Aboriginal land and uranium
Black wage struggles
The CIA in Australia
We apologise for the fact that no issue of ALR was published in the month of June.

In this issue...

We publish two articles on the conditions of Australia's blacks and their treatment by whites. One is by Warwick Neilly, a former union organiser in the Northern Territory. It outlines the economic exploitation of blacks by white-controlled businesses such as pastoral companies and discusses the attitudes of trade unions, also white-controlled, to this super-exploitation.

The other article discusses black land rights, with special attention to the impact of uranium mining, and mining generally, on the struggle between blacks and white economic interests over rights to traditional tribal land. The article is reprinted from Chain Reaction, journal of the environmental group Friends of the Earth. The editorial collective felt that the article is such a good coverage of a subject little understood on the white left as to justify reprinting it here.

Ron Witton, senior lecturer in American Studies and Sociology at Flinders University in Adelaide, analyses some of the political and social implications for Australia of the current spate of revelations about CIA activity in Australia. He believes that these revelations and other factors should lead us to consider 'what role the Americans may have had in Australia's internal political development'.

Colombian writer Gabriel Marquez gives an 'inside' account of Cuban military activities in Angola. With the Western press' hypocritical polemics against 'interference' being the only source of information to date for Australians, this fascinating story tells it from the other side.

The three reviews include one of the new draft program of the Communist Party of Great Britain written by a member of that party currently living in Australia. The issues raised of socialist strategy in advanced capitalist societies are of interest to socialists in all such countries. We hope in future to promote an in-depth debate on these questions, including reprinting of further material from overseas sources.

CIA Revelations
Ron Witton

Aboriginal Land
John Andrews, Pat Mullins, Don Siemens, Mark Carter, Lyndon Shea

Exploitation of Black Workers
Warwick Neilly

Cubans in Angola
Gabriel Marquez

Reviews

Editorial Collective: Brian Aarons, Kathe Boehringer, Gloria Garton, Terry O'Shaughnessy, Mavis Robertson, Eric Aarons.

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REVELATIONS:
SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN POLITICS AND SOCIETY
ron witton

The article presented here is an expanded version of a talk given by Dr. Witton on the ABC Broadband program on May 9, 1977.

Dr. Witton is senior lecturer in American Studies and Sociology at Flinders University, Sth. Australia, and is co-editor (with Mike Richards) of a forthcoming study of US influence in Australia entitled The American Connexion.

One of the major effects of the recent revelations about CIA involvement in the internal domestic politics of Australia is that it demands that we all think about the ways in which our society, its politics and its culture, may have been affected by the Americans and by their allies on the right wing of Australia's political spectrum.

Let me try to show what I mean. 1977 has already seen the publication of an important and stimulating book on Australian society. The book, Ruling Class, Ruling Culture (Cambridge University Press) was written by Bob Connell, the newly appointed Professor of Sociology at Macquarie University. There are few people who have Connell's wide-ranging knowledge and sensitivity to make sense of the manner in which capitalism has developed in Australia.
and to establish the way that Australia's ruling class maintains its control over Australian society, culture and politics. In the conclusion of the book, Connell discusses two historical moments in Australian post-war history when the rightwing forces of Australia engaged in massive mobilisation to trounce the forces of reform and change. The first of these was during the anti-bank nationalisation campaign of 1947-1949 which culminated in the dramatic electoral defeat of Labor. As Connell points out:

In the late 1940s a conservative political mobilisation occurred on a scale unprecedented since the first world war. A co-ordinated, expensive and dramatic propaganda campaign was launched against the Labor government by the business and political leadership of the ruling class. In 1949 the conservative parties swept back to federal office where, with a temporary interruption by the Whitlam government, they have remained ever since. In the 1950s and 1960s the remaining State Labor governments were picked off one by one: for a short period at the end of the 1960s there was no Labor government anywhere in Australia, a situation that had not been known for half a century. (p.208).

Connell's observations, I believe, force us to reconsider what role the Americans may have had in Australia's internal political development. He points out that the electoral campaign of 1966 was in many ways as significant as that of 1949 in its capacity to destroy the electoral hopes of Labor and of the left. The 1966 campaign was, of course, fought mainly around the issue of Viet Nam and was one in which the American government had a vital interest.

Well, given this observation, what relevance do the recent CIA revelations have? First, we must realise that if, as the former top-level CIA officer Marchetti claims, there were at least 20 or 30 "deep cover" or "clandestine" CIA operatives working in Australia during the latter half of the 'sixties and into the 'seventies (The Sun, May 4, 1977), then it would be naive to imagine that they would not work with the right against the left in Australia.

Moreover, the successive electoral defeats of Labor during the second half of the 'sixties indicate that if these were achieved with the assistance of the CIA, then the CIA had probably learnt much from their activities throughout the world where the overthrow of governments and funding of rightwing political parties had become standard fare. However, this period in Australia has particular relevance for other reasons. We already had a large number of US military, intelligence and communications bases on our soil and 1966-68 was a crucial time for the construction of the vital Pine Gap installation. It was finally completed about 1969 or 1970 and the now confirmed CIA officer (and friend of Doug Anthony), Richard Lee Stallings was then the officer in charge of the Pine Gap installation.

At the same time Australia was a major, if somewhat symbolic, ally of the US in Viet Nam. Of course, other things were happening at that time as well. In the late 'sixties, Australia saw a massive inflow of American investment. This was highlighted at that time by a top level US investment conference sponsored in Australia by the Stanford University's highly influential Stanford Research Institute, or SRI. The SRI carries out top level, often highly classified and intelligence related, research for the Pentagon and the American intelligence community, as well as for American corporations.

This conference in Sydney was attended by some of the top US corporate leadership; businessmen whose gigantic multinational corporations dispose of annual funds far in excess of many national budgets of third world nations and whose multinational corporations often provide "cover" to CIA agents working abroad. People like this do not descend on a country lightly and it is significant that they chose the late 'sixties for their conference. About the same time, the Liberal-Country Party cabinet actually had a closed session meeting with top level executives of another body representing the highest levels of US corporate power. This body, Business International, is an American corporate organisation which has the resources and co-ordination at its disposal to organise US corporate support for, or destabilisation against, governments throughout the world. The fact that a national cabinet would meet it in closed session indicates a considerable degree of
Also in the late 'sixties we had at least one very suspicious labor conference. It was
sponsored by the International Confederation of Petroleum and Chemical Workers, a body which has since been
unmasked as but one of the international labor organisations which have used CIA
funds to promote rightwing trade union influence in countries such as Australia.
This conference was held at the University of NSW and no doubt at the time may have
seemed innocent enough, although the strong role of rightwing Australian trade
unions in the conference should surely have alerted many people to the fact that
neutralty of the conference seemed dubious at least. However, if people such as Mr.
Edward St. John, QC, can find only now (Sydney Sun, May 4, 1977) that a body such
as the International Commission of Jurists has been manipulated through CIA funding,
how many other people and organisations will need to examine the role they may have
played, wittingly or unwittingly, in furthering the interests of the US in Australia and throughout the world? Hence
the interest in Sir John Kerr’s association with LAWASIA, another organisation that
used CIA funds. Often these connections are found out through mere chance. For
example, in the early 'seventies, I myself heard that there were plans to set up in
Australia a rightwing organisation to be called Peace with Freedom. At the time, I
recalled that I had heard the name before and, sure enough, by fossicking around a bit,
I found that the US magazine Ramparts had, in the late 'sixties, written an article
which mentioned that the CIA had funded an organisation by that exact name in
Africa. It is just too much to believe that this name was picked out quite at random by
rightwing Australians.

However, to return to the observations of Bob Connell mentioned earlier, we must now
begin to investigate the way in which events that have thus far been viewed as almost
solely within the Australian political arena may have been either set up, manipulated or
used by the US and its intelligence organisations. For example, with the
revelations of Marchetti and Boyce, the actions of rightwing trade unions in the
Ermolenko affair in Perth gain new significance. What about the whole cold-war
era that was ushered in, as Connell points out, by a massive campaign against Labor
and the left? What about the Petrov trial? What about the Communist Dissolution
referendum in the early 'fifties? How much were these events orchestrated from
Washington? We know that people like Dulles visited Australia during that period.
What plans were hatched during such visits? How many lower level CIA officers and
operatives moved around Australia influencing Australian events? In
Broadband on May 2, 1977, Mark Aarons was able to reveal the crude opinions of CIA
operative and trade union leader Harry Goldberg following his 1960 visit to
Australia because Goldberg was stupid enough to lose a copy of his report which then
found its way into the hands of the Australian trade union movement. (See
Tribune, May 11, 1977.) How many other reports have gone to the US unrevealed and
have helped formulate plans of
manipulation and control in Australia?

Let us just consider the reports of the now
proven CIA labor attaches that have worked out of the Melbourne US consulate. What sort
of work is being carried out at this very moment by the present US Labor Attaché
Arthur Purcell who has worked for the US in areas such as Latin America? Former CIA
officer Philip Agee in his book on the CIA has laid bare the dirty tricks that CIA agents
have played in Latin America, particularly with union leaders. We do not, of course,
know whether Purcell is actually CIA or not, though it would be hard to understand why we should have a succession of CIA officers in that post and then suddenly not have one. But in any case, it would be hard to believe that the function of the post has changed or that the post acts any differently in Australia than in Latin America, except of course that funds are presumably not used here for assassination of leftwing leaders as in Latin America. Rather, the post probably uses more subtle and appropriate tactics. Thoughts such as these make the reports — such as that referred to by John Hurst in the Nation Review of May 5-11, 1977 — of possible CIA blackmail, both political and sexual, of Australian labor leaders, highly relevant.

A whole new dimension to our understanding of CIA activities in Australia came with Humphrey McQueen's excellently documented account of the funding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, also in Nation Review (May 5-11, 1977). That so many of our literary, academic and cultural elite could be implicated from just this one organisation makes one begin to wonder what would be the result of having further files from the myriad of moderately well-funded rightwing organisations that have appeared, sometimes just temporarily, on the Australian scene. It is unlikely we are ever going to have the wealth of detail such as that unearthed on the Congress for Cultural Freedom by the ever vigilant Humphrey McQueen. Nevertheless, it is of equal importance to identify the effect that the funding of rightwing cultural and political commentators have had on Australian social thought.

The files used by McQueen reveal how easily the CIA and its rightwing friends had access to organs of influential Australian opinion, such as the Current Affairs Bulletin and other journals, as well as to universities and bodies such as the Institute of International Affairs, the Institute of Political Science in Australia, and the WEA. As well, we have been shown in this stunning review by McQueen the way that pressure was put on Australian daily newspapers when occasionally they erred and actually had leftwingers or liberals review books. Moreover, Anne Summers' and Paul Kelly's observation in the National Times (May 9-14, 1977) that there would appear to be an almost total news clampdown on the really sensational revelations of the last fortnight - with the startling exception of the Sydney Sun - confirms one's general feeling, backed up by McQueen's evidence, that the Australian press is a close and loyal ally to the American corporate takeover of Australia's economy and culture.

So, what views in, and of, Australia might be seen as those which have either come from, or are reinforced by, the CIA and its friends in Australia? At a crude level, these views would obviously include views such as the following:

- That unions are to blame for Australia's economic ills, rather than the view that, as we become more and more integrated into the world capitalist system, we will be more and more at the mercy of economic forces over which we have no control.

