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**Sixth National Congress  
of the  
Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)**

**A journal for the discussion of Australian  
problems in the light of Marxism-Leninism-Mao  
Zedong Thought**

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# Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)

Near the end of 1984 the Sixth National Congress of the CPA(M-L) concluded its discussions. In this edition of the *Australian Communist* we print some of the key documents of the Congress for general readership.

The Congress took place in the 20th year of the Party. This fact especially set the scene for reviewing the course of the Party's work and development down the years. There is satisfaction at the contribution the Party has been able to make to the Australian people's cause over those two decades. There is also a keen awareness of the many shortcomings to be overcome; of the need to redouble efforts and find yet more creative and energetic ways of developing the Party's activities.

All along, the Congress discussions were conducted in the spirit of them being an integral part of the Party's continuous work. Everything did not come to a stop while the Congress, like a creature with a life of its own, took over. Many of the broad topics considered by the Congress are always on the agenda of the Party's summing up of the unfolding situation.

Nevertheless the Congress plays a special role in deepening and concentrating the exchange of views on major matters of ideology, politics and organisation. It stimulates thinking far and wide throughout the Party membership. Of special note in this Sixth Congress was the large number of reports received from nearly every corner of Australia and from diverse fields of work. Many comrades made considerable effort to summarise the situation in their Party organisation, workplace or area of activity. Many also drew on this particular experience to comment on the national and international

situation and on matters of Party policy.

This filled the Congress discussions with lots of life. Without it any final synthesis of view according with reality would have been impossible. This tradition of summing up in a concrete way what we see, good and bad, should become firmly established for future Congresses – indeed in the continuous life of the Party. It is one of the vital ingredients for the Party to successfully fulfil its mission.

The main points of the Congress outcome are reflected in the Provisional Draft of the General Programme and Rules of the Party, which will soon be published as a separate booklet.

In summarising the Australian and world situations the Congress assessed that imperialism, the capitalist economic crisis and the war preparations of the two superpowers continue to afflict the working people of the world. The struggles for peace, national independence and socialism are more than ever central to the hopes of humanity.

Although still a little distant from the severest centres of oppression and turmoil, the Australian people are nonetheless strongly affected by the worldwide currents. U.S. and Japanese imperialisms, in particular, heighten their exploitation of our country and further erode Australia's national sovereignty. The United States attempts to lock Australia into its global war strategy, while the Soviet Union is rapidly expanding its military activities into the immediate neighbourhood.

The living standards of the Australian working people are further depressed, while a tiny minority grows even richer. As the economic



retirement from the revolutionary movement or from leading work. It merely marks the beginning of a new chapter in the life of revolutionaries. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that Comrades Hill and Bull have been asked to continue as official spokesmen and representatives of the CPA(M-L), and that Comrade Clarke will continue to carry out leading work with the *Vanguard*.

The decision to effect some changes at this Congress in the leading officers is part of general planning to assure the long-term leadership and smooth-running of the Party. It is not indicative of any "compulsory retirement policy", let alone of the bad practice of "the young chasing out the old". It is consistent with the established practice that every member of the Party is equal, irrespective of age, be they 16 or 96. It is also consistent with the general principle that the Party leadership is best if it is a mix of the veteran, the middle-aged and the youthful.

The major characteristics of the Sixth Congress discussions can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, it successfully tapped and exchanged the views of the Party membership on major matters of ideology and politics. It strengthened the collective understanding on key points and consolidated the Party's overall work. It obtained wide agreement on major principles and on the detail of the Party's activities. It clarified main tasks and provided inspiration to carry on the struggle with even greater energy.

Secondly, it demonstrated that the centre of gravity of the Party's life had truly shifted to Australian concerns. The reports made to the Congress, the whole tenor of discussion, recognised that the greatest contribution the Australian progressive movement can make to humanity is to solve the problems of social advance in this country. The tendency of earlier times to pursue interminably the internal affairs of the big socialist countries was not in evidence at the Sixth Congress.

Thirdly, the Congress confirmed the basic ideological and organisational stability of the Party. In a time of great turmoil and fragmentation in the worldwide Communist movement, the Party has grown and matured, rather than gone into a destructive spin. It has not become

disoriented on fundamental questions such as the leading role of the working class, the nature of the state or the role of the vanguard party itself. By the same token it has been possible to gradually shake off any rigidity of earlier years without forgetting what the Party stands for or what striving to be a Communist means. The Congress reflected the advance that has been made in adopting much greater flexibility in general policy and style of work. It has been possible to get nearer to far wider sections of the people, to have influence and contact where once it may never have seemed possible. The Party would act at its peril in a way which damaged this progress. It has been possible to work in many fields, including some where political consciousness is very backward, without it leading to the ideological wilting of the comrades involved; without them losing their sense of purpose or their preparedness to sacrifice all for the Communist cause.

Two factors probably explain this general stability. One is that the Party has always tried to maintain good ties with the workers and had an anchor in their steadfastness. Another is that the Party has strived to place some considerable emphasis on the study of the theory and the current situation. Here the special role of Ted Hill must be mentioned, not to indulge in flattery but only to state fact. The Party has not been content to "fly by the seat of its pants", to think that a few Marxist prescriptions can be endlessly re-shuffled and served up as theory or to be content with packaging daily events into one of a limited number of "left-wing soap operas".

The Party has attempted to develop a tradition of going deep into the works of the Marxist classics, of carefully analysing Australian society within the Marxist framework and of looking for the new, the essence of change, in every development. This emerging tradition is one that must be developed by the whole Party, not least of all by the younger generation.

The Sixth Congress is concluded. Although it is impossible to fully reflect the extent and diversity of all the reports and proceedings, the spirit of its work can be seen in this edition of the *Australian Communist*.



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# Major Reports to the Congress

Published here are four of the major reports presented to the Sixth Congress of the CPA(M-L). The first, on the work of the Central Committee, gives an account of major developments in the line and policy of the Party and of its activities. While dealing with the many shortcomings of the Party's work, the report says that there are strong grounds to be "heartened at the overall progress made by the Party since the last Congress. Much has been done to strengthen the Party ideologically, politically and organisationally. The Party has preserved and strengthened its place as an independent core within the working class and progressive movements".

In the second report the complex question of the prices and incomes accord and its effect on working class struggle is dealt with. There is no doubt that the accord was widely supported by the people in its earlier stages and that it has acted as a damper on the working class to some extent. But it was never able to screw the lid down tightly and the struggle is now spilling through.

The diversity of people's struggle is surveyed and analysed in the third report. The claim by some that the people are overcome with apathy is addressed and found to be a myth. The author says that "although it is fair to suggest Australia is

not 'ripe for revolution', a steady growth in consciousness is apparent. People are receptive to radical ideas, radical in the sense of getting to the root of things. Not only are there more people in struggle today, but the range of issues and the people involved are greater than ever."

The final report surveys various important aspects of Australian political economy. It examines the way in which the bourgeoisie combines dictatorship with a semblance of democracy. It discusses the growing fear of many bourgeois liberals that the Australian political system is heading into a period of great instability. It looks at the changing strategy of the capitalists in the face of economic crisis, the increasing reliance of capitalism on state funds to preserve profitability, the question of taxation, the struggle over industry policy and other matters. "In all walks of life disillusionment, disaffection and alienation are welling up; among the unemployed and the poor, among workers hoping the election of the Hawke government would improve their future prospects, among small businessmen and farmers, among professionals and those hoping for reform". This, says the report, provides the Communist Party with many opportunities to build its influence amongst the people.



## The Work of the Central Committee

1. The Central Committee, drawn from all over Australia, has met in various ways since the last Congress. Consultation was maintained among members and between the leading comrades and other members of the Central Committee. Collective leadership was practised.

2. Collective leadership is far more than a question of collective meetings. It is far more than the Central Committee itself making decisions on behalf of the whole Party. It must involve a correct relationship between the Central Committee and the Party membership, and between the Party and the working people. Individual Communists carry out the collective line of the Party. This means appropriate discussion and consultation so that arbitrary methods of work are avoided. All comrades at all levels are entrusted to take the initiative in implementing policy. Where they wish to develop some aspect of line or policy, or where they have doubts or criticisms on the present approach, they raise such matters with the appropriate Party body. Where a leading Party comrade, in particular, wants to take a stand that is or seems to be a variation of a Congress or Central Committee line, he or she is duty bound to have the matter appropriately discussed.

3. For its part the Central Committee actively fosters an environment in and around the Party where members and supporters feel at ease to bring forward any issue, big or small, and make a full contribution to the revolutionary movement. The Central Committee gathers the opinions of the Party membership, the Party supporters and the working people as a whole. It relies on them in assessing the political situation and in making its decisions. In this way collect-

ive leadership within the Party is built and consolidated.

