DISCUSSION:

STUDENT ACTIVISM

COMMENTING on the questions asked of student leaders (Student Activism ALR No. 4, 1968) I claim that the main causes are generally, the failure of modern industrial, bureaucratically organised societies to meet the individual human needs; particularly, for Australia, (1) the Vietnam horror; (2) desire of individuals and minority groups to participate meaningfully in government process, and feelings of frustration resulting from the capitalist establishment's denial of their rights; (3) increasing evidence of the capitalist power elite's suppression of humanistic values.

The movement receives its impetus from the contradictions which this present form of society cannot resolve; however the actual form of its action seems to draw on the examples of movements (not only student movements) overseas — e.g., SDS, Martin Luther King and non-violent civil disobedience.

I favor student power provided it is understood that there is nothing sacred about student action, which should be seen as part of the general radical and working class movement for a more progressive society. Student power could be achieved (here) by increasing the social consciousness of students, by constant attitude change campaigns, to the point at which a majority of the student body demanded the right to active participation in the administration of the University and the Students' Union, as well as in the social issues of the day. The first effect of this achievement of power would probably be a radicalisation of campus administration, of quality of courses, and the more significant effect — probably a more powerful protest movement coherently demanding change to a more humanitarian social organisation.

I think that much could be gained by a close contact and co-operation of all progressive people and their organisations. I should like to see the student radicals learn more from the CPA in terms of ideology and philosophy, and establish even stronger contact with all leftwing sections of the trade union movement and ALP. I would like to see the CPA and all left forces grow in strength and form an effective working coalition in issues of social change — education, Aboriginal and other minority rights, socialism: — nationalisation of big industry and finance, better social services, etc. I would like to see diminution in rightwing anti-progressive elements in the ALP and such unions as the AWU.

As to the future — after any excesses of youthful enthusiasm are tempered, most of the young radicals of today should be good supporters of the left, and perhaps even leaders in tomorrow's left forces. Perhaps a very few, with little contact with reality in terms of the present situation, may become disillusioned and opt out of the political struggle.

I believe that a democratic society is one where the economic and power organisations guarantee to all citizens to develop their own potentialities to the fullest along scientifically and humanistically progressive lines; where there is maximum freedom to participate in the positive development of all mankind; this pre-supposes a socialist economic organisation com-
bined with free communication of ideas, and the rights of all to participate in decisions of public administration. In my view, censorship of ideas and communications would be incompatible with this ideal, and the only suppression of human responses would be suppression of cruelty and all anti-progressive and anti-humanistic actions. Ideas should not be suppressed in a democratic society; any foolish or anti-progressive ideas should be capable of scientific disproof. This would necessitate a high level of social consciousness and willingness to participate in administration, on the part of most people. It would necessitate rationality combined with a love of people, and of progress.

I agree with socialism as a necessary step towards setting up a truly humanistic society, based on recognition of the dignity of man, of universal human rights, and international peace, and co-operation of all peoples in the common goals of social, economic, scientific and cultural progress, for the benefit of all human beings, in a world no longer divided by class distinction.

Bob Morrish

WHY CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

EACH ONE OF US may see the conflict of ideas and political, military and international relationships between the people of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and other Communist Parties in his own way and out of his own particular experiences and make different judgments.

Careful reading of the articles of Professors Hermach and Hodek and Doctors Richta and Levcik, appearing in the journal, Czech. Trade Unions during the past three years, leads me to the view that there may be another area of conflict about which little appears to have been said in the Australian debate, but which is, nevertheless, basic to the other considerations.

This is the conflict of developments and ideas within the economic base and the working relationships of people at the commencement of the scientific and technological revolution within Czechoslovakia and other socialist societies.

Perhaps in some of the Czech leaders’ explanations of what they feel is the essential path for a socialist country entering the scientific and technological revolution, there are even more conflicts with their Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian and East German comrades than have yet been revealed and many lessons for Australians too; more than in the debates of the philosophic, political and military issues! It may be the uniqueness of the Czech position which draws the fires of their comrades but holds out so much of value for Communist Parties like that of Australia.