- That Australians have no economic initiative and that we should be grateful to American corporations for coming to invest here, rather than the view that the Americans have succeeded in taking over almost every profitable sector of our economy and are ripping off the Australian economy and people at an almost obscene rate. And so on ....

There are even more subtle views that have been promoted in Australia and it is here that the CIA's friends in the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and in our universities, have played a particular role. These views would include, for example, the following: that Australian culture is parochial and sterile and that the only way we can develop culturally is to open our culture and society to international forces, and particularly to the so-called vibrant culture of the US in the same way as our economy needs to be "opened up". This results in a general downgrading of the status and value of Australian poets, novelists, musicians and artists, and a celebration of every visiting celebrity brought out - perhaps we can guess now by whom - from the US. This means that we see, for example, the often nonsensical modern art and sculpture displays regularly sponsored in Australia by the New York Museum of Modern Art, and stand in awe before the social products of another society and culture. We send our best talent to the US to become alienated from our society and they come back as men and women of the
world, but not of Australia. How often do we see Australian plays, and particularly ones of critical social comment, on the stages of our leading theatre companies, compared to foreign, particularly American, plays? Due to the smothering effect of the US film industry, distributing through US-owned cinema chains, we are only now seeing the incredible talent of our own film makers who have languished for years with only the work of making TV advertisements (usually for American products) to keep them from completely losing their talent. And even now, we find that Australian films must look towards the eventual American market before they can find backers (often American). And to add insult to injury, the films occasionally have to tolerate American lead actors, such as Richard Chamberlain of the TV doctor series fame.

To mention television makes one immediately think not only of the dismal fare we adults face each evening, but also of our children who daily view the cultural trash of another country while US companies bombard them with sickening advertisements. The same cultural invasion has, of course, also occurred in the book industry. We have seen the virtual collapse, and US takeover, of the Australian publishing industry and the cold war warriors of such bodies as the Congress for Cultural Freedom have rationalised this by pointing out the cultural superiori of international (mainly American) writers and international (mainly American) ideas. In the future, we are likely to hear less and less of Australia in books and novels unless the ideas are acceptable to the US publishing houses or deal with what they see as "non-parochial" subjects in order that there will be a market for them in the US and throughout the US empire of communications.

It is thus in the realm of ideology, of how we view ourselves, our culture, our history, our politics and, most importantly, our future, that the Americans, through the CIA and through those who see themselves as the guardians of the American way of life in Australia, will continue to try to control us. It is indeed a tribute to Australian culture that so much exciting cultural and social creativity is still occurring in Australia. However, we must, with the recent revelations, be aware that our cultural and social existence is at present being contested and that the struggle to gain national autonomy will be a long and hard one. It is the revelations of the recent period that form a watershed in our political history. Despite the protestations and stonewalling of the right, there is indeed machinery in existence in Australia to maintain the US's economic and cultural domination of our lives and there's no doubt that our own intelligence community works closely with the Americans to maintain this domination in which Australia's own ruling class plays a vital role.

The relevance of this to the mobilisation against the Whitlam government even before it got to power (Dissent, Melbourne, No. 29, 1972, The US and Australia), as well as when it was ousted (Sun, May 9, 1977), deserves considerable examination. It is my belief that more and more Australians will be moved to help expose the CIA and its allies in Australia and to begin to create an Australian culture and politics that will overcome the barriers that have been consciously constructed to thwart our autonomous national development.

However, the struggle will be a long and hard one. The gigantic US corporations that are here mean business, just as they did in Chile. And we have twice as much US investment in Australia than did Chile. What can these companies do? Well, for example, in Chile ITT financed and assisted much of the CIA's activities. In Australia why wouldn't it do the same to safeguard its investment? Thus, in Australia, ITT, through its ownership (among other things) of STC, controls a part of Australia's telecommunications industry, obviously a vital asset in terms of intelligence monitoring and surveillance. It would be naive and absurd to maintain that a corporation threatened by similar forces to those that opposed it in Chile would not use its powerful position in its own interest. Moreover, bodies such as the American Chamber of Commerce in Australia play a role in co-ordinating the activities of these giant multinationals.

But their task is far less easy than it was in the 'sixties and it is my belief that their task will become an increasingly difficult one. The revelations of the recent past and the increasing popular interest in them both here and abroad, confirm this fact.
The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 came into force on January 26 of this year, Australia Day - a day commemorating the first fleet’s arrival at Botany Bay in 1788 when, under ‘white law’, the whole continent suddenly ceased to belong to the Aborigines and instead became Crown Land.

The article takes a detailed look at the provisions of this Act and at the Aboriginal Land Rights issue as a whole. It pays particular attention to how the Act affects Aboriginal claims to the land on which uranium has been found in Arnhem Land. The effect of proposed uranium mining on Aborigines is a question which has largely been ignored.

It will be obvious to readers that the article was written before publication of the Second Report of the Ranger Uranium Environmental Commission.

The Aborigines came to this continent from the north upwards of 30,000 years ago. Living solely by food gathering and hunting they established a sustainable way of life in close harmony with the natural environment. They lived well in good seasons; they suffered in bad years.

First and foremost, the Aborigines’ link with their land is a spiritual one. As Vi Stanton movingly described to the Ranger Inquiry in Darwin last year: “She (the Earth) is the source of our true beings, our soul and our life .... from her we have our traditional dreaming places, our most sacred areas and the keeping places of our lore.”

The commonest form of ‘earth link’ is between a clan and a particular area of land. (2) Membership of the clan is usually determined by patrilineal descent - that is, a child automatically becomes a member of the father’s clan. Aborigines regard the link between a clan and its land as being timeless - a link between those living now, their ancestors and their Dreamtime spirit beings.

This spiritual link involves both rights and duties: “The rights are to the unrestricted use of its natural products; the duties are of a ceremonial kind - to tend the land by the performance of ritual dances, songs and ceremonies at the proper times and places.” (3)
Groups which live and hunt together, however, are made up of people from a number of different clans, since marriage cannot take place between man and woman from the same clan.

It has been estimated that about 300,000 Aborigines were living on this continent when Europeans first arrived in 1788. Right up until their first contact with white settlers, Aborigines lived in a manner closely similar to that of their earliest ancestors. What happened when the white people came was succinctly described by Woodward in the Second Report of the Aboriginal Land Rights Commission set up by the Whitlam government in February 1973(4):

“At the beginning of the year 1788 the whole of Australia was occupied by the Aboriginal people of this country. It was divided between groups in a way that was understood and respected by all.

Over the last 186 years, white settlers and their descendants have gradually taken over the occupation of most of the fertile or otherwise useful parts of the country. In doing so, they have shown scant regard for any rights in the land, legal or moral, of the Aboriginal people.

There are now about one hundred white citizens of Australia for every one Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal (i.e. there are approximately 160,000 people of Aboriginal descent).

These basic facts and the human tragedy they represent are, I believe, not sufficiently understood by the Australian community.”

ABORIGINALS AND MINING

Old attitudes die hard and the colonisation of Aboriginal land, such as there is remaining, continues to the present day. The most recent wave of invaders has swelled over the past 25 years, as mining companies have penetrated previously remote regions, mainly in the Northern Territory and Queensland, in search of the mineral ores for supplying metals to the world’s expanding industrial economies. This wave now threatens to reach a new peak with the discovery in the Alligator Rivers region of the NT of vast uranium deposits, on land claimed by Aborigines and only a short distance from an existing Aboriginal settlement, Oenpelli.

For an understanding of the origins of the Aboriginal Land Rights movement, the reaction of Aborigines to the Land Rights (NT) Bill passed by the Fraser government in December 1976, and also their determined stance against uranium mining, it’s essential first to review some examples of what mining ventures have done to Aboriginal communities in the past.

Bauxite Mining on Cape York Peninsula

The West side of Cape York Peninsula contains the largest known deposits of high-grade bauxite in the world. Here also there used to be three Presbyterian missions and Aboriginal Reserves: in the north, Mapoon, then Weipa and Aurukun in the south (see map). The missions had been founded at the end of the last century in an attempt to control the conflict between Aboriginal people and white settlers. The cattlemen, Jardine and Kennedy, had killed 250 people from the Batavia River (inland, south-east of Mapoon) alone.

The missionaries set out quite deliberately to ‘civilise’ the Aboriginal people. They did not succeed as efficiently as it might appear, for it was as late as 1957 that the last of the Aboriginal groups living near Aurukun was settled at the mission.

By the 1950s the bauxite deposits in this area began to be attractive to mining interests. 1957 saw the Comalco Act, giving control to the company over more than 5,000 sq. km. of reserve land on the west coast of Cape York - from 60 km north of Mapoon to the Aurukun settlement. In 1965 Alcan got a lease on 1300 sq. km. of the Mapoon people’s land. (5)

Weipa.

After much negotiating between Comalco, the Presbyterian Church and the State Government, the Weipa people were finally allowed to remain near the mission site, on a tiny 308-acre Weipa South reserve. They lost almost all their land, for the dubious benefit of living near the Comalco mining town. Comalco has paid some $500,000 to finance housing, electricity and so on for the Reserve, out of pre-tax profits of over $160 million to 1974.

Let’s look at the benefits that Comalco
have brought to Weipa. The main things claimed to come out of Comalco's mining operations were good housing, employment and education.

Comalco provided only $300,000 for the resettlement of the Weipa people - enough for 62 homes at $4,840 each. (At the same time Comalco was building white miners' family houses at $28,000 each.) The money did not run to wash basins, sinks or internal painting, let alone laundries or sewerage. Most important of all, the Aborigines who had built and owned their houses at the Mission, now no longer owned the houses in which they lived.

Employment? Until recently, Comalco never employed more than about 20 Aboriginal people on a permanent basis. Rather the Company had at its disposal a pool of reserve casual labor. Further, Comalco has avoided offering training to potential workers. Instead of building a trade school as promised, a pre-school was built with government assistance.

In other words the Weipa community lost its land with no thought of royalties or compensation to become a fringe settlement, dependent on Comalco as much as on the Queensland Government. The process was aptly described by Frank Stevens as 'pauperisation'. (6)

**Mapoon**

The Weipa community were at least partly rehoused by the company. Mapoon people have lost their land, and were even forced by armed Queensland police to leave their homes at the Mapoon settlement in 1963. The police then burnt the people's homes and belongings. (7) There was no compensation, royalties or recognition of the Mapoon people's rights. The company even refused to aid the resettlement of the Mapoon people at Weipa South, Thursday Island and Bamaga.

The people were forcibly evicted by a coalition of interests: the mining companies who needed as much control over the land as possible (especially with the bay near Mapoon as a possible port site); the church authorities who wanted to rationalise their operations, because they were unable to finance Mapoon as a 'modern mission'; and the Queensland Government to whom Mapoon was not only an embarrassment on Comalco land but also did not fit in with their assimilation policy.

A more recent development is that in 1974 the Mapoon people decided to resort to direct action and moved back into Mapoon to re-establish their community there. (5)

**Aurukun**

Aurukun in the south lost over 750 sq.km. of Aboriginal land to Comalco, the lease extending all the way south to the mission site. The mission was not directly affected and no mining has taken place so far. Comalco is just starting to move onto Aurukun land this year.

In late 1975, however, the Aurukun community began to feel the power of the mining companies. Just after the removal of the Whitlam government in November 1975, the Queensland Government rushed through a mining lease to Aurukun Associates - a consortium of Shell Oil's subsidiary, Billiton, the European company Pechiney, and the US land corporation, Tipperary.

