

Stop Uranium Mining!

**Australia's Decade of Protest
1975-85**

Greg Adamson

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Introduction

The election of John Howard as Australian prime minister in 1996 ushered in a new wave of enthusiasm for radioactive adventure. Nuclear testing was the fad of the 1950s. The 1960s saw plans for nuclear explosions to create new harbors along the coastline. In the 1970s state premiers vied to attract uranium enrichment plants. In the early 1980s the plans were to surround the cities with nuclear power plants. Today as we approach the new millennium, the call has gone out for Australia to become the world's dumping ground for radioactive waste. These waves of nuclear madness follow the election of Liberal-National governments.

These are just one side of the nuclear industry. On the other side is the enormous amount of uranium ore which is mined and shipped from Australia every year. Here the nuclear industry can thank Labor governments, at both state and federal level.

This pamphlet describes the rise of mass opposition to Australian uranium mining in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In particular, it tracks the fights within the ALP and trade unions on the issue. Today this is not so hard. Many Labor politicians who fought for the defence and expansion of uranium mining have now published their memoirs, admitting views they hid at the time.

In his memoirs, Graham Richardson, a key supporter of Labor leader Bob Hawke in the 1980s, described his enthusiasm for pressing, cajoling and threatening parliamentarians to help open the world's biggest uranium mine at Roxby Downs in South Australia. "This was the first time I acted as a real numbers man for Hawke in the Caucus. I felt a real charge, a surge of adrenalin. This was better than sex and almost as exciting as a good feed." Such was the calibre of the Labor leaders when faced with an issue which threatens the existence of humanity, through war or damage to the human gene pool.

The nuclear industry in Australia owes its survival and massive expansion to Labor governments from 1983. This is the reason that a new movement today must fight against the mining of Jabaluka, and the numerous other mines waiting to open.

The mechanism used by the Labor government was the so-called "three mines policy". While some people in the anti-uranium movement applaud this as a limitation

on the nuclear industry, it was actually the means by which the nuclear industry flourished.

By 1981 a campaign of mass street marches, industrial bans, education and more had tied the hands of the Malcolm Fraser Liberal-National government. The uranium mining industry needed to depoliticise the issue in order to guarantee long-term profits. In preparation for its election victory in 1983 the Labor leaders organised a campaign to split and destroy the anti-uranium movement. This was in the face of large and growing public opposition to uranium mining.

Once in office, Labor leaders ignored policy and drove ahead with support for uranium mining. Part of this process was a campaign to overturn the party's anti-uranium policy in 1984. In doing this the ALP leaders were willing to risk splitting the party. The rise of the Nuclear Disarmament Party in that year testifies to the broad opposition to Labor's treachery.

With the end of the Labor government in 1996, the nuclear industry extended its ambitions. This in turn led to the rise of a new wave of anti-nuclear protest. The new nuclear threats are many and broad: mining at Jabiluka in the face of hostility from traditional owners; expansion of South Australian mining and the resulting destruction of important water resources in the driest state on the driest continent; expansion of nuclear reactor facilities in suburban Sydney; plans for nuclear waste dumps in South Australia and elsewhere; and more.

The movement of the 1970s and 1980s has several lessons for today. One is that a massive movement can force the government's hand. A second is that both the Liberals and Labor will make every possible effort to defend the nuclear industry. A third is that there can be no compromise with these merchants of death, no matter which major party supports them.

This pamphlet is based on a series of articles published in the independent Australian newspaper *Green Left Weekly* in early 1999. Some of the material also appeared in a book by the same author, *We All Live On Three Mile Island*, published in 1981. It is dedicated to all future campaigners against the nuclear menace, a menace which must be defeated for humanity to survive. ■

1. Origins of the Australian Anti-Uranium Campaign

Opposition to uranium mining in Australia emerged as a mass movement in the 1970s. However, opposition to environmental destruction had already existed for more than a century. Campaigners for national parks, against the destruction of native flora and fauna, against urban pollution and for safe working environments were all fighting around what would today be called “green” issues.

In every case, unrestricted “market forces” of capitalism were destroying some aspect of the environment necessary for the survival of the human species. Many battles were required to achieve often limited results.

The Australian icon Blinky Bill began his adventures in 1933 after the shooting of his father for sport. Dorothy Wall begins her book with a moving description of a koala killing. The *Macquarie Encyclopedia of Australian Events* estimates that just six years earlier an open season on koalas in Queensland resulted in the shooting of at least 600,000 of them. The November 5, 1927, the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* described a single shipment of more than 100,000 koala skins.

Damming of unique lakes, sand-mining of beaches and felling of irreplaceable forests have disturbed many people. Concerns for preserving wilderness, flora and fauna have battled with the capitalist philosophy of “development”, the view that extraction of some commodity is the only legitimate land use.

Uranium-bearing ores were found in Australia more than a century ago. In 1869 traces of an unidentifiable green ore were reported from the Rum Jungle region in the Northern Territory.

Prior to World War I, mining of the radioactive element radium occurred at two sites in South Australia, but it was only during World War II that the modern demand for uranium emerged. Under Britain’s direction, the Australian government began encouraging the hunt for uranium. Australian uranium supplied the British nuclear weapons program during the 1950s.

Journalist and uranium prospector Ross Annabell in his book *Uranium Hunters*

describes the mood in Darwin in the early 1950s. The town was so sleepy that buildings bombed in World War II remained unrepaired. Then, in scenes reminiscent of a gold rush, fossickers began fanning out across the Territory, Geiger counters replacing gold pans. Tense excitement gripped every new announcement, the government promising a £25,000 reward for major discoveries. The Bureau of Mineral Resources provided aerial surveys showing likely places to prospect.

Annabell describes some of these government staff: “Men of the Bureau of Mineral Resources working on a radiometric survey of the new field had a grim mascot on their mess table — a grinning Aboriginal skull removed from a burial cave”.

Four decades later, the government’s Bureau of Resource Sciences was showing the same insensitivity to Aboriginal people, proposing to dump radioactive waste near the region of South Australia which had suffered bomb tests in the 1950s.

Working at Rum Jungle

The first of the new discoveries to be mined was at Rum Jungle. Annabell visited the site in the mid-1950s and found that “eighty tent dwellers lived two to a primitive shack with wooden sides and a canvas roof stretched over tarpaper ceilings. The canvas was rotten and leaking, the tarpaper tattered and torn.” Security at the mine was poor, and there was little indication that the largely migrant work force had any education regarding the danger of uranium mining.

Some people were very aware of the dangers, however. A 1975 Australian Atomic Energy Commission paper, “Radiation Hazards in Uranium Mining and Milling”, describes the deaths of large numbers of European miners in the 15th century. By 1913 their deaths had been attributed to lung cancer, and by the early 1920s radon gas was suspected as the cause.

Similar ignorance was found at the first Australian mainland nuclear bomb testing site, at Emu in South Australia, in October 1953. Fifteen years later site surveyor Len Beadell published a happy, chatty description of the explosion, *Blast the Bush*. His preparations for the atomic tests largely consisted of what he called “bush bashing”, driving through hundreds of kilometres of wilderness laying down a path for roads to follow.

During all his travels he fails to mention finding a single inhabitant. Any evidence of human occupation is attributed to “long-dead tribes”.

His awareness of radioactive fallout was limited to a concern that the site was far enough from Woomera to ensure that “radiation would not interfere with the future missile range work”. Rather, it should be “carried away harmlessly into the desert.”

The test was a complete success, enthused Beadell. After the explosion, British

bomb developer William (later Lord) Penney flew over the bomb site with Beadell, who writes: “I saw him rubbing his hands and heard him murmur one word, ‘Whacko!’ He should have been an Australian.”

During these decades, there was no public protest surrounding the Australian uranium industry, which employed few workers at small mines in remote regions. In the political climate of the times, supplying the British war machine was accepted as necessary by most people. The dangers of uranium mining were not widely understood, and official assurances of “adequate safeguards” were readily accepted.

British testing continued for several years. Here there was some concern expressed by a range of organisations. By the end of this period, a campaign had developed in opposition to nuclear testing which reflected the British anti-nuclear weapons testing campaign.

Preparing for nuclear war

The official government position was that nuclear war had to be prepared for, through both bomb testing and home preparation. In 1964 the Commonwealth Directorate of Civil Defence published a pamphlet entitled *Survival From Nuclear Attack: Protective Measures Against Radiation from Fallout*. This states: “People within or near the target area where radiation dose rates of 1,000 roentgens per hour or more are possible, may need to remain in shelter for most of the next two weeks”. An accompanying picture shows mum, dad and a small child happily playing inside their underground fallout shelter.

Luckily, “it would not take long for a family to prepare fallout shelter for themselves ... Windows are the weak point and would need to be blocked up with earth filled containers or bricks or even by furniture reinforced by earth, books or other heavy material.”

In the 1960s the Australian government was among the most enthusiastic followers of the US nuclear plans. Regarding the late 1960s, Ian Bellany writes in his 1972 book *Australia in the Nuclear Age*, “Official Australian interest in Plowshare has tended to concentrate on harbor-making applications and on underground storage reservoirs for water, gas or oil, in precisely the two areas of Plowshare activity, unfortunately, where American testing experience, and hence knowledge, is least”.

Plowshare was a project of the US Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). With startling honesty, chairperson Lewis Strauss told an AEC meeting in 1958 that its purpose was to “highlight the peaceful application of nuclear explosive devices and thereby create a climate of world opinion that is more favourable to weapons development and tests”.

This is one of many gems quoted by Dan O’Neill in his 1994 book *The Firecracker*

Boys. This tells the dismal history of the AEC's plan to blow up a chunk of Alaska as a test for building a new Panama canal.

Anti-Vietnam War experiences

During the 1960s a passive attitude to environmental problems and "science" in general began to break down, under the impact of the US-organised war against Vietnam. For year after year, Australians saw images of bombing and napalming in the name of democracy. Establishment assurances lost their value. A generation became educated about the nature of imperialism, and also learned the value of protest.

