INDUSTRIALLY, 1966 drew to a close with the Qantas pilots' strike, which had implications far beyond the pilots' undoubted victory. The dispute had its farcical elements. Mr. McMahon, already a slightly ridiculous figure, played the buffoon attempting a role as man of destiny. On November 29 he solemnly warned: ". . . the Government would not allow pilots . . . to act with contemptuous disregard of . . . the community at large. However, to give the pilots an opportunity to act responsibly and avoid being caught up in processes that will otherwise follow, I appeal to them to return to work without delay."

When this appeal was ignored, McMahon retired from the fray, not to be heard from again. Bury started in the same vein, but soon became more sober.

The press—the “liberal” Australian the worst—discovered "a majority of a radical minority who took the trouble to vote", the possibility of a “breakaway movement”, young irresponsibles stampeding the older men, a small group holding the community to ransom, defying arbitration and the law of the land, recklessly destroying the industry, etc., etc. A plot was even discovered for amalgamation of all airline unionists, controlled by a sinister pilots' union “boss”.

The papers controlled by those egalitarian press millionaires, Sir Warwick Fairfax and Rupert Murdoch, wept copiously at the thought of the gross inequalities of the "proletariat" on $3,000 a year penalised by “capitalist” pilots. They were far more worried than the proletariat. The affected “public”, which flies overseas for business and/or pleasure, was not amused. Since many come from the Establishment, this had some influence when it became obvious that the pilots could neither be cajoled, bribed nor stood over.

Obvious lessons will be drawn by all unionists. Arbitration is not necessary even to register victories; it is an obstacle to winning the gains that industrial strength and action can win, tending always to award the bare minimum increases (as already shown in the level of over-award payments won by militant industrial workers and their unions).

1967 will certainly be a year of industrial action. Arbitration’s crisis is unresolved. The basic wage decision and the interim
metal trades margins award only postponed the flood of wage
demands inevitable early this year, while the employers plan an
offensive against over-award payments and for their “total wage”
concept.

The sustained stagnation of consumer demand is a clear sign
of labor’s reduced portion of the social product. There is pent-up
resentment and pressure which will not be held down, despite all
the machinations of the influential “tame cat” faction in the trade
unions—even given the threatened aid of an AWU block vote at
ACTU Congresses. In the long run, the trade union movement
must express its members’ demands in action.

THE QANTAS STRIKE posed other and deeper issues. An
Australian editorial (17/12/66) revealed a major one: “... the
idea of a top-to-bottom investigation of the Qantas management
virtually demands that the Pilots’ Federation takes over the
running of the airline; a dangerous precedent, to say the least.”

This explains the seemingly suicidal stubbornness of Qantas
management, initially fully backed by the Government.

The pilots presumed to demand a say in control of manage-
ment, which capitalism simply cannot easily concede. Such
economic democracy strikes at the “right” of capital to hire and
fire, to decide upon technical change, allocation of investment
and price policies without consultation or consideration of its
employees, the national interest or effects upon the people as
consumers.

The basic democratic demand for workers’ participation in
control will more and more arise in industrial actions. It should
accompany the struggle for nationalisation of the monopolies,
conceivably even preceding it. Reaction to the pilots’ strike
reveals how deeply the rulers fear such basic reforms.

Another evidence of this fear is imminent repudiation of
Askin’s solemn electoral promise to institute a NSW Education
Commission, with Teachers’ Federation representation. Pretext
for this repudiation is alleged “left control” of the Federation,
putting the Liberals in the position of exercising an authoritarian
veto of the teachers’ democratic vote, after their disastrous semi-
oficial excursion into interference in the Federation elections. But
the union leadership’s political complexion is secondary. The
main consideration is maintenance of the bureaucratic principle,
avoidance of any control by employees of policy and administra-
tion, even in a service that in fact depends largely upon the
teachers for its administration.
THE NSW TEACHERS' FEDERATION is denied a say in policy decisions precisely because it advances and campaigns for a radical solution to the problems posed by the "education explosion". The NSW Government has only a piecemeal policy of patching up the most immediate problems.

