DISCUSSION:

DOCTORS FEES AND HEALTH SERVICE REFORM

TODAY, the economic position of lower income families and many also in the middle income group is such that any price rise is a definite hardship. In this context, the indignation of most of the general public at the proposed rise in doctors' fees is easy to understand.

To the worker, who traditionally has had to wage protracted struggles in and out of court for his inadequate pay rises, and who faces even stiffer battles in the future as a result of the total wage decision, the spectacle of the Australian Medical Association recommending to its members a substantial wage increase without having to refer to anyone is galling indeed. The fact that local associations of the AMA, and individual practitioners, may reject part or all of the recommended increase if they wish, does little to soften the blow.

Other price rises tend to pass with less comment. For example, in 1955 when a surgery consultation in a major city cost 17/6, the Women's Weekly could be bought for 6d. Today, a surgery visit costs 28/6, an increase of 63%, whereas the Weekly is 15 cents, an increase of 150%.

Of even greater significance are the rises in public hospital fees. Over the period 1958-1967 these range from no charge (and no rise) in Queensland, to a rise of 128% in N.S.W. ($3.60 to $8.20) and 177% rise in West Australia ($3.60 to $10.00)!

Doctors can produce many justifications for the increase. Apart from taxation which takes a very large slice of their gross income (leaving a pretty big slice, too, it must be said), most practices have quite considerable bad debts which will probably never be collected.

A general practitioner on duty travels an average of 12,600 miles a year. A recent comprehensive N.S.W. survey of hours worked by doctors, whose results were published in the AMA Journal, showed that the general practitioner in metropolitan solo practice works 53 hours a week and stands by on call a further 74 hours—a total of 127 hours per week associated in some way with the job. Country solo practice totals 147.5 hours, and while group practice halves the standby time, it does not reduce the hours of work. Such excessive overtime is quite rightly not permitted in industry.

Studies of death rates from coronary heart disease in men aged 40 to 59 years found that general practitioners had twice the rate of other men in the group, and apart from actual deaths, the rate per 1,000 of coronary heart disease was 7.1 for GP's, 3.3 for other doctors and 2.5 for non-medical people studied.

It must also be recognised that the doctors' fees (particularly the GP's) are not the main economically crippling factor in ill-health. With public hospital fees at $57.40 per week in N.S.W. (increased from $42.00 recently) one cannot risk being out of a hospitals benefits scheme of some kind—a constant drain on slender incomes. Few industrial awards (if any) have paid sick leave provisions adequate for any but minor ailments, and the consequent loss of pay in an illness of even a few weeks can be
an economic disaster, so that most bread-winners struggle to work while ever they can stand. Then there is the pharmacy bill, about which, incidentally, you will be grilled when you claim it as a tax deduction. Compensation, of course, means a wage-cut, and compensation cases are notorious for their protracted nature and difficulty of proof in all but the clearest-cut cases.

We can correctly say that an adequate health service should not be the subject of buying and selling, but an obligatory call on public funds. This is the case in the socialist countries, where the good health of the people is a prime concern of the government, and all health services are free. The accent is on prevention of ill-health, but the income is guaranteed for the entire period if one is off sick.

In our society where fortunes are made out of ill-health by the drug monopolies, and to a lesser extent by a few doctors and private hospitals, some immediate reforms are urgently needed, and some longer-term projects should be commenced without delay.

The frequency of complaints about difficulties in having claims settled, rejection of valid claims apparently by junior clerks, lapsing of coverage after 12 months in long-term and permanent illness or injury, plus the high cost of contributions, point to the most urgent need as the taking over of hospital and medical benefit funds by the Government. This would reverse the present basic principle that "registered funds are left to conduct their own affairs with a minimum of interference" (Senator Dame Annabelle Rankin on behalf of the Minister for Health).

There is immediate need for an investigation into the activities of the funds, which appear to place more emphasis on accumulation of reserves (for what purpose?) than service to the public. They need to be under the light of public scrutiny instead of shrouded in mystery as at present.