Large demonstrations against participation in the Vietnam War began in 1967 and continued through to the election of the Whitlam Labor government in December 1972. The last major protests occurred after US president Richard Nixon's infamous "Christmas bombing" of Hanoi at the end of 1972.

By then, hundreds of thousands of people had demonstrated, something virtually unknown to the generation which grew up in the 1950s. A mass movement with extensive social links and sophisticated understanding of strategy had been educated in this process. Some of the results which movement participants had discovered were:

- the effectiveness of mass action;
- the value of demands which win support from a broad range of people regardless of their views on other issues, and the value of tactics which draw in the maximum number of people, and provide them with increased confidence in their own power to press their demands;
- the need for democratic decision making in order to build an effective movement.

Modern movement debate often takes the form of arguing for or against those lessons from the anti-Vietnam War movement, especially the debate between mass action and some sort of minority action approach.

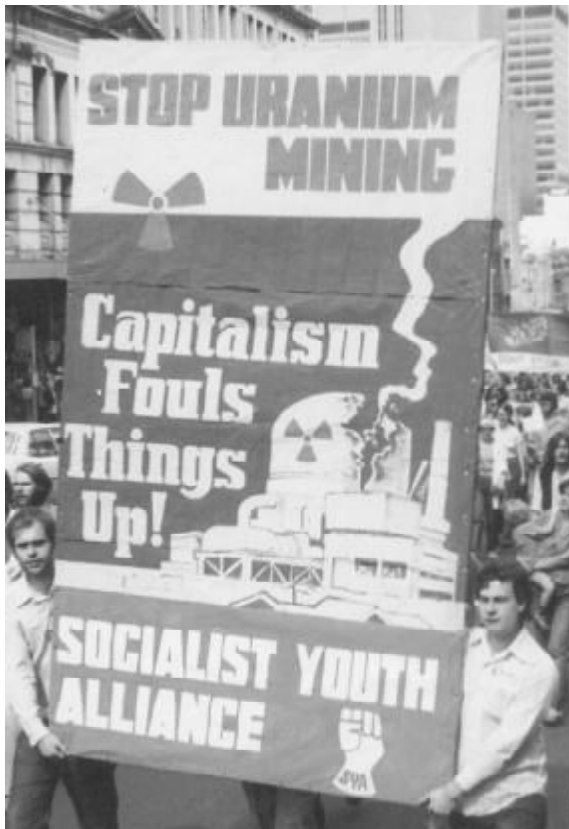
The modern feminist, gay rights and environmental movements were all facilitated by the climate of scepticism and self-organisation encouraged by this antiwar movement.

Among other things, the antiwar movement responded to the racism of the US war against Vietnam. Because of this, the antiwar movement helped create a broad anti-racist consciousness throughout Australia. The Aboriginal land rights movement in the late 1960s was able to win a receptive audience among activists in Australian cities. The establishment of the Aboriginal Embassy in Canberra in 1972 struck a chord among many people who had been fighting for the national rights of the Vietnamese.

The antiwar movement also gave impetus to what later became the green movement. In the late 1960s and early 1970s a blossoming environmental movement

campaigns around protection of the Great Barrier Reef from oil drilling, the Tasmanian wilderness from hydroelectric dams, the Sydney Rocks district from razing for high rise development and many other causes. There were also many demonstrations during the early 1970s to oppose French nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific.

One environmental disaster in the making was the uranium mining industry. ■



Anti-uranium protest, Sydney, April 7, 1979.

2. An Anti-Uranium Mining Movement Emerges

The second wave of uranium exploration, which led to the discovery of Australia's huge uranium reserves, began in 1967, in anticipation of intense demand for uranium as governments and power corporations around the world sought a cheap answer to their energy needs.

A sizeable proportion of the world's uranium reserves are located east of Darwin in the Northern Territory, in an area centred on the Alligator Rivers. With an official estimated 228,000 tonnes of uranium oxide, the Jabiluka deposit is among the largest in the world. The Ranger ore body, though less than half the size of Jabiluka, is also huge by world standards.

With ore grades averaging 21 kilos per tonne, the smaller Nabarlek is more than 20 times as rich as ore bodies that were mined in the US during the 1950s.

The small uranium deposit at Rum Jungle was mined until the early 1960s, stockpiled ore being processed until 1971. For more than a decade, official complaints were made about pollution at Rum Jungle. According to a 1975 report by the Australian Atomic Energy Commission, the Rum Jungle project discharged some 2300 tonnes of manganese, 1300 tonnes of copper, 200 tonnes of zinc and at least 380 grams of radium into the environment. At least a quarter of the discharged radium, an amount sufficient to cause 90 million cases of bone cancer, is estimated to have found its way into the Finnis River.

Public pressure has ensured that the uranium mining companies are forced to spend far more than their earlier counterparts on protecting the environment. But federal governments remain ready to help the companies cut corners at the expense of the land and its wildlife.

This was established early on by the fate of the Kakadu National Park, first projected for the Alligator Rivers area in 1965. As uranium finds were announced, the borders recommended for the park by the Northern Territory Reserves Board steadily contracted. By 1971, pressure from mining and pastoral interests had cut the proposed

park to less than half its original area. It then became clear that the government had every intention of allowing mining to go ahead within the park boundaries, even in vulnerable wetland areas.

Labor's export suspension

One consequence of the radicalisation associated with the Vietnam War was the election in December 1972 of a Labor government headed by Gough Whitlam. Under the previous Coalition government, contracts had been approved for the export of 9000 tonnes of uranium oxide, most of it destined for Japanese reactors.

The new government was reluctant to allow immediate export. In its 1972 election platform, the Australian Labor Party had made clear that uranium and other mining would be delayed until Aboriginal claims to the affected land had been investigated.

There were also economic factors militating against an early start to mining. Influential forces in the ALP, led by minerals and energy minister Rex Connor, wanted to wait until uranium prices increased. In the meantime, Australia could investigate the building of an enrichment plant. These considerations continued to dominate government policy through 1973 and 1974.

By 1975, a growing number of ALP branch members and parliamentarians, led by environment minister Moss Cass, had begun to express outright opposition to uranium mining. In May of that year, federal cabinet ordered that the mining proposals of Ranger Uranium Mines Pty Ltd be the subject of a public environmental inquiry, headed by Justice R.W. Fox.

The inquiry had begun hearing evidence when, on November 11, 1975, the government was sacked by Governor-General Sir John Kerr. The federal election in December was won by the Liberal-National Country Party Coalition under Malcolm Fraser.

One company, Mary Kathleen Uranium, which had already established mining facilities in northwest Queensland and was not subject to the environmental legislation, had felt confident enough to resume mining and stockpiling uranium even before the change of government. But the company's hopes for an early resumption of exports met with a serious obstacle — the trade union movement.

Increasingly aware of the dangers posed by the nuclear industry, the Australian Council of Trade Unions had voted at its 1975 congress to ban all uranium mining except for biomedical use. Acting on this decision, the Australian Railways Union (ARU) placed bans on the transport of uranium ore. The government was forced to agree that no exports would take place until Justice Fox brought down his report.

First union bans

In May 1976 the resolve of the unions was tested. A railway-yard supervisor in Townsville was suspended for refusing to move sulphur bound for the Mary Kathleen mine. On May 24 the ARU called a national 24-hour rail stoppage in protest at the suspension. Soon after, the supervisor was reinstated.

Pressure was mounting on the leaders of the union movement to force an end to all mining operations at Mary Kathleen. But in June, at the urging of Queensland Trades and Labour Council President Jack Egerton, himself a director of Mary Kathleen Uranium, a meeting of national unions adopted a “compromise” proposal which allowed mining to continue. This decision was endorsed by the ACTU executive soon after.

While sections of the union leadership were making clear that they had no wish to confront the government on the issue, public opinion was becoming increasingly critical of uranium mining. A poll taken in July 1976 found that only 22% felt that uranium should, as a matter of “duty”, be exported to other countries. Hiroshima Day demonstrations on August 6 and 7 that year were the first notable demonstrations against uranium mining, 500 people demonstrating in Adelaide.

In September, a tour by US anti-nuclear campaigner Dale Bridenbaugh and US-based Australian paediatrician Helen Caldicott drew increased attention to the campaign. Uranium mining had become an important public issue by the time of the October 1976 release of the first Fox Report.

Uranium shares rose after Fox presented his judgment that the dangers involved in mining and milling uranium and in the operation of nuclear power reactors, “properly regulated and controlled”, were not enough to justify a veto on the mining and selling of Australian uranium. In order to obtain this verdict, one company alone, Ranger Uranium Mines Pty Ltd, had spent \$1 million on submissions to the inquiry.

Fox recommended that no decision be made to resume exports until a second report dealing with the Northern Territory deposits had appeared, and widespread public debate had taken place. But the mining companies were quick to demand an immediate go-ahead.

Influential figures in the Labor Party found nothing to protest against in the report; opposition leader Gough Whitlam called it “an admirable document”. But in the union ranks, the debate on uranium mining continued. The ARU reaffirmed its ban and indicated that, if necessary, it would defy the ACTU executive on the issue.

Mass movement under way

The environmental organisations campaigning against uranium mining were spurred by the appearance of the first Fox Report. At a press conference, spokespeople for the

Australian Conservation Foundation, the Movement Against Uranium Mining and Friends of the Earth joined the ARU in declaring that they intended to mount a struggle as big as the campaign against the Vietnam War. On November 6-7, 1976, a national consultation of anti-uranium forces decided to demand a five-year moratorium on the mining and export of uranium.

These statements were timely; within weeks, the need for a militant campaign again became obvious. Ignoring the Fox Report's call for "comprehensive and widespread public debate" before uranium exports were resumed, the Fraser government announced on November 11 that it would allow the immediate export of over 10,000 tonnes of uranium oxide to meet existing contracts.

In effect, the government had given the go-ahead for uranium mining in the Northern Territory even before the Fox commission presented its second report. Mining companies whose finds were located in the Territory were given permission to export quantities of uranium that could not be supplied from existing stockpiles.

