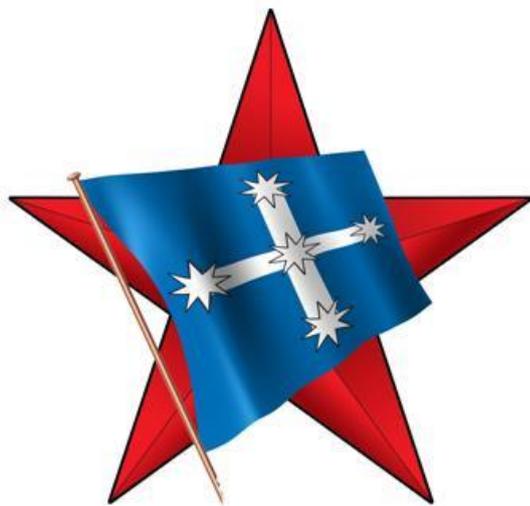


# **An Overview of the History of the CPA(M-L) in South Australia**



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by Nick G.

**T**he Australian state of Victoria was the birthplace of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). In its early years, its strongest base was in that state, leading opponents to label it the “Victorian break-away Hill group” (referring to founding Chairperson, Comrade EF Hill).

However, the new Party had contacts and supporters in other parts of the country.

One of those was Comrade CJ (Charlie) McCaffrey in South Australia. Details of Charlie’s life can be found on our website.

(see [www.cpaml.org/ourcomrades.php](http://www.cpaml.org/ourcomrades.php))



*Comrade Charlie McCaffrey*

The new Party was founded on March 15, 1964. McCaffrey, a long-standing and leading member of the original CPA, assessed the fight against

revisionism in both its local and international manifestations and decided to join.

In November 1964, under the heading “Leading Union Official Joins Communist Part M-L”, *Vanguard* reported:

Mr. C. McCaffrey, for a long time a leading official of the Ironworkers’ Association, and a leading member of the Communist Party of Australia (nominally headed by Mr. Sharkey), has joined the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist).

Mr. McCaffrey was a member of the South Australian State Committee of the old Party. He expressed in that Committee his complete disagreement with the revisionist line of the old Party.

His joining of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) is very warmly welcomed.

With Charlie, although not disclosed publicly, were other CPA members including Dr David Caust, Marjorie Johnston, Bill and Shirley Warton and Roy and Muriel Baynes.

At the time of his joining the CPA (M-L), Charlie was working at the SA Rubber Mills, one of the largest factories then in SA, as union delegate. His leadership of Communist work in the unions in SA was recognised by the old Party when the 1963 State Conference had resolved to “express to Comrade McCaffrey its sincere appreciation for his work on the State Committee of the Party over a period of many years”.

## **Support for People’s China**

Charlie remained at the Rubber Mills until a decision by SA comrades was made to establish a branch of the Australia China Society (ACS).

Much of the preparatory work was done by David and Tess Caust. Apparently, some time in 1965, David and Tess travelled to Melbourne to confer with Hill about extending ACS organisation into South Australia. There was no formal link between the two organisations, but given the developing international situation, and Caust's own perceptions of his obligations as a Party member, he wanted his involvement ratified by Hill. This was little more than a formality, and David, Tess and Charlie worked towards convening a meeting of interested potential members.

The founding meeting of the SA branch of the ACS was held at the Caust home on February 25, 1966. Those who attended were David and Tess Caust, Charlie and Lil McCaffrey, Marj Johnston, Roy Baynes, and several workers from the SA Rubber Mills. David Caust was the first President and Lil McCaffrey the first Secretary and Treasurer. From the start, calls for diplomatic recognition of China, and for promotion of friendship and understanding between the peoples of China and Australia, came from the best elements of the working class.

Tragically, David Caust died at the early age of 46 in August 1968. In his enthusiasm for the work of the Society, he had allowed his surgery's waiting rooms at Plympton, a working class suburb, to become a virtual reading room of Chinese magazines. Among those of his patients who were influenced in this way were Bob and Rhonda Creek who were later to become active branch members during the early 70s. Bob was a worker with the then state-owned Electricity and Water Supply Company and, in due course, became President of the ACS branch for several years.

Charlie had visited China in 1959 with a CPA delegation including Ernie O'Sullivan, a worker from Melbourne and a colleague of Ted Hill's. Charlie recognised the need for the Party to initiate the opening of a bookshop from which both Chinese and Australian Communist publications could be sold. He had no savings of his own and had to borrow funds from friends to

open the shop. He also had to resign, at the age of 65, from the Rubber Mills in order to manage the shop with his wife, Lil. In its first week, the shop had sales worth \$2.50!

Whilst the shop was a necessity (the CPA had banned Chinese publications from its own shop and would not, of course, distribute anything by the new Party), it was also like a magnet to the young activists emerging in schools, universities and workplaces eager to take part in the anti-war and related revolutionary movements.

Roy Baynes was elected to the position of Secretary of the ACS following Caust's death. Roy had been working as a seaman when China was Liberated in 1949, and his contacts with Chinese seamen developed in him a love for the New China. He had his legs severed below the knee in 1962 when a ship's cable snapped. "I'll lick this disability when I get my new legs," he told comrades, but the artificial limbs were often painful and he walked with difficulty.

Nevertheless, he was a tireless worker for friendship with China, making endless visits to schools and, after diplomatic relations had been established, to the airport to greet visiting Chinese delegations or hosting guests from the Chinese Embassy. (In 1971, Roy also brought together a group of 18 doctors, lawyers, specialists and physiotherapists to form an SA Limbless Association – something that was duly noted in his ASIO file.)

Testimony to his commitment to China was his response to a request from SA teachers in China for any books he could send in English. Getting books from libraries and private donations, he packed over 200,000 volumes into more than 100 tea chests, which were then loaded by ACS volunteers onto visiting Chinese cargo ships berthing at Pt Adelaide. Roy died in February 1983 just months after being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his work for Australia-China friendship. After Roy's death, his wife Muriel became secretary of the ACS (later ACFS -Australia China Friendship Society). Both were hard-working, loyal members of the Party.

Shirley Warton became Treasurer of the SA Branch in the early 1970s and also national treasurer. Her husband was shop steward at the Rubber Mills. Both were solid working class comrades.

Marj Johnston and her partner Jean Thompson were founding members of the ACFS. She and her brother Elliott had joined the CPA in 1941; Elliott remained with the CPA after the split, while Marj, an activist in the peace and women's movements, joined the CPA (M-L). She and Elliott attended the Second International Peace Conference at Sheffield, England in 1950. Returning by herself, but without a passport, she was allowed onshore at Fremantle only after union intervention. Back in Adelaide, she started a campaign to change "peace-lovers" into "peace-fighters". She was one of the founders of the New Theatre in Adelaide, at which plays with left-wing themes were performed. She was later awarded life membership of the ACFS.

### **Revolutionary surge**

An early group of activists had created the Student Worker Coordinating Committee (SWCC) and they readily accepted the political and ideological line of the CPA (M-L). As the Party's influence among young people grew, the SWCC became one of the founding organisations of the larger Worker-Student Alliance (WSA). This group soon became the most militant and most influential of various left groups active at the time.

The growth of the Party's influence on young people was rapid. They absorbed both the revolutionary spirit of Mao Zedong in the fight against revisionism and imperialism, and the CPA (M-L)'s revolutionary rejection of bourgeois trade unionism, New Leftism and parliamentarism.

Some, however, mistook the revolutionary surge as an actual revolutionary situation rather than as a stage in a developing revolutionary movement. When the Vietnamese people won their war against US aggression, and the war and conscription ceased to be driving forces motivating people's opposition to US imperialism



*SWCC around 1968-69*

and support for revolutionary work, some of those young people became disheartened and drifted away from the movement.

### **Working class – the leading force**

The youth movement against the war, and the fight for diplomatic recognition of China and interest in its socialist development, were not the only areas of CPA (M-L) influence. The new Party had carried with it at the time of the split, a number of CPA members active in areas such as industry, the wharves, education and construction. The latter two were also areas into which university students moved. Others moved into the car industry.

The State Secretary of the Builders Laborers' Federation (BLF), Les Robinson, and its organiser Ron Owens, were supporters of the Party. In October 1969 they had shown their support for the students protesting against the war by defying a United Trades and Labour Council (UTLC) ban at the official Labour Day procession, on the carrying of slogans attacking police brutality. Together with the students and other militant workers, they had marched as a large separate group.

In June 1970 they were both arrested on a site visit at the Modbury Hospital where they attempted to organise labourers into the union. Les was charged under the Road Traffic Act and



*Les Robinson*

Ron under the Police Offences Act and the Lottery and Gaming Act in a perverse use of laws never intended to prevent union organising. More significantly, both faced charges issued by the Chamber of Manufacturers of having breached orders made in the SA Industrial Commission that the union should stop hindering the business operations of certain building companies and three sub-contractors. This use of civil proceedings in an industrial dispute was a new ruling class tactic following the defeat of the penal powers of the Arbitration system in the great O'Shea struggle the previous year.

When the BLF officials sought the support of the UTLC, its acting secretary, J Calnan, wrote back denying that "the arrests were ordered by the construction companies...it cannot be said that the charges are in the nature of an industrial matter."

In court, further treachery was revealed when it was disclosed that the Australian Council of Trade Unions' (ACTU) Bob Hawke had been in secret negotiations with the UTLC, Collaroy Constructions, the Chamber of Manufacturers and the Australian Labor Party (ALP)-led Plasterers' Union (which claimed the labourers as their members) and had approved a strikebreaking proposal whereby a supervisor from the construction company would be enrolled as an FEDFA member (a union contesting coverage of crane drivers on construction sites) and placed on standby to operate the crane should the BLF member driving it walk off during a concrete pour.

*Vanguard* gave substantial coverage to Hawke's approval of strikebreakers against the BLF.

With their case on hold until September, Les and Ron demanded that the Trades and Labour Council change what had become a corporatised and class collaborationist Labour Day march by removing invitations to the Chamber of Manufacturers and other employer organisations, and by banning the use of vehicles carrying commercial advertising for business interests. The police band and the mounted police were not to take part. A teacher from the WSA was interviewed on a television current affairs program about the right of the group to join the march, which they did, again alongside the BLF.

