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bulletin of the Communist Left

November 1998

43 Howard's Liberals win the GST election! (Despite Labor getting more votes)

Howard's Liberals have been re-elected with what appears to be a comfortable majority — twelve seats. But they did this with a minority of votes. After distributing preferences over 51% preferred Labor as opposed to 48% who preferred Liberal. So much for democracy! The system is clearly rigged Labor seats are larger. Liberal seats are smaller. So therefore it is easier for the Liberals to win

The previous Liberal government had a majority of 36. So winning back office for Labor was a big ask. It meant that Howard could show his incompetence — and still win. Beazley made no major blunders. He successfully distanced himself from Keating and his arrogance. But he hardly put the boot into Howard. Howard had no answers on the question of unemployment. Before last election he said that he would consider himself a failure if did not solve the crisis of youth unemployment. He has certainly been proved a failure on this score. But where was the challenge from Beazley?

Howards new revamped privatised CES has proved to be a failure also. Beazley did commit a future Labor Government to a new comprehensive government run CES. But he wasn't very convincing. A lot of damage has been done. And a lot of money is required to restore the CES. Given the fiscal pressures any government is put under, it is doubtful whether Labor would oblige. He also failed to put the boot into Howard for this

By mutual consent, this was the taxation election. Howard, last election earnestly opposed a GST. Just recently he became a convert. We, and most of the electorate are somewhat cynical. We think that Howard supported GST all along but couldnt come out properly if there was any real fear of Liberals losing. Sincere or otherwise he has achieved his objective — to have won a parliamentary majority on the basis of campaigning for a GST. The fact that a majority might oppose a GST doesn't matter — unless the whole undemocratic framework of the Australian parliamentary system is challenged. In the short term this is unlikely to happen.

OF course this is not very democratic. Shouldn't the whole of the Governments record be under scrutiny? Questions such as "Black reconciliation", immigration, the turn to Asia, the republic, issues which had been important in Australian political life over the past two years, were merely swept under the carpet. Of course this means that Australia does not have a race election'. But on the other hand it doesn't address the question of racism. The best way to introduce privatisation "continue the reform programme" is to avoid making it a public issue. Of course there was no mention of Australia's involvement in Bougainville. Nor any debate over Australia being a lackey of US imperialism. These issues -- have bipartisan support. There was also no debate or policy concerning women or gay rights.

Well there was one other major issue on the agenda — unemployment. Beazley announced that his future Labor Government would create 500,000 jobs. This increased his support in some areas but was received with cynicism in others. The Liberals as part of their scaremongering campaign claimed that Labor would abolish work for the dole. This unfortunately, was not true. Labor offered a

different type of work for the dole, more conducive to getting the unemployed into the workforce and offering the unemployed as cheap labour for the bosses.

The GST as the main campaign issue was very convenient for Mr. Beazley. At last there was a clear and noticeable difference between Labor and Liberal. Working people could see how serious the GST attack would be. They think, and quite correctly that they already face a too high a tax burden. Working people and the poor spend far more (proportionately) on food and consumer items than the rich. Therefore a GST penalises them at the expense of the rich. Today unemployed and pensioners pay no tax. Thanks to a GST they pay 10% on virtually every thing they spend money on.

Labor was very happy to make taxation the campaigning issue. It meant every other issue could be swept under the carpet. It meant they could win back disenchanted supporters. Notably the trade union bureaucracy. Unions were very active in promoting Labor. Posters and stickers were put up everywhere authorised by various unions, showing how oppressive a GST would be to ordinary people.

The union bureaucrats have, of course, other reasons for their support for Labor. They fear Liberal amendments to the Workplace Relations Act. This was another issue buried by mutual consent. Beazley refused to make this an issue. But it was raised by the "Left" bureaucrats. Both Labor and Liberal want working people to pay for the crisis. The fundamental difference is that Liberals want to smash unions outright. Labor wants to get their consent for "reform" which means making us pay. Currently in the MUA there is a dispute between Coombes who is prepared for workers to do a twelve hour shift and Donovan of the Communist Party who opposes this. The Liberals would prefer no union at all. Labor hopes the Coombes leadership is successful so it can sell to the bourgeoisie, the virtues of the trade union bureaucracy. Either with the Liberals or Labor working conditions are lost and thousands of jobs go down the drain.