The big problem in the economic base of Czechoslovakia increased during the past five years, as the need for intensive rather than extensive development became paramount. In this regard, perhaps the Czech economy has been in a quite different circumstance to the Russian, Polish, Hungarian and Bulgarian economies. Some of the consequences of this different economic circumstance of Czechoslovakia was explained in the Action Program.

It is, of course, quite impossible to summarise the whole of the articles on “Can the Future be Planned”, “Twentieth Century Man”, “The Self-Awareness of Socialism” and “Our Conception of Humanization” or Professor Hermach’s large thesis in which he deals with the essentially “civilisational” process of socialism. These are
large ideas that take one even beyond the essentials of humanism.

In respect of economic planning; their views appear to be that five, seven or ten year plans can no longer satisfy the requirements of overall progress. "... the tasks which the planning of the national economy has been expected to fulfil were much more modest than what is meant by 'Planning the future'. Our plans were drawn up for relatively short periods not exceeding five years and did not entail the entire complexity of social life. Under the term 'planning the future' we do not only understand the future prospects of the economy, but also the long-term shaping of the entire substructure of civilisation of conditions for human life. In our research into the social and human conditions of contemporary civilisation we have arrived at the conclusion that we are on the threshold of a period of far-reaching changes in the fundamental processes of civilisation, changes which are no less significant than the industrial revolution of the past century, but which are, however, in many respects deeper and more profound than ever before. It can be seen that it is exactly this initial process of changes, which we call the scientific-technological revolution, that is becoming the source of all efforts in the world today for a purposive management of the civilisational processes and a long-term planning of the future".1

What is particularly interesting in relation to that kind of view is the extent to which state monopoly capitalism's planners have embraced the same perspectives on a second industrial revolution and its requirements for capitalism. Does that mean that the Czech Marxists equipped with the tools of both scientific and humanistic disciplines have become the greatest revisionists? Or does it mean that they are advancing to grapple with all of the dynamics of society in the scientific-technological revolution? Professor Hermach gives some of his concepts of the latter in "The Self Awareness of Socialism":

"The optimism of socialism does not and cannot represent the irreputable security of a precisely planned prediction. It cannot do so, not only because social motion, influenced by the human majesty of freedom, decision and creation, does not permit causality to transform into a mechanical force, such as the motion of an object, but particularly because of the fact, that contrary to the majority of historical phenomena, socialism can only materialise as a radical and creative act. That is why socialism is threatened by each attempt to force its motion into pre-arranged strict directives. Since thinking about socialism has for a certain period been subjected, by the absolutism of the plan, to pre-arranged necessities, and point-blank causality, the obvious result was the appearance of certain ailments in the life of socialism..."

"Since socialism cannot develop in any other way but as a continuous creative activity which keeps overcoming the stages of development it has already reached, every primitive comprehension of the laws governing the development of society and the necessities following from their application has a deformatory effect on its motion."2

Hermach cited Karl Marx in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon" to show the interruption and self-criticism of proletarian revolutions: "... proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, criticise themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses..."
and paltriness of their first attempts."

It may be that the Czechs, with a unique experience in pre-war bourgeois democracy, German occupation and a peaceful transition to socialism on a technological and human base rather different to that of all of its intervening socialist neighbours, may be enabled to judge "the inadequacies, weaknesses and (relative) paltriness of their first attempts" at preparing the optimistic picture of socialism in the last quarter of the Twentieth Century.

"COLANTO."

1 Drs. Levcik and Richta "Can the Future be Planned?" "Czech Trade Unions" No. 1, 1968, p.15.


MANUFACTURED MENACE

PINCHGUT, a tiny sandstone fortress on a tiny sandstone outcrop in the centre of Sydney's huge harbor, was built more than a century ago because someone in authority said the Russians were going to invade the Colony. In Victoria a fortress was erected on Mud Island in Port Phillip Bay.

If the responsible Czarist Minister had been aware of this development, he might well have pointed out that "invasion means warships and a fleet. We have a tiny fleet. Nearest port is Vladivostock in the Far East, a fishing village. Everything would have to come from St. Petersburg, twenty thousand kilometres away, go round Africa. England rules the seas. Having no Siberia it needs its Australian colonies for its surplus convicts The report is the babbling of an idiot".