4. As the leading body between Congresses, the Central Committee sought to implement the general line of the last Congress of 1982. This recognised that Australia has achieved a limited degree of national sovereignty and democratic rights. However these continue to be very restricted by Australia's economic and political dependence on several big foreign powers, especially the U.S., and by the erosion of civil liberties and the surveillance activities of the secret police. The Congress also analysed that on the world scene the contention and struggle between the two superpowers overshadowed world events. It threatens world war and has a profound bearing on the situation within Australia. The Congress advanced a number of immediate goals around the struggle for the independence and sovereignty of Australia and for world peace. It was with this basic orientation that the Central Committee carried out its responsibilities over the past two years. In its various discussions and work the Central Committee has tried to keep these important principles in mind:

- a) adhere to Marxism and the Communist cause.
- b) adhere to the leading role of the working class and the Communist Party.
- c) study and apply Marxism within the Australian environment; encourage fresh, uninhibited thinking, free from dogma.
- d) respect the outlook and views of the Australian working class and working people; work appropriately.
- e) promote unity of the working class and of the progressive forces.



f) promote people's struggle and initiative in all its diversity; analyse the situation and seek to provide leadership.

g) promote a better understanding of socialism amongst the Australian people.

h) uphold proletarian internationalism.

5. Against the background of the Congress line and with the above points in mind the Central Committee took many initiatives during its term. It conducted discussions with the Communist Party of Australia. These resulted in agreement on some day-to-day questions but more importantly, led to a generally better atmosphere in the working class and progressive movement. The old strident denunciations and acute divisions gave way to more amiable relations and exchanges. It helped relax the approach to discussing differences within the progressive movement and perhaps raised the general standing of the whole movement amongst the people. It enabled our Party to present its views on key matters of Marxist principle within a wider, more receptive circle.

6. The Central Committee also carefully analysed the position of the Labor Party, its advent to office and the attitude of the working class to the Labor Party. It was assessed that amongst working people there is widespread hope towards the Labor governments. Of late this has shown some signs of waning a little. However, it is important not to underestimate the extent to which positive sentiments towards the Labor Party hold sway in the working class. This reality must shape the approach taken by the Communist Party. In order to get nearer to working people and to spread a Marxist view, it is important to take into account the working people's sentiments – and to do so in a really sincere way. Past experience suggests that when the Party attempts to override popular feeling and takes an aggressive, universally condemnatory approach to the Labor Party, it can be the Communist Party, not the Labor Party, that ends up isolated from the workers. Every effort should be made to promote friendship with the Labor Party membership and supporters, so that our views can be put forward in an appropriate way.

7. Of special importance is the need to promote a wider understanding amongst the people of the functioning of capitalist economic laws. The

illusion that the Labor Party can yet bring real reform and a change in the working people's lot remains strong. Only where there is a wider understanding that the Labor governments will do nothing more than administer capitalism might there be a greater turning towards Communist ideas and leadership. In the immediate situation the Party has a heavy responsibility to expose the damage being inflicted by the capitalist class on the working class through major aspects of Labor policy. Of particular concern is the functioning of the accord. When this was signed early in 1983 our Party expressed the view that there was nothing necessarily wrong with agreements between the trade unions and the ALP, provided they did not harm the interests of the workers. But the Party commented that the essence of the accord seemed to be one of involving the top trade union structure (ACTU and the TLCs) in the suppression of real wages. That view has been consistently put and been confirmed by actual events. It was noted that the accord (like the Labor Party) enjoyed considerable confidence amongst the workers. The thinking and balance of forces within the working class would need to be carefully assessed before a full-scale break with the accord could occur. In some areas of the working class it has proved possible to make at least temporary breaches in the accord but overall it remains intact. In many respects the problem of how to deal with the accord is another form of the long-standing question of whether it is yet possible for workers to entirely pursue their demands outside the arbitration system. Our Party has a strong obligation to expose the negative features of the accord and the possible trend towards a tame trade union movement. The recent statement by a leading retailer (McLintock of Woolworths) that he liked the accord because it was "a wage pause in another guise" speaks for itself.

8. The Central Committee considers that further attention must be paid to work in the trade union movement – especially the industrial unions but also the white collar unions. In the past, tremendous emphasis was placed by the Communist Party on work in the unions. Perhaps there was over-emphasis. Certainly it can be said that emphasis was wrongly applied to seeking "control" of unions in a mechanical sort of way. Today, the problem in our trade union work



seems to be one of under-emphasis. Especially amongst the younger generation of comrades there is inadequate experience in the trade unions. The trade unions remain key spots where the Party can develop close ties with the working people, spread its ideas, do organisational work and promote struggle. A new generation of trade union leaders and rank-and-file activists is coming up. Our Party needs to have more friendships among them.

9. Turning now to some other aspects of the Central Committee's and the Party's work. The Party press and bookshops operated under the general leadership of the Central Committee. The *Vanguard* maintained weekly production, the *Australian Communist* bi-monthly. These and other special publications took the Party's view to the people. They sought to agitate and provide leadership. Production of publications is a relentless task, placing heavy demands on the comrades responsible. The publications also require commitment from Party members as a whole to contribute articles, materials, notes on events, photographs, drawings, etc. and to comment on the stand and style of the Party press. Within the Party there are many capable writers. These include many who do not consider themselves writers but who are well placed and well able to reflect aspects of life as they and their close circles experience it. Constant encouragement is needed to develop more writers, correspondents and artists for the Party press.

10. Through the operations of the bookshops and outlets the Party's material and a wealth of other progressive literature were distributed. There seems to have been an upswing in literature sales over recent times. This is doubtless the result of hard work by the responsible comrades in promoting sales and of a heightened interest amongst the people in progressive literature.

11. The Central Committee also sought to enlarge the public scope of the Party's work. This included the opening of a public office in Melbourne, increased attention to publicity work, the convening of a very successful public meeting and other action. These moves take greater advantage of the legal position of the Party in Australia, make it easier for friends to contact the Party, widen the circle of contact

and break down the unnecessary air of mystery that has sometimes surrounded the Party. The increased attention being given to public work does not of course represent a basic shift in emphasis away from developing our mass work amongst the people.

12. The Central Committee sought to strengthen the Party organisationally. It paid attention to enlarging and consolidating the membership. It promoted maximum consultation internally. It emphasised the importance of consolidating our forces and biding our time. It encouraged Party members to be fully involved in the struggles of the Australian people. These included those movements concerned with workplace issues, living standards, peace, democratic rights, the natural environment and many others. The Central Committee paid attention to enhancing the national character of the Party and its leadership, and to developing younger comrades into positions of responsibility.

13. The question of strengthening the Party's financial position was taken up by the Central Committee. Expenses continue to escalate. Financial difficulty is never a stranger to a Communist Party active and determined in its work. Without returning to the rigid quota systems on regions (and individuals) of the past, the Central Committee has asked all areas of Party membership to examine how they might increase and regularise the flow of finance in the coming period.

14. Strengthening the grip on Marxism throughout the Party has been a constant concern of the Central Committee. The Australian road to socialism can only be found if there is a solid understanding of the essentials of Marxist philosophy, political economy and politics amongst the membership. This area requires continuous attention. There needs to be greater studying and writing by more comrades on the many interesting questions that constantly arise in Australian Marxist theory and practice. There is a need to turn again to the great classical works and to absorb and discuss them afresh in the environment of today.

15. In the international sphere the Central Committee keenly studied developments. The shadow of the two superpowers casts itself even more darkly over the world. From an historical standpoint it can be seen that U.S. imperialism is



on the decline, while Soviet imperialism is on the rise. In the late 'seventies Soviet advances really had the edge over the U.S. position. It appeared that the Soviets might launch a major war at any time. At present the situation seems to be more one of stalemate between the two superpowers. Soviet expansionism has slowed a little, owing to the resistance of the people in Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and elsewhere. The U.S. has also experienced further setbacks, especially in the Middle East, but has stepped up its aggression in Central America. The questions of which superpower is the greater threat and of how to best utilise the contradictions between the superpowers to serve the struggle for national independence are ones which the peoples of each country and region must assess from time to time.

16. Through the Central Committee the Party maintained fraternal relations with other Parties around the world. The Central Committee contributed in any way possible to the strengthening of the international progressive forces. Support was extended to peoples struggling for national liberation against imperialist and hegemonist aggression. Emphasis was naturally placed on the Asia-Pacific region and in particular to the struggles of the Kampuchean and East Timorese peoples. The Central Committee was also mindful of the growing importance of the peace movement and worked to support its growth on a national and international level.