When their court case resumed on September 9, Les spoke defiantly and refused to plead, saying:

The reason I am summonsed before this court is because I was arrested at the request of the boss and his accomplices. As a trade union official, I was carrying out the policy of my members, the branch and the federation in protecting my members' work.

My appearance in this court on an industrial matter is without precedent in SA and perhaps Australia.

Therefore, I refuse to enter a plea because I consider that this court is representative of the boss class and, as a working class leader, I can expect no justice from a bosses' court.

Les was fined \$20 with \$22.90 costs. Referring to the 1969 defeat of the penal powers in the O'Shea strikes, he said the court fine was "a new form of penal powers".

"It is the policy of the federation that we do not pay such fines and I will stick by that policy," he declared.

He was jailed for 22 days.

### **Bosses look for new penal powers**

The try-on in the capitalist courts emboldened the employers. They were desperate for new penal powers to replace those smashed in the O'Shea struggle in 1969. Again, they focused on the BLF. It was the most militant union in SA. After Les and Ron began recruiting members in 1967, they had grown the union from 300 to 3000 members. But the recruitment often involved picketing worksites and taking advantage of contradictions between competing employers and contractors.

In 1972, a dispute arose between the union and Adriatic Terrazzo and Foundation which went to the courts seeking an injunction against the union on the basis of another civil law, the law of torts. A tort is a harm or damage caused by the action of another person who, if found guilty, is liable to make good the harm or damage, typically by a payment to the successful claimant. It was intended to resolve matters between persons in the civil arena, not between unions and employers in the industrial arena.

Les and Ron refused to appear to answer the charges and instead concentrated on reestablishing picket lines broken up by police the previous day and strengthening those at Adriatic sites. Concrete deliveries to Adriatic sites were blocked. This was despite a director of Adriatic, Mario Candeloro, admitting in the Supreme Court that he had threatened to blow Robinson's head off with a shot-gun if concrete deliveries to the firm were stopped or the men were forced to join the union.

Having defied the court, Les and Ron were arrested within days and jailed indefinitely for contempt of court.

Les and Ron adopted an attitude of proletarian defiance and firm class resolve.

"I will stay in as long as is necessary to win this dispute" said Les. "I will not purge myself to the court unless it means we can win the dispute."

"By winning, I mean that Adriatic Terrazzo & Foundations Pty. Ltd. agree to employ union labor. I will settle for nothing else."

"This is the policy of our members and it is paramount that we uphold this policy, even if it means going to jail."

Ron agreed. "Nobody likes the thought of going to jail," he said. "However, I'm defending union principles and I'll stay inside indefinitely. I won't purge myself, either."

Although sent to jail, Les and Ron were heartened by support from prison officers who, at a meeting the previous week, declared unanimously that they would not process any union official arrested under the tort law. Non-processing of prisoners meant that they would not be documented, escorted, locked in a cell or supervised by the officers.

Further heartening support came from CPA (M-L) leaders Ted Hill, Clarrie O'Shea and Ted Bull, who sent a message of encouragement to them in jail.

The federal executive of the ABCEF (ie. BLF) also sent three Victorian comrades to assist the SA branch while Les and Ron were inside. Marco Masterson wrote in May 1973 that "1972 ended a year of great struggle by the Federation on many fronts: wages, and against the war in Vietnam, building Unionism and job improvements...But I feel our best effort was in South Australia."

While rank and file members kept up the struggle to free Les and Ron, the response from other sections of the union movement was less than satisfactory. Placing their hopes in an ALP win in the federal elections, they feared that the dispute would play into the hands of the conservatives. That hostility continued even after the Whitlam (ALP) win.

The so-called "progressive" Labor State Premier Don Dunstan led the attack. He claimed that Robinson was not prepared to negotiate and wanted to use his union to defeat a Labor

Government, both State and Federally. The Premier's statement had no word of criticism of Adriatic.

It was only after eight days of jail time that the UTLC met and decided to support the BLF on the principle of opposition to the use of tort in industrial disputes. A unanimous vote banned all Adriatic Terrazzo and Housing Industry Association work until the tort action was dropped and, on that basis, Les and Ron were then released from jail. Every member of the union in SA had been on strike, and a national stoppage by construction labourers was imminent.

However, the promised support from the UTLC failed to materialise. Dunstan was facing a state election in March and worked to cool things down. That left Les and Ron vulnerable to further attacks by the capitalist builders, and they were back in court again on February 13, 1973 where their union (now the Australian Building and Construction Workers Federation) was slapped with a permanent order banning it from "interfering with or threatening by illegal means the business of Adriatic Terrazzo and Foundation".

Industrial action had now been established as "illegal means".

Historian Humphrey McQueen concluded that the lack of action by the organised union movement in support of the ABCWF "opened the door for a strategic attack on the labour movement...What began as a try-on around Adelaide set a battle plan to disorganise labour" (McQueen, *We Built This Country* p. 226).

### **Other fronts of struggle open**

At the beginning of 1972, Charlie McCaffrey took out a two-year lease on premises in the ship-building city of Whyalla. A bookshop was opened but did not quite see out the lease given a shortage of comrades prepared to invest the time in managing the shop in a relatively remote regional community. Nevertheless, the initiative reflected the Party's desire to embed itself in

industrial communities. Whyalla remained a desirable place in which to build a base, and in 1976, the WSA paper *People's Voice* listed two post office contact boxes, one in Adelaide and one in Whyalla.

A new approach to mass work, spurred by publication of Hill's *Looking Backward, Looking Forward* and study of Mao Zedong's writings, encouraged workers and students to experiment with new forms of workplace organisation and struggle.

In particular, the old Party's focus on winning leadership positions in unions and using the bureaucracy of those organisations to somehow shift the workers in the direction of socialism, in an alliance with the ALP, was rejected. Leadership of unions by Communists was not bad in itself, but a narrow focus on it had tended to neglect the more important matter of organising and educating rank and file members at the point of production where their strength really lay.

In the early 1970s more and more workers had joined the WSA and the Party. This included Greek workers at the SA Rubber Mills following a prolonged dispute which WSA had supported with various fund-raising activities and a presence outside the factory gates. While some workers came into the Party from foundries, component manufacturers and other smaller factories, a simmering tension was brewing in the large car plants. Out in the north, General Motors-Holden employed thousands as did Chrysler in the south. In both plants, Party members encouraged rank and file organisation as a counter to the dead hand of car industry unions, and the Vehicle Builders Union (VBU) in particular.

Workers at the Chrysler plant at Tonsley Park, disillusioned with the pro-company stance of the VBU, had established a rank and file committee in late 1973. It brought out a regular newsletter advocating policies that were much more advanced than those of the union. The newsletter also ran editions in Greek and Italian so as to facilitate communication with, and bring

unity to, the multicultural workforce. In a big plant such as Chrysler, workers in one section often don't know what is happening elsewhere. The weekly newsheet was handed out at the factory gates, often by WSA student members. About 2,000 of these were handed out each week. Workers were informed of any stoppages, meetings and other struggles taking place. Any event, such as an accident, intimidation of workers by foremen, refusal by the company to pay workers' compensation, was printed, together with regular analyses of capitalism and of the Labor Party as a party of capitalism. The Rank and File gave workers at the plant an avenue through which to raise grievances against the company that could not be squashed by shop stewards controlled by and loyal to the VBU.

Whilst there was involvement of other left groups and militant individuals in the Rank and File, the predominant influence was that of the Worker Student Alliance and the CPA (M-L). By following the mass line, listening to workers and articulating their demands in a more politically focused manner, these comrades won the respect of workers throughout the plant.

In 1972, at the invitation of the Whitlam government, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had sent officers to Australia to compile a report on the Australian economy. The report was published in December 1972, with the main emphasis on the necessity for continuous economic growth, suggesting methods which, if successful, would not interfere with the employers' "prerogatives", their profits, but instead would be "advantageous to all parties concerned". They included a wage freeze ("wage indexation"), so-called "job enrichment" and "worker participation" projects, and liberalization of trade and tariff policies.

The Rank and File Committee at Chrysler saw the danger in all of this and gave VBU shop steward Will Heidt the task of analysing the report and drawing out its implications for workers. The result was a 60-page booklet, *Battle for Working Class Organisation on the Shop Floor – Against*

*the Labor Plan and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development*. It was published in 1974 by "a Chrysler shop steward on the basis of discussions in the Rank and File Study Group on Worker Participation". It was circulated well beyond Chrysler and alerted the bosses and the VBU to the fact that workers had brains and could use them.

The two car manufacturers in SA, General Motors Holden (GMH) and Chrysler, had not adapted particularly well to changing market demands for smaller cars. They had both introduced small car models but their focus was on larger and heavier six-cylinder models. Both companies flooded the market with cars that were not selling particularly well, leading to overproduction and stockpiling. The answer, as it always is under the anarchic market of capitalism, was to shift the burden of a declining rate of profit onto the backs of the workers. Sackings, speed-ups, getting fewer workers to do work previously done by more were commonly resorted to.

### **Peter van Arend**

By late 1974 and early 1975, workers had been in dispute with Chrysler over severance pay caused by the company's stated intention to retrench workers.

In the Arbitration court, Chrysler and the unions agreed there would be no sackings before the severance pay scheme had been finalized and agreed to by the workers.

On March 15, 1975, Peter van Arend and 50 other toolmaker workers were sacked by Chrysler. Peter refused to accept the sack and continued to report for work, overwhelmingly supported by workers in his own workshop, by shop stewards and workers in the press shop and throughout plant.

A decision on voluntary retrenchments was not given until the morning of Wednesday March 19, the day of the last stopwork meeting at Chrysler. The 50 toolmakers including van Arend had been sacked before a vote on the severance pay scheme had been taken.

A motion from the floor of a mass meeting instructing the VBU Executive to renegotiate the scheme and to implement the 32-hour week policy of the union was refused by the chair although carried by an overwhelming majority.

Peter van Arend was taken to court by the company and had an injunction placed on him ordering him not to enter the plant – he courageously ignored this. Then he was jailed for contempt until he agreed to purge his contempt and obey the injunction. He took a firm working class stand before the court, declaring that:

‘with all due respect to this court, I have been forced to take this stand because it is contrary to trade union principles to resolve industrial disputes in civil courts...the company is using this court to intimidate its workforce and the trade union movement...I am fully aware I am in breach of the bosses’ law. It is a travesty of justice that those equally guilty of breaking the law are not here before this court to face up to their actions.’

