

tomorrow, will you get the washing dry on a wet week-end, who's going to mind the kids at night, has the 6-year-old got his costume for the school play on Monday, how is the 9-year-old going to get to soccer on Saturday, and when am I going to get time to do the shopping and clean the house if I go to my meeting? I don't deny men are paying some attention these days to these sorts of jobs, but how often do they shrug them off again if something "more important" comes up, in the manner society holds proper for the male but not the female?

Ted enunciates a whole number of truisms about the needs of work around the problems confronting women in order to reject the need for serious consideration of the basic charges of lack of creative thought by the CPA about the role of women in society. I find this different only in degree from the bewilderment and nervousness of many male branch members today, whose confusion and dismay is revealed in current comments like "You want to watch out for these liberationists. They'll eat you", or even more helpless, "What do they want? What are they after?" Ted reveals his affinity with many male party members in the patronising remark that "he has been happy to work and study under the leadership of women members". Some of my best friends are women!

His final paragraph does grave injustice to the present National Committee of the Party, under whose vigorous and imaginative leadership the ever-widening discussions about a revolutionary programme for women are taking place. The question is not whether real effort *will* be made to involve the whole party. It is that major steps *have already been taken* in this regard, and I am happy to see that the National Committee is more concerned with encouraging women to say what has been on their minds for a long time, than it is with asserting the creditable performance they have put up in the past.

KATHLEEN OLIVE

## AUTHOR COMMENTS

NOT ONLY does Mary Murnane's review of my book *A New Britannia* enter into the debate at an informed and important level it also extends the range of some of the points I made. So that further development can occur I would like to make the following six points.

1. Murnane says 'the central impulse of the book is to locate the Labor Movement in the materialistic, acquisitive perspectives of Australian society as a whole.' This is very close to my intention which was to write a history of the ALP. I realised that if I wrote an Australian equivalent of Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary Socialism* I would not have located the sources of Labor's central malaise because I would have written an organisational history. That is why I followed Gramsci who demanded that the history of a party be the history of a society from a monographic point of view. Thus every section of *A New Britannia* was conceived of as part of a history of the ALP. This applies to the convicts and the invaders just as much if not more than to the Socialists and the Unionists. By this marxist means I hoped to show that the ALP is irrevocably committed to capitalism and that it was not just a matter of personalities or contingencies. Any real critique of *A New Britannia* has to begin by recognising it as a history of the ALP.

2. On the question of the changed nature of unionism after 1880, which Murnane properly observes is most scantily treated, I would add that the more I see of the 1880's the less impressed I am by the distinction between old and new unions. Certainly there was a fight between the 8-hour trades and the new unions for control of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. But the issue was not one of striking or not, nor even of political action or not. It was rather a demand by the semi-skilled unions to be admitted to the grandeur of the old unions conditions. Both kinds of unions would strike to gain or preserve the eight-hour rule, or the recognition of the union — if striking became inescapable.

But the emergence of the new unions did not alter the consensual view of society possessed by the old unions. Indeed benefits seem irrelevant as the AEU became extremely militant in the twentieth century and maintained a most elaborate welfare system of its own. This was also true of the Melbourne printers in the 1880's. It is significant that W. A. Trenwith, who was the undisputed leader of the new unions in Melbourne, voted against strike action in 1890 and consistently refused to sign a pledge during his eleven years in Victoria's parliament as the leader of the Labor Party. The whole concept of the 'new unionism' demands fresh scrutiny to see if it is not an unwarranted import from the Webbs.

3. Murnane says that I am loath to recognise any sort of radicalism in the Australian past. This is a severe misunderstanding of the deliberately restricted scope of *A New Britannia* and in other hands has led to it being described as anti-working class. The first thing to say about this is to suggest that all interested read my chapter 'Laborism and Socialism', Richard Gordon (ed.) *The Australian New Left* (Heinemann, 1970). As I have explained above *A New Britannia* is an elaboration of the first section of this essay. The radical working-class has been deliberately excluded — not because it was not present before 1920, but because it was necessary to focus attention on the attitudes that continued on to form the Labor Party. My articles in *Arena* 19 and 20 contain more material on the emergence of the proletariat. There is an enormous amount still to be done.

