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International Women’s Day

The last ten years of feminism are not the last years.... The last year of the United Nations Decade for Women has seemed to many people to be an opportune time to take stock of what women have achieved in the last decade. The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination ushered in International Women’s year in 1975. That year saw 10,000 in the IWD March, a whole day of women taking over the Town Hall for films, talks, exhibitions, etc., and the sponsorship of many women’s programs (including the Women’s Trade Union Commission, now Women’s Employment Action Centre) which would lose their funding when the heady days of IYW and the Whitlam Labor government were both undemocratically and suddenly chopped off. The 1975 IWD Broadsheet said “Don’t let the UN or the government or your boss or your man tell you what to do. March with us, women demonstrating for what women need”. Women acted for their right “To live, to work, to love”.

Proclamations of good intent during the last decade have included the federal government’s (voluntary) Affirmative Action program, and federal and state anti-discrimination acts, as well as women’s units in state and federal government departments. Equal Opportunity Officers have been appointed to make the most of the world’s most under-utilised resource — women’s power — (Where’s the greatest brain drain? Down the kitchen sink!)

What have we seen for it all?

It’s been ten more years of struggle for a Women’s Movement with a long history — IWD has been going since 1910 — still fighting for freedom from sweating conditions, child care, equal pay and equal work — just as in 1910. Some issues, particularly those around fertility rights (contraception, abortion, in vitro fertilisation, reproductive technology) have achieved new prominence, and campaigns have mobilised around them.

One focus of the 1985 IWD celebrations is to commemorate the victories women united have achieved, while remembering the demands we still have to attain. The general themes for the 1985 broadsheet are Freedom from Poverty, Freedom from Violence — Freedom to live in a world where we have a real say. Issues considered include: housing; social security; work; child care; women’s services; women’s peace actions; with the overall theme of the rights of women to lives free of poverty and violence, and all that entails.

Women’s refuges and rape crisis centres, once a very marginal concern, now have widespread acceptance — they’re known, even if not yet adequately funded. Despite the failure of governments to reform abortion laws, obtaining an abortion has become more possible; and Family Planning centres and Women’s Health Centres now provide access to information about contraception. Equal Pay cases in 1972-74 have still not yet achieved equal pay, due mainly to the differences in the work of men and women — women still have the low skill, low pay, low hours jobs, without adequate child care — and current campaigns are working to make equal pay a reality, hopefully with the support of the trade union movement.

Women’s campaigns on peace and disarmament have continued to gain strength, particularly in the actions at Pine Gap and Cockburn Sound, indicating a growing commitment of women to this issue.

Women have also, despite the myriad political issues of the last decade, worked on developing a feminist culture — with its own films, radio, newspapers, books, concerts, dances, magazines .... and all the things that defy traditional labels.

All this work has been at some cost and great credit to the women involved — the only real conclusion to be drawn from the Decade of Women is that the strength and struggle of women is amazing and often successful, and without it other rhetorical statements of support are not worth the (tons of) paper they’re written on.

Phillippa Hall

Invitation to Readers

The Editorial Collective of Australian Left Review invites letters of topical comment, criticism and debate over theoretical and political issues for inclusion in subsequent ALRs. Ideally, letters should be between 200-500 words, and be addressed to:


Get those red pens down!
New Caledonia has slipped from the headlines in the past few weeks. The scene has moved to Paris where leaders of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) and the European Right in Noumea have been negotiating with the High Commissioner Edgar Pisani and the Mitterrand government.

By the time this issue of *Australian Left Review* is printed, New Caledonia could once more be in the headlines. For, whatever the final form of the Pisani Plan, one side or the other is likely to reject it.

The first Pisani Plan proposed a referendum in July which would decide on an independence date—either on 1 January 1986 or in 1989. But such independence would be severely limited: New Caledonia, or Kanak, as the FLNKS has named their homeland, would be "associated" with France, which would control foreign affairs, defence, internal security and even education. Noumea would be a white enclave and the European population would control its affairs.

Worse still, all residents in the territory who have lived there for more than three years would be eligible to vote in the July referendum. That would, in all probability, give the anti-independence forces a majority.

Despite the severe limitations of the Pisani Plan, the FLNKS accepted it as a basis for further negotiations. It was, after all, only a plan, and the FLNKS hopes to win further concessions on the question of full independence and voting, and citizenship rights.

The Pisani Plan, moreover, proposed 1 January 1986 as a date for independence—and that is something that the FLNKS has demanded over recent years. They now take that as non-negotiable, something that will happen whatever Paris finally decides.

The French settlers and their supporters in the Wallisian, Tahitian and other minority communities are opposed to independence at any time. It is probable that they will boycott the July referendum. However, the economic crisis now facing the European small businesses and population as a whole, due to the collapse of tourism and the closure of the nickel industry during the crisis, may well force the European leaders to face the new reality. A hard core among them, however, based upon the pieds noirs from Algeria, who form a neo-fascist terrorist wing of the European population, will resist independence by all means at their disposal.

Whether the FLNKS accepts the final Pisani Plan will depend on how many concessions the French government makes, and how much the FLNKS is willing to compromise and accept something less than full independence. But that could well be achieved in the months and even years after 1 January 1986.

The FLNKS must also face the realities of world politics. They live in a small country, with less than 150,000 people, in a part of the world which remains an imperialist, neo-colonial lake. Only Vanuatu is a really independent country among the small Pacific island states. The Americans are so concerned about a new Grenada developing somewhere in the world that, through the US Ambassador in Paris, they have come out solidly against independence and for continued French colonial rule.

The American stand also reflects conditions that of Canberra. But the Foreign Affairs mandarins there, and the Hawke government, realise that independence is inevitable and that the major strategic objective must be to find "moderates" to head a future neo-colonial regime.

Canberra is therefore putting cautious pressure on Paris to make sure that, whatever the shape of the final Pisani Plan, it should be acceptable at least to the "moderate" Kanaks, while not upsetting the French colonists too much. Above all, Canberra does not want a repeat of the turmoil and destabilisation of recent months which led to a notable radicalisation of the Kanak population.

Canberra's tremulous foothold between all the potential minefields is unlikely to succeed. The Mitterrand government is as prone as any previous regime to believe in French imperial "grandeur", and the imposition of the glories of French culture and language on unwilling native populations. Paris also considers the South Pacific an area of French strategic influence, particularly given the continuing nuclear testing on Mururoa.

The proposal to build a major naval base near Noumea is not only a move to reassure the French colonists in Noumea, but to expand the French nuclear presence. The warships which will use the Noumea base will be nuclear-powered.

The Australian labour movement has paid little attention to New Caledonia until recently. The trade unions, through the Pacific Trade Union Forum, have developed links with their Kanak counterparts but, more generally, there has been little contact.

Yet the future of Kanaky is of importance for the labour and progressive movements. If Australia—and New Zealand—are to win some independence in their foreign policies, they will need independent states in their neighbourhood.

Moreover, in addition to the internationalist duty to support struggles for independence and social change in our neighbourhood, the labour movement also has a duty to fight the neo-colonial designs of our own ruling class. Australia has been allocated the South West Pacific as its "sphere of influence" to keep the world safe for imperialism. Lastly, the proposal to have a nuclear-armed naval base so close to our shores should arouse widespread opposition in Australia.

The coming months will be decisive for Kanaky. The Kanak people deserve the widest possible active solidarity in their difficult struggle.

Denis Freney,
7 February 1985.
The Reproductive Fix
Christine Crowe

New reproductive technology has made bottle-bred babies a reality. The unquestioned neutrality of such technology is no longer an acceptable position, and questions such as who does such technology benefit and why have created the climate for lively debate among feminists. Christine Crowe examines these issues, and others.

The "public debate" surrounding the issues of In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) and reproductive technology has so far centred upon two aspects: what could be called orthodox questions of the "morality" of conception outside the uterus, the "dehumanisation of reproduction", the "wastage" of fertilised ova; and the legal entanglements concerning consent and ownership of ova, sperm and fertilised ova. Although the beginnings of a feminist response, or responses, to the new reproductive technology have been evident in the last twelve months, a framework in which to formulate questions which address the complexity of issues raised by these technologies is yet to develop.

In this article, I propose that a feminist critique of science and technology is necessary in order to yield analyses not only of IVF, but of all forms of reproductive technology such as cloning, genetic engineering, organ transplant using embryos, surrogate motherhood and "womb leasing", sex selection and the development of ectogenesis (conception and development of an embryo outside the uterus) using the artificial placenta.

It can be stated that IVF is a major step towards the development of ectogenesis. Carl Wood, a leading figure in the field of reproductive technology, has confirmed the fact that, in Great Britain, an ovum fertilised outside the uterus has survived for fourteen days. (The Warnock report in Great Britain has stipulated this figure as the limit for the growth of the fertilised ovum ex utero.) This occurrence, coupled with the increase in research and development in relation to premature babies born at twenty-four weeks or earlier, means that the actual time period necessary for a foetus to exist in a woman's body is diminishing. In Wood's opinion, the development of an "artificial womb" is not foreseeable in the near future because of the restrictions imposed by governments on the length of time embryos can be "grown" outside the uterus. He states: "I think it's feasible in the future .... I would guess it's more likely to be fifty or one hundred years" (Issues '84, Network 0/28, 27.8.84).
The birth of the first baby developed from an ovum fertilised through the IVF procedure occurred in Great Britain in 1978. I shall examine the views of feminist writers on reproductive technology prior to this event in order to develop an analysis of IVF as one form of this technology. I shall propose that, given capitalist and patriarchal power structures, the IVF procedure is a "technological fix" for certain types of infertility. Technological fixes have been described as solutions to social problems, solutions which are applied "without first having to remove the causes of the problem" (Elliott & Elliott; 1976, p. 22).

IVF does not "cure" infertility; it provides an avenue to motherhood through technological intervention in the process of reproduction.

In Woman On the Edge of Time (1976) Piercy describes two possibilities for the direction of society. A woman from contemporary society visits two "futures" which represent different results of the use of science and technology.

In one future, society is centrally controlled and hierarchical in structure. Technology is used to control every aspect of individuals' lives. Genetic engineering and forms of biological manipulation had resulted in the segregation of society according to class, race and gender criteria. Children were born of "moms" (p. 290) who were designed to fulfill that function.

In the "other future", representing an alternative direction of science and technology, in inequalities of class, race and gender were eradicated. This society consisted of small communities utilising low-level technology and operating by co-operation with other communities. Reproduction occurred through ectogenesis, the only manifestation of technological sophistication:

It was part of women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies. Finally there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had; in return for no more power for anyone. The original production: the power to give birth. Cause as long as we're biologically enchained, we'd never be equal. And males would never be humanised to be loving and tender. So we all become mothers (p. 103).

In relation to technology, Piercy implies that technology itself has the potential for either "use" or "abuse". The outcome of the use of technology is determined by the society in which it evolves.

Piercy states that women must yield the biological power to give birth in order to gain social power. In a society which holds "equality" as a virtue, however, it seems contradictory that the standard by which to judge the "norm" is male-defined; in order to gain "social equality", women must deny capacities unique to them.

In The Dialectic of Sex, Firestone (1972) proposes that women's ability to reproduce is not a power which has to be relinquished, but a "tyranny" (p. 221) which has dictated the nature of women's oppression. She writes "the natural reproductive difference between the sexes led directly to the first division of labour at the origins of class" (p. 17).

For Firestone, the location of social inequalities lies in biology

Women, biologically distinguished from men, are culturally distinguished from "human". Nature produced the fundamental inequality — half the human race must bear and rear the children of all of them — which was later consolidated, institutionalised, in the interests of men (p. 192).

In order to overcome social inequality arising from women's ability to reproduce, Firestone advocates the use of reproductive technology. Much of human history, she states, has involved the transcendence of the "natural":

the "natural" is not necessarily a 'human' value. Humanity has begun to transcend Nature: we can no longer justify the maintenance of discriminatory sex class system on grounds of its origins in nature (p. 18).

The distinction between the experience of motherhood and the institution of motherhood is not made by Firestone, who implies that women become mothers through "false motivations" (p. 217). Once these false motivations had been shed, pregnancy, described as "clumsy, inefficient and painful" (p. 221) would not be considered by women. Firestone neglects to examine the possibility that women may wish to
experience pregnancy and childbirth, however painful and "inconvenient" it may be.

