

# Vote Left Independent



With elections coming up in the sorry state of Victoria early next month the question must be asked by socialists - how can we best effect some real change and some real alternatives?

Faced with a Labor Government that has refused to defend the working class through the economic crisis and a Liberal/National Coalition that has sworn to destroy working conditions we seem to be between a rock and hard place.

The only choice at this stage is a vote for Independents, but that is not without its problems.

182 Independents are standing and very few have policies that would recommend them. General knowledge that the electorate is fed up with both main parties and the success of Phil Cleary in Wills has opened the floodgates.

All sorts of opportunists will try to take advantage of the situation.

Independent Action was formed in late July by a public meeting called by Communist Intervention to help influence this very complex situation. It wanted to unite all those forces who supported the election of Left Independents and co-ordinate information about who was standing where.

The first problem we faced was working out who we would support, but that has been clarified in the work of building Independent Action itself. It has become clear that we are much too loose an organisation to actually endorse particular candidates.

Independent Action put forward five main points and called on Independent Candidates to adopt them as prominent parts of their platforms. It has pledged to support those candidates who do this.

The five points are:

- job creation
- defend and extend the public sector
- defend democratic and trade union rights
- a safe and clean environment
- a guaranteed living income for workers, farmers and welfare recipients

In any case the election of numbers of Independents can only help to break down the stranglehold the major parties have had on the Australian electorate all this century.

It is clear that this is no more than a very first step in the fight to find solutions to what is an international problem of capital. Disillusionment with major parties is worldwide and reflects the depth of the crisis. The answers to this crisis though don't lie in any attempts to fix capitalism up, but only in solutions which transcend the reign of capital.

The major questions which face socialists at the moment is how we can begin to develop a political framework and shift the agenda.

For too long mainstream debate has been between the Right-wing and the Very right-wing, and any mention of aims which lessen inequality are treated with mirth.

As a result of this most of the Australian electorate are not currently sympathetic with socialist goals.

It's not enough for us to sit back and bemoan that situation, or to claim it's only because they are misinformed. Rather we need to learn to work together for common goals whilst maintaining the debate around our differences.

We believe this will best be achieved by working towards the building of a political alliance. Whilst Independent Action is far from such a goal, it is at least a beginning in terms of laying down a basis and beginning to determine where our agreement lies. It has also been able to achieve a wide range of support from nearly all of the 'left' groupings.

There is an argument, predominantly from the left of the ALP, that we have to vote Labor to ensure that there is no victory of the Coalition. This makes no sense electorally.

Providing it is only left independents we support, they would oppose the Coalition's excesses more actively than Labor have shown able to do.

The best possible result would be a Labor government with Left Independents holding the balance of power. This would help hold Labor to some of their stated policies of not privatising or attacking trade union rights.

But most of all it would introduce a new stream into parliamentary politics. The reality is that parliamentary democracy is a political system designed to serve capitalism and it will take different sort of democracy to establish socialism.



# Arms business booming

We know that the renewed sabre rattling of Bush in the Middle East is a cynical exercise to secure himself votes in the coming US elections. But there is another even more sinister side in the continued sale of arms to the Middle East.

Since the Gulf War arms sales have been reported in the vicinity of forty-four billion Australian dollars. And it is America and Britain who are making the running.

A UK based security research organisation, Saferworld, has been monitoring the rapid rearmament of the Middle East and has published a report which points to the hypocrisy practiced by the politicians in both cases.

The biggest buyer has been

Saudi Arabia which has ordered A\$22.5 billion worth of combat aircraft, missiles and munitions from the United States.

At the same time they have an agreement with Britain which is expected to involve Tornado bombers, Hawk trainers, three minesweepers, and a variety of support equipment costing A\$3.5 billion.

Further supplies are headed for Israel and Syria.

The hypocrisy is exposed when we consider that the British Foreign Office Minister, Douglas Hogg, said in March 1991 'it would be tragic if the nations of the Middle East were now, in the wake of war, to embark on a new arms race.'