Since contributory schemes are the present basis of a national health service, these should be Government-run schemes conducted possibly through the Government Insurance Offices. Under these circumstances, the doctor could well be paid a fee in line with the wage standards of the day, having in mind his considerable knowledge and skill, long hours, unique responsibility for human life, and often heavy financial commitments in the establishment of his practice.

This should not be made the occasion for a rise in contribution rates. Rather, Government administration should facilitate a steady reduction in contribution rates, to the eventual, not-too-distant introduction of a completely non-contributory health service.

Legislation to curb the advertising and sales of drugs, and to limit the profits of the drug houses is also an urgent necessity.

Payment of adequate salaries to hospital specialist and junior medical staff would attract large numbers of applicants of a high standard, as many doctors would prefer this to private practice if the pay were reasonable. A considerable extension of public hospital out-patient buildings, facilities, medical, ancillary and lay staff is needed to provide a satisfactory medical service. No means test should be applied to patients.

Industrial health is all but ignored in Australia, so that in Victoria the Meat Industry Employees' Union, by building and financing a clinic has had to show the Government what it should be doing in providing facilities for investigation and treatment of occupational diseases. Of even
more significance would be a vast prevention scheme and obligatory advanced safety measures to be carried out by the monopolies and other industries, instead of radio exhortations to “work safely.”

Removal of university quotas, substantial increasing of teaching staff, and payment of special student allowances would help overcome the real shortage of doctors. Medicine is still a difficult profession for a poor man’s children to choose—the long course is too great a financial burden without extended financial aid. This is essential if the lag in numbers is to be overcome.

These measures would help to ensure adequate medical services and a reasonable return to the doctor for his years of study and heavy responsibilities, without financial burden to the worker.

KATH OLIVE.

WORKER, INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIALISM

DOUG WHITE’S comments in your last issue may indicate that the differences between us are not as great as appeared from our earlier articles.

Among the main criticisms made of his original article was that, in essence, it appeared to contain three unsupported propositions—first, that the intelligentsia as such was developing into a political class with a distinctive ideology differing fundamentally from that of the industrial working class; second, that these two ideologies were competing for hegemony of the anti-capitalist movement; and third, that Marxists might well, for this modern world, prefer the ideology of the intellectuals.

From this it followed that Marxism needed basic revision because, if I might be excused the paraphrase, the ‘old’ industrial working class and its ideology have ‘had it’.

Neither the concept of the intellectuals as a distinct class nor that of competition between its ideology and that of the industrial workers do, in my opinion, reflect objective reality, either as already established facts or developing trends. Nor can the propagation of those concepts assist the movement for a socialist Australia.

Doug White takes as his theme the change in the composition of the work force—occurring at an increasing rate in this period of our history—and he sees it, correctly in my opinion, as in essence of a qualitative character. But, despite his quotations from Richta, he appears to see all these changes as occurring outside the ranks of the industrial workers, outside even the ranks of the working class or any other of the ‘old’ classes.

Richta speaks of “researchers and technicians (as) an indivisible part of the working class which, while growing in numbers, changes in character”.

But, for Doug White, these changes appear to constitute the emergence of a new class on the political scene—the intellectually-trained elite—distinguished solely by the fact of its higher education and not at all by its relationship to the means of production. (“Norm Docker’s quite true statement that some intellectually trained persons are self-employed or even employers of labor is beside the point.”)

The point to be emphasised is that changes are occurring inside the ranks of the industrial workers in that they are achieving a higher level of intellectual training, mainly, but not solely, as a result of more young intellectually-trained and highly-skilled workers entering their ranks. But the basic relationship of these intellectually-trained workers to the means of
production is the same as that of the non-intellectually-trained.

Doug White does not agree with this—"... newer sections of the work force stand in a different relationship to the productive process". Please, my friend, be specific! What precisely, in a fundamental political sense, is the different relationship?

I would readily concede that a skilled or highly-trained worker—a planning engineer, if you like—could have different points of view and attitudes on various questions from a totally unskilled manual worker. But these matters are related to the problems of working class unity rather than to fundamental class differentiation. They have always existed to some extent or other, e.g., in the sometimes different attitudes of craft and industrial unionists.