The decision to grant the lease over 1800 sq. km of Aboriginal Reserve land was taken in complete secrecy; not only were the Aboriginal people not consulted, but the Presbyterian Church and Federal Government were also kept entirely in the dark. Public protest and exposure forced the Queensland Government to allow the companies to negotiate with the Aurukun people - negotiations which they have shown little sign of taking seriously. The companies have what they want: a legal hold over the bauxite fields. Now they can afford to wait.

In short the bauxite mining companies' entry to Cape York Peninsula has meant a new stage in the colonisation of the Aboriginal people. The missions and reserves settled the people, setting out to destroy their original economy and culture. But now the mining companies are taking the land to which the people belong - they are taking away their potential economic independence, their future as well as their past.

**Nabalco on the Gove Peninsula**

On 30 May 1969 the Commonwealth of Australia granted a lease to Nabalco Pty. Ltd. (70% owned by Swiss Alumina Aust. Ltd., 30% by an Australian company, Gove Alumina) for the mining of bauxite on more
than 20,000 hectares of land on the Gove Peninsula, the traditional land of the Yirrkala Aboriginal people (see map). There was also provision for building a mining town, Nhulunbuy, nearby.

The mining company and the Government regarded white people at the Yirrkala mission as representatives of the Yirrkala people, and proceeded to appropriate, by legislation, of course, the land they wanted, without consent of the Aboriginal community. The mission put in representations on behalf of the Aborigines opposing the development, but these had no effect and Nabalco’s mining operations began.

However, the Yirrkala people did not give up that easily, and looked to the law for protection. In 1971 a number of their people brought a court case against Nabalco and the Commonwealth, seeking a declaration from the court that the Yirrkala people should be entitled to occupy and enjoy their traditional land free from interference, and also that they had rights to the bauxite and other minerals in that land.

Their legal counsel tried to bring out and dust off the ‘doctrine of native title’ from the attic of British Common Law to prove their claim. Judge Blackburn, however, rejected the arguments, finding in Australia “a long succession of legislative and executive acts designed to facilitate the settlement and development of the country, not expressly by white men, but without regard for any communal native title.”

Gordon Briscoe, an Aborigine who testified at the Ranger Inquiry, describes Blackburn’s judgment against the Yirrkala people as a “humiliation”, and says “it will go down in Aboriginal folk-law as the day that indicates that the law is a ‘white law’.”

It is interesting to note that senior counsel for the Yirrkala people in this legal battle was A.E. Woodward, who was later to head Labor’s Aboriginal Land Rights Commission.

Given the go-ahead by the judgment Nabalco proceeded with its bauxite mining and set up a plant for refining the raw ore to alumina. The population of Nhulunbuy has grown to about 3,500 people. Meanwhile, as Briscoe has said, comparing the promises of the uranium mining companies now with those earlier promises of Nabalco: “The same arguments were put forward then that mining will bring employment and royalties (to the local Aborigines). All that has happened is that the culture has been destroyed by population pressures, alcoholism and loss of control by tribal elders”. Woodward in his second report on Land Rights in 1974 noted that Nabalco “apparently as a matter of policy, employs and trains practically no Aborigines”.

And it is not just that mining has had such a devastating effect on the Yirrkala people, as if that was not enough. It has also had a terribly destructive effect on the local ecology of the area. In 1974, referring to the red-mud effluent from the alumina plant, Woodward stated that “Already a substantial area of swampland is covered by this material which is obviously deadly to all living things”. He further noted that Nabalco was seeking further land for the disposal of this waste.

The generation of this waste and pollution from the Nabalco refinery also rebounds back on the Yirrkala people. Traditionally they had been heavily dependent on the sea as a source of food, and a number of cases of fish-poisoning at Yirrkala have been reported.

Wallaroo and Leonora

Similar tales of destruction can be told about other areas where the miners have moved in to dig up Aboriginal land. Gordon Briscoe described two more examples to the Ranger Inquiry as follows:

“At Wallaroo (SA) copper mining has been fundamentally responsible for the dispossession and destruction of Aboriginal law and the creation of a fringe society. The
people at Point Pearce (SA) have never recovered their dignity and pride. At Leonora (WA) similar patterns of social destruction have arisen ... Because gold suffered more than copper from world market price fluctuation ... a ghost town is all that is left. There a history of brutal racism has left the previous indigenous population squashed onto Government settlements in subservience to the NATIONAL INTEREST" (his emphasis).

THE GURINDJI SHOW THE WAY

Two events in particular spurred Blacks throughout Australia to combine in a national struggle for land rights.

In August 1966 about 170 Gurindji people walked off Wave Hill Station, a Vestey property in the NT, and set up camp at Wattie Creek, in protest against their poor living conditions and bad treatment on the Station.(16) (The Gurindji finally won their fight in 1975 when they were handed a lease for their tribal land by Gough Whitlam).

Secondly the loss of the Yirrkala people’s case against Nabalco and the Commonwealth in 1971 showed Aborigines throughout Australia that they would have to extend their struggle for land rights into the political arena if they were to stand any chance of realising their aims.

Consequently, in January 1972 the Aboriginal Embassy was set up outside Parliament House in Canberra, one of the principal demands being for land rights. This bold action brought at least one quick result, since on 9 February 1972 Mr. Whitlam said that if the ALP got into government it would “establish community ownership of land in the Northern Territory by identifiable (Aboriginal) communities or tribes”. Thus when Labor came to office in November 1972, land rights was a key part of their legislative programme, and in February 1973 it appointed Mr. Justice Woodward as a single-person Commission to inquire into and report on:

“The appropriate means to recognise and establish the traditional rights and interests of the Aborigines in and in relation to land, and to satisfy in other ways the reasonable aspirations of the Aborigines to rights in or in relation to the land”. (17)
minerals, provided it did so before exploration started. This veto could only be overruled if both Houses of Parliament voted that it was in the national interest that this mining venture should proceed.

- That all royalties and payments in connection with mining should be used for the benefit of Aboriginal people, and be divided up between Land Councils, the local communities involved and an Aboriginal Benefits Trust Fund.

Most of these recommendations were well received by Aborigines, but there was one area in particular where there was widespread dissatisfaction - that concerning mineral rights. (18)

Realising that the new ‘minerals rush’ by Governments and mining companies posed perhaps the greatest threat to the future existence of Aboriginal communities in the Territory, both the Northern Land Council and Central Land Council placed strong submissions before Woodward asking for an ‘absolute right’ to all minerals, including gas and oil, found in Aboriginal soil. The NLC followed this by saying: “We believe that any attempt to compromise in relation to this question of mining or minerals may largely undo the benefits of granting to them ownership of their land” (19)

Of course, Woodward did compromise and knocked back these requests. As a judge steeped in the tradition of British law, according to which all minerals in land which comes under the Crown’s jurisdiction remain the property of the crown, he could presumably accept no other option - even though the Aboriginals’ occupation of their land for upwards of 30,000 years before the white people came, and the fact that mining ventures are so destructive of their land and culture, surely established grounds for a break with tradition in this case.

To Woodward’s credit, however, he clearly intended that the Government should only over-rule an Aboriginal veto on a mining venture in extreme circumstances. He states in his Second Report (20): (“Aborigines’) views could be over-ridden if the Government of the day were to resolve that the national interest requires it. In this context I use the word ‘required’ deliberately so that such an issue would not be determined on a mere balance of convenience or desirability but only as a matter of necessity”.

So in the present case of uranium mining in Arnhem Land, where there is certainly no ‘necessity’ for mining to go ahead (and even monetary benefits would only amount to 0.5% of national income at best (21)) then we would interpret Woodward as meaning that, if the Aborigines said no to mining, then the Government would have no grounds for over-ruling their veto. (But as we shall see later, the Aborigines won’t even be given the chance to exercise a veto on uranium mining, which makes this finding somewhat academic!)

The trouble is we have to ‘interpret’ Woodward on this highly contentious question of what is in the ‘national interest’. If he really wanted to protect Aborigines from mining developments he should have spelt out in much greater detail what he meant by the term. Because, as we have seen with both the Woodward Reports and the Fox Report, as soon as the report of a Commission is released it becomes a ‘political document’, to be cut, stretched and twisted to whatever shape the various parties desire. With a Liberal/National
BLACK MARKS FOR MINERS

Location of resources and Aboriginal communities affected by uranium mining.
Country Party in power, and the Australian and foreign mining interests group, the Australian Mining Industry Council, working away behind the scenes, ‘national interest’ can all too soon be reshaped into ‘multinational interest’.

Another weakness of the Aboriginal veto over mining as proposed by Woodward was that it had to be exercised when an exploration lease was being sought, or not at all; thus Aboriginal consent to exploration for minerals entailed a consent to any mining which eventuated later, provided the mining proposed was in substantial accordance with the proposals submitted to the Aborigines before exploration.

As Geoff Eames, solicitor to the Central Land Council has noted: “... very considerable difficulties ... will face Aborigines to reach an agreement at the exploration stage which provides for all the possibilities which may occur after exploration has been completed”. After all, if a mining company knows all about what it is planning to do before exploration, why bother to explore? Unfortunately this weakness, and the others mentioned, in Woodward’s original recommendations have been carried over into all the land rights legislation proposed since.

LAND RIGHTS LEGISLATION

Nearly all of Woodward’s recommendations were incorporated into the Aboriginal Land (Northern Territory) Bill 1975 presented to Parliament by the then Labor Government on 5 November 1975. The Bill had a very short life since the Labor Government were removed from office only six days later.

The Labor Land Rights Bill was opposed by the Liberal/Country parties and when they came into office they set about amending it. When they presented their own Bill to Parliament in June 1976, the Bill was described as a ‘sell-out’ by Land Rights groups throughout the country. Under this new Bill, Land Councils, which had proven such effective advocates of the Aboriginal cause in the past, were to be stripped of practically all their powers and finance; the Country party dominated NT Legislative Assembly was to be given the power to make laws concerning Aboriginal land and right of Aborigines to enter pastoral properties; and most alarmingly, the Federal Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs could him/herself over-rule an Aboriginal veto on a mining venture in the ‘national interest’ without even airing the matter in Parliament.

Only now, however, is the true measure of this Bill becoming apparent. Indeed, it did return to most of Woodward’s recommendations, as they are outlined earlier in this article. Land Councils were retained, though doubts about their funding remain; the NT Legislative Assembly’s powers over Aboriginal land were cut back somewhat compared with the first Liberal/NCP Bill; and the Aboriginal veto over mining returned to its Woodward form - i.e., over-ruling in the national interest was subject to disallowance by either House of Parliament.

But as argued earlier, the Aboriginal veto over mining suggested by Woodward had serious weaknesses as it was. And just in case these weren’t enough, some of the late amendments to the December 1976 Bill ensured that the Aborigines had no power of veto at all over practically all the major mining, and oil and gas, ventures at present contemplated on land claimed (or which will be) by Aborigines in the Territory. We will deal with the uranium mining case separately; first of all, though, let us look at all the other proposed developments.

ROLLING IN THROUGH THE DOORS

One sub-clause 40(5), in the Land Rights Act provides a convenient loophole through which any company that has already been granted a lease for oil or gas exploration on land claimed by Aborigines can now go ahead with any further developments without Aboriginal consent. This means that the oil and gas deposits at Mereenie which Magellan Petroleum Pty. Ltd. are seeking to exploit, and the deposit on Aboriginal land at Palm Valley discovered by Palm Valley Oil and Gas, can both go ahead whatever is said by the Aboriginals claiming this land.

