. The Catholics are seen as shiftless, worthless and incompetent; they are drunkards; they are irresponsible and lazy. Professor Thomas Wilson, a modern Ulster economist, openly proclaimed that Catholics 'were made to feel inferior and to make matters worse they often were inferior, if only in those personal qualities that make for success in competitive economic life.' (10) It is again redolent of a colonial situation that whereas sectarianism for Protestants is manifested as slurs on the personal capabilities of the Catholics, the latter reserve their chief hate for the institutions of colonial rule, and are less concerned with attacks on Protestants as such. It is Stormont, the Orange Order, the Union Jack, and other concrete symbols of the colonial situation that are vilified by the Catholic community. There are direct parallels with many African situations, where the Europeans attack the Africans as human beings, coining various abusive epithets with which to describe them, while the Africans are more concerned with attacking the institutions of colonial rule. In Northern Ireland we find this familiar pattern of a racial rationale confronting a nationalist ideology.

There is then a natural propensity to sectarianism in Northern Ireland given the nature of the colonial situation. One needs to add that this propensity was deliberately fostered first by the British ruling class, and later by the Ulster ruling class, for their own purposes. In the first instance sectarianism was encouraged by the British administration at Dublin Castle in order to fragment the radical movement that arose in the wake of the French revolution. The United Irishmen, a society that went from strength to strength in the 1790's, numbered among its leaders many prominent middle-class Protestants from Belfast, men such as Wolfe Tone and Henry Joy MacCracken. The Orange Order arose at this time in order to protect the Protestant ascendancy, and thus the Crown and the established order, from the radical movement. As E. P. Thompson notes with respect to the rebellion of the United Irishmen in 1798: 'In the years before and after '98, the Dissenters of Ulster, the most industrialised province, were not the most loyal but the most "Jacobinical" of the Irish; while it was only after the repression of the rebellion that the antagonism between "Orangemen" and "Papists" was deliberately fostered by the Castle, as a means of maintaining power.' (11)

The Ulster ruling class had its own particular reasons for fostering the sectarian divide. On the one hand it was useful in preventing the evolution of a working class unity that might threaten their class rule, on the other hand, and more importantly, sectarianism was the mortar that held together the various blocks of the Unionist alliance. By the latter decades of the nineteenth century it was clear that the enthusiasm of Britain for remaining in Ireland was very much on the wane. The first Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1886. Unionism was the response of Protestant Ulster to this situation and, as was seen, successfully welded together all classes in defence of a Protestant state tied to the United Kingdom. Obviously the Ulster ruling class needed the Protestant working class to provide the mass basis for the movement and for the armed rising that was threatened by Carson in 1912. In like manner working class support has been necessary for the threat of a 'Protestant backlash,' that has been less than delicately hinted at by successive leaders of Northern Ireland, to retain its credibility. Thus,
as long as the Ulster ruling class saw its future within the United Kingdom, it had a vested interest in encouraging sectarianism and in emphasising the real threat posed by Catholics. For instance, in 1933, during the depression, Sir Basil Brooke (later Viscount Brookeborough), a future Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, endorsed the Ulster Protestant League’s campaign against the employment of Catholics, remarking: ‘Many in the audience employ Catholics, but I have not one about my place. Catholics are out to destroy Ulster with all their might and power. They want to nullify the Protestant vote, take all they can out of Ulster and then see it go to hell.’ (13)

Moreover if the Protestants are seen as ‘home’ workers whose prosperity depends, they are led to believe, on the continued subjugation of the colonised, the Catholics, then a further base of support for sectarianism is established. The situation is a common one. Workers in Britain were not concerned about the plight of the workers in the colonies in the days of Empire, no more than they are concerned today about the fate of the Third World. It is a common feature of imperialism that workers in the metropolitan countries are lulled into a right-wing consciousness with respect to the colonies or today the Third World, by the dominant capitalist ideology which convinces them that the benefits they enjoy depend on the continued exploitation of other parts of the world. Imperialism, as Lenin remarked, ‘makes it economically possible to bribe the upper strata of the proletariat, and thereby fosters, gives shape to, and strengthens opportunism.’ (14) The Northern Ireland situation can be seen in this light. Protestant workers have always enjoyed better land-tenure, better job and better housing opportunities than Catholics, these advantages being most frequently enjoyed through personal contacts in the local Orange Lodge. Thus a basis for antagonism between Catholic and Protestant is this division between ‘home’ and ‘colonial’ workers, and the conviction of the Protestants that their prosperity, such as it is, depends on the continued dominance of the Protestant ascendancy. It is an attitude that has, as seen, been fostered by the ruling class. The difference from other colonial situations is that in Northern Ireland Protestant and Catholic live side by side, and are nominally equal citizens of the same state.

From the above account it can be seen that sectarianism is a product of the class relationships of a unique colonial situation. It means that Protestant workers suffer from a false consciousness that makes them see the Catholics as their main enemy, and drives them into an alliance with the Protestant landowner class and Protestant bourgeoisie. At the same time the Catholic working class also possesses a false consciousness. It is not class-consciousness, but a form of nationalism interlarded with religiosity and romantic idealism; a United Ireland is seen as providing the solution to all the problems that bedevil the Catholic community, including bad housing and unemployment. No less than the Protestant false consciousness it mistakes the real enemy and abandons itself to the myths of a heritage of nationalism. This Catholic false consciousness results in a facile analysis that sees the situation in Northern Ireland as the product of crude British imperialism. It is an analysis that leads to the notion that the presence of British troops and continued unity with Britain are the chief, if not only, problems. A United Ireland becomes the universal panacea. Indeed at its most simplistic this analysis suggests that once the British presence is removed the Protestants will recognise their essential Irish identity and live at peace and amity with their Catholic neighbors. Such simple-minded nationalism ignores two essential points. Firstly the British ruling class does not, any longer, have any great interest in upholding the Protestant ascendancy, and secondly the real problem remains the Protestant community, which remains irredentist and highly unlikely to be reconciled to any notion of an Irish state dominated by a Catholic majority.