In adhering to the distinction between "women" and "human", Firestone incorporates the existing framework of power relations in her analysis; to be "human", a woman must relinquish her biological capacities. In her advocacy, Firestone conflates biology and culture. As Spender (1982) states:

"... the capacity to give birth which in itself constitutes a liability or an asset in social arrangements. Whether giving birth is a mark of penance or a sign of superior powers depends largely on which sex controls social organisation and produces meanings for society." (p. 511)

As with Piercy (1976) Firestone advocates that social equality can only be achieved once women no longer need to fulfill the reproductive function which biology has dictated. Unlike Piercy, who proposes that men become "humanised" in this process, Firestone proposes that women may become "human" by yielding this biological capacity. Both views contain a different focus on the value of women's capacity to reproduce; underlying both, however, is the premise that biology determines social capacities.

As O'Brien (1981) states, this argument advocating the use of reproductive technology can be summed up thus:

"Women are naturally trapped in the childbearing function. Therefore the liberation of women depends on their being freed from this trap." (p. 20).

I now wish to examine the premise that this biological function is, in itself, a "trap". Biological sciences such as anatomy, physiology and genetics "demonstrate" that the process of reproduction in human beings is no different from the reproduction of other mammals: "anything specifically human in the process apparently must await the appearance of the product of the process, the child, as a separate but dependent creature" (O'Brien, 1981, p. 19).

Childbearing, along with eating, sexuality and dying, is also a "natural function". Eating, sexuality and dying, however, have never been examined solely by the biological sciences. O'Brien points out that these biological events have been the subject of profound theoretical discussion:

Dialectical materialism takes as its fundamental postulate the need to eat: Marx has transformed this very simple fact of biological necessity into the breeding ground of a theoretical system ... The simple sex act has been transformed by ... Freud into a theoretical a priori of a system ... Death has haunted the male philosophical imagination ... and has become the stark reality which preoccupies existentialism (p. 20).

She writes:

"... we have no comparable philosophies of birth (p. 20). Reproductive process is not a process which male-stream thought finds either ontologically or epistemologically interesting on the biological level. The human family is philosophically interesting, but its biological base is simply given (p. 21)."

In attempting to investigate the experience of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood, Rich (1976) draws a distinction between motherhood as experience and motherhood as institution. She writes of:

"... two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed upon the other: the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that the potential — and all women — shall remain under male control (p. 13)."

Rich criticises Firestone's analysis for its acceptance and reproduction of male-centred interpretations of pregnancy and childbirth. Firestone "fails to explore the relationship between maternity and sensuality, pain and female alienation" (p. 170). It is the institution of motherhood under patriarchy, according to Rich, which must be transformed rather than the biological capacity to experience pregnancy and childbirth.

Rich did not reject artificial reproduction as one possibility pertaining to the future of women:

"... ideally women would choose not only whether, when and where to bear children, and the circumstances of labour, but also between biological and artificial reproduction. ... But I do not think we can project any such idea onto the future — and hope to realize it — without examining the shadow image we carry out ... of Eve's curse and the social victimisation of women-as-mothers (p. 170)."

Until women are able to explore the experience of biological motherhood.
even under oppressive patriarchal auspices, a real "choice" between biological and artificial reproduction cannot be made.

Now I shall examine the assumptions pertaining to technology upon which these arguments rest. Implicit in Rich's discussion of reproductive technology is the contention that the control of technology determines its use. She states:

_in light of most women's lives as they are now having to be lived, it can seem naive and self-indulgent to "demand" that technologies be "turned over" to women (1976, p. 288)._ 

In her advocacy of reproductive technology, Firestone not only considers the biological process of reproduction as uninteresting but "barbaric" (1972, p. 188); this biological "inequality" is to be overcome by the use of the "technological fix" (Elliott & Elliott; 1976, p. 22).

Firestone implicitly adheres to the view that technology in itself is "neutral". She writes that a "serious error" (p. 186) arises when "results of the misuse of technology are very often attributed to the use of technology per se" (p. 186). Also, "radicals, rather than breastbeating about the immorality of scientific research, could be much more effective by concentrating their full energies on demands for control of scientific discoveries ... For, like atomic energy, fertility control, artificial reproduction, cybernation, in themselves; are liberating — unless they are improperly used" (p. 187).

Reproductive technology seems to provide "additional options for women who want children but cannot, or choose not to, conceive through intercourse" (Rothschild 1982, p. 364). This statement raises the issue of whether technology is indeed ideologically "neutral" — whether technology, by use rather than abuse, actually allows more "options" for those women who cannot, or choose not to, conceive through intercourse. The implication of the social meaning of those options, however, are also to be discussed; who, or what group, defines the "problem" to which technological solutions are the "answer"?

The question of whether technology is autonomous, whether it has an independent existence, a separate "history" detached from social forces in which it developed or whether technology both reflects and is a reflection of social, economic and political relationships, is an issue around which much debate revolves. The question is especially pertinent to women because the contraceptive and reproductive technology developed and being developed this century will have dramatic effects on the lives of women.

A distinction must be made between "technique" and "technology". Technique refers to "the act of applying knowledge, whether directly or with the aid of a tool or machine, to a productive task" (Dickson; 1974, p. 16). Technology refers to "an abstract concept embracing both the tools and machines used by a society, and the relations between them implied by their use" (p. 17). This distinction is crucial; often the disparity between the two is not acknowledged and social relations involved in technological innovations are not considered. Statements such as "Technology has a career of its own, so far not much subject to political guidance than restraints imposed on other enormously powerful institutions" (Lipscombe & Williams; 1977, p. 19) exemplify this view.

If technology is viewed as neutral, then social relations which occur through the use of the technology are determined by either the "use" or "abuse" of the technology. I propose that reproductive technology is shaped by the social relations of production and reproduction incorporated in its very construction. Without a radical alteration of the social relations in which the technology is designed, the control of technology would in itself do little to alter the social relations necessary for its implementation.

The present social circumstances in which in vitro fertilisation is practised relies upon women's perceiving motherhood to be desirable. Motherhood is perceived by many women as the achievement of positive personal and social identity. The lack of options for women to achieve such identity other than through mothering reflects the power of the ideology of motherhood as well as illustrating inequalities relating to production and the sexual division of labour. Women's lowered self-esteem, due to the inability to reproduce, and therefore mother, reflects the strength of ideology in which women are perceived primarily as reproducers. In contemporary society, motherhood is defined as the relationship between a woman and her biological child; adoption of children is perceived as a "substitute" for this biological relationship. Women who are unable to have this biological or state-sanctioned relationship to a child are perceived as "childless". As Rich (1976) asks:

_What makes us mothers? The care of small children? The physical changes of pregnancy and birth? What of the woman who, never having been pregnant, begins lactating when she adopts an infant? What of the woman who ... has practically raised her younger sisters and brothers ... and who later enters a convent? (p. 225)_

I propose that in a society where motherhood was not confined to a biological relationship, the IVF program as a "technological fix" for infertility may not develop. It is necessary to raise issues not only relating to the "control" of the

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technology, but to investigate the social relations surrounding the development of such technology. Without such examination, the issue of women’s co-operation in the IVF program would not be addressed. A feminist critique based solely on control of the procedure would implicitly adhere to a “use/abuse” argument concerning science and technology.

The IVF procedure, as a technological fix for infertility, does not address the question of the social meaning of motherhood. Instead, it focuses exclusively on motherhood as the relationship between a woman and her biological child. As a discipline, medical science has the power to define its own priorities and areas of research. Its area of interest lies with women's co-operation in the IVF process and infertility (King, 1981, p. 1). Hubbard, discussing the use of the technological fix in the form of IVF, states: “A technology is only a tool. How society chooses to use a tool will be influenced by the characteristics of the society in question” (1984, p. 44).

The first implicit assumption is that technology develops of its own momentum; technology is the application of scientific discoveries which are developed in circumstances devoid of political factors. In capitalist/patriarchal ideology, “ideas” themselves are promoted as autonomous entities. The autonomy of technology, stemming from the seemingly “objective” natural sciences, must be questioned. By promoting a schism between the technology and the social relations in which it is formed, the legitimation of more extensive power relations occurs. Technology would be seen to have “social impacts” due to its implementation rather than carrying with it dominant values of the society in which it was formed. As Arditti et al. (1984) have stated in relation to IVF:

I am not involved in the ethics of having to make those decisions. My ethics and how I manage? I am terribly interested in the possible, and not very interested in what is not possible. I think that’s about it, and I have no experience on the way they are decided (1982: Proceedings on the Conference: IVF: Problems and Potentialities, p. 39).

The decision as to who should decide for “society” the “uses” of this technology is problematic. The Waller Commission (1984) has established guidelines for the IVF program. This committee has made its conclusions in the presence of public discussion. Indeed, the lack of information concerning this report indicates that the community in general is not aware of the formation of a committee to resolve contentious issues.

The NSW Health Commission has recently established a working party to report on proposed regulations for IVF. This group comprises doctors and social workers involved in the program, and one woman undergoing IVF. The issue of “public debate” of the procedure is addressed only within the framework acknowledged by the state. Power is operating in this instance at the level of only allowing certain issues to be discussed by
A feminist response or responses to reproductive technology requires a critique of science and technology which does not inadvertently incorporate current ideology of the neutrality of science and technology. A demand for more control of reproductive technology is, in itself, inadequate as a basis for critique. I propose that an analysis of reproductive technology necessitates an examination of the social construction of needs and the ideological components of such technology. I have attempted to give a brief outline of feminist thought on reproductive technology prior to the escalation of research and development in this area to enable further discussion in light of events since the development of the IVF procedure. In order for a feminist critique to become part of the debate surrounding reproductive technology, many complex issues must be raised and discussed. Questions and issues negated by the use of IVF as a technological fix must be brought to light. These issues are not confined solely to IVF, but future forms and manifestations of reproductive technology. Although there may not develop one “feminist line” on reproductive technology, there needs to be an agreement between women on how to approach issues and formulate questions. An ongoing discussion which deals with more than questions of technique is needed.

Immediate questions which arise centre upon issues which may require investigations and research, as well as debate between women:

- What is the meaning of motherhood to women? The IVF procedure reinforces the exclusive relationship of a mother to her biological child. What alternatives are there to this exclusive relationship? The issue of “surrogate motherhood”, or “womb leasing”, in particular, necessitates an examination of motherhood and its meaning.

- What are the alternatives for women who cannot be biological mothers? Infertility brings with it both personal and social dilemmas. Not only do many infertile women experience negative repercussions, including lowered self esteem, but feel implicit social rejection and isolation. Because of the focus on motherhood as a “natural” situation for women, these women are subject to constant social scrutiny. What help in the form of counselling, support and information can feminists undertake? What encouragement and support is there for women who do not reproduce?

- Women on the IVF program are given drugs which produce “superovulation”, the production of multiple ova per cycle. What long term studies have been made on possible effects of these drugs?

- Why has not more research and development funding been allocated to the investigation of the causes of infertility? Are doctors being educated to detect early symptoms? Are women and men being educated to recognise symptoms?

- More information and education is needed in relation to the transferre of sexually transmitted diseases, symptoms of which may be undetected by women.

- What avenues are available for women to gain more access to information concerning reproductive technology?

- More information is needed on infertility and its causes, thus enabling feminists to have a rejoinder to doctors who claim that IVF is the only way to “help” infertile women.

The questions raised represent only a small number of those which can be formulated. The complex nature of the issues necessitates an analysis, or analyses, which are able to examine not only those issues currently debated, but those which may arise in the future.

References

Bibliography


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"Family Feud"

The family has come under increasing scrutiny from those on the left. Danny Blackman, Gill Calvert, Linda Carruthers and Margaret Penson argue that this analysis has not been critical enough.

In this paper we want to challenge the concept of the "family", including concepts held by the left. We would argue that left notions accept traditional definitions of the family and sexuality. We want to attempt to redefine concepts such as the family, parents and incest. As well, we will attempt to link concepts which are familiar in a traditional marxist discourse, such as production and exchange, with an analysis of the relations of reproduction.

A materialist analysis requires that no "facts" can be taken as simply given. This is particularly important in relation to an analysis of the relations of reproduction, with all their effects on the production of gender, class and race.

We do not intend to set out a "strategy", defined as a plan of action. We hope that the processes of analysis, discussion and redefinition of various concepts will lead to the development of conclusions about the politics involved in the struggle around the family and sexuality, and thus to some formulation of possible strategies.

We will ask a series of questions about the family and sexuality which will raise some of the problems about the nature of such concepts.

The Family

One of the defining characteristics of advanced capitalistic patriarchal society is the prolonged economic dependence of children and the intense nurturing which is required by the ideology of dependence and helplessness. As well, popular concepts of childhood involve notions of innocence and immaturity (defined as inability to deal with the "real" world). Most importantly, childhood is privileged as a time (0-14, 0-18) and a space (the household, "in the family") whose characteristics are defined in opposition to the requirements of the relations of production in advanced capitalistic patriarchal society.