Another issue put aside was the complete privatisation of Telstra. Telstra has already been partly privatised. The Liberals want to go the whole way. Complete privatisation is opposed by Labor who see that working people will suffer and One Nation who are concerned with the suffering of rural people. There is strong opposition to privatisation in the bush as they figure that a private firm is unlikely to find the country areas profitable and will therefore cut services or let them deteriorate. Whilst both Labor and One Nation had the potential to pick up support, they didn't as the issue was buried.

One big loser of these elections was Pauline Hanson's One Nation. One Nation was very effective in terms of Queensland state politics. But it is another matter to compete nationally as a respectable alternative administrator of capitalism. This fascist controlled right wing broad front party showed that it wasn't up to being a big player on the national agenda. It is extremely difficult to talk about race, multiculturalism, and immigration if no one is talking about them. When it came to competing with the big parties on the big issues they floundered. The protectionist programmes of One Nation would, if implemented require a big increase in taxation. This both the ruling class and middle classes find repugnant One Nation is based on the middle class which takes taxation seriously. So it must have a clear working policy to be listened to. Their crackpot idea of a 2% flat rate of taxation for everyone was easily exposed as ridiculous. People interested in One Nation went back to the Nationals. Both Fascist sitting members Pauline Hanson and Graeme Campbell (Australia First) lost

their seats to the Liberals. One Nation did win a Senate seat, in Queensland. In New South Wales high profile David Oldfield was unsuccessful in his bid for a Senate seat.

However, it is too early to write of the fascists totally. Over one million Australians voted One Nation. There were also minor fascist parties including Graeme Campbell's Australia First and the Citizens Electoral Council. They did considerably better than the Democrats and Greens combined. The Left would be pleased indeed if it could get a similar electoral support. The hard-line groups can still grow under this umbrella and pose a physical threat to immigrants, ethnic minorities, Blacks, unemployed and working people. We must not be complacent and ignore the possibility of them getting their act together and thence an audience.

The Democrats picked up a degree of support by posing as the hard alternative to Hanson and cashing in on the anti-Hanson protest movement built by the Democratic Socialist Party. The DSP did the hard work. But the Democrats reaped the electoral rewards. This is the price of building a movement with no class principles.

Howard, in his post-election speech announced his support for "reconciliation with Aboriginal people" This concept, even he acknowledged was vague. What he means by it remains to be seen. But by announcing this support he was effectively distancing himself from his previous role of giving the extreme right a free ride. His promotion of Hanson has done Australia considerable damage in the eyes of Asian governments and people. And this has been costly in terms of trade and tourism.

Enlightened bourgeois representatives know that you can attack migrants, restrict their intake and rights behind a banner of "multiculturalism". They also know that you can support 'Black reconciliation' without threatening the interests of mining interests or the racist capitalist state. They also know that Black common law claims do not seriously threaten the rights of graziers. So why stir things with hard-line racism and extremism? Such social division is a liability.

It is the task of revolutionaries to expose 'reconciliation' and "multiculturalism" as frauds. As long as a capitalist state exists it is antagonistic to Black people and migrants (especially those of Asian, African, Polynesian or Melanesian descent. It is not our job to guild the system by giving it a nonracist appearance. It is our job to fight the racism prevalent within the working class and in society generally. We must prepare physically through workers defence to prevent them from organising. One Nation, isn't dead. It still has the potential for mass organisation — if we let it.

The Greens and the Democrats polled poorly. The Democrats picked up a seat in NSW in the Senate. The Democrats, once again, appeared "left on social issues. But on the hard class issues they are at best unreliable. — if they don't support the Liberals outright. This they did on the Workplace Relations Act.

The Liberals got re-elected on the basis of a well calculated scare campaign aimed at persuading middle class people in marginal electorates they had something to lose in supporting Labor and offering them cash concession carrots. The Liberals played very effectively on middle class unemployed bashing mentality. They did enough to achieve a working majority.

The ruling class, are at the moment, sitting pretty. They have a government committed to "reform" and union smashing. They have a respectable opposition which threatens nothing fundamental. They have the union movement contained and the far left isolated. Liberals are committed to a

“reform programme”. Labor’s opposition is not fundamental. It is vital to the workers movement and all exploited that an alternative is built to this rotten social-imperialist economic rationalist Labor Party. It’s time we had an alternative which stands up to all the attacks and fights the system. Loyalty to the Labor Party is simply suicide.