The government was confident that divisions and confusion within the union movement would prevent a resolute response. For a time, Fraser's gamble seemed justified. Queensland unions which would be involved in the handling and transport of uranium repeated their defiant statements that they would not allow it to be exported. But instead of receiving support from ALP leaders, the workers whose lives would be at immediate risk from the export of uranium met with betrayal.

On November 17 the federal parliamentary caucus of the ALP decided to support the fulfilment of all existing export contracts, taking a position essentially the same as Fraser's. This decision was soon endorsed by the ALP federal executive, by the parliamentary caucus of the Queensland ALP and by the NSW ALP state council.

In pushing through this sellout, the Labor hierarchy was aided by the fact that the miners at Mary Kathleen, the only uranium mine producing at that time, refused to support the bans. The miners were members of the Australian Workers Union, one of the largest and most conservative unions in the country.

Although the Labor leaders were able for a period to stop the unions from becoming the main centres of opposition to uranium mining, they could not prevent that opposition from growing. On November 19, 1976, 3000-4000 anti-uranium protesters marched through the streets of Melbourne. ■

3. The Struggle Against Uranium Enters the Labour Movement

In early 1977 the campaign escalated rapidly, mainly under the leadership of environmental groups. At least 20,000 people took part in nationwide demonstrations on April 1. On May 25, the second Fox report, dealing with uranium mining in the Northern Territory, was released.

Like the first report, it failed to decisively reject uranium mining, thus giving it the green light. The only unequivocal position the report adopted was that the uranium deposit at Koongarra in the Alligator River district should not be developed, to protect surrounding wetlands. The report's recommendations on environmental safeguards, though strict, were not binding on the government or the mining companies.

The report was bitterly criticised by Aboriginal activists. Its conclusion, according to Neville Perkins, then a member of the NT Legislative Assembly, was that "Aboriginal needs must come second to mining demands".

The federal Land Rights Act stated that Aborigines had the right to claim vacant crown land where they could establish traditional ownership. There was no question that the uranium-rich Alligator River district came into this category, and Fox recommended that it be declared Aboriginal land.

However, under the act, an Aboriginal veto of mining on their land could be overridden if the government considered mining to be in the "national interest". To the Fox commission, the right of mining companies to make profits was more important than the right of Aborigines to protect their land and culture.

Despite calls from the pro-uranium lobby for an immediate go-ahead, the government delayed announcing a decision while it made plans to use uranium exports as a weapon in international trade negotiations. "If Europeans want stability of access to supplies of energy, it is reasonable enough for us to seek to have that principle of stability applied to access to their markets", Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser said on July 3, 1977.

Waterfront battle

Meanwhile, several state governments indicated that they could be relied on to help a decision to step up exports. In Sydney and Melbourne, police violently attacked wharf pickets protesting against the shipping of uranium.

The police attacks provoked a revolt by the Victorian branch of the Waterside Workers Federation, which defied its national leadership and imposed a complete ban on ships carrying uranium. On July 7, the national conference of the ALP voted to call for an indefinite moratorium on uranium mining.

This decision, carried unanimously, represented a considerable toughening of the motion put by the party leadership. The new policy also stated bluntly that Labor would “repudiate any commitment of a non-Labor government to the mining, processing or export of Australia’s uranium”.

The party’s ranks proved to be far in advance of the leaders. Within a month, the Victorian branch adopted a motion rebuking ACTU president Bob Hawke for stating that he supported the eventual mining and export of uranium, and that the ALP would ultimately approve mining and export.

The strength of the movement was shown in Hiroshima Day rallies and marches on August 5-6, 1977, when at least 50,000 people mobilised.

On August 25, the government’s expected go-ahead for uranium mining was announced. Contrary to most predictions, the government rejected the Fox commission’s clear recommendation that the NT mines be developed sequentially, in order to minimise the impact on local Aboriginal communities. This decision appears to have been motivated by a desire, common to the government and mining lobby, to mine and sell as much uranium as possible before a Labor government could be elected and shut the mines down.

The Fraser government could not ignore the fact that the mobilisations were having a big political impact and, as opposition to uranium mining mounted, the ALP’s anti-uranium stand was a vote-winner.

Through 1977 public opposition to uranium mining kept growing. A poll in six capital cities in March 1977 showed that 64% of respondents supported uranium mining, with 24% opposed. In September, a survey for the *Sydney Morning Herald* found 53% in favour and 42% opposed. The *Herald* survey found that in Melbourne, where the anti-uranium movement had been especially active, 50% were opposed and 45% in favour.

On October 22, as many as 70,000 people mobilised in every capital city and many provincial centres. Thousands of workers marched behind trade union banners, and the ALP rank and file were heavily represented.

Despite the militancy of the Labor ranks, only in the lead-up to the December 10 federal election did Labor's leaders grudgingly begin campaigning on uranium mining. Although the Coalition was returned to office, the ALP and Australian Democrats, both opposed to uranium mining and export, gained a majority of votes.

Debate in the unions

Early in 1978, 10 major unions were represented at a national consultation of the Movement Against Uranium Mining (MAUM). At this time, members of the Waterside Workers Federation affirmed their total opposition to handling uranium shipments, including existing contracts. In a national ballot of major ports, wharves voted by 3486 to 0 in favour of rejecting uranium shipments.

On February 10, the ACTU at a special conference on uranium accepted the advice of its president, Bob Hawke, and decided to allow existing uranium contracts to be fulfilled. However, the conference recommended that "labour not be made available" for the opening of new mines, pending assurances from the government that adequate safeguards existed in relation to nuclear waste disposal, and that "the legitimate demands of the Aboriginal people" over land rights were satisfied.

Within a week, the Victorian and South Australian trades and labour councils had voted to reject this sellout. The confusion and demoralisation produced by the ACTU's backdown was shown on February 14, when 500 waterside workers in Sydney voted by a margin of 3-1 to endorse the ACTU decision.

Responsibility for leading the anti-uranium movement fell once again to the anti-uranium groups in each state. The movement had entered 1978 with morale high. Late in the previous year, MAUM in Victoria had more than 100 local groups operating. A poll published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in early 1978 showed that 66% of people aged between 18 and 21, and 57% of those between 21 and 24, opposed uranium mining.

Nationwide demonstrations on March 31 and April 1 attracted 30,000 people despite heavy rain in some cities. Soon afterwards, preparations began for the mobilisations on Hiroshima Day, August 5.

An early victory was notched when the Victorian branch of the ALP, at a special conference on May 14, endorsed the Hiroshima Day demonstration and expressed full support for the anti-uranium movement.

Some views on the left

1978 represented a maturing of the Australian anti-uranium movement. After two years of massive but chaotic efforts, the movement was beginning to affect national

politics. It is not surprising that in that year distinct positions on what the movement should be doing developed.

The largest left party at that time, the Communist Party of Australia, had a long tradition of campaigning against nuclear weapons, both in its own name and with the Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament in Melbourne, and the Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament in Sydney.

The CPA saw the anti-uranium movement as a potential adjunct to the traditional peace movement, despite the fact that the vast majority of anti-uranium activists had no previous affiliation to the peace movement and were opposed to all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle. It presented this narrow view to a MAUM meeting in Melbourne on May 20, 1978, when it successfully argued that the demand “Land Rights not Uranium” be dropped from the Hiroshima Day demonstration.

The smaller pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia, with significant influence in some militant unions, publicly supported aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle because the Stalinist leaders of the Soviet Union claimed nuclear power could be safe. This position had been disproved by the anti-nuclear power movement many years before the Chernobyl nuclear plant spewed death across Europe.

An SPA leaflet distributed in Brisbane in May 1978 summarised its view: “Opposition to the mining and processing of uranium, and through it the production of nuclear power, is unrealistic and flying in the face of the facts”.

Such an obviously silly position had only limited influence in the trade unions where the SPA was based. ■

4. 1977-78: Anti-Uranium Movement Debates Strategy

During 1978, activists' attention was focused on the battle waged against the federal government and the uranium companies by Aborigines in the Northern Territory, represented by the Northern Land Council.

When the go-ahead for mining and export of uranium was announced in August 1977, Aboriginal affairs minister Ian Viner said the government had accepted all the Fox report's recommendations on Aborigines, including that no mining in Kakadu National Park begin until Aboriginal title to the area had been granted and the necessary control mechanisms set up.

Despite this, and over the angry objections from the NLC, mining companies carried out widespread exploration of the area. Ranger Uranium made substantial preparations on its mine site inside Kakadu. In November 1977, in reply to protests, the government endorsed the mining companies' preparations.

The huge investments being made by the companies indicated that the government had given them clear assurances that the Aboriginal people would not be allowed to prevent mining. In May 1978, Canberra allowed Pancontinental Mining to carry out test drilling at Jabiluka.

The terms for the extraction of uranium were being negotiated in mid-1978 between the federal government and the NLC. The Aborigines had not relented in their opposition to mining, but pressure and threats from the government had convinced many that mining would be allowed to proceed whether they agreed or not.

On August 4, it was reported that the talks had reached a stalemate on environmental questions and on the royalties to be paid to the Aboriginal communities by the mining companies. Fraser promptly threatened to appoint an arbitrator whose decision would be binding.

Bullying tactics

Late in August it was announced that agreement had been reached between the

government and NLC representatives, and that the Ranger project would go once the agreement was ratified by a full NLC meeting on September 15.

But on September 21, a judge of the NT Supreme Court granted an injunction restraining the NLC from signing the agreement. Several Aboriginal communities applied for the injunction because of their dissatisfaction with the way the September 15 NLC meeting had been conducted. Only half of the council's 42 members had been present.

An especially sore point with the Aboriginal communities was the crude threats Fraser and his ministers had used against NLC leaders to get them to recommend that the agreement be approved. At a meeting on September 8, Fraser told NLC chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu: "I have the power to block any law in the NT. I'm the number one man in Australia. We're not going to negotiate. Shut up and sit down. We're going to dig that hole anyway. It doesn't matter if you don't want it. We're still going to do it.