It is noteworthy that in the vanguard of Catholic militancy is not the Official IRA which holds to a Marxist line. They declared a truce in early 1972 in the belief that further bomb outrages would lead, not to socialism, but to a sectarian civil war. It is the Provisional IRA, which split with the Officials in 1969, that makes the running in terms of bombings and confrontations with the British army and the Protestants. And the ‘Provos,’ as they are known, are
hardly the bearers of an advanced ideology. They seek a nationalist's dream, a United Ireland, which for many of them would come complete with the paraphernalia of entrenched Catholicism and other aspects of the Republic's political and social systems that mark it out as a backward state. In essence the Provisional IRA is a species of Green Fascism lamentably called to life by the Orange Fascism of the Protestants.

NORTHERN IRELAND AND CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM

Northern Ireland then is beset by all the contradictions that attend a colonial situation, where the settlers receive support and supply from the metropolitan country. But the situation is further complicated by the fact that another basic contradiction exists. Capitalism in Northern Ireland has for a long time been out of step with the evolving capitalism of Western Europe. It has remained an old-style paternalist type of capitalist social formation with a landowner class governing with the acquiescence of the industrial bourgeoisie. Anders Boserup, in a recent essay, has pointed to the contradictions involved here:

'The underlying contradiction which manifests itself in the ongoing struggles is that which opposes two incompatible social systems: the Orange system which may be conceived of as a paternalist or "clientist" version of capitalist social formation, and twentieth-century managerial capitalism.' (15)

Boserup perhaps does not ascribe enough importance to the contradictions inherent in the colonial situation, but he is correct in pointing to the pressures created by an antiquated capitalist system having to come to terms with the managerial monopoly capitalism of the rest of Europe. This contradiction, accentuating the contradictions created by the unique colonial conditions inevitably brought change. Given the pressures created by the underlying contradictions the Civil Rights movement of the late 1960's was bound to trigger off an explosive course of events. Moreover after years of entrenched Protestant rule, after generations spanning the centuries in which the false consciousness of both communities had had time to mature, it was equally inevitable that once change occurred the lines of the old conflict between Catholic nationalism and Protestant Unionism would again be drawn. The expectations of one side in an era of change in Northern Ireland are automatically diametrically opposed to the expectations of the other.

However the developing pattern of events has effected some changes in the nature of class interaction, changes that reflect the underlying contradictions. Firstly there has been intra-class conflict within the Protestant ruling class. For years the landowner class have held sway with the acquiescence of the industrial bourgeoisie. The Prime Ministers of Northern Ireland, Craig, Brooke, O'Neill, Chichester-Clark, all were products of Ulster's landowner elite. The downfall of Chichester-Clark's government and the accession of Brian Faulkner to the Prime-Ministership in 1970 marked the seizing of the reins of power by the industrial bourgeoisie, who were dissatisfied with the course of events. It is now true to say that the ruling class in Northern Ireland, led by the industrial bourgeoisie, simply want an end to the conflict. They are pragmatically willing to contemplate any measure, including the reunification of Ireland, if that is the way to re-establish their profit margins and once again make the area safe for foreign and home investors. As Boserup notes, 'in Ulster today big business is on the side of reform and moderation and, ultimately, of reunification.' (16) It is a position that British capital would happily endorse, for there is no profit in Northern Ireland. Indeed the economy of Northern Ireland subsists on grants from the British exchequer. British capital would be very pleased to be free of a political and financial embarrassment, while still, of course, being able to reap whatever benefit there is to be had from the North of Ireland as it already does from the South. It is precisely this point that Catholic nationalism fails to understand.

It is equally true that the ruling class in the Republic of Ireland has no interest in promoting Catholic nationalism. The IRA may be partially tolerated as a sop to sections of the electorate, and to the Cerberus of Ireland's revolutionary heritage, but Irish reunification is not a serious policy of either of the two main parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. The indigenous
Irish capitalist class is chiefly interested in consolidating the economic gains it is making as Ireland modernises, and in getting the best possible deal from the new membership of the Common Market. The Irish electorate, beguiled by the new prosperity that is suddenly apparent in the Republic, is only nominally in support of the Catholics in the North. The election this year of Liam Cosgrove and Fine Gael in place of Jack Lynch and Fianna Fail was a vote for law and order, and in the last month or so the Irish army has become much stricter in its dealings with suspected members of the IRA.

The failure of successive Unionist leaders to cope with a situation where terror and violence have continued to escalate has also given rise to inter-class conflict within the Protestant Unionist alliance. Since 1969 the Protestant working class has become increasingly dissatisfied with the abilities of their leaders. With the proroguement of Stormont and the imposition of direct rule from Westminster in early 1972, followed by the concessions granted by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, William Whitelaw, a sense of betrayal became evident. Speaking of the Protestant riots Boserup comments: 'But the eruptions of the Protestant poor and their resistance to all reforms must also be understood in the context of the social and moral isolation which had befallen these people. More than a deliberate move to pressurise the authorities, the Protestant riots were the reaction of despair of people who had been let down and rejected by everyone and can find sympathy and identification nowhere. Their Government, the Republic, Britain and her Army, the BBC and the press, all betrayed them and all rejected them.'

