DISCUSSION:

FRENEY CONTESTED

I CAN ONLY SAY in reply to Denis Freney’s comments on workers’ control in the ALR of June-July that his general approach is too dogmatic for my liking, on two points.

The first point relates to his approach to the tactics to be used in struggle. In my previous article, I said that I considered that he moved too quickly in advocating to railwaymen such an advanced form of action as to run the railways themselves. I suggested that it would be better if he consulted the railwaymen first as to whether they thought it was a good idea.

Yet Denis now compounds his first sin by asking if it is ridiculous to advocate to bus and tramway workers that as a protest against fines imposed on their union they should run their vehicles but refuse to collect fares. If he is asking me that question, I say that I just don’t know, and suggest again that only those concerned would really know whether it is ridiculous or not. So Denis should have a chat with them to find out.

I do know it is ridiculous, unwise and undemocratic not to consult and listen to those who will have to put into effect some course of action. It even smacks of stalinism. This defect in his approach is significantly revealed in his closing comment that “I don’t think quoting ‘ordinary workers’ proves much”. Yet it is the thinking of ordinary workers that is going to determine whether workers’ control is to be achieved or not. Consequently anyone who closes his mind to such thinking limits his usefulness to the workers.

Incidentally, he claims to be able to quote workers who support his point of view. So why not get one of them to make a contribution to the debate? Readers must be getting tired of just he and I bickering on the subject.

Another thing that concerns me about the approach of Denis is that he is too committed to preconceived ideas of what forms struggle should take, and to the mechanical adoption in Australia of forms that have been used overseas. I would be the last to say that overseas experience should not be studied and perhaps adopted in forms acceptable to Australian workers. But I consider that the main concentration should be on evolving forms of struggle that are appropriate to the objective Australian conditions.

What I put is, could it not be that the road to workers’ control in Australia, like the road to socialism, might be somewhat different from that taken in other countries? Bearing that in mind, while the matter is as fluid as it is at the moment, should we not be careful not to impose on it forms that could be foreign to its specifically Australian development?

The second point of difference is in relation to his conception of the relationship of the trade unions and bodies formed to struggle for workers’ control. And again I consider that
Denis is too dogmatic in his approach to this.

He apparently has a "thing" about bureaucracy and regards all trade unions as bureaucracies. So he holds that even though bodies formed to fight for workers' control can have friendly relationships with the unions in their industry they "... must be independent (his emphasis) of the union structures and hierarchy — left, right or centre. Otherwise they run the danger of becoming just another sub-committee under the control of the union hierarchy..."

Now I am with him in his dislike of bureaucracy in trade unions. In fact, when one looks at ones such as the Australian Workers' Union, one is almost led to believe that they invented the word! But I am not with him in his assumption that all trade unions are so bureaucratic that the official apparatus has to be avoided like the plague.

This is true in some cases, so the rank and file will have to have their own forms of organisation. But there are unions in which workers' control exists as a reality. This not only strengthens the union, but also strengthens job organisation. It is for this reason that it is just because such unions are tightly organised that one finds in them the highest level of Shop Steward and Shop Committee organisation.

Incidentally, a striking testimonial to the value of union apparatus was given in the action of the million workers who stopped work in protest against the jailing of Clarrie O'Shea and the penal powers. A demonstration on such a scale, spread over different States, could only have been brought about, given the militant mood of the workers, by detailed organisation by a number of unions.

Jack Hutson.

SHOP COMMITTEES AND WORKERS' CONTROL

SHOP COMMITTEE and job organisation has been a way of life in the power industry since the 1930's, and represents a long history of struggle to improve the lot of the power worker. These bodies were not set up as an alternative to the official trade unions, but to assist and strengthen the unions by maintaining a constant and vigilant stand at job level in the interest of the workers. Where the shop committees, shop stewards, delegates and workers have had differences with their unions and the Labor Council, this has been necessary to impress upon them that action was essential to win a certain just demand. This has eventually been accepted as a correct course, and united action of shop committees and workers with official trade union leadership in comradely unity has been successful in winning the issue.

In the power stations, eight, ten or more shop stewards, each representing his union, form the Shop Committee and this body has been able (through the holding of mass meetings) to convey to management, trade unions and Labor Council, the feelings, wishes and demands of the workers.

