WORKERS’ CONTROL

In the last issue of ALR, Jack Hutson opened a discussion on the question of workers’ control. In this issue the contributors listed below answer questions posed by ALR, and Jack Hutson comments on their views. Further contributions of up to 1000 words are invited.

All the contributors to this discussion are militant unionists.

JOHN BAKER is an official of a postal union, and of the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations.

FRANK BOLLINS is an organiser of the Sheetmetal Workers’ Union in Sydney.

JIM CRAIG is a boilermaker, a migrant from Scotland now in Brisbane.

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BRIAN MOWBRAY is a maintenance fitter at GM-H in South Australia, and chairman of the Combined Shop Stewards’ Committee.

GERRY PHELAN, formerly a fitter, is a research worker at the AEU-Boilermakers’ research centre.

PETER SYMON is a member of the Executive of the Port Adelaide Branch of the Waterside Workers’ Federation.

What do you understand by the demand for workers’ control?

BAKER: Workers’ control can mean different things to the workers of different industries. Italian and British postal workers seek a measure of authority, prior consultation, and right to participate in decision-making at many levels of their postal services. Some of these demands are being met to a certain extent and with a measure of challenge to the “right of the management to manage.” In some respects the demands for workers’ control would mean, when successful, only bringing up from the kind of infrastructure of industrial relations many of the things that unionists insist should be done, and managers and owners agree to do, but without them becoming part of the open, acknowledged structure of industrial rights, practices and relations. It could mean very much more, however, but that would depend on how well the working group in the factory, office or university understood the theory and practice of industrial relations and industrial conflict, which may be one of the suitable descriptions of the class struggle in some of its forms.
BOLLINS: Basically, I believe that the demand for worker control of industry is a situation where the organised workers of a particular job would exercise a decisive influence on the general conduct of that industry. This decisive influence would flow from the militant demands of the workers, expressed through mass meeting decisions and implemented by direct negotiations between the workers' representatives and the employer. Not only should worker control concern itself with routine basic issues but it should also set out to abolish the senseless cut throat competition that is flourishing in industry today to the detriment of the working class.

CRAIG: Workers' control must mean an effective say in the decisions on such matters as wage fixation, deployment of labor, safety, etc., and as a job delegate I can well imagine the employers' reaction to any attempt to implement them in the present situation. For instance, any attempt to demand access to the employers' financial records in any discussions on wages or conditions, whilst a fair demand in the circumstances, would create a reaction from the employer which would make the churches' reaction to Giordano Bruno's theories mild in comparison.

FRENEY: Workers' control has been well defined by the British advocates of this concept, Ken Coates and Tony Topham: "'Control' is not identical with self-management: it implies a dual relationship in which one human party constrains (superintends, supervises) another. 'Workers' Control' is control over capitalists, limiting their powers to act as they will". Workers' control differs in form from participation in that workers themselves, directly or through elected committees, take whole spheres of activity into their power. They do not share this power with the boss, but take it from him. A good example is safety on building jobs such as arose in Brisbane recently. The workers managed through their strike to force the boss on one job to give them control over safety. Yet this was only a temporary victory because the boss was unwilling to allow this to continue and was able in a month to take that power into his own hands again (although allowing some form of "participation" by the workers).

MOWBRAY: The demand for Workers' Control within the existing framework of private and/or public ownership of industry and arbitration is a demand for the right of the workers of hand and brain who actually create the product for an effective say in the overall planning and running of the factory. Workers' Control is synonymous with the recognition by the employer of shop committees, and the committees' rights to be involved in planning production schedules (e.g. at present the conveyor line is speeded-up to make up for mechanical or electrical breakdowns of a minor
nature. No consideration is given to the production workers involved — the schedule must be fulfilled). Plant Safety Committee — Suggestion Committee — in fact the workers' representatives must be directly involved in every aspect of working conditions in the factory.

PHELAN: The traditional belief of the working people and of the capitalists too has been that socialism means workers' control as distinct from capitalist control. Under capitalism the people are increasingly doubting that the decisions relating to their needs made by the establishment are in their best interests and they are turning their doubts into action. In the face of this action capitalism will be forced to make some concessions in the granting of some measure of workers' participation. Under socialism, as it is understood to be a transition to communism, the struggle won't be to extract concessions from a group of owners but there may be a struggle to impose the point of view of the majority on the government political leadership if that leadership is out of touch with the requirements of society and the mood of the people.