The task of marxists, including those with intellectual training, is to assist the working class (with growing intellectual content) better to master the real changes occurring in objective reality, forge a greater internal unity, improve organisational and political techniques and provide a better attractive force for those emerging forces which can make common cause with it against capitalist policies and ultimately against capitalism itself. Marxists can also assist those emerging forces outside the ranks of the working class to a recognition of the value to them of such an alliance.

Political opportunism, to which I certainly share Doug White’s antipathy, has many aspects, one of the most fundamental being that of tailing behind a spontaneously developed ideology or movement.

The ideology of the industrial workers was reformist, anarcho-syndicalist or narrow trade unionist, but was only considered by most revolutionaries to be ‘working class ideology’ insofar as it embraced socialism and marxism. Is it not this same ideology which we need to find the ways to have the intellectuals approach, even if from a different starting point?

Doug White invites me to agree with him that we should not “restrict thinking to minor tinkering with the grand scheme laid down in the past”. In return, I am sure he will agree that correct marxist analysis and understanding still postulate a socialist form of society as the solution to the problems of the Australian people, that the more firmly the socialist movement embraces the working class and particularly the organised industrial workers, the more soundly based it will be, and the more it attracts to its side the growing number of intellectuals, the more effective it will be.

NORM DOCKER.

LAWSON IN W.A.

FROM THE FOUNDATION of the Sydney Bulletin until the turn of the century its impact was both popular and nation-wide. The Bulletin’s influence in Western Australia was striking. With depression in the east and discovery of gold in the west there was an exodus, and with the diggers went the Bulletin. And with the Bulletin, Henry Lawson. But even apart from the goldrushes Lawson was already known in Western Australia. The democratic provincial newspaper the Victorian Express (later the Geraldton Express) was reprinting verse from the Bulletin in the early eighteenth nineties—including Lawson’s verse. The conservative Perth press was slow to recognise the upsurge of our national literature. It regarded Australia as “one of the worst places in the world for poets”. It liked to refer to Lawson as “the laureate of the larrikin”, or “the fervent laureate of the swag and apostle of the ethics of the Push”. But the independent provincial newspapers, which were numerous, thought otherwise.
The most discerning tributes to Lawson were made by Andree Hayward, an Oxford graduate who was a journalist and literary critic in Western Australia from 1894 to 1922. In an address to the Cue branch of the Australian Natives Association in 1897 Hayward described Lawson as "the poet of the people—the Australian people". Again, in an article published in the Kalgoorlie Sun in 1901, he wrote of Lawson:

"...there are not many of the ordinary bush experiences which he has not plumbed to the depths... His works are marked by a graphic power, a quiet insight, a humour often sardonic, a bitter scorn of sham and hypocrisy, a gnawing sense of injustice against social conditions. You may find him in varying moods, sometimes petulant to the verge of childishness, but he is always reflecting something faithfully. The world has not used him overwell and he complains bitterly or laughs goodhumouredly as the mood takes him. There is a grim realism in some of his word pictures that eats into the mind like acid into metal."

Once again, in 1909, in the Sun, Hayward praised Lawson as the author of "the best and most vivid and realistic bush sketches and stories of Australia".

**AUTOMATION AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE**

**PETER SYMON** in his article on containerisation (ALR 2/67) does not look for the driving force behind automation and mechanisation, but I think it is necessary to do this to be in a position to correctly meet its challenge.

_Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism_, issued in the Soviet Union in the 1960s, has a section dealing with the class struggle as the driving force of the development of an exploiting society, which includes the following:

"Were it not for the resistance of the workers, the capitalist would prefer to swell his profit by such "simple" and "cheap" methods as cutting wages and lengthening hours. Not only competition but also the persistent struggle of the working class for the protection of its own interests, to a great extent forces the capitalist to seek other sources of increased profit, such as introduction of new machinery, improvements of technological processes and adoption of inventions."

Is this true? Life might give an answer.