In the war against fascism the power stations were flat out extracting the maximum energy from the plant. At Bunnerong and other stations, the workers toiled under the most uncomfortable and adverse conditions, including long hours during the day and night. After the war, in 1945, the Sydney County Council endeavoured to introduce mass maintenance shift work round the clock. This was repugnant to the workers, they refused to accept it, and a strike of seven weeks' duration took place. The Shop Committee led the strike, when the majority of the official trade unions opposed it, contending that it was premature as industry had not yet re-established itself
after the war. Nevertheless, the workers of Bunnerong and Pyrmont went on to gain a form of shift work that was acceptable to them. Tremendous rank and file activity took place during this dispute, led by the Shop Committee which called for and formed an enlarged Disputes Committee. Protest marches took place, rank and file deputations went to Parliament House, Sydney County Council headquarters, the Labor Council, trade unions and other organisations, as well workers spoke at and called for financial support from shops and factories all over Sydney. Prolonged sittings with the President of the Industrial Commission took place, some extending late into the night, and on one occasion proceeding by candle light.

Shortly after winning this battle another strike took place at Bunnerong, to secure the establishment of a canteen to supply a reasonable midday meal, as well as facilities for shift workers. This was also won and inserted in the then S.C.C. Award.

Following these important victories and after considerable discussion, the Shop Committee was given official recognition by the S.C.C., the Trades & Labor Council and the trade unions. A Charter and Constitution were drawn up and agreed upon.

In this turbulent period disputes continued to flare up over many matters with which the power workers were dissatisfied, with the result that a so-called “Better Relations Conference” took place. This extended over many weeks and involved the Chairman of the S.C.C., the Councillors and Management of S.C.C., the Shop Committee and trade unions. A number of improvements and gains were made from this conference, including a special fare allowance to Bunnerong.

In 1950 the NSW Government passed legislation to set up an Electricity Commission. Bunnerong and Pyrmont Power Stations, along with Port Kembla, were transferred to the Electricity Commission in January of 1951 and 1952. The Railway Power Stations followed in 1953. Other small stations were gradually absorbed, with the Balmain Company joining in 1957.

The ex-Railway power station workers (White Bay, Ultimo, Zara Street) were very active in the Shop Committee movement. White Bay, in fact, is credited with having formed the first Shop Committee in the whole Railway industry. These workers had been covered by the Metal Trades Award and were well in the struggle of the metal trades campaign for increased margins.

From these activities the need for some form of combined job organisation was apparent. As a result a series of meetings took place, attended by delegates from all power stations and sites, etc., that had been taken over by the Electricity Commission. These combined meetings discussed the formation of a combined delegates’ organisation for the whole of the power industry, and working conditions at the various plants.

During 1956 the Combined Delegates appointed a committee to prepare a log of claims for a new industrial agreement. When it was completed, this was presented to the Electricity Commission by the Broad Committee, a sub-committee under the auspices of the Trades and Labor Council, composed of a representative (mainly union officials) from each of the 26 unions with members working in the E.C.

In the meantime the Combined Delegates Committee (ECCUDO) which had adopted a constitution and elected officials, developed into a powerful rank and file organisation and was responsible for initiating and leading the workers in the power industry in campaigns for improved wages and conditions despite continued attacks from the Electricity Commission, and some-
times with opposition from the trade union organisation itself.

Various forms of struggle were used and are being used right up to the present time: rolling strikes, stop work meetings, deputations to the Electricity Commission, to Parliament, to the Labor Council — these and many others forms of action were developed by the ECCUDO. In the main and at different periods of struggle, the Combined Delegates have had a very good relationship and degree of cooperation with the Labor Council and trade union officers. The shop stewards were included in many official delegations and Labor Council officials on many occasions sought out the Combined Delegates to have a frank exchange of views and ideas.

During 1956 the unions were informed by the F.C. that, due to the bringing into operation of new modern power stations on the coalfields, there was a surplus of workers in the metropolitan area. This touched off the workers' campaign for full employment in the industry we had helped to develop, based on a 35-hour week and four weeks' annual leave. This was one of the most intensive campaigns waged by the Delegates' Committee and the workers. It continued for many months, involving diverse forms of struggle. We were on the streets of Sydney and all over the place. The Labor Council worked with us and assisted in producing pamphlets for public distribution outlining the power situation and the workers' case. A number of stoppages took place, and a large mass meeting was held in the Town Hall. At a conference with the Chairman of the Commission the delegation was told that 250 unskilled and semi-skilled workers would have to be retrenched. The strength of the campaign prevented this from taking place. The Commission agreed to pay one week's wages for every year of service to anyone leaving the Commission. It agreed to give three months notice to the unions before a plant was closed down, and payment for at least six months of travel and removal expenses for workers transferring to the country power stations. These were some of the concessions won by the campaign.