The result of this disillusionment has been that the Protestant working class have turned their backs on the Unionist leaders and have formed their own organisation. The Vanguard movement, the Orange Cross, the Ulster Defence Association, the Loyalist Association of Workers (LAW), are all essentially working class, and all have sprung to prominence since the passing of Stormont. These working class organisations are, of course, still in thrall to a false consciousness, they are still sectarian, but it is a consciousness that also partakes of a certain bitterness towards the erstwhile leaders.

The point must also be made that in terms of working class militancy and Trade Unionism, the Protestant workers are the most advanced in Ireland. Although a false consciousness has prevented them from forming a class alliance with Catholic workers, and has made them supportive of the ruling class, nevertheless, somewhat incongruously, they have a history of strong Trade Unionism. This has meant that while no mass-based Social Democratic or Communist movement exists in Belfast, making it, as Boserup points out, unique among the industrial regions of Europe, nonetheless there has been Union militancy and strikes. Belfast shipbuilding workers, who are antagonistic to the employment of Catholics on the one hand, were, on the other, in the forefront of the struggle for the eight-hour day in Britain. This genuine consciousness, its reformism apposite to the present stage of capitalism in Ireland, holds out hope that new and meaningful class configurations could evolve with the fragmentation of the old Unionist alliance.

One effort, stemming from Protestant working class efforts to re-evaluate its relationships with the Catholic community, has been an analysis put forward by a group called the Workers' Association, which held its first Annual General Meeting in Belfast on 27th May 1972. One of its pamphlets is entitled 'Why a Divided Working Class?' The Workers' Association takes a stand against Catholic nationalism, calling it 'the Catholic nationalist Anschluss,' but stands for minority rights for Catholic workers in a Northern state within the United Kingdom. While opposing Catholic nationalism therefore the group is equally opposed to discrimination in employment, housing and the like. The core its doctrine is its 'Two Nations' theory, that calls for the recognition of an Ulster Protestant nation which will remain in the United Kingdom, standing alongside the Irish Catholic nation. At the same time the Association stands for the 'full recognition and accordance of the democratic rights of the Catholic minority in the Northern Ireland/U.K. state, and of the Protestant minority in the Southern Ireland state.'

(19) 'The Workers' Association,' declares a member of its Belfast branch, 'maintains
unshackled the interest of Protestant and Catholic proletariat in the struggle for a democratic settlement of the national conflict, based on the recognition of the two nations in Ireland. (20) Alan Carr, a member of the Coleraine branch, further notes that ‘Northern Ireland possesses all the necessary ingredients for the development of a working class political movement, but that this potential has not been realised because the conflict between the two nations in Ireland (and between the working classes of those two nations) has not yet been resolved.’ (21) There are clear indications in all this that here is a nascent class-consciousness, struggling to develop, and trying to come to terms with the false consciousness and the sectarian divide.

It would be foolish to place too much faith in the Workers’ Association. It is not a numerically significant body compared to the more sectarian Ulster Defence Association or the Vanguard movement of William Craig. (Craig has drawn 15,000 plus to his rallies, while the UDA has marched 10,000 men through the streets of Belfast). However the attempt to engender a new consciousness that the Workers’ Association represents is indicative of the changing face of the class struggle in the Province, and must be welcomed. Whatever configurations of class struggle become the pattern of the future it is apparent that the old Unionist alliance has been broken.

SOCIALISM AND THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

To suggest that there is any likelihood of socialism being established in Northern Ireland -- or a United Ireland -- in the near future is to indulge in pure fancy. The present struggle is bogged down in the familiar pattern of sectarian hatred and Orange and Green nationalism. The absence of a genuine class-consciousness, and the predominance of false consciousness, precludes any possibility of socialism in the immediate future. Unless one adheres to the view that socialism is a Phoenix that springs from social conflagration, then one must see it as a long-term goal only. In the short term, as Anders Boserup has suggested, the best possible option is to find some way that will enable the two communities to disengage from the present conflict. If a way can be found where Ireland as a whole, whatever the political boundaries, can be drawn into the capitalist system of Western Europe with the two working class groups so disengaged, then there would be a maturation of class consciousness within each group. The absence of sectarian conflict would remove the spur to the growth of false consciousness and the pressures generated by the changing social formations would encourage the growth of class-consciousness. It is assumed, of course, that the capitalist ruling classes in Britain and Ireland no longer have any interest, for the reasons set out above, in promoting either sectarianism or nationalism. Given such developments then a time would come when the false consciousness of both communities would be replaced by a genuine class-consciousness and class alliances between Catholics and Protestants would be possible. Such a notion, at this point in time, seems overly optimistic, but it is the only realistic path towards socialism, and groups such as the Workers’ Association show that the possibility of moving away from the narrow confines of a false consciousness does exist.

The pattern of evolving social formations is a fact, it is the disengagement of the two communities from the present conflict that remains to be accomplished. The ugly problem that also remains however is that any disengagement is liable to be subsequent to a bitter and bloody confrontation. The present situation does not hold out much hope of avoiding such a confrontation. The British government would seem to be trying to follow a similar pattern of decolonisation where extreme parties are in competition over what they regard as a fundamental issue. First you find, or create, a moderate, centre party, then you hand over power and retreat hastily during the contrived period of calm. When the country again gets out of hand you then lament the inability of the natives to handle their own affairs. One possible candidate for the centre party role in Northern Ireland is the Alliance party. This is a party that has been in existence for some time; it is non-sectarian and claims wide support. However there has been no election since its formation to test that support, and it is chiefly run by members of the middle-class, many of them intellectuals, many
of them Catholics. In an electoral situation, where opinion would tend to follow sectarian lines, then the party probably would not command the support it imagines. Nevertheless, given the latest British plans for a new Assembly for Northern Ireland to replace Stormont, elected on the basis of proportional representation, they might find themselves, together with the Northern Ireland Labour Party, holding enough seats to act as a buffer between Protestant parties such as the Unionists and the Vanguard Unionists, and the Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party. The results of the local elections, due to be held at the end of May, will tell us something about party strengths.