The education crisis is nationwide, and affects all three levels. The university crisis is reflected in recent increases in fees and reduction in governments' subsidies. The most immediate effects are upon expansion of university teaching and facilities, and opportunities for post-graduate work.

Restriction of post-graduate and research opportunities poses a big question of national concern. Is it the Establishment's deliberate policy to depend more and more upon United States, Japanese and other foreign technology, to avoid the cost of independent scientific research and technological development? This certainly fits in with the virtual abandonment to foreign investors of whole sectors of the economy, and to the general posture of embarrassing servility to American policies. And it is not necessarily refuted by the undoubted excellence of much Australian scientific work, already heavily dependent upon US finance, and providing a scientific cream to be skimmed off by foreign institutions, as required.

A far-reaching social consequence of the whole education policy is the emergence of a new elitism. Enough has been written already about IQ tests, and the tiny percentage of university entrants from the working class. Not quite enough is perhaps understood of the elitism inherent in the growing inequality of opportunity for higher secondary and tertiary education, compounded by increasing expenditure of taxpayers' money for the private schools.

However opportunist his political motives in wooing the Catholic vote, Sir Robert Menzies also proceeded from an ideological conviction, expressed in a 1963 talk at his old school, Wesley. He lauded the fact that the Great Public Schools had managed to survive... "Fifteen years ago... I thought we would find ourselves practising that dreadful civic vice of uniformity which we have such a passion for in Australia. Individuality is the essence of our ideas for Public Schools. This business of daring to be wise, and setting out to develop intellectual integrity is something that can be achieved by a great school and lost by a bad one" (SMH, 26/2/63).

These views are, almost verbatim, identical with those expressed by the Argus more than half a century ago:

"Is it, then, a thing to be wondered at that even in a new city like Melbourne most of our leading men in business and in professional life are men who were college-bred? But let us imagine a State where there are no
colleges like the English public schools, but where all things are under the bureaucracy of the Central Education Department . . . we cannot govern India and . . . build up a great Australia with machine-made men. . . There is something in college breeding which cannot be got in any other way . . . rescue our colleges from the maw of the machine . . ." (quoted in Sources of Australian History, ed. M. Clark, p. 584).

More and more public money is going to non-Catholic private schools attended almost exclusively by children of the very rich or the well-to-do.

And why not? Holt's new Federal Cabinet, as Menzies' before it, is made up of men whose outlook was formed in these exclusive schools. Of the 16 Cabinet Ministers who gave details of their secondary education in "Who's Who", no fewer than 11 attended nine private schools (all non-Catholic). The King's and Geelong Grammar lead with two Ministers each; Wesley is now down to one, but still boasts the Prime Minister. (In 1965, 1.8 million school children attended public schools, 476,000 went to Roman Catholic Schools, and all other private schools enrolled only 104,000).

THE UNKINDEST CUT of the Qantas strike was the display of industrial militancy from such high-paid, well-educated and trained members of the "new class" that is supposed to have rendered obsolete not only social revolution, but even social-democratic reformism.

Changes in class structure certainly need more study by the left. The Communist Party's draft 21st Congress documents suggest that the trend of social development in modern Australia sets the owners, managers and administrators apart from their employees and the rest of the nation, including scientists, technicians, planners and social scientists, educators and other highly qualified people essential for the new and advancing level of the productive forces.

The left is certainly concerned with strengthening co-operation and unity between the labor movement and intellectuals, white-collar and professional workers. It should, as the Congress documents suggest, oppose "proletarian sectarianism" and recognise the special contribution to political debate and action made by the growing radical minority among these strata.