## Military AeroSpace Expo

The Australian International Air Show and Aerospace Expo, to be held outside Melbourne at Avalon from the 21st to 25th October, will have more than 100 exhibitors from 11 countries.

Between 70 and 80 per cent of the aeronautical equipment displayed will be military based. Australia currently spends \$1.6 million per day on aeronautical defence technology.

Despite a history of brutally suppressing the struggles of its own working class and a well-documented repression of the liberation struggles in East Timor and West Papua, the Indonesian military have

been invited to attend Aerospace. In 1990-91 alone, more than \$1 million of military exports went to Indonesia, combined with \$2 million in military aid.

Planning for the Aerospace expo is set against a background of a continued military build-up in the Asia Pacific region. Foreign Affairs Minister, Gareth Evans, announced on August 27 that Australia will give the Papua New Guinea Defence Force a fifth Iroquois helicopter. This decision was made in spite of documentation revealing the helicopters were used to fire on unarmed civilians in Bougainville.

The Federal government is also

expected to offer patrol boats to Fiji, overturning sanctions imposed after the first Fiji coup in 1987. The announcement would follow a move to restore defence co-operation made in July this year.

The Federal government defence spending for 1992-93 is up 5.6 per cent on the previous financial year, at just below \$1 billion dollars. The Aerospace Expo must be seen in this context.

The Campaign Against Militarism, well-known for organising around the defence equipment exhibition AIDEX 1991, is campaigning in the lead up to Aerospace. For more details contact 419 5937.

# Business Ethics or Business Acumen

**We've seen capitalism pretend to turn green; now it's pretending to turn ethical.**

Business Ethics are becoming big business. Almost unheard of in the 1980s there are now a plethora of books, conferences and new bodies in Universities and industry groups offering advice on codes of conduct for business.

In the next two months in Melbourne two conferences have been scheduled on the subject of business ethics and conscience.

This trend is already well underway in the USA where managers of public services claim to take account of ethical considerations when selecting from tenders to contract services out.

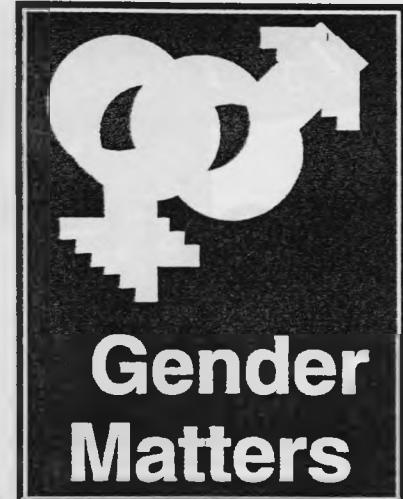
The Australian Society of Chartered Accountants has established a direct link to the St James' Ethics Centre in Sydney. Accountants are now encouraged to ring the Centre for counselling if they are faced with an ethical dilemma in dealing with a client.

The St James' Ethics Centre was established by the St James Anglican Church in 1989. It is modelled on the Trinity Centre for Ethics and Corporate Policy which operates amid some of the biggest financial institutions in the world on Wall Street.

The St. James Centre promotes itself as providing advice on business and professional ethics in the workplace.

Given the nature of capitalism and its insatiable greed and given the desperation of that greed in this economic crisis, all of this must be taken with some scepticism; but it is at least an indication that sections of the capitalist class have become aware that economic rationalism has been exposed for what it is and that too much more of its excesses will be tolerated.

We wouldn't be so naive as to think that if it were a choice between profits and ethics, capitalism would ever choose ethics, but it is a small gain that capitalism is trying to dress itself up in an 'ethical' gown.



## Women's Wages Fall

Australia has the smallest wage gender gap in world, according to a report released recently in the US. All of women workers who have fought for this can feel very proud. But the fighting's not over.

In the last three quarters women's wages have shown a steady decline. In the quarter to November 1991 women's hourly rate in comparison to men's fell from 84.9 per cent to 84.1 percent. In the quarter to February 1992 they fell again to 83.8 per cent and in the May quarter they have fallen to 83.5.