British policy seems to be to keep Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, for the time being at least, to appease the Protestants, while making concessions to the Catholics, in an attempt to quell nationalist fervor. In the event Britain has antagonised both sides. The object of the British government is, as it always has been, to paper over the cracks in Northern Ireland’s crumbling political and social structure, with a constitution or whatever is necessary, and then to pull the troops out and declare a return to normality and a successful conclusion to the whole operation. Ultimately the Protestants are correct in their suspicion that Britain desires the reunification of Ireland and the shedding of the problem of Ulster. To any student of British colonialism this comes as no surprise.

It is difficult to be sanguine about the prospects for avoiding a continuing series of violent conflicts in Northern Ireland. Whatever happens with regard to the new Assembly, the border issue still remains and after four years of an undeclared civil war the strength of feeling in the Province is great, and unlikely to abate following a partial solution that strives to satisfy all and will probably satisfy none. The tragedy of Northern Ireland seems to demand a violent denouement. One can only be sanguine at all on the basis, as argued in this paper, that the capitalist classes in Britain and Ireland no longer have any interest in fostering the false consciousness of sectarianism or that of nationalism, and on the basis of the fact that the old alliances have broken down, promoting a search for new attitudes in the working class. Thus there is a chance for the maturation of a working class consciousness in Northern Ireland; the possibility of a cessation of intra-class conflict at least exists. But whether that possibility will be realised without additional violence is a vexed and terrible question.

POSTSCRIPT

Since the above article was written two important events have occurred in Northern Ireland, the local councils elections of May 31st and the election of representatives to the new Northern Ireland Assembly at the end of June. Generally speaking the results of these elections support the conclusions drawn above. The splits within the old Unionist bloc were only too apparent. In the local elections eight different strains of unionism competed for the Protestant vote. In the Assembly election Brian Faulkner’s Official Unionists, as they are now called, did not secure enough seats to re-establish their former hold on government. Faulkner’s party won 26 seats in the 78-seat Assembly, while unofficial (independent) Unionists won 6 seats and the loyalist coalition of Ian Paisley’s Democratic Unionists and William Craig’s Vanguard Unionists won 17 seats.

The main Catholic party, Gerry Fitt’s Social Democratic and Labour Party, won 19 seats, and is interested in a power-sharing arrangement with the Protestant parties, on the lines suggested by the British government in their White Paper of October 1972, which contained the original proposals for the Assembly. However the Paisley/Craig faction are opposed to any such notion, as they are opposed to the original White Paper. Meanwhile the Provisional IRA boycotted the Assembly election and advised Catholic voters to spoil their ballot papers. Predictably the performance of the moderate parties, the Alliance party and the Northern Ireland Labour Party (an extension of the British Labour Party), did not live up to their own expectations. The NILP won only a single seat in the new Assembly, while the Alliance party won 8, insufficient for the party even to influence events in any coalition situation.

It does not augur well for peace in Northern Ireland that no adequate basis for a
workable government has emerged from the election. The British government, in the person of William Whitelaw, is anxiously trying to get the two main pro-White Paper parties, the Official Unionists and the SDLP, to work out a new basis for government in the Province. But with the Paisley/Craig coalition strongly represented in the Assembly, and unwilling to cooperate with either the British government or the Catholic parties in any scheme of power-sharing, and with the Provisional IRA unwilling to accept the Assembly, only a very fragile kind of rule will be established at best.

Meanwhile the level of violence in Northern Ireland continues to escalate. A new Protestant terrorist organisation, the Ulster Freedom Fighters, has emerged, joining the Ulster Volunteer Force and extreme elements in the Ulster Defence Association in a campaign of bombing and assassination. The savage methods of this new force have prompted the Provisional IRA to announce that they will no longer give advance warning of bomb attacks. For their own part the Provisional IRA have announced that they will continue their campaign of violence until Britain is ready to negotiate on their terms.

One is forced gloomily to conclude that the possibility of a disengagement of the opposing working class forces in Northern Ireland from their fruitless and bloody conflict without a major, violent confrontation seems as remote as ever.

FOOTNOTES

4. It is noteworthy that the population of Ireland at the first census in 1821 was 6,081,000 people. In 1921 the population was 4,228,000 people, a telling commentary, surely, on the ‘benevolence’ of the colonial regime.
5. It is perhaps difficult for Australians to understand the immediacy of history for the people of Northern Ireland. For an Ulster Protestant the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne is still the most important date in the year. “King Billy” rides on triumphal arches every year as the Protestants reaffirm their victory over Pacy and the Catholics.
6. There are approximately one million Protestants and half a million Catholics.
7. Quoted in Rose, op. cit., p. 86.
8. Ibid., p. 87.
10. Quoted in Rose, op. cit., p. 84.
12. The willingness of the Protestants to fight to remain British, or rather to resist decolonisation, has been manifest throughout the twentieth century. Just as Algerian colonors terrorised French cities with plastic explosive to remain French, so now Protestants waving Union Jacks attack British troops on the streets of Belfast. Just as Rhodesian Whites faced with the threat of decolonisation declared UDI, so now we find William Craig of the Ulster Vanguard movement proposing a UDI for Ulster.
13. Quoted in Rose, op. cit., p. 95.
16. Ibid., p. 179.
17. For example the freeing of Catholic internees from the Long Kesh internment camp.
22. The referendum held by Britain in Northern Ireland to determine people’s views on the border issue was about as pointless and misleading as a referendum can be. 99% of those voting elected to remain within the United Kingdom, but the Catholic community abstained.
TRADE UNIONS AND REVOLUTION

The revolutionary Left in Australia has its own inheritance. Partly due to the influence of the new Left, many old shibboleths have been discarded. A survivor that has been uncritically embraced by many new forces as well as being carried on by the older, is the belief in the potential of the trade unions, as social institutions, to become a real force for revolution.