Another sub-clause, 10(3), under which any mining lease granted before the date of commencement of the Act or “in pursuance
of an agreement entered into by the Commonwealth before that date"(23), sees to it that Mt Isa Mines are not prevented by Aboriginal opposition from digging up the 1,000 tonnes of silver, lead and zinc 45 km south of Borroloola on the McArthur River (see map). The plan is then to pipe this fine-grained ore to the Sir Edward Pellew group of islands for shipment.

On a visit to Sydney last August to draw attention to the plight of the Borroloola Aborigines, one of their spokespersons, Jack Isaacs, repeated a familiar story: "The pipeline hasn't gone through yet, but if it is built it will go through our sacred lands. Our whole community - and the old people - they worry about that. They want to put mining on our tribal land and we don't like it ... Somebody ought to stop it".(24)

The Fraser Government played a direct role in removing the right of the Borroloola people to say no to this mining development. In July 1976 the Government instructed the Interim Aboriginal Land Commissioner appointed by the previous Labor Government, to stop hearing the land claim of the Borroloola people. Geoff Eames, solicitor for the Central Land Council, continues the story:

"After the order from Fraser to stop the hearing of the Borroloola cases, the Commonwealth entered into an agreement with Mt. Isa Mines Ltd., the terms of which are still secret but which one can reasonably assume provided a right of a lease and a guarantee of mining in the area ... It is quite obvious to me that the biggest mine in the NT was going to receive the protection some Liberal speakers in the House of Representatives' debates felt it deserved".(25)

As Geoff Eames told us recently when we phoned him in Alice Springs, "The mining companies are now rolling in through the doors. The land rights legislation is a start, but I'm afraid it's all we're going to get for a long time".

Finally it should be stressed that the 1976 Land Rights Act only applies to the Northern Territory. Other land-rights legislation has been passed over recent years in each State, except Queensland, but all of it is very limited in extent. The need and struggle for genuine land rights continue - not only in the NT but throughout Australia.

LAND RIGHTS AND URANIUM MINING

Let us now look at how the Land Rights Act 1976 safeguards the rights of Aborigines who are claiming the land containing the uranium deposits in the Alligator Rivers region of the NT (see map for their location). The short answer is that it doesn't. Again escape clauses in the Act see to it that only one, or possibly even none, of the proposed uranium mining developments can be held up by an Aboriginal veto, should the land come under Aboriginal ownership in the future. So far as the land rights question is concerned, the Act gives a bright 'green light' for mining and no doubt the Fox Commission will be unwilling to adopt a tougher line to protect Aboriginal interests.

It is important to note that all the main uranium deposits in the Territory are on land currently subject to Aboriginal claim to ownership under the Act. On behalf of the traditional Aboriginal owners, the Northern Land Council are putting before the Fox Commission a claim for land in the Alligator Rivers region as shown on the map. The Fox Commission has been empowered by the Land Rights Act to deal with claims involving the Ranger project area. The NLC claim includes the land occupied by the Ranger, Koongara and Jabiluka uranium deposits, and the site for the proposed mining town. The NLC are suggesting that this area which also encompasses the proposed Kakadu National Park, should be jointly managed by Aborigines and the National Parks Service, under Aboriginal ownership. (26) The other major uranium deposit, at Naborlek, is within the present Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve which will come under Aboriginal ownership directly under the terms of the Act.
Ranger

The Ranger project itself, managed by Ranger Uranium Mines, is specifically exempted from any Aboriginal veto by sub-clause 40(6) of the Land Rights Act. From the miners' point of view this is just as well since the 25 descendants of the original owners of this area have a very strong claim to this land which Mr. Justice Fox will find hard to deny. (27)

The traditional owners are particularly concerned that two sacred sites on the nearby Mt. Brockman escarpment will be desecrated or physically damaged by blasting at the mine, if the Ranger project goes ahead.

The sites are Djiddjiddiba, a sacred presence taking the form of a big quartzite boulder on the rubble slopes; and Dadbe, the Rainbow Snake, a deep rock hole with permanent water on which blue water lilies float, on top of the escarpment at the northwest tip. (28) The Aborigines say that if Dadbe or Djiddjiddiba is desecrated so the whole country will be wiped out. Currently there is a token fence across the track leading to the sites on Mt. Brockman but when the Ranger Inquiry visited the area it was discovered that someone had run right through the fence with a truck. (28)

Jabiluka and Koongara

The neighboring deposit, Jabiluka, for which Pancontinental Mining Ltd. holds the exploration licence, is not subject to Aboriginal veto because the company applied for mineral leases before June 4, 1976, and this is thus exempted by sub-clause 40(3) of the Act. Noranda Australia which holds the exploration licence for the Koongara deposit could presumably have taken the same course of action, but our information at the time of going to press suggests that this company was not quick enough off the mark to exploit the veto-exemption the government was offering.

Nabarlek

Queensland Mines at Nabarlek, however, did get their mineral-lease application in before the June 4, 1976 deadline, and is therefore exempted from any Aboriginal veto another blow to the traditional owners of Nabarlek who have been battling against the company since it first discovered uranium there in 1970. (29)

Queensland Mines was off to an especially bad start here. Early on, when prospecting, one of their drilling teams sank an exploration hole within the area of the Gabo Djang (Green Ant) sacred site, without consent of the Aboriginal owners at the Oenpelli Settlement. This was regarded as an act of desecration. To the Oenpelli people, the green ant nests in the large boulders at this site are sacred, and they believe that if the ant eggs are broken by human action, dire consequences will come to all people.

When Queensland Mines sought further leases in the area, the Oenpelli people objected, but finally compromised on an area of possible mining which they believed protected the Gabo Djang site. Later, in 1972, however, they discovered that the company had misled them in its description of the location of the ore body, and they withdrew their approval. (30)

Woodward in his second report described the next development as follows: “On 26 July 1973, Queensland Mines made the Aborigines an offer which I can only describe as contemptuous, which amounted to arranging the sale to them of 173,040 shares in the company at the then full market price of $1.70 per share. The offer was rejected by the Nabarlek Aborigines.” (31) In February 1974 the company made another offer including a lump sum payment of $600,000, but this was also rejected.

Woodward went on to say that “.... it is to my mind unthinkable that a completely new scheme of Aboriginal land rights should begin with the imposition of an open cut mine right alongside a sacred site.” (32) and he recommended that “Queensland Mines should not be permitted to develop mineral deposits in the Nabarlek area without Aboriginal consent.” (33)

We feel it is significant here that Woodward did not add the rider - “unless the Government decides that the national interest requires it” We trust that the Fox Commission feels bound by this unequivocal recommendation of an earlier Royal Commission.

In May 1974 Queensland Mines began an advertising campaign in national
newspapers designed to discredit the Oenpelli people and force them to withdraw their opposition to mining. The text of one large ad in The Australian (May 13,16,'74) read: “50,000 Australians (Qld. Mines Shareholders) demand equality with Aborigines. The uranium cannot be mined because a small group of Aborigines now say they don’t want it mined.... Has someone told them they might get the land and the uranium - and be able to sell to the highest bidder?”

Under this and other pressure, the Nabarlek Aborigines eventually did ‘consent’ with Queensland Mines about the development of the Nabarlek ore body. But this consent must be seen in the light of recent statements by the Oenpelli people that “Aborigines have recognised the inevitability of mining”. (34) In other words, even if they said no, they know that mining would go ahead anyway. As Mr. S. Maralingurra said during a recent Oenpelli Council discussion: “balanda (white men) push, push, push - soon pubs everywhere and they will kill the race - look at the Larrykeahs, Darwin is their country and they are living on the tip.” (34)

Basic Opposition to Mining

Both the Northern Land Council (NLC) and the Oenpelli Council expressed their basic opposition to uranium mining in their final submissions to the Ranger Inquiry. (36) They fear the destruction of their land which will result from mining, and the likely desecration of their sacred sites. In addition, they fear the effects on the local Aborigines - mainly the 600 people at the Oenpelli settlement - of such a vast mining development on their doorstep. The proposed mining town with a population of more than 15,000 would be less than 60 km. from Oenpelli; some mines would be even nearer.

Silas Roberts, Chairman of the NLC, said of this town: “It will do nothing for us, only hurt us. Drink and men looking for girls and everything. We want to keep this city a long way from our land and particularly our sacred sites.” (37)

However, in the final parts of their submissions to Ranger, both the NLC and the Oenpelli Council show clearly they believe mining will take place whatever they do, and they outline suggestions for reducing its impact on Aborigines and their land. Unfortunately, these ‘compromise’ proposals are likely to be seized upon by the Fox Commission as a way around Aboriginal opposition.

In short, about all the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976 will do for Aborigines so far as uranium is concerned is to guarantee them compensation - monetary compensation, of course. To this Silas Roberts of the NLC has the poignant answer:

“It is only when we lose our land and our culture that we have a greater need for money.” (38)

ABORIGINES AND ALTERNATIVES

Even if the Land Rights Act is in reality another ‘sell-out’, there is a very positive development emerging mainly as a result of Aborigines’ struggle for land rights - a rediscovery by Aborigines of their identity and a regaining of their confidence. This was illustrated recently at a National Land Rights Conference in Sydney when the
following statement by Wesley Wagner Lanhupuy from Arnhem Land was acknowledged with unanimous applause:

"I accept Aboriginal as meaning the original people of Australia who have been separated into those at the top and those down here by the whites when they first arrived. It doesn't matter if you are half, three-quarters, quarter or full-blood in the amount of your Aboriginal blood, even if you have some small amount of Aboriginal blood in you, we of the NT accept you as Aboriginal. Aborigines - whether URBAN or TRIBAL - who have a spiritual awareness of themselves as Aborigines and identify themselves as Aborigines are Aborigines."

There is also the growing demand among Aborigines for self-determination - the right to determine their own future. And here there is a confluence of interest with all those white 'alternativists' who are seeking an alternative to the materialistic environmentally-destructive Australian society of today. We too are seeking a devolution of centralised political power so that smaller regions and the communities within them can have a much more direct say in the running of their own affairs - economically and politically. In this search we have much to learn from Aborigines, who have been friends of this earth for much longer than we have.

John Andrews
Pat Mullins
Don Siemens
Mark Carter
Lyndon Shea

The article is republished from the Friends of the Earth's magazine Chain Reaction, Vol.2, No.4, 1977. We acknowledge, with thanks, their permission to reprint it in this issue of Australian Left Review.

CLASS ANALYSIS CONFERENCE 1977

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If you are interested in working with any of these groups or in offering a paper please make contact with:

Colin Gray and Baiba Irving, 10 Burton St., Glebe, 2037. 660.1461.
Terry Smith, 33 Elliot St., Balmain, 2041. 827.2464.
Warwick Richards, 205 Young St., Annandale, 2038. 660.5379.
NOTES
AND SOURCES
6. The Politics of Pauperisation, Frank Stevens (reprinted by Australian Union of Students; also available through IDA — see ref. 5).
7. See Official Statement by the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator J. L. Cavanagh, Brisbane, 31 October 1974.
10. Ref. 9, p.148.
12. Ref. 11, p.17.
13. Ref. 8, p.121.

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EXPLOITATION OF BLACK WORKERS

The following article has been adapted from a paper given by Warwick Neilly, former organiser of the North Australian Workers’ Union, in the Trade Unions and Co-operatives Course at the NSW Trade Union Training Centre.

The first major industry to start up in the Northern Territory was, of course, the beef industry. It was only in later years that the other major industry - mining - began to take its place.