In other words, within the family, childhood is defined by dependence, helplessness, but outside the family, the ideology operating in relation to production is competitive individualism. How is this switch made? By what processes?

These processes, and the change from the dependent child to the competitive adult occur during adolescence, during which time there is an acting out of the contradictions between the values of the family and the values of society. Adolescents have to maintain relationships with both the family and society, and the family has an investment in the adolescent as a child, until independence is achieved.

One should be aware of the space that pre-school children occupy in the household, and the ideological production they serve in the "family". The family, by definition, nurturing, safe, caring and protective, and sometimes co-operative, exists in relation to the requirements of childhood.

Significantly, childhood and the values which support its ideological production, must exist totally outside the world of material production. Children, like mothers, are natural beings whose existence and needs are presumed to be self-evident. For women, the needs of children and their absence from the world of production serve to create an ideological construction of motherhood as non-
...WE'LL HAVE OUR
HEARTS, OUR HANDS,
OUR MINDS-TOGETHER
WE'LL BUILD A
NEW FAMILY.

TRUST A MAN
TO GET IT WRONG
ABOUT THE PERSONAL
BEING POLITICAL.

Women and Reproduction
— OR — Wouldn't Techno-
logical Reproduction
Mean Women's
Liberation?

The exclusion of children from "work", i.e. paid employment, in capitalist patriarchy serves to reinforce the notion that only wage labour confers "independence", and thus only those in paid employment "should" have any personal autonomy or control — attitudes to children and the realities of their position are not far removed from those towards people on welfare and women workers in the domestic economy.

The twenty-first century capitalist patriarchal society operates to isolate the realm of reproduction from the realm of production by the construction of sexuality and individualised notions of sexuality.

Reproduction exists within social relationships which encompass both material production and political power. Hitherto, in patriarchal society, the relationship of women to the social and political structure has been through their exclusive ability to bear children. Without women, no society as such could be imagined or, at least, not one that was extended in time. The technical ability to reproduce people outside women's bodies raises the question of women's relationships to society. Women exist in capitalist patriarchy within the ideological functions of reproduction. Given that technology is produced within capitalist patriarchal relations of production and, as such, represents class and gender power, we need to analyse whose interests are served by the drive to make human reproduction a technological feat.

At first, it would seem that test-tube babies and in vitro fertilisation have been a humane scientific response to the needs and demands of childless women. That is, they locate women who may have been outcasts in society back into that society. Criticisms of the in vitro fertilisation program have been met with the response that the critics are denying women the fulfilment of their desire for motherhood. In fact, the programs so far have been mainly attacked by the
Right-to-Lifers and the Church generally; feminists and the left have not hitherto formed a large part of the public discourse around these issues. The public discourse has perforce been limited and there is considerable need to address the underlying assumptions around reproduction and women's oppression.

**Ideology of Reproduction**

To a certain degree the notion that women's greatest burden is their exclusive ability to bear children is an assumption that is shared by both reactionaries and some radical feminists. Thus, Shulamith Firestone, in her *Dialectic of Sex* (1970), posited the idea that technological reproduction would remove the basic impediment to women's economic, social and political liberation. This was argued in a context where the subordination of women's labour power to male control was seen as the result of the necessary dependence of women, during late pregnancy and early nurturing, on males for food and sustenance. Thus male power and control was established around a biological fact, i.e. that women bear children — and sexism itself is seen to be almost a natural outcome of nature's arrangements.

The reactionary right agree that women's reproductive abilities confer on them a special place in society and argue that women should stick to it. The two positions differ considerably but they share a common thread of biological determinism.

Given that masculinity is constructed as the polar opposite of femininity (i.e. men are "not women") and women are defined as beings (not necessarily human) who have babies, the technological reproduction of embryos outside the uterus threatens several different contradictions. If men can now make babies "scientifically", are they now both father and mother? If women are not necessary for reproduction, what are they?

Hitherto, the sexual politics of reproduction have both deprived women of power and conferred power on them within restricted domains. Thus, "motherhood", with its rights, responsibilities and duties, has conferred power of a particular kind in families. Publicly, the Education Department and the medical establishment appeal around certain issues to the interests of parents (i.e. mothers) in relation to discourses over the control, socialisation and health of children. Women's political power, such as it is, arises therefore around their undeniable links with reproduction. Once that link is severed, or is in the process of being altered, so are the domains in which women enter public discourse.

All this is, of course, speculative; what is not a matter of speculation is that technology is controlled by and produced in the interests of capitalist patriarchy. Seen in this context, the project of men providing women with the technology to fulfil women's supposed destiny should give cause for concern.

**Definition of Family**

We need to see the question of incest and the incest taboo as inseparable from assumptions about sex, children, families, power and the construction of gender identity. Although it is generally agreed that incest is widespread and far more common than it's reported incidence, estimates of its occurrence vary widely from 10 percent to 40 percent of all families. What is not in dispute is that, as defined, 98 percent of reported incestuous contacts involve father/child abuse and, of these, 10-25 percent are father/son and 75-90 percent are father/daughter.

Issues in relation to incest include the questions of how families are defined, how they are organised, and what the differences are between "love" and "sex".

The incest taboo is a basic principle for the organisation of men, women and children into families. Thus, families are defined as groups of people, relationships between whom must be non-sexual, except for that between husband and wife. When incest occurs in families it disorganises the concept of the family (leaving aside for the moment its effects on its victims). Furthermore, particular social roles such as mother, father, child, aunt, uncle, etc. are defined solely in terms of a series of prohibited sexual contacts.

Within these prohibitions, however, is a series of mandatory physical contacts which are organised in ways serving to support notions about the differences between male and female sexuality, and about the role of mothers and fathers.

The incest taboo organises sexuality and is defined as sexual contact between brother/sister, daughter/mother, mother/son, father/daughter, father/son — contact within the immediate family, as it were.

The construction of motherhood has been a process over the last 150 years of intensified physical and emotional involvement between mother and child. Thus, mothers have responsibility for, and are expected to take pleasure in, the physical aspect of the mother/child axis. Toilet-training, washing, general carressing and medical interventions are carried out by the mother on the child. The child, male and female, is "introduced" to its body by the mother via the practices of mothering. The relationship is highly physical, particularly in the early years, for both sexes, but can continue in a particular way between mothers and daughters for much longer. What is pertinent about this relationship is that it is defined as "non-sexual". It is non-sexual precisely because it is women who perform these tasks, and women are not seen as having an independent sexual identity. Their sexuality is only allowed to exist in relation to adult males, i.e. it only exists in a context dependent upon responding to the "other". The erotic aspect of the mother/child relationship is buried beneath the ideology of "pure mother-love". Given that the relationship is erotically charged, it is also characterised by power and powerlessness, both the power of the mother over the child, and her relative powerlessness in relation to the wider social and political framework in which the mother/child axis exists.

Fathers have no emotional role in relation to children; as a practice, fathering has not yet been invented.
For fathers, there is no equivalent ideological construction to motherhood.

We need to ask what would be the effects on mothering and notions of childhood, if fathering were constructed.

Motherhood is, by definition, non-sexual, and the sexual relationship with the father/husband may or may not be satisfying, or even exist but, within the framework of heterosexism, it is the only one that should exist.

Relationships between parents and children are characterised by an extensive mythology which includes the following:

- Parents don't have and therefore don't act on their sexual feelings for children.
- Sexual love is not about power. Real "love" dissolves power differences and renders such differences harmless.
- Parent/child love is a "pure" form of love and the power differences between parents and children are absolutely neutralised by the fact that parents "love" their children.
- Children don't have any sexuality.
- Real parents don't commit incest, because parents aren't sexual in relation to children.

These myths provide clues as to what the nature of the incest taboo consists of.

The question of incest has been raised in this context because of the light it sheds on the definition of the family. By definition, incest exists in relation to relations of domination and powerlessness. Therefore, it cannot be seen as in any way "progressive" to advocate the overthrow of the incest taboo as a strategy for overcoming what is an effect of the construction of sexuality and power within capitalist patriarchy and the interlocking network of relations of domination that accompany it.

Relocation of the Family

The satisfaction of the needs determined by and determining capitalist patriarchy changes the role of the family in this form of organisation.

Women are now being drawn into more direct relationships with capitalism through their resumption into the paid workforce; the relations of their unpaid work within the family are changed as well with the ready provision of, and the need for reliance on, takeaway food, laundromats, etc. Patriarchy has also partly relocated control away from individual males in the family to broader forms of social control available through paid employment or the welfare state, and to other areas such as mass media advertising and the pornography industry.

Paid employment not only provides women with money, which increases their bargaining position inside the household (a shift in power relations), but it also increases the range of social contacts available to them: that is, other women and men outside the household.

There needs to be an analysis of the ways in which men's and women's erotic needs are controlled and organised by the family and other forms of social organisation, for example, work and leisure.

Such an analysis should include an examination of the fact that, in this society, women's erotic relationships are becoming divorced completely from reproduction. This would need to include an examination of the reintegration of women into a new form of heterosexuality through consumption and economic independence ideology. The "new" women's magazines like Cleo and Cosmo provide a good example of the nature of this integration.

The "family" in capitalist patriarchy exists in relation to work and politics in different ways over time, and in different classes, but it exists as a form of organisation along with other forms.

The left should be wary of privileging the family as the only, or the most important, site of construction of gender and class relationships.

Within the framework of the points and questions raised, we would challenge left notions of the family and sexuality. In terms of strategies, one of the first requirements is to develop adequate and historically relevant definitions and concepts.
Macho, leather, SM, Hitler fascination and drag-show. Obviously, these are separate issues. They have in common that they are all facets of popular culture. Too little work has been done to date, too little written to bring these phenomena together in some systematic way. There is also too little debate on popular culture ideology, particularly when some of the traits of such popular culture are disconcerting. There is a tendency to hush up some of its practices or to be indifferent to its existence.

Drag shows definitely belong to the cultural fringe although they have a relatively firm place in Australian theatrical productions. We wish to state quite categorically from the outset that we do not share the views of some sections of the community that drag shows are necessarily derogatory of women, decadent or queer. Here is a (transvestite) subculture which has found a medium of playing out its existence in an artful way by creating illusions and often total theatre. But we wish to report on one particular drag show, performed just recently, which had a distinctly different flavour to earlier and other drag shows we have seen, and then summarise our
impressions.

We are sitting in a drag show. The show is about to begin. The stage is black, hard, white neon lamps light the stage. The loud-speakers are put into action — almost man-sized, facing the audience, screaming, thumping, vibrating. The speakers are large but not good. Sounds are distorted, screeching, grating. The bass is on full, the treble also. Contrast of frequencies. The hard bass rocks the tables, glasses clink, the stomach is hit from below with hard, regular flat blows. The high frequencies are garish and test the eardrums, move even the nostrils and bring a few tears to our eyes.

The lead actress/actor of the show roles in with the large, well-practised strides of a model. A plastic smile, wild silvery blond hair and a glitter garment flowing suitably around the empty stage. The music changes into a new tune. She takes the microphone and pretends to sing. Coloured lights whirl around. She arches back as if she expended enormous amounts of energy to get the vocal cords to high pitch and to the volume of the American singer. Histrionically, she lowers her microphone at the end of the songs. The audience claps. More dresses appear, more plastic smiles, more tapes are played. Sometimes several girls dance together; then its Moulin Rouge style of Paris, only not half as good. At least the imitation is recognisable.

Peculiar to all models are their sharp movements, their slim, curt perfection of female impersonation. Since nothing gives them away as men, is this show then presenting "total" women? No. We, two women in the audience, feel alienated, not in ourselves, but from the show. This is indeed an all-male show, tightly constructed as an ideal of male presence, male performance and male values. Strangely enough, there are no contradictions, no male/female double messages as Dame Edna or even Boy George may have transmitted. The girls in the show are men in outrageous gear. They usurp women's clothes into a male construct. Macho culture in fancy dress. Their smiles are hard, aggressively well placed stares are sent into the audience. Here is no place for humour, for send-ups. Macho is a culture of tedious earnestness.

One song they perform is a rock piece on Adolf (Hitler). Leather hat, leather gear, the swastika as an arm-band, legs moving to marching rhythm. The uniform gives anonymity. Someone gets killed in the act without pity. The girls/boys glitter on, their faces hard and uncompromising. The chill down our spines does not stem from being impressed but from anger tinged with fear.

There is a sense of the threatening, partly because the show is derivative to the extreme. Dress as a symbol of stereotype, of uniformity. American Hollywood stuff, not sung even, but pretended. Clothes nobody wears, women who are men; a show without soul but with an ideology. Hate, aggression, narcissism and the uniform.