Completely absurd as was the report of a Russian Invasion, the so-called menace of The Yellow Peril was just as absurd. Yet the old Bulletin paraded this spectre for years. Never any explanation of how the still feudal "Yellow" countries were to come the thousands of miles, with England still undisputed Mistress of the Seas and protector of Australia, one of its most profitable colonies.

Nineteen-seventeen and the Socialist Revolution in Russia gave the world's politicians and newspapers a bogey they have paraded for half a century. Even after fifty years of Peaceful Coexistence they still deny its possibility. The Press throughout the world never 'lets up' in their anti-Soviet, anti-Communist propaganda. Most of it is incredibly childish, but the memory of the reading public is short, and knowing no history, they are not equipped to recognise falsification of history.

However the Australian military forces, lacking a really good, hair-raising spectre, progressed slowly. Then two World Wars created a machine that had a vested interest in Menaces and Perils, particularly and significantly as in that period much capital was invested in tin, rubber, oil, silver-lead and minor industry in South East Asian countries. This made it imperative that Australian Governments have some bogey to justify the expenditure of millions, rising to tens of millions, then to hundreds of millions, finally, in 1968, to $1,118,000,000 (Treasurer McMahon's figure). To protect the country from . . .

From what? This is a very awkward question and is rarely asked. Yet occasionally, the real reason, printed for all to see (not only in the Financial Pages) is the declaration that Australia has substantial investments in the area which must be protected.

So — a Menace there was. Indonesia! Yes, the Indonesians were going to attack Australia. Again no explanation; only an incredible acceptance of Governmental and newspaper-backed publicity that this was so. How the Indonesians, with little shipping, no war in-
dustry of importance, lacking in fin-
ance, impoverished, enormous domestic
problems, were to launch a large scale
invasion (let us forget the matters of
navy, shipping, air protection, lines of
communication) and land a million
fully equipped and adequately armed
soldiers, hospitals, food, munitions,
armament on our shores was never
dealt with, for the very good reason
that it could not be dealt with, even in
fantasy!

Melbourne journalist and writer on
Vietnam, Denis Warner, stated on ABC
News Commentary on Sept. 7 that the
purchase of the F111 was because the
Australian Government was afraid of
Indonesia! Now that the communist
risk had disappeared, he said, Australia
must help the present “safe” forces
there.

Gone the Russian Peril of last cen-
tury. Gone the Yellow Peril. Gone the
Indonesian Peril. Gone the Vietnam
Peril! Yes, gone the Vietnam Peril, for
there can be no end but victory for the
Vietnamese national forces. The past
repeated unequivocal statements by
President Johnson that America in-
tended to stay in Vietnam, no longer
have value. The pronouncement by his
representative, Averill Harriman, leader
of the U.S. delegation, is an acceptance
of irresistible facts. Harriman said
(A. F. Press cable, The Australian
7/6/68) that America sought neither
military bases nor any other favored
positions in South Vietnam as an out-
come of the war, and this also applied
to Laos. He said the United States be-
thieved that countries in South East
Asia should be free to determine their
own internal affairs. “We look forward
to the day when our troops can be
withdrawn. Our objectives are strictly
limited. In Vietnam we want no alli-
ances. We have no desire to threaten
or harm the people of North Vietnam
or to invade your country”.

If one read that statement in the
light of American conduct in the past —
and even in the present — it would
be to repress disgust at the hypocrisy.
America, building its forces from
hundreds to half a million and using
all the known horrors of warfare, each
year promised victory in the next year.
But Harriman’s words have to be read
in the light of events today, with the
initiative in the hands of the national
forces and world and domestic feeling
against the aggression widening and
mounting to decisive heights. In what
faith Harriman’s words were given mat-
ters little — events will force their con-
firmation.

Actually, Vietnam never became an
official endorsed Peril. This was be-
cause of confusion and disagreement
as to what was behind it. And behind
it, the seekers for Menaces declared, was
China. How now was Australia men-
aced? What applied to the Indonesian
Menace applied with greater force to
China: tiny shipping tonnage, enorm-
ous domestic problems, including the
desperate task of lifting production to
satisfy, not only the basic population
but the annual twelve million popula-
tion increase, apart from a number of
other deficiencies and handicaps in-
cluding a couple of thousand extra
miles of communications with no ade-
quate means of protecting them.