The beef industry began in earnest a few years before the First World War and the key company was Vestey’s, who became the major operators in the NT at a time when there was big competition in the world over beef markets. The British companies, of which Vestey’s was one, were in competition with the American companies and they wanted big areas of land for producing beef. The NT was a natural for this and they moved in heavily with big properties and abattoirs.

At about the same time, the Federal government was taking an interest in the area and under a Labor government headed by Prime Minister Fisher, they took full control and appointed an administrator in 1911. Labor’s aim was to develop the land with many small landholders who would live in the NT, and a team of experts was sent to Darwin under the leadership of one, Dr. J.A. Gilruth.

In 1912 one of the first things they attempted was to develop the idea of a government-owned abattoir in Darwin. When this idea was floated, Vestey’s retaliated, suggesting they build an abattoir to do the work and there would be no need to establish a government-owned outfit.

The following year, Labor was defeated and Vestey’s private deal went ahead. Vestey’s expansion in the slaughtering business was paralleled by their rapid land gains. Between 1914 and 1916, Vestey’s obtained 36,000 square miles of land in the NT.
During these years the Northern Territory Workers' Union was formed and there began a history of struggle for at least one section of the workforce.

The founders of the NTWU included activists from the International Workingmen of the World, or “Wobblies”, who did a lot of the early work. They were also active in southern parts of Australia and had as their main task the creation of what they called ‘One Big Union’. The ‘One Big Union’ eventually became the Australian Workers' Union and, in many ways, the NTWU was similar to the AWU.

With the defeat of Labor in 1912 and no doubt under its own steam, the local administration in the NT became more and more conservative. They became more and more friendly to interests such as Vestey’s and more oppressive to the general population, both black and white. Part of this oppression was to try to stop the development of union solidarity in the north.

There was a concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals. For example, one man, a Mr. Carey, was given the jobs of Director of Lands, and Agriculture, and Chief Protector of Aborigines. He was also, believe it or not, the Censor of all outgoing and incoming mail.

The two key jobs of Director of Lands and Chief Protector of Aborigines meant he was in a powerful position to do what he liked in the allocation of land and control of Aboriginal people.

The development of Darwin as an administrative centre was built on these two key functions: control of Aboriginal people and land allocation to business interests.

This was the situation during the war years. But in 1917, Mr. Carey went right over the heads of the employers and started work with Vestey’s. He no doubt left behind in the administration a group who would do his work.

During this time the hostility of workers was so great that it was reported by one of the leaders of the NTWU, Harold Nelson, that practically all wage earners had joined the union, in Darwin at least. Because of this, the union movement was able to infiltrate into areas previously kept closed by the employers and administrators.

The crunch came when Harold Nelson got hold of a letter written by Carey detailing a plan by Vestey’s to take over a large pastoral holding which had a lease expiring in 1918. A figure of £20,000 ($40,000) was mentioned as the price the Administrator wanted to carry out the operation. This was the work in which Carey was involved.

Of course the trade unions blew it wide open. Carey protested that his mail had been stolen, but Nelson replied that the union had had its mail stolen for several years by Carey. A meeting of union members called on all those involved in the Administration and Vestey’s to resign and for the election of a new Administrator.

The next day a general strike was declared and a meeting held in the Administrator’s residence. A rebellion had begun in Darwin over collusion between the Administrator and Vestey’s.

The Administrator was still Dr. Gilruth who made his escape on the HMAS Melbourne which had been instructed to proceed to Darwin by Prime Minister Hughes. But while the Melbourne was there the crew mixed with locals in the pubs and became sympathetic to the cause. The captain ordered them back to the ship and the Melbourne left in a hurry. They left Carey and some others stranded. A few days later they were taken away by a Burns Philp steamer after threats of being thrown into the sea by the locals.

A subsequent Royal Commission forgave the local residents, saying they had been under extreme pressure at the time from the local administrators.

These were the beginnings of the labor movement in the Northern Territory, but the central issue to be looked at is the treatment of Aboriginal people in the industrial scene as they were, and still are, the bulk of the workforce in the cattle industry.

It is a fact of history that the initial militancy did not flow on to the organisation of Aboriginal people into unions.

Their conditions have always been bad and the reasons for this can be placed under three main headings:

* The desire of employers in the industry to make the greatest possible profit and expand
as much as possible, along with their racist attitudes;
* Government or administrative efforts to directly assist the employers;
* The inability of unions to work against this because of the racist attitudes of their members and officials. These prevailed in the community generally.

In 1970 I spent a couple of months with the Gurindji people at Wattie Creek. While there I talked with an Aborigine named Pincher Numiari who was one of the leaders of the Wave Hill station strike against Vestey’s in 1966 - the longest strike in Australia’s history which led to the land claim at Dagarugu, or Wattie Creek.

He told me he had been born at Wave Hill and that he had worked as a stock camp ringer. He said “I bin work for Vestey’s all my life when I was young till I get married, in Wave Hill station. I bin start off in old station first. Old Wave Hill, not that place where they bin walk off .... I seen very bad, treat’em like a dog when I was a kid.”

Asked about things that had happened and things done by the station manager, he went on, “A lot of wrong. I saw them fellas walking here before, early days, all them old people here. They used to clean him road, no grader. This country, they used to cart him up bag of flour. Bag of corned meat. One box matches. No more, see. They bin walk on foot, don’t matter how many miles on foot. All this country they bin clean him up, you know.

“.... Men, and women, all the children was there .... They bin all gone foot walk. Clean him out. Clean the stone, chuck the stone away. Next time they carry the rock on the neck and hand in chain .... Walk ’em foot walk, you know. Carry them brand on shoulder.”

He said this had been done by the station manager. “.... If he can’t do it, you s’posed to, sometime he take ’em over there. Shot him one bloke down over there.

“Bin going back to station in the night. To station in the night that Borwee, one boy. I was a kid then. They put the cattle in the

Aboriginal stockmen on strike at Wave Hill station.
cattle camp. Had a lunch. Then go out get his horse and go out and cut them bullock out, you know. An' then he pushed 'em fellas, all those boys: 'You mob go to cattle over there'. And they all bin go to cattle camp all them fellas, all them boys. Then, I don't know how many, might be two, might be three white bloke, one fella. They take him to river there and tie him around to chain and shot him there. And get fire and burn 'im up.

"Oh, yes. Bit of a cruel before, early day. Anything happen, they just took them over the creek there and shot them."

Conditions were "cruel" to use Pincher's words and they remain cruel even today, in varying degrees.

The colonisation of Australia meant that traditional Aboriginal society was shattered. Their economic activities and nomadic life were brought to an end as settlers claimed land for cultivation and sheep and cattle raising. In the sparsely settled northern and central region of Australia, once the resistance of Aboriginal people had been put down, their labor potential became great.

The lack of white workers and the fact that Aboriginal people could no longer work at their traditional economic activities meant that Aboriginal labor camps became essential parts of the cattle station economy. A number of people have pointed out that this relationship is no different from that in South Africa. In Australia, as with South Africa, this system of labor exploitation was without any real rewards for the workers.

Conditions on cattle stations have been described by many observers.

In 1946 Vestey's called in Professor Berndt of Sydney University to investigate conditions of employment at their Wave Hill Station. Vestey's were having trouble keeping labor and they wanted an expert opinion on how to stop this. Berndt's report became famous for what it exposed.

He found that a depressing situation existed with people housed in crudely built shacks of old bagging and iron. They were rarely waterproof and broke up in a strong wind.

He also found that simple things like a safe water supply were refused; that police were known as "neck chainers" and carried out physical violence against the Aboriginal people. Young children were used under the theory of "catch them young and train them". Wage payments were often avoided and were not even paid under the Wards Employment Regulations. Medical attention was poor or non-existent. Food was bread, beef and tea three times a day. Prostitution was forced on the women to earn extra money and rape occurred under physical threat from white workers. Old age meant living on rations worse than others in the community.

Berndt said that to solve the problem of losing labor that living conditions should be improved and wages paid.

The company's reply to the money question was: "Money seems to be the root of all evil". They rejected his other suggestions. That was in 1946 - what about today?

A report on living conditions on cattle stations was commissioned by Gordon Bryant in 1973 when he was Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. This report, compared with Berndt's 1946 report, revealed that on two stations near Alice Springs, Utopia and Alcoota, conditions were the same.

1900 - 1946 - 1973 - no real change!

This summarises the approach of the vast majority of employers in the industry. They wanted to expand their land holdings quickly and maximise profit. They did this through defeating the Aboriginal people, exploiting their labor and providing no rewards. The exploitation of Aboriginal people is an indication of how the Australian economy worked in the past, and still works today.

The treatment described was paralleled by government activity through its various agencies - the police and welfare, in particular.

Welfare's role is more insidious and more difficult to understand than that of the police who were, in the past, seen as "neck chainers".

Under the heading of "protectionist policies", the various government agencies reinforced and gave legal status to exploitation.

In Queensland there is the infamous Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islanders Act, and in the Northern Territory we had the Wards Employment Ordinance.
Under the NT Ordinances, the weekly wage for Aboriginal male workers was set at 5 shillings (or 50 cents) a week in 1933. This was for work in agriculture, pastoral work, surface mining, transport, timber cutting and domestic work. By comparison the basic award rate for white male workers was £2.8.0 (or $4.80) at the same time. The Ordinance also made some provisions for food, tobacco and clothing. What did this mean?

It meant that employers were able to pay nothing at all if they wanted to, or pay out 50 cents a week and everything would be legal. This was the function of government at that time: it gave the legal OK to employers' policies. Sub-standard wages and conditions of employment were legalised through the Ordinances and administered by the Welfare agencies.

The 50 cents did not change for 16 years! In 1949 it was increased to £1.00 (or $2.00) a week for male Aboriginal workers, but only if they had three years' experience. Drovers were paid a little more but had a 7-day week, 16 hours a day job. Aboriginal women workers were paid 7/6 a week if the wife of a male employee, others were paid 10/-, or $1 a week.

In 1957 the top rate was lifted to £2.8.3 (or $4.83) with a 15/- clothing allowance.

Finally, in 1965 a decision was made to pay equal wages in the cattle industry in the NT but the new rates did not apply until 1968, only nine years ago. Even then the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission put the notorious "slow worker" clause into the award which allows employers to set lower rates if they wish.

The equal wage case in 1965 also saw women excluded from the operation of the award. This, despite the fact that they had been included in the old regulations. Women work as domestics - cleaning white workers' quarters, cooking for the boss' family, etc.

It means that Aboriginal women are still excluded (unless they are cooks in the general mess) from award coverage and there has been a lack of concern by the unions involved to correct the position. Currently, in the NT, this responsibility lies with the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union but, in the past, the approach has been that the work women do on the stations is not a part of the cattle industry. There are strong indications that this is not correct. The
EXPLOITATION OF BLACK WORKERS

(NT) Award. This had been done by Commissioner Portus in 1951 when the NAWU argued that they be included under the award. They were not necessarily arguing equal pay.

In 1965-66 the Arbitration Commission could not do this and had to grant the applicants equal wages. That they did not let it operate until 1968 is an example of the conservative influence of the Arbitration Commission on industrial life in Australia.

An example of the union’s role in the past was that in 1923 the NTWU as it was then known, moved to prohibit Aborigines from the cattle industry. The Arbitration Commission did not allow this, realising that employers needed the labor. But let’s not pat the Commission on the back - the decision was for the employers.

