The three following contributions comment on the book “From Tweedledum to Tweedledee”. *

Although the book is strongly criticised from different points of view, the issues raised are sufficiently important to warrant the extended comment.

By WINTON HIGGINS

For the left in general, analysis of social democratic parties is a traditional area both of over-sensitivity and of extreme confusion.


This over-sensitivity and confusion have their historical roots in the unaccidental tendency for marxists and marxist parties to collapse into social democratic perspectives. The confusion is intensified by the emotional invective and internecine strife which tears the left apart whenever this tendency manifests itself. Preoccupied with the egocentric problems of “liquidationism”, “ultra-leftism”, and so on, the left hardly ever gets
round to a dispassionate analysis of social democracy itself -- an analysis that must have far-reaching consequences for left strategy. Only this can explain why two academicians produced in five weeks what the entire Australian left has failed to produce in over fifty years: a sustained enquiry into the ALP and its "social model".

The great bulk of this little book is a pastiche of clippings from the 'Australian Financial Review', 'The National Times', 'The Australian', and a handful of other journals. But a central thesis does emerge from the book: however ad hoc, spontaneous and even contradictory ALP policies may appear on the surface, together they articulate a complex and deliberate plan for social and economic integration in the interests of a streamlined "neo-capitalism". The authors therefore stress the INTERCONNECTIONS between policies, for the classic ruse of social democracy is to offer the dispossessed classes certain palliatives ("progressive measures" as the are fashionably and misleadingly called by the left) with strings attached -- strings that hold together a "package deal" whereby, in exchange they surrender their effective power to demand more radical changes.

The evidence which Catley and McFarlane bring forward to support this thesis is irrefutable. Apart from the policies themselves and their obvious congruity, there is a large body of evidence as to what Labor's overall priorities are, and the sources of its strategy to achieve them. Its first priority is a high stable growth rate, and it has gleaned a strategy for achieving this from the major international "think-tank" for capitalist planning and stabilisation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as the more glamorous examples of social democracy at work, particularly Sweden.

Basically, two kinds of policies are used to achieve the desired growth rate. The first involves a much greater degree of government planning, including forecasting private industry's future demands for labor, raw materials, transport facilities and so on. The second is intended to increase the productivity of labor by domesticating the workforce, making it more class collaborationist in attitude and willing to accommodate the swiftly changing needs of the capitalist class. This second type of policy necessitates the integration of the trade union movement into the state and other capitalist institutions at all levels, from cooperation of the upper echelon of trade union officialdom onto government consultative panels, right down to co-option of local militants in workers' participation schemes. The title of the fourth chapter -- "Destroying Class Politics" -- thus sums up the ALP's strategy towards the labor movement.

Catley and McFarlane justly dismiss the conventional left approach to the ALP which sees that party as a collection of individuals, some idealistic and some opportunists, and a random collection of policies, some good and some bad -- an approach which ends up in the tactic of putting your money on the idealists and the good policies and hoping for the best. Clearly, this approach dissolves the coherence of the ALP so that the basic thrust of its policies is lost from sight.

The ALP's unqualified commitment to capitalism is certainly established in the book, but the suggestion in the title that the ALP and the Opposition are indistinguishable contradicts one of its major themes: the ALP was elected in 1972 by the grace of key non-working class sectors precisely because it proposed new solutions to the problems of Australian capitalism. From the standpoint of the working class, the election of the ALP has meant that its main class adversary, the capitalist state, has made a radical switch in strategy, from Liberal-inspired confrontation and even violence against the working class, to ALP-inspired undermining of that class' organisational bases.