17. The preparation of this current Congress was also led by the Central Committee. This involved the convening of the Organising Committee and continuous assistance so that it could successfully conduct its work. The Organising Committee has ensured that the Congress discussions have gone deep and wide amongst the membership, so as to fully tap the collective wisdom and fighting spirit of the Party. The Central Committee has also overseen the proposed re-draft of the Programme and Rules to take into account changes in the situation since the last Congress.

18. The Central Committee is heartened at the overall progress made by the Party since the last Congress. Much has been done to strengthen the

Party ideologically, politically and organisationally. The Party has preserved and strengthened its place as an independent core within the working class and progressive movements. It has enriched its understanding of Australian reality and put down deeper tap roots into Australian society. It has combated subjectivism, made its method of work more supple and behaved in a modest way. Many shortcomings in the work of the Central Committee and the Party as a whole remain to be overcome. There are the weaknesses mentioned earlier in this report, such as the inadequate contact in the trade unions and the lack of all-round depth in the Party's grasp of Marxism. There is still the often identified problem of at times being too much the reporters of events rather than the initiators. There are gaps in the analysis of events and trends that we provide to the Australian people. Internally we did not do enough to develop and utilise the full talents of the Party members. Nor did we fully integrate into the Party's work many excellent friends and supporters. We must do a lot more hard work to solve or minimise these and other problems. But we should also put stress on the positive achievements of the Party over its 20-year history. Even when mistakes were made they occurred in the context of trying to serve the people, of seeking to find the correct path to the emancipation of the Australian working people. The Party has matured enormously in its theoretical grasp, in its practical activities and in its style of work. It has comrades and friends in numerous corners of Australia and abroad. Together they contribute rich experience, wisdom and skills. The past two decades have been ones of great turbulence and difficulty in the international Communist movement, especially in the advanced capitalist countries. But through all this the Party did not lose its way. As the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) enters its third decade there is every reason to go on drawing inspiration from the tireless work and creativity of many comrades – especially the long-serving, unsinkable veteran comrades – and to be optimistic about the growing influence the Party will exert in the making of Australian history.



## **Workers' struggle and the Accord:** *A Report from the Shop Floor*

When the prices and incomes accord was first mooted in our industry, most of the workers there took a cautious "wait and see" attitude to its development. With the election of the Hawke government in March 1983, working class elation and expectations were running very high. Advantage was taken of these sentiments and the ratification of our union's acceptance of the accord was bundled through with no mean haste. A genuine resentment of many workers to this day is the near total lack of workshop-based discussion that was permitted on the accord. Misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the accord abound amongst workers — a situation that no doubt has suited the Labor government very well.

Initial opposition to the accord came from some left groups. Unfortunately a number of these had a bad history of issuing unrealistic calls for indefinite stoppages over non-issues, proposing immediate general strikes and so on. They were easy meat to be disposed of. They may have even lent credibility to the pro-accord argument.

It was obvious that with the extent of working class support for Hawke, combined with the ravaging of the Fraser years, the accord would certainly be supported by the workers in general. Many no doubt believed in it as the vehicle upon which to place their expectations. It seemed best to acknowledge this reality and struggle around it accordingly, in the knowledge that the unfolding experience of the workers would expose the essentials of the accord.

The main argument of the pro-accord advocates in the trade union movement is that it is an instrument by which the "achievable can be obtained in a particular historical period"; that it "elevates the working class on to a new plateau of influence with the government".

Much subjectivism underlies this thinking. There is an extreme over-estimation of the extent to which government is in unquestionable control of the economy. It neglects the fact that although the number of party backsides on parliamentary seats may change, the basic elements of bourgeois rule — the ownership of the means of the production, the courts, army, police, stock markets, etc. — all remain. It is capitalism that fashions the government's behaviour, not the other way around. The economic reins are still held by the big monopolies, many of them foreign. Australia remains a country with very restricted sovereignty. A mere change of parliamentary government cannot sweep away the ills of the capitalist crisis. Yet the view was held by some in the trade union movement that if a "shopping list" of reforms could be agreed to with the ALP, then these could be delivered one by one when the ALP was in office. The position was even put by some that a "super accord" would later be negotiated to have the Labor government begin introducing socialism!

This illusion about the extent to which a Labor Government would have sweeping independence of action, that it even subjectively would want to serve the working people, is clear



from the accord statement. In describing the "nature of prices and incomes policies" the accord statement reads:

#### "FRASER REJECTED

"Past policies of the Fraser government are completely repudiated by the parties to this statement as manifestly unfair; they promote industrial confrontation and they provide no effective resolution of the fundamental economic problem of achieving low unemployment with low inflation.

#### "BY CONTRAST

"In contrast to this approach, it is agreed that policies must be adopted which are comprehensive and equitable and based on co-operation, not confrontation. Accordingly, the policies detailed in this document have the following characteristics.

"\*They are agreed between the parties rather than imposed by the government.

"\* They are comprehensive in that they cover prices, wages, non-wage incomes, taxation and the social wage, that is, expenditure by governments that affects the living standards of the people by direct income transfers or provision of services.

"\*They are concerned with the equitable redistribution of income as well as basic economic objectives.

"Such policies provide the best chance of overcoming the appalling economic situation into which reactionary conservative economic policies have led the nation".

It is as if all can be changed with one wave of the accord. Nobody, of course, asked the bourgeoisie if any of this was acceptable to it, since it holds the real power, and even if the capitalists were agreeable how they would override the functioning of the basic laws of capitalism.

It is often said "I agree that the initiative of the government is severely restricted, but what harm is there in at least trying, through a comprehensive union-Labor agreement, to get some reforms?" "No harm", it could be answered, "provided any accord is presented by trade union leaders in its proper perspective." The most damaging aspect to working class interests of the present accord has been its extreme glorification as "the way ahead" for working people. It is a great advance, say some

trade unions, that supersedes all prior forms of union action and promises great benefits.

We have a "binding agreement", they say. "Keep on plugging away, get the accord fully implemented, don't risk the accord by breaching it, it's the best thing going for us". By pushing this view the real purpose of the capitalists' support for the ALP and the accord has been obscured. To some extent the workers have been disarmed and gains that could have been made through the "prior forms" of industrial struggle have been lost.

It is most important to understand the background which brought the Labor Party to office and which underlies the backing of the big monopolies for the accord.

By the early 1980s the Fraser government was quite isolated. Resistance by the workers to wage cuts was very strong. In fact many other strata of society were gathering momentum in their opposition to Fraser — the unemployed, Aboriginals, pensioners, youth, home buyers, environmentalists, small business, etc. The current of rebellion was strengthening.

Looking ahead the big bourgeoisie knew that things would only get tougher for the people: the danger of resistance greater. Further suppression of living standards would occur to restore profits. The structure of world manufacturing was changing. The "Pacific Basin" doctrine was being put into practice. Under this, Third World Pacific nations were being upgraded as manufacturers (complete with low wage structures), Australian manufacturing was being destroyed and Australian raw materials were being further plundered, while the U.S. and Japan looked on, supplying the technology, directing the markets and reaping the profits. This would mean staggering levels of unemployment in Australia and rising discontent.

The capitalists looked to the Labor Party to take over the government, to blunt the struggle of the workers and people, to settle the unions down. Risky elements in the Labor Party were isolated and a more reliable and charismatic Hawke was brought forward to replace the vacillating Hayden. The combined efforts of the capitalist media in promoting the Hawke ascendancy were unprecedented. It is still going on.

The most informed and calculating sections of the bourgeoisie saw in the accord a means to



put the lid on working class struggle, particularly wage demands. The attractive feature of the accord was that it appeared to offer the working class a new deal. Doug Anthony, the former National Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister in the Fraser government, when retiring from parliament, actually blurted out that the Hawke government's economic policies were simply extensions of the Liberal/National government's wage freeze. For once Anthony spoke the truth.

One of the most frequently used arguments by supporters of the accord within the trade union movement is that it has resulted in wage rises for the least organised, lower paid and most vulnerable section of workers. It has prevented further losses in these areas, they say. Certainly there have been the partial wage indexation increases. But in real terms the "most vulnerable section" of the working class has probably suffered more losses under the accord than previously. It has generally borne the brunt of the introduction of new technology, price increases, inequitable tax burdens, poor social welfare and so on. Reliance on the accord has to some extent dampened struggle around these matters.

Another argument raised by pro-accord exponents is that despite the shortcomings and disappointments, the accord gives the labor movement a set of government-agreed principles to mobilise around; that it is more desirable to have these agreed principles as a basic platform of struggle than to have no agreement with the government and be fighting from square one. The trouble is that when the government wriggles out of honouring the principles, the unions have sometimes ended up with nowhere to go. If they then persist with trying to have the principle implemented they are accused of going against the accord! Such is the way the whole accord had been twisted around.