So, when we examine the wages struggle in the Northern Territory and consider the role of unions in relation to a key part of the workforce, the unions’ effort has been minimal and, in fact, anti-Aboriginal. However, I want to make it clear that the future lies with the broad labor movement and efforts must be made to bring the problems of Aboriginal people in this society into the struggles of the labor movement.

The question of union membership here is crucial. It is no use having an award, for instance, if a union does not enforce its conditions. Unions have failed in this regard in the past.

A report on the situation in Wee Waa, NSW, for instance, by Norman Foster (Department of Labor and Immigration) in 1973, found that depressed wages existed due to the Australian Workers’ Union (AWU) not enforcing the application of the award.

It was my observation in the NT that Aboriginal people have a high appreciation of the value of unions and are only too willing to join and get the real protection unions can offer.

There must be an ACTU-sponsored drive to clean up unorganised Aboriginal labor as a first step. Unfortunately, when we look at history again, there have been problems in even getting this type of activity off the ground.

In 1972-73 some officials of the Federated Miscellaneous Workers’ Union (FMWU) approached Gordon Bryant for assistance in organising Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory. (The FMWU had recently absorbed the North Australian Workers’ Union.)

Clyde Cameron intervened as Minister for Labor and Immigration and opposed Bryant doing anything practical.

The drive to unionise Aboriginal labor should occur in the context of a total social action program adopted by the labor movement to include health, welfare, land rights, housing, economic aid and education for Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal question in trade union history is, in many ways, the guts of that history. A history must deal with people, and the people of Northern Australia were predominantly Aboriginal until the last 20-30 years. The key industry, the pastoral industry, of that period was built on their blood and sweat. Not many of us in other parts of Australia really understand this. But it is up to us to work to change that situation.

Union organisation in Northern Australia will become increasingly important to all Australian people. With the decline of Australian manufacturing industries, largely located in the southern States, and increased interest in mining in the north, the stakes for Australia’s future are high.

Mining and similar industries are not labor intensive, but are highly profitable and this demands a new approach by unions.

With increasing unemployment created by business interests shifting their money into mining, perhaps we should begin to demand that some of the huge mining profits be spent in other areas of Australia to help provide jobs.

If union activity is left to traditional areas of wages and conditions on site for members working there, the rest of Australia will be ignored.

Unions must, of course, continue to struggle - and struggle hard - for the wages and working conditions of their members. But there are broader issues confronting Australia today and in the future. It is in the hands of the labor movement to do something about these issues.
Arbitration Commission has not had a case put to it on this question and it should be done without delay.

I remember having a discussion with a woman in Katherine before the season had fully started up last year. She was with her husband who told me that he was thinking of not going back to the station because he was not getting enough money that year, and for years before. His wife was even more bitter because the employer had offered her $15.00 a week (an increase of $5.00) to get them to go back and work - back to a 7-day week, dawn to dusk job.

The situation of women workers in the cattle industry is, therefore, even more depressed than that of male workers.

Before the equal wage case the Welfare Branch of the Department of the Northern Territory had the power to negotiate higher wages but never did so. On many occasions they did the reverse - lowered wages for workers whom the employers regarded as "handicapped".

From 1949 to 1957 there were numerous examples of this practice which proves without a doubt that the role of the Wards Employment Ordinance was tailored to suit the employers' sector of society in the NT.

Other provisions of these regulations were:

Section 32:
A fine of £100 or six months' jail if you went onto an Aboriginal living area without permission from Welfare or the station owner.

Section 46:
A penalty of £50 if someone encouraged a ward to leave his employment even if offered higher pay.

Sounds like the notorious Queensland Act?

The low wages on cattle stations had their parallel on mission stations and it was not until 1972 onwards with a federal Labor government that this was altered. But even today you can come across practices in this area which preserve sub-standard wages.

Some mission stations pay adults as juniors until they can prove their age to the paymaster. There were a couple of cases like this when I was in Darwin.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the government in the NT has, in the past, intervened to legalise sub-standard wages and living conditions. They have done this through various ordinances and the Welfare Branch of the Department of the Northern Territory.

Even though the ordinances laid down certain provisions for accommodation standards, there have been no prosecutions against employers in the history of their operation. This is an example of how the Welfare Branch worked - they turned a blind eye to reality. This is very effective because it means they create the laws and then police them in the interests of the employers. This is the second aspect of why conditions were, and still are, bad on cattle stations, at least.

What has been the response of unions to this situation? Their overall response has been poor! The situation is changing today but in the early days and up until recently trade unions and their officials have had similar views to those of the Australian people as a whole, including employers and government representatives.

Many would say the situation hasn't changed. I think some changes have been made, but there is a lot more work to do.

The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATS1) was formed in the early 'sixties, and also the ACTU began to pass resolutions at its Congresses deploring the Aboriginal employment situation. This led to the equal wages case in 1965.

But even with this case no real attempt was made by the union concerned, the North Australian Workers' Union, to join up Aboriginal workers. It did not call any Aboriginal witnesses from the industry in a case which rambled on for six months with the employers doing most of the talking.

Luckily, the political environment at least had slightly changed and the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission could not do as it did in 1951 and knock back the inclusion of Aboriginal workers into the Cattle Industry
The following account of Cuban military activities in Angola has been excerpted from a lengthy article by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and distributed by Prensa Latina the Cuban news agency. Originally published in the US radical newspaper The Guardian early this year, it is based on extensive interviews in Cuba with officials and soldiers who went to Angola.

The author, a progressive writer born in Colombia in 1928, is considered one of Latin America's foremost living writers. He is most widely known in the US for his novel One Hundred Years of Solitude.

In 1843, a female slave called Black Carlota had taken machete in hand to lead a slave uprising at the Triunvirato sugar mill, in the Matanzas region, and had been killed in the rebellion. In homage to her, the action of solidarity to Angola was named Operation Carlota.

It began with the sending of a reinforced battalion of special forces, made up of 650 men. They were flown over a span of 13 days from the military section of Jose Marti Airport in Havana to the airport at Luanda, still occupied by Portuguese troops.

Their mission was to hold back the (South Africa-UNITA-FNLA) offensive so the Angolan capital would not fall into enemy hands before the Portuguese left, and then to keep up the resistance until reinforcements could arrive by sea.

But the men on the first two flights were sure they were already too late, and the only hope they nourished was that they might be able to save (the province of) Cabinda.

The first contingent left at 4 pm, November 7, on a special flight of Cubana de Aviacion, on one of the legendary Bristol Britannia BB-218 turboprops that the English manufacturers had stopped making and the rest of the world had stopped using.....

The passengers, who remember clearly that they numbered 82 because that was the same as the number of men on the Granma, the boat that carried Fidel Castro and his band to Cuba to launch a revolution, had the healthy look of tourists tanned by the Caribbean sun. They all wore summer clothes, with no military insignia, and carried briefcases and regular passports with their real names and identification.

The members of the special battalion which is not under the revolutionary armed forces but rather the ministry of the interior, are well-trained warriors, with a high level of political and ideological formation. Some hold college degrees, are voracious readers and occupy themselves with intellectual pursuits.....
But in their briefcases they carried machine pistols, and in the cargo hold of the plane, instead of baggage, there was a substantial load of light artillery, small guns, three 75 mm cannons and three 82 mm mortars ....

(Just as the first two planes arrived in Angola), three ships were leaving Cuba bringing an artillery regiment, a mechanised battalion and recoilless rifles; they would land in Angola on November 27.

On the other hand, the columns of Holden Roberto (head of the FNLA) were so close that only hours before they had shot and killed an old native woman who was trying to reach the headquarters at Gran Farni, where the Cuban forces were concentrated.

So the men arriving on the two planes had no time to rest: they put on their olive-green uniforms, joined the ranks of the MPLA and went into battle.

During nine months, the mobilisation of human and material resources was a drama of daring. The decrepit Brittannias, patched up with brakes from Soviet-made Ilyushin 18s, kept up a steady and almost unreal traffic ....

Cuba’s chief of staff went to Angola personally at the end of November — anything was possible then, except losing the war.

But the historical fact is that the war was at the point of being lost. In the first week of December the situation was so hopeless that some thought was given to the possibility of fortifying Cabinda and saving a beachhead near Luanda for an evacuation.

**FIDEL’S INVOLVEMENT**

Fidel Castro himself was keeping up to date on the smallest details of the war. He was at the sendoff for each troop ship and before it sailed he would call together the combat units in the theatre at the Cabana. He sought out the commanders of the special
forces battalion that went on the first flight and drove them to the steps of the plane in a Soviet-made jeep. It is probable that then and in every one of the other farewells, Castro had to hide an envy for those going off to a war he could not be in.

By then, there was not a spot on the map of Angola that he could not identify, not a quirk of the land that he did not know by heart. So intensely and meticulously did he follow the war that he could cite any statistic of Angola as if he were talking about Cuba. He spoke of Angola’s cities, its customs and its people as if he had lived there all his life.

At the start of the war, when the situation was especially pressing, he stayed in the general staff command room as long as 14 hours at a stretch without eating or sleeping, as if he were on the campaign.

He followed the progress of battles, using colored indicators on wall-sized tactical maps, and was in constant contact with the battlefield high command (of the MPLA) ....

The difficulties of December were due in the first place to the tremendous firepower of the enemy, which, by this time, had received more than $50 million in military aid from the US. In the second place, they were due to Angola’s delay in asking for help and the time it took to get the help to Angola.

Finally, they were due to the miserable conditions and cultural backwardness left by half a millennium of soulless colonialism. That, even more than the first two factors, posed the greatest obstacle to a decisive integration between the Cuban troops and the armed people of Angola ..... 

The Portuguese colonialists ..... had built beautiful, modern cities to live in, with air-conditioned glass buildings and stores with huge electric signs. But these were cities for whites, like those the gringos built around Old Havana ..... Beneath the mask of civilisation lay a vast and rich land of misery: The natives’ standard of living was one of the lowest in the world ..... Old superstitions not only complicated daily life, but also hindered the war effort. The Angolan had been convinced that bullets would not penetrate white skin, they feared the magic of airplanes and they refused to go into the trenches because tombs were only for the dead ..... 

Angola was a dirty war in which one had to watch out as much for snakes as for mercenaries, as much for cannibals as cannonballs. A Cuban commander, in the midst of a battle, fell into an elephant trap.

At first, the black Africans, conditioned by generations of resentment against the Portuguese were hostile to the white Cubans. Many times, especially in Cabinda, Cuban scouts felt betrayed by the primitive telegraph of the talking drums, whose thump-thump could be heard for as much as 20 miles.

South Africa’s white troops which fired on ambulances with 140 mm. cannons, threw up smokescreens on the battlefield to collect their white dead, but left the black bodies for the vultures ....

In Cuba, all the news coming from Angola was bad.

On December 11, in Hengo ..... a Cuban armored car with four officers in it set out along a path where some mines had been found.

Although four other cars had already passed through safely, the scouts advised against the route which cut only a few unnecessary minutes off the trip. Ignoring the advice, the car was almost instantly blown up. Two special forces battalion commanders were gravely wounded, and Commandant Raul Diaz Arguello commander of international operations in Angola, a hero of the struggle against Batista and a man widely loved in Cuba died instantly.

That was the bitterest news for the Cubans, but it was not to be the last. The next day came the disaster at Catofe, perhaps the worst setback of the entire war ....

A South African column had managed to repair a bridge under the cover of the morning mists and had surprised the Cubans who were in the midst of a withdrawal. The analysis of this defeat showed that it was due to an error on the Cubans’ part ....