On April 18, Rank and File members and supporters held a demonstration outside Trades Hall. Shouts of ‘Free van Arend’, and ‘Bosses union bosses gaols’ greeted VBU officials as they arrived for a meeting. Abbott, president of the UTLC and state secretary of the VBU, was so shaken he had to enter the meeting with a bodyguard. Car workers blocked his entry and demanded action to support van Arend.

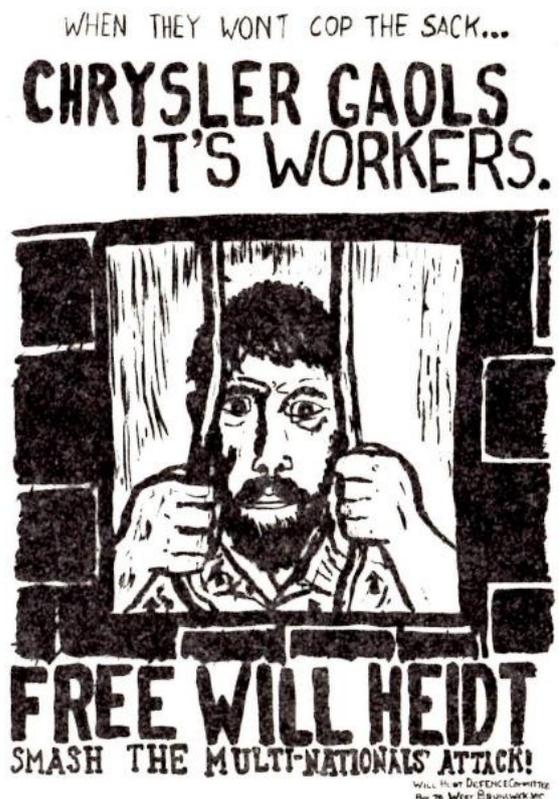
Despite van Arend’s gaoling involving a principle around which the whole union movement should have united (use of civil courts in industrial disputes), unions under the control of the ALP and the two revisionist parties were largely silent. On the other hand, unions led by CPA (M-L) supporters or their allies gave much-needed support. The Melbourne Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) placed a total ban on the handling of all Chrysler goods and contributed financially to help Peter’s wife and four children while he was in gaol. The BLF also organised support. In SA, the Plumbers and Gasfitters also gave financial support.

Although the state ALP government also opposed the use of civil courts in industrial disputes, Premier Don Dunstan was conspicuous by his lack of action. The VBU state secretary Abbott had been preselected for a safe Labor seat in the SA parliament. Five previous VBU secretaries had ended up in parliament. Rather than jeopardize their relationship with the big bosses, and the parliamentary career paths of their leaders, the VBU launched a furious attack on the Rank and File.

Van Arend was released on April 30 without having purged his contempt. He should have been a natural choice as a speaker on May Day; however, the ALP-controlled May Day Committee refused to have him as a speaker. Faced with their refusal, marchers brushed aside the ALP chairman and gave the microphone to van Arend who thanked supporters, said the ALP had failed the workers, and called for nationalisation of multinationals like Chrysler.

#### Will Heidt

Still plagued with overproduction, on October 17 1975 Chrysler sacked 230 workers and then tried



to get other workers to take on a greater workload.

Will Heidt and others refused to work a five-person job with four workers. The matter was referred to arbitration which recommended further union-company talks and a return to arbitration on December 5. Before this, Chrysler again tried to transfer a worker from Heidt's section on the Trim Line, which stopped work in protest. Heidt stopped the line pending the arrival of union officials, but was sacked.

Chrysler called in three security goons to remove Heidt, assaulting him in the process. The former Royal Dutch Marine fought back and was supported by hundreds of workers who forced the guards out. For defending himself, Will was charged with assault – there were no charges against the security thugs.

Within minutes, four cops arrived and tried to arrest Will. Hundreds of angry workers surrounded the cops and prevented them from taking Will out of the plant. The police, scared and humiliated, left.

At a mass meeting that afternoon, 2,000 workers demanded Will's immediate reinstatement, that he return to his section on the Trim Line, and condemned the use of police and security thug violence in an industrial dispute.

Later that day, Will and another Chrysler worker, Martin O'Malley (later state secretary of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union CFMEU) were attacked by police when entering a nearby hotel for a drink with worker supporters. The two were arrested and Will, as a reprisal for the humiliation police had suffered in the car factory, was viciously bashed. They appeared in court the following day, represented by student and worker supporters with a sign that said "Gaal bosses, not workers!" For defending himself at the factory, Will was charged with assault – there were no charges against the security thugs. However, no-one was there from the union to represent them. Their cases were adjourned.

For the next couple of weeks, Will played a game of cat and mouse with the police, making appearances at the factory and then disappearing into a network of safe houses. He was seized by police on January 29 1976, refused bail and remanded until February 16. On that date he was gaoled indefinitely for having violated a Supreme Court injunction forbidding him from entering Chrysler. The conditions for his release were that he agreed not to enter the plant and apologised to the court for violating the injunction. He refused to do this.

Will also faced four civil charges: two for assault and two for resisting arrest arising from the police and security thug attempts to remove him from the plant in November, when in accordance with union policy, he refused the sack and "sat-in" on the job.

In SA, the day after his arrest, workers refused to start work for three hours in protest against his violent sacking. On Saturday, February 1, supporters marched the one kilometre route from parliament house to Adelaide Gaol; this was repeated the next week, only it was a bigger and more militant demonstration with Chrysler workers shouting "Free Will Heidt" and "Gaal bosses not workers". Another march was held the following week.

As with van Arend, support for Will from the official trade union movement was minimal. Waterside workers in Melbourne donated money to his defence appeal and a meeting of 150 railway workers at Spencer St. Station voted to black-ban the handling of Chrysler cargo.

The NSW and Victorian branches of the BLF called for Will's immediate release and the Victorian branch set up a rank and file group to develop struggle in his support.

The Victorian branch of the VBU passed a motion calling for Will's immediate reinstatement and the dropping of all charges – members instructed their leadership to organise shop floor meetings and collections of money in a move that was very



*Supporters marching the one kilometre route from Parliament House to Adelaide Gaol in defence of Will Heidt, 1 February 1976*

embarrassing for the VBU in SA.

In SA, the VBU washed its hands of Will, saying that under their rules a worker who is dismissed by an employer is only kept on as a member for 6 more weeks. It told Will to accept the sack in violation of its own policy.

Will Heidt Defence Committees were established in Melbourne and Adelaide and did much good work.

The SA state ALP government of Don Dunstan did nothing to support Will Heidt although ALP policy was the same as Will's -to oppose police and civil court interference in industrial disputes. A combined unions delegation to the SA government met with Attorney-General Peter Duncan, probably the most 'left-wing' government minister, but nothing was achieved.

Heidt was eventually released from jail after 7 weeks on March 16, 1976. The court considered 7 weeks "sufficient" for Will to have purged his contempt. He had not apologized to the court

and made this clear on his release, saying he had not done so because he opposed police and civil court interference in an industrial dispute.

Despite the support of workers at Tonsley Park, Will was unable to win reinstatement. Not only was he banned from Chrysler, he was effectively black balled by other employers throughout Adelaide. But he did not surrender his politics and worked at the Bowden-Brompton Community Centre, a strongly working class part of Adelaide, with great success.

#### **Party base at Chrysler smashed**

The 1976 log of claims was a complete sell out by the VBU. At the July general meeting, VBU official Kevin "Shady" Lane admitted that "If we took the results of our negotiations to a mass meeting, we'd get lynched".

A July 26 combined meeting of Chrysler and GMH shop stewards voted in favour of holding a mass meeting two days later. These were intended to be joint unions meetings of the four unions with

coverage in the car industry, but the union leaderships kept their members at separate meetings.

Unlike the Chrysler plant, workers at GMH had not taken the Chrysler workers' path of establishing a rank and file committee because conditions were more favourable to working through the shop stewards, generally a more worker-oriented group than those of the VBU at Chrysler. By the time of the joint Chrysler-GMH shop stewards meeting, an Action Committee had been established to coordinate action between the Woodville and Elizabeth GMH plants. On August 5, the Action Committee initiated guerilla strikes in the Press Shop and Trim Fabrication at Elizabeth. GMH sacked workers in these plants.

The following day, shop stewards extended a "work to rule and work without enthusiasm" policy to other sections at Elizabeth. GMH stood down workers throughout the plant and on August 13 sacked 49 mechanics in the Vehicle Assembly Plant.

At Chrysler, thousands of workers rejected the VBU Executive's recommendation to accept the 1976 log of claims. Pat Meehan, VBU organiser and former president, took an inaccurate and damaging version of their motion to Chrysler bosses, giving them an excuse to stand workers down. When challenged, he said "I hope they all get stood down and the militants can get up before a mass meeting and explain why."

Despite this provocation from the union, VBU members banned overtime for seven weeks amidst a Chrysler threat that it would leave the state if militancy continued. VBU officials called a mass meeting on September 9 in an effort to lift the bans but were opposed by the majority of workers who challenged officials and left the meeting believing the bans were still on. The next day Dominic Foreman, VBU Secretary, told the capitalist press that the meeting had not been officially closed and that therefore it was up to the VBU Executive to decide on the bans. The VBU took up Fraser's demand for secret ballots on industrial action and the result, met with

skepticism and anger by Chrysler workers, was that the motion supporting the bans was narrowly lost in what later emerged in the Arbitration Commission to have been a union-rigged ballot.

It was not long before other companies sought to have secret ballots. September saw Adelaide Brighton Cement applying for a secret ballot clause in its award and referring directly to the Chrysler situation as a justification. The VBU had breached the dam and the anti-union floodwaters were pouring in.

Overproduction was again plaguing Chrysler. At the start of July 1977, Chrysler announced it would either stay on a five-day week and sack 850 workers, or go on a four-day week and sack 350. Workers, the company said, could "take their choice".

The VBU refused a call by hundreds of workers to convene a mass meeting and instead called in the shop stewards and told them to put the option of the four-day week to members at the plant. The higher officials were not prepared to front the workers.

The Rank and File newsletter called on workers to reject the four-day week, refuse all sackings and place black bans on the new model Galant and the movement of new cars from the Chrysler stockpile.