The delegates and workers of Wangi Power Station demanded a site allowance to compensate for the expense involved in travelling the long distance between Wangi Power Station and their homes in the Newcastle area. They prepared a very good and well documented case and arranged an inspection tour of the area. Action backing their claim included several strikes by Wangi workers. Later a deputation met the Premier seeking a 35-hour week and four weeks' annual leave. The Premier said the Government had set up an Automation Enquiry and advised the unions to submit evidence to it. The Australian Railways Union, on behalf of all the unions, accepted the responsibility for preparing material to support the case. This they did with great credit and ability.

In 1961 a struggle took place around the proposal to change the agreement (industrial) to one of a Consent Award. A vigorous fight against this change was waged, but a majority decision of the Broad Committee accepted it.

There have been many issues that we have struggled around since then, including a wage increase in 1964. In 1966 the $2 case was put before the Court by the trade unions. The main advocate presenting the case was from the Electrical Trades Union. A very thorough case was presented, backed up with evidence from others. The Combined Shop Stewards' Committee organised a sustained attendance each day of workers from power stations and sites from all over N.S.W. These filled the public gallery, backing up the unions' case. At the present time negotiations are still in progress re the general conditions.
The Automation Enquiry referred to above lasted for years. The Judge appointed by the Government visited power stations and sites throughout the State; he also travelled overseas extensively. But did this futile inquiry solve the pressing problems of power house workers? Lasting more than two years and culminating in a voluminous report now gathering dust in the archives of Parliament House, this inquiry offered nothing to the power workers by way of improved conditions nor, even more importantly, anything by way of job security.

During 1955 in a tragic accident at Bunnerong Power Station, one worker was killed and two seriously injured in a blow-back on a boiler. This sparked off one of the most intensive campaigns on safety that we had ever seen. Great changes were demanded and agreed to by the management following a deputation to the Chairman of the Commission. Numerous discussions took place between the Shop Committee and Power Station Management and practical measures were devised and agreed on to make working on boilers in particular safer for all. Modern first aid rooms were built, staffed with qualified nursing sisters, and with a medical officer attending at set times. Emergency rescue apparatus was also installed throughout the station.

Today power house workers face great technological advances in the industry, which raise entirely new problems and aggravate old ones. What does the future hold for power house workers? Rapidly advancing automation (and nuclear energy possibly in the next decade) means less workers, new training and a hundred other unanswered questions. What stake have the workers in this future? Have they a right to know or more importantly have they a right to a say, in what is to happen to them and their families in the future?

The history of the activities of our job trade union organisation shows that the workers can intervene, that they can assert their rights in an industry that they helped to build and now run. And what of this job organisation which has been built up over many years and has such a proud record of struggle on behalf of power house workers? Does it fulfil the needs of a changing industry? Does it measure up today to what is required to make it an even stronger organisation in the future?

Obviously not. It must be plain to all that the whole structure of our work force in the industry has changed. The number of workers in the wages division has fallen by half, whilst on the other hand the salaried division has grown. Many of those in the salaried section only yesterday were in the wages section. Now they are technicians, operators, etc., and their needs and problems, the pressure facing them, are identified with the wages section. This is revealed in the fact that the salaried section has had several struggles lately and is spearheading the campaign for the 35-hour week, five weeks' annual leave, payment for annual leave at average weekly rate during the year, and increase in penalty rate for shift work up to $2 per shift.

The present constitution of our job organisation (E.C.C.U.D.O.) keeps us apart. Obviously this must be rectified as quickly as possible and the utmost unity and confidence established between wage and salary workers.

We require today flexibility and organisational unity between the workers and job organisation, the Shop Committees, Trade Unions and Labor Council, so that the whole structure conforms to and facilitates the utmost democratic expression and unity of all workers in the power industry. Only then can the workers and their organisation assume an offensive role, so that, in this period of far-reaching
changes affecting all the workers, their voice can be heard in the industry in which they earn their living. It raises the vital question of whether the workers can have a say in their destiny.

As stated earlier, the question of nuclear power stations is now very much on the agenda, with reports that one will be built in N.S.W. in the early 1970's. What's in this for Power House workers? Is our security to be even more uncertain? We want to know now, and demand that the trade unions be consulted and informed.

Strong job organisation, not in opposition to the established trade union organisation and centres of leadership, but complementing them, is essential, as this record shows. This is the best way of ensuring the democracy of the rank and file, allowing them to participate in decision making as well as in carrying out decisions.

**Harry Webb**

For twenty years, before his retirement in 1968 Harry Webb was President of the Bunnerong Shop Committee, and for fifteen years the President of the combined delegates organisation which covers all shop organisation in the power houses in NSW. A member of the Electrical Trades Union he was made a life member (a rare honor) by the Federal Council of the Union on his retirement. As a young electrician he was active in the British General Strike in 1926 and after a period of unemployment went to sea for about nine years. During this period he joined the Communist Party in London (1936). He migrated to Australia in 1938.