On December 22, at the closing of the party congress, Cuba gave its first official indication that it had troops in Angola.

The war was still not going well. Fidel Castro, in the closing speech, reported that
the invaders in Cabinda had been defeated in 72 hours; that on the northern front the troops of Roberto who had been only 15 miles from Luanda on November 10 had been forced to retreat to more than 60 miles away; and that South Africa's armored columns which had advanced more than 400 miles had been blocked more than 120 miles from Luanda. The detailed report was comforting, but it was far from a victory ....

Cuban aid reached such a level that at one point there were 15 Cuban ships on the high seas bound for Luanda. The unstoppable offensive of the MPLA on all fronts turned the tide, once and for always, in its favor .... In January, it was conducting operations originally planned for April ....

THE TIDE TURNS

After mid-March the South African troops began their retreat.

On April 1, at 9.15 a.m., the advance of the MPLA troops under the command of Cuban commandant Leopoldo Cintras Frias arrived at the dam at Ruiacana, next to the chicken-wire fence marking the frontier with Namibia. An hour and a quarter later the South African governor of Namibia .... accompanied by two of his officers, asked permission to cross the border to begin talks with the MPLA.

Commandant Cintras Frias received them in a wooden shed in the 10-yard wide neutral strip between the two countries, and the two groups gathered around a large dining table .... Agreement took only two hours to reach, but the meeting lasted longer, for the South African general ordered a succulent dinner, prepared on the Namibian side. As they dined, he offered several toasts in beer ....

Afterwards, the program of the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola was agreed to by Castro and (Agostinho) Neto during their meeting on March 14 in Conakry, after victory was achieved. They decided that the withdrawal would be gradual but that as many Cubans as needed would remain in Angola as long as needed to build a modern and strong army, able to guarantee the future internal security and
independence of the country without outside help ....

For security reasons, the Cuban press had not published any mention of the participation in Angola. But, as usually happens in Cuba, even with military subjects as delicate as this, the operation was a secret carefully kept by 8 million persons. The first congress of the Cuban Communist Party which was to be held late in December and which was a sort of national obsession all year, took on a new dimension.

The volunteer units had been formed by sending private messages to members of the first reserve made up of all males between 17 and 25 and those who had been members of the revolutionary armed forces. They were summoned by telegram to report to the appropriate military committees, with no word of why they were called. The reason was so obvious that everyone who believed that he had military skills hastened to his military committee without waiting for a telegram. It took a great deal of effort to keep this mass concern from turning into a national disorder.

Insofar as the emergency permitted, selection criteria were quite stringent. Not only were military qualifications and physical and moral condition taken into account, but also work background and political education.

Nevertheless, there were innumerable cases of volunteers trying to sneak through the filtering process. A qualified engineer tried to pass himself off as a truckdriver, a high official pretended to be a mechanic, a woman almost got away with passing herself off as a recent army recruit.

A youth who joined without his father’s permission met his father in Angola, because his father had also gone without telling his family.

CUBA’S AFRICA POLICY

Cuba’s act of solidarity with Angola was far from a casual or impulsive act but rather the end result of a continuous policy towards Africa by the Cuban revolution.

There was only one new or dramatic element in this delicate decision: this time it was not only a question of sending what aid it could, but of taking on a large conventional war some 6000 miles from its own territory, with the cost in blood and treasure incalculable and the political consequences unforeseeable ....

It was a decision of irreversible consequences, too large and complex to be resolved in 24 hours. Nonetheless, the leadership of the Communist Party of Cuba had only 24 hours to decide, and it decided without flinching, in a large, calm meeting on November 5. Far from what has so often been said, it was an independent and sovereign act of Cuba. Only after the decision was made, not before, was the Soviet Union informed.

Contacts between the Cuban revolution and the MPLA had been very intense since they first began in August of 1965 when Che Guevara fought alongside the guerrillas in the Congo. The following year Neto himself went to Cuba accompanied by Endo the military commander of the MPLA, who was later killed ....

In May 1975, as the Portuguese were getting ready to pull out of their African colonies, Cuban Commandant Flavio Bravo met Neto in Brazzaville, and Neto requested help with the shipment of arms and asked about the possibility of further, more specific aid. As a result, Commandant Raul Diaz Arguelles led a civilian Cuban delegation to Luanda three months later. Neto was more precise .... He asked Cuba to send instructors to open and run four military training camps.

CUBAN SHIPS ARRIVE

Although the MPLA which began in 1956 was Angola’s oldest liberation movement and the only one with a broad popular base, and although it offered a social, political and economic program that suited the country’s conditions, it was nonetheless the one in the weakest military position. It had Soviet arms, but lacked people trained to use them ....

So when the (Cuban troopship) Viet Nam Heroico arrived in Puerto Amboim at 6.30 a.m. on October 4, and the Coral Island arrived on the 7th and the La Plata at Punta Negra on the 11th, they docked without anyone’s permission - but also without anyone’s opposition.

The Cuban instructors were met by the MPLA and immediately set up the four training centres: one in Delatando which the
Portuguese had called Salazar, 150 miles east of Luanda; the second in Benguela, the Atlantic seaport; the third in Saurimu, formerly Enrique de Carvalho, in the remote deserted eastern province of Lunda, where the Portuguese had had a military base that they destroyed before abandoning; and the fourth in the enclave of Cabinda.

ROBERTO'S TROOPS ADVANCE

Roberto's troops of the opposing FNLA were then so close to the Angolan capital that a Cuban artillery instructor giving his students their first lessons at Delatando saw the armored cars of the mechanised brigade of regular South African troops cross from Namibia, and three days later they had occupied the towns of Sa da Bandeira and Mocamedes without meeting any resistance.

It was a Sunday stroll. The South Africans had tape cassettes of lively music in their tanks. In the north, the leader of a mercenary column directed operations from a Honda sports car, beside a blonde who looked like a movie actress. They advanced as if they were on holiday, with no scouts out ahead, and they probably knew where the rocket came from that blew the car into bits. In the woman's overnight case there was only a party dress, a bikini and an invitation to the victory party Roberto was already planning in Luanda ....

By the end of the week, the South Africans had penetrated more than 350 miles into Angolan territory and were advancing towards Luanda at the rate of more than 40 miles a day. On November 3, they attacked the lightly-manned training camp for recruits in Benguela. The Cuban instructors there had to break off their classes to lead their apprentice soldiers against the invaders, teaching them during lulls in battle ....

The MPLA leaders, prepared for guerrilla war but not for large-scale conventional battles, then understood that their combined neighbors, equipped with the most rapacious and devastating resources of imperialism could not be beaten without an urgent appeal to international solidarity ....

CHE'S AFRICA HISTORY

Nothing demonstrates more clearly the length and depth of the Cuban presence in Africa than the fact that Che Guevara himself threw himself into the battles of the Congo at the peak of his career.

On April 25, 1965, he gave Fidel Castro a farewell letter resigning his rank as a commandant and everything else that tied him to the government of Cuba. On that same day, travelling alone, he took a commercial flight, using a false passport and a false name but not altering his appearance .... carrying with him an attache case filled with literary works and inhalers for his incessant asthma, and killing his empty hours in hotel rooms with interminable solo games of chess.

Three months later, in the Congo, he joined 200 Cuban troops who had travelled from Havana in an arms ship. Che's mission was to train guerrillas for the National Revolutionary Council of the Congo, then battling Moise Tshombe, the puppet of the old Belgian colonists and the international mining companies ....

For greater security (Che) was not listed as the head of the mission, so he was known by the nom-de-guerre of Tatu, Swahili for the number two.

Che stayed in the Congo from April to December 1965, not only training guerrillas but also directing them in battle and fighting alongside them.

His personal ties with Fidel about which there has been so much speculation, did not deteriorate at any time. The two kept up regular and cordial contacts through very efficient systems of communication.

When Moise Tshombe was defeated, the Congolese asked the Cubans to withdraw to make the armistice easier. Che left as he had come, without fanfare.

He took a commercial flight from Dar es Salaam, capital of Tanzania, burying his face in a book of chess problems during the entire six hours of flight. In the next seat his Cuban adjutant was kept busy, entertaining the political commissar of the army of Zanzibar who was an old admirer of Che and spoke tirelessly of him throughout the flight, asking for the latest news of him and saying over and over again how much he would like to see him again.

That fleeting, anonymous passage of Che Guevara through Africa planted a seed that no one could uproot.
THE BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM -
New Draft Program of the CPGB.

The redraft of the British Road to Socialism published in January of this year is essential reading for all those interested in the European communist movement. Compared with its predecessor, first published in 1952, it is a far stronger document. It explains the strategy and tactics of the Communist Party of Great Britain in terms of a scientific analysis of the particular conditions of Britain and it goes to some length to deal with the questions of alliances, the seizure of state power, the role of parliament, the role of the Party and the building of a socialist society.

At the same time it introduces certain new concepts. In particular, the concept of the anti-monopoly alliance is seen as tending to be narrow, economistic and negative. It has been replaced by the positive concept of a broad democratic alliance, and the monopolies are identified as the major obstacle to its advance. The leading force in this alliance will be the working class, but other sections will be involved in the struggle for democracy and against the ruling elite. It is axiomatic to the document that the objective basis for the advance to socialism lies precisely in the fact that it is in the real interests of the vast majority of the people to fight for democracy and against capitalism. Clearly the respect of the democratic decisions of that majority is crucial to their unity and their continuing support, and so it follows that, in the draft, the CPGB comes out clearly for a transition to socialism in Britain without civil war.

It is therefore quite specific in the conclusions that it draws, and whether one agrees with its central strategy or not, at least it provides a firm rebuttal to those who think that European Communism is based upon a lack of analysis or a lack of theory.

The new draft provides its own summary in the following 6 points:

First, that the big problems we face today have their roots in the capitalist system, and can only be finally resolved by socialism.

Second, that to achieve socialism the working class and its allies must take political power out of the hands of the capitalist class.

Third, that this socialist revolution can be carried through in Britain in conditions in which world war can be prevented, and without civil war, by a combination of mass struggles outside Parliament, and the election of a parliamentary majority and government determined to implement a socialist programme.

Fourth, that the forces exist in Britain which can put Britain on a new course, and that the need is to unite them in a broad democratic alliance embracing the great majority of the people.

Fifth, that the winning of political power by the working class and its allies will not be a single act, but a process of struggle, in which the next important stage is the winning of a Labour Government which will carry out a left policy to tackle the crisis and bring about far-reaching democratic changes in society, opening up the road to socialism.

Sixth, that socialism in Britain can only be achieved and built by the fullest development of democracy, involving far greater participation by the people in running the country, recognition of the elected Parliament as the sovereign body of the land, freedom for all democratic parties, including those hostile to socialism, to operate, genuine freedom of the press, independence of trade unions, and the consolidation and extension of civil liberties won through centuries of struggle.
These conclusions seem to me to stem from some important points made throughout the booklet. It is, for example, important to see the development to socialism in Britain in the context of the changing balance of world forces. Of particular significance are the anti-imperialist movements for national liberation, and the developments within Europe itself. While the recent victories of the peoples of Viet Nam, Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau all place additional strain upon the centres of imperialist power, the overthrow of fascist regimes in Greece and Portugal, and the recent advances of the left in France and Italy provide clear evidence that the changing balance of world forces is being reflected deep within the imperialist countries themselves. Against this there is the constant economic growth of the Soviet Union and the other socialist states of Europe. Any development towards socialism in Britain is only conceivable in the context of increasing anti-imperialist struggles and further strengthening of the left throughout Europe. Further significant advances on the part of the French and Italian left could provide a totally new context in which new possibilities are opened up for left advance in Britain.