At a mass meeting on July 12, the VBU proposals were overwhelmingly rejected and motions supporting the Rank and File proposals passed. The motion also said that the bans could only be lifted by another mass meeting. When a VBU official tried to frustrate the passage of motions from the floor by leaving the meeting, he was dragged back by about 50 angry workers, pushed back onto the stage and told to run the meeting properly. The capitalist press described this as violence and a near riot by "extreme radicals" from what they always mis-named the "Student Worker Alliance".

On July 13, Michael Williss, a teacher member of WSA and the Party appeared on the TV current

affairs program *This Day Tonight* as a WSA spokesperson to effectively rebut claims by Dunstan and the union that WSA had infiltrated Chryslers with student radicals who bore most of the responsibility for “violence” and “extremism” at the plant.

About 100 members of the VBU attended a meeting at Trades Hall on July 14. Most were “loyalists” brought in from other workplaces and from amongst the pro-union shop stewards from Tonsley Park. Only about 20 Rank and File supporters attended and were outvoted. It was revealed that a VBU shop steward had eleven workers charged with assaulting the union official on July 12.

What was not revealed at this meeting of VBU members was that the officials had been colluding with the company to identify every known member and suspected supporter of the Rank and File to be included in the mass sacking being prepared for the following day. ASIO knew in advance of what was being prepared behind the members’ backs. A field officer report on the July 14 meeting included the following:

(Name redacted) has advised that persons alleged to have taken a leading role in events at Tonsley Park on 12 July (listed at Para 8 of ADL 742) will in all probability be dismissed by the company on 15 July 1977. The company is understood to have VBU backing for the proposed action to occur but expects WSA reprisals e.g. ‘sit-ins’ and demonstrations to occur. (This information is strictly non gratis and must remain so until the company publicly announces the dismissals.)

Not only did the VBU help the company compile the list of those to be sacked, it also broke the long-standing union policy of “last on, first off” in order to get some of the key Rank and File workers, who had been at the plant for up to eight years, sacked.

On Friday July 15 1977, near the end of the shift, Chrysler sacked 700 workers, including those specifically targeted as the Rank and File. The plant was brought to a halt as workers walked off the job. Ten cars in different areas were overturned and smashed. Racks of parts were tipped over and scattered about the floor, body panels waiting to go onto the line were smashed with hammers and tools thrown about the plant. Later a picket was placed on Chrysler’s spare parts division to prevent urgent spare parts from reaching Adelaide Airport in time for the plane.

Although the Rank and File newsletter continued to be produced and distributed within the Tonsley Park plant, and workers continued to fight over issues without VBU support, the core of the Rank and File organisation had been effectively smashed.

### **Party continues to lead**

The defeat suffered by the Rank and File did not dishearten CPA (M-L) members and supporters in other parts of the SA workforce.

At Elizabeth GMH, the Party had influence in the shop stewards committee and the Woodville-Elizabeth Action Committee. Our influence had grown over time and had to take into account the shop-floor popularity of established leaders like Ted Gnatenko, a Bulgarian migrant who had started with GMH at Woodville in in 1954 but had



*A comic from a rank and file publication of Chrysler workers at the time*

transferred to toolmaking and Elizabeth in 1963. In 1965 he became a shop steward and in 1970 the Senior Shop Steward for the Metal Workers at Elizabeth. His fluency in six languages endeared him to many of the 6000-strong multicultural workforce. Gnatenko was aligned with the Left Caucus which had grown out of cooperation between the CPA and left-leaning members of the ALP during the fight against the “groupers” of the Democratic Labor Party.

In 1969 the body shop (part of the Assembly Division of GMH Elizabeth) was occupied by mostly Italian workers. These workers would only allow Gnatenko (AMWU) senior shop steward to represent them having previously turned the fire hoses on security guards and Vehicle Builder’s Employees’ Federation (VBEF, ie. VBU) officials who tried to get them to leave.

In December 1970, GMH apprentices occupied the foyer of the administration block at Elizabeth to protest at the indifference shown to their complaints by their unions (Amalgamated Engineering Union, Australasian Society of Engineers, Electrical Trades Union) and GMH. The occupation lasted two hours and was repeated the following year on January 22 when 80 apprentices occupied the foyer for three hours.

It was within this workforce that our influence began to grow in the early 70s. We played a positive role in supporting Gnatenko when he was sacked in Christmas 1974 after chairing a mass meeting of all workers following a GMH decision to sack 1000 workers. We sought permission from GMH to have the meeting within the plant but this had been refused. Gnatenko convened the meeting anyway and was sacked. There followed nearly two years of legal argument in the Industrial Commission and the Supreme Court which resulted on 26 November 1976, with a judgement that found the dismissal unfair. Gnatenko was ordered to be reemployed to his former position as a toolmaker on terms not less favourable and payment of any loss of wages he had suffered in the interim.

In September 1976, two shop stewards, Les Bowling and Brian Noone, were suspended from

office for one year by the VBU. Bowling had worked in several factories before starting at GMH and had been a member of the SWCC. The union had recommended that the shop stewards committee lift an overtime ban and a “work to rule”. Bowling and Noone were obliged to put the motion to members in their sections but did so without a great deal of enthusiasm, and the workers rejected the recommendation. The VBU decided that the two shop stewards needed to be disciplined.

The following day, GMH gave Noone and Bowling notice that they were to be transferred out of the Vehicle Assembly Plant (VAP). Workers reacted angrily at both the VBU demotion and the GMH transfer and forced both the VBU and GMH to back off. Noone and Bowling were reinstated as shop stewards by the VBU in the VAP.

Not to be outdone, the VBU Executive again suspended Les and Brian from office under a rule of their federal body. The second attempt to get rid of these two shop stewards met with even greater opposition from the shop stewards committee and the workers, and so the VBU backed down and, on 17 October, reinstated them for a second time.

However, shop floor activism resurfaced in mid-1978 over the log of claims. There were reports in the capitalist press alleging sabotage on the line. Workers were in a defiant mood, with anger directed at both the union and the company. According to the VBEF minutes:

Shop stewards called a meeting (9.8.1978) of their members to deal with matters arising out of the Log of Claims, and that L. Bowling, C. Sweeney and B. Noone had led a march of members into the Administration Block at Elizabeth – this action led to the dismissal of L. Bowling and Sweeney – and B. Noone receiving a final warning on Thursday morning.

The VBEF refused, at heated meetings of shop stewards and activists, to support Bowling and Sweeney, denying them any financial assistance to pursue claims of unfair dismissal based on

Gnatenko's precedent, on the grounds that the two shop stewards may have "been engaged in illegal activities" (VBEF General Minutes, 16.8.1978).

Meanwhile, the traditional Labour Day march had degenerated into little more than an excuse for Labor and ACTU leaders to play at being "heroes of the working class", with their clear message being that all problems would be solved with the election of Labor governments. On October 9, 1977 less than 400 people gathered to take part in the march. Many of those were supporters of WSA, carrying Eureka flags and marching with Chrysler workers. The latter carried a banner reading "Secret Ballot – Bosses Weapon – Chrysler says 2,530 workers; VBU officials say 3,117 votes". At one stage, this group was attacked by ALP officials and police who tried to rip up the banner. Hawke and other bigwigs had to cancel their planned speeches at Tarntanyangga (Victoria Square) and headed off to the bar of Trades Hall on South Terrace, half a mile away.

### **Worker Student Alliance**

Reference was made earlier in this article to the Student Worker Coordinating Committee (SWCC). This group of about ten young people, formed around 1967-68, were the first young people to support (and some to join) the Party. They were also amongst the first to offer an alternative to pacifism and Labor Party domination of the Campaign for Peace in Vietnam (CPV). They carried banners calling for "Victory to the Viet Cong" and denouncing imperialism and its war. They carried flags of South Vietnam's National Liberation Front.

In 1970, groups taking an anti-imperialist line within the anti-war movement created an umbrella group called the Adelaide Revolutionary Socialists (ARS). The groups included the SWCC, Adelaide University's Students for Democratic Action (SDA), a Flinders University group the Flinders Revolutionary Socialists, Secondary Students for Social Action and an anarchist group, Provo.

SDA had been formed in 1968 to oppose the state Liberal government's electoral gerrymander. Its two main leaders were Peter O'Brien and Rob Durbridge. Both were critical of the ALP as well as the Liberals, but from a New Left perspective which elevated the student movement above that of the working class which was derided as, at best, unable to break through the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie, and at worst, simply racist and backward.

From the beginning of 1970, editorial responsibility for the SDA's *Grass Roots* newsletter, now in its third year of publication, was split between the New Left and supporters of the Party, with each group taking turns to edit an issue.

The first real test of strength for the anti-imperialists within the anti-war movement, was a demonstration against US imperialism and the Vietnam War called for late in the afternoon of Friday May 8, the day before the first Moratorium march.

Durbridge was instrumental, with ourselves, in these arrangements, made at the meeting place of the Adelaide Revolutionary Socialists. The ARS had attended meetings of the newly-formed Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC) but had not yet been able to challenge the influence of the ALP, CPV and CPA over the VMC. The aim of the ARS demonstration was to support the slogans "Victory for the Viet Cong", "Support the NLF" and "Smash US imperialism".

At 4.30pm on Friday May 8, 1970, some four thousand students and others marched out of Adelaide University and up the 'Ho Chi Minh Trail' (Gawler Place to Rundle Street, left into King William Street, left into Pirie Street and on to the march's conclusion in Tarntanyangga). There were anti-imperialist placards, red flags and NLF flags. As the marchers turned into King William Street, they were attacked by about twenty drunk conscripts from the Woodside army base. These thugs bashed whoever was in the way between themselves and the NLF flags, some of which they successfully seized and burned. The

marchers tried fighting back, but the police intervened, arresting some of the young soldiers. A few went to trial but some had been released from paddy wagons on North Terrace and told to get back to base.

Between the first May Moratorium and the second one in September lay July 4, US Independence Day. The ARS decided to hold another anti-imperialist rally on that day. The march set off along the 'Ho Chi Minh Trail' but was attacked by police. A comrade was arrested outside the Town Hall and placed in a paddy wagon. The marchers rocked the paddy wagon back and forth but couldn't free him. Relations with the cops continued to deteriorate, and once the marchers were back behind the sanctuary walls of Adelaide Uni, a number vented their frustration by throwing stones at the cops.

The following night, at a meeting of the ARS, a split developed, with Durbridge and his supporters criticising attempts to free the comrade from the divvy van and the rock throwing at Adelaide Uni. Durbridge threatened to leave the Alliance if it continued the way it was going.