An interpretation of what we saw must be tentative. Much is intangible, much may be merely third rate showbiz. At an intuitive level, we clearly felt discomfort which sprang most probably from a sense of having been bulldozed, and asked to accept an ideology which is much more than hate of women. Independently, we thought of fascism. We also thought of the increasing fascination with the figure of Adolf Hitler, at least in the Western world. We do not wish to simplify or exaggerate the impressions. Yet we can see here a relationship between an event which, although seemingly removed from the arena of politics, is based on psycho-social forces which may have political implications. The drag-show, we believe, was not merely a bad show or an aberration but, sadly, was symptomatic of wider movements and developments in popular culture. Even if the show was derivative and not putting forward its own values, it remains significant what choices were made.

At one time, certain subcultures endorsed values like "keep loving one another", non-violence, peace, etc. In these subcultures, among them the gay movement, a shift towards a macho culture and framework is at present quite apparent.2

Some sections of punk embrace the same fashions and behaviour, as do bikies and growing sections of the average suburban youth. (In a different vein, but certainly worth some scrutiny, one may ask why films like Mad Max 1 and performers like "Divine" score so well in our culture.) Macho may mean a number of things: a celebration of male culture, rough male to male interaction as a form of approved contact and, of course, the treatment of women as sex objects. Macho is now "enriched" by further variables: the leather uniform, the follow-the-leader mentality, the hard militant line, even the whip. Uniforms give anonymity. Anonymity permits greater licence because, as Agnes Heller argues, the externalisation of conscience is an abdication of an inherent sense of responsibility: one cannot be wrong, one cannot be shamed as long as one follows the leader!

The present fad in leather and uniforms would be of little concern were it not for the fact that the brutality of the costume is increasingly translated into actual behaviour and day-to-day interaction of the predominant culture. Sadomasochism (SM) has been around for
some time but now it has become almost respectable in some circles. Tough games have stopped being games, symbolic and cathartic in a number of instances. The porno industry is one example. At this moment the industry flourishes owing, in part, to the enormous boost it has received through the video-hire network. Increasingly, porno films deal with cruelty, torture, mutilation and killing for sexual gratification, presumably for actor and audience alike. Here, the original intention and function of porno, namely to play with sexual fantasies of the audience, has begun to be turned into something horrid and gruesome. The so-called snuff movies, although illegal, are readily available in major cities in Australia for a fee of $300 to $500. Snuff movies show the actual murder of women as a condition for male sexual gratification. Up to now, predominantly Latin American women were used for the filming. The market now seems to have shifted to Filipina women. Mutilation of their bodies, as shown in some of these films, is equally no fake, no trick filming. Customers now get "the real thing". The film has dropped aspirations of an art form, as a make-believe, shared by cinema, theatre and literature, and has become a documentary of real events in the real world. Pornography involving pregnant women — particularly used in SM — has become another "fad", as has child pornography. The women are really pregnant, really tortured, just as the children in the films experience the sexual assault of their bodies in the real world.

We have moved far away from our description of the drag show which, superficially at least, cannot bear any resemblance to the pornographic films we have just cited.

Our question here is related to the complex issue of mirage versus reality, cultural representation of fantasies versus the mimetic aspects of art or popular culture. We question how far any cultural fringe movement and self-expression can be regarded as innocuous. Those who prefer to argue from macro-social perspectives are likely to dismiss our remarks and intuition as peevish. Those who are concerned with qualitative, i.e. micro-perspectives on aspects of human conduct, may be persuaded to share our concern.

With regard to the leather fad, the macho values, we only want to add the following. If any of these fads and crazes are merely regarded as a healthy sign that we live in a society in which "everybody can do his/her own thing" (an ideological position which we do not find attractive) then some equally important arguments may be overlooked. The leather fad, the uniform, says, rather, that "everybody can be somebody". During periods of economic stagnation, high unemployment, curtailed future hopes for large groups of people, such implicit argument can be a palliative. It is also dangerously seductive. Hitler used it, many dictatorships have drawn on these sources of persuasion and seduction for their own ends and with a great deal of success.

The hard glitter, the strong boys, the uniform, are symbols which, in certain circumstances, can translate quite readily into real social and/or political action or aggression. Moreover, however cynical one may wish to be with respect to the democratic processes of governments at election time, grassroots movements and generally dissipated thought in a culture (anthropologically speaking) merge into a country's political direction. Hard line politics, uncompromising stands on social conflict and international relations are macho cow-boy behaviours. They are not signs of strength, but of weakness, of a sell-out. The hard glitter is an annihilation of human values.

**FOOTNOTES**

2. Cf for instance the discussion of SM by Heller, Agnes, The Power of Shame, manuscript of a paper delivered at a Sociology of Culture conference, La Trobe University, 1982; forthcoming in a collection of essays by the author under the same title.
3. Cf for instance the discussion of SM by Agnes, The Power of Shame, manuscript of a paper delivered at a Sociology of Culture conference, La Trobe University, 1982; forthcoming in a collection of essays by the author under the same title.
4. Cf for instance the discussion of SM by John, Frankston College.
5. Cf for instance the discussion of SM by John, Frankston College.
6. Cf for instance the discussion of SM by John, Frankston College.
7. Cf for instance the discussion of SM by John, Frankston College.
Researching Workers' Health at the Port Kembla Furnaces

In the Belly of the Monster

Local people say that the name “Wollongong” was an Aboriginal term for “see the monster comes”. Whether or not this is true, today the mythology appears to have come to life. Looking from the heart of Wollongong across the industrial landscape to Port Kembla, the skyline is dominated by the steelworks’ two working iron blast furnaces which seem to rise out of the ever-present polluted mists.

This isn’t just an illusion of the casual observer. The closer one gets to the furnaces, the more overpowering they become. On the cast house floor of the furnace, workers are subjected to extreme heat, with radiant heat levels near tapholes between 80 and 100 degrees Celsius, high levels of noise, coke and iron ore dust, metal fume and choking sulphur gases from large slag pits below the furnace. When the metal is cast, it runs across the length of the furnace floor in open sand-lined channels, and pours into waiting brick-lined railway ladle wagons. This snaking river of molten metal poses a danger of burns from sparks and splashes. Workers must remain constantly wary while they are tending the cast. The patterns of work, rest, eating and drinking are determined by the often unpredictable casting schedules of furnaces which are operated 24 hours a day. The rest breaks represent a respite from burning throats, stinging eyes, coughing, searing heat and hard work. Even the most experienced blast furnace worker remains a physiological outsider in this hostile environment. The senses never fully adjust.

Iron production is the result of complex chemical reactions within these huge furnaces. It is these reactions which also produce what is probably the most serious and life-threatening of all the many hazards present on blast furnaces—the asphyxiating gas, carbon monoxide. To this dangerous gas, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) attributes at least one-third of all industrial deaths due to poisoning. Carbon monoxide (CO) displaces oxygen from the carrier protein, haemoglobin, in the red blood cells. It has an affinity 200 times higher than oxygen, for haemoglobin. At lower
In an integrated steelworks like those at Port Kembla and Newcastle, where blast furnace gas is recirculated as a heating fuel, literally thousands of workers are potentially exposed to carbon monoxide gas. Other major production units, such as coke ovens and basic oxygen steelmaking furnaces, also have carbon monoxide present in byproduct gas.

Carbon monoxide is not confined to the steel industry, but represents a danger to workers across the whole spectrum of manufacturing and transport industries.

The Hazard Becomes Visible

In the middle of 1982, in Australian Iron and Steel’s Port Kembla steelworks, on the No. 4 blast furnace, a tradesman’s assistant suffered a heart attack which was immediately fatal. Within an hour of the fatality another worker was gassed, but recovered consciousness shortly afterwards. Both incidents occurred in an area where it was known that blast furnace gas was often present.

The Port Kembla Branch of the Federated Ironworkers’ Association, the union which covers production steelworkers, with the Lidcombe Workers’ Health Centre, commenced an investigation into the circumstances surrounding both incidents. The union is convinced that carbon monoxide contributed to the fatal heart attack, and was present in high concentrations when the second worker was overcome.

Despite evidence being uncovered of previous gassings, and several incidents of more workers being overcome by gas in the months that followed, Australian Iron and Steel, to this day, has steadfastly denied any connection between carbon monoxide gas and the incidents.

Since this time, the union has been demanding better protection from the hazard of carbon monoxide. These demands have centred around two claims. The first is that integrated electronic automatic alarm systems be installed in all areas in which carbon monoxide is potentially present. The second is that appropriate engineering controls and improved maintenance procedures be instituted.

The company, which is a fully owned subsidiary of BHP, has never wavered from its position that present CO monitoring arrangements in the Port Kembla steelworks are adequate.

Carbon monoxide monitoring at Port Kembla consists of a very small number of automatic CO alarms and the use of hand-held monitors. There is no integrated automatic alarm system in the high risk blast furnace and coke ovens production areas. The union asserts that the company has resisted the introduction of carbon monoxide alarm systems in these areas because high levels are often present, and activated alarm systems represent potential disruption to production. The limitations of hand-held monitors are evidenced by the fact that some workers have been gassed while using them.

International Guidelines Ignored

In November 1981, the International Labour Organisation convened a meeting in Geneva of a committee composed of government, union and company representatives, to draw up a code of practice for occupational health and safety in the iron and steel industry. The committee included a Mr. P.J. Laver, then General Manager of Mt. Newman Mining Company (a subsidiary of BHP). By the middle of 1982, Laver had become the General Manager, Operations, Steel Division, of BHP.

The code of practice, published in 1983, provides that “special precautions should be taken to protect blast furnace workers and other workers potentially exposed to blast furnace gas and other gases containing large concentrations of carbon monoxide”.

This protracted dispute has involved the government inspectorate, the NSW Division Of Occupational Health. Inspections by the Division, including sampling of carbon monoxide levels, took place at the Newcastle blast furnaces in May and June 1981 and at the Port Kembla blast furnaces in October and November 1982. Prior to the division’s inspection of the Port Kembla furnaces, the union inspected
the furnaces with a doctor and scientist from the Lidcombe Workers' Health Centre, and drew up a testing program which the division was asked to follow. The union paid for its delegates to spend their working time accompanying the division inspector while he was on the furnaces. At both Newcastle and Port Kembla, the division found high levels of carbon monoxide.

At Newcastle, the inspector reported "exposures, particularly downwind of the furnace, of some significance during most of the shift..." and considered that "carbon monoxide exposures on No. 1 furnace are likely in excess of the TLV (Threshold Limit Value)". At Port Kembla, the inspector reported "highly variable levels of carbon monoxide... ranging from very low levels to levels in excess of the Short Term Exposure limit, depending, in part, on specific operations, presence or otherwise of leaks and weather conditions". At Port Kembla, the division arranged to test volunteers on each furnace for blood carboxyhaemoglobin levels. Only five workers were tested over one shift, with some workers declining to participate.

The division made no recommendations concerning automatic system monitoring and control of carbon monoxide at Newcastle, except to say that the importance of the "significant" exposures could "best be ascertained by measuring blood carbon monoxide levels (carboxyhaemoglobin) of the furnace crews at the end of the shift, and it is suggested that such measurements be done."

At Port Kembla, the division made three recommendations. The first was for the introduction of more sophisticated hand-held monitors for use by the Gas Watchers. The second was that "the possibility of mechanical removal of effluent gases during emptying of the Dust Catcher on No. 4 Blast Furnace... should be investigated". It was defects in this system which the union believes were responsible for a number of gassings in 1982. The third recommendation was that "the company should make available a suitable screening test for carbon monoxide exposure for any employee who feels that he or she has been excessively exposed to Blast Furnace Gas".

Behind the Australian Iron and Steel Curtain

By early 1984, neither the company nor the NSW government inspectorate had indicated that they were prepared to implement a carboxyhaemoglobin testing program.

In January 1984, assisted by the Port Kembla Branch of the Ironworkers' Union, the Lidcombe Workers' Health Centre made a submission to the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations for research project funding.

The union and the health centre proposed to properly investigate the extent of blast furnace workers' exposure to carbon monoxide, using carboxyhaemoglobin measurements, and as an exploratory study, to look at the incidence of symptoms occurring at the end of the shift likely to be related to CO exposure.

Thus, the implementation of the NSW inspectorate's recommendations was being initiated by a union, assisted by workers' health centre researchers, and funded by a federal government research program within the broad commitment of the ALP/ACTU Accord. The funding application was successful, and work started on the project in July 1984.

The union and the researchers faced what appeared to be two big problems. These were the issues of co-operation of workers in a blood testing program, and access to the steelworks.