SYMON: Workers' control to me means the victory of the working class over the capitalist class in the struggle for socialism. Anything less than this is not "control" but "worker participation in management." To have control the working class must win politically and economically, establish a working class government and effectively run the State machine in the interests of the working class and its allies. It must also achieve the socialist nationalisation of industry, establish a system of planning and the appointment of management loyal to the working class. The winning of workers' control is, therefore, a revolutionary act and requires the fullest participation of the working class and its allies.

How important and effective do you think this demand is in stimulating class struggle and developing socialist consciousness?

BAKER: The demand for workers' control and practices of workers' control, if carried forward with an understanding of the industrial relations processes should lead not to collaboration, but to more far-reaching demands. It had something of the Mae West formula — "Familiarity with me doesn't breed contempt, only more familiarity."

BOLLINS: The importance of a developed campaign for worker control should not be underestimated. In the process of getting workers to accept such a program their understanding of the class nature and control of present day society would be stimulated. The modern capitalist state rejects completely any semblance
of worker control. Attempts to intrude a trade union viewpoint into the affairs of management is met with a frenzied rejection by the employer. Today, the bulk of workers accept the demarcation line between the boss and the worker. The demand for worker control would encourage struggle and stimulate socialist consciousness.

CRAIG: I feel the trade union movement has got into a rut as far as struggle is concerned, confining itself almost exclusively to economic struggle around wages almost to the exclusion of political struggle. Wages struggles alone are not sufficient to raise the workers' consciousness of the need for change, especially when we find ourselves caught up in a wages game where the boss makes the rules and the workers' understanding of the concepts of socialism is little advanced as a consequence. A long term program aimed at raising the sights of trade unionists towards workers' control can demonstrate to them that industry not only does not need private control to function, but will strengthen their confidence in their own ability to run industry, besides laying the basis for the type of workers' participation which a socialist Australia envisages. In opening up and encouraging debate at all levels in the union movement on such concepts as workers' control, as opposed to collaboration, my own investigations confirm that many backward ideas exist, both among the rank and file and union leadership on the subject. But this should not deter us from encouraging such debate. On the contrary, how else can these ideas be sorted out except in honest and principled discussion?

FRENEY: "Workers' Control has to be developed to its farthest frontiers in order that with it can arise the understanding that capitalists are both unnecessary and inimical to the economic and moral well-being of the people" (Ken Coates — Tony Topham in Participation or Control). Workers' Control then is of validity, because it challenges the bosses' domination. But it can only have a really revolutionary sense if it is seen as subsidiary to the concept of workers' self-management, conceived not only as a goal, but as a slogan which when concretised is of immense revolutionary power, right now in our present situation.

MOWBRAY: In answering this question, I must say that the demand for workers' control must be raised as such. It cannot be raised with much hope of success in isolation. The success in carrying forward the demand is dependent on a number of fundamentals.

By this I mean that the groundwork must be done. The workers must be involved to the extent that the struggle (regardless of the issue) becomes their struggle. It is my view that only through a conscious effort by the activists on the job can the class struggle
be sharpened, and consequent to this (depending on circumstances and conditions) can socialist consciousness be developed.

PHELAN: The demand would stimulate struggle because to secure even greater workers' participation would be a struggle against the traditional rights of the employers and as such would be class struggle. Whether or not socialist consciousness was developed would depend on the extent to which the political implications of the action being taken were understood by those taking part. Without a Communist Party giving leadership aimed at increasing the political awareness of the participants there is a very great chance that socialist consciousness would not be developed.

SYMON: The demand is fundamental to the development of class struggle and of socialist consciousness. It is the very essence of revolutionary activity and thought. Workers' control, if viewed in this way, sets the objective and raises the sights of the class to a high level. Nothing less than the satisfaction of this demand will make the working class the ruling class and the leader of society. An understanding of the need for workers' control enables workers engaged in day to day struggles to see these struggles in their correct perspective. A conscious worker can draw the necessary big conclusions from the small and limited struggles which are an ever present feature of capitalist life.