The left alternatives.

Communist Left left urges workers to build an alternative to Labor. We do this because it is crystal clear that Labor is complicit in the attacks on working people and, if elected would initiate its own. The choice should not be one of merely the more palatable poison. Small attacks only pave the way for bigger ones. The ruling class are well aware that their interests lie in smashing unions, wages and conditions the dole and the public sector. Labor doesn’t fundamentally challenge this agenda. It only quibbles about the way it is implemented. Fortunately there are left wing organisations who at least realise that this is wrong and oppose the attacks on working people. Unfortunately most appear to believe that the system could with better parliamentary representatives serve the interest of working people. The reformists have abandoned reformism. Unfortunately some “communists” or “socialists” instead of drawing out the conclusion that reformism doesn’t work want to take the place of the reformists.

One party who did not stand candidates was the International Socialist Organisation. They campaigned for Labor, no doubt claiming that this was “critical support”. In Sydney they were party to organising a march and rally through the streets of Newtown. Lead speakers were the two Labor candidates for the local electorates, Sydney and Grayndler. Representatives of community and pensioner organisations also spoke. The ISO Chairperson spoke of inspiring experiences overseas such as in Europe, Indonesia and South Korea. But she studeously avoided any lessons which would have embarrassed Tanya Plibersek Labor for Sydney or Anthony Albanese Labor for Grayndler. Albanese made a point of thanking the ISO for their efforts. Albanese likes to think of himself as a campaigning member with left credentials. ISO are happy to cooperate. Before and after the election the ISO put up posters with demands which appear militant. But the demands “Tax the rich” No uranium mining” No to racism” are all totally compatible with reformism. It can be argued that as the system is racist, “no to racism” is a challenge to it. But, unfortunately “opposition to racism” in the current political climate means little more than the liberal multiculturalism that pervades pettybourgeois public opinion. The ISO attack “Howard and the bosses system” but avoids any mention of the fact that Labor supports the same system. ISO are no more than the campaigning militant sounding wing of Labor.

The Democratic Socialist Party differed from ISO in that they stood candidates and were more openly hostile to Labor. But the type of opposition was shown by the main demo which they held — through the streets of trendy Glebe. Now there is a working class in Glebe but they weren’t oriented towards it “Out of the coffee houses and into the streets” was one of their slogans, according to Communist party candidate Denis Doherty (who spoke) a survey the CPA did revealed that ten percent of those on the Glebe Estate were considering voting One Nation. In no way did this demo attempt to change the situation. This demo was strong on pointing to the Labor as a source of racism. One Nation were merely drawing the logic of policies pursued by both parties we were informed. But in no way were we shown that racism was inherent in the capitalist system (especially in a relatively privileged country like Australia) and nor were we shown that it is only the working class

who have an interest in fighting it. Quite the contrary. Guest speakers included the protest candidates Nuclear Disarmament Party and Common Cause- No Aircraft Noise. The DSP version of 'aniracism' attacks explicitly racist application of immigration controls (especially East Timorese refugees). The key demand raised was for the right of migrants to the dole. But they avoided attacking immigration controls outright. DSP are a left liberal protest party. who build mass campaigns compatible with the left pettybourgeoisie. It 's the Australian Democrats who win the votes from the DSP's hard mass work.

Ron Poulson stood for the Communist League who are the Australian supporters of the American Socialist Workers Party. Few realised he was standing as his name was somewhat lost amongst the ungrouped independents listed at the end of the Senate ballot paper. He put up virtually no posters. His campaign supported a shorter working week, opposed any Australian intervention on Bougainville, opposed immigration controls supporting open borders internationally. Well and good, so far. It called for the repudiation of bank debts to farmers and concluded that what was needed was a workers and farmers government. It is very important, given the strength of One Nation, that the left take up the demands of farmers to win a worker-farmer alliance. Indeed, Ron Poulson believes in this. The problem is his demand Workers and farmers Government is ambiguous in terms of what type of government he supports — parliamentary or revolutionary. In reality Communist League argue that a varierit of parliamentary government could actually serve workers and small farmers. This is reformism. There are no other demands which raise the question of revolution (expropriation) either. Poullson is strong on defending Cuba. He is an apologist for the Castroite bureaucracy which rules there.