**AARONS' VIEWS CONTESTED**

**Laurie Aarons** at the Left Action Conference in Sydney at Easter outlined his program of action for the Left.

Firstly, he says, the point of his program is to destroy one social system and to replace it with another. Secondly, it is necessary to do this because only a different kind of society can apply "the scientific and technological revolution" to the material and spiritual needs of man.

But in fact he does not properly develop either of these arguments so that in the end the model society he describes is, besides being unclear, not radically different from present Australian society in several key ways.

For example, in attempting to define "truly human relations between men in production" he opts for cooperation and self-management rather than exploitation or authoritarian bureaucracy. But he is unable then to define what he means by co-operation and self-management. It is unhelpful to speak, as he does, of "a new balance of central planning and local initiative". What new balance? More central planning than at present, or less? It is difficult to tell.

Similarly, when he speaks of the second element in the proposed new balance — i.e. local initiative — his radical alternative is expressed only as "direct control over decision making". Again, what direct control? By mass participation (if so, how?) or by elected representatives?

It is only when Laurie Aarons comes to discuss the first element — central planning — that a political theory is revealed.

Here, he identifies central planning with what he calls the "democratic state". Centralised planning would enable the setting of the framework, targets and priorities in production. All national policies would be decided through "conviction". What does this last term mean — referendum, election, representative democracy, majority decision? The lack of clarity in the
notion of central planning carries over into the conception of the other functions of the democratic state. These include direct election and free access to the mass media. The last concept is extremely vaguely expressed, and the old worrying doubts about any alliance between the socialist state and the mass media are not considered or dispelled.

The first concept — direct election — is crucial. While it is perfectly true that proportional representation would be more democratic than the present electoral system, putting "direct" in front of the usual term "election" does little to make it more revolutionary. Essentially what is being offered is a liberal democracy with state owned and controlled industry, with little more than a nod at local initiative and self-management. Laurie Aarons says that his democratic state, in contrast to bourgeois liberal democracies, would aim from the beginning to wither away. But why would this state, which seems to have a theory not significantly different from the theory of the Australian state at the moment, except in its greater (or is it?) role in economic planning, why would such a state decide to wither away more than any other state has ever done? Laurie Aarons merely hopes it will.

The political theory emerging from this is the reaffirmation of the value of elections at all levels as a practical mode of individual self expression and control. Laurie Aarons tries to counter attacks on socialism by attempting to place socialism within the liberal-democratic framework. But the future lies not with liberal democracies, necessity failures, but in the development of relations which obviate the necessity for elections, relations in which the control of a person can never be taken from him, by any elected representative. Whatever these relations are, elections, whether in the context of a capitalist economic system or not, never produced self management or free expression yet.

The second theme underlying the speech is the significance of the scientific and technological revolution. This process will, he says, "determine the world wide struggle for social change" as new social tensions are created. But although this idea is repeated many times, and one discerns a search for a modernised version of the contradictions of capitalism theory, these new tensions are not at all elaborated in any way that makes them particularly "new". Earlier, in outlining a model society, he had stated what was morally desirable, and his emphasis on the scientific and technological revolution is meant to indicate that this moral objective ("truly human relations between men in production") is in sight; in fact, is "determined".

It is an old Marxist trick, and here the usual doubts are seen, for having seen the determinism in his "contradictions" theory, Laurie Aarons immediately states that the process must be helped along. All this could easily be dispensed with. Clearly technological change brings with it social changes, which should be analysed, but the possibilities are various and even by Laurie Aarons' own analysis of capitalism, pessimism is at least as warranted as optimism, and the moral choices must be made without the aid of the forces of history.

The moral ideal is doubtful, the social analysis unclear. What of the strategy? Here I shall consider just one point — his advocating that all sections of the left should support the election of a Labor Government, regarding the defeat of the Liberal-Country Party Government as an advance. This point came under fire at the Conference itself, and should be seen as arising from the theoretical belief in the electoral process formulated earlier. For example, he says the
Left, during the elections, should campaign for proportional representation to improve the electoral system.

Laurie Aarons does not spend a great deal of time, understandably, in defending this position. But it is defended in detail, although not specifically, by Denis Freney in International No. 7. His argument, too, falls down.