The more crucial was the question of co-operation from the workers. It had been said that the multilingual workforce would refuse to co-operate, particularly for the taking of blood. But, for practical and ethical reasons, each worker's co-operation was essential for the project to go ahead. The blast furnace workers had, through the union, pressed for improvements on the furnaces; at union meetings, the problem of carbon monoxide had been discussed and action urged. However, the project was the first of its kind in the steelworks, and represented a considerable step forward into uncharted territory for the union and its members. On the face of it, little

"Could I say something Commissioner? A.I. & S. have already done one test on No 5 Blast Furnace, they came back with the results and we weren't satisfied with the results, but the gentleman who came back with the results, I asked him 'what about this grab fire going on in here?' He says 'they are doing no harm'. I said 'what about the slag pits, the fumes?' He turned around and said, 'do you no harm'. Well we don't believe that. This is why we want someone from the outside. We brought this up with the union, this is why the union is here today."

confidence could be gained from the apparent failure of the government inspector’s efforts, which resulted in the testing of only a very small number of workers. However, such pessimism proved to be unfounded. Workers overwhelmingly supported the project. For purposes of comparison, the study required a control group of volunteers from sections of the steelworks not affected by carbon monoxide.

There was a number of reasons for this positive response. Many workers believed that regular medical screenings should be introduced in the industry. The testing program was therefore seen within an overall context of union-based occupational health care. There can be no doubt that workers were suspicious of any testing that could jeopardise their continued employment by providing the company with information to weed out the less fit, or “unsuitable” workers. It must be remembered that this project occurred in an industry which had been hit very recently by retrenchments and was undergoing extensive restructuring. The company had attempted to sack injured workers during this period, and was prevented from doing so only by union action. Union delegates were elected onto an ethics committee to safeguard workers’ interests and formally passed a resolution that the results of individual worker’s tests would be available only to the worker and the researchers.

The extensive involvement of migrant community health workers from the Illawarra Regional Migrant Health Unit at Cringila was crucial. A large number of job meetings were held on all shifts. Many of the meetings were, in fact, informal discussions between the researchers, health workers and furnace workers. A flow of information and support developed which was only possible due to the rapport which developed between the workers and bilingual health workers. The project was extremely fortunate in being able to employ a Yugoslav doctor, experienced in occupational health, who spent many hours on the furnace discussing and explaining the project, particularly with the large number of Yugoslav blast furnace workers. The term “subject” is inappropriate to describe people who were very much active contributors to the project.

The final element in the successful implementation of the project was the participation of the union in all aspects of its development. Apart from the formation of the Ethics Committee, meetings of blast furnace delegates were held early in the project to sort out practicalities and to establish the protocol. While testing was proceeding, delegates and workers gave invaluable assistance and advice. In particular, information regarding usual work practices, and a working knowledge of potential hazards, including gas leaks, brought to the project a perspective rarely found in scientific research. A major part of the design of the project is the production of multilingual information and provision for paid meetings to explain and discuss the implications of both individual and groups results.

The second problem, less serious to the viability of the project, was BHP’s track record in attempting to prevent access onto company property by union occupational health consultants. Delegates participated in negotiation sessions with the company regarding plant access. Initially, the company was opposed to this involvement with the delegates, but such involvement was a matter of principle for the union and important for the resolution of the question of access. After principled agreement was reached, a working party was formed consisting of company representatives, researchers and the union, including the delegates.

The researchers had organised to test workers at a local community health centre situated close to the steelworks. However, access to the blast furnaces, although not vital, would allow the researchers to measure environmental carbon monoxide and heat levels, and to carry out general observation of the work processes during the workshift. Eventually, BHP agreed to co-operate with the research on conditions which were acceptable to the union and the researchers. For the first time in the Australian steel industry, a scientific environmental testing program, with full participation by the workers, was under way.

Implications of the Project

The results of this study will be published when they have been fully analysed. Whatever the findings of the study, the issues raised by this project are significant for a number of reasons. The conducting of the research has wide implications for trade unions and scientific research. We know of no previous examples by this project for a number of reasons. The conducting of the research has wide implications for trade unions and scientific research.
of Australian research into health conditions in the steel industry that is published and publicly accessible. This fact alone makes the project significant.

• The need for such a project was first raised by the union within the context of the failure of the NSW inspectorate and the company to adequately investigate the problems of carbon monoxide exposure. There is a growing understanding in the union movement that scientific research can be a useful tool in improving industry occupational health standards. In the steel industry, in particular, BHP and successive state governments have failed to employ the considerable resources at their disposal to investigate adequately and eliminate serious workplace hazards. The picture in Australian manufacturing industry overall is as bleak. The paucity of Australian research testifies to both the neglect of past governments and the power of big corporations.

• Unions and their members are often suspicious of scientific research and its aims. The long history of time-and-motion and work assessment studies provides a sound basis for such suspicion. The emergence of predisposition screening, used to fit the worker to the job, rather than to improve workplace conditions, means that unions must protect their members’ interests at all times in relation to scientific research. If there are to be more studies like this one, there is a real need for the union movement, assisted by workers’ health centres, to develop a Code of Practice for the conduct of occupational health research.

• Trade union based scientific research is directed at solving workplace problems. As the development of this project illustrates, unions and workers’ health centres are uniquely placed to identify severe occupational health problems which persist in Australia. For trade unions, research is part of the process of cleaning up the workplace, and is not done for its own sake. The value of this research to the workers cannot be confined to its technical findings. It should be remembered that this project to assess biological effects on workers took place in a workplace that did not even have a basic emergency warning system. Although it could be said that it was a bit like studying the effects of water immersion on the sinking Titanic, the urgency of solving the problem was poignantly underlined in the last week of the testing, when news reached Port Kembla that two Newcastle steel workers had been fatally gassed by carbon monoxide on the coke ovens. A week later, the company refused yet again to install an automatic alarm system in the Port Kembla coke ovens.

Recently, the International Metalworkers’ Federation bulletin on Occupational Health and Safety said, “There are examples of countries which are very well informed, e.g. on asbestos or DDT, but which continue to use these substances as if nothing had happened. Here we must ask ourselves if the ILO conventions which are being discussed every year, washed and laundered many times over and then ratified by the governments of the individual countries, are going straight into the dust bin.”

If hazards, long recognised internationally, are the subject of neglect and disputation with unions, what can be expected with the multitude of unresearched chemical processes being rapidly introduced into the industry?

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• Hopefully, the funding of the Port Kembla CO project and other union-based projects is the beginning of a new approach by the federal government, which will lead to many more union-worker health centre projects being government assisted. An essential ingredient in this strategy is the government funding of workers’ health centres throughout the country, to a level which ensures their viability. Such developments are crucial to the implementation of the occupational health and safety sections of the ALP/ACTU Accord.

What is at stake here is whether important and often contentious occupational health research will ever take place in Australia. Occupational health research projects must be government funded and conducted by trade unions in conjunction with workers’ health centres; the alternative is research largely shaped by the priorities of companies concerned primarily with holding costs down. Effective occupational health research can only be undertaken within the context of genuine workers’ participation. Against pervasive and subtle corporate pressures, this participation is, finally, the most effective defence for committed, useful and ethical research.

Susan Lewis and Paul Matters

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Orchestral Manoeuvres:

Australia's biggest social contract, the Accord reconsidered

The ALP/ACTU Accord has raised some vigorous debate in the pages of ALR. This debate is rejoined by Vic Slater, who argues for mass involvement in the Accord. Only in this way can the framework of the Accord be extended to cover the needs of women and other disadvantaged sections of the workforce. This article was sponsored by the WA Socialist Coalition as a paper delivered to the Forum on the Accord.

Prices and incomes policies, or social contracts between the union movement and social democratic parties in government, have traditionally been viewed with reserve, suspicion or outright opposition by the left. The most telling criticism of such agreements is that they can limit or compromise the independence of unions and the capacity of workers to take action.

The bargain can involve nebulous or non-specific promises for the implementation of Labor's program in government. This was the experience with the British social contract with the Wilson and subsequent Callaghan governments between 1974 and 1979. Unions agreed that, in return for the implementation of the radical Labour Election Program of 1974, wage increases would be restricted to a level decided by the Labour government as being "in the national economic interest". Enforcement involved the government setting the maximum annual increase in wage levels in the public sector — with agreements in the private sector expected to follow those limits.

The policies of the Wilson government moved away from the program on which it was elected, and soaring inflation contributed to a redistribution of wealth in favour of capital during those years. The social contract and the Callaghan government collapsed in 1979 as inflation reached nearly 20 percent while the government set a limit on wage increases of six percent. This sparked off a nationwide revolt of lower paid public sector workers and within months the rightwing monetarist Thatcher government gained power.
But all social agreements do not lead to the same experience. In Scandinavian countries (where levels of union membership are among the highest in the world), political-industrial agreements have led to much more active involvement of the trade union movement and workers in economic and social decision making than in any English-speaking country. The experiences of social agreements in the two cases stand in sharp contrast and I would reject the assertion that such agreements inevitably involve the scrapping of the objectives of democratic socialism in favour of tripartite capitalist economic management as suggested by Herb Thompson (The Accord — Raising Profits at Workers' Expense, ALR 89).

Wages Struggles and the Capitalist Crisis

Those who assert that trade union independence depends on the unfettered rights of workers to struggle for wage increases within the capitalist market place should examine historical experiences in this respect. A paper given by Herb Thompson at a WA Trades and Labour Council seminar on the Accord correctly observed that, during periods of economic boom, workers often gain increases which enlarge the wages share of the GNP and carry over into periods of cyclical crisis when decline takes place. The increases are the "fat" which provides a buffer against the lean years. This analysis of wages struggles and collective bargaining has relevance to the prolonged period of capitalist expansion punctuated by short periods of bust in the post-war decades.

But the reality of prolonged periods of capitalist crisis makes a mockery of the capitalist "free market" for workers struggling for wage justice. Some British and Australian comparisons of wage levels between the years 1920-31 involve massive reduction in real and money wages.

In Australia, it took twenty years for the basic wage to recover to 1921 levels — in 1941, two years after the outbreak of World War II.

All governments have prices and incomes policies. To the extent that the wages struggle is the most elementary expression of class conflict as a function within the capitalist system, unions are involved in the operation of these policies. In this context, it should be remembered that conservative governments have dominated Australian politics and industrial relations for but 18 of the 84 years since Federation.

The Fraser government had a prices-incomes policy using a combination of mechanisms to reduce living standards in response to the onset of the economic crisis in the 1970s.
- Partial indexation operated in 13 of the 19 indexation decisions prior to indexation being ditched by Fraser in favour of a wage freeze — straight out wage cutting.
- Taxation policies as a major instrument for redistributing wealth in favour of capital and reducing real wages.
- Prices policies gave unfettered reign to the operation of the market in conditions where the largest corporations can dictate prices and pass on increased costs to maintain profit levels.
- Cuts in real government spending on the social wage elements of living standards — health, education, social welfare.

The union movement responded very unevenly to these policies. But, in the area of real money wages, the Australian working class was relatively successful in maintaining the share of wages as a proportion of GNP — as compared with Britain and the US where cuts in real wages contributed to higher levels of unemployment.

The union movement was not notably involved in areas such as prices, levels of government spending, taxation, employment and industry policies until the AMFSU developed the social wage campaign. On taxation (right up to the time of the tax avoidance scandals of 1982) the rightwing flat earth advocates of small government and flat taxes had more impact on the debate about taxation policies than the bulk of unions or the left.

Collective Bargaining — United States Style

The ruling class response to the restructuring of the Australian economy and the international redivision of labour is to move for a US model of collective bargaining. The Victorian Chamber of Commerce declared itself in favour of "non egalitarian forms of wage fixation". The Liberal Party, reflecting the interests of international capital, followed suit.
Workers who are well organised or in strategic sectors of the economy — usually male — are better placed to make real wage gains in this ball game. Provided that such gains do not flow on to the mass of workers (and the restructuring of the economy and high unemployment assist to block such flow-ons), they are treated as islands of economic privilege within the class. They also fuel the (in part) false economic argument that they contribute to the increasing number of their fellow workers being thrown on the industrial scrap heap.

This is the stark reality in the United States where narrow economic militancy is strong among pockets of the workforce, but the trade union movement is in an advanced state of decline. Only 16-17 percent of the US workforce is unionised — a real recipe for the death of democratic socialism or even the most elementary organisation of workers. Militancy and “free” collective bargaining in these conditions has little or nothing in common with class or social consciousness.

The Social Wage Campaign and Intervention

The social wage campaign was a major break with the narrow restricted view of the role of unions in modern society. The campaign confirmed the experiences of the 1970s when increasing numbers of workers became involved in struggles relating to managerial prerogatives such as the right to hire and fire and decision making, industrial health and safety, and social issues involving responsibility for the social value of labour, e.g. green bans.