The peculiar Stalinist proposition that the workers regard their unions as "citadels" in the struggle against capital persists. And this is so in the attitudes of those who are fond of characterising others as stalinists.
At the 23rd Congress of the CPA the view was accepted that the unions "should be seen as instruments for social change, for the training of workers for a revolutionary transformation of society. Revolutionaries should grasp the potentialities and work to influence the unions to become vehicles for radical social change, for socialism with a human face, to accord with the best traditions, history and culture of our people." (Emphasis added.)

This view needs more serious consideration, not only for the way in which it is interpreted into practice, but for itself and its implications.

It would seem to be held that there is some absolute connection between working to raise revolutionary consciousness and work in the trade unions as being essential to this end.

Any questioning of this tenet is taken to mean that one is discarding the working class as a revolutionary force. The more is this so if it is suggested that the trade union movement, at this moment, has become a barrier to bringing workers to the position of realising their true potential. It is further distorted to mean that it is "giving the unions away" entirely, or that the view is that they are no longer relevant to the workers' day-to-day struggles, and so on.

The unions are part of our reality and their relevance for the purpose for which they exist is not in question. What is, is the practice of "revolutionaries" in them and among the workers.

Why were the trade unions formed and why do they exist today? What are their characteristics?

They exist to represent the interests of the working class within capitalist society. The trade unions merely express the fact that classes exist. Whether they can be transformed into something different is the point at issue.

Their legal recognition by the State (admittedly as a result of prolonged struggle) enmeshed the workers' organisation in the framework of capitalist society and capitalist laws. In the nature of things this was inevitable.

MILITANCY AND ITS DIRECTION

Revolutionary politics is often expressed simply as trade union struggle. Militant trade unionism, and its promotion, is seen as the essence of revolutionary work. The need for political programs of struggle is often relegated to the background or narrowed down to achieving immediate and realisable demands within the system.

The conditions for revolutionary change do not include the prerequisite of the revolutionising of the working class as a whole. It never has previously and its possibility is as doubtful as its necessity. The neutrality of the majority or a passive tolerance towards the advanced forces and their actions would seem to be a more appropriate requirement.

The militant workers are those who are active unionists, who act in militant ways in pursuit of their own interests but who, in most cases, support the system. The importance of militancy on matters of self-interest is still grossly over-rated as a base for developing revolutionary consciousness.

Outside the militants, who are the minority, how do the workers really see the trade union movement? Often as something akin to the way they regard health funds. As a begrudged expense, necessary in terms of social insurance, the structures of which are the property of others and have but a remote connection with those who belong to them.

"New unionism" has been advanced as the way to change this and there have been some notable developments in some directions in recent years. Some trade union officials (particularly builders laborers) in seeing the need to take a new direction have "intervened" against bureaucracies in social issues. In using their position among workers and in the trade union movement to this end, they have put their own position on the line. Attempts to involve the workers and release the latent mass initiatives that are so often untapped have met with some success.

Generally, however, within the trade union movement, this intervention has been narrowly based and restricted to top decision-making bodies, such as the ACTU, some TLCs and union executives. They have not involved the workers (and often meeting with widespread hostility) because union bureaucracies are hopelessly tied to the system.

To encourage changed attitudes on racism, sexism, pollution, the environment is (or should be) basic to any who regard themselves as siding with the people's interests. The involvement of trade unions in those causes formerly espoused by academics and middle class do-gooders is to be welcomed and fought for. But it does not necessarily mean some sort of revolutionary turning
WHAT ARE REVOLUTIONARY PRIORITIES?

In the above, where does the revolutionary vanguard (party? group? Marxist viewpoint? -- what you will) influence the particular issue? Who draws the longer-range conclusions? Who seeks to invest the movement with a revolutionary consciousness that enables the struggle to be ended so that it advances the understanding of the participants that the whole system is wrong and has to be destroyed or that results in another victory for militant reforms of the system while leaving it intact and able to absorb the changes?

Every struggle should be studied in this light. On the job -- work-ins, refusal to be sacked, actions against managerial policies, actions for job control. Outside -- resistance to developers, to the building of freeways, to defeating bureaucracies that are heedless of people's needs and lives. Should not the criteria in all these struggles be whether there were advances in revolutionary ideology of the participants, could there have been in the circumstances, how could these have been enhanced?

Where do the priorities of revolutionaries lie?

Consider the time spent in fractions of trade unions and or industrial groups in discussing trade union "tactics," in meetings to discuss trade union elections, in meetings to discuss rules, constitutions and administration. Consider the time spent in executive and committee meetings and even those deadly union meetings (followed by the all-male piss-up in the pub afterwards) because the past hangs to us and it is the thing to do. Whereas it is all mostly sterile and useless.

The time spent in these internal matters would be much more usefully devoted to consciousness raising on those issues that will help produce a new radical outlook. Revolutionary ideas have a power and attraction of their own. If there is added to this an attempt to give life to those ideas, particularly by personal example in living and on the issues of non-self interest (war, racism, sexism), then one can sense and in fact show a growth of radicalisation which takes a new leap with the involvement of others.