4. Murnane says I disagree 'that bitterness and militancy were strongest in Queensland'. I do not; see pp.214-5 for my criticisms of Nairns' account of Spence's role. What I said was that Queensland was neither as militant nor as bitter as Gollan sometimes claimed and that the bitterness was the rancour of smallholders towards absentee finance companies. Murnane challenges this for the Central West although admits it for the Darling Downs. This misses the whole point. The rancour of smallholders operating as shearers well away from their holdings on the Darling Downs was strongest in outback Queensland precisely because it was there that they encountered the largest absentee station-owners. The Darling Downs was full of smallholders and short on bitterness, as a local issue.

But the sustenance of the land myth requires a series of books like *Selector, Squatter and Storekeeper* before we can be certain. All that Waterson and Buxton have done is to detach two sizable but somewhat special districts, the Darling Downs and the Riverina, from Russel Ward's version. But even if Ward is correct for the rest of Australia we are left with the problem of accounting for the persistence of the land myth well into the twentieth century. The chapter on 'Selectors' was the longest because land seemed to be the most important means by which it was believed that the ravages of capitalism were to be avoided; and the most overlooked.



5. Murnane's criticism on the absence of any solid ideological framework to show why the working-class willingly acquiesced other than hegemony contradicts her final paragraph where she says I locate 'the story of Australia in a universal context'. I attempted to place Australia in its imperialist perspective. Thus working-class acquiescence is presented in terms of Lenin's theory of a labour aristocracy. It is this breaking away from the contemplation of the outback to a concentration on Australia as an outpost of Empire which most markedly distinguishes my approach from that of Russel Ward.

6. It is finally alleged that I do not ask or answer 'whether the Labor Party sharpened the liberal conscience into conceding social welfare programmes'. Might I suggest she read p. 234 again?

HUMPREY MCQUEEN

## JOHN SENDY AND THE ALP

JOHN SENDY (*ALR* 29) discusses some of the fundamental questions of socialist strategy in present-day Australia, and in particular the relation between the ALP and socialism, and between socialists and the ALP. In doing so, he comments on an article I wrote in *Labor Times* (Vol. 1, No. 2).

Inevitably, there are some basic differences between Sendy's position and mine. Sendy writes as a Communist seeking an appropriate strategy for Communists in relation to the broad labour movement and the contemporary protest movement; he believes that there are no meaningful prospects for socialists within the ALP. I write as a socialist (of the libertarian Marxist variety) who believes that meaningful socialist activity can best find expression through the ALP, and who is seeking an appropriate strategy for socialists within the ALP. It seems to me to be important for the socialist movement that there is a clear understanding of these differences.

I start from a number of assumptions. They are all arguable, but they are the ones I hold.

1. It is not right for socialists to impose their vision of society on the mass of people. (In any case, it is self-defeating. Experience suggests that the fact of imposition, or "commandism", necessarily produces institutions and power structures which deny that vision.)
2. The only possibility of achieving socialism is through the creation of a mass socialist consciousness.
3. There is nothing in the present Australian political climate to suggest the existence of such a mass socialist consciousness — or the immediate prospect of one developing. (The militant protest movement on Vietnam, urban development, "quality of life," etc. is in my view insufficiently developed, either in numbers or theoretically, to offer any more than a limited increase in socialist consciousness — desirable in itself, but not enough.)
4. History (particularly the depression experience) suggests to me that the mass of the people are not prepared to move beyond "democratic" and parliamentary solutions so long as they believe that their conditions can be ameliorated and their problems at least in part solved by these means. There is nothing in the present political climate to suggest the possibility of any such revolutionary transcendence. (The militant protest movement may seem to