After the war American car manufacturers, with highly mechanised and even partly automatic factories in the USA, transferred some of their capital to West Germany to build factories to make cars. But here they turned back the clock, for the factories in Germany were less mechanised than their US factories, and production per head was only three-quarters of production per head in the USA. The decisive factor in the lower rate of mechanisation was not the lack of science or technology in Germany, nor the lack of skill of the German workers, but the much lower wages in Germany that made it more profitable to use German workers than expensive US machinery. The main reason for the lower wages, nominal and real, in Germany was the more successful class struggle of the American workers around wages than of the German workers of that period.

The handling of bulk sugar by mechanisation has recently been introduced into North Queensland ports, replacing the previous method of bagging and loading by slings. The expensive machinery was introduced because the CSR decided that in the long run it was cheaper than paying high hourly rates to waterside workers. But when the bulk sugar is sent to Hong Kong it is discharged there by cheap labor bagging the sugar down hold and sending it out by slings.
The grabs, tip trucks with metal trays and possible storage bins to handle the bulk sugar at the refinery would not be very expensive but the labor is so cheap that despite the slower turn-round of the ships the old method is preferred.

Does the drive of the capitalists for profit inevitably mean a drive for greater mechanisation? *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism* writes, "Bourgeois economists extol capitalist profit as the greatest stimulus to technical progress . . . They gloss over the fact that the subordination of production to the principle of capitalist profit is not only a stimulus but also a limitation of capitalist production . . . It not infrequently happens that capitalists, especially under present day conditions, restrict production, hold back technical progress . . . Monopoly hinders the growth of the productive forces and technological progress . . . If super profits can be obtained as a result of the monopoly of the market, then the stimulus to technological improvement is naturally weakened . . . Retaining old equipment in which enormous capital has been invested also hinders technological progress."

It seems to me that the class struggle is the main driving force of the development of an exploiting society; that the great amount of mechanisation and automation in different countries in the world today is an acknowledgement by the capitalists of that country and industry of the strength and organisation of the working class; that they have temporarily abandoned the hope of cutting wages and lengthening hours.

Peter Symon, by failing to show that the successful struggles of the workers are the main driving force behind mechanisation, does not fully show the role and strength of the working class in today's world. He does not combat the widely held view that the drive for profits by the capitalists consistently drives to mechanisation and that mechanisation is inevitable and out of the hands and control of the workers.

I feel it is essential to show workers how their strength does influence events, and to convince them that this strength and organisation can and must be used in a political as well as an economic direction. First, it can ensure that big changes in industry and the cutting down of jobs can be compensated by higher pay and shorter hours, and where necessary, pensions and severance pay. Finally, knowledge by the workers of what they have achieved makes more realisable and possible the socialisation of the major industries that are being transformed by science and technological advances.

The plans of the British shipowners to use 29 container ships to carry 80% of the cargo Australia-England, and their control of containers from factory to ship to factory are a far-reaching challenge. While they have the money to do it, they may not have the power. But the proposals of the WWF, endorsed by much of the trade union movement of this country for an overseas national line and the nationalisation of the stevedoring industry is more of a challenge, for with organisation we have the power to enforce them.

**Victor Williams**

**WICKED WASTE**

The article by Richta (ALR No. 3, 1967) deserves close study. Briefly the argument is that capitalist production to date has had two main elements, capital and labor power, but now we are on the eve of a radically different situation in which production will have three main elements, capital, labor power and science, with science increasingly supplanting labor power.

Thus an increase in production in the new technological age will come...
not so much as in the past by reinvestment in more machinery of a similar though improved type and the labor of more workers (i.e., 'extensive factors'), but rather by the application of science to technology, management and the training of new-type skilled personnel (i.e. 'intensive factors'), which will "more and more replace the simple labor power of man with his limited physical and emotional powers and memory".

I do not feel equipped to enter into debate whether it is useful to regard the modern production engineer, scientist and technologist as a special case of a worker selling his labor power, or whether such persons are becoming so different, so numerous and so decisive that they should be classed as a 'creativity factor' and thought of as 'human capital', as distinct both from capital and labor-power.