The more militant section of ARS reconstituted itself as the Radical Alliance of Students and Workers on 8 July 1970 and criticised Durbridge. *Grass Roots*, organ of SDA at Adelaide Uni, ruptured, with Vol 3 no 24 prepared by Durbridge attacking the "hard line faction of the Radical Alliance", and the Marxist-Leninists replying in the next issue under the heading "The proletarian revolution and the renegade Durbridge".

Despite the split, there was still tactical cooperation between the various groups. On 24 July anti-imperialists met to prepare for the Sept 18 Moratorium. It was agreed that an anti-imperialist leaflet would be drafted by Jim Moss (CPA), Durbridge (New Left) and Mike Williss (a Marxist-Leninist) representing the three main ideological trends.

At a meeting on 16 August, it was announced that the Worker-Student Alliance had replaced the ARS. Durbridge and his group were members

initially. On 13 September, WSA discussed a proposal by Durbridge for a student strike at Adelaide Uni the day before the Moratorium on Sept 18. Plans for blockading the intersection of King William and Rundle Streets and holding a street theatre were announced.

The September 18 Moratorium closed down the King William Street and North Tce intersection in a change of plans decided by Brian Medlin and a couple of others in the leadership of the VMC. Brian, Lynn Arnold (later Labor Premier) and Greg O'Hair explained to those in the front line what to do when the march got to the intersection. The change of plan caught the police off guard, and they hurried to break up the occupation, moving police horses into the demonstrators' ranks.

As police moved in, a substance like tear gas affected part of the crowd and it was widely believed that the police were using it as they made arrests. It later transpired that chloropicrin, a tear gas-like substance manufactured for use in WW1 as a poison gas, had been brought and released by a demonstrator. At subsequent meetings of WSA, Durbridge and others demanded that this person confess to his role and hand himself in to the police. Although the Marxist-Leninists didn't support the action of releasing the gas, we opposed Durbridge. Durbridge left WSA after this.

WSA continued to grow and received a certain notoriety thanks to the capitalist press. This rebounded to WSA's advantage as groups of workers engaged in struggle sought its support. In 1971, for example, a phone call was put through to WSA members at Adelaide University. The caller wanted WSA to "get down here quick – there's a revolution going on!" The caller was the owner of a delicatessen, many of whose customers were workers from the nearby Council depot. When WSA members met the striking workers, they were immediately accepted as comrades and helped organise placards and flags for a 2-kilometre march to the Council offices. On other occasions, WSA members supported actions by the BLF and by striking workers at the SA Rubber Mills.

The alliance between workers tired of being told to leave everything up to the union – and through it – to the ALP, and students seeking to implement the Party’s policy of integrating with the working class clearly eclipsed the campus influence of supporters of the New Left.

Of the two founding members of SDA, O’Brien had moved interstate in 1969. In 1971 Durbridge was active in an anarchist movement on campus symbolized by a cartoon character, Rufus, who toyed with revolution and dope-smoking. At a meeting of the July 4 organising committee in 1970, he had produced a leaflet titled “The Communist Party is behind the anti-war movement – a long way behind!”, reflecting general anti-imperialist attitudes towards the revisionists in the old Party. However, in 1972, he joined the Communist Party of Australia, reinforcing its Eurocommunist revisionist wing (the Aarons clique) and represented the CPA along with Mark and Bernie Taft in the 1982 joint discussion between the CPA and CPA (M-L). In 1991 he supported the dissolution of the CPA and became a founder of the social-democratic Search Foundation. Peter O’Brien worked for a time as ministerial adviser to SA Attorney-General Peter Duncan in the Dunstan government but succumbed to heroin and other illnesses.

During 1973 and 1974, Marxist-Leninists continued to provide leadership to the WSA whose numbers now reached more than a hundred committed activists. General meetings were lively affairs where issues were thrashed out in a comradely fashion. The Party encouraged women to take leading roles, disciplining and removing from membership two males who consistently berated women comrades in reference to their sexuality and their bodies, and promoted the involvement of workers from migrant backgrounds.

### **Flinders Occupation**

The Marxist-Leninist influence at Adelaide University was quite open, with our comrades after breaking from Durbridge and the New Left, setting themselves up as SDA (M-L)! But the

Party’s influence among the student left at Flinders was no less strong, and in time came to be quite decisive.

This was certainly evident during the occupation of Flinders University. What began as action by History students against the examination system turned into an occupation of the Registry building where Vice-Chancellor Russell had his office. Investigating Russell’s background, students discovered that he had been involved in research for the American war machine and had been a consultant for the CIA. They threatened to open the VC’s office files, one per week, until their demands were met. The files, once opened, revealed the extent to which Vice Chancellor Russell’s research had been related to military and intelligence agencies and indeed some suggestion that there had been involvement or supportive research for chemical and biological warfare.

The university counter-attacked and had the students cleared from the Registry. However, Flinders students returned to the university and reclaimed the Registry. Police were called in. A number of students were detained but no formal arrests were made. The University no doubt considered it too risky to invite the close examination that court procedure could involve. In fact, the university administration implemented court proceedings to prevent publication of the material that students had ‘illegally’ accessed. Instead, they implemented their own disciplinary action, expelling several students, suspending and disciplining others.

Not only did the Occupation take an anti-imperialist stand, but it also cemented the role and influence of women within WSA and the Party. Their courageous action and decisive leadership at the height of the Occupation saw the influence of women on Party work develop substantially.

It was not only among the students that the Party was influential. In the Philosophy Department were outstanding opponents of US imperialist aggression in Vietnam such as Brian Medlin and Greg O’Hair, both of whom had leading positions

in the VMC. One of the iconic photos of the Moratoriums in Adelaide was that of a spread-eagled Medlin being arrested by group of police. He and O'Hair refused to appear before the Royal Commission into the September 18 Moratorium.

It was Medlin and O'Hair and those others influenced by the Party that the Royal Commissioner had in mind when he described the line of demarcation between the militant and reformist wings of the anti-war movement. He wrote:

One "radical" position on Vietnam was that the United States is a powerful and aggressive nation which seeks to exert power throughout the world wherever the exercise of or ability to exert power is considered by its own rulers to be beneficial to its own interests. The power may be political, military or financial. The initial entry of the United States into Vietnam and its subsequent actions there, although disguised as being support and aid for an existing government in office there, are in reality according to this view merely an exercise of "imperialist" power of the United States in that country.

A more moderate view does not accept the "imperialist" argument, but regards the entry of the United States into Vietnam as a tragic mistake, and its subsequent actions as attempts to overcome that mistake without too much loss of face. The initial military action of the United States was, in the view of many, illegal as well as immoral.

At Flinders Medlin set up a democratic Staff-Student Consultative Committee within the Philosophy Department and introduced the first Women's Studies course in Australia. In 1974-5, he taught a course in Politics in Art which was much influenced by Mao Zedong's *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*. Among the students were John Schumann, Michael Atkinson and Verity Truman who formed political folk band Redgum, trying to apply the essence of Mao's teachings in an Australian context. The Party's

focus on class and anti-imperialist independence was reflected in many of the band's lyrics. They played at WSA's Eureka Dances and at fundraisers for WSA branches such as the Teachers Action Group. An "underground recording" of their music was made at Australian Broadcasting Corporation studios in Adelaide by Darce Cassidy. The tapes became popular on campuses across Australia and on independent radio. From there they became one of the most popular bands associated with anti-imperialism and a progressive, working class Australian culture.

### **People's Voice**

An important initiative at this time was the publication of the WSA monthly paper *People's Voice*, beginning in April 1975. Coincidentally, it began just as the Peter van Arend struggle was breaking out at Chrysler and made the details of that struggle and the role of the Rank and File available to workers across Adelaide. It was sold at factories and was soon being approached by workers with stories to tell of speed-ups, victimisation, sackings and sell-outs by Labor-controlled unions.

*People's Voice* ran regular articles exposing wage indexation and inflation and the Hawke-ALP wage freeze, the housing crisis and working women's demands. By March 1976, and to keep up with the demand for progressive information, it changed to a fortnightly publication. This was in the wake of the twin dismissals of Whitlam (at the behest of the CIA) and Heidt (at the behest of Chrysler).

Its first fortnightly edition publicised the arrest of the Storemen and Packers' state secretary George Apap at a sit-in of the city offices of woolbrokers Elder Smith-Goldsborough Mort. They had just sacked 400 employees at the Port Adelaide wool stores and those workers were sitting-in and refusing the sack.

The very next issue reported the release of Will Heidt from Adelaide Gaol. The paper continued through to 1979, by which time WSA had changed its name to Worker Student Alliance for Australian Independence, a clumsy and

unnecessary name change but one which corresponded with a much greater focus within the Party on Australian independence as the “first stage” of a two-stage struggle for socialism.

Among the WSA aligned mass organisations promoted by People’s Voice were the Australian Cultural Association which criticised US cultural imperialism and promoted progressive Australian culture at its dances and on its weekly Independence Voice radio show on 5UV. Also aligned with WSA was the Progressive Art Movement, a collective of visual artists including Annie Newmarch, Christine McCarthy, Jim Cane (CPA), Bob Boyne and Pamela Harris. They held anti-war exhibitions, created a series of great screen print posters, and street murals.