This is now being recognised. Thus
J. A. C. Mackie and Milton Osborne
(quoted by The Australian) stated:
“The notion that China was threaten-
ing to sweep down through South East
Asia in armed strength, or that there
was a Peking-led Communist conspiracy
to subvert one country in the region
after another was barely credible.” Rob-
ert Duffield, The Australian’s Foreign
Editor, wiped the idea in other words:
“China”, he wrote, “has never sent
conquering armies to ‘colonise’ outer
areas of China; Mao Tse Tung has
shown no more desire to do so than
the Ming Dynasty did”.

The Americans threw in the Domino
Theory to strengthen the propaganda
about the Chinese Menace. Of this,
Duffield wrote when the President of Thailand expressed his disbelief: "Now, if Thanom Kittikachorn no longer believes in the "Domino Theory", what right have those defence hawks on the (Australian) Liberal back benches to believe in it?"

History shows that Australia faced no Peril from feudal Czarist Russia more than a century ago. It faced no Yellow Peril from feudal, semi-colonial China half a century later. It faced no Indonesian Peril. It faced no Perils in the Yesterdays. It faces none today that economic assistance, understanding, acceptance of peaceful co-existence and recognition of national sovereign rights would not neutralise. With those principles as a foundation for Australian foreign policy, South East Asia could and would become an area in which the awakening peoples seeking national sovereignty could steadily work out policies which, with our assistance, could be mutually fruitful.

NORMAN FREEHILL

METAL TRADES UNIONS

RECENTLY the Metal Trades Federation celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. This central organisation, uniting the metal unions, was inaugurated at a conference held in Melbourne, June 14-16, 1943. The Metal Trades Federation, with a Federal Council consisting of two representatives of the Federal Executives of each of the affiliated unions, and organisations in various States, consisting of representatives of State branches of the affiliated unions, has functioned continuously and has played an outstanding role in the general struggles of the trade union movement.

One of the aims of the Federation was to foster amalgamation. At the time of its formation, the Federated Ironworkers' Association was in process of amalgamation with the Munition Workers' Union. The Sheet Metal Workers' Union and the Agricultural Implement and Stovemakers' Union were negotiating on the question of an amalgamation which was completed in 1945. Recently the amalgamation of the Boilermakers' and Blacksmiths' Societies has given a further stimulus towards the Federation's goal of one union in the metal industry.

A history of the Metal Trades Federation, covering the struggles of the period of the Second World War, the problems and struggles of the early post war years, and the increasingly important role of the metal unions in the national trade union movement over recent years, would be of value to the working class movement. During the existence of the Federation, the metal industry has expanded and the metal unions now have a combined membership of more than 300,000. New problems of the wages struggle, technological changes, and the increasing need for trade union activity on social problems generally, call for still closer organisation of the metal unions.

The ACTU Executive is to convene a conference of the metal unions to discuss proposals for a joint metal trades department within the framework of the ACTU. Metal unions have welcomed this objective, conditional on a sufficient measure of control by the metal unions on policy and administration, to maintain the level established by the Metal Trades Federation, and to enable further advancement.

T. WRIGHT

FOR AMALGAMATION

ALTHOUGH THE ACTU has indulged in severe condemnation of the Arbitration Commission's decision abolishing the basic wage in favor of a total wage, it is possible that unions
will eventually benefit by developing greater unity, and in many cases complete amalgamation.

Amalgamation has occurred in some cases and although some large craft unions are proud of their independence, they will die a slow death, unless they are prepared to join larger organisations.

On the one hand many employers spurred by the profit motive and the struggle for survival in a highly competitive market are constantly reforming themselves by mergers and takeovers.

They also have strong employers' federations staffed by experts with seemingly unlimited funds to resist union demands.

As well as being organised on a national basis some employers are governed by international agreements.

Unions when facing such opposition often unite but petty differences are often resurrected when amalgamation is mentioned.