But the significance of the facts on which this theory is based seems to me so enormous, that we have hardly started to grasp it. The article quotes estimates that in America the share of 'intensive factors' accounted for as much as 68% of economic growth in the period 1953-57. The decisiveness of such changes is put in a startling way:

"The intensive growth . . . brings with it important social consequences because, as distinct from the earlier industrialisation, the accelerated growth does not necessitate increasing the share of accumulation in the national income, or reducing the share of consumption; it can be achieved (due to the efficacy of the new productive forces) by channelling the same share or perhaps less, to accumulation. It is this type of economic growth that meets the intrinsic requirements of socialism."

It seems to me that if this idea can be taken out of the realms of statistics and concrete facts found and allowed to speak for themselves, people would be amazed at the reckless waste of capacity of the giant monopolies which prove capitalism to be far more obsolete than leftwingers dream in their wildest dreams.

Just two illustrations, which I hope may 'start the ball rolling', one from America, the other from Australia. According to the American communist economist Hyman Lumer writing in 1961: "The drive to modernise is vividly illustrated by the steel industry. Here, despite protracted operation far below capacity, outlays for plant and equipment were raised from $939 million in 1959 to almost $1.5 billion in 1960."

"It is estimated that today the big steel companies can operate at a profit of as little as 30% capacity. For example, in 1960 US Steel, though operating at half capacity much of the year, recorded its highest yearly profit. The main purpose of investment in steel industry is not expansion but the cutting of unit costs and the raising of profitability (World Marxist Review Sept. 1961, p. 78.)

In a world half of which is starving for modern industry based on steel to overcome their backwardness, what moral right have the world's largest steel producers to operate at 50% capacity?

No wonder, with such profitability coupled with monopoly, the trend is away from the old-style economic crisis of too many goods on the shelves, unsold. The waste of capitalism tends to take another form: acute undercapacity production, potential goods not reaching the shelves but remaining unsold because unmade. Whatever economic mistakes socialist governments may make, they pale into insignificance compared to such wicked although hidden waste.

Now for the Australian example. Mr. Taft in his article "Exploitation
in Affluent Society" reasons from general Australian statistics that from 1949 to 1965 about 80% of the extra wealth produced has gone to the wealthy employers and says “The inescapable conclusion is that the Australian worker today, despite his higher real income, gets a smaller share of the total wealth of the nation —his exploitation has grown—he is relatively worse off.” (ALR No. 2, 1967, p. 14.)

Most workers do not yet realise this, and probably even Mr. Taft, who is in the forefront of those who readily embrace the significance of the new, would gasp if they had read Petroleum Gazette for December, 1966. Talking of the ‘Five-year-old Giant’, petro-chemical industries in Australia, in which $178 million have been invested, it gives a theoretical example of the economics of the modern chemical industry.

“A plant of 10,000 tons a year capacity might cost $2 million to build. One of twice the size would cost only $3 million. A plant ten times as big, with a capacity of 100,000 tons a year, would perhaps cost about $8 million. All three would require only about the same number of operators, since process control in most modern chemical plants is highly automated.”

Because of this some Australian plants have been deliberately built to serve a larger market than existed initially, so that later they can enjoy the resulting economies of scale. But, unfortunately, Australian plants, giant size as they are, are still small by comparison with plants in Japan, United States and West Germany who can thus, despite freight and customs duty, undersell “us” on our own market on some lines.

Estimates by the Tariff Board hearing a claim for higher barriers to protect our infant giants show that Australian Synthetic Rubber Co. Ltd., one of the Altona (Victoria) Petro-

chemical group, could not operate at full capacity for 1965/66 unless it commanded the whole of the Australian market.

But according to John Lloyd (Melbourne Age 3/2/66) the new Botany (NSW) ICI-Phillips Complex should have at least an equal capacity for synthetic rubber when it comes on stream so that “both plants working simultaneously would be able to provide more than double the Australian demand”!

It might be argued that even this is justified because the car population will increase and with it the demand for tyres and synthetic rubber. However, the Wilbur Smith Transportation study predicts only a 63% increase by 1985, so that the second factory has been built some 20 to 30 years too soon from any sensible economic point of view. And we stand little chance of export if the US, Germany and Japan are so much more efficient that they can already export to Australia.

What sort of crazy thievery is this? Allowing the monopolies to spend millions of dollars building plant that can operate at only half capacity?