Denis Freney’s essential argument is that the Left must advocate the election of a Labor Government “so that we can go through that experience with the workers, and be in a position to offer a viable alternative”. But this very old theory, that the workers will understand the true nature of reformism once Labor is in power, has been too often disproved in Australia. Disillusionment with a reformist government tends to result in a swing further to the right than to the left. And even if the latter occurred it is the task of the revolutionary left to consistently offer its alternative, and not submerge itself in the aspirations of a party with which it does not essentially agree. What counts is the growth of a revolutionary left, and this does not depend on whether there is a Liberal or Labor Government in power.

Both Aarons and Freney are advocating a blurring and diluting of the program for the left. Because of the sanction it gives to the parliamentary system, I doubt whether candidates should be supported at all. This does not exclude political activity directly related to the elections. But if candidates should be supported, they should be left, non-ALP candidates.

Finally, Laurie Aarons has attempted to put forward a program for the left which synthesises most of the current ideas floating around in left wing circles — self management, democracy, confrontation, the effects of the technological revolution. The vagueness and repetitiveness of his language reflects a desire to generalise, to encompass as many trends as possible, to keep up with the times. But in fact these concepts have not even welded into a total analysis or coherent program.

ANN CURTHOYS

DISSOLUTION OF SDA

LAST APRIL Brisbane’s Society for Democratic Action (SDA) announced its dissolution. In a newsletter (28/4/69) Mitch Thompson explained: “At the last general meeting of SDA held at the University a decision to dissolve was overwhelmingly accepted. So, what began as a protest movement towards the end of 1966, has died less than two and a half years later. SDA as an organisation no longer exists. Those people who feel the need to continue protest will do so, but the time has arrived, for many of us, to pass from a protest organisation to a radical or revolutionary movement. A movement to challenge the structures of this Society”.

The ensuing reaction in southern states was interesting. One newspaper said that SDA had gone underground (The Australian May 16), whatever that meant. Some radical students saw the dissolution as proof that Brian Laver’s leadership and socialist revolutionary position were faulty and incorrect. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) took the opportunity to move in leading cadres to take over the Brisbane student scene. However few saw SDA’s decision as a courageous, imaginative and adult move, something that once more puts the Brisbane activists in the van of the Australian revolutionary movement.

Before I elucidate upon this it is necessary to sketch in the history and achievements of SDA. Formed in 1966 on the campus of the University of Queensland, it consisted of a small group of students concerned about the Vietnam war and hindered by unde-
mocratic State government legislation which effectively frustrated the holding of demonstrations and the distribution of pamphlets in Brisbane's streets. However this was not the only issue as interest was also expressed in conscription, education, Aborigines, conservation of natural resources etc. During 1966 and 1967, as a result of direct action, organisational experience and intellectual activity, it became apparent to SDA's student members that these issues were not unconnected aberrations of the system but parts of a whole, in fact they formed an interrelated indictment of the system.

Accompanying this awareness was an insight into the nature of Australian society, that power is in the hands of a few socio-economic groups which decide the direction in which society shall develop, whilst on the other hand there are 'minority' groups confined "to working for the system rather than participating in or controlling it". This in turn led to the realisation that in order to effect social change links had to be forged with all these groups. One result was that political activity amongst secondary students was developed; and before the events in France during May 1968 the concept of a student-worker alliance was initiated, one manifestation being the FOCO Youth centre, established in Brisbane's Trades Hall.

By the beginning of 1969 SDA was characterised by the following: 1 Support of social revolution in the third world. 2 Advocation of student-staff control of universities in order "to capture university education for the development of individuals rather than the efficient perpetuation of the social and economic goals of the status quo". Further it advocated, in line with this, worker control in all centres of production — in factories, in schools, in the public service. 3 It sought also "structural involvement with the forms of under-privilege in our society, whether it be social, educational or economic". This was indeed a marked development amongst students who had come together a couple of years previously for the purpose of protest.

Coupled with this were other developments; the articulate and sensitive SDA student cadres had, by the end of 1968, either "dropped out" or graduated. During the latter months of that year energy was directed to creating off campus quarters, together with a bookshop and printery. Ideologically SDA had moved far ahead of the general student body. The SDA leadership had recognised the "moral obligation", as Baran and Sweezy put it, "to devote ourselves to fighting against an evil and destructive system which maims, oppresses, and dishonours those who live under it, and which threatens devastation and death to millions of others around the globe".

Then in March Queensland university's student paper Semper Floreat (17/3/69) stated that revolution, worker control, participatory democracy and other concepts "have ceased to have any meaning or relevance to anybody outside the (SDA) leadership". The article went on to observe that what "was attractive about SDA in former years was the fact that they articulated in forceful and idealistic language, the bourgeois myths about freedom, justice and equality which everyone believed in..." In short the article suggested that SDA should remain bourgeois oriented and perpetuate the bourgeois myths in order to reach the level of consciousness of the majority of students.