In the electorate of Sydney the Communist Party of Australia (Formerly Socialist Party) stood their candidate Denis Doherty. Doherty tried to win supporters of the now defunct Aarons led CPA by getting the endorsement of Jack Munday. Doherty had indeed a comprehensive programme which raise all sorts of issues including a shorter working week, Bougainville, opposition to the GST. None of which he raised in a revolutionary way. Communism means raising immediate demands to show expose capitalism as unable to carry out even the smallest immediate deamd consistantly. Denis raised many demands but made no attempt to pose the question of revolution. The CPA put up thousands of quite effective posters opposing the GST. They too did Labor's leg work. to their credit they put up posters in working class Waterloo which the trendy left always "forget" to do. In their middle class arrogance, those groups don't think that ordinary people are capable of being political.

For both the Senate and the house of Representatives, the Socialist Equality Party stood candiidades. The electorates they targeted for the Reps were in the Hunter and Illawarra regions. It was indeed commendable that they stood in Hunter as this was one of the electorates targeted by One Nation. This party, whose campaign was worthy of critical support made it quite clear that they were internationalist and for the overthrow of capitalism. Their failings were however well and truly exposed by their inadequate "programme" for fighting One Nation. The left, including One Nation opponents, they pointed out, supported the same reactionary nationalist Keynesian measures as One Nation. So should there be any specific action to deal with One Nation.? well one could easily imply that the SEP thinks that there shouldn't or needn't be a fight against One Nation — except to be consistently internationalist. Fascism is not merely reactionary nationalism. It is a social movement of the middle classes (or sections) and sections of the labour aristocracy to smash the organised working class. It must be smashed physically by working class action. Communist Left

attacks the radical left because they are unable to smash One Nation properly not because they attempt to do so. To imply (or allow it to be inferred) that the popular front antifascists are as bad as or of a similar ilk as fascists is an insult to a lot of decent radicals. Fascism is a movement which attempts to win over small farmers. SEP did not raise programmatic demands to win them to proletarian dictatorship. They do oppose immigration controls. Unfortunately they raise this demand somewhat buried under the general heading Democratic Rights

The left alternatives polled poorly. But far more serious than their tactical failures is their failure to raise the question of a revolutionary alternative to the Labor Party and the question of revolutionary expropriation of the capitalist class. The CPA with its two stage blinkers sees this only as something as desirable in the distant future. But today's capitalism permits nothing. It will allow no government to implement "policies which serve working people". "Serve our drive for profitability of we kick you out" is what the capitalist class demand. So we must build the organisation and consciousness to chuck them out. This must begin now! To support revolution, but only in the distant undefined future is effectively abandoning the working class to capitalism. It is no wonder that the left is not considered to be a serious alternative by working class people.

The arrest of General Pinochet

The arrest of former Chilean dictator General Pinochet, by the British police has raised many eyebrows. Retired heads of state do not usually get arrested. This is especially true for those who support the imperialist cause. Human rights attacks are generally reserved for the opponents of Britain America and the West. Pinochet has been a sterling friend. On his arrival on Britain he was treated like a VIP. Before going into hospital he saw his old and loyal personal friend Dame Margaret Thatcher. General Pinochet has been charged by a Spanish Judge for murder and genocide. Apparently some of those killed, imprisoned or tortured by his regime were Spanish citizens. He has determined that it is within Spanish law that Pinochet be charged with the death of Spanish citizens even though the murders took place in Chile. There is an extradition agreement of which both Britain and Spain are signatories. Tony Blair is in an embarrassing position. He has effectively got to choose between appeasing Chile (and imperialist backers of the Junta) or obeying an international court order. Currently he is merely pointing to Britain's obligation to international law. However, this does not convince Pinochet's many supporters. British citizens are warned against going to Chile lest they be met with violence from Chileans out for revenge. One supporter of Pinochet is President Menem of Argentina. He sees the arrest as more British meddling akin to Britain's invasion of the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands. Britain and Argentina are trying to re-established a friendly relationship. Menem is in Britain to encourage investment. He has made conciliatory gestures like saying the war over the Malvinas should never have happened. British capital is hankering for investment. They don't want any dispute with Chile which might dampen the rapprochement.