How do you think forms of workers' control, even if realised, can avoid the danger of strengthening class collaboration?

BOLLINS: Dangers of class collaboration and integration would be ever present in worker control under the capitalist system. Such dangers exist in any form of trade union activity, and in fact, express themselves in the contemporary trade union atmosphere. The main danger of class collaboration and integration lies in a reformist concept of worker control, based on a concept of merging interests of employer and worker. To guard against this danger the following basic requirements are necessary:

An extensive education campaign on the class nature of capitalist society.

Mass participation in worker control to prevent isolation of rank and file leadership.

FRENEY: Self-management implies that a whole industry or enterprise is run directly by the workers, that the boss has in fact been expropriated, and the workers through elected committees control all aspects of the industry or enterprise. We saw self-management as a revolutionary slogan in France in May 1968 when the students and teaching staff took over schools and universities and ran them themselves.
MOWBRAY: When I read this question I was somewhat taken aback by the negative way in which it was worded, perhaps because I am optimistic enough (some may cynically say unrealistic) to hope that forms of workers' control already realised will not fall into the trap of class collaboration. (I am thinking here of the terrific gains made by the Building Workers in Queensland on the safety issue.) I feel that there can be no workers' control if there is class collaboration and, in my view, the only way to avoid any danger of this is for the elected job representatives to be directly answerable to the workers, in other words — rank and file control.

PHELAN: Attempts at "buying-off" activists in any field of human endeavor, when the activities of such people tend to upset the status-quo are a common occurrence. It would be naive to think that such attempts would not be made with respect to the representatives of workers on planning, administrative or other committees. The best defence against such occurrences is the widest participation by the people in the discussion of the working of the committees plus the right of recall of representatives. A strong political party whose only concern is for the wellbeing of the people will be essential, because as the workers achieve participation to a greater degree, the conflict will become sharper between those who say that a change of social system would produce even greater benefits for the people, and those who maintain that capitalism has demonstrated that it is capable of change in accordance with the demands of the time.

SYMON: The full realisation of workers' control demands the carrying of the struggle against capitalism to its ultimate and the ending of the system both politically and economically. Sometimes, however, workers' control is presented as only a partial demand, e.g., control over safety on the job. When such forms are analysed they are found to be limited and cannot properly be described as "control", but more like "participation". If workers' control is watered down to mean workers' participation, or sharing of management, then it may strengthen class collaboration, the revolutionary content of workers' control is lost sight of and becomes a mere reform of management. The capitalists in a number of ways already accept this worker participation. They will accept it just so long as they are left in control of the commanding heights.

In what relation does the struggle for trade union rights stand to the struggle for workers' control?

BAKER: If the struggle for trade union rights is to move out of the very narrow containment within the legal, authoritarian con-
trols of the compulsory regulation system peculiar to Australia and New Zealand, it must, particularly around the issues of changing technology, cut its teeth on questions of job control, of change in the physical and mental working environment and the right to participate in all forms of factory, office and university democracy.

BOLLINS: Capitalist society denies the working class basic trade union rights. These elementary rights such as the right to organise to establish job organisation, the right to represent on working conditions, to negotiate on wages and numerous day to day job issues as they arise are all resisted by the system. To establish a trade union authority on any of these issues, including the right to strike, means a challenge to the authority of the boss. Therefore, they appear to me to be fundamental in the fight for worker control.

CRAIG: I may be over-simplifying the problem, but I think the sooner the trade union movement takes a leaf from the students and youth in their actions for civil liberties and anti-draft actions the better — if it's a bad law, defy it; and the sooner we start publicly burning Court Orders, as the kids burn their draft cards, the better.

FRENEY: Jack Hutson seems to interpret workers' control as an extension of trade union rights with the control necessarily being exercised by bodies (even of the rank and file level) of the Union. That is a false concept of workers' control. The latter implies rather that workers elect their own bodies outside the framework of the unions and therefore beyond the control of union hierarchies. Not to say that a limited form of workers' control may not be won and applied through a union structure, but that is really a deformation of workers' control as such. On the other hand, it is through the trade union structures that the battle for workers' control and self-management will be fought, although external bodies to the unions, an independent movement for workers' control and self-management, for example, can be of vital importance.