What is true, and what the British experience confirms, is that the crises of late capitalism reduce the range of choice available to rival parties of capitalism, so that a process of CONVERGENCE occurs. This process forces a labor party to abandon its traditional egalitarian posturing just as surely as it forces its opponents to abandon laissez-faire. As British communist Bill Warren writes:

"Wilson was election in 1964 on a platform and with an ideology in which equality scarcely figured. On the contrary, it was widely noted that the traditional Labor rhetoric of equality and social justice had been largely abandoned in favour of emphasis on efficiency, dynamism, the scientific and technological revolution as applied to Britain and so on. Alongside this went rhetorical broadsides against grouse-shooting amateurs, Tory backwoods squires, etc. which
again emphasised efficiency rather than justice as the crux of the difference between Labor and Tory.”

The analogy between 1964 Britain and 1972 Australia hardly requires elaboration. And just as the failure of traditional Tory policy turned Heath into “an orthodox social democrat” in 1972, so the Liberals’ 1972 electoral defeat has, as the recent Federal election campaign showed, turned Snedden into an orthodox technocratic laborite.

This contradiction in the book, between seeing the ALP as identical with the Opposition, and seeing it as having crucial differences from it, is symptomatic of the authors’ underlying theoretical inconsistencies. The introduction sets the pace with an orgy of eclecticism: Lenin’s 1913 characterisation of the ALP as a liberal-bourgeois party is quoted with approval, and yet we are invited to join in the old laborite’s grief on the demise of the ALP’s radical egalitarianism. In spite of a reference to the objective constraints on anti-capitalist programs imposed by the capitalist system itself, we are assured that a Labor government “could introduce socialist measures (nationalisation of corporations without compensation, under workers’ class power) to counter managerial power, and begin the long process of bringing the state under people’s power.”A little further on it turns out that it is not the capitalist system that defeats this revisionist dream, but a coalition inside the ALP of “new intellectual middle classes” and “the petit-bourgeoisie represented by small capitalists and the labor aristocracy”.

Instead of a consistent methodology, there is a mishmash of themes lifted from a variety of social and economic theories including, in the second last chapter, marxism. In the absence of a sound materialist basis, a good deal of conspiracy theory enters into the book. The greatest howler in this regard is the theory that women’s liberation is an OECD plot (p.37).

The other substantial weakness of the book - related to the first - is that it is saturated with jargon. Firstly, a lot of technical terms, from bourgeois economics in the main, are used without explanation. These terms could have been simply explained, if not dispensed with altogether. Secondly, most of the book is written in an idiom made fashionable in a very restricted circle by the ‘Financial Review’. This idiom is not only obscure: it encourages positive obscurantism. Thus, Connor’s plans to develop Australian fossil fuel resources are attributed to “Gigantomania” and compared with Stalin’s “obvious Freudian inspiration” to “litter the Soviet countryside with huge hydro-electric schemes” (p.49). A considerable number of working terms, like “Tweedledum/Tweedledee syndrome” and “Whitlam inflation” echo this subjectivist slant.

Nevertheless, the book has its uses for the left, quite apart from the negative one of criticising the left’s own approach to the ALP. It provides a comprehensive account of ALP policies that can be integrated into a marxist analysis of Australian capitalism and a marxist explanation of the ALP itself. Such an explanation would have to be founded on the marxist theory of the state, including the role played in the state apparatus by parties with working class electoral bases and the consequent political domination over that class by the state. Certain specific themes treated by Catley and McFarlane feed very well into this marxist project, particularly the ALP’s extremely bureaucratic style of government (in spite of all its vapourings about “open government”) and the meritocratic ideology peddled by contemporary social democrats here and overseas. In foreign policy, as the authors point out, the ALP’s falling in step with post-Vietnam imperialist strategy has added two new twists to Australia’s junior partner role to the major imperialist powers: firstly, Australia is to become the springboard into Asia as, in Whitlam’s words “an offshore factory”; and secondly, posing as a raw materials supplier, Australia is to seek admission into the Third World community as an Imperialist Trojan Horse (a role that the Israeli state has been playing for some time).