"If this agreement is not signed you will lose the Northern Land Council. I will take it off you ... you won't have anything."

Moved by a groundswell of opposition within the Aboriginal communities, the NLC told the Supreme Court on September 22 that it would review its decision to ratify the agreement. With this announcement, the NLC blocked mining until mid-1979, because the wet season was impending. On October 11, the Ranger agreement was rejected by a meeting of 40 NLC delegates.

On November 3, yet another NLC meeting signed the agreement. Under ruthless pressure from the federal government, NLC chairman Yunupingu caved in, and began campaigning for the agreement to be accepted.

The final NLC discussions on the matter were a shameful affair, in which Yunupingu and Aboriginal affairs minister Ian Viner exploited the confusion of the delegates to present the agreement as an accomplished fact which the Aboriginal people had no right to continue to oppose. According to NLC member Leo Finlay, the traditional owners of the Ranger mine site were not asked their opinion; the consultation required by the Land Rights Act never occurred.

During December an agreement was signed covering mining at Nabarlek, where mining officially began on June 8, 1979, with a \$25,000 party for 200 guests. Deputy Prime Minister Doug Anthony unveiled a plaque, and Galarrwuy Yunupingu and two Japanese power company executives used a silver spade to turn the first sods. Aboriginal children were given party hats, balloons and sweets. The Ranger mine was officially inaugurated three days later.

Elite or mass campaigning

With at least 40,000 people taking part around the country, the 1978 Hiroshima Day demonstrations established clearly that the anti-uranium movement had not lost ability to involve large numbers of people in political struggle.

Particularly significant was the turnout of 25,000 people in Melbourne, equal to the largest of the 1977 demonstrations. For the first time, the Victorian ALP had been drawn into mobilising its members and supporters to join the campaign.

Large numbers of people, including trade unionists, secondary and university students and professionals, were beginning to take visible political action against the nuclear menace. Just a few years earlier, a movement against the US war against Vietnam had played an important part in ending one of the most vicious military invasions in history.

The government and the capitalist media dismissed the mass actions. Not surprisingly, the views of the Australian ruling class were echoed by some people within the movement. They argued that the mass of people are powerless, and that there is no point in trying to mobilise mass opposition to uranium mining.

Advocates of this position on the right looked for an elite of scientists, entertainers or politicians as the force that could end the uranium threat. This position was mirrored on the left by those who believed that the bravery of a militant minority of activists could substitute for mass action by broad numbers of people.

One left-wing version of this political elitism was expressed in the August 19, 1978, issue of the *Battler*, the newspaper of the International Socialists. An article entitled "Which way now for the uranium movement?" stated: "People are more and more questioning the value of street marches ... No-one, least of all Fraser, is going to take the movement seriously if all we ever do is march and make speeches."

This was a caricature of what the movement had been doing. A typical example of the impact of the movement was at the University of Queensland, a major organising centre for the anti-uranium movement. In preparation for the 1978 Hiroshima Day, a group of 50 or so engineering students had formed an "Engineers Against Uranium" group, and marched behind their own banner.

The mass orientation of the movement was convincing millions of Australians of the need to oppose the nuclear fuel cycle. Students, workers and many others were convinced of the value of joining mass protests. Trade union protests were possible because individual unionists were convinced by the mass movement. In the 1970s there was no tradition of environmental education within the Australian union movement that could explain why unions across the political spectrum were willing to take up the issue. What was convincing rank and file unionists was the mass anti-

uranium movement itself.

In the face of growing anti-uranium protests, the government of Joh Bjelke-Petersen in Queensland banned the right to march on the city streets. Some in the movement argued that mass civil disobedience to the ban, involving hundreds of people walking into police lines to be arrested, was the highest priority.

The alternative view was that the anti-uranium movement should oppose this restriction but continue to mobilise the largest possible number of people in public demonstrations against uranium mining. Turning anti-uranium demonstrations into exercises in mass civil disobedience, they argued, assisted neither in focusing on the anti-uranium message nor in building the anti-uranium movement.

It was not only the mining of uranium that the anti-nuclear campaign would have to combat. In March, deputy PM Anthony announced that Japan had agreed to take part in the building of a uranium enrichment plant in Australia during the next two years. While in Paris in July, Anthony announced that France would also be a partner. Western Australia's premier, Sir Charles Court, supported moves by the Western Mining Corporation to set up an enrichment plant near its Yeelirrie uranium deposit, north of Kalgoorlie.

In October 1978 it emerged that the Australian Atomic Energy Commission (AAEC) was planning to have nuclear power stations operating in several states by the mid-1990s. AAEC officials revealed that the commission was already working on plans for nuclear power with state government authorities in WA and Victoria. In June 1979 the Court government named two prospective sites, both in an earthquake-prone area. ■

5. The Mass Movement Defeats Fraser

By early 1979, the Australian anti-uranium movement had grown rapidly for more than two years. Millions of people were now convinced of the dangers of the nuclear fuel cycle. Hundreds of thousands had attended a protest demonstration or made some other active commitment to opposing the deadly export. Trade unionists had played a major part by supporting bans on the industry.

The federal government was not getting far with its nuclear agenda. It had also alienated many people with its bullying treatment of Aboriginal leaders in order to force partial acceptance of mining.

Then the spectacular and disastrous accident at the US nuclear power plant at Three Mile Island happened. On March 28 alarm bells started ringing at the reactor, which had been opened hurriedly at the end of 1978 for financial reasons. This was the real thing: the accident which anti-nuclear campaigners had predicted was taking place. The movement was right; “science” was wrong.

On April 6 and 7, at least 60,000 people attended protests in 20 cities and towns around Australia. The crowd of 20,000 in Sydney was the largest for any rally there since the Whitlam government was sacked in 1975. Much of the credit for the huge Sydney turnout belonged to Labor Against Uranium, a committee of Labor Party anti-uranium activists.

The union movement was not united on the issue. At a special meeting of 12 unions in Melbourne on March 9, 1979, two right-wing-led unions, the Australian Workers Union and the Federated Ironworkers Association (which have since amalgamated), indicated that they would continue to defy ACTU policy by allowing their members to work on site preparations for the Ranger mine.

At the same time, John O'Connor, the West Australian secretary of the Transport Workers Union (TWU), said his union would ban any goods coming to or from the Yeelirrie uranium mine site. On April 29, ACTU senior vice president and Electrical Trades Union (ETU) official Cliff Dolan announced that several key unions had resolved

to ban all work by their members on the Nabarlek and Ranger projects.

The Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union (AMWSU), the Australian Railway Union, and the ETU would refuse to supply labour at the mine site, and would also try to stop the manufacture and transport of equipment for the mines. Dolan said the TWU had promised its support for this stand.

These were not futile gestures. The Ranger consortium had said it would need up to 500 tradespeople at peak construction time, most of them in trades covered by the unions which had imposed the bans.

The Fraser government fostered the image that it was willing to ride out public opposition to its policies. In the case of uranium mining, this approach was of only limited value. If the government could win a quick victory, then the industry could go ahead, but if the fight to allow uranium mining became a long battle, the whole industry would become politicised, hindering the mining companies, which wanted to make money (regardless of consequences), not carry on an endless dispute with their workers and the public.

The desire of union and Labor Party members for action was shown on December 3 at a Sydney rally called by Labor Against Uranium. In an unprecedented show of support by Labor leaders, federal opposition leader Bill Hayden, NSW Premier Neville Wran and federal ALP minerals and energy spokesperson Paul Keating all expressed the Labor Party's opposition to uranium mining and export.

Further nuclear plans

The Liberal government in South Australia elected in late 1979 put forward plans to significantly expand the nuclear industry. Mining was proposed in SA at three places: the huge Roxby Downs reserves and the Beverley and Honeymoon sites near Lake Frome. An enrichment plant was suggested for either Port Pirie or Whyalla. This would represent a major new commitment to the nuclear fuel cycle, taking chemically concentrated uranium oxide and increasing the proportion of the radioactive isotope U-235 to the concentration required for particular power plants or military applications, producing gaseous, liquid and solid radioactive wastes.

The government pretended that these nuclear developments would generate large numbers of jobs. The SA United Trades and Labor Council challenged this fraud, leading a ban on work on the Roxby Downs site.

In other states, too, as if to prove that the loss of the Three Mile Island facility would not hinder the industry's forward march, a stream of nuclear plans appeared.

In January 1980 the West Australian State Electricity Commission announced that the most likely site for a planned nuclear reactor was Breton Bay, about 90 kilometres

north of Perth. Premier Charles Court declared that the government would not be deterred from its plan to have a nuclear power station operational by the mid-1990s.

The Victorian State Electricity Commission was considering sites at Portland, French Island in Westernport Bay, Kirk south of Werribee and Giffard on the Gippsland coast. Two of these sites, Kirk and French Island, were close to the Melbourne metropolitan area.

Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen later proposed building a uranium enrichment plant at either Caboolture or Beaudesert, both near Brisbane.

Bans take hold

Meanwhile, real information about the nuclear threat was reaching more Australians. For example, metalworkers at Evans Deakin Industries in Brisbane held a stop-work meeting on February 20 to hear a Canadian-based researcher on the long-term health effects of low-level radiation exposure, Dr Rosalie Bertell, describe the dangers of the nuclear industry.

Workers at both EDI and the engineering plant Sergeants-ANI banned all work on steel fabrication for the Ranger mine site. A few weeks later the Electrical Trades Union announced that it was withdrawing services to any of its members working at the state's Mary Kathleen uranium mine, and called on them to leave the site.

Preparations for a major rally in April on the first anniversary of the Three Mile Island accident started at a January 9 Labor Against Uranium organising meeting of 120 in Sydney. There were divisions within the movement over whether the rally was worthwhile building. Both the Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament (AICD) and the Movement Against Uranium Mining (MAUM) decided not to work to build the rally.

Within any movement, the timing of rallies is an issue to be decided by the participants, and should reflect the real possibility of organising a successful show of opinion. In this case, MAUM felt it didn't have the resources to help build the rally. In the case of the traditional peace organisation AICD, however, a more rigid view was put forward that the movement should limit itself to annual mobilisations on Hiroshima Day in August.