Let us look at some of the areas where it is claimed that the accord has been acted on in full or in part:

#### **1. Wage indexation**

Minimal advances have been made; in fact workers are presently in what is effectively our second 12 month wage freeze in two years.

#### **2. Medicare**

The most basic health cover with many shortcomings has been provided. The burden of funding the health system has actually been

shifted even more heavily on to workers by the imposition of the compulsory levy.

#### **3. Repeal of the most repressive anti-union legislation**

There is no longer any need for the former legislation, as the ACTU has become an industrial police force. In any case Willis is preparing new legislation more draconian than Menzies would have dared to use.

#### **4. Tripartite industry development mechanisms**

This was a sop to nullify the metal unions in particular. The government has dismissed metal union plans for economic development out of hand, whilst bending over backward to assist the likes of BHP.

#### **5. Occupational Health and Safety**

Despite a specific commitment to occupational health and safety under the accord, the government has done nothing to compel employers to accept new legislation.

#### **6. Redirection of government spending from private schools to state schools.**

Nothing of the sort has happened. In real terms, cash flow to the private schools has increased. Ask any teacher! It is one of the reasons why the teaching unions withheld campaign funds from the ALP recently.

The acid test of the accord is which group is most vigorously supporting it. It is indeed the employers themselves. If any one union, even a small one, takes up a wage increase or other issue on behalf of its members, any number of employer representatives are on television and in the press decrying this attack on the "principles of the accord". The employers know the accord for what it is. They ought to. They encouraged its emergence and backed up the Labor leaders to implement it. Often workers are condemned as if they were murderers, when all they are demanding is something promised by the actual content of the accord. The Food Preservers, the Furniture Trades Union and the BLF have been singled out for furious attack by a combined front of the government, employers, Arbitration Commission and the ACTU. The *Financial Review* commented in October last year:

"There are few precedents around for the type of action threatened against the BLF.

"One mentioned by government sources in the past week is the Menzies government's 1965 Stevedoring Industry Bill, which authorised the



Minister for Labour to ask the Arbitration Commission to investigate possible deregulation of the Waterside Workers' Federation. Under the legislation, which was never used, the WWF would have lost its right to represent waterside workers and another union or unions would have been declared to cover the ports.

"As part of the 1949 coal industry dispute, the Chifley government legislated under the National Emergency (Coal Strike) Bill to outlaw any payments to miners which would encourage an extension of their strike.

"Tougher action than in both these pieces of legislation now has become a key part of the Hawke government armoury against recalcitrant unions.

"The Wilson and Callaghan British Labour governments eschewed such legislative sanctions against recalcitrant unions who broke ranks from the British social contract, leaving disciplinary measures to the Trade Union Congress.

"The Federated Furnishing Trades Society in May (1984) was faced with similar action as threatened against the BLF over a pay rise won by a small group of its members in Victoria.

"Such an isolated pay rise would not have provoked much of a response from the Fraser government. Even if it wanted to act it would not have got ACTU support".

There is no doubt disillusion with the accord is spreading amongst working people, although there is still considerable hope that it may be possible to force the government and employers to carry out price restraint, taxation relief and social service increases, as promised in the original deal. If real relief does not come this

year on the tax front it may be the last straw for many so far as the accord is concerned. Already circumstances are forcing more and more workers to fight and to try and break through the fence that has been built around worker demands. As the government and employers re-interpret the accord ever more narrowly this forces many sections of the workers "outside the accord".

Rather than say the accord is collapsing, the more appropriate description is that it is crumbling bit by bit. It still retains the strength to "hold the lid on struggle" to a certain extent. We should give attention to building unity around the demands and expectations of the workers and in the process put our view about the role of the Labor government, the accord and the ACTU.

More Party members and supporters should be encouraged to be active in trade union affairs at all levels. Trade union activity is a key way of really knowing what people are thinking and determining ways of giving leadership and learning from workers' struggle, be they concerned with questions in the workplace, in the community or on matters of national concern. The Party needs to further build up its influence amongst the workers and draw more on the ideas of its worker comrades. The Party should also continue to emphasise the leading role of the working class and be sharply aware of how the Australian working class is evolving as capitalism develops. It is the working class that bears the historic mission to lead the emancipation of all mankind and establish a communist society without class oppression.



## The Apathy Myth: People's Action is Widening and Maturing

There is a myth among sections of the left which suggests that people (and particularly the young) are remaining apathetic and uninvolved, despite unemployment, the growing danger of war and the many other problems of the times. It would be fair to say that those with this view are themselves the ones who are cut off from struggle.

On a recent TV programme, an ALP Socialist Left parliamentarian complained that young people today weren't interested in the sort of issues he had been involved in at their age, during the Vietnam war and conscription era. Yet the very same programme showed, all too briefly, how the Wollongong Out-of-Workers' Union — mainly made up of young people — was fighting back against unemployment. This group is active, militant and well organised. Among other things, they have initiated national connections among the organisations of the unemployed.

More than anything else the growth of the peace movement and the tremendous success of the Nuclear Disarmament Party should have shattered the "apathy" myth.

It is worth looking back to compare this Labor government with the Whitlam government.

The mass organisations, the anti-war/anti-conscription movement on which Labor rode to office in 1972, more or less disintegrated. There was a belief that Labor would take care of the problems without the need for people's organisations or mass campaigns.

It has been a different story with the Hawke Labor government. People have basically

kept their own organisations intact. A good example is the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS). The anti-dam movement had a lot in common with the anti-Vietnam war/anti-conscription movement: both played a major role in the election of an ALP government. However, instead of disbanding after the Franklin had been saved, the TWS simply dropped the "Tasmanian" from its name, and is now involved in campaigns to preserve wilderness areas all around Australia.

It is inaccurate to say that people are still involved in struggle despite the existence of a Labor government — rather, in many cases they are compelled to take action because of some of the things the ALP government is doing.

In our printed material we have often said that more and more people are becoming involved in more and more areas of struggle. This is something that bears repeating: it is not just a glib remark, but a clear statement of truth.

In the recent past there was something of a preoccupation with overseas issues, questions of international solidarity. These issues are important, and certainly should not be neglected. However today there is more of a focus on Australia — questions of poverty, unemployment, the environment, peace, wages, democratic rights, housing and related matters. And there has been a tremendous growth in understanding as well as in numbers.

Again, the Wilderness Society is a case in point. Originally the cause of the Franklin River was pushed by a small band of bushwalkers and



biologists, with little knowledge of the economics and politics of the issue, who knew the area and simply wanted to preserve it for its own unique qualities. The people involved were compelled to study and investigate, and so their knowledge and awareness grew and the struggle was lifted to a higher level.

Not only are there more people involved in struggle today, but the range of issues and the range of people involved are greater than ever. This very brief review of just a few of the struggles which were reported in *Vanguard* in 1984 illustrates the process.

**Job creation.** People are increasingly concerned about the "rotating dole queue" — short-term government job creation projects which last on average about six months and do nothing for unemployment except make the statistics look better. The attitude of governments is that these projects should become "self-sustaining" after the initial funding period. But most of the projects are in the area of community services — home handyman programmes, youth worker training, recycling, improving the urban environment. It is impossible for them to be run as profit-making businesses, yet they provide a vital service. People involved in the projects, either as participants or sponsors, have refused to go along with this state of affairs and are demanding real, long-term job creation.

**Workers' health and safety.** People are now far more aware of problems in this area. Repetition injury and other health and safety problems associated with new technology are becoming more and more widespread, and so is the response from the people affected. Workers' health centres and groups dealing with particular aspects of workers' health and safety have sprung up in many parts of Australia, and more recently a national organisation of workers' health centres was set up.

**Community newspapers.** The community newspaper movement has continued to grow in response to people's increasing disillusionment with the monopoly media. Most major cities in Australia have one or more community newspapers, produced by and for the people in the community, reflecting their needs and aspirations and often acting as a focal point for local struggles.

#### **Accountability of government authorities.**

Over the last two or three years a whole range of "consumer" groups concerned with the accountability of government bodies has emerged: Energy Action (representing electricity and gas consumers), Housing Commission tenants' unions, Public Transport Users and others. These groups not only act as advocates for individuals who have been badly treated by a government authority, but actively intervene on questions of policy where the rights of consumers are likely to be affected. Indeed the consumer movement in general has really expanded. Its effectiveness can be judged by the attacks on it from the Right.

**Art and culture.** A few years ago community or union arts officers were virtually unknown. Today many workplaces and community centres sport fine murals, factory workers can enjoy performances on the job during their meal break and have the opportunity to participate themselves. These rights had to be fought for. They represent a real grass-roots demand from the people for something better than Coca Cola culture.