WHAT KIND OF JOB ORGANISATION?

There needs to be a continual confrontation and challenge to bourgeois ideology. Lessons of the anti-war movement in forcing liberals and opportunists to reveal their real position or change, need to be related to the human, personal level -- on racism, sexism, human liberation. One does get responses.

Priority should be given to building workplace organisation of revolutionary and militant workers -- in developing and presenting their own, independent Marxist view on issues while participating in them, and relating these to the wider and decisive struggle to alter each other and the whole system. Such groupings should be non-exclusive and embrace all Left tendencies and ideas.

The main energy should be directed to such job organisation, outside any official structures of the trade unions. Organisations that will concern themselves with consciousness raising, education and developing Marxist ideas and attitudes. The retort that this is sectarian, elitist, revolutionary purism is predictable. All revolutionaries are part of the struggles of workers among whom they work and participate in them (or they should). This is a different matter from playing at being a Left reformist who can prove to be more militant than some Rightwing counterpart.

Such revolutionary groupings are not adjuncts of the trade unions, nor connected with them, but alliances of people with mutually respected outlooks, aimed at taking up issues of the ideological conditioning of people and the issues that will bring those they influence into direct confrontation with the system.

They could help give validity to the view that the purpose, contrary to much practice today, is not to solve the problems of bourgeois society but to raise consciousness that will enable people to act for real social change.

-- Hal Alexander.

WORKERS' CONTROL

Much of the discussion around workers' control quickly arrives at a position where it sees the unions and their leaders as significant roadblocks standing in the way of industrial action of all types by wage and salary earners. The trade unions are held to be too authoritarian, too prone to making decisions at the top which affect members and on which the members have strong views, too slow to make decisions, and too slow to act on them, too closely integrated into the capitalist system, and too predictable in their reactions to industrial events.

The kinds of responses of trade unions to events are held to be too limited in number, and the range of issues with which they deal
too narrow. Some of the unionists who are more political see trade unions as not being the agents for revolutionary transformation they were sometimes thought to be, and conclude that they must therefore be for the status quo, or at best agents for minor reform, capable of being realised within the capitalist system.

How much substance is there in these views? Many unionists will have experienced the high-handed attitudes of trade union officials telling them what they (the members) must or must not do. No doubt some of the reasons for this can be traced to the pressure of work on officials, and to the notion that such an approach gets rid of the problem quickly and allows them to get on with the next job.

It might also be because the official has experienced that problem before and knows precisely how to deal with it to resolve it quickly. It would be very frustrating for him/her to have to wait while the members think the problem through and perhaps decide upon a line of action despite the contrary advice of the official. Lack of patience and increasing frustration could well be the price of greater experience. On the other hand, it must be remembered that many sincere officials will want to draw on their experience and argue forcefully to try to prevent members from "getting their fingers burnt" and will see this correctly as a legitimate function of a trade union leader. Many union activists, let alone officials, in their experience in that same action initiated from the shop floor, in a genuine attempt to improve a situation, can produce disastrous effects, even, perhaps, destroying the shop floor organisation in the process.

The official's general outlook to industrial disputes will be important. Some take the view that they should handle every problem in order to justify their existence to the members and ensure their re-election. This attitude too may be born out of experience. As a student at a recent AMWU shop stewards' school said: "Often the members come up with a problem and when I begin to discuss it with them in order to help them to solve it rather than solve it myself, their reaction is 'You're the shop steward, you solve it'."

Some officials discourage members acting on their own behalf, being concerned that no competent rank and fileers should emerge who would be a threat to them at the next election. Others handle every problem so as to prevent the rank and file gaining experience of industrial action. Still others have the ego problem.

Another reason for authoritarianism or decision-making by groups at the top is that it is easier. If decisions made can be handed down and accepted, the initiative will remain with the top committees and subsequent action will be along the lines with which they are familiar and with which they can cope.

Thus, at a union-organised meeting at GMH at Pagewood recently to seek endorsement of the company's pay offer, those organising it insisted that there should be no comment from the floor of the meeting to the propositions that were to be put. It was only the stronger insistence of shop stewards that they would not be prevented from speaking on something with which they disagreed which permitted the rank and file to be heard.

On the other hand, at a recent mass meeting in Newcastle during the BHP dispute, the opportunity arose for the rank and file organisation to raise its objections to those aspects of the conduct of the dispute with which it disagreed, and yet not a word was said. Thus, in one case, the union officials attempted to stifle any discussion and initiative from the floor and were prevented from succeeding only by the experienced shop stewards taking a stand. In the other case, the hearts of some officials would have been gladdened if the rank and file had shown some initiative and had had something to say. The important point is not to lump all trade unions, committees and officers together, but to distinguish between those who will encourage and facilitate greater involvement and action by wage and salary earners in their own interests and those that won't, even if that action is aimed at improving the quality of the union.

As to the question of whether or not the trade unions are too slow to make decisions and too slow to act on them, on some issues they are guilty on both counts. Take for example the series of nuclear tests planned by France for early July. With all the past policy resolutions about opposition to nuclear testing, how many central union bodies issued protests by media releases outlining their policy, or, better still, how many initiated some action on the issue, and how long did they take to do so? The lack of response will no doubt leave the critics of the trade unions able to say, "That proves the point," but then how many unionists have asked themselves "What did my mates and I do to give life to our union's policy of opposition to such testing?", or, alternatively, "What did we do to change our union's policy to one of opposition to these tests?"