Attendance at the rally was 5000, with union and ALP branch banners prominent, and Dolan heading the speaking list. The rally played an important part in supporting workers who were involved or planning to ban uranium-related work.

By 1980, the cover-up over the British nuclear testing at Maralinga — two decades of suppression of discussion about them, justified by claims of national security — was beginning to unravel. This had been assisted by the work of a newly established Atomic

Veterans Association. As in the US, the British tests in Australia had included an examination of the ability of soldiers to operate in the vicinity of nuclear explosions.

The total disregard of local Aboriginal residents during the testing was also revealed. Despite a concerted government campaign to drive Aboriginal communities from their land nationally, traditional communities remained in the area. The only measure taken to protect these primarily non-English-speaking people was the placement of English-language signs in the vicinity.

Hiroshima Day in early August, focused on opposition to uranium mining, drew around 10,000 people to rallies in Sydney, Brisbane and several other cities. A few weeks later 5000 took to the streets in Melbourne.

Fraser fails

Before the October national elections, Fraser appeared to be concerned about nuclear weapons proliferation based on Australian exports. After winning the election, this was exposed as a pretence. By March 1981 “safeguards agreements” had been signed with seven countries, including the Philippines and South Korea, where corrupt and repressive regimes faced immense anti-government opposition, and France, which continued to test nuclear weapons in the Pacific.

Industry plans, however, were completely bogged down by early 1981 when, despite the predictions by government and pro-nuclear union leaders that bans on uranium mining would prove ineffectual, the bans by the Australian Railways Union, the Electrical Trades Union and the AMWSU (the largest union in the country) came into effect.

In early April, Queensland Mines appealed to the federal government to help it export yellowcake from the Nabarlek mine. Shipments through Darwin on barges had been halted by the decisions of the Northern Territory branches of the Waterside Workers Federation and the Seamen’s Union not to allow the containers to be loaded or shipped.

Deputy Prime Minister Doug Anthony responded by having alternative options drawn up, including an airlift to Singapore. Despite some high profile airlifts, the uranium industry knew it was in trouble. Only a depoliticised industry could achieve their export targets. Fraser’s confrontational strategy had failed to achieve this. But the industry found another ally, which would keep it in business for the next decade and a half, and anaesthetise public concern: the Australian Labor Party. ■

6. Labor Betrays the Anti-Uranium Movement

In October 1980 a federal election returned Malcolm Fraser's conservative coalition. Despite widespread opposition to uranium mining, the ALP had refused to make it an election issue. ALP leaders had even turned down an offer from US actor Jack Lemmon to do an anti-uranium television commercial for free. Lemmon had starred in the anti-nuclear film *The China Syndrome*.

By 1981 all the elements were in place for the victory of the anti-uranium movement. Nine years earlier, a large movement had forced the withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam, and within a year giant anti-nuclear war mobilisations would begin to sweep Europe and Australia. For the past five years, a growing anti-uranium movement had mobilised tens of thousands of people.

Increasing Australian environmental concerns had developed something unique in the world, a strong and active union opposition to the nuclear industry. The Australian Council of Trade Unions had adopted an anti-uranium policy in 1979, and key unions were putting it into practice.

Electrical workers, metalworkers, road, rail and water transport workers were all willing to put themselves on the line in support of this position. Aggressive posturing by the Fraser government had not broken this resolve. Fraudulent assurances and studies guaranteeing the safety of nuclear power and backed by huge advertising campaigns had not stopped the growth of anti-nuclear opinion.

Labor Party members across Australia had campaigned for their party to adopt an anti-uranium position, and some of their leaders had addressed demonstrations against uranium mining.

Yet by the end of 1981 the union bans were off, the union movement split and demoralised. To understand how this came about it is necessary to look at two contradictory trends within the union movement: the fight to protect living standards and conditions of Australia workers; and the desire to trade off these same conditions in return for the perks of Labor in office.

Broad reach of bans

A February 6, 1981, meeting of 24 unions with possible connections to the uranium mining industry adopted a resolution for implementation of the ACTU bans. This meeting described the industry as including the provision of materials and services to mining sites and townships built to serve the sites. It also for the first time included servicing of an existing mine, Mary Kathleen. Previous decisions had related only to the opening of new mines.

While the mining companies could rely on some unions, particularly the Australian Workers Union, to assist in filling gaps caused by other unions, in areas such as telecommunications services, the bans would have an immediate impact.

On March 1 national bans by the Australian Railways Union, Electrical Trades Union and Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union came into effect. In Darwin, Waterside Workers Federation bans on loading of yellowcake were now matched by Seamen's Union bans on its shipping. (The previous year uranium which got past the wharves had been carried by union-crewed ships.)

Transport, mining, construction, metal fabrication, power, telecommunications and a host of other services were denied to the mining companies.

By October the bans had stopped "business as usual". Mary Kathleen profits had dropped from \$6.0 million in the second half of 1980 to \$1.7 million for the first half of 1981. This represented just two successful shipments.

Nabarlek maintained its profits with direct government aid. Yellowcake stored at Lucas Heights near Sydney had been exported earlier, and the stocks were then replenished from Nabarlek, the government handing over the previously received sales money.

Showing the strain, industrial relations minister Ian Viner in May threatened the use of troops to break the bans. In Queensland and elsewhere, governments prepared anti-union legal action.

Throughout the year small demonstrations and meetings supporting the bans were held across Australia. In November 15,000 took part in a Melbourne rally organised by the Movement Against Uranium Mining.

Bob Hawke

Then on December 8, 1981, the ACTU executive voted by 15 to nine to lift all bans on uranium until the following February. This decision was hailed by the media as a victory for Bob Hawke's pragmatism.

In the 1970s, Hawke had strongly opposed any ACTU action on uranium mining. At the 1977 ACTU congress, in opposition to proposals to suspend uranium mining

and exports for two years, Hawke argued for a referendum on the issue. Hawke's position won by 493 to 371. Before the following 1979 congress, an ACTU executive meeting voted to recommend that mining at Ranger and Nabarlek be allowed to go ahead.

On September 14, 1979, the congress delegates heard Hawke argue passionately for the executive's new position. Hawke predicted that uranium bans would not be enforced and would stand as "a monument to futility". But all Hawke's pessimism could not erase from the minds of the delegates the conviction that rank-and-file unionists wanted action, and were prepared to back it up. The vote went against Hawke, 512 to 318.

ACTU policy is not binding on affiliated unions. Even before the vote, the Miscellaneous Workers Union and the Australian Workers Union had given notice that they would not withdraw the members they had working in uranium mines.

Leaders of the Waterside Workers Federation at an all-ports conference in early October 1979 called on the ACTU to convene a conference of 25 unions potentially affected by the nuclear industry. The WWF leaders indicated that their bans on the handling of uranium depended on other unions pledging to take similar stands.

In defiance of the wishes of the ACTU delegates — and in many cases of their own memberships as well — officials of the unions voted narrowly at a November 30 meeting not to take industrial action to enforce the ACTU policy. Later, with union members coming to understand the dire threat represented by uranium mining, pressure on the officials increased. The February 1981 ACTU unions conference already mentioned represented a complete turnaround.

But while the movement was gaining strength and thousands of workers were implementing bans in practice, a power shift was taking place in the ALP and ACTU. Labor leader Bill Hayden announced in November 1981 that he was opposed to the union bans. This had been foreshadowed in the 1980 federal elections, when Hayden refused to campaign on the uranium issue.

Why Labor ratted

The dropping of union bans in December 1981 wasn't just a momentary show of cowardice in the face of threats from Malcolm Fraser. It was part of the process of preparing for government, which transformed ALP policy in the early 1980s. The most visible evidence of this was the Prices and Income Accord. But the principle of such a social contract, in which unions, bosses and the government sat down to help make capitalism profitable, extended to other areas.

The Accord during its life would result in the most dramatic shift of income from

labour to capital in the country's history. This same approach would ensure stable export of uranium for the next decade and a half.

The story of Roxby Downs is typical of the impact of the uranium industry on political processes when billions of dollars are at stake. It also shows the process by which the ALP turned itself inside out on this key policy question.

The election of David Tonkin's Liberal government in 1979 was heralded as a green light for nuclear developments. The government was an enthusiastic public supporter of the Roxby Downs mine. However, it lacked a majority in the upper house, the anti-uranium Democrats holding the balance of power. Using the now familiar tactic of buying off an individual Labor Party member, the government was able to gain approval for the mine in June 1982.

This by itself would have been insufficient. Long-term development of the mine required Labor Party approval, at both state and federal levels. Victorian "left-winger" Bob Hogg provided the opening at the ALP's federal conference in July. His three-and-a-half page amendment at the 1982 national conference pretended to oppose uranium mining. The key section, however, stated that a Labor government would "consider applications for the export of uranium mined incidentally to the mining of other minerals". On the face of it this position makes no sense. Nuclear weapons, radiation from nuclear power and nuclear waste are all a threat to human survival, regardless of whether the original uranium oxide was dug up alongside copper or not. But for the ALP, this was okay.

South Australian Labor was not slow to follow. Campaigning in the late 1982 state elections, leader John Bannon announced that Labor in office would allow the mine to proceed, a promise which he kept. When Labor won federal power in 1983, Prime Minister Hawke used this precedent to approve exports from Roxby Downs, a decision accepted by Labor cabinet on October 31.

The final outcome of the ALP's about-face was the notorious "three mines" policy. It was not everything the mining companies demanded, and far short of the extensive development of a nuclear industry which its advocates wanted. But in the real world of falling uranium commodity prices and collapsing interest in nuclear power, it was an industry life-saver. ■

7. Why Labor Mined Uranium

At its 1977 national conference in Perth, the Australian Labor Party adopted a policy opposing the mining, processing and export of uranium. The policy remained substantially in force until 1984. During those seven years, all three parliamentary Labor leaders — Gough Whitlam, Bill Hayden and Bob Hawke — opposed and flouted the policy.

