

## FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

A film by Tom Zubrycki

### General Synopsis

The emergence of the New Right as a force to be reckoned with in Australian politics had its origins in one of the most bitter and protracted disputes in Australian labor history - the 1985 Queensland Power Dispute.

It all started in February of that year when Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Peterson sacked 1,002 electrical linesmen and rushed through Parliament some of the harshest anti-union legislation seen in Australia for over 50 years.

FRIENDS & ENEMIES is an impressionistic account of the 9 month struggle observed through some of the major participants on both sides. On the surface the focus is on strategy and tactics, but the underlying themes refer to power and social class. The film constantly shifts between two dialectical poles: Vince Lester, the Queensland Minister in charge of the dispute, takes us to the heart of National Party territory as he explains the government's position to audiences at country fares, barbecues and debutante balls. Meanwhile, back in the union office, a progressively embittered rank and file grapple to understand the root cause of their predicament (who their friends and enemies are?), and how if at all, they can influence the course of events. The interplay builds to a chilling climax as both sides prepare for a final showdown.

The film raises serious questions about the trade union movements apparent inability to effectively run a campaign of such magnitude. This is especially disturbing when viewed in the context of further savage anti-union legislation recently passed by the Queensland government, making striking virtually illegal in the state.

### PERSONAL NOTE:

In the past 12 months, both the Queensland Trades and Labor Council and the Australian Council of Trade Unions have tried to wipe the slate clean and cover-up their complicity in what was one of the most disastrous defeats in Australian Labor history. Sections of the rank and file, many of whom suffered serious financial and personal losses, dared to criticise the officials responsible. For this they have been labelled "stirrers and communist agitators". FRIENDS & ENEMIES is a tribute to the courage and tenacity of these men and women. History has a tendency of always repeating itself because the lessons of past failures have never been learnt. Hopefully, the film will go some way towards correcting these mistakes.

FRIENDS & ENEMIES, 93 mins, Colour, 16mm  
Producer/Director: Tom Zubrycki, Editor: Les McLaren  
Photography: Fabio Cavadini, Larry Zetlin  
Sound: Keiran Knox Music: Paul Charlier  
Produced through the Documentary Fellowship Scheme of the  
Australian Film Commission