A negative virtue, but still a commendable one, is the authors’ refusal to get involved in the left’s problem of how to relate to the ALP — a problem that must be left to activists since it involves some fine judgments about working class perceptions of, and commitment to, this party. There can, as the authors imply, be no question of a working class party collaborating in the implementation of the ALP’s overall plan. The task of the left is rather to work for the defeat of that plan, and in so doing, win the working class to socialist politics. The STATED tactic of serious left groups is to mobilise around certain issues raised by the ALP, such as socialised medicine.
and the takeover of the Australian economy by the multi-national corporations, and to push those issues in a revolutionary direction. This tactic, while correct, is insufficient.

What is also required -- and here Catley and McFarlane's work acquires its greatest relevance -- is an understanding of how Labor's plan works, the dangers it entails for the labor movement, and the specific points at which it must be defeated. It is in this area that many sections of the left have been particularly timorous, and have shown little combativity or inclination to produce the constant "political arraignment" of the regime that Lenin deemed so essential.

So what dangers does the ALP in office pose the working class? Firstly, the dropping of equality in favour of meritocracy is not a merely ideological shift. As Warren has pointed out in the British case, the first Wilson government actually reversed the trend for the share of wages in the national income to increase, it left lower income earners worse off and it deliberately pursued deflationary policies which resulted in large-scale unemployment. Had it not been for the fact that a militant working class defeated Wilson's incomes policy and industrial legislation, matters would have been worse still. As the authors of the Cambridge University study 'Do Trade Unions Cause Inflation?' comment:

"It seems to be the fate of Labor Governments in Britain to tax employees more heavily (or restrain their real wages more effectively). Indeed, it almost appears ....... as if the objective economic-historical role of the British Labor Party is to do (no doubt despite itself) those things to the workers that Conservative Governments are unable to do."

I especially commend Catley and McFarlane's book to those who doubt that similar observations do, our could, apply to Australia.

The second, more long-term danger a Labor government poses to the labor movement is that of total absorption into the capitalist state apparatus. Catley and McFarlane quote a Swedish democratic cabinet minister as saying:

"Our aim is the establishment of a corporate state. We are aware of the abuses of the system, as in Fascist Italy, and we intend to avoid them. But corporation has succeeded in the labor market, and we believe it is the solution for the whole of society. Technology demands the collective." (p.44).

Enough said.

In spite of what we now know about the ALP, the left may properly work to preserve it in government for the sake of enhanced openings for raising revolutionary demands, conditions for struggle and the experience of "reformism" that Labor governments afford. But it is vital that this strategy should not collapse into supporting Labor willy-nilly, or act as a prohibition on trenchant criticism of the ALP. Here, above all, the first rule of revolutionary politics applies: tell it like it is.

In recommending that people read this book, I do not recommend that they buy it: $3.50 for 88 pages (excluding appendices) in a paperback edition is outrageous. Borrow it, rip it off, or achieve the same result at a fraction of the cost in time and money, by reading the same authors' article on the ALP in 'Intervention' No. 3.

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FOOTNOTES


By JANNA THOMPSON

From Tweedledum to Tweedledee, by Robert Catley and Bruce McFarlane is a book which probably expresses the disillusionment of many left wing people who
have left the ALP or remain, but without much enthusiasm. Its argument is that the ALP’s overall aim is to manage capital more efficiently and its policies contribute to this end. Thus, there is no real difference between the Liberal Party and the ALP. In fact, we are given the impression that the ALP could do more harm to the interests of the working class than the Liberals by using its influence with working class organisations to get them to accept an incomes policy and productivity deals.

The book is reminiscent of Miliband’s ‘Parliamentary Socialism’ in which the history of the British Labour Party is presented as a series of betrayals of the working class by their parliamentary leaders. Like Miliband, the authors adopt the tone of betrayed trust. They have seen through it all, and now they have the painful duty of enlightening their readers. So we are supposed to be shocked that a Labor government would plan imperialist expansion in Indonesia; we are meant to be revolted by the spectacle of Labor Ministers disguising capitalist interests under the cloak of nationalism; we are supposed to cry shame when we find out what Connor’s resource protection policy amounts to.