This abuse of ALP policy-making processes by its leaders goes a long way toward explaining how the anti-uranium movement was defeated in the early 1980s. ALP numbers person Graham Richardson summed it up in his description of the 1983 government decision to approve exports from Roxby Downs, which became the world's largest uranium mine:

“The decision proved to the business community that this was an economically responsible government in deadly earnest about maintaining Australia's image internationally as a reliable supplier of commodities.”

The Hawke/Keating government showed that the court of last appeal on issues of policy is not ALP members, or even “public opinion”. It is the country's rulers, big business. While ALP policy-making processes can respond to mass protest movements, when Labor is in government they are ignored in favour of instructions provided in the editorials of the daily press.

Whitlam & Hayden ignore policy

In 1977, Whitlam was still the ALP's federal parliamentary leader. In September, he came under fire within the party for ignoring the party's policies on both East Timor (opposing self-determination) and uranium mining.

That month, Whitlam told a Monday Conference interview that the issue of nuclear waste could be easily resolved: “If the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] said that there were adequate safeguards to monitor the storage and the disposal of the waste, the radioactive waste from nuclear power generation, of course the party would accept it”. The IAEA was a major proponent of the expansion of nuclear power.

Whitlam was replaced by Hayden. In his 1996 autobiography, Hayden writes of

the 1977 policy, “I never understood the justification of that policy” and goes on to describe it as a “smelly albatross strung around our neck”.

Despite this, Hayden was a keynote speaker at a December 1979 Labor Against Uranium rally, alongside Paul Keating.

During the federal election 12 months later, Hayden sidelined the uranium issue, despite widespread support for the party’s position. By mid-1982 he was ready to fight for the mining industry. Addressing the July national conference, he stated that if the ALP policy of repudiating existing contracts was carried out, “We would almost become a banana republic”.

Hayden was feted by the NSW right faction. Introducing him to the June 1982 state conference, Keating said: “He has taken on the hard decisions that none of us like to take on, but which have to be taken if we are to win government. He is a leader of courage and determination, a man of integrity and principle.”

In this case, “hard decisions” refer to publicly unpopular decisions which are urged on Labor by big business.

Two years later, the New Zealand Labour government would show what could be done with a publicly popular anti-nuclear policy, banning the visit of nuclear warships. In 1982 Hayden had briefly toyed with the idea of limiting nuclear warships’ access to Australia. A sharp rebuke from US deputy secretary of state Walter Stroessel on June 21 was followed by a rapid backdown.

The June 24 *Australian* described this as follows: “Labor’s polls have shown that the question of nuclear power is a potential vote winner, but only if it is aggressively campaigned. Mr Hayden’s concern is that such a campaign would split the Australian community. He would rather come to power from consensus than conflict.”

The hypocrisy of this claim is that the ALP leaders were happy to undertake a major conflict with their own members and supporters, but not with the country’s economic rulers.

Within months, Hayden lost the leadership of the party to Bob Hawke, who would go on to win the March 1983 federal election. It was Hayden’s active opposition to the anti-uranium policy that convinced some in the Labor left faction to switch their allegiance to Hawke, a surprising decision given his consistent and ruthless attacks on uranium bans while leader of the ACTU.

Accounts of the period describe the surprise support for Hawke from Tom Uren, a prominent anti-uranium campaigner. Both Hawke and Uren describe this in their autobiographies. In *The Hawke Memoirs*, published in 1994, Hawke says, “I made it clear that I supported Hayden’s desire to change the policy and would do all that I could to secure that change. I told Tom that if the policy remained unchanged I would,

reluctantly, support it.”

In *Straight Left*, published the following year, Uren provides a similar account of this discussion.

Labor left loses

This event epitomises the problem for supporters of progressive policy within the ALP. The election of a Labor government leaves untouched the control of the country’s large business interests, and Labor rules in their interests.

These interests are aware of this, and actively intervene in ALP processes with the aim of keeping friendly forces in control. The left faction is relegated to hoping it can influence one right faction or another to implement some of its policies. This in turn creates self-limitations on the left faction, encouraging personal advancement at the expense of policy principles.

While Labor left confusion helped legitimise the rise of the prime minister who would lead the uranium sellout, the same faction also provided the author of the new pro-uranium policy, Victorian Bob Hogg.

This gave the go-ahead for mining South Australia’s giant Roxby Downs reserves, outraging ALP members across the country. Emergency meetings and conferences were called, including a special state conference in Victoria on October 3, which declared the new policy unacceptable.

The election of the Hawke government at no point represented a setback for the nuclear industry. While France exploded a nuclear bomb at Moruroa on May 26, 1983, Hawke opposed cutting French uranium sales. At the same time, minerals and energy minister Peter Walsh announced export licences for the owners of the Ranger and Nabarlek uranium mines in the Northern Territory.

While Hawke was willing to ignore ALP policy, he still needed the support of federal caucus to approve the expansion of uranium mining. The battle for this vote was a turning point for his government.

In an atmosphere of pressure and threats, the resolution was carried by 55 votes to 46 in late 1983. The closeness of the vote showed the breadth of opposition to uranium mining, the anti-uranium view cutting across the party’s traditional factions. The broad anti-uranium movement of the past six years had been solidly reflected within the party, and a newly developing peace movement was starting to make itself felt.

One example of these threats was seen on October 25, when SA parliamentarian Peter Duncan, a previous opponent of uranium mining, made a speech supporting the Roxby Downs project. According to a report in the November 3 *Sydney Morning Herald*, he faced expulsion from the party had he not made the speech.

Another was the forced resignation from cabinet of immigration minister Stewart West. In this case, Hawke used the “principle” of cabinet solidarity, under which all cabinet members are bound to vote for cabinet proposals in caucus, allowing minority positions to dominate.

Hawke sent letters to all federal Labor members requesting them to publicly support the caucus decision on Roxby Downs.

Lost opportunity

The war between the party leadership and its members continued from mid-1982 to late 1984. Combined with other conservative, anti-worker positions adopted by the Hawke government at the time, this period probably represented the greatest opportunity for a left wing to emerge from within the Labor Party, in the same way that NewLabour was shortly to emerge from the New Zealand Labour Party.

The absence of any real alternative laid the basis for more than a decade of conservative Labor government.

The completion of the destruction of the anti-uranium policy occurred at the mid-1984 ALP national conference. This conference also endorsed treasurer Paul Keating’s “free market” economic platform, opposition to self-determination for East Timor, support for US military bases in Australia and support for the lowering of living standards of Australian workers through the ACTU-ALP Accord.

After seven years in opposition with a strong stand against the deadly nuclear fuel cycle, the Labor Party was giving the thumbs up to its parliamentary leaders, who had already given the uranium mining companies the go-ahead.

Who were these delegates who so comfortably dismissed the widespread public and ALP membership concern? Of the 99 full delegates to that conference, 20 were federal parliamentarians, 23 were state parliamentarians, 20 were full-time union officials and six were state ALP secretaries. ■

8. The New Mass Anti-Nuclear Movement

In the early 1980s a new anti-nuclear peace movement arose in Australia. Building on the mass protests against the mining and exporting of uranium in the late '70s, over the next half decade the new movement drew hundreds of thousands of people into the streets.

The movement closely followed international events. The election of arch-conservative US President Ronald Reagan gave the green light for new militaristic programs, including the Strategic Defence Initiative (“Star Wars”). Another development was the upgrading of nuclear-armed missiles across Europe.

The US government made it clear it was seriously considering engaging in a first strike against the Soviet Union, involving “limited” nuclear weapons based in Europe. Millions of Europeans marched against this project, generating a strong antiwar sentiment.

The first sign that this sentiment was echoed in Australia was a People for Nuclear Disarmament meeting of more than 1000 people in Melbourne on October 21, 1981, around the theme “Act for survival: stop the nuclear arms race”. The movement gained national prominence in April 1982, when Palm Sunday marches around the country drew 100,000 people.

From the beginning, the movement had to deal with a debate over the issue of “unilateralism” versus “multilateralism”. According to the former, Australia should unilaterally renounce any association with nuclear war preparations. These included uranium mining and export, US military bases, visits by US nuclear-armed or -powered warships and nuclear-armed planes, and ongoing development of a nuclear capacity at the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor in Sydney.

Unilateralism had been the goal of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the late 1950s and early '60s. The mass European campaigns of the 1980s for removal of US nuclear missiles, and New Zealanders’ stand against nuclear ship visits in the mid-1980s, were unilateralist.

Multilateralism, on the other hand, called on nuclear powers to negotiate as a

prelude to nuclear disarmament. Unilateral disarmament was opposed, and demands such as “Disarm East and West” were advocated. This position removed any requirement for the Australian government to take steps beyond encouraging international negotiations.

Debate in the movement

In general, multilateralism was advocated by supporters of the Labor Party government, a government which condemned nuclear war in international forums while doing nothing at home about the ANZUS alliance with its nuclear implications.

A related question was the role of the Soviet Union in the “arms race”. Some supporters of unilateralism pointed out that the US led every major development in the nuclear arms race, including the atomic bomb, the intercontinental bomber, the hydrogen bomb, the nuclear submarine, the submarine-launched ballistic missile, the neutron bomb and cruise missiles.

The first Palm Sunday demonstrations in 1982 officially had a predominantly multilateralist character. They did not demand the closing of US bases, an identified link in US nuclear war preparations. However, many who joined the demonstrations had no such qualms: banners opposing US military bases in Australia and other specific demands were carried alongside the official, less specific “Stop the nuclear arms race” banners.

The issue came to a head at a meeting of the Nuclear Disarmament Coordinating Committee in Sydney on September 27 to plan for the 1983 Palm Sunday rally. While a wide range of organisations had been invited to the meeting, its predominantly Labor Party leaders prevented groups with a unilateralist perspective, including the Socialist Workers Party (now the Democratic Socialist Party), the Committee in Solidarity with Central America and the Caribbean, and the pro-Soviet Young Socialist League, from affiliating.

At the time, the Labor Party was preparing to dump its anti-uranium mining position in preparation for winning the 1983 federal election.

