

unemployment. Capitalism as a whole is never challenged, and the way out of capitalist misery never even hinted at. Where serious issues are taken up (as is happening more frequently) this reflects the reality of the present depression, and the fact that people are fighting it. To ignore this would further discredit the already significantly discredited "mass media", and by publishing material of this type the media moguls can point to how "unbiased" they are. (At the same time such stories have their use, especially if taken up in a mass way).

*Vanguard* is not out to sensationalise or merely reveal some of the effects or excesses of capitalism. *Vanguard* is biased, just as Marxism-Leninism is biased. Marxism-Leninism — and *Vanguard* — belong to the workers. *Vanguard* has no other reason for existing other than its service to the Australian working class, and other Australian patriots. It exists to inform, to educate and to promote struggle. Through the mass line method of work, mutual teaching and learning, it strives to help develop and propagate Australian revolutionary theory.

*Vanguard* is an important link and channel of communication for all Party members and supporters, particularly for those working in isolated situations (the importance of this aspect was driven home to this writer through recent personal experience — perhaps people working more "centrally" would be less aware of it).

Many ways of getting the best use out of *Vanguard* come to mind. Articles can be used to initiate discussion amongst the people at all levels. Where appropriate, material can be adapted and reprinted in other publications. The weekly theoretical pages provide a useful base for an individual study programme of some of the classic writings of Marxism-Leninism, with specific Australian problems in mind.

But this cannot happen spontaneously. Reading, as much as writing, requires determination and application. All of us need to examine the question of reading and writing for *Vanguard* with a disciplined, scientific and revolutionary approach. Part of our task as Communists is to develop the potentialities of *Vanguard* to the full.

## Uniting theory and practice demands study of classics and of our history

**The purpose of our study is to gain a deeper understanding of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought in order to apply that understanding to Australian conditions.**

The basic truths of Marxist economic analysis are illustrated on an almost daily basis at present through the economic crisis affecting Australian and Australian people. The introduction of new technology is not for the benefit of the worker, it enables the employer to spend less on wages and make more profits from the machines that replace the worker. Where there are problems in replacing the worker, there is, because of the constant quest for profits, either an attempt to force down wages or possibly a move to another country where the cost of labour power is significantly less than in Australia.

We see the decline of the labour-intensive manufacturing industries because, until now, capital has been invested in the profit-making mining and extracting industries. Because of the reduction in jobs available, we are currently seeing a continuing rise in unemployment with all the attendant miseries it brings to those deprived of even the amount deemed necessary to exist and propagate.

As Engels put it: *"But the perfecting of machinery is making human labour superfluous. If the introduction and increase of machinery means the displacement of millions of manual by a few machine-workers, improvement in machinery means the displacement of more and more of the machine-workers themselves. It means, in the last instance, the production of a number of available wage-workers in excess of the average needs of capital, the formation of a complete industrial reserve army, as I called it in 1845, available at the times when industry is working at high pressure, to be cast out upon the street when the inevitable crash comes, a constant dead weight upon the limbs of the working class in its struggle for existence with capital, a regulator for the keeping of wages down to the low level that suits the interests of capital."*

Our own "Big Australian", BHP, is currently providing one of the best examples in Australia of the truth of Engels' words written in 1877, with its mass sackings of its workforce. These ruthless sackings are being carried on throughout the country and, with the crisis of overproduction in full swing, the unemployed are being used to reduce the wages of the employed. This is, of course, the example of the buyer and seller situation where a surfeit of sellers, workers selling their labour-power, are at the mercy of buyers, the employers, who attempt to use the "industrial reserve army" for their own ends. We are constantly told in the press of the greed of workers who want more wages while the unemployed are forced to exist on social security and there are continued attempts at putting the blame for unemployment on the older people in the workforce who are supposedly keeping jobs from the young unemployed.