Mark Burford’s paper Prices and Incomes Policies and Socialist Politics correctly identifies the social wage campaign as a major contribution to the formulation of the ALP-Actu Accord. Such publications as Australia Ripped Off and Australia on the Rack extended the debate about the direction Australia was taking to hundreds of thousands of workers.

The critical weakness of the Accord is that, in the lead-up to the 1982 elections, there was no rank and file involvement — this problem of “from the top down bureaucracy” shows up in the formulation of many ACTU policies, including the most progressive policies.

But, unlike the British social contract, the Accord involves mechanisms which, combined with national wage campaigns, can largely maintain wage levels.

The major inequality is that relativities are maintained which favour the highest paid sectors of the workforce and take no account of the position of women as a massive segment of lower paid workers within the workforce. The introduction of full plateau indexation, with a higher relative increase for lower paid workers (over and above the CPI) should be a major objective of the labour movement in any renegotiation of the Accord.

The Accord covers wide areas of economic and social policy which urgently need to be backed by workers and community education and involvement as the basis for effective national negotiations by the ACTU. This urgency is underlined by the Hawke-Keating ascendancy and retreat from the policies in the Accord in favour of the free market approach to industry policy, financial regulation and the moves towards a new consumption tax.

TAX REFORM NOW!

"THE WEALTHIEST 1% OF AUSTRALIA'S POPULATION OWN 20% OF THE COUNTRY'S TOTAL WEALTH. HALF THE POPULATION OWN LESS THAN 8% OF THE WEALTH. THE RICHEST 2000 PEOPLE OWN AS MUCH AS THE POOREST 1 MILLION AUSTRALIANS." "The Distribution of Wealth in Australia" P. Sacktor

"TAX REFORM NOW! THE PROBLEM IS NOT TO GET THE RICH TO PAY MORE TAX. THE REAL PROBLEM IS TO GET THE RICH TO PAY ANY TAX AT ALL." Professor Kenneth (1981)

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The critical weakness of the Accord is that, in the lead-up to the 1982 elections, there was no rank and file involvement — this problem of “from the top down bureaucracy” shows up
This formulation attributes to the state a metaphysical function or existence separate from the real world where the state reflects, influences and is influenced by the productive relations of society.

Capitalism has survived and evolved long since Marx predicted that the contradiction between the social nature of production and private appropriation would produce its own gravediggers. The increasingly social character of production means that the survival of capitalism involves modifying this contradiction by the extension of the public sector in the capitalist economy. But the extension of the public sector also reflects the gains of the working class and provides the basis for intervention by workers in decision making in favour of social and community interests as opposed to private profit.

Monetarists and Friedmanites who seek to roll back the social gains of the long era of capitalist expansion recognise this much better than some on the left.

Union militants and officials are co-opted but that is only one side of the coin. Unions being involved in major national decisions can provide the reverse — subvert the notion of managerial prerogative, the "master, servant" relationship, and involve workers in breaking out of the traditional view of unions as having a narrow role in defending wages and job conditions.

**Tax Reform and the Accord**

Community education about the scandalous mess of the taxation system and mass campaigns around an alternative program (popularising and extending the taxation reforms of the Accord) could strengthen the role of the ACTU and other community organisations leading up to the review of the taxation system in Australia. The taxation leaflet, rally and stoppage of Fremantle waterfront unions is one of the few examples of union initiatives to date. But wider union and community education and action could shift the ground in favour of real reform.

Taxation was a major issue in the federal election, but the Liberals have again taken the initiative in advocating the extension of indirect tax in return for a fistful of PAYE dollars via family income splitting. Popularisation of the role of capital gains and wealth taxes in a radically restructuring of a totally regressive taxation system could create a public mood which would reject the introduction of a new consumption tax advocated by the Liberals and Nationals and also being canvassed by Hawke and Keating in defiance of the Accord.

Trade unions traditionally have been defensive, and respond readily to attacks like the W.A. Fuel and Energy Bill, section 54c, and the criminal charges against John O'Connor in an attempt to stop the rot setting in. But they are slow to intervene in ways which set the agenda and provide better conditions for actively extending the role of unions in economic and social life.

The left and socialists have traditionally been oppositionist in exposing the effects of capitalism in the hope that support can be won for an alternative system. Opposition, without active intervention by masses of people in the direction that society is taking, is well illustrated by the program of the Social Rights Campaign. The Social Rights Campaign counterposes to the Accord a series of slogans involving immediate demands which are mostly more limited than the ALP/ACTU Accord.

But the economic policy involves calls for nationalisation without compensation, and workers’ control; it turns its back on the real possibilities to mobilise around the widely supported elements of the Accord to:

- strengthen the social and economic role of unions
- extend industrial democracy and community involvement in the decisions which affect people’s lives.

If the left can become better interventionists, there are real opportunities to utilise democratic socialist objectives as an effective antidote to the notion of corporatism which arises out of the Hawke-Keating ascendency.

*Vic Slater*

**Vic Slater is a Fremantle official of the Waterside Workers Federation and a member of the CPA National Committee.**
Getting Blood-out of a Stone:
What John Stone Reveals about Treasury

At the end of 1984, John Stone resigned as Australia's Treasury Secretary. He now holds a position with the Centre for Policy Studies at Monash University, Melbourne: a think tank of economic mercenaries. From his role as Treasury's dogged autocrat, he has projected himself as a social commentator, making pronouncements on issues ranging from Aboriginal land rights to youth wages and from Australia's immigration policy to law enforcement — to name but a few. The fact that these views have been published in Quadrant gives a good indication of their political leaning.

While Stone's social commentaries are not in themselves worthy of review, it is nonetheless interesting to see revealed the world view of this once powerful bureaucrat. It shows so explicitly that the "Treasury line" which he represented for so long is not simply a product of objective, technical economic analysis. It is closely tied to a particular conception of the way society should be organised — socially as well as economically. Hence we find that Stone's reactionary social views and Treasury economics are not unrelated: they share a common ideological origin.

In this paper, I want to look at how the newly-revealed John Stone gives us access to an understanding of Treasury's approach to some fundamental issues of macroeconomic policy.

It would appear that there are two personal qualities which any Treasury Secretary must display. The first is a total commitment to a line of analysis and a relentless pursuit of its realisation. Accordingly, those who hold this position must be hard workers. It used to be said of former Treasury Secretary Sir Frederick Wheeler that it was always easy to tell when he was on holidays — he wore a sportcoat to the office. John Stone, too, is renowned for his diligence. The second quality required for the position is that of a visionary — preferably blinkered, but a visionary nonetheless.

These may appear demanding conditions, beyond the capacity of most. But libertarian economics provides the perfect ideology through which both qualities can be displayed.
Its policies are simple, so that commitment need not generate self-doubt. The market solves all problems. And its vision is precise: a self-regulating world of calculating individuals achieving their optimum self-interest. The capacity of such a theory to provide precise and simple judgments (irrespective of their foundation) undoubtedly largely explains the current great appeal of libertarian economics both within the Treasury and within the Australian economics profession generally. When economists make that one small commitment to market solutions, all explanations of history, society and politics dissolve into clear-cut and resolvable technical problems.

John Stone has made that commitment intellectually, but it has never been articulated in its purity. While he accepts and espouses the integrity of libertarian theory, Stone is also a Treasury person through and through. In his perception, this requires that Treasury exercise a major influence on Australian economic policy. Thus, Stone's career has always exhibited the internal tensions between the libertarian approach of a market theorist and the regulatory best of a loyal Treasury officer. His commitment to the Treasury cause and his vision of the libertarian society have not always pushed in the same direction.

These two aspects tell something of Stone's relationship with the Labor government. The debate at the time of the election of the Hawke government, over whether Stone should be retained as Treasury Secretary, turned out to be the wrong debate. As the policies of the government have already shown, it is not simply a matter of whether Stone was too inclined to free-market economics to advise effectively a Labor government. The issue was what aspects of regulation and deregulation are perceived to be central to economic management. The irony is that, while Stone and the government both seek to develop a blend of regulated and deregulated spheres, their specific blends are exactly antithetical: the government supporting the regulation of industry and the deregulation of finance, and Stone the opposite.

So, while Stone was retained as Treasury Secretary, the effect was that, on major issues of economic policy, his advice was ignored. For a zealot like Stone, this is worse than being sacked. His decision to retire was the only means by which he could counter being ignored and, at the same time, draw public attention to his conflicts with government policy.

To highlight this conflict, Stone poignantly announced his resignation on the eve of the 1984 budget and, soon after, made a scathing attack on government economic policy.

This attack, presented in the form of the 1984 Shann Memorial Lecture, should be cause for concern. The lecture is recognised as Stone's swan song. Its importance, however, is not just as the reflections of a central figure in Australia's economic policy formation, for Stone remains an expression of the Treasury. His speech must be understood as a Treasury polemic, unfettered by the political decorum of Westminster loyalty. With Stone gone, the Treasury line remains, and Stone, in his jumpy, stilted, public-service-style prose, presented us with an unqualified expression of that line.

The Great Depression and Now

Stone's purpose was to proclaim his abhorrence at the refusal of governments to accept the free-market truths he sees as self-evident.

He chose to do this in a rather peculiar way, which proved particularly revealing of his simplistic understanding of social processes. Rather than a systematic, direct assault on government policy, Stone chose to relate Ernest Shann's economic writings from the 1920s and '30s to his own views of the present. In drawing parallels between the 1930s and prospects for the 1980s, Stone revealed his conceptions of history, recession and of the state.

The central parallel he identified was the effect of the growth of government regulation and spending in distorting economic processes. Shann identified this from the 1890s and traced its progression to the Great Depression. Stone has identified the same process from the 1960s, and his speech speculated on a comparable progression.

In Australia, where capitalism grew only under the aegis of the British colonial state, it seems an odd twist to associate state intervention with the demise of economic activity. It seems history gets rewritten so as to construct an earlier developing Australia without the state! Only the facts are changed to protect the ideology. Stone's position contends that the economy exists in itself and then the state is imposed upon it. From

The Treasury Building in the Parliamentary Triangle.
this premise, the existence of the state can be only distortionary because it is constituted as a historical imposition. The explanation of why the state intervenes accordingly is reduced to the capacity of certain vested interests to gain from the state a favourable distortion of market forces. Politics — the representation of opposed social forces within the state — becomes reduced to the corruption of economic processes. Politics — the representation of opposed social forces within the state — becomes reduced to the corruption of economic processes. Yet, in seeking to rid economic processes of political determination, Stone is in fact promoting exactly the opposite. If all social decisions are made through the control of resources in the market, then economics (the capacity to command resources) becomes the handmaiden of politics (the capacity to determine the social allocation of resources).

Stone goes further than posing the state simply as an impediment to economic processes. Implicit in his parallel of the 1930s and the 1980s are the propositions that governments positively cause recessions, and, following from this, that recessions have purely national explanations.

Governments and Recession

The first proposition follows from the belief that the market, if left to itself, will solve all economic problems. The market will ensure that all resources, including labour, which seek employment will gain employment when they are priced appropriately. When there is unemployment, price will fall and demand will grow accordingly. Thus, the only explanation available for why resources might be unemployed is that government regulations stop their prices falling. This is precisely Stone's rationale for eradicating an award wage for teenagers. The fact that such a policy would probably increase teenage employment can be used by conservatives to affirm the general proposition that a fall in wages can generate an increase in employment. The fact that the fall in teenage employment will be at the cost of increasing adult unemployment then becomes the rationale for eradicating an award wage for adults too!

For Stone, contemporary unemployment is not seen as a product of recession (indeed, he has no concept of recession), but as a consequence of inflexibility in the labour market, caused by unions and the arbitration system. Yet such inflexibility did not cause unemployment in the 1950s and 1960s. It is clearly not possible to solve the problems of unemployment by wage flexibility, for employment responds to the level of economic activity more than to the price of labour.

In this context, it is strange that Stone, in the Shann lecture, should quote favourably the work of John Maynard Keynes, author of the famous General Theory. Keynes' principal point of departure from the classical economists of the day was his recognition that economies do not necessarily stabilise at a full employment level of activity — that various forms of state intervention, such as regulation of investment and employment-generating state expenditure, are necessary in order to lift economies out of recession. Why would Stone quote Keynes as an authority? Keynes saw that the wage and price cuts of the early 1930s, designed to price resources back into the market, were associated with growing unemployment. Yet these are the policies advocated by Stone!