Theoretical clarification of this issue is important. This should be firmly based upon analysis of actual reality, recognising that marxist theory is a generalisation of concrete social forces that can and must be objectively measured and studied in their movement. This is one very important issue to be discussed before and at the Communist Party of Australia Congress.
The Qantas pilots' strike certainly did not express a conscious radicalism or desire to remake society, as some over-enthusiastic supporters seem to suggest. But it did express a deep moving and as yet only incipient demand by citizens for access to control over the "policy levers which determine their lives".

There is surely some lesson for the Establishment, and for some on the left, that the pilots, with a degree of individual freedom of decision given to few employees, found that their ultimate power lay in the collective weapon of the strike. It is perhaps more than symbolic that pilots met in the Sydney Trades Hall.

The left has to develop policies to raise consciousness of more basic issues contemporary Australian society poses before wage and salary workers. The Communist Party hopes its Congress will be an opportunity for an exchange of views on these issues, and not only within its ranks. An encouraging degree of interest and critical discussion is already evident.

1967 OPENED with the visit of Air Vice-Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky. No one in authority seemed to be prepared to say what the purpose of the visit was, nor what its results are.

There was a great difference between this visit and Johnson's; almost a case of "after the Lord Mayor's carriage . . ." "Security" was the overwhelming consideration, with thousands of men detailed to "protect" the visitor from any hostile opinions, and hundreds available to assault demonstrators (with the Brisbane police predictably the most vicious of all).

It would be political naivete to deny that the visit turned out better than expected for Holt and the war party here. This was aided by press reporting, which was mainly gushing nonsense, unmarred by any critical examination of the evasions and outright lies advanced by Ky in reply to the very few probing questions put to him.

Apart from a handful, the journalists seemed strangely shy, possibly because they were bound by their instructions from the controllers of public opinion, who deliberately set out to support the US war in Vietnam, and the US puppet, also to advance their plans to elect an ALP leader amenable to their wishes. A further classic example, were one more needed, of the great power of the Establishment when it considers it necessary to "swing into action".

The whole exercise was phoney, of course. The let-down will be all the harder, and it will not be long in coming. Ky is no more a patriot or a democrat than was Diem or the other nine
between them, nor has he popular support. He depends more abjectly upon American power than Diem ever did.

When Harry Stein of Tribune asked Ky to explain why the National Liberation Front controlled so much territory and population, his answer was: "I don't think they have control of the majority either of the land or the population. They are deep in the jungle, split in small groups. . . So we have pushed them now back to the borders, to the jungles. . ." (SMH, 20/1/67).

No Australian paper contradicted this editorially, yet all the evidence shows Ky was deliberately lying. With fanfare of trumpets, two wholly American offensives have been opened recently. In the Mekong delta, the closely settled rice-bowl of Vietnam, with 5½ million people, the Americans are trying desperately to smash popular support for the effective NLF government, and are bogging down in the mud of the paddy fields and the political swamp of popular support for the NLF. Only 30 miles from Saigon, the Americans suffered their heaviest casualties of the war in an effort to control the Iron Triangle. This campaign is likely to be as complete a failure as "Operation Attelboro" late last year.

On January 24th a bold attack was reported on a US naval vessel in the Saigon River.

If these facts were not enough, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that even the South East Asian experts in the US Administration would only claim a bare majority control for Ky: "At the end of 1966, 57 per cent of the population was under Government control. . . The agonisingly slow progress of the pacification program has been a major disappointment in both Saigon and Washington." (SMH, 23/1/67.)

Ky was obviously lying on this crucial question, showing that popular support is for the NLF, demonstrating that he cannot speak for the Vietnamese people.

These facts also cast a different light upon the war situation. The Americans are not winning, despite all their military superiority and their balance of terror.

The war, costing an astronomical $20 billion, is exposing basic American military-political weaknesses. The longer it goes the more these weaknesses will operate.