In the present economic situation we have seen a close association between the Australian Railways' Union and the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen and a joint presentation for just wage increases being made to the Arbitration Commission by these unions.

Because of this close association in wage struggles of the past, these unions have not felt the need for amalgamation; but with automation making severe inroads on the economical and numerical strength of these unions some consideration will have to be given to amalgamation in the near future.

Looking at the picture in a broader sense we find over 90 unions affiliated with the ACTU broadly divided into industry groups, but although many agree to the principle of amalgamation few have done so.

Some union officials say that by amalgamation thousands of dollars could be diverted into more useful channels, such as improvements in trade union research, enlargement of strike funds, better welfare benefits for members, etc.

In view of the fact that all future claims for wage increases will have to be on a work-value basis, some unions have employed research officers, with a university degree on a substantial salary.

The money necessary for such an expansion is often beyond the scope of a small union.

Automation is slowly eroding traditional craft concepts, making skills and whole occupations obsolete.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the railways, where many signalmen have been displaced in favor of automatic track signalling requiring the attention of merely one or two operators.

Even the grade of train driver has been threatened in England by the introduction of an automated train not requiring the services of an operator.

Although employers have saved thousands of dollars by a denial of "flow on", by order of the Arbitration Commission, unions have found it necessary to unite industrially to achieve just wage increases.

A feature of the present railway work value case has been the great unity between the ARU and the AFULE on an Australia-wide front.

Such unity has eventuated in European countries, and Australians must realise that the existence of a large number of trade unions, many of them small and insignificant goes against the future progress of the union movement as a whole.

L. E. Speers
EDUCATION IN NEW GUINEA

THE ADMINISTRATION is indulging in a spate of self praise for the advance of education over the last fifteen years. Compared with the previous sixty years of colonial rule it is certainly a success story but the failures of the past are no basis for comparison.

In 1963 two separate surveys were taken, one by the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development, usually known as the World Bank, and the other by the Commission on Higher Education in Papua and New Guinea, referred to here as the Currie Commission after Sir George Currie, the Chairman of that Commission. The divergences in the figures are not a reflection on the surveyors but arise from the lack of accurate data in the Territory.

The World Bank survey shows that 1958 was the first year in which the pupils attending schools with a recognisable standard were separated from the sub-standard schools. The primary school attendance was then 43,000 in both administration and mission schools. In 1963 the World Bank survey showed that 149,552 pupils were attending primary schools. The Currie Report's figures were 147,112. The World Bank survey stated that the number of children of school age was 492,000. Those attending school were 30.3 per cent of the total.

Both surveys projected their figures to 1968. The World Bank survey expected 247,957 pupils in primary schools and the Currie Commission 252,140. Both these surveys were made when Mr. Hasluck was Minister for Territories and were based on the tempo of advancement at that time. The schools in existence at that time could accommodate more children than were attending.

Answering a question in the House of Representatives last year, the present Minister, Mr. Barnes, gave the number of children in primary schools as 200,260 out of a potential of 549,000 —36.4 per cent at school. (Hansard 18/10/67.)

The present Minister assumed office in December 1963, and as the projections indicate immediately began to cut back the education program, stating that further emphasis would be on economic development.

There is evidence of considerable economic expansion over the last four years but its impact on the two million New Guineans is negligible, because an illiterate people are unable to take advantage of the changes. Irrespective of the amount of outside capital investment New Guinea will remain a backward and primitive country if the mass of the people continue to be illiterate. At the present time it is doubtful if more than 15 per cent can read and write.

Mr. J. K. McCarthy, who was with the Administration for 40 years, is seriously concerned with the lack of education. "There is a desperate need for educated Papuans and New Guineans and we are paying dearly for the lack of schools during the early years. My job made me constantly aware of this and I wish that the process could be hastened." Instead of hastening, we have the deplorable position that the ratio of school attenders to the numbers eligible has advanced less than 7 per cent instead of the 25 per cent envisaged in the projections of 1963.