Blair is also embarrassed by social-democrats who want him to take a stronger stance. Social democrats, in Europe and Britain consistently hate the man who downed a social democrat government in blood. At least seven members of Blair's cabinet have been involved in anti-Pinochet protests. One of them embarrassed Blair by claiming that the likes of Pinochet did not deserve diplomatic immunity irrespective of international law. From both left and right, Blair is being exposed as weak. General Pinochet is well and truly a mass murderer. During the coup and its aftermath many thousands of Chilean leftists, unionists and even moderate Christians met their

death. They were either directly killed by the military or alternatively met their death being tortured in prison. General Pinochet was directly responsible for many of the murders, himself. One of those murdered was elected President Salvador Allende, the elected socialist. Head of state.

The military coup in Chile provided a practical lesson that there is no peaceful or parliamentary road to socialism. Trotskyists, at the time warned that a bloodbath was a probability given the antagonism of the state apparatus to the working class. We also warned that the popular front alliance made by Allende and the stalinists was a death trap for working people. Allende argued that Chile was an exception. The state, he claimed, kept out of politics. Trotskyists argued that this was an illusion and that the state would act in ruling class interest in Chile — as it did in every other capitalist country. One of the conditions of the for Allende getting liberal-bourgeois support was that the working class was not armed. General Pinochet led a coup which butchered an unarmed working class and smashed trade union and political organisations. The only crime of most of the victims was that they were unionists who voted in a government to legislate radical reform and socialism. Whilst Trotskyists warned of the consequences of ignoring the fundamental principle that the capitalist state is an instrument of bosses rule, we in no way wished the fate which was bestowed upon them by the bloody generals led by Pinochet. An unprincipled 'unity' with the bosses and their state which means a disarmed working class will be smashed by an armed ruling class.

We believe that the Chilean working class will rise again. This time it will have revolutionary leadership committed to smash the ruling class and its repressive state apparatus. For this the lessons of the popular front must be learnt.

There may be some imperialists who are embarrassed at how blood thirsty Pinochet was in defending their interests. They may be genuine in wanting to try him for many of his crimes. It is easy to be critical from a distance. In no way do these critics support the working class nor the restoration of the elected government. They want imperialist interests to be maintained with less brutality. But fundamentally, they still support the same system and its control over the Chilean people.

Many supporters of the arrest are arguing that International law should deal with such tyrants who are enemies of 'human rights'. International law has one purpose — policing world domination of imperialism. We have no faith in that institution to act in support of working people, or victims of imperialism, whatsoever! The coup occurred in 1973. Imperialist control over Chile is now secure. Perhaps they might scapegoat their comrade to show they are "consistent supporters of human rights". This would effectively be a whitewash. The imperialists were involved in that coup — up to their necks.

We hate General Pinochet. We wish on him whatever his victims (and their relatives) consider worthy. But the only people we entrust to try and punish him are the Chilean working class.

Review:

RED HOT The Life and Times of Nick Origlass by Hall Greenland

This book is a labour of love. For decades, Hall has been working to get this book out describing the life of someone who gave outstanding service to the left and workers movement. Hall has been committed to giving the life of Nick Origlass justice. His main purpose is political But politics is linked

to personality. Hall describes both and the link between both. He raises personal issues to explain his development not as an exercise in trivia. In the history of Trotskyism in this country Nick deserves an honourable mention. This book well and truly gives him his dues — without glorification or covering up his flaws.

Nick Origlass (originally Origlasso) was born in North Queensland, the son of an Italian cane cutter. He got a job in the Taxation Department “considered a plum job”. He lost his job over a paper aeroplane and went to Mt. Isa. He then took a camel ride down the Birdsville Track. He jumped a train and got busted for avoiding his fair. After a stint in Bathurst Jail he went to Sydney, got involved in the Communist Party and the unemployed movement. The Communist Party considered him suspect. He went on to join the Trotskyist movement. He goes back to Brisbane to become a builders labourer. He comes back to Sydney to lead the Trotskyist movement with his ally Laurie Short. After many splits and desertions by renegades Origlass, embraces the Pablo Tendency, becomes a Leichhardt Councillor, eventually mayor. His activities on council were certainly militant but not working class. Origlass is a victim of the gentrification of Balmain and the failure of his politics.