Summing up, then, it is fair to suggest that although Australia is not "ripe for revolution", a steady growth in consciousness is apparent. People are receptive to radical ideas, radical in the sense of getting to the roots of things.

Different struggles are becoming linked together. Yet again the anti-dam campaign provides a good example. Environmentalists and trade unionists were able to come together on the economic costs of the dam and the need for secure jobs, which dam construction would not provide.

Many of the struggles in 1984 and over recent years underlined the growing awareness of the role of the multinationals. Also people are not just raising demands to "stop this!" or "ban that!", but are putting forward positive winnable demands, intervening in areas previously left to the politicians and big bureaucrats.

As well as the "apathy" myth, there is a related myth that Australia has somehow become a "middle class" nation with a dwindling and increasingly irrelevant working class.

While it is true to say that the workforce employed in heavy industry and manufacturing





has shrunk, vast numbers of white collar workers have been brought into the arena. The effects of economic restructuring, new technology and declining profitability have led to the birth of the "white collar production line", with all its ensuing results of lack of job satisfaction, declining real wages, industrial injuries – and worker militancy.

Bank workers, insurance workers, public servants, teachers, academics and journalists have all been involved in industrial action in 1984, many for the first time. This situation can

only grow and develop.

In many cases white collar unions have elected new and more militant leaderships – but rank and file action remains the key.

Finally, to sum up, there is almost unlimited scope for the expansion of our political work, and great cause for optimism. Of particular importance is work among young people, which means tackling the issues of unemployment (the "undevelopment of Australia) and peace and redoubled vigour. Young people are looking for leadership, answers and a way out.



# Aspects of the Australian Political and Economic Situation

## 1. The Evolution of Bourgeois Democracy and the Role of the Parliamentary Parties.

In Australia the political system can be described as a bourgeois democracy. This system is broadly common to the advanced capitalist countries, although not all of them, all of the time. Bourgeois democracy combines capitalist exploitation of the majority by the minority with universal electoral franchise and limited democratic rights for the people. How did bourgeois democracy come about and how is it possible for the bourgeoisie, a minority class, to retain power in a democracy? These are questions often asked.

Underpinning the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, all along, is the state apparatus – the army and police, the courts and prisons, the bureaucracy. It is the machinery of persuasion, regulation, sanction, punishment and even terror that protects private property and upholds bourgeois rule. It was largely adapted from the medieval horror chambers.

But in its own fight for ascendancy over feudalism, the young bourgeoisie raised up the banner of democracy. It developed the democratic ideas of antiquity to demand equal rights and equal representation with the nobility. It used democratic promises to mobilise the labouring people behind it in the struggle against the feudal order. Ultimately the bourgeoisie emerged supreme.

Generally speaking it did not then dispense with democracy but adapted and controlled it to its own advantage. Democracy

and liberalism served well the free competition of early capitalism. They beautified the sharp and ugly form of the state. Besides it was necessary to accommodate the growing demands of the working people who were seeking their own rights too. Yet the bourgeoisie never really had a comfortable relationship with democracy. Run on the bourgeoisie's own terms, democracy gave stability and legitimacy to its rule. But there was always the possibility that bourgeois democracy would run away from itself – that the working people would demand a far fuller democracy that extended to them, the majority.

Frequently there were conflicts within the bourgeoisie over how to handle this problem. There was a liberal wing and a diehard wing. Various devices were developed to cushion the fear of a people's takeover. These included restricting the extension of the franchise to upper houses and the use of colleges of electors to choose heads of government. There was a lot of juggling to be done and sometimes it just didn't work. Situations arose where the bourgeoisie could not maintain even limited democracy without risk of being overthrown. It then relied just on the naked state to defend its power. It lapsed back to the medieval horror chambers – to fascism.

But by adapting and developing the old parliamentary institutions the bourgeoisie has been able to rule under a democratic signboard for quite extended periods. It has been possible to graft an ideology around these institutions, which holds them up as the centres of power, of



the exercise of the people's will and of the hope for social change.

This system of parliamentary government is buttressed by a system of parliamentary parties, maintaining some degree of discipline over their members amongst the elected representatives, vying with each other to achieve and maintain government.

In Australia three main parliamentary parties have emerged: one openly representing the interests of big capital but attempting to attract the support of small business and to portray itself as the party best able to benefit the whole people (Liberal); another originally based upon upper-middle sized rural landowners but which has increasingly channelled the interests of big mining and finance interests, attempted to be a voice for manufacturers and to win the support of the urban middle class, thus also laying claim to be the party of the whole nation (National); and another which grew out of the trade union struggles of the developing Australian proletariat, has retained a wide following among the workers, has at times channelled the interests of national manufacturing capital, has always had to facilitate the wishes of big capital if it were to achieve or remain in office, has increasingly attracted the support of the salary-earning, non-commercial middle class and which has also laid claim to be the party of the people (Labor).

These three parties compete with one another for parliamentary office and the opportunity to form the government. Each of them has a section of the social strata where it draws the most solid electoral, financial and organisational support. But as we have seen, all try to appeal to a range of wider demands and concerns, especially by promising packages of economic benefits. They must do this if they are to win the election.

Such a party system has generally served bourgeois rule well. It has helped to cover up the cruder reality of the state, created an illusionary democratic atmosphere and served to protect the capitalist relations of production. It has helped to ensure that the structure of political power will not deviate too much from that of economic power. Although never an easy matter for the bourgeoisie to handle, the Labor Party has played a crucial role in making the

whole parliamentary system work.

With its connections amongst the working people, the Labor Party alone has the capacity to be a credible channel for their demands within bourgeois democracy. It has held up liberal alternatives to the conservatism of the other two parliamentary parties. It has kept alive hopes for ordinary people that the balance of good fortunes may one day tilt their way. It has often served to deflect radical thought in Australia towards liberalism and gradualism and to shift the focus away from people's action on to the parliamentary arena.

But it has never been an entirely comfortable arrangement for the bourgeoisie. There is always the danger that the Labor Party may arouse the expectations and demands of the people to quite dangerous levels. For this reason the Labor Party has been kept under strict discipline. The whole machinery of "public-opinion" making, owned by the bourgeoisie, is kept at the ready to curb any undesirable leftist trends being reflected through Labor. Electoral oblivion is threatened if the bourgeoisie's demands are not met. The careerism of many in Labor's ranks is capitalised upon to the full — "pursue that course and your chance of ever being a minister is finished."

In this way Labor policies are kept under tight rein. There is a highly pronounced trend in all Labor governments to fashion their programme to the satisfaction of big capital and to avoid at all costs "alienating the middle ground". In this way the Labor Party is adapted to the needs of the bourgeoisie and plays its part in giving life to the "competition between parties" so essential to the functioning of parliamentary democracy. The sentiments and demands of the people are thus dampened down a bit and the system of bourgeois democracy is, for the time being, successfully preserved.

## **2. Impact of the ALP Government on the Party System in Australia.**

However, the experience with the ALP government since 1983 has prompted some conservative and liberal ideologues to raise questions about the future stability of the party system (and thus of bourgeois democracy) in Australia. But this time the concern has had a different twist to it. It has arisen not because the ALP government has been too radical or reform-



minded. It has arisen because the government has been too conservative. As many of the bourgeois political columnists have observed, the government has ceased to represent, even nominally, the underprivileged and radical or reform-minded elements in Australian society. Concern as to the implications of such a development has been expressed by such diverse commentators as Geoffrey Barker, Katherine West, Dr. H.C. Coombs and others.

Barker's column in *The Age* over recent months has been harping on the failure of the ALP government to redistribute economic benefits from richer to poorer Australians. He views the government as "welching on what is supposed to be a fundamental mission of the Labor Party — to bring about a fairer distribution of private wealth and social responsibility". "It is outrageous", he states, "that a Labor government should be sustaining the relative position of better-off members of this society while the relative position of less well-off people is being allowed to decline". (*The Age*, 27.10.84).

Why is it outrageous for a Labor government to do this? Mr. Barker does not say so explicitly; but he understands that the strength of bourgeois democracy, and therefore capitalism, in most Western countries this century, lies in its being able to direct working class and radical activity towards the parliamentary system. He knows that at a time of economic crisis, especially, it is critical to be seen to offer something to the people. After the tough times and the humiliation of the Fraser years people want some relief.

If a Labor government fails to perform its traditional role, if it clearly abandons the majority of ordinary people, the future stability of bourgeois democracy and capitalism could be threatened.