The other side, of course, is the sickening horror of the American death and devastation wreaked on Vietnam and so cynically excused. Take the justifications advanced for the often denied civilian deaths from bombing of the North. "You can't do this sort of bombing without hurting people. There are civilians everywhere," said Mr. Sylvester, retiring Assistant Secre
Civilians are everywhere in the South, too; napalm, high explosive and "resettlement" are killing thousands and uprooting hundreds of thousands in a horrible orgy of genocide.

Mr. Sylvester also demoted to second place the pretext of "Northern infiltration"; the first purpose of the bombing is "to invigorate the morale of the South Vietnamese" (meaning Ky and his junta). Such is the moral bankruptcy of US imperialism.

Northern bombing is not winning the war, either. Indeed, the Americans are paying dearly for this war crime. The North Vietnamese anti-aircraft defence, armed with sophisticated Soviet missiles and advanced conventional systems, is causing increasing losses. It is described as "...what the Air Force already calls the most fearsome air defence of any war..." And up-to-date MIG's are flying in increasing numbers over Vietnamese skies.

SECONDARY AS IT IS to their own heroic struggle, world-wide support for the Vietnamese people is essential for their victory. Never has US political isolation been more obvious, and world opinion is shifting still more against its imperialist aggression. U Thant's latest and firmest declaration reflects this.

Material support from the socialist countries is growing, with the Soviet Union supplying the most vital needs for defence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. World-wide popular support for Vietnam, in which Australian protests are not unimportant, are continuing to grow. In Australia, the national division is as deep as ever. The left needs to work out methods of broad mass campaigning, avoiding any tendency to turn inwards or concentrate on just one method in the struggle to pull Australia out of Vietnam. A new stage of grassroot answer to the government's war propaganda, and explanation of the issues, appears urgently needed.

At this decisive stage in the Vietnamese war, the divisions in the international communist movement and the socialist world are an intolerable burden, affording US imperialism room to manoeuvre by preventing solidarity of action by all anti-imperialist forces. Outright Chinese rejection of the appeal for common action is the main obstacle.

THIS BURDEN is incalculably weightier since the latest events in China, events which have paralysed Chinese diplomacy and worsened its egocentrism. More, they are causing great damage to production and to socialist relations, damage not easily caught
up. The disunity officially—and artificially—set in train by the “cultural revolution” will not be easily overcome, whatever the outcome of the power struggle.

Events in China are still only too obscure. Doubtless there are exaggerations and distortions by the daily press, interested in anti-China campaigning. However, there are enough hard facts to show the serious divisions and the dangerous departures from socialist theory and practice.

Since 1957, there has been the ill-fated “Great Leap”, the reversal of domestic and foreign policies decided by the VIIIth Congress of the Communist Party of the National Peoples’ Congress, China’s parliament. The Chinese leaders have moved in stages from official agreement with the 1960 Declaration of 81 Parties to complete rejection, and have lifted their differences with the CPSU to the level of violent hostility to virtually every other Communist Party, and establishment of splinter groups wherever they can. Party and socialist democracy is trampled on, moving from breaching the party constitution to suppression of newspapers, suspension of education, closing of the Young Communist League and dismissal of the elected trade union leadership.

The colossal dangers in such a situation are obvious. One ray of hope still shines; the divisions within the party and nation are so deep that they must reflect vital social and political forces which are striving to overcome the degeneration of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, and for a return to scientific socialism and realistic policies. Even if two qualifications are made—that forces hostile to socialism could use the chaos, and that victory for those opposing the present leading group would not necessarily remove all the Maoist distortions immediately—this provides ground for some optimism in an otherwise wholly disheartening and dangerous situation.

Certainly all the friends of China, and the international communist movement first, must do all in their power to help the great Chinese Communist Party back to scientific socialism and to fraternal communist relations.

This is in the interests of the struggle against imperialism and the US war on the Vietnamese people. It is in the interests of preventing world war, and it is in Australia’s national interests, already harmed by 17 years of the anti-China policy and by the US threats to widen the war and drag Australia into such a catastrophic crime.