Righteous indignation has fuelled many a left wing movement but it is no substitute for a correct understanding of the situation. As an analysis of Whitlam’s government in action ‘Tweedledum and Tweedledee’ leaves a lot to be desired.

Behind a lot of the argument in this book is the idea that the nature of the Labor Party was altered by men like Whitlam and Hayden. Catley and McFarlane see Labor’s past as being both a Golden Age and the Stone Age. The old leaders are referred to as ‘paleo-laborites’, but at the same time, they see the Party in the old days as committed to redistribution of income and nationalisation of private power. (The authors have a touching faith in this supposed commitment, probably the result of not having a Labor government for so long.) Now, under Whitlam and his technocrats, the ALP has become a party wedded to capitalism. These technocrats have redefined equality as equality of opportunity and show no interest at all in nationalising private power.

The authors do not have much to say about why Whitlam and his technocrats were able to take control of, and alter the direction of, the Labor Party. They seem to accept the idea of Pannekoek that the entry of intellectual middle class into labor parties resulted in reformist theory and practice -- and Whitlam type policies. But exactly why these intellectuals should be interested in ensuring more profitability for capital is not explained.

The main thesis of the book is that far from advancing haphazard and unco-ordinated policies (as many people believe) the technocratic laborites have deliberately adopted goals and strategies in accordance with the recommendations of the Paris-based OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) of which Australia is a member.

They cite the following as evidence to support their thesis:

1. OECD did make recommendations for Australia (such as suggesting some tariff barriers should be removed), some of which the Labor Government has followed.

2. Labor ministers and advisers have been known to refer favourably to OECD guidelines.

3. The policies put forward by the Government on a wide range of matters fit into OECD strategy. (For instance, Labor support for equal pay, day care centres can be seen as an attempt to tap a previously under-used source of labor -- what the OECD recommends for overcoming labor power shortages which plague European capitalist societies.

None of this goes very far. Of course, it is perfectly possible that ALP ministers do follow OECD guidelines, and likely that some of them do so some of the time. But the authors have not proved that they have a master strategy supplied by the OECD for making capitalism run more efficiently. Their attempt to show that ALP policies can be seen as contributing to a more efficient, harmonious capitalism doesn’t do the job. For without too much strain on the imagination you can see anything the ALP could possibly do short of declaring the Australian People’s State as contributing to the functioning of capitalism. Giving aid to Aborigines helps to prevent costly racial strife and may help some Aborigines become skilled workers so they can contribute to an economy which needs skilled labor. Higher pensions will help relieve worker dissatis-
faction with their lot in the present system. Another problem is that the OECD guidelines which the authors mention are simply Keynesian strategies or the collected wisdom (if you can call it that) of capitalist countries who have faced similar problems (like inflation, under-production, manpower shortages, strikes, etc.). So it would not be surprising if many of the ALP’s economic policies were not in accordance with them, as would be the economic policies of similarly placed capitalist countries, whether members of the OECD or not.

Is there any evidence to suppose that the Labor Government has anything that can be called a master plan? If they do then we would expect to find from a study of the government in action some order in the way policies were put into effect: in their timing, the way they complement each other. I don’t have the impression that things happened in this way. What appears to have happened is that ministers began with some ideas about what they wanted, some ideas about what needed doing, that their ideas were modified by those of their staff and by interest groups; that ministers produced their policies without too much attention to policies of other ministers, with which they were sometimes in conflict. That these policies are coherent and compatible only in the sense that they all presuppose as given the capitalist framework. (What else is new!)

What account of Labor Government programs and strategies we should adopt of course depends on a detailed study of their decision making. But Catley and McFarlane do not attempt such a study. What is surprising and startling in their thesis is unproved. What is acceptable, namely that the ALP operates in capitalist framework, is not surprising or startling.