From a different perspective, the conservative ideologue, Katherine West, has expressed a similar view. She makes a more general point about the dangers of both major parties continuing to ignore the unemployed and underprivileged of Australian society:

"If we continue to do nothing to provide constructive work for the unemployed, the electoral majority next time round will be a combination of those who already belong to the have nots or fear they are in real danger of

falling into their ranks". (*The Australian*, 3.12.84).

And more pointedly:

"It is an obvious over-simplification to depict the have nots as a cyclical aberration destined to join the ranks of the haves when the economy picks up. However humane it may seem to those who try to reassure the poor that they in fact have a future, unrealistic hopes often lead to disappointment and consequent alienation which, in extreme circumstances, could drive the poor to reject the political system itself as being totally inadequate for expressing and satisfying their overlooked interests and needs. If the current alienation of the have nots is allowed to reach this political extreme, Australia will risk the destructive instability that has characterised in so many parts of the world what sociologists have called the plural society". (*The Revolution in Australian Politics*, Penguin, 1984, p.46).

Similar conclusions have been outlined recently by one of the most significant liberal thinkers in post-war Australia, Dr. H.C. Coombs. In his recent John Curtin Memorial Lecture, Coombs warned of possible threats to the stability of the Australian party system if the Hawke government continues to ignore the claims of those in need and of radical and reform-minded groups in Australian society. After citing Prime Minister John Curtin on the significance of the role of the ALP as the party of reform and progress under capitalism, Coombs states:

"There are great threats to that image of the Labor movement in the pursuit of consensus by the adoption of the policies of the Opposition. To pre-empt that Opposition in the wooing of the conservative centre is in essence a policy of polarisation. It is already clear that it is driving the Opposition to extreme right wing policies. Within the labour movement itself it is by its half-hearted performance on the three major moral issues of the time, nuclear war, Aborigines and unemployment, alienating not merely those in need and those whom society has injured but also the idealists, the intelligentsia and the radical reformers. It is from these people that the inspiration for change and progress comes. It will be the beginning of death for the Labor Party, however big its leader's popularity rating may be, when the labour



movement is no longer seen by them as the instrument for change in the interests of decency and human dignity. The political vacuum on the left created will be filled, perhaps for a while by single issue or splinter parties but before long by a more radical party outside the Labor Party". (John Curtin Memorial Lecture, Australian National University, Canberra, November 14, 1984).

The common fear being expressed by Barker, West and Coombs is that the balance of the Australian party system and, ultimately, the system of bourgeoisie democracy, is being harmed or potentially harmed by the attempt of the Labor government to capture the conservative as well as the middle ground of Australian politics – to take over the Opposition as West has characterised the government's strategy – while abandoning traditional areas of support among the needy and reform-minded. These more far-sighted spokesmen of the bourgeoisie fear the emergence of a new party based on those abandoned by the major parties. Their basic concern is that such a new party may not display the same allegiance to the bourgeois party system and to the parliament as the other parties. In such circumstances, the stability of bourgeois democracy in Australia would be upset and continued bourgeois rule made more difficult, perhaps even threatened. Indeed, so concerned is Dr. Coombs with the possible implications of the Hawke government's strategy that he concluded his Curtin Lecture with the following emotional plea:

"May the spirit of John Curtin imbue the Australian people and the labour movement in these days when all our values and indeed our survival are threatened".

### **3. Our Current Political Tasks.**

This observed trend does indeed present the CPA(M-L), and the progressive movement as a whole, with additional opportunities to build their influence among the people. In all walks of life disillusionment, disaffection and alienation are welling up; among the unemployed and the poor, among workers hoping the election of the Hawke government would improve their future prospects, among small businessmen and farmers, among professionals and those hoping for reform. Coombs, in particular, has set out the major issues around which has grown such dis-

affection: unemployment (he really means the effects of the economic crisis), Aborigines and nuclear war. On each of these issues the Party is faced with the task of further developing its position and demands and showing how they are related to the struggle for independence and socialism.

In sum, our current political task is to help provide the leadership to light the way forward for the Australian people engaged in struggle around these central issues of the day.

The initial step is to analyse the current situation in relation to each issue and how it has developed.

Consider item one on Dr. Coombs' agenda of issues, unemployment. In doing so it is necessary to expose the laws of modern-day capitalism and demonstrate how government economic policies are designed to maintain and support capitalism, in particular, to maintain the dominance of imperialist and comprador interests.

### **4. Unemployment and the Economic Crisis.**

The question of unemployment is a question of economic crisis under capitalism. What happens in each major crisis is that capitalism itself is increasingly called into question as the livelihood of the bulk of the population is either destroyed or threatened. The bourgeois political parties attempt to find ways of avoiding this, of managing the crisis while using the state machinery to help capital restructure. In the political arena the experience of economic crisis is manifested in the difficulties of maintaining electoral support in the face of diverging interests as the crisis mounts. Bourgeois democracy is really put to the test. How is it possible to preserve in office a government which will serve the interests of big capital at the expense of the most numerous section of the electorate, the working people?

#### **(i) The Demise of Fraserism and the Rise of the Consensus Approach.**

Fraser's response to the crisis was to maintain government support for the big capitalists while attempting to reduce real wages, welfare payments and the living standards of people generally. He sold this to the electorate in terms of the philosophy of reducing the role of government in the economy and the need for sacrifices. The whole strategy came unstuck as it became



more and more apparent who was bearing all the sacrifices and who was getting all the benefits.

Fraser's strategy could not simultaneously serve the interests of the imperialists and the compradors on the one hand while maintaining the necessary electoral support of other classes and strata. It simply broke down under its own internal contradictions. The bourgeoisie needed a new government. But not just any alternative government, not one led by Hayden because under him too high a price might have to be paid for the support of working people and there was the added problem that he was a bit too anti-American. No, it had to be an alternative government led by Hawke. He had a proven record in delivering the unions and in supporting the U.S. The message gradually seeped through to the parliamentary ALP and after much soul-searching Hayden was sacrificed for the necessary support from sections of big business.

The cement for the new electoral alliance was provided by the Hawke strategy of consensus, working together, etc. The prices and incomes accord is the means of keeping workers in line while cutting real wages. As the chairman of Woolworths (McLintock) recently observed, the prices and incomes accord is really the continuation of Fraser's wages freeze under a different guise. Together, the prices and incomes accord and the popularisation of the consensus approach within the working class movement have resulted in the lowest level of wage claim-related strikes for a decade. Leading businessmen have been applauding the government's success.

The response of our Party has been to draw attention to the fact that the accord is essentially an instrument to suppress wages. But the Party has also taken into account the positive sentiment of many working people towards the idea of "working together". This bears on the manner in which we handle the accord question. The thrust of our explanation must be that not everyone is working together to solve the crisis and, indeed, this can never occur under capitalism. The fact remains that capitalist relations of production involve class divisions — in essence, between those who own and control the means of production and those whose livelihood depends on selling their ability to work. In such a society, the impact of a crisis bears most

heavily on the latter as the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of people, is destroyed.

This response can be supported by pointing to the form capitalism takes in Australia whereby all sectors of the economy are dominated by a relatively few large overseas-owned and Australian-owned corporations. Government economic policies are inevitably primarily focussed on serving their needs. For any bourgeois government, improved economic performance and a way out of the crisis can only occur as a result of government efforts to improve the profitability of these corporations. This is a necessity in the era of state monopoly capitalism. Other solutions either involve more unemployment and potential disruption and instability or challenges to the imperialist domination of Australia. The bourgeois political parties want no part of these options. Hence the use of measures such as government-inspired wages freezes or prices and incomes accords.

In this context it is also necessary to expose the significance of a whole range of economic policies in supporting private capital accumulation through the economic crisis. Such policies include for example, taxation, industry development, financial deregulation and foreign investment guidelines. These and other economic policies are important aspects of how the state responds to the requirements of private capital accumulation by different sections of the bourgeoisie during the era of monopoly capitalism and to the problems of managing and containing the pressures emanating from those classes and strata experiencing economic distress. The most far-sighted policies of governments are developed with a view to balancing such factors as the immediate requirements for continued private capital accumulation, maintaining the allegiances of the major classes and strata to bourgeois democracy and capitalism, moderating or deflecting radical demands and keeping the party of government and on the government benches in the parliament.

#### **(ii) Taxation**

Marx once wrote that the "tax struggle is the oldest form of class struggle". Tax systems reflect particular forms of class systems. Every important change in the balance of class forces is registered in the tax structure.

The tax system in Australia is highly



iniquitous, reflecting the class structure of Australian society. Professor Russell Mathews has commented on the tax system as follows:

“The whole system is so rotten that nothing less than a complete restructuring will restore equity and achieve the other reforms that are necessary.” (*The Mythology of Taxation*, Centre for Research on Federal Financial Relations, ANU, Canberra, June, 1984).