MOWBRAY: The struggles are one and the same. The right of trade unions to organise on the job and have elected representatives of all unions form joint shop committees, and to have these committees recognised by the employer as the spokesmen for the workers is an extremely important aspect of the struggle for workers' control. The class question is raised immediately because of the bitter and extreme resistance put up by the employer to any form of worker organisation over which they have no control. Also the importance of workshop news sheets cannot be overlooked in a society where the employing class has control of the mass media.
PHELAN: The struggle for trade union rights under capitalism is an integral part of the struggle for workers' control. The fact that right of entry to factories by trade union officials is not permitted and in some plants shop committees are not allowed to function gives some idea of the size of the task of securing workers' control. Where the worker has to date been unable to gain such advantages as those it is unlikely that, without great struggle over a long period, he will achieve representation on planning, policy and other committees. Greater participation should be actively sought, but it would be unsound political leadership to suggest to workers that, under the slogan of workers' control, they will achieve more quickly reforms which they have hitherto been unable to achieve.

SYMON: The struggle for trade union rights is part of the struggle for workers' control. In struggling for rights, the trade unions are attempting to throw off the fetters which restrict their power and opportunities to advance. In Australia the penal powers of the Arbitration Act continually penalise the trade unions and often save the capitalist class from defeat. On the other hand continual use of the penal powers affords an opportunity to educate the working class in the real nature of the capitalist system and how it uses the capitalist State machine to protect the system from working class attack. Arising from this experience and understanding the class will eventually see the need to change the system. The workers will eventually see the need to win real political victory. The winning of trade union rights will bring this time a long step nearer.

What concrete ideas do you have for the formulation of demands for workers' control and forms of struggle to achieve these in Australia today?

BAKER: The most important point at which to take up the demands for measures of workers' control is where the new technology is likely to alienate man even further from control over the job processes. It is precisely at these points that the new technology, not the ideas and practices of management, may need an entirely new attitude and relationship between the worker and the machines and machine systems. Theorists of scientific management, like Drucher and Lord Franks may even now go further along these lines of thinking than militant unionists on the factory floor, who are inhibited by the conservatism of the union bureaucracies in the same way as French factory unionists were openly restrained in May 1968. But concrete ideas cannot be developed sensibly, outside of the real situations. There is no body of experience and theory to work on.
BOLLINS: I believe that the ultimate of worker control within capitalist society will only be achieved after many years of conscious action on the part of the workers. I am firmly of the opinion that the time to commence this conscious action towards the ultimate of worker control is right now. Each job or workplace or industry should be viewed at its own level and steps planned in accordance with levels of organisation and understanding. The trade unions should be prepared to challenge the authority of the employer by action on every issue that affects the conditions of the worker.

CRAIG: We may have, under Australian conditions, to start almost from scratch in a long-term policy of popularisation of the concept as a whole, but some, like safety, I feel, have a more immediate possibility of success, as witness the recent dispute in Brisbane in the building trades over job safety which possibly owed its success to a combination of solid rank and file job action, good conscious union leadership and public sympathy. Starting from scratch what real concrete possibilities do we have to build on? Nationalisation of industry, a step in the right direction, is an aim of the union and labor movement, however distorted or halfhearted at present. Factory and shop committees at least are accepted in the union movement, however de facto the recognition might be in some quarters, and offer an effective basis as the apparatus for effecting workers' control in the future. Workers' action for the re-instatement of sacked workers challenges the employers' right to hire and fire for instance, and generates enthusiasm in spite of long indoctrination to the contrary. Somewhere here, I feel, where workers' action normally ends on particular struggles, the idea has to be raised. I also agree on the need for the abolition of the Penal Powers. In fact I feel it is a basic step before any real move can be made towards establishing the concept of workers' control.

FRENEY: It would be wrong to see self-management simply as a distant goal which will come with the millennium. Self-management is something that can be concretely fought for in struggles arising in the coming year. Take the universities for example. To show the validity of self-management (i.e., to convince students and workers that they can manage their universities and workplaces) an occupation of the university during which it was managed by a series of student-staff committees going down to the lecture-room level and when the university would be changed (even for a short period) into a "model" of what militant students want could be very valuable. And why not during strikes? If the workers had been willing, would it not have been of enormous importance if the railway workers had occupied the stations and workshops during the recent strike, and themselves through elected commit-
tees actually run the railways for a couple of days (thus giving the workers they were taking to work an example of what they could do if they tried). Workers' control and self-management are immediate slogans which take the workers' felt needs (for control and power) and link them with the need to overthrow capitalism and establish full workers' self-management and socialism. Workers' Control and self-management then are, above all, transitional demands.