A similar debate was taking place in Melbourne. The People for Nuclear Disarmament general meeting in October decided to focus on US bases in Australia, uranium mining and nuclear activity in the Pacific at the 1983 Palm Sunday rally. In November, this was amended to make “Disarmament Now, East and West” the main demand.

Internationally, the movement was beginning to have an impact. December 1982 was the third anniversary of the NATO decision to deploy 464 ground-launched cruise missiles and 108 Pershing II missiles in Europe. To mark the anniversary, 30,000 women

formed a human chain around the Greenham Common air base in England.

The 1983 Palm Sunday turnout was more than 150,000, including 60,000 in Sydney, 70,000 in Melbourne, 15,000 in Perth and 10,000 in Adelaide. Attendance was boosted by concern at Reagan's announced plan to ignore the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty with the Soviet Union and proceed with Star Wars.

As the US nuclear war threat grew, the movement's demands became clearer. On July 2-3, 1983, a meeting in Canberra of 52 organisations set the demands for the 1984 Palm Sunday rallies. These were: opposition to US bases in Australia, bans on US warships and planes, an end to uranium mining and exports, and for a nuclear-free zone in the Indian and Pacific oceans.

The meeting rejected a call by the Sydney-based Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament for the "internationalisation" of the US bases. As the meeting was proceeding, a demonstration of 10,000 took place in Perth against visiting US warships.

Labor government

Recently elected Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke had stated that ANZUS pact commitments to US bases, port facilities for US ships and facilities for B-52 bombers in northern Australia would be maintained. This view was reinforced by the cabinet's adoption in August 1983 of "The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy". The document, leaked to the *National Times* several months later, gave unqualified support for US war policies and their Cold War ideological underpinnings.

Hiroshima Day that month, which mobilised 26,000 demonstrators across Australia, demanded an end to uranium mining and US bases, and the diversion of military spending to jobs programs.

As Hawke's government moved to the right on the issues of uranium and US war ties, opposition began to grow within the ALP. In January 1984, 270 delegates to the national Labor Women conference criticised US military bases and the export of uranium to France. Hawke presented his keynote address facing a banner stating "Labor Women say NO to uranium mining".

Palm Sunday in 1984 was the largest national protest action in Australian history: 150,000 in Sydney, 100,000 in Melbourne, 25,000 in Perth, 10,000 in Brisbane and Adelaide, 5000 in Canberra and Hobart, and protests in many regional centres.

The government responded by releasing a series of "independent" studies. In late May, the Australian Science and Technology Council released a report on uranium exports which advanced the notion that exporting uranium allows Australia to use its influence to discourage nuclear weapons proliferation.

The following week, Hawke reported that the US military bases “cannot be used to make war on any other country”, because “there are no combat personnel there or combat equipment there, no military stores or workshops, no plant or machinery or laboratories for research, development, production or maintenance of any weapons or combat systems of any type”.

Of course none of these things would be at the US bases; their role is to form part of a worldwide spy network and to convey orders for general and nuclear warfare.

Foreign minister Bill Hayden joined this “newspeak” effort in mid-June. While France exploded nuclear devices in the Pacific on June 12 and 16, and Hayden issued a condemnation of these, he also said that Australia should fulfil its existing uranium contracts with France.

The Labor leaders’ preparations culminated in the ALP national conference decision to drop the no uranium mining policy in favour of continuing mining at three mines. Opposition at a number of ALP state conferences beforehand prevented the removal of all limits on uranium exports. Throughout the debate, 1000 anti-uranium protesters occupied the lobbies of the conference site.

For the mining industry, the ALP’s open support for three mines, including the huge Roxby Downs mine in SA, was a major victory, guaranteeing continued Australian participation in the nuclear fuel cycle.

As Australian Labor was confirming its commitment to the nuclear fuel cycle and the ANZUS treaty, in New Zealand a Labour government was elected on a platform that included barring nuclear warships.

Nuclear Disarmament Party

This conflict in the second half of 1984 between the mass opposition to uranium mining and nuclear war and the Hawke government plans to export uranium and actively participate in US nuclear war preparations led to the strongest challenge yet to the Liberal-Labor duopoly, which had dominated Australian politics since World War II — the formation of the Nuclear Disarmament Party. While small parties such as the Democratic Labor Party and the Australian Democrats had gained seats since the 1950s, in their political programs and performance they had existed as an appendage of one major party or the other.

On June 17, 1984, at the initiative of Canberra doctor Michael Denborough, a meeting of 70 people voted to form the NDP. It faced a daunting task and opposition from nearly every existing political party in Australia, but it captured the imagination of millions of Australians in the few months between its formation and the December 1984 federal election. ■



Anti-uranium protest, Sydney, April 1, 1978.

9. The Rise of Anti-Nuclear Political Action

The Nuclear Disarmament Party was formed in June 1984, around the demands of the Palm Sunday rallies, which earlier that year had been attended by 300,000 people. These were:

1. To close all foreign military bases in Australia.
2. To prohibit the stationing in Australia, or the passage through Australian waters or airspace, of any nuclear weapons or nuclear-powered warships.
3. To terminate immediately all mining and export of uranium, and to repudiate all commitments by previous governments to the mining, processing or export of uranium.

After its formation in Canberra, founder Michael Denborough travelled to Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane, Hobart, Alice Springs and Adelaide to initiate NDP branches. The last of these was formed only two weeks before the December 1984 federal elections.

Formation of the NDP occurred as heightened concern about the nuclear threat coincided with a right-wing militarist shift by the Australian Labor Party national leadership under Bob Hawke.

This sentiment was expressed at an August 9 meeting in Sydney, when 3500 people heard speakers from a range of anti-nuclear organisations, including famous author Patrick White speaking on behalf of the NDP, of which he was a member. The meeting passed a resolution of unanimous support for the New Zealand government for declaring the country nuclear free, and called on the Australian government to do likewise.

By October, NDP branches were forming across the country, in regional centres such as Newcastle and Wollongong as well as in the capital cities. High-profile members included former ALP senator Jean Melzer in Victoria and Midnight Oil singer Peter Garrett. Midnight Oil had featured at several anti-nuclear concerts throughout the year, including a February “Stop the Drop” anti-bases and anti-uranium concert in

Adelaide attended by 8000 people.

The Australian Democrats were in panic. One Democrat senator on national television described the NDP's appearance as "effrontery". The Democrats, who had no involvement in social movements but claimed to represent them in parliament, had hoped to renew their parliamentary representation through disillusionment with the ALP over nuclear issues.

The Democrats were less than clear in their own approach. In a survey of parties dated October 17 and circulated by the Democrats themselves, on support for the ANZUS treaty they answered: "Yes. Non-nuclear." This ignored the fact that the ANZUS treaty was nuclear, as shown when New Zealand refused to accept US warship visits and was shown the door.

ALP multilateralism

Labor left figures desperately appealed to their supporters not to leave the party, even though the NDP was presenting a realistic and practical alternative to Hawke's support for the US nuclear war plans. The ALP sent Bill Hayden on an international trip for nuclear disarmament.

"We have embarked", he told Australian media on his return in November, "on a series of activities designed to bring [a nuclear test ban] treaty into life — at the United Nations, in Geneva, and in major capitals such as Washington and Moscow". On November 22 Hawke told the Sydney Morning Herald that he "was prepared to act as a go-between in arms control talks between the US and the Soviets", even if they hadn't asked him.

The beauty of this multilateralist position for the Labor government was that it could issue empty statements and then pretend that the reason it was continuing with its own nuclear weapons support was because other countries weren't disarming.

This is why the unilateralist anti-nuclear movement in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s was so important, because it explained that no-one could win a nuclear war and campaigned for unilateral disarmament by Britain. Similarly, the power of the NDP's campaign was that it fought to end an Australian role in nuclear war preparations and the nuclear fuel cycle.

The NDP drew its support from across the political spectrum, including members and supporters of all political parties. As expected, its anti-nuclear positions drew a hostile response from leaders of both the traditional conservative parties and the Labor Party.

Among smaller parties, the response was mixed. The Democrats saw their own ground slipping away. The Greens, who were then just beginning to develop in Australia,

in general were not interested. The largest party of the Australian left, the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), maintained its traditional allegiance to the Labor Party. The CPA's paper *Tribune* called for a vote for Labor, although many CPA members supported the NDP. Most smaller left parties and groups called for a Labor vote.

Socialist support for NDP

Alone among the left parties, the Socialist Workers Party (now the Democratic Socialist Party), along with the allied youth organisation Resistance, supported the Nuclear Disarmament Party. This support was open and up front.

Direct Action, newspaper of the SWP and Resistance, announced in its November 21 issue that its entire staff had joined the NDP. In many cities, the efforts of SWP and Resistance members in building, publicising and supporting the new party gave the NDP the opportunity to reach tens of thousands of previously uncommitted people. Some of these SWP members also joined the NDP, while others didn't.

At the time, this was not an issue. The NDP was open to everyone supporting its aims, and actively encouraged members of other political parties to join in supporting this issue, which cut across many traditional political allegiances. SWP members within the NDP, such as one of the Queensland Senate candidates, were open about their SWP membership.

The SWP took a position of support for the NDP after the July 1984 ALP federal conference. SWP leader Jim Percy described the party's approach in an October 1984 report, published at the time in *The ALP, The Nuclear Disarmament Party and the Elections*: "We think it would be a big mistake for the NDP to rapidly take positions on other issues. It would cut it off from growing, from winning more forces. It could divide and destroy it."

The Nuclear Disarmament Party attacked the Hawke government for agreeing to take part in Star Wars-related MX missile trials off the coast of Tasmania, forcing Hawke to back down on February 5, 1985.

It was also attractive to thousands of people who had previous experiences with the undemocratic habits of the Labor Party. Labor leaders since the 1983 victory had broken policy after policy, on uranium mining, on military ties and on a host of other issues. Among the thousands who joined the NDP, a large number wanted to be certain that individual prominent leaders wouldn't hijack policy once in office. This hope for democratic functioning was embodied in the rules of the new party.