These are quite simply attempts by the ruling class to divide workers and hide the real reason for the current crisis — overproduction. As Marx says in *Wage Labour and Capital*: *"Now, what will be the consequence of a rise in the price of a particular commodity? A mass of capital will be thrown into the prosperous branch of industry, and this immigration of capital into the provinces of the favoured industry will continue until it yields no more than the customary profits, or,*

*rather until the price of its products, owing to overproduction, sinks below the cost of production. . . . the high price produces an excessive immigration, and the low price an excessive emigration."*

As the *West Australian* newspaper said on September 6, under the heading "Sudden fall in investment": "Investment in mining and manufacturing projects in Australia dropped by nearly 10 per cent, or \$3.53 billion, in the 12 months to June, according to a survey released yesterday." With the current low prices, there is now an "excessive emigration" from investment in the major mining and manufacturing industries.

One can say that the principal contradiction in capitalist society is between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and that in Australia, as was stated in the September-October *Australian Communist*, our principal contradiction is between the imperialist bourgeoisie with its hangers-on and the Australian working people. The external influence upon our country is the battle between the two superpowers, the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union to redivide the world, so that the declining imperialism is grabbing all it can at present with the resultant suffering of the Australian working people. In the current situation, therefore, our task is the defence of what sovereignty Australia already possesses in the face of, primarily, the rapaciousness of American imperialism. As a part of this defence we must also take into account the attempted inroads by Soviet imperialism plus increasing penetration of Japanese capital. An expose of the Soviet Union's return to capitalism also presents problems, not insurmountable, in that the Australian people have little experience of Soviet imperialism, while the experience of U.S. imperialism is an almost daily experience, as well as the effect of the Vietnam war on Australian understanding of U.S. imperialism.

To quote from Marx: *"In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material*

*productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general."*

Put briefly in relation to Australia, we have a capitalist society with a parliament presenting the facade of bourgeois democracy and we have workers' organisations, trade unions, which basically operate within the confines of capitalism. We grow up with these institutions, our thinking reflects the material society which surrounds us and we have no choice in selling our labour-power to capitalists in order to survive. The more direct the exploitation of the worker, that is, the more open it becomes that you *are* selling your labour-power and that you don't have a choice basically in selling it, the easier it is to comprehend the basics of Marxist theory and sympathise with the aims of socialism and eventually, Communism.

In applying our understanding of the capitalist system, therefore, to our work with the masses, we must constantly keep in mind the fact that overall the social consciousness of the majority of people is conditioned by the capitalist society within which they live. When contradictions deepen between working people and the bourgeoisie, as is happening at present between the Australian people and the overseas bourgeoisie directing its stooges in parliament, there is a qualitative change in understanding for many people. Even so, people still overall believe in parliament until the stage is reached where contradiction develops into open antagonism. That stage has not developed although it certainly doesn't mean that we simply parrot the phrase "but there's no revolutionary situation" like we used to trot out the phrase "this is another step forward to independence, etc." to round off articles in *Vanguard*.

If we look at the overall needs of the people, most of us would like financial and personal security. Even though it can't satisfy those needs,

capitalism does its best to provide enough to make this need for security at least a possibility, if not directly achievable, in order to preserve the facade of capitalism. One rather excellent example of this was the recent decision in the Budget to make home loan interest payments tax deductible. The government was forced to do this primarily by the action of the Australian people but also because the ruling class was alarmed that one of the dreams it promotes, the ability to own your own home, was rapidly crumbling, and crumbling openly. In actual fact, a rebate at the end of the year will come too late for many people, but the concession enhanced capitalism's apparent willingness to look after people's needs as well as giving the impression that people's action can be successful in bourgeois democracy. (It can of course, be successful, as long as there is no fundamental attack on the system of capitalism).