Underlying this bourgeois oriented analysis of the Semper Floreat article was the conception of student movements as pressure groups "designed to secure the advancement of their sectional interests within an accepted status quo", something that they are not. It failed to realise that SDA
had gone beyond being a student movement trying to reform society by protesting in the streets, that is attempting to bring about social change by marching, getting arrested etc. and showing the government in a dramatic way that some people do not agree with certain decisions made in their name.

Dan O'Neill, an SDA theorist and activist, pointed to the fallacy of thinking real social change can come through exerting pressure on the state; this he said was completely naive. "It is a concept of power that Gramsci has exposed as completely useless to radical action in an advanced society. This is because it suggests that the state is the main power in the society when, in fact, it has become increasingly evident that the state is simply one agency among several agencies, several great institutional orders of society, through whose reciprocal relations the final status quo of power is maintained".7 Because of the integrated and sophisticated nature of this society "change must be introduced first in the function and scope and organisation of all cultural, ideological and formally and informally educational structures in this society".8 This means that wherever men "acquire their notion of what social reality is, their notion of the nature of man, what is customary, what is not customary; what is evil, what is respectable"9 there socialists must work to present and argue the ideas that expose and refute the bourgeois concepts, to point to the realities and alternatives.

In an elementary way this is, in effect, what SDA has done. The dissolution has meant an end to protest, not radical or revolutionary politics. What is envisaged is the formation of "Action Committees at whatever level we may be working or studying — from job levels to colleges, from specific educational institutions to faculties, from the public service to the under-privileged. All those radical people who are actually concerned enough, beyond just the psychological need of belonging to the organisation, can no longer rely on SDA to carry out radical work. The movement must be decentralised. Each person should consciously be working towards the building of a group (Action Committee), even if only two at the beginning, in whatever area or issue they are involved. Agents such as regular weekly newsheets (jobsheets etc.) could be of great importance".10

Thus wherever former SDA members find themselves, whether it be on the factory floor, in the professions, on campus etc., there they will seek to isolate, describe, and refute the ideas upon which the status quo depends, and in their place pose the socialist alternatives.

The final point to make is that the dissolution of SDA helps answer the question "What does a student radical do when he is no longer a student?" Some observers reason that current campus radicals will, upon graduation, enter the ranks of the professions and become part of the status quo. This is a reasonable expectation, for students are mostly middle class kids snared in a bourgeois controlled institution, which churns them out as candidates for manipulative careers within a bourgeois society. Perhaps some campus radicals will end up this way. Yet on the other hand perhaps they will go from a position of militancy within the university to a similar one within society as a whole, "will ask exactly what the point of their education was, and what use it could be towards making a socialist society".11 Certainly the dissolution of SDA and the concept of Action Committees gives reason for believing so.

R. J. Cahill

1 For details of SDA refer to my Notes on the New Left in Australia published
by the Australian Marxist Research Foundation, 1969.


4 *ibid.*


8 *loc. cit.* p. 9.

9 *ibid.*

10 SDA Newsletter, April 28, 1969.


WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL—ANOTHER VIEW

I AM WRITING this as a participant at the World Youth Festival who saw none of the preparations, only the results as they affected the 15,000 participants. The reaction of many western delegates, including many Australians, was surprise and disgust at the program and the running of the official “discussions.” The program included several things which I considered to be of secondary importance to ones not included. The official “discussions” were ones which limited discussion and prohibited expressions of differing views.

The developments in Czechoslovakia are amongst the most important ones of this decade; they raise the question of markedly differing forms of socialism and are relevant to the whole world.

It should have been possible to discuss them at the Festival but they were ignored by the International Preparatory Committee (and this was prior to the invasion). The inclusion of a day devoted to women’s rights, while being important, seemed absurd when such things as raised in Miss Burgoyne’s article (student-worker relationships, etc.) were neglected. Another point which greatly annoyed many Australians, was the “day for solidarity with the Arab peoples, victims of Israeli aggression.” While the question of the Middle East warranted inclusion in the Festival program, it is hardly as open and shut an issue as this. The Arabs have made mistakes too and the whole issue of the Middle East needs discussion. What sort of a discussion could be held under a heading like that!

A member of the Australian delegation returned from a meeting with the East Germans. Her reaction summed up the whole tone of the Festival, as imposed from above: “The attitude of the East Germans is that they’ve done everything now; their country is perfect and there’s nothing left to do.” I.P.C.’s attitude (as we saw it) was one that no discussion was needed on socialist countries — they’re perfect!