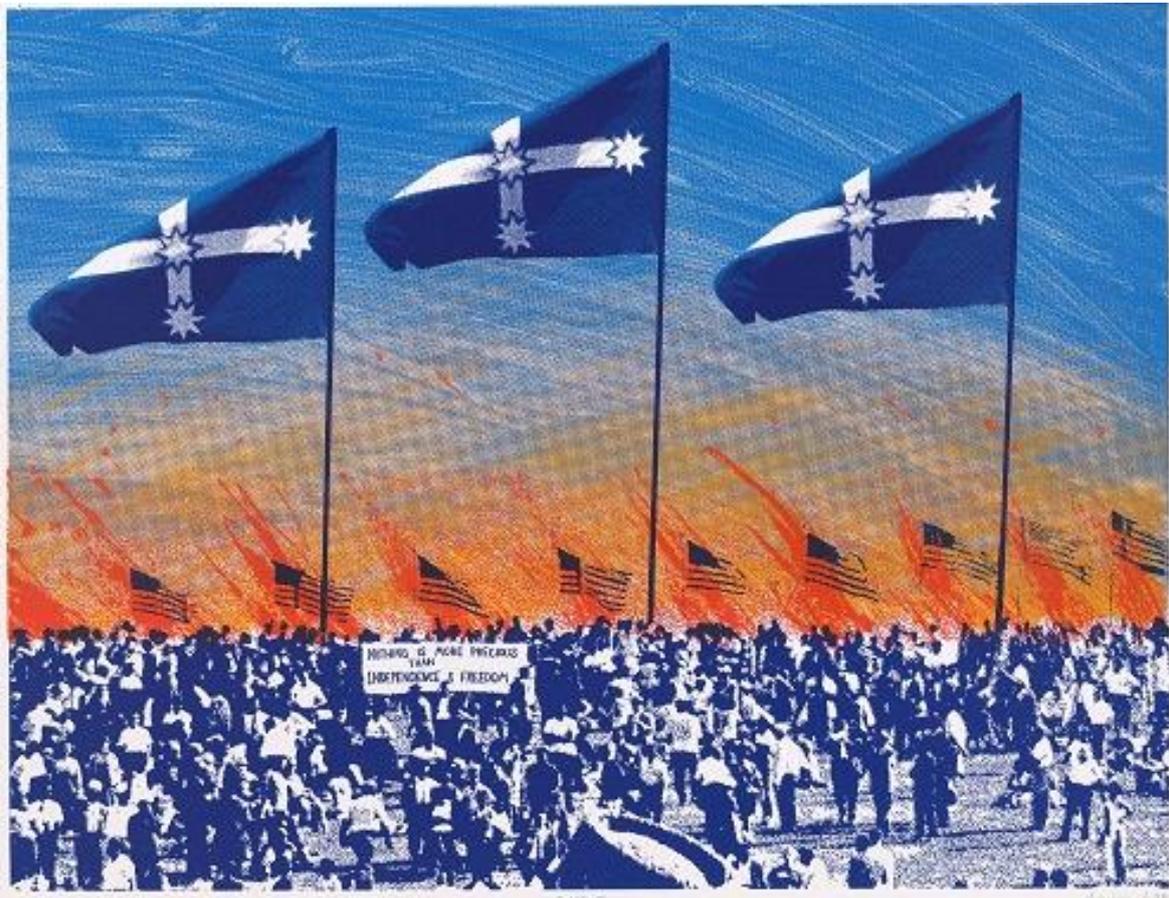
### **White collars and blue collars**

The Party’s real strength in the 70s and 80s was in blue collar industries. The car industry and construction have been mentioned, but there

were also comrades in foundries and parts manufacturing and other traditional workplaces.

This did not mean that white collar professions were ignored. Some Party members became lawyers and others entered teaching and the public service.

The teachers’ union in SA at this time was the SA Institute of Teachers (SAIT) (later the Australian Education Union (AEU)). It had been under the control of headmasters who occupied its leadership. It rejected industrial action, claiming to be more of a professional association than a union. In 1973-4, WSA set up a sub-branch for teachers and trainee teachers, called the Teachers Action Group (TAG). TAG had an active membership of 25-30 and its own publication, *Blackboard*. It depicted the SAIT leaders as holding back the members. This had come to a head in 1979 when teachers had voted for strike action, only to have the Rules amended to



*Annie Newmarch's Sunrise – a example of the art produced by the Progressive Art Movement*

require a 2/3 majority (the strike vote had reached a simple majority).

After 1975, a loose coalition of Party/WSA and CPA-aligned activists made headway against the conservatives, winning support for policies at SAIT Branch Council meetings. Although there were some differences between our supporters and those of the CPA, as well as non-aligned progressive teachers, Party members worked as part of a coalition of progressives and did not display sectarianism or try to take over the progressive group. The Party/WSA members succeeded in winning the leadership of the major SAIT affiliate, the High School Teachers Association (HSTA) and built up their influence in the Primary Teachers Association as well.

By 1979, they had decided to directly challenge the conservative leadership, running as Vice-President Mike Williss, who had been active on the Salaries Committee and headed the HSTA, but whose long hair and beard (and female Vice-Presidential partner with only one name!) was still a little too radical for the conservative profession. However, the voice of classroom teachers was being heard, and in the next elections, the conservatives effectively handed the Presidency to a politically conservative, but not reactionary candidate, and the male Vice-Presidency was won by a TAG-nominated classroom teacher.

Once the progressive classroom teacher element had shown it could succeed against the conservatives, it proceeded to change the rules regarding holding office. Influenced by Party policy (in turn influenced by China's Cultural Revolution), TAG argued that there should be time limits on holding elected positions. In China, cadres had been required to vacate their offices and go and work alongside the workers and peasants for extended periods of time to remould their class outlook and keep them oriented towards the proletariat and serving the people. In Australia we were also influenced by Hill's *Looking Backward, Looking Forward* which rejected trade unionism as a bourgeois ideology and criticised the old Party's prioritising of the

winning of elected leadership positions in trade unions at the expense of developing strength amongst the rank and file.

At the time that TAG won the change to a limit on two consecutive two-year terms of office, there seemed like an endless supply of rank and file teachers to draw on for rotations at the leadership level of the AEU. In the 2000s the rule was relaxed to allow 6 years, instead of four, before having to vacate an elected leadership position.

A lasting legacy of our influence within what was later called the Progressive Educators group within the AEU has been the commitment to refuse affiliation with the ALP or any other parliamentary party. It is still the view of this group that teachers and other education workers must maintain an independent capacity to fight for public education regardless of which party holds office.

One thing that was easier to achieve in a union with hundreds of workplaces than it had been in the big factories such as Chrysler and GMH was operating several lines of activists – some in the forefront and some based in schools. Had the Chrysler Rank and File been a bit more strategic about this, it may have been able to prevent the VBU and Chrysler from completely smashing the Rank and File through a mass sacking.

This circumstance within the teacher workforce was made use of when Enterprise Bargaining was introduced for the first time. It was conducted across the entire workforce (which had been enlarged to include all education workers with new classifications for Aboriginal Education Workers, School Support Officers (SSOs) and seconded teachers working in the Department or in specialised areas like music and swimming).

A requirement of Enterprise Bargaining was that all employees be represented with the employer in a Single Bargaining Centre (SBC). This meant that an organisation representing tens of thousands of workers would have a single vote alongside any non-union employee who wished to represent him- or herself, or any small union

with joint coverage of part of the workforce (as the Public Service Association (PSA) did with SSOs).

School-based comrade, Mike Williss, decided to try and mobilise the mass of teachers to neutralise the SBC as an anti-union platform and put out a call for teachers to attend the SBC and register to represent themselves. Of course, this group of initially around 20 AEU members (later 60-70) were all solidly loyal to the AEU and worked with its industrial team throughout the negotiations. The comrade had a method of intercepting Departmental faxes to schools and was able, with others, to write and fax out answering communications through the night, so that the next morning the principals found that Departmental information was analysed and answered by good information in the hands of each school's AEU rep. As the strength and understanding of the rank and file teacher attendees at the SBC grew, meetings of the SBC took on an increasingly fiery and militant tenor and they were able to vote the Departmental CEO out of the Chair of the SBC and replace him with the comrade who had begun the campaign. Much to the Department's outrage, the SA Industrial Commission ordered that this comrade be put on paid release from his school and given access to Departmental fax machines and phones to carry out his duties as Chair of the SBC.

The SBC campaign was a mix of underground work (clandestinely intercepting Departmental correspondence and getting out answers to it), and open reliance on those union members prepared to struggle and win. The Department chose not to revive the SBC in the next round of Enterprise Bargaining, and when it attempted in the third round to reopen the SBC under one of its own choices of Chair, was sharply reminded by teachers who responded to this provocation that the previous Chair still occupied the position and voted for him to take over the meeting which he did, closing down the SBC for the final time.

### **US Bases get the nod...**

The memory of British imperialist crimes in the SA Outback (testing of atom bombs on the lands of

the Maralinga Tjarutja) was still a festering sore when the US spy bases at Narrungar in SA and Pine Gap in the NT became operative in 1969 and 1970 respectively. The Party strongly opposed the bases which had as part of their mandate to spy on People's China and rejected claims to their being "joint US-Australian facilities".

When the US proposed to erect an Omega navigation tower in 1973 to facilitate its global military communications, WSA in Victoria raised the issue and established a Stop Omega Committee. Michael Williss convened a meeting to establish a similar committee in Adelaide. The move was supported by a cross-section of the community and the following organisations were the first to sign on: the Australia Party, the ABCWF, the Uniroyal (ex-SA Rubber Mills) Shop Stewards Committee, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the CPA and WSA.

In early 1974, the Stop Omega Campaign endorsed a Victorian proposal for a convoy of buses to take anti-base protesters to the US facility at North West Cape in WA where transmission towers allowed the imperialists to communicate underwater at appreciable depths to their nuclear submarines. The base had been opened in 1967 when US Ambassador Ed Clark presented Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt a single peppercorn for the rental of the land on which the facility was located.

The prospect of a theatrical return of the peppercorn to the US base commander and an attempted reclamation of the land for Australia, worried the authorities. When the matter was raised at the February general meeting of the Australia China Society, the 40 members present included four separate ASIO field officers who each filed their own report on the meeting. The ACS was requested to support the "Long March" to North West Cape in defence of China which was targeted by the US nuclear submarine fleet.

By the time of the next monthly meeting of the ACS, its AGM, the Stop Omega Campaign had been renamed as the Campaign Against Foreign Military Bases in Australia (CAFMB) and again,



four ASIO field officers filed reports on the other 24 members present as they approved financial support for the "Long March". Bob Creek, the EWS worker and former patient of Dr David Caust, was selected as an ACS representative on the trip.

In the lead-up to the departure of buses for North West Cape, demonstrations of around 70 members and supporters of CAFMBA were held outside the US Consulate and defence contractor Lytton Industries.

The Long March to North West Cape was a major success, with street theatre, rallies and distribution of leaflets conducted at each stop along the way. The WA police found every opportunity to harass and attack demonstrators and were subject to much criticism for removing their police identity badges before each attack. The core leaders of the protest were all aligned with the CPA (M-L) and WSA.

Despite the success of the CAFMBA, North West Cape is still in existence. All US Naval personnel were removed in 1993. It is currently operated under a contract by US missile manufacturer Raytheon.