An added deterrent to the expansion of education is that since last year a charge has been imposed. Parents now have to pay $1 per year for each child attending primary school and $3 for those attending secondary schools. This is no way to encourage people with no educational background to seek an education for their children.
It is contrary to the Education Acts in Australia and denies the provisions of the United Nations Human Rights Charter which states Article 26 (1) “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.”

The Barnes Administration claims that the emphasis has been transferred from primary to secondary education, but the number of students in secondary schools is also well below the projections made in the World Bank survey and the Currie Commission Report.

In answer to a question in the House of Representatives (Hansard 18/10/67) Mr. Barnes stated that there were 11,396 students enrolled in Administration and Mission secondary schools. The projections given for 1967 in the World Bank Survey were 15,373 students and the Currie Commission Report 15,543. Technical students exceeded the projections by over 154 per cent 3,177 as against 1,251 projected.

The opposition of Mr. Barnes and the then Minister for Education, Senator Gorton, to the establishment of a university in the Territory apparently had the support of Federal Cabinet. This opposition was only defeated by the breadth of the protest from both Australia and New Guinea, but it has the effect of delaying its establishment by two valuable years. As no special provisions are made in the Budgets for the necessary buildings, these are only becoming available this year. The university authorities state that their plans for development are being frustrated by the lack of funds and also by the fact that allocations are made on an annual basis although each intake of students is for three or four years. Thus the university did not know what funds were available for 1968-69 until the Budget was brought down in August, although the Currie Commission had recommended that at least until 1970, the university’s funds should come direct from the Commonwealth as a special grant.

As a result of such circumstances, Professor Inglis, Acting Vice-Chancellor, said in February that the university would have to refuse admittance to 35 eligible students this year, at a time when there were only four indigenous graduates in the whole country. Present enrolments are (Sydney Morning Herald 23/2/68): 71 students taking second year courses, 160 taking first year courses and just over 100 taking the preliminary year.

To achieve the objective of economic advance, so often portrayed by Mr. Barnes, needs a changed attitude to expenditure on education. As stressed in the Currie Commission Report “education is a producer good.” In order to get production under way it is necessary to make considerable capital outlay.

In order to gain the greatest advantage from such expenditure it will be necessary to make a frontal attack on adult illiteracy, because the adult population have the immediate task of developing the productive capacity of the Territory. The elimination of illiteracy is being undertaken in a number of countries, including Cuba, which claims to have eradicated illiteracy in a year and is now implementing a program to raise these former illiterates to primary school standard. If this success can be achieved by a nation with a poor and backward economy how much easier must it be for a highly industrialised and wealthy economy like Australia?

Any proposals for the eradication of illiteracy in New Guinea will meet with fierce opposition from the monopolies which batten on New Guinea and thus have a vested interest in its backwardness. But they are only a small
group whose power arises from their connections of wealth and association within the Establishment. If sufficient New Guineans and Australians, by their united effort, show that they wish to see an advanced and prosperous New Guinea, these people can be thrust aside.

**JIM COOPER**

**THE LIBERTY TO CONTROL**

**THE DRAFT CHARTER** of democratic rights issued by the Communist Party of Australia says that "the democratic participation of the people in making decisions which basically affect their lives has to be the foremost demand of movements for extension of democracy". This struggle is to be engaged now not after socialism.

Ralph Gibson in *Australian Left Review* Number Three 1968, lays a heavy emphasis on "liberties:" the right to strike, penal laws, conscientious objectors, police repression. "More is needed however," he says, "than preserving the liberty to struggle. What is needed above all is the struggle itself, the most powerful struggle by wide sections of the people against the power of monopoly capital." Failure, he warns, means fascism.

This is surely correct. Correct too the historical truth of Lenin’s observation that democracy was “only for the minority, only for the possessing classes, only for the rich.” Preservation of rights against the repressive measures of monopoly, made possible by its dominant control of the State machine is undoubtedly political lesson Number one for any communist.

The draft however seems to me to introduce a connected but separate issue namely, democratic control. Australian communists in the past have not advanced this concept with any degree of confidence or consistency, fluctuating, as they were, between ideas of a left united parliamentary front, and entering Parliament only to expose it.