Such an apparent willingness to offer concessions also, of course, reinforces the image of parliamentary democracy. As we have been discussing recently, belief in the parliamentary process and trade union organisation is deep-seated. It should not be surprising. As we know, knowledge comes from understanding and for most people the understanding is that capitalism and its institutions work. Although there are crises, and as said previously these crises usually lead to a qualitative change in understanding in many people, experience for most people has shown that, in the past, crises have been overcome and capitalism has managed to dish up again a few, if not all, of the goodies it promises.

Furthermore, capitalism has sweetened its appearance with the illusion that it is the people who control the country, through parliament, and through elections every two or three years. After all, it is not surprising that people believe they have some control. Mass action led to the end of participation in the Vietnam war and the election of a Labor government in 1972 seemed to prove that a choice was available.

At the same time, capitalism presents itself as the only viable system and as far as possible prevents knowledge of communism being promulgated through the education system, which it controls, and through the mass media,

which it also controls. A striking example of this happened recently in Perth. Representatives of a Trotskyite group handed out leaflets to senior high school children, criticising capitalism. All hell was let loose at this attempt to "subvert" our school children, yet the following Sunday, an article in the *Sunday Times* described how children were being encouraged in schools to set up their own company and make profits.

As long as we keep in mind the inevitable change from a capitalist to a socialist society, including the stages which lead to such a transformation, and attempt to understand contradictions and their changing role in Australian society, we are not discouraged by situations which are not to our liking, nor are we discouraged by errors. Through study and through practice we should ensure that, as far as possible, errors do not happen. But if they do, then it is not the end of the world as long as the error is recognised and appropriate lessons drawn.

Once you begin to think about the contradictions in Australian society and understand who is the real enemy, and when you understand that people's thinking is influenced by the material world in which they exist, the elimination of left bloc ideas becomes much easier and enormous possibilities are opened for really listening to people's ideas even if they aren't spouting revolutionary fervour. It is the working people of Australia who are our concern and much can be learned from listening to their experiences instead of imposing our ideas with the conviction that we must necessarily be right.

It's all too easy once you've discovered communism to get impatient with people whose experience has not been the same and also to become discouraged when revolution isn't just "round the corner". After all, it's much easier to be communist when there's an apparently revolutionary situation than it is to be a communist in a non-revolutionary situation where the patient type of work can look boring and unproductive in the long term.

We obviously bring different levels of understanding with us when become communists, apart from a common belief in communism, because of our different experiences. A useful quote from

Liu Shaoqi's essay on *How to be a good Communist* is quite relevant in this regard although it obviously has to be applied to Australian circumstances: "The people joining our Party not only differ in class origin and personal class status but also carry with them aims and motives of every description. Many, of course, join the Party in order to bring about communism and attain the great goal of the emancipation of the proletariat and all mankind, but some do so for other reasons and other aims. For example, some comrades of peasant background used to think that communism meant 'expropriation of local tyrants and distribution of the land.' When they first joined, they had no understanding of the real meaning of communism. Today, quite a number of people join the Party chiefly because it is resolute in resisting Japan and advocates the Anti-Japanese National United Front. Others join our ranks because they admire the Communist Party for its good reputation or because they realise in a vague way that it can save China. Still others are seeking a future for themselves, chiefly because they have no other way out — they have no fixed occupation, are out of work, lack the means to study, or want to escape from family bondage or forced marriage, etc. A few even join because they count on the Party to get their taxes reduced, or because they hope 'to make their mark' some day, or because their relatives or friends have brought them in, etc. Naturally, such comrades do not have a clear-cut and stable communist world outlook, do not understand the greatness of the communist cause and the difficulties besetting it, and lack a firm proletarian standpoint. Naturally, too, some of them will waver or change somewhat in certain circumstances at certain critical turning points. Since they bring all sorts of ideas with them into the Party, it is most important that they should be educated and should train and temper themselves. Otherwise, they cannot become revolutionary fighters of the proletariat. . . . Although many people do not have a thorough understanding of communism before joining, it is possible for them to become active fighters in the communist and revolutionary movements of the time. They can become politically conscious Communists provided they study hard after joining the Party."