The BLF (and its later changes in name) continued to be a welcoming place for communists to gain

employment through in the construction industry, or in as an organiser. Peter O'Dea had worked as a barman for seven years when he first came into contact with WSA members drinking at his pub.

"I can safely say that in the whole seven years that I was a barman," he later said, "I never saw anybody associated with the union. It was purely a transaction which the employer organised and I just paid. My first real exposure to strong trade unionism was the Builders Labourers Federation. I got retrenched as a barman and someone got me a job as a builder's labourer and I was absolutely stunned at the level of organisation that was there."

That was in 1973. A couple of years later, O'Dea was put on as acting state secretary when Secretary Ron Owens was sent by the federal management committee to assist with the federal takeover of the NSW branch. When the intervention in NSW was completed, O'Dea was sent to Canberra as a federal organiser in 1976, as part of the federal intervention into the ACT branch of the BLF caused by an attempted takeover of its membership there by the Building Workers' Industrial Union. Joining O'Dea in the ACT were SA builders' labourers Rob Sinclair, Renee van Dalen and Les Bowling, the latter having gone into construction after losing his job at GMH.

O'Dea brought to unionism in the ACT a new militancy and activism beyond the immediate workplace, and encouraged the union to take up the cause of both the Aboriginal Embassy and the revolutionary core of South African opposition to apartheid – the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania. However, differences arose between O'Dea and Gallagher, and whilst the Party was correct to avoid interfering in the internal affairs of unions, it failed to properly handle contradictions between its own members in this union, and losses occurred.

The BLF (or ABCWF, and now the CFMMEU) was always going to come under the bosses' attack. The investors looking for quick profits from new

buildings, bridges and other infrastructure are indifferent to the injuries and deaths in this industry and do not tolerate militant unionism at the workplace.

Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser called a Royal Commission into the activities of the Australian Building Construction Employees' and Builders Labourers' Federation (1981–1982). Fraser wanted the BLF deregistered and its members absorbed into the tradesmen's union, the BWIU, under the pro-Soviet revisionist Pat Clancy.

Called before the Commission, Ron Owens again took a principled working class stand, declaring:

At the direction of my union and of my conscience I refuse to answer any questions put to me. We consider this Commission a further indication of the Australian Government's drastic moves to the right and to hide behind all guises to try to hoodwink the Australian people from the knowledge of the disastrous economic situation they have plunged this country into.

My union colleagues before me have told this Royal Commission how you people are bleeding the taxpayers of thousands of dollars a day while the poor and underprivileged of this country hunt through garbage bins and soup kitchens to exist so it would be senseless for me to try and dent your conscience as you would not have these jobs if you had feelings for the working class of this country.

I can assure your bosses, the Fraser Government and the multinationals that they can no longer hide behind these puny diversions as the workers see the attack on the Builders Labourers as an attack on all genuine union leadership and it will be resisted as Hitler's kangaroo courts were resisted and he too had his puppets so I say to you if you have any respect for the rule of democracy and law you should

disassociate yourselves from this contemptible farce.

### **Australian Independence Movement**

In the early 1980s, WSA for Australian Independence morphed into the Australian Independence Movement (AIM). The AIM inherited WSA's great track record of putting into effect the leadership of the Party in a mass organisation with which it had no formal links simply through the persuasive abilities of Party members and supporters.

In its first year, 1982, AIM opened a shop in the city in the name of the Australian Cultural Association, one of the groups that had operated under the WSA umbrella. The East Bookshop was still being run by the McCaffreys as an outlet for Chinese books and magazines, Marxist-Leninist classics and Party publications. The ACA shop stocked only progressive and anti-imperialist Australian content. An ACA Women's Group arranged activities such as a concert by Sydney's Judy Small, whose first album, *A Natural Selection*, was being sold in the shop.

One of the driving forces in the ACA was its President, BLF organiser Allen Harris. He gave drive and energy to the ACA/AIM through its *Independence Newsletter* and its support for bush dances and the annual National Folk Festival, Renewables Fairs (opposing the fossil fuel industries) and for the regular appearance, to the delight of children, of a Eureka flag carrying Blinky Bill.

When striking Woodville GMH tradesmen approached AIM in 1983 and asked for a Eureka flag, they were also given a banner with the words "Support GMH workers". These were placed in the middle of busy Port Road which went past the Woodville plant. As a result, people driving past honked their horns and support came from the Mayor of Woodville and from local bakeries and supermarkets. However, the ACTU's Hawke was now PM, and at the head of a Labor Government he had called a National Economic Summit of bosses and unions, and he

had made thinly veiled threats against unions that were tempted to “step out of line” and pursue their members’ independent agenda. Support for the GMH workers from other unions slowly faded away, and they were left to deal with the consequences of the shift to the “World Car” by themselves.

AIM/ACA continued to do good work through until around 1986 when the momentum began to dissipate.

### **Relations with the CPA and others**

1982 saw the first of several exchanges between our Party and others. Charlie McCaffrey had joined Ted Hill in discussions with the CPA, the latter including Rob Durbridge. The outcome was a four-page supplement to which each of the CPA, CPA (M-L), SPA, and SWP contributed a page. It was carried in each of the parties’ papers.

Further talks between the various left parties and organisations occurred in December 1984 and January 1985. We did not believe that there could be a reconciliation between revisionism and Marxism-Leninism, but where the interests of the working class required joint activity and cooperation, we pushed for it.

Despite the dissolution of the CPA in 1991, the discussions which had taken place between the parties had ongoing value.

One important practical outcome of the discussions between the parties was the relative ease with which the labourers’ union (largely under the influence of our Party) and the craft union (largely under the influence of the SPA and its rebadging as the CPA in 1996) were able to combine into one construction union. In the late 1980s, the Builders Labourers’ Federation was deregistered by the Labor Government. In the early 1990s agreement was reached on an incorporation of the remnants of the BLF with the BWIU in a new union, the CFMEU. In Victoria this process was led by our comrade John Cummins who became the new union’s Federal President and was President of the Victorian branch until his death in 2006. In South Australia, a

remarkably respectful and mutually supportive relationship between our comrade Martin O’Malley (BLF) and the SPA/CPA’s Bennie Carslake (BWIU) saw the CFMEU take its rightful place as the union for all construction workers.

This was of great benefit when the Howard government set up its “special cop on the beat”, the Australian Building Construction Commission (ABCC) to again try and smash the construction workers’ union. Howard’s “Work Choices’ legislation extended the threat of individual contracts and loss of rights to all workers.

The first try-on came with charges against Victorian CFMEU organiser Noel Washington. In June 2008 he was charged by the ABCC over incidents on job sites the previous year. At the time the charges were laid, Rudd had become Labor Prime Minister and Julia Gillard his Workplace Relations Minister. Washington faced 6 months jail if convicted. Neither Rudd nor Gillard did anything to stop the use of Howard’s attack dog, the ABCC. Gillard lamely muttered that she “couldn’t comment on a case before the courts”.

With the CFMEU needing support, a committee to prepare for setting up an SA branch of Victoria’s Spirit of Eureka organisation organised a sausage sizzle and showing of a Filipino film about the killing by police of seven striking workers at the Hacienda Luisita plantation in the Philippines. It was both an act of solidarity with the Filipinos, and also a call to defend workers’ rights at work in SA. Held at the Australian Education Union, there were five speakers:

- Martin O’Malley, State Secretary, CFMEU on the building bosses’ watchdog, the Australian Building and Construction Commission
- Chris Field, Assistant State Secretary, LHMU, on the CleanStart campaign for low paid workers.
- Wayne Hanson, State Secretary, AWU, on fighting back over the WorkCover cuts.

- Karrangal John Hartley, Aboriginal activist, on the NT intervention and the unpaid wages campaign

- Janet Giles, State Secretary, SA Unions, on YRAW and the Labor Party

Washington's charges were subsequently dropped in December because the ABCC didn't give proper regard to procedure. But the need for an organisation to keep alive the rebellious and democratic spirit of the 1854 Eureka rebellion, and to use in current circumstances the rebel's oath to "defend our rights and liberties" saw the Spirit of Eureka established in SA.

Concurrently with the charges against Noel Washington, ABCC charges were also laid against SA rigger Ark Tribe for "failure to attend to answer questions about a safety dispute at Flinders Uni in May 2008." His court cases quickly became events for progressive workers and unionists to attend and O'Malley led the defence, accepting support from all corners.

At the same time, Spirit of Eureka began a campaign to commemorate the Eureka Rebellion each year by asking local government councils to fly the Eureka flag for a week in December. At first three, then as many as eleven local councils flew the flag, often after lengthy debates about what the flag represented – an important democratic milestone in Australia or a symbol of white racism. The latter was patiently dealt with by explaining to waverers that the rebellion was the first significant act of multicultural unity in the country, with two of the thirteen persons arrested as "ringleaders" of the Rebellion being black immigrants.



Ark Tribe

In 2009 and subsequently, the flag was also flown above the SA parliament.

For two years, Ark Tribe was hounded by the ABCC which demanded the

bosses' courts jail him for the mandatory 6 months that his "crime" entailed.

Ark was not an ideologue and was sometimes torn by conflicting loyalties to family, the mates he rode with, the guys he had served in the army with, and the union which he loved. But he understood a basic class truth: injustice must be fought. Injustice would never subdue him or make him turn his back on his own beliefs and values.

Ark's court case spanned two federal governments, one Liberal, the other Labor. As Labor PM after Rudd, Gillard refused to support him.

Ark's support instead came directly from other ordinary working class people. Rallies held to coincide with Ark's court appearances attracted members of a wide range of unions and community organisations. Ark's defence lawyers argued his case very strongly and effectively, but the deciding factor in his acquittal on 24 November 2010 was the fear by the authorities that things were "getting out of hand" and would be made many times worse by having a rank and file worker jailed for refusing to answer questions related to a meeting to discuss safety on site.

### **Building an independent working class agenda in SA**

South Australians have a good knowledge of how Labor operates at both Federal and State levels. In addition to the 12 years of pioneering neo-liberalism under Hawke and Keating (1983-1996) and pro-US cheerleading and anti-union attacks under Rudd-Gillard-Rudd (2007-2013) at the national level, there were the overlapping years in SA of Rann (2002-2011) and Weatherill (2011-2018).