Greenland has been both an admirer of Origlass and a close comrade. But in no way is Origlass idealised. Greenland can see faults — crucial faults which have been of political consequence. Yet Nick's achievement is well and truly honoured. Rightly so! We differ very strongly with Greenland over his evaluation of Nick's political direction. However it is evaluated, Greenland gives the social, political and personal data so we can evaluate Nick's direction. For this he is to be commended

In writing about Nick Origlass, Hall is not merely writing about a man of humble origins who became both a theoretician and a fighter for his class. He is writing about the Trotskyist movement in Australia. Trotskyists in all countries were “swimming against the stream” in isolation from the official labour and socialist movements. Australia was isolated from the international Trotskyist movement. Given that decisive struggles were fought elsewhere, Trotsky did not pay the same attention to the movement here. Of course it meant limitations in the understanding of the political concepts that Trotsky fought

Although he did not found the movement here, he did become the key leader for about thirty years. And was very much considered it's leader. This is a book of many faction fights. These are placed in their personal and social context but to his opponents as well. He gives detail about the struggle against Professor John Anderson, that famous libertarian who degenerated into anti-communism. Anderson backed by Peter Eddy and Ted Tripp was blatant about his revisionism. He called for the rejection of Trotskyism. Nick blocked with Laurie Short against the revisionists. The Origlass- Short Bolshevik wing was victorious.

The next major split is when Origlass and Short recommend the French turn to Australia. The French Section of the fourth International entered the socialist Party to fight for Trotskyism. In Australia this was opposed by Wishart and Thistlethwayte who formed the Revolutionary Workers Party. The Short -Origlass grouping then became known as Labour socialist Group.

Then came the split of Laurie Short and “Diamond” Jim McClelland. This split, in some ways parallels the Burnham/Schachtman split in the US, in that the splitters reject the dialectics, the defence of the Soviet Union. However Hall claims “personal reasons were involved”.

Hall also discusses Orighlass relationship with the Fourth International and his support for Pablo “enterism sui generis” basically meaning long term enterism. The Labour Socialist Group sent Denis Freney as a delegate to the 1961 congress. Nick gave clear instructions to Denis to support Pablo. The Australians understandably opposed the Congress’ persecution of Pablo by Maitan, Mandel and Frank as Pablo was in jail at the time and didn’t get a chance to respond . Nick and the LSG were excluded from the USec when Pablo was. Denis Freney was not recognised as a delegate to the 1963 congress of reunification with the US SWP.

The USec had supporters in Australia the most notable being Bob Gould. He was supported by Roger Barnes and Sylvia Hale. Ultimately this grouping known by its bulletin Socialist Perspectives. This grouping founded the CND, Vietnam Action Committee, Student Underground, Resistance and the Socialist Workers League predecessor to the Democratic Socialist Party.

Australia did have, in the fifties a small group of InternationalCcommittee supporters led by Scottish migrant Gavin Kennedy. A leading member was George Petersen who became an MLA. This grouping fused with the LSG.

Hall clearly slows what Pabloism, a movement which he supports, stands for. He quotes Pablo “The profound meaning of the twentieth century has been the immense movement for the liberation of the colonies, the oppressed people and women and not the revolution of the proletariat, which was our myth and our god”. Well the movement for the liberation of women. At least in terms of the official women’s liberation movement is well and truly conservatised, bureaucratised or dead, Femocrats certainly have gained more power for themselves. Feminists concentrate on improvements within the system often dominated by the pursuit of legal reform or government funded band-aids. And as for the liberation of the colonies, Pablo cannot see that the strength Of this movement as opposed to class struggle is due to the reactionary liquidationist Strategy of the stalinists —liquidation of the class struggle into national liberation struggles. Hall shows how Pablo influenced Orighlass’ turn to Balmain residents struggles. In doing so he shows how Pabloism leads to liquidation into movements of the middle class.

This book is not merely one of faction disputes. Nick Orighlass was very much a man of struggle. And this book describes important struggles in which he was involved. Nick was a trade unionist in Mt. Isa, an unemployed activist based in Glebe (Hall describes the Glebe ‘dole riots including the treatment metered out by the police) involved in the defence of Noel Eatock, a young Aboriginal, a member of the BLF in Brisbane, an ironworker at Mort dock Balmain. Nick was extremely poor. Hall describes how one attempt to skip out of a house (for being behind in rent) almost failed because the horse was almost too sick from malnourishment to carry Nicks gear.