The Festival was for “Solidarity, Peace and Friendship”. Because of the attitude of the Soviet Union and its allies, the Festival failed to achieve this. Before solidarity can be achieved differing points of view have to be discussed until common ground is found. Even the solidarity meeting with the Vietnamese demonstrated the lack of solidarity within the Festival. A mass demonstration was organised by I.P.C. as a counter to one the West Germans (S.D.S.) had organised. There is no solidarity, peace or friendship with dictatorship and here the I.P.C. was trying to dictate both ideas and actions.

Mr. Supple (ALR No. 2) emphasises “imperialism” and “exploitation”. In
fact, the only imperialism "discussed" was U.S. Any attempt to discuss other aspects of imperialism (and there are others) or other questions concerning the relationships between states was successfully disrupted. For example, one of the main questions for western youth (and many eastern youth, too) is, is Soviet socialism only aiding or sometimes retarding the struggle for peace and freedom? This is directly related to the Czech issue. Of course, it wasn't discussed officially.

Mr. Supple also claims that Sofia was "the world centre of progressive young people . . . to advance their rights, to propose." The point is, that our rights were severely limited. Propositions were restricted to propositions about capitalism. The only socialist countries which engaged in self-criticism were Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia and only Yugoslavia dared suggest that one had the right to criticise aspects of the Soviet Union.

I agree in part with Mr. Supple, that international meetings are as important, if not more so, now, than in the past, but they must not be like the Festival. As capitalism and socialism become more complex, it is very necessary to discuss them on an international basis. But, as the Festival was organised, it was virtually useless: only the initiative of some western groups saved it. It is no longer necessary to demonstrate that we can get 15,000 people in one place and if such gatherings can be manipulated to make it appear that all present give uncritical support to the Soviet Union, in fact they are harmful. It is necessary to have open discussion, even if it means socialist countries may be criticised.

It seems obvious that one's views on Czechoslovakia will be reflected in one's attitude to the Festival. After all, they stem from the same basic principle. I am objecting to the stifling of discussion. In part, so did the Czechs. I ob-

ject to the imposition of ideas — so did the Czechs.

The Festival demonstrated one positive fact: that socialist ideas will continue to develop despite efforts to contain discussion just as, I believe, freedom in many forms will develop no matter what conformity is currently demanded by leaders in socialist countries.

N. MORTIER

LEVIN'S INTERNATIONAL
—AND STALIN'S

JUST OVER fifty years ago, the Third International was formed. In view of current discussions on the nature of international relations of communist parties, it may be useful to look at these relations in Lenin's time, and the alterations in their form in the period shortly following Lenin's death.

In Lenin's time, the International consisted of the free association of several completely autonomous parties. A general concordance of views was ensured by each party, on admission, agreeing to a certain set of views.

However, this did not cut across the concept of complete sovereignty of each party, not only in regard to "internal affairs", but in deciding its attitude to world problems.

Certainly, there was no "unofficial doctrine" of the leading role of one party, no matter how much admiration the various parties had for the success of the Bolshevik party.

Within the guide lines of accepted ideas, four congresses, marked by lively debate and differing viewpoints, took place in Lenin's lifetime.

The congresses most relevant to present conditions were the third and fourth (1921, 1922). The first declared for the United Front policy and the latter continued this policy. It was
thus the last congress to express Lenin's views. (It is remarkable that historians of the Third International almost completely ignore the fourth congress, but already, at that time, very serious consideration was being given to the remarkable differences in various countries in which the United Front policy was being developed).

Much has already been said of the 1928 Sixth Congress of the International, the sectarian line of which in one important expression (the attitude to social democracy) was admitted by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union openly in 1963.

Almost as important, perhaps, was the Fifth Congress (June 1924) in which a whole number of organisational changes were made which effectively converted the previously sovereign parties into sections of a single world party, with the application of global democratic centralism, proliferation of agencies and those measures which imparted a rigidity to the organisation, and ultimately did great harm.

Instances occurred in which entire sections were dissolved (e.g. the Polish Party in 1938) and serious consideration was given to dissolving others—and all this from "above".

Where sectarian extremes of the International's policy were opposed on a national scale, fiat in the form of telegrams from the Executive Committee of the International were sufficient to ensure their replacement by those who shared the sectarian views of a leadership which was ultimately that of Stalin.

The magnificent repair work of Dimitrov and others in the mid-thirties (and Stalin's belated second thoughts) were insufficient either to repair the damage of the previous period or to avoid later, basically sectarian, mistakes, punishments, dissolutions.

The positive achievements of the International are well known. But in weighing the balance of the period a sober consideration of the negative examples can also assist in forming one's attitude to the current debate on the basis of internationalism in the present period.

S.C.