What is worth remarking on is the assumption underlying their thesis, the idea that the Labor Party has been taken over and re-oriented by a group of technocrats whose plans and goals determine its direction. Catley and McFarlane toy with the idea that the direction of the Party and the Government is determined largely by social and economic ‘realities’ and not by the men who happen to hold office (“Labor is in office, it is not in POWER.”) But this idea does not enter into the main arguments of the book. Only if the technocratic-laborites are in control of the direction of ALP policy does it make sense to condemn them for failing to be radicals. Only under this assumption does it become plausible to suppose that the ALP has a master plan which determines the direction of the Labor Government.

One obvious shortcoming of the assumption is that it does not allow for contribution to government policy making by any group outside of politicians and their advisers, except in a negative way (like resisting the implementation of a policy). At one point the authors do say that WEL forced the government to agree to the principle of equal pay for women, something they were at first unwilling to do. But they also say that offering equal pay is part of OECD strategy for encouraging women to come into the work force. So presumably, it was part of Labor’s plan, too. Should the authors be allowed to have it both ways?

A marxist analysis of the course of a labor government would try to account for the direction of its activities in terms of the forces acting on the economic and social structure, the crises of modern capitalism and the need to alleviate social ills that they cause. Catley and McFarlane’s account is not a marxist analysis. At times it borders on a conspiracy thesis.

Another assumption of the authors which has to be challenged is the idea of the class struggle that lies behind many of their remarks. The class struggle, according to this idea, is the basic conflict between workers who create value and capitalists who expropriate most of it. Capitalists try to cover up this conflict by introducing or encouraging “non-class” issues: women’s liberation, consumerism, own home ownership, education reform, and trying to pretend that interests of workers and capitalists are largely the same. Many of the social movements are thus treated shortly and sharply. Consumer groups are simply contributing to the consumer ethos of capitalist society. People concerned with ecological problems are associated by the authors with the Club of Rome and Ehrlich and then dismissed as “eco-freaks” or members of “radical chic movements”. Women’s liberation is said to be all right as long as women fight as part of the working class and not just as women. Catley and McFarlane worry about the danger that those trying to split the working class might encourage women to believe that it is men and not capitalism which oppresses them. The problem with this idea is that women do often have to
struggle against particular men -- a husband, a trade union leader. Should working class women cease their struggle for equality in working class organisations for fear that this might threaten working class solidarity? The reader is almost left with the impression that it’s not a good thing for women to leave the home and go into the workforce -- when their doing so contributes to capitalist aims.

In their rapid dismissal of non-working class movements, Catley and McFarlane do not mention the argument of some socialists that such movements (like the ecology movements) can present a serious challenge to capitalism. I suspect that they are blinkered by a narrow view of the contradictions in a modern capitalist society. If on the contrary, we hold that the socialisation of production in a society like ours has resulted in the penetration of capitalist needs and values into all areas of life: male-female relations, the family, the schools, etc., then we hold that fighting capitalism means fighting on many fronts at once. That people sometimes join the struggle as members of a community or as women does not mean that they necessarily cease to fight for the interests of the working class -- i.e. for the overthrowing of capitalism.

One question that the book raises but does not answer is whether capitalism can be managed efficiently. Catley and McFarlane are concerned to uncover the stratagems of the ALP and not to say anything about how successful these stratagems are likely to be. I suspect that behind the authors’ warnings about the atomisation of the working class is the fear that OCD policies could actually work. This fear is probably unfounded. Work done recently in political economy, such as that of Claus Offe and James O’Conner suggests that problems created by the capitalist economy create the need for welfare services and other state expenditures, and these expenditures in turn cause a fiscal crisis for the capitalist state. According to this view, governments far from pursuing a strategy are desperately trying to deal with pressing problems which cannot be solve in the capitalist framework.