Despite the global advances for the forces of progress and socialism, the achievement of state power in Britain is no simple matter. Though there is a relatively united and powerful labor movement, the strength of reformist thinking backed up by a strong ruling class ideology pose major obstacles to advance. The support given to the Social Contract and the ready acceptance of the two-party system are prime examples of this. However, it is incorrect to see the struggle against these ideas as separate from the other aspects of political work. The strategy that is adopted, and the alliances that are forged, must be based around the positive counter-ideology that socialism provides.

Any strategy that hopes for the mass support of the British people must allow for the special role within the working class that is played by the Labour Party, and for the democratic advances won by the working people of Britain. In this context it would be quite wrong to analyse the Labour Party as objectively a non-revolutionary force, or to write of parliament as a reactionary institution. Instead, we need to realise that there is a continuing battle between the right and the left, and this reflects itself within the Labour Party, within the trade union movement, and within local and central government. The need for communists is to continually strengthen the left trend wherever we can, for socialism can only be achieved in Britain when the majority of the people see that it is in their interests.

Finally, within a broad alliance of democratic forces grouped around the working class and its organisations, there is a very specific role to be played by a marxist party. Extreme care must be taken to neither submerge the party in the alliance nor to elevate the party above the alliance. The document is very specific on this point, and it describes the essential characteristics of the party as being:

First, it must be based on Marxism-Leninism, because this enables it to analyse the nature of society, the character of class rule, and the varied forms of oppression experienced by the working class and other forces. Without such an understanding, a party cannot properly grasp the nature of different forces and the part they have to play.

Second, it has to be firmly rooted in the organised working class and labour movement, because of their leading role in society. But it must also be active and organised among all the other social forces and movements which in one way or another are reacting against the effects of capitalism. Its branches and groups must have a close relationship with all these forces if it is to be able to help them in developing a political perspective, relating the immediate struggle and possibilities to longer-term objectives.

Third, it needs to be based on the principles of democratic centralism, combining full discussion within its own ranks with collective and united work for democratically decided political aims.

Fourth, it needs to have close relations with the communist movement in other countries, based on the independence and equality of each Communist Party in the great world movement which is making history on a global scale. Such international solidarity is vital not only in the immediate struggles, but for the achievement and building of socialism. (lines 787-806)

At its best the document represents the experience of the leading sections of the British working class combined with the developing theories of marxism-leninism. But this is not to say that it is without its weaknesses. On the question of Ireland, for example, it often seems to be applying a theory rather than developing a credible alternative strategy. To pose a united working class as the solution is insufficient unless one seriously comes to grips with the problem of sectarianism. Sectarianism, like racialism, is very strong among large sections of the British working class, and a lot more needs to be done by the left in Britain before it can be successfully routed.

The standard ultra-left criticism of the strategy is that it underestimates the strength of the armed forces and their devotion to the status quo. While I
fully believe that the army of an advanced capitalist state can be neutralised without a military confrontation, I do find the booklet weak at this crucial point. There is a need for it to be a little more specific here and analyse, for example, the effects of a big reduction in defence spending, and to say whether the reduced army would be a conscript or a professional force.

I have no doubt that these, and many other issues will be brought up in the wide-ranging debate that the CPGB has initiated around its document. What program the party adopts at its next congress in November is still an open question. But by launching the draft, and by throwing it open to the entire left for public discussion, the Communist Party of Great Britain has reaffirmed its position as the only credible revolutionary force in Britain.

-Colin Beardon.


Barry Hill's book The Schools is well written and leads in the right direction but its conclusions are based on some unsupported assumptions.

The book describes a number of Australian state secondary schools, a prestigious private community school, and a learning exchange, a product of the deschooling philosophy of Ivan Illich.

Hill evaluates schools which have highly authoritarian and traditional teaching methods and others which are more democratic and experimental. The book focuses on how well educational innovation has succeeded and to what extent students, teachers and parents participate in decisions regarding the running of schools. There is an emphasis, too, on showing the ways in which the schools reflect the socio-economic backgrounds of the communities they service.

Hill's descriptions are vivid but his conclusions are disappointingly familiar. Like certain progressive educators of the '20s, Hill is calling for "open education" - schools where students, parents and teachers are all involved in making decisions about methods and curricula. The democratisation of schools, according to Hill, would:

"help make the idea of education towards a more open society a reality. It is to dispense with the idea of education being a matter of turning out winners and losers in a materialistic meritocratic society, and to step towards creating a society which is more cooperative, participatory and humane, a society which facilitates genuine participation in social, cultural and political institutions .... (p.300)

Open education is called "a strategy for transforming values and social structures - a project which is essentially political", and thus Hill undervalues the essential link between the schools and the economic and political system which they are set up to serve. In capitalist society, entry into the labor force relies largely on the educational certificates one has acquired and schools provide these certificates. By sorting people into job categories schools provide a major service for employers, and what most parents and kids want from schools are the certificates that lead to the better jobs. Because occupational opportunities depend largely on school certificates, to talk of dispensing with education as a means of turning out "winners and losers in a materialistic meritocratic society", is to talk of dispensing with one of the major functions of schools. It is doubtful that any education system could have such an autonomy from the existing economic and power structures and yet Hill does not explore this problem.

Unlike many earlier writers in the same tradition, Hill is highly aware that schooling is not the means to upward social mobility for the successful and hard working that it was once supposed to be. He points to research showing that success and continuation at school depends primarily on whether the home has taught the child the kind of skills and attitudes which are the prerequisites for educational achievement. He reminds us that the matter and manner of schooling, the vocabulary and expectations of teachers, favor the child from a wealthier home and discriminate against the child from a poorer family. The myth that education is a major way to give poor kids a chance to make it in the system has been exploded.

Hill appears to assume, however, that inequality of educational opportunity is some kind of unfortunate accident, rather than an integral part of the way in which existing power structures are reproduced and legitimised. Even though one myth has been exploded, Hill seems to share in a view of governments and state education systems as institutions whose aim is to do the best they can for everybody. He talks as if the state were a neutral arbiter in society rather than the product of existing power relations and one strikes continually the unspoken assumption that social institutions are the expression of the demands of a vast mass of equal individuals who are well meaning but muddle-headed or ignorant.

Hence ignorance and apathy, rather than lack of power due to the economic and social structure of society are seen as the major source of social ills. Hill says:

"Unless some body take the school does something about it, they (the students) are
destined to be marginal participants in community life, consumers, commuters, triennial voters - essentially spectators of the public realm. The alternative is for the school to set its face against this prospect. It should build on, sustain and create political impulses. It should be out to undermine the chances of the kids lapsing - out of the ignorance which usually breeds indifference into political docility .... (p. 314)

He doesn’t talk of the ignorance which springs from the fact that those with economic and political power have the major control over the dissemination of information, or the apathy which springs from the feeling that you can’t fight the Fairfax or Packer empires with silk screen posters and roneoed newsletters. Inequalities of power are largely absent from the analysis and open education is seen primarily as a preparation for participation in the democratic society which presumably Hill thinks we have, or could have, if we would only change our heads and be more socially responsible.

All this is not to say that Hill is wrong in calling for greater democratisation of the schools. The schools of tomorrow may perhaps become more democratic, to serve a society where “worker participation” has become the latest expression of class struggle. Fighting for democratisation in schools is valuable and desirable because it will show that it can only be marginally achieved and only go part of the way towards effecting the kind of changes Hill wants to see. In the final analysis, schools are there to maintain and reproduce the existing power and economic relations of a society, not to overturn them. Democratisation of schools is desirable, however, not just because it would teach kids how to use the “right channels” but because when those channels are blocked people will ask themselves why. If Hill had more rigorously examined the link between economic and political power and schooling he would have come up with a better book. Like the curate’s egg, it’s good in parts, but those parts tend to be descriptive rather than analytical.

- Carol O’Donnell.


American colonialism has had an enormous impact on the Philippines education system. Generations of Filipinos have been taught that the United States gave the Philippines “progress”, “democracy” and the benefits of “partnership”. In his previous books, Constantino has attacked the colonial mentality of many of his countrymen, and his writings had significant impact on the nationalist movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was hardly surprising that he was placed under house arrest when martial law was declared in September 1972.

His latest book is an important contribution to Philippines historiography and is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the nature of the present regime. Other fairly recent works, for example Usha Mahajani’s Philippine Nationalism (1971) cover the same period - from the arrival of the Spaniards to World War II. Constantino’s history is significant in that it applies a marxist analysis to Philippine history, and thus refutes the assumptions enshrined in widely used textbooks such as O.D. Corpuz’s The Philippines and G. Zaide’s History of the Filipino People. Other historians, notably Dan Schirmer, have recently been engaged in re-writing Philippine history, and Constantino’s book is a welcome contribution to the attack on the colonial myths perpetrated by previous historians.

Most historians have either ignored or glossed over the importance of class conflict, and Constantino does much to remedy this neglect. In particular he draws attention to the importance of land ownership in Philippine history, pointing out that land which was previously communally owned was expropriated by the Spanish friars and encomenderos who introduced the concept of private ownership of land. The Ilustrados who betrayed the Revolution in 1898 were only too eager to acquire the friar lands. During the American period, large estates were consolidated and rice lands converted to sugar and other cash crops. This process is still going on. Marcos’s spurious attempts at land reform, as well as the Muslim secessionist movement, are ample testimony to the importance of the land question in contemporary Philippine politics.

Constantino also emphasises the tradition of agrarian revolt in the Philippines, and points out that most historians have ignored the fact that the surrender of Aguinaldo and his Cavite elite did not prevent the inheritors of the Katipunan tradition from continuing the guerrilla war against the American invaders. Other historians such as Dan Schirmer have also drawn explicit parallels between the Philippine revolution and Viet Nam. The use of native mercenaries, enforced concentration of civilians in camps, widespread atrocities and the use of torture by the Americans foreshadowed many aspects of the Viet Nam war.

Constantino explicitly draws the parallels with Viet Nam, and implicitly with the present martial law regime in the Philippines. He also seems to be issuing a warning against Filipinos placing too much faith in President Carter’s emphasis on human rights when he states: “A durable myth .... had its origin in Aguinaldo’s time: that the Democratic Party in the United States is the special friend of the Filipino people.”

- R. Lim.
A NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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Civilisation at the Crossroads: social and human implications of the scientific and technological revolution, $4.50 (300 pp.), 1969.

Some copies of this very important pioneering work are still available. Published by ALR in 1969, the book is the work of a Czechoslovak interdisciplinary research team headed by Radovan Richta. It appeared late in 1967 in Czechoslovakia and undoubtedly resulted from the deep concern with the crisis in economy, politics and ideology which came to a head there at that time.

Its findings in turn provided the theoretical basis for the Action Program developed by the Czechoslovak Communist Party to meet that crisis.

These national aspects do not, however, detract from the universality of the problems dealt with. The book is a first-class piece of research and analysis about issues confronting all advanced industrial societies, as apt today as it was when published. Over 300 pages of text are supplemented by extensive tables and references. At today’s prices, it is selling cheaply.

Antonio Gramsci: The Man, His Ideas, by Alastair Davidson (100 pp.), 1969. $2.

This short book was one of the first works published in English about the life and work of the Italian marxist thinker and communist leader. It is still a valuable reference for those interested in Gramsci’s contribution to marxist thought and socialist politics.

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