Lack of activity by the central body of the union does not prevent activity by the rank and file. The problem is to get activity by the rank and file even if the central union body has acted. But unions are not always slow to decide on activity. Groups of citizens in such areas as the Rocks, Wolloomooloo, and Centennial Park were no doubt very
pleased with the speed with which the Builders' Laborers' Federation responded to their calls for assistance to prevent destruction of their homes or of parkland.

To the question of whether the trade unions are hopelessly integrated into the capitalist system or not the short answer is probably "yes;" but having said that we haven't said much. It is not only quiescent trade unions which are integrated, but militant trade unions actively pursuing higher wages and better conditions also perform a function which contributes to the evolution of the capitalist system. And yet they are necessary. There remains a pressing need for strong organisations to which wage and salary earners, militant or otherwise, can turn to handle the host of small and large problems they encounter daily. It is not practical to think in terms of some other form of workers' organisation supplanting the trade unions, or that wage and salary earners can improve their position in the absence of some on-going organisational form. The more appropriate question seems to be that given the existence of trade unions can improve their position in the absence of some on-going organisational form. The more appropriate question seems to be that given the existence of trade unions, which have been established by wage and salary earners at great cost to preserve and advance their working and living conditions, how can these institutions be transformed in such a manner as to assist them to obtain greater control over their working environment and in other ways to create the kind of future they want? This question is not easily answered and there is a great temptation to throw up one's hands and say "We'll never change the trade unions." If by saying this we mean that we will never change the attitudes of those who attend their union branch meetings then we can reasonably expect that it will be even more difficult to change the attitudes of those who don't (who are by far the greater number). This indicates the size of the problem. If on the other hand we mean we will never change the attitudes of trade union leaders then we need to look carefully at our approach to basic social change and how it comes about, and the respective roles played by leaders and by the rank and file.

An often valid criticism of trade unions and their activities is that their reactions are predictable. To what extent have patterns of behavior become so firmly fixed as to be not only anticipated by employers but brought into their planning? To what extent do both union officials and the rank and file search for variations in their activities which will enable them to retain the initiative and will not be predicted? There are other factors too, such as an awareness of the total environment in which an employer operates -- for example, knowledge as to who are his suppliers and customers, and consideration of the extent to which they can be recruited as allies in any dispute or their opposition neutralised.

Those trade unions that restrict themselves to the income side of the members' affairs immediately narrow the range of activities on which they can be relevant to their members. If they take the broader view that they are concerned with the affairs of the member as a citizen outside the factory as well as within it, then the expenditure side comes into focus bringing with it all the activities of Government, and the other institutions in society which affect price, quality and the availability (or the lack of it) of goods and services.

In all the circumstances of the wide diversity in approach, in tradition, in area of operation and of power of the respective trade unions, the most sensible proposition seems to be that the ideas of workers' control should continue to be discussed and actions should be initiated in which wage and salary earners see that by their own actions they can influence the course of events. In this day of massive aggregations of power of all kinds such a realisation is extremely important. While actions on their own behalf may be only of a limited nature, the educational process will be invaluable and could well stimulate action around other issues previously considered too big to tackle.

It is in the nature of things that some section of any movement will have advanced ideas and if, in the case under discussion, these ideas lead to action these actions could well have a much greater chance of success if they take place under the protective umbrella of an established trade union. This is not to say that actions should not be taken without the support, tacit or otherwise, of the union organisation -- indeed the speed of events may dictate the course of action irrespective of how long the union committees take to formulate a policy and whether or not they finally offer support. What is being said is simply that if the existing organisation and power of some sections, large or small, of the trade union movement can be geared up to support those taking the advanced action, they will have a much greater chance of success.

While such advanced actions are being planned and executed, the bulk of the under-staffed union apparatus can get on with the so-called mundane activities, such as arguing about logs of claims with employers, or trying to convince them of their minimum obligations under the award, which activities the voting members insist be carried out.

The workers' control movement and the trade unions are thus seen as being complementary to one another -- the trade unions
as benefiting from the stimulation and perhaps the success of new actions to change the distribution of power on whatever level in the society, and the workers' control movement benefiting by the established trade unions using their power, influence and organisation to attend to day-to-day problems as well as providing a protective umbrella under which the workers' control movement can flourish. The key to the success of such a relationship is the support of significant numbers of rank and file unionists and officials who will carry the new imaginative ideas of working class action into the trade unions, working to gain acceptance of them and showing by example to other wage and salary earners, organised or unorganised, that new forms of action are practical and that they have the desired effects.

-- Gerry Phelan.

REPLY TO JOHN MANIFOLD.

In the article by Mr. John Manifold with the above title in your May issue, quite a lot is said about my book -- "On the Origins of Waltzing Matilda" -- that I hope you will let me comment upon. He is obviously criticising my book by comparison with another book soon to be published, but with which he seems to have prior knowledge. I have not seen the contents of this new book, so limit my comments to what Manifold says, as it affects my position.

He says: "The original song came into existence in 1895 at Dagworth Station," and adds that this tune has been discovered by a Mr. Magoffin, the author of the new book. But by Manifold's description of it it is clearly not the same song as we sing today -- the Marie Cowan. He says the song is in manuscript, music and words, and in the handwriting of its composer -- Christina Macpherson -- and is quite clearly an imperfectly remembered version of the Scottish tune, Bonnie Wood of Craigielee. He says that this "original" version by Christina, "spread across the country by word of mouth, getting gradually altered in the process."