MOWBRAY: In formulating demands it is of the greatest importance that they are readily seen by the workers as having a direct bearing on their working conditions, and once the campaign is launched, are eagerly seized upon. It is my experience that the disillusionment among the employees in the car industry following the abortive '64 strike was mainly aimed at the unions — Vehicle Builders' Union in particular, but there was widespread suspicion of all unions and union officials. The company's attitude was despised also, but the attitude still prevailed in the workshops that "The unions didn't get anything for us — the court didn't give us anything, so you can't expect the boss to give it to us."

And so we come to the questions of concrete ideas regarding forms of struggle to achieve workers' control in Australia today. In applying this to the motor industry, I believe that the basic support for shop stewards, committees, etc., must be worked for and earned, and then developed until the confidence of the workers is restored in the job leaders, and then demands raised on the job to be campaigned for and, in fact, realised. Speed-up is one of the main problems to be tackled in the car industry and the demand that the workers who are actually at the point of assembly set the speed of the line is a valid and well supported demand. When this demand is realised, then the whole range of workers' control in the car industry becomes, to my mind, a practical demand, to the point of eventual nationalisation. Any demand raised must emphasise the fact that the workers who produce the articles are also the citizens who buy the articles and consequently are twice exploited.

PHELAN: The immediate formation of shop committees in workplaces which would meet with the employer to determine such matters as wages and conditions; industrial relations between the employer's agents (foremen, etc.) and the employees and speedy correction of grievances; the employment of representatives elected by the workers to be their spokesmen in the discussion of day-to-day problems with the employer between meetings of the shop committee with employer; the introduction of new techniques and machines; the retrenchment, deployment or recruitment of staff resulting therefrom; the organisational arrangements needed at a
workplace to ensure that with any anticipated reduction in size or quantity of future contracts emergency work can be obtained and performed and so prevent workers from being dismissed. Failing the securing of emergency work, discussions would centre on providing alternate employment.

The above ideas will only become reality when sufficient numbers of people in the workplaces are convinced of their necessity, are prepared to use their industrial strength to obtain them and to mount the parallel offensive against the penal powers which the employer would use to counter that industrial strength.

SYMON: The demand for workers' control is inherent in the general program for socialism in Australia and will be realised when socialism is won. Much more needs to be done to show that partial demands, even if won, have limited value and usually only for a time, if they leave the capitalist system unchallenged. For example, the winning of a higher wage is readily absorbed by the capitalists. While it is important to fight for and win wage demands this must be coupled with an explanation of the wages system and a demand for the end of exploitation. Demands for participation in all aspects of management should also be vigorously pursued. At the same time the limited nature of such reforms should be understood and the demand for control explained and fought for.

What importance has workers' control when socialism is achieved?

BAKER: At the end of 1966, I had the rather unique experience of being present with Yugoslav postal union leaders whilst the Director-General of Posts and Communications signed his own liquidation papers. He was the last of the top bureaucracy to "wither down" into the community of postal workers then running the postal services, and apparently running them very efficiently. From the inception of the plan to disintegrate and eliminate the old centralised, bureaucratic structure which had been commenced some 15 years earlier, authority and control had been moved down into the Postal Community of 400 elected by the postal workers each year to meet and deal with the problems of the postal services extending over the different national republics. For a socialist society, workers' control, in one form or another, may be the ideal before self-contained, self-regulating factories put men and women on the "outside looking in." Men and women in a primitive capitalist society like that of the Tolai people of New Guinea, those in peasant societies or the first socialist societies, don't seem to work with the intensity and continuity of those in capitalist societies like Australia and the US and maybe it's good that they
don't. But if they are to work as do those with the whip of sackings, hire purchase, promotions and other insecurities menacing them as a matter of course, then they appear to need complete involvement in the purposes and processes of work and be concerned with its dignity in a culture that has some different values to ours. Workers' control rather than "the plan" and the "directives from above" may be a fundamental need of any socialist society, early or later in its history. Again, there's too little experience and knowledge one way or another.