These years corresponded with the Party's promotion of the need for an independent working class agenda, recognising that the conservative Liberal-National coalition parties would always attack the people, but that so too would the ALP as a consequence of its commitment to managing capitalism and the

stranglehold that imperialism exerts on the nation.

During Rann's first and second terms, he was often the most popular Premier in the country, but disillusion steadily grew as unions took issue with unfunded WorkCover liability, problems with funding of health and education, and a perception that the government was not doing enough for environmental flows along the River Murray. His treasurer, Kevin Foley, was arrogantly championing the expansion of Roxby Downs whilst at the same time dismissing problems in prisons, notoriously dismissing concerns about overcrowding in 2008 with a pledge to "Rack 'em, stack 'em and pack 'em".

Rann and Foley also championed Private-Public Partnerships as a form of privatised infrastructure development. The Party researched PPPs and published in February 2008 the booklet *Public Private Partnerships: Community Benefit or Crony Capitalism?*

By the time of Rann's third election, in March, 2010 the leader who once enjoyed the highest popularity rating of any state premier at 84%, was languishing at 38% as workers and community activists continued their fight against the State Budget. Rann had been dancing for so long to the tune of Business SA and the Property Council of SA that he could no longer get back into step with the people. He had succeeded several years before in rebadging the ALP as "pro-business, pro-growth and pro-mining" prompting calls in some quarters for a return to Labor values in the ALP.

There were also others who shared a growing realisation that it was too late for the ALP, that it was finished as a vehicle through which workers and community organizations might have their interests promoted. This viewpoint realised that only strong community and people's action could create opportunities for victory and that the promotion of union values had to occur through struggle and not be diverted into attempts to change the Labor Party. To that end four major rallies were held during October-November 2010 in an unprecedented show of unity by public

sector unions. Midday rallies attracted as many as five thousand workers and community activists as nurses, correctional service officers, firefighters, ambulance drivers, teachers and public servants joined forces to demand the withdrawal of attacks on their rights and conditions and upon the services that they provide to the public.

SA Unions provided fertile ground for winning unions to the line of an independent working class agenda. Its Secretary was Janet Giles, a feisty battler who had led the Australian Education Union, and its President was the CFMEU's Martin O'Malley. Its office manager and industrial campaigner was Angus Story who had been involved with the Chrysler Rank and File and had worked for years as senior industrial officer at the AEU.

The severity of the neo-liberal agenda of the Rann Government on behalf of big capital caused grave concern to thousands of workers in South Australia. They demonstrated their feelings on the streets of Adelaide and outside the ALP State Convention in 2010. Rann and Foley required police escorts to enter their own Convention as three thousand public sector workers condemned their attacks on services and conditions.

Foley was forced to resign, and unions pursued their own agenda, demanding that Rann step down as well. Under pressure, he agreed to a timeline that would see his replacement by the ALP "left" faction's Jay Weatherill. While some SA Unions affiliates recognised that a change of leaders without a change of policies was no real victory, many of them could not conceive that the solution was to look beyond the ideology of social democracy because they genuinely believed that capitalism with a human face (social democracy) was a just cause. SA Unions developed and promoted a Charter for workers' struggle independent of the Labor government.

Premier Jay Weatherill's brand of social democracy, in reality was no different to his predecessors. Big Business in the form of Business SA, credit ratings agencies (such as

Standard and Poor's and Moody's) and the IMF were actually at the helm and dictated the Premier's "reform" agenda. Privatisation was adopted by Weatherill with sales of land, buildings and South-eastern forests.



In April 2013, the Party published *Beyond Labor: the need for an independent working class agenda*, a ten-page pamphlet that was distributed within the unions and progressive organisations. It was particularly useful in explaining the shortcomings of the view that the elevation of Weatherill had made it possible to "take back our Labor Party" and to put "labour values" back into the Labor Party.

Party activists were early opponents of billionaire "Twiggy" Forrest's proposal to put Aboriginal people and other welfare recipients on an Income Management Scheme. Weatherill had met with Forrest and agreed to promote the scheme in SA, giving blanket support to the Forrest Report. The Party produced leaflets exposing the scheme and deploring the fact that First Peoples would be unwilling guinea pigs in a punitive exercise that would ultimately extend to

all unemployed and poor people.

Much work was done in the Playford Council area in the northern suburbs where workers were aware that the car industry was being deliberately run down and that many, if not already unemployed, would soon be. We supported a group called Stop Income Management in Playford (SIMPLA) which later became the Anti-Poverty Network (SA). A driving force in the group was a young man, Pas Forgione. Although not a communist, Pas was recognised as a very influential activist and Spirit of Eureka awarded him its annual Spirit of Eureka Award in December 2014. Stephen Darley of SoE described Pas in these terms:

He does what a lot of the radical left doesn't do these days - he goes out to the working class areas and organises there, rather than stay in the 'safe zones' of the CBD and inner-city suburbs. And he is very well received there, he comes across as the opposite of someone just out to 'use' people. He has been a major part in building up SIMPLA (Stop Income Management in Playford) to an excellent and much-needed group, and similarly with the Anti-Poverty Network.

Just as Rann and Foley had faced opposition at an ALP State Conference, so too did Weatherill, especially on the issue of compulsory income management. Pas and a number of our comrades had done the necessary groundwork to ensure that SA Unions and its affiliates would take a stand at the November 2014 ALP State Conference.

A flyer distributed both outside and inside the ALP Convention by supporters of SIMPLA quoted from a statement from ACOSS which said the Forrest scheme would "take our nation back to the 1930s when unemployed people did not get cash benefits and had to work on the roads or beg for charity to survive".

The flyer was well received by passers-by and the majority of delegates inside the ALP Convention.

The community group action attracted media and police attention.

In an example of how a community group can work well with progressive trade union leaders, including SA Unions, their leading body, not only was the flyer distributed widely inside the Convention, but the following resolution was passed near unanimously.

“Convention opposes the Weatherill Cabinet’s rushed embrace of the Forrest Report. Of note, Convention is concerned with the Report’s advocacy of financial penalties for welfare-recipient parents as a means of improving school attendance, its attack on TAFE funding and its replacement by vouchers that would only fund training for employer-approved courses, its call to block cash payments for welfare recipients via the Healthy Welfare Card, and its bland acceptance of increased crime in the community that will flow from the implementation of its recommendations. This rushed support of the Forrest Report has been made without consultation with the Aboriginal people whose lives will be affected and is contrary to Labor values.”

Premier Weatherill was forced to back track inside the Convention in the face of overwhelming support for this resolution. The resolution and the media attention were only possible because of the tireless activism of the people from the working class northern suburbs over many months with support from progressive unionists.

In 2015 Weatherill angered many in the Labor Party, the unions and community organisations with the announcement that he would go through the pretence of consulting the public by holding a royal commission into the nuclear industry, to be headed by a pro-nuclear former SA governor, Rear Admiral Kevin Scare. The intention was to expand further the nuclear industry in SA, from mining to enrichment, energy and storage. Weatherill had to change SA legislation prohibiting any SA government

consulting publicly on the merits of a nuclear waste storage. This legislation had been won years before by the Anangu women of Cooper Pedy in a fight over a plan to move nuclear waste through South Australia.

Party members vigorously opposed the Royal Commission as did groups including Conservation SA, the Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW), Friends of the Earth, the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Australian Greens. Thousands of opponents of the nuclear industry made submissions, attended community “consultations” and attended rallies. First Nations peoples took leadership on many occasions. The final report, delivered in May 2016, made 12 key recommendations, including identifying an “economic opportunity” in the establishment of a deep geological storage facility and the receipt of spent nuclear fuel from prospective international clients.

Party members supported the anti-dump movement. On Saturday October 15, four thousand people gathered at Parliament House, Adelaide, to oppose proposals for nuclear waste dumps in SA. They had seen through Weatherill. Led by Aboriginal community leaders including Anangu woman Karina Lester (daughter of Yami Lester who was blinded as a child by fallout from one of the Maralinga A-bomb tests) and Adnyamathanha elder Regina McKenzie, speaker after speaker at the rally denounced the waste dump plans.

SA Unions state secretary Joe Szakacs called on rally participants to make sure they also rallied outside the ALP state convention on October 29 to support ALP members inside the convention who would be speaking against the nuclear waste dumps.

Weatherill sought to circumvent public opposition to the recommendations by referring them to a citizens’ jury of 368 randomly selected South Australians who, after careful deliberation over three weekends, overwhelmingly rejected the proposal for a nuclear waste dump in SA.

Having lost the 2018 SA election, Weatherill was

soon back in the embrace of Twiggy Forrest, announcing in 2019 that he would become the new CEO (one can imagine with a huge salary) of the early education arm of his philanthropic Minderoo Foundation.

Party members have led or strongly supported fights against capitalism's degradation of nature. They led a campaign to block uranium mining in the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary, have opposed fracking and the introduction of a private market in water entitlements and campaigned for the restoration of environmental flows along the Barka-Murray River system, and against testing and drilling for oil in the Great Australian Bight.

### **Working with the precariat**

In recent years, with the closure of much of Australia's manufacturing, dictated by imperialism, a more or less permanently unemployed, under-employed, or precariously (contract) employed underclass has been firmly embedded within the working class.

In such circumstances, the organising experience of the type seen at Chrysler has had to change and be adapted to the changes within the workforce. A start has been made on summing up experiences in organising what some have termed the "precariat". In July 2018, the Party published *Service Sector*

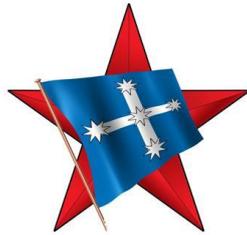
*Workers Struggle Shows Need for Bold, Resilient Leadership*, a 35-page summary of Clean Start, a campaign by cleaners in shopping malls and city buildings, the writing of which would not have been possible without input from comrades from SA and friends of the Party involved in the Clean Start campaign in SA and eastern states, many of whom were migrant workers. It reflected on new forms of struggle, of struggle under new conditions of ruling class obstruction and legal restrictions, and of struggles by workers who are in the early stages of their organised development.

### **Conclusion**

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) is a national organisation. Its general character is that of a fighting organisation of the Australian proletariat. It is a national entity - a national organisation with a national leadership speaking with a national voice.

However, that general character is developed through the particular regional bases in which the Party exists and works. The general character resides in these particular fields of operation and is strengthened by them.

South Australian communists will continue to do whatever they can to build an all-Australian revolutionary party of the working class.



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