Could we not instead have tyres at half the price? Or one plant twice or three times the size instead of two, that would have been so much more economical and given a chance for export? Why couldn’t the under-developed countries where much of the oil comes from have their own plant?

Capitalism is patently failing fast. Should we not have socialism?

M. CROW

PROF. ROSE ON ENGELS

I READ with interest the review by A.H. of my book Wind of Change in Central Australia, ALR, No. 2, April-May, 1967. He writes that:
"Although Rose's theories may yet prove to be correct, he advances a personal theory under the banner of the 'materialist view' as shown by a comparison of Rose's statement (quoted in the review) with that of Engels."

Here A.H. cites a portion of the 1884 foreword to the Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. This comparison of the views I expressed with those of Engels shows that the reviewer has appreciated the essential difference between the approach I took and that of Engels. I would not, however, accept the view that I advanced a "personal theory".

As you are aware, this passage from Engels (or, more exactly, the sentence beginning "on the one side . . ." ) has been subjected to criticism from various quarters over the past 70 years. Amongst them was one from J. Stalin, as a result of which a footnote was added to the editions of Origin of the Family ... published in the Soviet Union after about 1937. This footnote in part read as follows:

"Engels is here guilty of inexactitude by citing the propagation of the species alongside of the production of the means of subsistence as causes determining the development of society and of social institutions . . ."

After the XXth Congress of the CPSU, this footnote was dropped. In fact, the criticism in the form given did not stem from Stalin at all, but originated from the German Marxist Heinrich Eildermann in the foreword to his book, Urkommunismus und Urreligion (Primitive Communism and Primitive Religion), Berlin, 1921, dealing chiefly with the Australian Aborigines. Eildermann's book was translated into Russian in 1923, and I assume that Stalin plagiarised the criticism. Eildermann published a further book, Die Urgesellschaft (Primitive Society), Berlin, 1950, in which his original criticism was extended to cover the first two-thirds of the chapter dealing with "The Family" in the Origin of the Family . . .

Some of your older readers may recall the discussion that took place around this "Stalin criticism" in the 1940s and 1950s. I originally took the standpoint that Engels was not "guilty of an inexactitude", and I considered that my anthropological field work demonstrated this. However, after a period of some years (in fact, just before the XXth Congress) I grasped the significance of the criticism and at long last accepted it. I still hold the view that the criticism is valid. Perhaps here I may refer to the article "Political Economy in the Soviet Union" appearing originally in the Soviet journal, Under the Banner of Marxism, in 1943, and then translated into English and appearing in the Communist Review, Sydney, in December, 1945, and January, 1946.

My approach to the question of marriage relationships in the book under review was intended to conform with the criticism of Engels mentioned. I should not class it as a "personal theory". In other words, the marriage relationship is simply one part of the production relationships: that is, it is essentially a part of the basis of the society. That is not to deny that the marriage relationship, whether in Aboriginal or in our own society, is not tangled up or overlaid with various parts of the social superstructure. But it is ultimately material factors that are decisive in determining the marriage relationship.

It would take more than a letter to argue this matter. But before I close I would mention that this whole question is at present being given considerable attention here by scientists in the German Democratic Republic, and some important publications can be expected in the not-distant future.

Frederick Rose
SPOTLIGHT ON A.C.T.U.

THE COMING 1967 ACTU Congress and the ACTU leadership cannot ignore the growing demand from wage earners for positive action in support of demands for increased wages to break new ground in working conditions and attention to the need for improved social services. They demand improvements in the Industrial Acts, including the repeal of the penal clauses and for a more positive lead in support of a policy on international affairs, aimed at peaceful relations with other countries. The excellent policy decisions made over the years should be implemented now.

There are those who see this 1967 ACTU Congress as an opportunity to frustrate the movement towards these objectives by organising opposition by sheer weight of numbers. The hope of the extreme right wing that the AWU’s admission will solve all their problems, will be successful only at the expense of the already declining authority of the ACTU as a national trade union centre among the workers.

The introduction of a total wage and the Commission’s abandonment of the basic wage places those in the trade union leadership of the ACTU in a difficult position.