Now mass strikes, demonstrations and other forms of protest are a necessary instrument of the working people in the effort to obtain “participatory democracy”, but they do not constitute, in themselves, “control.” If we are to use the term “liberty,” then it would be necessary to coin a phrase "liberty to control." However the very real complexities and natural personal limitations in participatory control of industry and affairs by the working people, mark off this democratic right as something qualitatively different to the traditional liberties of speech, publication, procession, worship and assembly.

These “liberties to struggle” will have to occur decisively at flash points in the long struggle to establish “liberty to control.”

The draft does not suggest that democratic control will be a walk-over, but a “struggle,” that is, another front of struggle against the monopolies. The draft does not expect, of course full control for this would be socialism. It contemplates a “measure” of control. It says "The struggle to achieve measures of democratic control in deciding conditions of work, development, planning...”

"... popular control in relation to national development, the economy, the distribution of the national income and the problem of coping with technological change.” Such words seem mild, but carried out, they would challenge the “command-posts” of the Establishment, both in industry and the State.

Incidentally, the behind-the-scenes monopoly dictatorship about which
Ralph Gibson rightly warns, may be understood by the left-wing, but the ordinary citizen does not understand it. In the process of a protracted struggle for a reasonable measure of democracy, along with other struggles, the masses can learn from experience who lies behind "the Establishment." They can learn too that in some institutions, there are false "talking shop" aspects which must be discarded to be of use.

But . . . by what precise means is the "participation in control" to be exercised? The draft gives no clues.

The purpose of this contribution is not to answer the question but to comment on the nature of "control."

The concept of control varies according to a person's concept of society. For example, at one extreme there are anarchist ideas which regard society as a collection of disconnected individuals, an "atomised" society. Organisations of individuals of any character are regarded as an infringement of individual liberty. Therefore not only is "bureaucracy" wrong, but any form of State apparatus, political parties, or even unions. Consequently there is opposition to planning and consistent policies, both of which assume organisation. Control is seen as an individually-exercised operation, with each individual having an identical right of control to any other.

At the other extreme are ideas of right-wing socialists who regard the exercise of the ballot-box for Parliamentary candidates as the ultimate extent to which the citizen need participate. Such people, in Australia, are not given to theorising, but the underlying assumption could only be an elitist one: "Leave it to me: all you have to do is to vote for me."

Neither of these concepts corresponds to modern life. Today's giant industrial complexes, where the division of labor has proceeded a hundredfold over the days when Marx wrote, together with the world-wide co-ordination of production and exchange are wonders of organisation. Without such organisation, the leisure, education and culture of the working people of the privileged Western world, and with it a high level of democratic control, would be impossible.

Wherever man turns in modern capitalist society, he finds himself as part of a production team. And this holds irrespective of the pace of technological change about which the late Dave Morris and "Colanti" have some differences. This is so because we use the word "production" in the sense that Marx did, meaning the production of surplus value, so that the so-called tertiary "services" industries and their white-collar employees are included.

Each production team then, in its turn is intermeshed with other production teams in every direction, the whole held together in the political structure of the State.

The trouble is not, as the anarchists would have it, that there are teams and a political structure, but that the whole lot are controlled by capitalists forced by the very system of production to ignore the increasingly knowledgeable opinions of their workers, and their increasing needs for more creative work, each at his own level of skill, experience and capacity.

Moreover, the position can only be reversed by the workers building powerful job organisations, industrial organisations and political organisations, advancing better policies than the capitalists and culminating in complete public ownership.

Democratic control in this context therefore can, at its fullest, be expressed decisively by individuals only as part of a collective.
The ballot-box parliamentary socialist, and the hundreds of thousands of street demonstrators will play an irreplaceable part in the political struggle, but neither can substitute for participatory worker-control. Only an organised struggle for this, systematically uncovering the real source of authority and opposition to the workers' cause can serve to correct those with trends towards anarchism or towards parliamentarism, and unite them with the mass of working people.

M. Crow

UNLUCKY AUSTRALIANS

I FIRST became aware that Frank Hardy was involved in the Newcastle Waters/Wave Hill struggle of the Aborigines from a cutting from The Australian I received in the German Democratic Republic. My first reaction was to ask myself, "How the devil did Frank get up there and what's he doing with the Aborigines?"