Now, with that statement as it stands I am in complete agreement and it does not conflict with anything in my book. But -- is this the song that is claimed to be behind the origin of the Marie Cowan song? With this I disagree, and give the evidence for that in my book. Manifold dissects and compares the new MS tune and the Cowan tune, and clearly demonstrates that they are NOT the same tune however much he finds some resemblances to each other.

Such resemblances can be found between tunes in numerous instances of quite unrelated tunes, and can have no significant importance, as such, in this instance. But such resemblances do not bring together the tunes to make the Cowan tune as being composed by Christina. If the new MS tune is Christina's, then so is the tune we sing today Marie Cowan's. There can be no dispute on that. Things that are different cannot be the same.

Without knowing the new MS tune when I wrote my book, I foretold of the existence of such a tune from a close study, detailed in my book, by a process of reasoning in much the same way as astronomers have foretold the existence of heavenly bodies before they were actually discovered at a later date.

There are a number of versions of Waltzing Matilda in existence other than the Cowan, known by the general term "Buderim," in which both the tune and words are very distinct from the Cowan.

Up to date no unchallengeable link of the Cowan with any tune composed by Christina Macpherson has been produced. And the new discovery does not do so.

The words of the new MS do not follow those of the Cowan but do follow those of the Buderim and other similar versions. I suggested in my book that the Christina "original" tune would be that from which the Buderim group had descended, and, from Manifold's descriptions, it looks as if that prophecy was correct.

I have not denied that Paterson wrote the actual words of Waltzing Matilda, as we have them in the song, nor have I denied that "a" Waltzing Matilda song was made by Christina Macpherson and A. B. Paterson, under "some" circumstances at Dagworth and Winton. But -- "which" song -- is the issue.

Another song comes into the matter in the form of "The Bold Fusilier", the tune of which is practically identical with that of the Cowan tune, and, most significantly, the framework of the verse and chorus are identical, whereas both the tune and framework of the words in the "Buderim" are distinctly different. But, the words of the new MS tune ARE the same as the Buderim.

Manifold's explanation of Paterson's hypothetical misunderstanding with Marie Cowan's identity will not stand rigid ex-
amination. If the new MS song is, as he says, the "original" of his and Christina's cooperation, it is surely incredible that he should have failed to recognise the difference between it and his own original when it was submitted to him, and he replied, "Your song received, very satisfactory. Marie Cowan has done a good job. Good luck to her."

Manifold says that the Cowan song has descended from the new MS song, and that this seems all the more certain since Christina's "original" preserves the attribution of the text to Paterson, i.e., the Cowan says the words are by Paterson. But the "Buderim" group's words are far more, practically identical, with the words by Paterson in his own works, than are the words of the Cowan, and Paterson's own words, with those of the Buderim and this new MS "original," contain the expression "Matilda my Darling," which the Cowan does not.

Manifold also, rather by insinuation and fantastic theorising, tries to cast doubt on the authenticity of the antiquity of the Bold Fusilier as given to me by Mrs. Kathleen Cooper. It seems that by some means or other, no matter how, "some" kind of relationship "must" be schemed up to link the Cowan song with this "original," now found, by Christina and Paterson.

Anything but admit the obvious! To bolster his theory he has to bring in a number of other songs to link up and carry his theory of what "could" have been the process by which the Bold Fusilier first descended from the above "original," went to the South Africa war, then to England, then returned to Australia and then became the Cowan song. But what position does all this put the "original" in? Simply a very far removed and insignificant position in relation to the Cowan song -- the one we sing.

To discredit the memory of Mrs. Cooper's grandfather, Manifold refers to "Ring, Ring the Bell, Watchman" of which Mrs. Cooper's grandfather said it was in existence "a hundred years" before his time. Manifold says it was far less ancient than he thought. Well, I happen to have written to the English Folk Dance and Song Society on that subject and got a reply saying "We have been unable to find anything about the history of that song." All they could do was to send me the words as published in England, and re-published by E. W. Cole in Melbourne. If Mr. Manifold has any evidence as to its antiquity let him produce it. As a matter of fact Mrs. Cooper told me that the song we sing today is a different version to what was sung by the Chippers, which indicates that their version was the older, or "original." Mrs. Cooper's account of its singing by the Chippers is ignored by Manifold who instead casts an unsupported imputation against her story.

He stretches his own credibility as an impartial student when he also distorts the true position regarding the existence of an "Old Bush Song" on a Waltzing Matilda theme said to have been heard prior to the Christina/Banjo song. He says: "No song on the subject could be 'an old bush song', the implication being, of course, that such a song must have been on the same theme as the Christina/Banjo one. Now, Manifold knows very well that that is not the position at all. All that has been said was that an old bush song had been heard about "Waltzing Matilda," or that "a" Waltzing Matilda song had been heard before 1895. Brady who says he heard such a song says that the words were different. Now, I have given in my book what I regard as practical proof, backed up by extensive evidence, that this old bush song clearly was an old German folk song about Guild apprentices being "On the Walz with their 'Matildas' (girl friends)," brought out to Australia by German migrants in the early days -- yet Manifold ignores this, (why?) and deliberately gives a twist to the matter by trying to link that song with the Dagworth one in 1895!

Manifold says that this new MS "original" in the handwriting of Christina Macpherson was "discovered by Magoffin." Perhaps I might make the same claim, because I independently "discovered" it with people living in Hobart, Tasmania, and was in correspondence with them for some time about it when I was told I could not have a copy because it was going to be published in a book and the persons concerned had been asked not to give a copy to anyone else! But I was told that the words were as sung by Leonard Teale, those of the Buderim version.

There are a number of other aspects about the "origins" of Waltzing Matilda, but I limit myself to only what Manifold has said in his article.

-- HARRY H. PEARCE