A more solid conservative case for wage cuts might be made by contrasting the 1930s and the 1980s — that falling prices were inappropriate in the 1930s but necessary in the 1980s. This contrast rests on the claim that the contemporary Australian economy is integrated more fully into the international economy than was the case in the 1930s. The price cuts in the 1930s brought about a cycle of falling domestic income and falling domestic demand, requiring further price cuts; the price cuts of today are supposed to make our goods more competitive in international markets, without inducing the corresponding effects of falling domestic demand. But Stone's lecture made no such case. Instead, he sought to emphasise that the issues of the 1930s are the same as the issues of the 1980s. Historical circumstances and transformations in Australia's integration into the international economy are, for Stone, either trifling or irrelevant. More to the point, they
cannot be understood. For Stone, these issues have no history: it is simply the virtues of the market against the distortions of the state.

A National or International Economy?

A further proposition from Stone’s lecture is that recessions are national in origin. Irrespective of the existence of recession in other countries, Australia can avoid unemployment by ensuring a flexible, market-determined domestic economy. The possibility that capitalism may have an inherent tendency towards crisis, or over-production, or even simply economic cycles, is ignored — or not posed. Further, Stone appears to operate with a highly simplified conception of Australia’s integration into the international economy, which makes it possible for him to conceive of the fortunes of contemporary Australia as separate from the fate of the rest of the world. (Here perhaps we find the appeal of Keynesianism.)

For Stone, there appears to exist an autonomous national economy which plugs into the world economy like an electrical appliance into the mains. If the connection is clean — if domestic price responses are sensitive — the national economy works well. If domestic price responses are distorted by state intervention, the national economy fuses. There is no recognition of the possibility that, with the fluid international movement of trade, money and production, the concept of a national economy, under the control of a national government, is increasingly outmoded. Stone grossly inflates the importance of government policy in exerting effects upon capital accumulation within Australia. This, then, provides the rationale for the inflated profile of Treasury within the state.

Stone’s idealisation of the entity of a national economy is also the means by which he can explain his essential opposition to the deregulation of the international movement of finance — the floating of the dollar and the issuing of the new licences to foreign banks. Despite describing, in his Shann lecture, the deregulating measures of the government as “courageous” (which is not, in itself, an affirmative description), Stone is well known as an opponent of financial deregulation. Treasury’s submission to the Campbell Inquiry shows some evidence of this. It appears to be a flagrant contradiction for Stone to espouse the virtues of the free market, yet oppose financial deregulation. One explanation is that Stone’s opposition derives from the desire to hold major tools of monetary policy, particularly exchange rate policy, within Treasury influence. That is, to maximise the economic power of Treasury, he has advocated the deregulation of those things over which Treasury has no control (e.g., wages), but the continued regulation of those things over which Treasury does exercise control. But this explanation is not entirely satisfactory, for Stone is more an idealist than a pragmatist. Hence, he did not seek simply to grasp every tool of policy which may conceivably be utilised by Treasury. Rather, he sought to retain or acquire control over those policies which he considers will have a positive effect in ensuring market efficiency in resource allocation. An explanation of his opposition to financial deregulation must therefore identify why, as an essential libertarian, Stone believes that Treasury retention of financial controls will facilitate economic efficiency.

The most likely explanation is his anachronistic conception of an autonomous national economy, where internal efficiency is seen as a matter separate from external relations. Accordingly for Stone, with domestic free markets the national economy puts its most efficient line-up into international competition, but that line-up requires a manager to ensure internal integrity in the international field of play. Stone simply does not grasp the point that trade, money flows and investment flows form a complex pattern which moves across as well as within national borders with relative ease. Border controls on the movement of each are important, to be sure, but this should not lead to the belief that domestic resource flows are somehow apart from international resource flows. For the understanding of resource flows, the national economy is not the obvious unit.

A focus on the national unit, and its assumed integrity as an economic entity, is the means by which Stone has inflated his perception of his own importance, as well as that of Treasury, by contending the capacity of government economic policy to determine absolutely (albeit negatively) economic performance within the national entity. The current expansion of the Australian economy, along with the US economy, despite the existence of government policies which Stone condemns, is a clear illustration of the over-exaggerated emphasis Stone gives to the autonomy of the national economy.

John Stone’s demise must be seen, by his own criteria, as the ultimate expression of his lack of political power. As one with a true missionary zeal, Stone has been preaching loudest at the time when he is least believed. And the louder he preaches, the less believable he becomes. Like all missionaries, his vision of the efficient after-life has no relevance to the material conditions of the souls he seeks to save.

It must be recognised, however, that there is no point in vilifying John Stone the individual: to do so would fall into Stone’s own ideology of exaggerating his importance in economic events. Similarly, we should not look to the possibility of the new Treasury Secretary, Bernie Fraser, exerting a significant impact on the Australian economy. The state of the economy does not revolve around personalities, but is determined by wider social forces within a class-divided society. In this context, Stone the individual must be understood as force. When he has laid bare his views in the Shann Memorial Lecture and in subsequent statements, he has not been advancing an “objective”, technical economic analysis. He is asserting a particular ideological position about the way society should be organised. In this respect, he remains a true representative of Treasury.

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Philippines Fallout

Marcos' regime is rapidly losing support despite massive injections of foreign military and domestic aid. Australia's continued 'aid' for Marcos is placing both Foreign Affairs and Bill Hayden's human rights policy under considerable strain. Phil Hind reports.

When Aquino was gunned down by a Filipino guard at the Manila airport in August 1983, his assassins obviously did not foresee the consequences of their actions. The assassination led to massive outpourings of popular dissent and boosted the previously divided and embattled opposition movement.

Twelve months later a Marcos-appointed panel had charged 25 soldiers and one civilian with conspiracy to murder Aquino. Most prominent among those accused was General Fabian Ver, Armed Forces Chief of Staff (now on indefinite leave) and cousin of Marcos.

The opposition, though still seriously divided, went on to score several victories in its continuing campaign to end the Marcos dictatorship. Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos were mobilised in huge rallies of protest against Marcos, and in sympathy with Aquino. The protests continued right on up to and past the May 1984 national elections.

They focused the world's attention on Marcos' continuing repressive rule and illustrated how isolated he is becoming from his people. For example, for the first time, significant sections of the business community began publicly to identify with the opposition.

The national elections also revealed similar trends. Although the opposition groups could not come to any final agreement on their approach, the results reflected well on all sides. The boycott campaign is estimated to have moved over 15 percent of the population into not voting. The various opposition candidates, on the other hand, managed to outpoll Marcos candidates in Metro Manila and win twice as many seats overall as the most optimistic forecasts had projected.

Not that the election of a new National Assembly means very much in the wider scheme of Filipino power politics. Marcos was, and still is very much in control. He maintains his effective right to rule by decree, and his right of veto over the Assembly. He directly appoints 17 of the 200 members of the Assembly. His executive power is enormous — through his control over the direction of the economy, the deployment of the Armed Forces, police and constabulary, and his patronage of favoured business and media interests.

But in other ways the election was of great significance. Marcos obviously saw it as a means of trying to legitimise his authoritarian rule and as a tactic for dividing the opposition. It was a gamble; one which he hoped would convince his US friends that he can live with a semblance of democracy. Twelve months on, Marcos' rule now looks more shaky than ever.
The Geo-Strategic Context

The American connection is very important in Filipino politics. The military stakes are very high. Although the US had a direct military and political involvement in the Philippines going back to the turn of the century — when it became a colonial ruler of the Philippines after the Spanish-American war — it is the period after the end of World War II which has most set the tone for current US interests in the Philippines.

Following the surrender of Japan in 1945, the US was left in virtual control of the entire Western Pacific. The US granted formal independence to the Philippines in 1946, but stayed on as an occupationary force in Japan in order to completely disarm it and punish its former rulers.

The US quickly moved to establish a permanent military presence in the Asia/Pacific rim in order to prevent any communist advances into the region. This policy also became the pretext for intervening militarily against the communist revolutionary movements which were then developing in China, Korea, the Philippines and, ultimately, Viet Nam.

The Americans committed themselves to a great network of permanent military bases and advance forces in Japan in order to completely disarm it and punish its former rulers.

Japanese mainland and South Korea; to the east Guam; and to the southwest Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

US military figures have long asserted the high strategic importance of the Philippines bases. So important are they that the US agreed to a $900 million aid and grant package to the Philippines last year as payment for the next five years' lease. US Navy Commander-in-Chief (Pacific), Admiral Robert Long, told US Congress last year that it would cost the US $2 billion to replace the bases in the Philippines. Alternative sites, however, are hard to come by!

Significantly, the bases agreement also provides for the participation of US troops in security activities off the bases. If nothing else, this provides the same "tripwire" guarantee which goes with the presence of US forces in Korea. Any popular dissent which can be portrayed as communist inspired becomes the ready-made excuse for US intervention in the interests of national security, saving American lives, etc. Given the political complexion of the US today — post-Afghanistan, post-Iran and post-Grenada — it is hard to imagine any scenario in which the US would fail to intervene in the Philippines if it saw its tenure over the bases threatened.

Philippines society is going through a profound economic and political crisis. The dual failure of its export-led development strategy and of the US-backed Marcos dictatorship is most evident.

The Philippines has the highest level of foreign debt in the Asia/Pacific region, apart from South Korea. Its foreign debt is fast approaching the size of its whole GNP. It currently owes $26 billion in loans to foreign creditors. Inflation is running at a yearly rate of between 30 and 40 percent. Unemployment in urban centres like Manila has jumped, with mass lay-offs in '83/84; while underemployment is rife in all sectors of the economy. Since the Aquino assassination in August '83, there has been an enormous flight of capital from the Philippines — to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. Foreign reserves have fallen to a perilously low figure and the Philippines' ability to buy crucial imports to keep industry running has been severely curtailed. World banking creditors and international investors held back for over 12 months on sinking more money into the Philippines economy, until Marcos agreed on terms for a program of economic reform.

This amalgam of problems and its resulting shockwaves would be devastating in their impact even on the best of economics. In the Philippines...
they spell disaster. In a country where mass poverty and low wages are more common than not, where basic social needs like housing, health and education are a function of wealth and privilege, the effects of the economic crisis are particularly acute.

In the immediate post-election period, Marcos moved to institute a new series of austerity measures designed to stop the economy sliding even further. The World Bank and international creditors laid down tough conditions for the Filipino government to fulfil before it will finalise any new loans. New loans are needed to bridge the growing gap between old loans which must be paid and immediate funds needed just to keep the economy ticking over. In effect, Marcos has mortgaged the present Philippines economy against the hoped-for prospect of a strong economic future. However, that strong economic future is perhaps more distant now than it was at the beginning of Marcos' rule 18 years ago.

The present crisis lies in the failure of the Marcos development strategy to deliver the goods. While martial law in itself produced growing popular resistance, such resistance may have been minimised had there been real and substantial benefits to a majority of Filipinos. But such benefits have not trickled through.

The Marcos Economic Strategy

What was the Marcos strategy and why did it fail? Amid growing political and economic crisis in the last sixties, Marcos emerged as President with a commitment to a new development strategy. With the urging of the World Bank and his American-trained advisers, he embarked upon a course of "export-led industrialisation". The rationale was simple: by encouraging foreign investment in areas where the Philippines had a "natural" advantage over other countries, it could capture large parts of the Western consumer and reprocessing markets. Rapid growth, based on exports, would spin off into other sections of the economy and earn foreign exchange at the same time. (The so-called "natural advantages" of the Philippines were cheap labour and natural resources.)

In the rural sector, Marcos encouraged a combination of "green revolution" technology (i.e. high-yield rice varieties, pesticides, herbicides, etc.) with a large agri-business investment as an attempt to radically lift agricultural productivity.

The government, for its part, provided the infrastructure in the form of massive irrigation, hydro-electric and road-building schemes.

In fact, the provision of infrastructure and incentives to investors was the name of the game in this type of development approach. The Free Trade Zones established by Marcos (called Export Processing Zones) in Bataan, Mactan and Baguio epitomised this concept. The government spent billions of dollars on electricity and water supplies, transport and communication facilities, and construction of factory sites to service these and other foreign investments. In addition, the government was offering: tax exemptions and privileges, tariff exemptions, foreign exchange privileges, low rents, permission for 100 percent foreign ownership and permission to impose wages lower than the going standard.

Marcos used martial law to concentrate political and state power around his rule and, by so doing, to create the conditions favourable for foreign investor confidence. But he also created a crony network around him. Corruption, patronage and personal gain — already endemic in Filipino society — became institutionalised behind the closed doors of the Marcos dictatorship.

Thus, the Marcos government committed itself to keeping wages low, staple food prices low, and to massive spending on its own part. The big money for its infrastructure programs it borrowed from overseas. Ultimately, even the repressive constraints of martial law could not prevent the development strategy from starting to fail apart.