The Unlucky Australians is an an answer to the questions I asked myself. It describes what brought him to the "top end" of the Northern Territory, how he became involved in the strike of the Aboriginal pastoral workers, in their struggle for land rights and in their historic action in "squatting" on Wattie Creek.

The value of the book is twofold, first because it exposes at first hand before familiarity had dulled the author's perception, the humiliating conditions under which the Aborigines employed in the pastoral industry of the north live, and secondly because it has caught almost photographically a particular phase in the Aborigines' struggle for emancipation.

Inevitably comparisons must be made with other works on the Aborigines — Herbert's Capricornia and Stuart's Yandy as examples. Both, in this writer's opinion, are far better literature, but neither had the impact which one can anticipate for The Unlucky Australians.

Hardy's impressionism coupled with reportage has one serious weakness. He has been unable to fit what he described into its historical perspective. The 1946 Pilbara strike of Aboriginal stockmen "intrigued" (p.19) him but little more. He cited Dexter Daniels on the influence of the Gurindji on the thinking of the Roper River Aborigines (p.242) but its importance for the future course of the Aborigines' struggle seems to have been missed.

He has written about an important phase of an historical process without fully realising it. Egon Kisch, the master of reportage, before undertaking an assignment immersed himself in the literature and the history of the subject about which he was to write. Hardy could well have done the same, or insofar as he was tipped fortuitously into the Aborigines' struggle he should have done his reading before recording his experiences.

He notes almost incidentally the help the Trade Unions gave in bringing Dexter Daniels and Captain Major south to speak and collect strike funds but the historic role of the working class in the Aborigines' struggle is obscured. Is it adequate to comment in parentheses "(the better the day, the better the deed)" that the strike at Newcastle Waters commenced on 1st May? Was it mere coincidence that the Pilbara strike also commenced on 1st May? Or is there some genetic connection?

Before the war the only white people the Aborigines of the north came in contact with were those interested in their exploitation in one form or another — the pastoralists, the missions and the government bureaucracy. But this changed with Pearl Harbour in 1941, when thousands of troops — Hardy amongst them at Mataranka — and
the Civil Construction Corps, operated in the north. These were largely workers in or out of uniform and some part at least of the ideology of the working class was taken over by the Aborigines and adapted to their purposes.

In 1938 fifty per cent of the Aborigines in the Northern Territory were described as "nomads": today there are none. They have broken their tribal bonds and are becoming increasingly conscious of themselves as one people on an Australia-wide basis. The yeast is in the dough and what Hardy writes about is part of the fermentation.

Because it is one man’s account of his experiences it is natural that Frank Hardy himself is part of the story but is his obtrusion excessive? Why does he appear in ten of the twenty two photographs illustrating the book, mostly in the centre of the picture? In contrast Dexter Daniels and Captain Major, two of the main Aboriginal participants in the struggle, score three appearances each.

By personalising the account it remains unclear — at least in this reviewer’s mind — the extent to which other white people influenced or were engaged in the Gurindji struggle.

One technique that Hardy has employed to advantage is his use of tape recording transcriptions. About a fifth of the book is made up of such transcriptions. They help in no small measure to bring his account to life and give it depth. These transcriptions incidentally have considerable anthropological value.

To summarise: The Unlucky Australians is a timely and important book. Its weaknesses are of a subjective nature and are outweighed by the book’s merits particularly its educational value for that portion of public opinion which has no experience of the plight of the Aborigines in the north. It is, moreover, an example of the way one communist responded to injustice, immersed himself in a struggle and developed initiatives which took the demand of Aborigines for land rights out of the Northern Territory and into the conscience of the nation. By implication the book can fulfil a certain role in determining tactics in the struggle around Aboriginal land rights and against the overseas companies, monopolising the best pastoral land of the north. One thing is quite certain, the disgraceful “residential area, horse paddock and orchard” decided on by the Federal Government will not satisfy, but will further incense the Gurindji who had petitioned for restoration of 500 square miles of their tribal land.

The front will broaden to take in an increasing number of Aborigines, and at the same time involve wider sections of the non-Aboriginal population.

Frederick Rose