A book like “Tweedledum and Tweedledee” should be judged not only for the ideas it puts forward but also for its implication for socialist practice. In this respect, it is worse than useless. The message that comes forward is that socialists should concern themselves with the real class struggle and not issues that capitalists use to divert the attention of the workers. But how does the socialist meet up with the real class struggle? The problem revolutionaries face in a society like ours is that most movements and struggles that workers and others engage in are reformist in character (at least on the surface) and thus in the style of Catley and McFarlane can be shown to contribute directly or indirectly to the functioning of capitalism or the mystification of the working class. So we seem to be faced with the choice of keeping our hands clean and doing nothing or having to worry about whether our actions aren’t giving aid and comfort to the class enemy. There is no attitude which is more likely to lead to the irrelevancy of the socialist movement and a loss of contact with the workers and oppressed groups.

The title “Tweedledum and Tweedledee” suggests that there is no essential difference between the ALP and the Liberals. Indeed, both parties function in the capitalist system and both therefore have to deal with the problems of economics and society that are created by that system. But to say this is to speak in generalities. When we come down to the level where we work and live, then the Tweedledum and Tweedledee idea becomes less attractive. Although Liberal and ALP policies look much the same, our good sense tells us that Liberals would be somewhat more reluctant to spend on social services and more eager to make the poor pay, that education reforms would not have top priority, that there would be fewer qualms about increasing unemployment. These may amount to quantitative differences, but they do make a difference to those people whose interests socialists are supposed to be concerned about. To forget this is to ensure that socialist intellectuals will never gain the confidence of working people.

By PAT VORT-RONALD

The Women’s Liberation Movement has existed in most States in Australia since 1968 or earlier. In that period its loose structure and the differing views of the women involved have produced varying analyses of the position of women in Australia, and various strategies for changing it. Among these, as in other mov-
ments such as the trade union movement, have been reformist and non-marxist strategies. In spite of differences, several central demands have clearly emerged:

1. The demand for women’s control of their own bodies through free and available contraception and abortion, sex education and health facilities.

2. The demand for social responsibility, involving both men and women, for housework and child care.

3. The demand for an end to discrimination against women in the workforce, including one rate for the job, an end to “male” and “female” classifications and training, in the school system, in apprenticeships and on the job.

Socialist and working class women have been involved in this movement, and its first national conference was on the subject of women in the workforce. Women’s liberation has played a large part in pressurising various governments, employers and the trade union movement to recognise women as workers entitled to the same pay and conditions as men, and in encouraging and supporting women who have taken traditionally “male” jobs.

In addition, it has influenced many socialist groups, some of whom now include its basic demands as part of the struggle for socialism.

Finally, it has worked in conjunction with other groups on the left: participation in the Sydney May Day rallies is just one example of this.

In view of these basic facts, it is surprising, to say the least, to read in Catley and McFarlane’s ‘From Tweedledum to Tweedledee: The New Labor Government in Australia: a critique of its social model’ that Women’s Liberation is nothing more nor less than a capitalist plot, whose aims are indistinguishable from those of OECD-inspired Labor policy. These claims, preposterous as they are, are worth examination because the book’s theme is an important and valid one, and will be read by many on the left.

Women’s Liberation is seen as an OECD plot on two grounds:

1. It is seen as part of OECD plans to “atomise” workers so that they turn to “non-class” issues.

2. It is seen as part of a manpower policy which plans the size of the workforce: women are to be substituted for, or used to supplement, expensive immigration schemes. (1)

The Labor Government is claimed to be supporting Women’s Liberation to these ends.

One would expect a substantial argument to back up these claims, but no evidence whatsoever is given to support them. All we are told is that various sections of the capitalist class and the Labor Government are supporting a series of limited reforms to encourage more married women into the workforce. (2) Instead of serious political argument, the authors label Women’s Liberationists as “libbers” who preach “sex war”, (3) the same tactic as is used by the capitalist press against the women’s movement. This tactic is also used by sections of the left which refuse to recognise that women are oppressed in a specific way under capitalism, that only their own struggles can end this oppression, even in the context of a socialist revolution, and that this struggle is a vital part of the anti-capitalist forces. Here, it is worthwhile remembering what August Bebel had to say about unprincipled opposition to women’s struggles on the part of male socialists:

“There are socialists who are not less opposed to the emancipation of women than the capitalist to socialism. Every socialist recognises the dependence of the woman on the capitalist and cannot understand that others, and especially the capitalists themselves, should fail to recognise it also; but the same socialist often does not recognise the dependence of women on men because the question touches his own dear self more or less nearly.” (4)

In addition to blind prejudice, the authors reveal an abysmal ignorance of the demands of Women’s Liberation. They show that OECD policy on the entry of women into the workforce is designed specifically so as NOT to interfere with the nuclear family under capitalism (5) Any knowledge of Women’s Liberation critiques of the family under capitalism shows that such reformism is incompatible with Women’s Liberation strategy which aims at the abolition of the nuclear family as the basic social unit of society. One
might as well say that the struggles of workers for better pay and conditions are indistinguishable from OECD policies of job enrichment and worker participation schemes! Of course, the authors are at pains to point out the necessary antagonism between the latter two, but are blind to the fact that the same antagonism exists between the real struggles of women for liberation and OECD’s attempts to integrate them into the workforce at capital’s convenience. This blindness is the stranger in view of their unacknowledged use of an article by Margaret Benston, a well-known marxist women’s liberationist, as a basis for their criticism of OECD “human capital” theories about the family. (6). The title of the article is given, but not the author, nor the source; perhaps it would have been too embarrassing to admit that an important marxist critique of the family and women’s position under capitalism could come from the Women’s Liberation Movement!

Having issued such a blanket condemnation of Women’s Liberation, the authors attempt to mitigate it somewhat by isolating and praising Women’s Electoral Lobby, which they regard as the good proletarian element of an otherwise bourgeois movement. WEL is hailed as a group of “thinking working women” who, UNLIKE Women’s Liberation, demand equal treatment for women workers. (7) Once again, this is just plain inaccurate, since Women’s Liberation was demanding this before WEL came into existence. The distortions which the authors are willing to engage in to praise WEL at the expense of Women’s Liberation are illustrated by their analysis of the “equal pay” bribe attached to the December 1973 incomes and prices control referendum. According to them, it was WEL pressure which succeeded in having “equal pay” added to the Government’s promises. If this is true (and given the inaccuracies of the rest of the section, it may well not be), it would seem to be a serious concession to a class collaborationist policy of incomes control, for very doubtful benefits, since the kind of “equal pay” promised was not specified, but government policy at that time was only for “equal pay for work of equal value”. And women, at least, know what kind of a fraud that policy was! But such a concession is hailed by the authors as “a blow for class politics! What kind of class analysis is this?

The authors not only distort the politics of the women’s movement according to their own prejudices, but they also show a complete lack of understanding of the tactics of the struggle against OECD-type reforms. As to the former: the Women’s movement already contains women of very different political viewpoints, but this does not prevent tactical alliances to achieve certain goals. Such alliances are also formed in the workers’ movement. The authors offer no principled criticism of the actual concrete politics of either Women’s Liberation or WEL; they offer instead a tissue of simplistic generalisations and downright fallacies, and ludicrous attempts to split the movement into “good” and “bad” elements according to their own confused and ill-informed criteria. Such ignorance and prejudice can do nothing but harm to both the women’s and workers’ movements.

A final point must be made concerning the authors’ tendency to imply that women should NOT enter the workforce, in view of the fact that sections of the capitalist class and the capitalist state want them to do so. This is an utterly inadequate response, since the struggle for equality in regard to work is crucial for women to gain independence and challenge the sexual division of labor. What we must do is demand to enter the workforce ON OUR OWN TERMS, which means demands at the same time for control of our own bodies, and the socialisation of housework and child care. These demands are quite distinct from OECD-type plans which in no way challenge the nuclear family under capitalism, and from strictly reformist demands based on the notion of “equality” for women within the capitalist system.

FOOTNOTES

2. Ibid., p. 38.
3. Ibid., pp. 42 and 41;
7. Ibid. p. 42.
8. Ibid. loc. cit.