SEX DISCRIMINATION

CAPITALISM has long been noted for its ruthless exploitation of women and although modern capitalism no longer adopts the more blatant methods such as cheap female labour in mining and heavy industry, it still relies heavily on the source of cheap labour made available by the existence of unequal pay.

However, I am more concerned at the moment with the more subtle forms of exploitation and discrimination which are features of the type of society that capitalism breeds. Women have the right to develop themselves to their fullest capacities, but this is not being done at present because although few legal disabilities against women still exist there are grave social disabilities which prevent them from developing themselves. I refer to the obvious discriminations which are practised against women in terms of job opportunities e.g. the difficulty of becoming a headmistress in a co-educational school, or the difficulty of making much progress in community affairs.

Now, I think that it is important to realise that women constitute a common factor in all the major institutions of society. In this respect they provide a link between workers, students, intellectuals and even the capitalists themselves. But in addition it should be borne in mind that all women suffer some discrimination because they are women regardless of their class. Thus the lowest paid fac-
Achy worker and the wife of the factory owner suffer some common discriminations, at least at the social level.

If it could be pointed out to all women exactly how much they are discriminated against, two results are likely to follow, depending on the backgrounds of the different women. Some, belonging to the working class and other similar social classes could be expected to actively seek a change in the basic structure of the society which causes such discrimination.

On the other hand, whilst it could not be expected that women from the capitalist classes would actively work for such a change, it would not be unreasonable to expect that they would be at least less hostile to such a change and to that extent the reactionary forces would be weakened.

There are many structures which help to support the existing capitalist system and in which women could work to at least reduce the effectiveness of such a structure as a bulwark of capitalism.

However such an awareness of their condition is not likely to become evident to all women at once. What is necessary is a long campaign to bring out just how extensive is the discrimination against women. Such a campaign would have to be mounted by all those who wish to change the society.

Particularly important is the role of men in such a campaign. On every occasion that discrimination was detected it would be necessary to use every possible tactic to expose the situation. For example, a black ban on any firm or government agency which advertised a job position for a male only when either a male or female would have been suitable would be a step in the right direction.

However whatever action was ultimately decided upon it would have to be integrated with other action designed to bring about the same change in society. Probably a national conference along the same lines, but on a different scale, as the recent Left Action Conference, would provide a point of focus for those who are interested in tackling the problem of our present society from this angle.

LYLE T. CULLEN

MORE PROTEST ON 'CIVILIAN MILITARISTS'

I HAVE just returned to Australia after some months overseas, and been given a copy of your issue of December 1968, containing an article 'Civilian Militarists' by John Playford. I was interested to find so much of Dr. Playford's article devoted to the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University, and to my own writings and lectures. Some of Dr. Playford's points are correct, or justifiable interpretation. He is certainly entitled to hold the views he does, to quote Tribune in support of them and, in our kind of society, to express them. But his article contained so many errors of fact, incorrect or even improper inferences, and so much use of the techniques of guilt by association and smear by irrelevant juxtaposition that I feel I must protest through your columns. Much of what he says is not true, and this includes references to my own career which, had he so wished, he could so easily have checked with me.

On errors of fact: it has never been proposed that the Centre should have access to classified material. Dr. Playford's account of the formation of the Centre bears almost no relation to what occurred. He relies for his 'evidence' on a second-hand account by a journalist who, on his own admission, did not
A REJOINDER

IN THE LIGHT of claims that the Australian National University's Strategic Studies Centre has established a solid reputation for relevance and objectivity, it is rather interesting that Dr. Millar should begin his letter by pointing out that in "our kind of society" I am entitled to hold certain views, including the right to quote from Tribune. (It is also interesting to note that "Civilian Militarists" contained several scores of references of which only one came from the dreaded source referred to by Dr. Millar.)

Let me turn now to minor "errors of fact". Dr. Millar was advertised to speak at a meeting sponsored by the Defend Australia Committee. He may not have lectured on "military history" at Dunroon, but he has lectured there on other subjects. The description of him as a "Professional Fellow," whatever that may be. Dr. Playford's assessments thus involve serious inaccuracies and misrepresentations, which call into question the purpose no less than the validity of his article.

May I say a few words about the Centre. It is an activity of this University, subject to the same requirements of academic discipline and propriety as any other activity. Its participants include people of widely varying academic and political interests. It does not have views: it provides facilities where views can be expressed and research undertaken freely. It seeks to raise the level of university and public knowledge and debate on strategic and defence matters, and if Dr. Playford would like to make use of it, he has only to ask. He might then become rather more informed about it, and about questions of defence, than he now appears to be.

T. B. MILLAR,
Professorial Fellow.