This decline must be linked to the de-regulation of the labour market. In 1987 when wages were tied to the 4 percent second tier women's wages fell too, but they then settled.

This decline shows the increase in the proportion of women who are working in de-regulated areas and makes it clear that women workers will lose from de-regulation and enterprise bargaining agreements unless they are able to organise and make sure that their interests are represented at the bargaining table.

Women will be further disadvantaged in Victoria in the short term because they are over-represented in State Awards and these are the conditions most at risk by a Coalition government.

# A Right Royal Debacle

by Lynn Beaton

The attention heaped on the British royals leaves most of us a bit cold. The Monarchy we don't support and the issues being raised by the mass media have every appearance of being more soapy than soap. Apart from disgust at the media's prying eyes, there is phenomena here which deserve some attention. In the last couple of weeks, stories of marital instability, divorce, bulimia and attempted suicide have taken a more serious turn - the muck-covered revelations about the clear infidelity of the Duchess of York and suggestions of adulterous behaviour of the Princess of Wales raise very serious questions about the royal succession.

It must be asked that if these princesses by marriage are capable of infidelity, how can we be sure that their offspring are in fact the progeny of their royal husbands. This must have serious implications for an institution which is a hangover from patriarchal feudalism and which still enshrines male succession. The only claim the British royals have to their lives of privilege are based on their claim to birthright.

The whole emphasis on female virginity at marriage, and fidelity in marriage has been because men cannot ensure paternity unless they are confident their wives are untouched by another male. Male philandering on the other hand has been tolerated because it doesn't effect heritage.

Whatever else has happened it is clear that the challenge to the patriarchy has infiltrated public opinion about royal behaviour.

Likely tugs of custody over Fergie's

daughters who are fifth & sixth in line for the throne are also sensitive. When Princesses Margaret and Anne separated from and divorced their commoner husbands the question of the children was clear. In these cases maternal claims and royal claims were consistent. Also in these cases the royal line went through the mothers and the possibility of male infidelities was neither here nor there.

There is more evidence that the patriarchy is under threat - in past times royal wives who brought disgrace to the royal household were cast aside without a second thought. They were burnt, executed, sent to convents - not so now. This is most delicate in Dianna's case, but even the unpopular Fergie would get public sympathy if the Queen attempted to deny her access to her children.

A poll taken recently in Britain saw Princess Dianna as way out in front as the favourite royal. She scored 34% of the poll, followed by Princess Anne with a mere 12% and the Queen and her mother tying with a measly 11% each. The significance of this is that Princess Dianna is only a royal by marriage - she has no birthright, she could be anyone - well almost.

The difference between the treatment of these royal adventures and those surrounding the abdication of the previous Prince of Wales are stark. In that case it was Mrs. Simpson who was caste as the she-devil and the poor love-lorn Prince was valiant for his stand. Revelations of Dianna's marital misery has rendered her a heroine and her husband is seen as an uncar-

ing, insensitive oaf, not to mention the whispers of infidelity. Another question in this same poll asked who was to blame for the difficulties in the Wales' marriage; 35% said Charles and only 16% blamed the fairytale Princess. Isn't this a turn around - ain't it always the women who get the blame?

What exactly has Charles done? He has behaved like millions of men of privilege - and many without privilege, that is, he has set himself up with a beautiful wife who has delivered him two beautiful heirs and now he is off playing boys games.

And even if his wife has been unfaithful, there is a general acceptance that she had a right since she was lonely in his absences and because of his inadequacies as a caring sensitive husband.

When the first of Charles' and Di's children were born - it occurred to me that it would have been a disaster for the royal household if the firstborn were a girl. Equal opportunity would surely have to be argued in these times about male succession. It was indeed very fortunate that the two firstborns were both males.

In any case the contradictions in the very existence of a monarchy in this day and age are coming home to roost and I don't think we've seen the last of it.

British workers who are under attack from all directions cannot forever stand by and watch their taxes go to support a family whose tenuous claim to exist grows more tenuous by the minute.