BOLLINS: Worker control of industry while it can and should be established within the framework of capitalist society, should not end with the advent of socialism. On the contrary its existence should take on a new and more significant importance. Worker control, freed from the restrictive influence of monopoly controlled industry should achieve its ultimate under socialism. It should serve as a base for scientific planning and control of socialist enterprises. It should serve as the main barrier against bureaucracy and restricted thinking, a by-product of capitalist ideology. In a word—worker control is socialism in practice.

FRENEY: Self-management applies also, of course, to Workers' States where capitalism has been overthrown. Unless the economy, starting at the factory level, is directly managed (not owned) by elected workers' committees, within the framework of a democratically-elaborated national Plan and a democratically-controlled market, then the bureaucracy which arises in these States will take over complete control, expropriate their workers of any real power, and rule through a bureaucratic police dictatorship of the Stalin type. Self-management of the economy severely limits the power of the bureaucracy, and if combined with real socialist political democracy (through workers councils at all levels) and freedom of political expression, can ensure that power in the post-capitalist society is genuinely in the hands of the working class, and not in the hands of their self-appointed "representatives."

MOWBRAY: My answer to this question is short and to the point. I believe that workers' control is the essence of socialist society—without it there is no socialist society.

Having answered these six questions (six parts of one question?) I would like to wind up by asking one question which has, to my mind, a relationship to the previous six: "What needs to be done to establish workers' control over our own organisations, i.e. many trade unions — AWU — VBU — ETU and the ALP?"

PHELAN: Workers as a class owning the means of production, distribution and exchange will not necessarily mean that workers as employees will have an effective say in the running of the
particular enterprise in which they work. The importance of workers' control for socialism will be, amongst other things, that:

1 It will facilitate the solution of administrative, organisational, production, labor and other problems because those who actually have to work in the plant will be making the decisions affecting their own work environment.

2 The working people being in control will feel (and will be held to be) more responsible for the public image of their plant for the quantity and quality of its products, than they would do if the plant were controlled and directed by some committee whose links with the plant were not as close.

3 The extension of democratic rights in the society (which workers control would be) would carry with it the extension of the responsibilities of democracy. The assuming of greater responsibility for the functioning of the apparatus connected with work would tend to produce a more responsible attitude to the functioning of those parts of the broader apparatus, the society itself, not connected with work.

SYMONE: To me, the realisation of socialist society is inseparable from workers' control. The socialist victory establishes the leading role of the working class. The workers proceed to nationalise industry, plan the economy and make it work for the producers of industrial, agricultural and cultural wealth. The workers establish their own State machine and formulate their own Constitution and laws, so that every action for restoration of capitalism is defeated. The winning of socialism is only possible as a result of the mass action of millions of workers in the struggles for social change. After the victory of socialism the continued participation of the people in all aspects of political and economic life has to be encouraged and facilitated. Ultimately the State becomes a State of the whole people, class differences disappear and social unity is at last achieved.

JACK HUTSON COMMENTS...

MOST OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS near enough agree with my own point of view so do not provoke any argument. An exception is the one by Denis Freney, who agrees with me on some points but differs on three points. So I intend to deal with his contribution in association with those of Jim Craig and Brian Mowbray.

The first point of difference is Denis' rejection of my contention that workers' control is a long-term objective under Australian conditions, as he considers it to be "a slogan of immediate validity in almost all unions and struggle". It could be that we are talking at cross purposes, because what I considered to be a long-term objective was the full achievement of workers' control as defined
DISCUSSION:

FESTIVAL DEFENDED

AS ONE who participated in the preparatory work to organise an Australian delegation to the 9th World Festival of Youth and Students held in Sofia, July-August 1968, I draw conclusions which differ from those expressed in *ALR* 1/69 by Susan Burgoyne.

The Festival for Solidarity, Peace and Friendship was, I believe, an historic occasion which brought together some fifteen thousand young people from over 120 countries. Those who participated in the Festival had a common aim to condemn world imperialism, whose aim is to exploit and suppress the peoples of the world. This alone makes the personal efforts of those who sponsored and supported the Festival, well worthwhile.