Numerous studies done in Australia support such a conclusion.

Such tax exploitation is accepted because the ideology of capitalism is dominant. The justification for tax exploitation is based on three general concepts: the old idea of incentive and the new ideas of ability to pay and equal treatment for equals.

In brief, the incentive rationale asserts that if profits are taxed too heavily, the accumulation of capital and thus the growth of production and employment will diminish and that if the incentives of wealthy families and investors and their financial institutions (which monopolise the supply of money capital) are impaired, the supply of investible funds will dry up. In other words, the official ideology of taxation asserts that taxes must not reduce the incentives to supply and invest money capital. These propositions are, of course, true within the framework of capitalist production.

The ability-to-pay doctrine holds that every member of society – capitalist and worker alike – should pay taxes commensurate with personal income. Needless to say this principle is suspended when it conflicts with the incentives doctrine. For example, dozens of loopholes ensure that income from capital ownership is substantially tax free. Further, numerous means are available for the rich to avoid tax by nominally reducing taxable income.

The final justification for tax exploitation is the idea that “equals should be treated equally”. Unassailable in principle, this doctrine is prejudicial to the working class in practice. Capitalist society is not a society of equals. A tax system that treats everyone as equals merely reinforces existing inequalities.

The ideological justification of tax exploitation has been called into question more and more as the inequitable content of the tax structure has been revealed over and over in

recent times by various studies and government inquiries. Governments do nothing to change this tax structure in any significant way – to do so is to threaten the position of the rich and powerful. The proposed tax summit promises to be another exercise in attempting to contain the pressures for reform. It will not challenge the basic system of tax exploitation nor the ideology which provides its justification.

### (iii) Industry Development Policy.

The question of industry development is a critical question in the era of the dependence of capital on the state, particularly during an economic crisis. Industry development is really a term which encompasses the broad spectrum of economic measures which governments introduce and administer to support private capital accumulation. For example, it includes such measures as taxation concessions, subsidies, infrastructure expenditure, government purchasing preferences and foreign investment guidelines and many other forms of government regulation. Arguments about the nature and extent of these measures of state support for capital are usually the result of conflicts between different bourgeois interests. The interests of working people are not central to these arguments in the terms on which they are currently conducted. The interests of working people are only taken into account to the extent that governments wish to avoid any serious threat of instability arising from the demands and struggles of workers.

Because industry development issues frequently represent the internal conflicts of the bourgeoisie there are dangers in entering these debates on the terrain set by the bourgeoisie. An example concerns the long-standing debate which has dominated discussion of industry development in Australia, namely, free trade versus protectionism.

Protectionism has been used in Australia as one measure of support for various manufacturing interests. Indeed, protectionism has been an element for maintaining common interests between the national bourgeoisie, the compradors and the imperialists in a number of manufacturing industries. All these sections of the bourgeoisie in these industries receive support from protectionism. The motor vehicle industry and those industries servicing it provide a good





the state in consultation with various bourgeois interests, have been rewritten to favour some sections of the financial section and disadvantage others. In particular, the position of comprador banking interests has been strengthened in relation to other financial interests and some imperialist banks will be permitted to set up in Australia as long as they find some Australian partners, that is, compradors. This restructuring of the financial sector has been undertaken in order to better serve the financing of imperialist and comprador activities in the economy while at the same time maintaining and strengthening the more significant comprador interests in the financial sector.

In each of the aspects of industry development considered here, and others, the central issue concerns the continuing crisis of capital accumulation, generally in the era of monopoly capitalism, and particularly in the current crisis, together with the conditions under which the state will provide further support for private capital accumulation. As a result conflicts emerge between different bourgeois interests and in the debate and struggle over the direction each economic policy will take there is often no clear class distinction between the protagonists.

Often sections of the national bourgeoisie, the compradors and the imperialists are found on both sides and the government has the job of balancing the different interests while maintaining the long-term dominance of the imperialists and the compradors. The task of Communists is not to enter the debate on the ground set by the bourgeoisie but to analyse and understand the significance of the various conflicts and prepare and use the demands which are in the long-term interests of working people and which are clearly integrated with the demands for independence and socialism. Above all, the Party must join in and support the development of the many people's movements fighting around questions of living standards, independence and related matters.

##### **5. Nationalise the Multinationals and Big Compradors.**

It is not possible to formulate a response to the economic crisis which is consistent with the goal of independence and socialism which does not include the demand for nationalisation of the multinationals and the big compradors. It is a key part of a strategy for removing the cause of economic crises. Capitalism is characterised by production for profit and it has an inevitable



tendency to over-production which results in periodic crises. The big overseas-owned corporations and the big compradors form the centrepiece of this system of production for profit in Australia. Nationalisation of the imperialist and big comprador interests would result in production in the most significant areas of the economy being planned in the interests of overall balanced industry development. Nationalisation is not socialism, but it is a step towards working people gaining control over the most significant sections of the economy. As it is the interests of the imperialists and their allies which are being brought under national control, nationalisation is also a key step in developing an economically and politically independent republic.

However, this response to the current crisis cannot stop with this proposal. It has to be recognised that if the working class is to win its goal of independence and socialism it has to win allies. The working class cannot hope to win this goal if it throws itself against the united opposition of the rest of society. It must win to its side significant elements of other working people, the petty bourgeoisie (including small farmers), professional groups and the intelligentsia, and the national bourgeoisie. The working class must form a united front with all these other groups

and the Party has to lead the way in further developing policies to give effect to that united front.

To form a united front it is necessary to recognise the interests of all its possible constituents. The policies and tactics developed in response to the economic crisis and the particular economic issues discussed above, together with the other major issues of the day such as nuclear war and Aborigines, must take into account the interests of all these other groups.

For example, the national bourgeoisie must be excluded from the demand for nationalisation. Indeed, it may be appropriate to support demands which directly aid accumulation by this section of the bourgeoisie in return for its support for an independent Australia and a decent livelihood for workers in their firms. Such measures could include subsidies, tariffs or government purchasing preferences for those firms that do enter such agreements.

These and other suggestions need development and exploration before being made definite. What is important is that we must further embark on this path of taking into account interests of sections of society in addition to those of the working class if they are to be won to the side of the working class in the struggle for independence and socialism.



# Tribute to the Work of E.F. Hill

It is fitting that something be said at this Congress about the work of Comrade Hill.

For almost 50 years Comrade Hill has been active in the Australian revolutionary movement.

For most of those years he has been involved in leading work of one kind or another within the Communist Party. The last 20 years have been highly significant.

In 1964, together with others, he took part in the establishment of the Communist Party of Australia (M-L). He has served as its chairman ever since. He has been an integral part of its development, its difficulties and its growth and successes.

The CPA(M-L) exists to serve the working class of Australia. It reflects working class hopes and aspirations. It is inevitable therefore that the work of Comrade Hill has been bound up with those joys, hopes and aspirations of the working class, a class to which he has paid special attention. Of him it could be said that he serves the people.

Marxism sees human history as a process which proceeds according to definite objective laws irrespective of the will of man. But such a view includes the role of men and women within any given historical period.

However, it insists that the character of an individual is a factor in social development only where, when, and to the extent that social relations permit it to be such. So that talented people without the ideology of Marxism and without Marxist organisation fail to have progressive social significance commensurate with their talents. But talented people who serve and

express the social needs of their time can make highly significant contributions to the course of history. Any evaluation of the work of a revolutionary leader must proceed from the actions of that leader in tackling the tasks posed by objective reality which is dominated by the state of existing productive forces and productive relations.

The reality of Australia today is the reality of capitalism. Within this system, although the workers toil collectively in the production of commodities, the products of their labour are privately appropriated by their employers. The inevitable outcome of such relations of production is continual confrontation and struggle. Struggle is the only path open to the workers – never-ending struggle against their oppression and for a meagre existence. They are the leading force for social change and revolution.

The task of investigating these Australian features at the same time as upholding proletarian internationalism has dominated the lifetime work of Comrade Hill.

Using the sharp weapon of dialectical materialism he has challenged and swept aside many sacred cows.

In a precise examination of the stages of Australian revolution, Australia's dependence and degree of independence, the role and social characteristics of the Australian Labor Party, the dangers posed to Australia by both super-powers with particular reference to the emergence of Soviet social-imperialism, much new ground was broken. Many new concepts were advanced.

In an era when many are proclaiming



that Marx's theories of socialist revolution were old-hat and outdated, Ted Hill led many Australian revolutionaries in a deeper study of the fundamental Marxist classics emphasising beyond all doubt the relevance of Marxist ideology. Especially valuable to the future revolutionary movement has been the pioneering work on the characteristics and work of a revolutionary party operating within bourgeois democracy, a form of bourgeois dictatorship in which there is the illusion of freedom.