The ACTU has now been confronted with the need to establish a new and more substantial basis for a ‘family living wage’ than has been done to this date.

The rejection of the concept of a $44.00 ‘family living wage’ as a basis for the basic wage claims in the 1965 ACTU Congress was unfortunate. This is highlighted by the failure of the strictly arbitration method adopted for dealing with the basic wage claims. No doubt there will be considerable concern expressed with strong demands for the restoration of the ‘basic wage’ in the coming Congress.

This will not solve the wage problem, which must be looked at very carefully. If the demand for the return of the basic wage means a return to the old basic wage standard, much below the needs of a family, and recognised as such by the Commission itself as shown by the new minimum wage level introduced into the Metal Trades Award in 1966, then it will be of no avail.

If a family living wage standard is to be obtained then the formal legalistic approaches must be changed and strengthened by industrial activity on a wide national scale. Relying on mainly economic and arbitration argument no matter how skilfully put is not enough. This is now limited further as a result of the total wage decision which allows only an annual review procedure based on economic factors, price movement, increased productivity and the ability of industry to pay, a truly arbitration straitjacket.

The inadequacy of the approach previously used is highlighted by the fact that $6.40 is needed to adjust the 1953 basic wage for price movement and productivity to what it should be today. If the basic wage had been automatically adjusted since 1953 by the movement of the ‘C’ Series Index to 1961, and the Consumer Price Index until December, 1966, the $1 granted in the recent total wage decision would have simply restored the 6 Capital Cities Basic Wage to the 1953 basic wage adjusted only for price movement.

Nothing was gained for 14 years’ national productivity increases. This emphasises the need for a new approach and vigorous industrial campaigning in wage campaigns.

The struggle for over-award payments, spear-headed by the shop com-
mittee movement in the Metal Trades, for many years has been an example of the rank and file rectifying the failure of the ACTU to provide national leadership in the wages field.

The ACTU is faced with the criticism that it fails to initiate new demands, to plan specific proposals to improve working conditions, social services, etc., and plays the role of limiting its activity around demands to unsupported deputations to Parliamentarians and poorly publicised campaigns on matters of national interest.

The ACTU fails to emphasise its independent role, being content to play a secondary role to the leadership of the ALP in important national matters, whereas in countries overseas national trade unions centres provide the main rallying and organising point on all issues concerning the working people.

This failure to initiate such activities has been counterposed by the workers with the emergence of other trade union centres within Australia within the white collar organisations, devoting considerable time to such subjects as education, social services, automation, etc., and assists the view expressed by some that the blue collar workers’ organisations are no longer able to provide national industrial and political leadership on such important matters.

Trade union officials who make up the majority and who are more centre of the road in their view should see that the price of accepting complete right wing domination by loading the Congress vote for that end is serious in itself. More importantly in the long run, the ACTU has its authority undermined by such actions and this in turn weakens the much needed authoritative central trade union organisation in Australia.

The weakening of the progressive trade union forces is essential to the aims of the Federal Government policies. Their need to divert more money to its war programme requires a lowering of living standards. War requires personal sacrifices for the mass of the people. This is the lesson of history, less wages, more tax, less social services, greater exploitation of labor and more restriction of liberties.

The ACTU must either submit to a reduction in living standards or must break out to provide a centre of opposition to these policies by stepping into its historically correct role of unifier and organiser of the Australian labor movement.

JIM BAIRD

LEISURE AND WORK

READING ALR recently one gained the impression that some contributors believe that weekend recreational pursuits are superseding the daily contacts in the process of production in determining attitudes.

Working in the administration block of an established firm while extensive remodelling is being undertaken one is enabled to renew the perspective of the influence of our occupational environment.

The clerks, typists and non-top managers dine on laminex tables, but the Directorate have tablecloths and glass dishes of fruit of all kinds not available to the lower strata.

When the entrepreneurs dined upstairs in the unaltered building the de luxe atmosphere was not readily noticeable. Under the present temporary regime of three sittings on the ground floor, class distinction is obvious and serves to emphasise that social thinking is determined more by our daily vocational environment than by week-end diversion.

TILLER-TOILER-TELLER.