Sofia became the world centre of progressive young people where they joined together internationally to advance their rights, to propose, to express and to initiate future struggles to determine that the world in which we live should be a world of peace and free from exploitation.

The positive contribution of the Festival is best expressed by the solidarity meeting with the people of Vietnam. Here material, financial and medical aid was extended, overwhelming solidarity was expressed for the continuance of the struggles for the people of Vietnam. The Festival therefore made a positive contribution to the final victory over imperialism in Vietnam. Such a victory over imperialism would be a tremendous assistance to the peoples’ struggles for independence in various countries.

This alone would vindicate the necessity of celebrating the Festival.

Miss Burgoyne raises specific criticisms of the narrowness in the work of the International Preparatory Committee. Such criticisms were not raised with the National Festival Committee for guidance or assistance in her work as the Committee’s representative at IPC. I believe Miss Burgoyne’s conclusions mainly derive from her own personal opinions relating to Czechoslovakia.

There are of course certain aspects of work by the IPC which I also criticise but I have personally raised my criticism direct with the IPC. This, in my view, is the only principled procedure to follow. I have never had occasion to criticise the aims of IPC, which I fully support.

The IPC took the tremendous responsibility of guaranteeing the organisation, finances and political preparations of the Festival. If the main support and participation came from the youth organisations of socialist countries and the World Federation of Democratic Youth then it is obvious that their views would emerge at any conference or forum held during the Festival. The policies and aims of the Festival must have the agreement of those who do the basic work. National Festival Committees represented at the IPC agreed with the preparations. It seems that Miss Burgoyne is really raising the issue that some aims and themes of the WFDY and of youth organisations are in contradiction with the theme of the Festival for solidarity, peace and friendship.

This is obviously not so, for no other
organisations contribute more to positive activity for solidarity, peace and friendship than do the WFDY and the youth of socialist countries.

Miss Burgoyne expresses the opinion that international gatherings like the Festival are not as important today as in years gone by. I believe that this is also a wrong estimation irrespective of conflicting ideas, opinions and views and all the complexities and contradictions that exist amongst the various youth movements today.

One must take a positive, objective view that problems are not insurmountable and can be resolved. As the tactics and strategies of imperialism sharpen and are increased it becomes more urgent for the youth movements to resolve their differences through unity in action around common aims of solidarity, peace and friendship.

This can be best achieved by international gatherings. Whether the form of these gatherings is Festivals or Forums does not really matter, what is important is that struggles be coordinated, assisted and supported by all progressives. If one did not reach this conclusion then why should we worry at all?

What is important is that there be no over-emphasis on any one section of struggle. The recent French student revolt must be a glaring lesson to all on this. In my view the overthrow of the establishment cannot be consolidated without the support of the masses and correct political preparations by a communist or marxist party. To over-emphasise the importance of any one group is a political error. We should look upon international gatherings of co-operation as the property of all exploited forces, first of all the working class, and all extend our efforts for the international spirit of solidarity, peace and friendship with this in mind. For this after all is the way to the emancipation of Man.

The work of the Australian Festival Committee and the participation of an Australian delegation, was, I believe, a positive contribution to world peace and friendship. The aims of the Festival will always receive my support and assistance.

TOM SUPPLE.

(Mr. Supple is a Vice President of the Sydney Branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation and the Secretary of the National Festival Committee which prepared Australian participation in the 9th Festival.)

ANOTHER OPINION

IT MAY BE OF INTEREST to those who read Susan Burgoyne's article on the World Youth Festival (ALR No. 1, 1969) to consider some of the conclusions reached on the same topic by the London Bulletin No. 6 of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. This article speaks of the Festival pointing up "profound differences in the political orientation of young people in the socialist and capitalist countries" and draws from this the conclusion that "movements which have grown up fighting against authoritarianism and harassment in their own countries are naturally not going to welcome the same phenomena in a socialist country." (Restrictions on delegation activity, limitations in the Festival program.)

The writer found that many young people from Eastern European socialist countries showed an "abysmal ignorance" of post-war Czechoslovakian history and thus were unable to really consider the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia.

Apart from Vietnam, the author notes that the one political issue that basically concerns East Europeans is the German question. He suggests that this concern actually distorts understanding of world politics. Claiming that Bonn is not an objective inde-