We meet today when it is apparent that an important body of revolutionary cadres has emerged, the members of which strive to develop the same correct style of work.

Communist style of work demands strong personal commitment and integrity in pursuit of revolutionary truth. It is a style of work which rejects slavish copying of phrases and propositions or the blind worship of individuals. It demands resolute thought prepared to break new ground whilst learning from the past. It demands courage to seek to penetrate to the essence of things, it embraces a restlessness which is never satisfied with a smattering of knowledge. Above all else it demands a commitment to continue to strive to master Marxism.

It is possible for Comrade Hill to relinquish the chairmanship of the CPA(M-L) at this Congress with the knowledge that there are talented young people working hard to develop

a correct Communist style of work.

The questions of leadership and continuity of leadership are important for the revolutionary movement. It is not lightly then that we claim that this continuity seems assured.

In no small measure is this due to the correct invaluable work of Comrade Hill. We should record these views at this Congress and express appreciation of his theoretical and practical work. It will occupy a special place in the history of the Australian revolutionary movement.

At this stage of proceedings in any bourgeois organisation it is customary to hand over a hefty cheque as a golden handshake, expressing the wish that the recipient enjoys a future quiet retirement. However, our organisation is fundamentally different from bourgeois organisations. In everything, we strive for a revolutionary attitude. So we reverse the process.

Comrade Hill hands over to us a fine legacy. We request from him a continuation of the same revolutionary commitment as he has given in the past even though younger comrades are shouldering the burden of day-to-day leadership. Our request is certain to be fulfilled. Revolutionary struggle is continuous. The same must be said of Ted Hill's work. Many questions on Australia's road to socialism yet remain to be investigated. There is no doubt Comrade Hill will be involved in the task.



# Messages of Greetings to the Congress

*In the modern international Communist movement it has become widely accepted that the primary focus of each Party's work is to solve the problems of advance within its own country. Each Party acts independently in the light of its own particular conditions. There is no "guiding centre" or "model party" for the whole world-wide movement. There are no big brothers and little brothers. Parties do, of course, extensively draw on the experience of one another. They exchange views and*

*conduct fraternal relations, often of a very profound kind. They extend mutual support and uphold the principles of proletarian internationalism. Fine examples of this spirit are seen in the messages of greeting extended by various fraternal parties to the Sixth Congress of the CPA(M-L). On behalf of the Party, the Central Committee has extended its deep gratitude for these expressions of solidarity and salutation. The messages from fraternal parties are printed below.*

## **MARXIST-LENINIST COMMUNIST PARTY OF BELGIUM**

Dear Chairman,

The Central Committee of the PCMLF sends fraternal greetings to the Sixth Congress of your Party. We wish Chairman Hill, the Central Committee and all the comrades great success in their struggle for the defence of the workers, for peace, against the two superpowers, for socialism.

*Fernand Lefebvre,  
Chairman.*

## **COMMUNIST PARTY OF BURMA**

Dear Comrades,

On behalf of our Central Committee, entire Party members and commanders and fighters of our People's Army, we convey to you and through you to all your Party members, our hearty congratulations on the conclusion of your Sixth Party Congress.

We hope decisions of your Congress will advance the struggles of your people in your country in accordance with your concrete situation.

Though geographically far apart, our two parties have always supported each other's struggle on the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and proletarian internationalism and the actual practice of independence, complete equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

We are convinced that the deep solidarity between our two parties will grow stronger day by day.

With Communist greetings,

*Central Committee,  
Communist Party of Burma,  
21st December, 1984.*

## **COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA**

Dear Comrades,

Glad to learn convening Sixth Congress Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). We extend warm greetings to you and wish you new successes in future work.

*Central Committee,  
Communist Party of China.*



## COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDONESIA

Dear Comrades,

Delegation CC CPI extend warmest congratulations successful conclusion Sixth Congress CPA(M-L). We wish your Party success in creatively applying universal truth of Marxism-Leninism to concrete Australian conditions.

*Jusuf Adjitorop,  
Secretary CC CPI and Head of  
Delegation of CC CPI.*

## PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY NEW ZEALAND (MARXIST-LENINIST)

Dear Comrades,

We note with pleasure the growing influence of the (CPA(M-L)) as evident from your successful Sixth Congress.

We are confident your Party will play its full role in future in the building of our Marxist-Leninist movement in Australia for the benefit of all workers, all progressives, for peace and socialism.

Your growing strength greatly encourages and strengthens our struggle in New Zealand. Comradely greetings,

*V.G. Wilcox,  
Chairman,  
Preparatory Committee for the  
Formation of the C.P.N.Z.(M-L).*

## WORKERS' COMMUNIST PARTY (MARXIST-LENINIST) OF NORWAY AKP(M-L)

We hereby send you our warm and revolutionary greetings on your Sixth Congress of your Party. We very much hope your Congress is successful for your future work for socialism in Australia.

The AKP (M-L) held its Fourth Congress in December after four successful years of ideological and political consolidation and development outlined in the International Declaration of the Central Committee which we hope you've already received. The Congress elected Mrs. Kjersti Ericsson as new Party leader after Paal

Steigan.

You will learn more about our Congress in the next issue of *Class Struggle* which we hope will be out in May.

The opposing forces in the world today become increasingly antagonistic. Rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States has heightened the danger of a new world war. In Western Europe, with its highly developed capitalism, the relatively long period of good economic conditions after the Second World War is over. Most countries are increasingly being marked by the large and lasting problems of capitalism, with high unemployment, destruction of social and health services, union-busting and so forth. The concept of social-democracy is a myth. In fact social-democracy is today the most important barrier to the development of the forces of revolution in a country like Norway.

In this international and national situation, today's need for a strong international Marxist-Leninist movement is great. Our Party will therefore give priority to bilateral and multi-lateral contacts and co-operation.

We therefore hope that our greetings for your Sixth Congress will be another step in the contact between our two parties.

Great success for your Sixth Congress!  
With Communist greetings,

*The Executive Body  
of the Central Committee,  
of the Workers' Communist Party  
(Marxist-Leninist) of Norway.*

*AKP(M-L).*

*Oslo, January 30, 1985.*

## COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE PHILIPPINES

Dear Comrades,

On behalf of the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army and the revolutionary Filipino people, we extend our warmest congratulations on the successful conclusion of the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist).

We wish the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) more success in implementing the line and policies adopted by the Sixth Party Congress



and in integrating the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete situation in Australia. We highly admire your Party's principled support for the revolutionary struggles of the peoples of all countries, including the Filipino people's struggle against the U.S.-Marcos fascist dictatorship, and your persistent struggle against monopoly capital in Australia, in defence of national independence and for the realisation of socialism.

We hope the militant unity and friendship between the two Parties will continue to develop in the years to come.

Long live Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism!

*Central Committee,  
Communist Party of the Philippines,  
December 15, 1984.*

#### COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND

Dear Comrades,

On the occasion of the Sixth Congress of

your Party, we extend to you our warmest greeting on behalf of all members of our Party.

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) is a genuine political party which has adhered to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, persisted in the struggle for the interests of the Australian people and consistently supported the revolutionary struggles of the people of all countries. Thanks to its persistent struggle for the people's benefit and its correct policies, the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) has been able to grow in strength and enjoy higher and higher prestige.

We are convinced that the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) through its Sixth Congress, will surely become even stronger, exert a tremendous influence and play a major role in political affairs, and achieve greater successes in its revolutionary struggle.

*Central Executive Committee,  
Communist Party of Thailand,  
Thailand.*

*December 28, 1984.*

## A Note on Party Finances

Improving the Party's financial position received a good deal of attention at the Sixth Congress. As the report of the Central Committee (published here) points out, financial pressures are never a stranger to an active Communist Party. The costs of carrying out the Party's work are regularly increasing. The Party's position is a little more consolidated but if more finance can be raised it will permit the Party to expand its work in many fields.

An interesting discussion took place in one part of the Congress about the level of Party membership dues. Should they be kept at their present quite low level or should they be substantially increased? The conclusion of the debate was that really the matter turned on a central ideological point. It went to the essence

of what the Party is about, of whom it serves. It is a Party based upon the workers. The level of the membership dues must be consistent with the economic circumstances of the working people. It was therefore decided to set the annual membership dues at \$20.

It was recognised that some Party members may be able to contribute in addition to the dues, and that Party organisations might be able to extend other fund-raising activities. An appeal for further voluntary financial support was thus extended to members and supporters. It was important to place the handling of finance raising on a more systematic basis, without imposing rigid quota systems and the like. The Congress expressed the hope that the matter of finance would be given consistent attention by the whole Party.