The NDP also attracted the support of many famous people. Some of these, such as Patrick White, made their involvement a wholehearted support of the party. Others were more directly involved. Peter Garrett joined to stand as a NSW Senate candidate.

By early 1985 the NDP's impact was being felt. In the elections, 642,435 people had cast their primary vote for the NDP, and thousands of members had joined in just a few months. It had won one Senate seat, and nearly won a second. Labor's MX plans had been reversed, as the ALP struggled to win back lost support. A party with no political debts to any established party had emerged.

The March 1985 turnout of 300,000 on Palm Sunday, including 170,000 in Sydney, gave notice that the issue was continuing to grow. ■

10. The Political Establishment Closes Ranks

Anti-nuclear forces in the Pacific region suffered two significant onslaughts in 1985. In New Zealand, which was already in dispute with the US over nuclear ship visits, French secret service agents blew up the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in July, killing photographer Fernando Pereira.

At the time the Rainbow Warrior had been engaged in a battle against French nuclear testing in the Pacific. It remains one of the most famous examples of international governmental terrorism and dirty tricks.

In April in Australia, an unholy alliance united to attack the young Nuclear Disarmament Party.

These two blows reflected the anti-nuclear movement's significant influence by the mid-1980s. Both the Rainbow Warrior and the Nuclear Disarmament Party were responses to the rapid plunge of international politics towards nuclear disaster. Drawing mass popular support, they had also made rich and powerful enemies.

By April 1985, the NDP was preparing for a national conference in Melbourne. The NDP had to work out a practical way to approach a wide range of issues, now that it had a parliamentary seat. It also needed to develop an ongoing structure and decision-making process, as well as a policy on how to direct the work of parliamentarians.

The party included a hugely diverse membership. Strong areas of support included both the working-class industrial cities of Newcastle and Wollongong and the wealthy Sydney eastern suburbs. Hundreds of experienced and sceptical older political activists rubbed shoulders with enthusiastic and optimistic teenagers.

To forge a single political party from this range required patient, careful building of trust around practical and effective campaigns against the nuclear menace. However, the party's opponents were anything but willing to give the NDP the breathing space it needed. This external pressure was successful in causing a central core of high-profile leaders to doubt the possibility of building the NDP.

The Melbourne conference was not delegated, but was open to any member. The

conference was making recommendations to the national membership, not binding decisions.

There were three highly contentious issues. Firstly, Peter Garrett and Senator-elect Jo Vallentine were firmly set on shifting the party's policy from unilateralism to multilateralism. This took the form of attempting to equate Soviet and US responsibility for the nuclear arms race. This would not necessarily have caused major problems for the party as long as it maintained its focus on opposing Australian involvement in US nuclear war preparations and the nuclear fuel cycle. Nevertheless, it was an inaccurate and unnecessary concession to the US war machine.

The second issue was that of proscription, of forcing those members of other parties who had joined the NDP to cease membership of any other party. This was set for discussion under proposals for a national constitution.

The third question was that of ratification of conference decisions. One proposal was to send the conference decisions to a postal ballot of members. An alternative was that meetings of members should have the ultimate say. The subsequent media interference in the NDP's affairs was one measure of the danger of a broad new party relying on postal voting, without giving members the opportunity to meet and discuss the issues.

National conference walkout

The postal ballot proposal was defeated on a division by 101 votes to 78. At this point Vallentine and Garrett, along with about one-fifth of the conference participants, staged an apparently spontaneous walkout.

In her 1995 book *Half-Life*, former Senate candidate Gillian Fisher describes the events as one who walked out. A week before the Melbourne conference, she had learned that there would be a walkout if the postal ballot proposal was rejected. She describes how staff in the Sydney office appeared to have been aware of plans to split two weeks earlier than that. An alternative venue had been booked prior to the walkout.

Vallentine issued a letter on April 30 giving two reasons for leaving. First was "the takeover bid of the SWP"; second was her disagreement with decision-making processes of the national executive. She then stated that her primary commitment was to "multilateral disarmament", in contrast to the NDP platform on which she had been elected. This was particularly troubling for many NDP members who had experienced similar policy shifts by ALP leaders disregarding their members.

Most of those who walked out thought they were going to set up another party. This never eventuated.

The leaders of the group went to the media, blaming the Socialist Workers Party.

NDP member and former Liberal minister Ted StJohn had been running a campaign against socialists for several weeks. In an April paper favouring proscription, he expressed the view that the problem wasn't a predominance of socialists, but the very existence of left-wing views: "Communists have been and still are the bane of the peace movement, which they have attempted to use for their own purposes, and this remains so even though they are now only a small minority amongst us".

StJohn also proposed a national constitution under which NDP parliamentarians could "vote according to his/her conscience" on any question, including nuclear disarmament.

The Melbourne *Age* editorial of April 30 ignored the program on which the NDP fought the election to claim: "the party formed to promote general disarmament would inevitably have warped under the influence of the SWP to become an anti-American, unilateral disarmament party".

The April 30 *West Australian* read: "Senator-elect Jo Vallentine and other NDP leaders did the right thing by walking out of the party's inaugural conference in Melbourne. If the party is to maintain faith with the thousands of Australians who voted for it last year, it has to put as much distance as possible between itself and the Socialist Workers' Party."

After systematically attacking the NDP previously, the *Canberra Times* commented: "The party suffered a bitter split at the weekend as a group that had infiltrated it set about imposing its brand of left-wing politics on members".

Red-baiting on the left

Unfortunately, *Tribune*, the paper of the Communist, echoed this view in its May 1 issue: "The NDP was launched as a broad electoral coalition around a single set of issues. It will only remain an effective mass force if it can be re-established as such, free from the interventions of the SWP or anyone else seeking to use it 'for higher ends'."

None of these papers (including *Tribune*) had supported the Nuclear Disarmament Party during the 1984 elections.

Red-baiting is not a response to something inherently antagonistic about socialism. It is simply a 20th century modification of an age-old system of scapegoating. After the NDP split, SWP membership became a basis for accusation, as was agreement with the SWP on some position or support for the rights of SWP members within the NDP. SWP members were dehumanised, their views discounted, their motives suspect. Anyone with a grudge against the SWP was accepted as a credible witness.

Some CPA leaders lent "left" credibility to the campaign, attacking the SWP for, among other things, building a highly successful solidarity movement in support of the

Nicaraguan revolution.

The largest part in the campaign was played by the Labor Party. Labor leaders understood the risks which they undertook in dumping so much of the party platform in so short a time. The party risked losing not just a large part of its membership, but key sections of its support. Red-baiting was a cheap and effective means for a party which had already disposed of its own heritage of socialist terminology.

On the evening of the federal elections, 30 police had invaded the Adelaide NDP election night party and arrested 12 people who had attended a Roxby Downs protest earlier in the week. This protest had been in opposition to the Labor state government granting a water licence to the mine's management company. In the following months the ALP nationally expelled members who had supported the NDP during the elections.

Looking to the future

After the dust had settled, some things were the same and some were irrevocably changed.

Support for the NDP continued to remain strong for quite some time. A Morgan Gallup poll published in the July 23 Bulletin showed NDP support remained strong at 5%, compared to 7.2% at the time of the 1984 elections; this included 7% in NSW, 5% in Victoria and 4% in South Australia.

The NDP continued to campaign and contest elections. In the following federal elections in 1987, preferences allowed it to win the NSW Senate seat which had eluded it in 1984.

The Peace and Nuclear Disarmament Action (Panda) group formed after the walkout by Vallentine, Garrett and Melzer split at its national meeting on October 19-20, convincingly answering the question of who was responsible for the April NDP split. Garrett participated in the founding discussions of the Rainbow Alliance in August 1986 but had moved on well before that group's demise in 1998.

The splitters were media darlings for a brief moment. But the applause for their red-baiting didn't convert to media support for their subsequent anti-nuclear activities.

In the face of aggressive US nuclear plans, Jo Vallentine returned to an essentially unilateralist disarmament position, later becoming a senator for the WA Greens. Peter Garrett resumed his career as a rock star, speaking out on nuclear issues and the environment, but avoiding any organisations where he had to be responsible to an active membership base.

For the rest of the 1980s the Socialist Workers Party sought left regroupment with several splinters of the original Communist Party of Australia, but was unable to draw any of them back into active socialist politics. (The CPA itself finally perished. The

Communist Party of today has no connection to the CPA of that time.) In 1990 the Democratic Socialist Party, as it was now called, achieved a regroupment of sorts by replacing its party newspaper, *Direct Action*, with support for a broad non-party paper, *Green Left Weekly*. Today the DSP is the largest and most influential left party in Australia.

Keeping up Labor's attacks, the Victorian ALP state secretary organised forged NDP how-to-vote cards in the Nunawading by-election later in 1985, admitting this to a police investigation.

The Nuclear Disarmament Party continues to this day. Michael Denborough argues convincingly that the threat of nuclear annihilation has not eased, and Australia's involvement in US war plans and the nuclear fuel cycle is as great as ever.

The suspicion created by the walkout and red-baiting campaign is still felt in the left movement nearly a decade and a half later. The rebuilding of a mass anti-nuclear movement will require an understanding that the nuclear warmongers and uranium mining industry and their friends will cheat, lie, sabotage, bribe, intimidate and try to sow dissent among anti-nuclear campaigners. Assuming anything less would be naive, as we fight to end their power to destroy the world.

Continuation of the movement

While the three mines policy of the Labor government allowed the unprecedented development of Australian uranium mining, it could only be a temporary arrangement. As the history of the Australian environmental movement shows, protection of any part of the Australian environment has only been possible through constant and vigorous effort. Advocates of nuclear power development, nuclear waste dump development and a broad nuclear industry will continue to push forward with promises of rich rewards.

On the other hand, the majority of Australian working people will not remain unaware of the threats of uranium mining, of war and nuclear contamination, and the long-term danger of irreversible damage to the human gene pool. For this reason battle over uranium mining will continue to resurface until this deadly industry is permanently defeated. ■

Resistance books