A whole chapter is taken to describe the great Balmain uprising against Stalinism leadership of the Iron- workers in 1945. Bob Gould is personally a bit peeved that Hall did not discuss the Trotskyists involvement in an important struggle for a shorter working week. Hall can’t describe everything. But given the importance of this demand — we are inclined to agree with Bob.

Of course Hall fully describes the struggles against the Stalinists. These got physical. He also describes the struggles that Trotskyists faced establishing their platform at the Domain, in Sydney and Yarra Bank in Melbourne. Trotskyists had to fight Stalinists, right wing soldiers and the police.

Nick, who started off as a militant unionists ended up a local counsellor endorsed by Balmain resident activists based on a resident action programme. When Nick initiated his turn towards council his comrades were apprehensive that he might bogged down in issues such as dog poop. This however, was not the main problem. Revolutionaries can enter local government to fight for class principle. The problem is, Nick didn't do this. And this is exposed in Hall's book. Nick's instruction to those who handed out his how to vote cards is as follows;

Address Labor voter

Vote true Labor Vote Origlass

Stick to Labor principles

Vote Origlass

Fair deal for Balmain (at Balmain polling booths

The party needs a shaking up

Address nonLabor and notso Labor

Stand solid, Save Balmain

Fair loyal representation

Balmainites are people too

Everywhere

For true representation of the people

people come first

Such programmes are a recipe for gross degeneration. In no way does he suggest that working class interests be fought for. Calls for supporting "real Balmain" etc. are bad enough normally. They are even worse considering that Balmain was in a process of degeneration — from working class to yuppiedom. Balmain of the forties (as Hall describes) was extremely and proudly working class. By the mid sixties this working class heartland was on its way out, Today it is virtually nonexistent. Nick is partly a victim of this degeneration. But he did not raise a programme to defend th working class who remained.

He found a base amongst the new middle class. In RED number 3 we reported how nick Origlass sold out the Federal Art Squatters Glebe Point, so the land could be used as more parkland. For yuppies, parkland comes before housing the homeless — especially if they live in an unsightly factory . This sellout was a direct consequences of Nicks resident action direction.

Nick also failed politically. Being forced out of the Labor Party he formed the Balmain-Leichhardt Labor Party. This local grouping can best be described as resident-action reformist, certainly does not constitute a break from reformism despite militant opposition to many of Labor's betrayals — at least on the municipal level. We are not denying that some of nick's campaigns weren't supportable.

Nor are we denying that Nick energetically served the community. We are saying that because Nick, in his local politics did not draw class lines and succumbed to the middle-class yuppie invasion of Balmain defending middle class interests against the working class

We sort of understand the predicament. Nick took a principled stand against oil containers and factories which do attack the working class. But he is backed by radical activists and not the working class. These activists give him a base against the treacherous Labor Party. This predicament would have been avoided had he built a base on class principles previously.

Hall documents these struggles as effectively as he does those of Nick's working class past. They are rich in lessons of struggle also. Nick's defence of a Glebe old mens home was indeed commendable. But for revolutionaries the fundamental class character of ones programme is what is decisive. Nick certainly had working class roots. But with this programme it was no wonder that others on his ticket, Sandblom and Bray were clearly middle class. Hall brings this out very clearly. Despite being middle class, his radicalism is strongly and vehrmently opposed by the right-wing local ALP. Nick was expelled from the ALP for opposing oil tankers.

This is a very readable book. . lot of factual information is given in the context of a story which is fast- moving and interesting. Hall manages to cover every aspect, personal, sexual, political. He does so in a manner which is factual yet doesn't bog you down or descend into trivia. This is both a book about an interesting person a book about class struggles and a book with important education reformism, Stalinism, Trotskyism in Australia not to mention Balmain local government. We differ very strongly about Hall's assessment of Nick's politics. But the key strength of the book is that it gives you the basis of an explanation of why Nick developed in his political and personal direction. And this is very valuable indeed.

Communist Left P.O Box 119 Erskineville 2043 Australia Printed by BREAKOUT (T.U)