The Marcos plan created the illusion of development and, for a period, produced strong economic growth, but was vulnerable on many fronts.

Marcos Move Over?

In short, Marcos emerged from the martial law period with more problems than he began with. The economy is in a worse position, the opposition is stronger and more broadly based, and his overseas backers are not sure which horse to put their money on.

Even among Marcos' most trusted supporters in the US, there are clearly some differences emerging. Some sections of the State Department, intelligence community and business see the need for a government with greater legitimacy and less corruption — one which is better able to manage the economy in the interests of foreign investment and export-led development. Scenarios for getting out of the crisis are now much talked about.

One scenario has it that the US is cultivating one or other of the leaders of the legal democratic opposition. Salvador Laurel, nominal leader of the opposition grouping, the United Democratic Opposition (UNIDO), is one such person being mentioned. He is not anti-bases or anti-foreign
business; he is just anti-Marcos and anti-dictatorship. The problem for the Americans is how to back a moderate transfer of power while simultaneously excluding the radical nationalist, anti-American and socialist inclined opposition groups. It is precisely with these groups that the majority of popular support now seems to lie. If a more democratic opening is created, then these groupings will be present and vying for representation and power. The burning questions of land reform, improved living standards, and the removal of the US bases will then all assume centre stage. If Laurel remained loyal to the US in the face of this, he could well end up more isolated in Malacanang Palace than Marcos ever was.

Opposition Groupings

Who are the opposition? First, there are the traditional opposition politicians and political organisations, primarily representing the interests of various wealthy family empires. Included in this group are the leading lights in UNIDO such as Salvador Laurel. The stated political objectives of this group are the "restoration of democracy", by which they mean the restoration of a freely-elected parliament, an independent judicial system and an end to the military terror. This group has little or no criticism of US bases, and looks for continuing close ties with the US.

Secondly, there is a group of former politicians, who have developed a far more critical position on issues such as US bases and the economic system operating in the Philippines. These include former Senator Diokno (a prominent human rights lawyer) and his grouping, Kaakbo (Movement for Philippines Sovereignty and Democracy); and former Senator Tanada, who is a leader of a new grouping called the Nationalist Alliance for Justice, Freedom and Democracy. In general terms, these groupings espouse a radical nationalist perspective and, although fairly small in numbers, are very influential.

The major opposition grouping is the rapidly growing National Democratic Front; of necessity, an underground organisation made up of groups including the New People's Army, the Communist Party of the Philippines, radical Christians and a variety of people's organisations covering different sectorial and geographical groupings. The NDF claims over 10,000 organised members, with influence over many thousands of others through kindred organisations. US Embassy officials express the view that, in the long term, this group poses the most serious threat to the dictatorship.

The NDF has a 10-point program which calls for:

- the overthrow of the US-Marcos dictatorship and its replacement by a coalition government of representative democracy;
- nationalisation of all US property and termination of treaties and agreements;
- re-establishment of all democratic rights;
- genuine land reform for peasants and co-operative forms of agricultural production.

A protracted armed struggle is also being waged by the New People's Army (NPA — the military arm of the Communist Party). The NPA targets its attacks against the Philippines military and is widely acknowledged as acting to protect the lives and property of ordinary people in the areas in which they operate. Beginning in 1969 as a group of 60, armed with a handful of World War II vintage weapons, the NPA has grown rapidly to the point where its members are thought to be in the order of ten thousand full-time guerrillas, backed up by local militias of many thousands more. The NPA now operates in all
The Philippines situation poses significant foreign policy dilemmas for the Hawke Labor government. These problems relate not only to the US—Australia allied relationship, but also to the developing links between Australia and the Philippines over the past decade.

**Civilian Aid**

Australia has been a generous giver of economic development aid to the Philippines since 1972. Between 1972 and 1983, Australia gave $120 million (1983 values). A significant component of this aid has gone towards major rural development projects, one on the southern island of Mindanao (costing $41 million), and the other on the eastern side of Samar (costing $65 million). Both these areas are economically backward. On face value, the aid is needed and appropriate.

However, these projects have attracted much criticism in both the Philippines and Australia. Instead of assisting the poorest people, the criticism goes, only the already well off will benefit materially. For example, one consequence of the projects is that poor tenant farmers will possibly be forced off their land.

In 1981, Dr. Richards investigated these claims on behalf of Community Aid Abroad and found much evidence to support allegations about the military use of the roads in Mindanao. The Samar project involved, in the first stage, $25 million in aid, primarily directed to road construction. It commenced in 1978 during the term of the Fraser government and the second stage, involving $40 million was approved in 1983 by Mr. Hayden. Hayden said in parliament in November 1983 that, although the project was not economically viable, it was sometimes necessary to undertake projects for "political reasons".

According to the Asia Partnership for Human Development (a Catholic development organisation) 50,000 peasant families in northern Samar have had to flee from their homes because of military atrocities.

**Military Aid**

Australia's military aid to the Philippines is low in comparison with other ASEAN countries, but still amounts to $1.5 million a year (‘83/’84). The largest proportion goes to training of, and study visits by, officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) ($686,000). In 1980/81, one hundred and fifteen officers attended training courses in Australia. In 1982, Australia's then Minister for Defence, Ian Sinclair, claimed that Australia trains more AFP officers in Australia than does the US.

In the past, Australian military aid has also been directed to the sales of Nomad aircraft and patrol boats. Last year, we spent $602,000 on maintenance support for Nomads purchased by the Philippines Air Force, and another $100,000 on maintenance support for previously supplied DART target ranges.

The dividing line between military aid, arms trade and defence cooperation is a blurred one. In order to fully appreciate Australia's relationship with the Philippines, we also need to look at co-operation between respective armed forces and equipment sales. Here are a few examples:

- In the early 'seventies, Australia supplied 12 Nomad aircraft and later in the 'seventies supplied patrol boats.
- In February and March 1981, Australian Special Air Services personnel took part in combined special warfare and counter-terrorist exercises in Subic Bay.
- In 1981, the Department of Defence arranged the sale to the Philippines of an automatic target range system called DART, manufactured by a US company in Australia. DART ranges are designed for training for guerrilla and urban fighting. The Defence Department acknowledged to the Senate last year that it was "highly likely" DART was being used to train Filipino police and other sections of the Armed Forces.
In 1982, Philippines Defence Minister Enrile visited Australia, at Prime Minister Fraser's invitation, to explore expanded defence co-operation, including possible further purchases of Australian military equipment.

Labor's Policy

The election of a Labor government in 1983 has not, overall, produced any radical changes in the foreign policy line Australia has pursued in the region over the past decade. In large part, the differences in policy are more of emphasis than substance.

The US alliance and its obligations in the region are still primary, although there is considerable emphasis on Australia developing an independent position. The crude anti-Soviet warnings of the Fraser years have dissipated.

The maintenance of close ties with ASEAN is seen as vital, not only for defence purposes but also economic ones. On issues like East Timor, Kampuchea and military aid, this creates ongoing conflicts with other foreign policy objectives.

The Labor government has also vastly increased Third World aid, while seeking to promote human rights issues. The Father Brian Gore episode was a case in point.

Hayden has also indicated that he is sensitive to the need to develop "trickle-up" aid programs and not to supply aid which is being "used to deny human rights".

Hayden argues that by using a human rights policy and monitoring how aid programs are used, Australia can act as a restraining influence on authoritarian governments — his "political reasons" argument. How this policy should apply to the Philippines is a dilemma still facing the government.

Alternatives

What alternatives are there to this fairly wild foreign policy mix? What positive initiatives might we expect a Labor government, with a measure of public persuasion, to follow? There are four areas in particular which are susceptible to policy change and which are consistent with a more independent and non-aligned foreign policy stance.

- Stop all military aid, or at least suspend it, until such time as it is reviewed in light of: a) its connection with the repressive rule of Marcos, and b) its connection with growing regional militarisation.

It would be important that such a review cover all military aid and technology transfers, servicing arrangements, training and advisory arrangements, and joint military exercises.

- Review all civil aid to the Philippines to investigate whether; a) it is being used to enhance the repressive capabilities of the Marcos government, and b) it is meeting the urgent humanitarian development needs of the Filipino people.

Some might argue that this aid should be stopped immediately, although I believe this would be premature without a full and public review. Others might argue that a review process should be used in order to develop appropriate guidelines, consistent with the above objectives. At stake here is whether people believe that any sort of civil aid projects can play a role other than simply helping to legitimise ruling elites. It also raises the question that if we rule out giving aid to "repressive" governments, where would we stop?

- Develop lines of communication with all opposition forces who represent significant sections of Filipino society. This implies recognising that repression and social inequality are the greatest threat to stability in this area of our region.

Australia's long-term interests lie with progressive and fundamental social change in the Philippines.

A long-term aim must be to link the question of Philippines sovereignty and the presence of US bases with disarmament. In this context, Australian support for a Nuclear Free Pacific ultimately includes a Nuclear Free Philippines.

Although the present Labor government has refused to link the issue of warships and bases in any substantial way with support for a Nuclear Free Pacific, it obviously remains a critical long-term issue for any meaningful disarmament strategy.

By acting on these initiatives, the government would not only further the evolution of Australia toward a more independent and non-aligned foreign policy, but would also assist that process of social change which has now become necessary in the Philippines.

This article is based on a paper prepared with the assistance of Mike Beale and presented to a seminar on non-alignment organised by the Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament in June 1984.

Sky Jeep?

Sky Jeep, Part of Australia's aid package to the Philippines.
Labour and the Money Power

Reviewed by Alastair Davidson


This book is a valuable addition to the growing critical historical literature on the ALP. It serves a dual purpose. First, to recall that from its beginnings the labour movement here subscribed to a crude national-populism whose corollary was to identify in the foreign banks the cause of Australian woes. Second, to remind us that no matter how theoretically dubious, radically flawed and chauvinistically biased that view of the money power was, it was still miles more radical than the straight capitalist positions of the ALP today. I merely quote three telling excerpts from the leaders of the ALP in the Bank Nationalisation debate of the post-war years:

There are others of us in this House who can remember the circumstances of 1930, when the members of this Parliament and of the State Parliaments, and the governments which they had set up, were subject to a dictatorship, and the dictators were the private banking institutions. (Chifley)

I was only a child, the youngest of a family of eleven, when the banks failed in 1893, but I remember that my parents lost £100 when the bank in which they had deposited it "went hung" and they did not get a "bean". I am not surprised that only a few years earlier Kelly became a bushranger. He was only doing justice when he robbed the banks, because at that period they were robbing the people. (James)

The private banking institutions are the very basis of finance capitalism, and the Opposition Members of this Parliament stand for the maintenance of that unjust economic and social system known as capitalism. They know that if the private banks are broken the capitalist system will be weakened. They are fighting tonight for capitalism and not for the wage earner, the small farmer and the little business man .... Tyrannies have been practised in the past in this country, but there has been no worse tyranny than that of our banking institutions when Australia was in the throes of a depression. (Calwell)

These quotations sum up the theme of Love's book. In an interesting introductory chapter he suggests that this view rests on the cult of the common people, their populist values (a conspiracy theory of the way the world works) and consequently a refusal to adopt class positions. Of course, there are nasty derivative attitudes summed up in dubbing Niemeyer a Jew, when he was not. Certainly, the ALP did not adopt class positions and this is partly at the roots of its present sell-out even of the views embodied by Chifley, but holding class positions does not, in itself, guarantee an avoidance of conspiracy theories. Left critics of the ALP should remember that it was precisely in the period of "class against class" that communists also endorsed strongly the theory of the eighty, forty, twelve families which controlled the capitalist system. This was so, no matter what country we look at.

Moreover, there was, as Love points out, a basis in fact for the view that, at the source of all the problems was the monopoly finance capitalist oligarchy. The problem is how to articulate this truth with all the other instances and levels of capitalism. Here, the labour movement certainly went no further than the absolutely obvious and, from the days when Lane deliberately left out of the first Australian edition of The Communist Manifesto all reference to the class struggle, dishonestly tried to deny the existence of a class struggle, and always fought against other alternative views to their own. But what we have lost in this ideological battle is even the commitment to a view of the money power which provided a starting point for a better understanding of Australian class relations. Now we have Keating and Hawke whose role is summed up in a thesis I am at present reading, entitled in part Hawke, Modern Prince or Antipodean Duce, which definitely suggests that they are not modern princes. That their views

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In the gold era, Australians had also experienced what is now called a multicultural society. Their experience convinced them that such a society didn’t work; and at that time clearly it didn’t work (p. 22).

The implication is that it will not work now, but Blainey seems to have forgotten that the economic, political and social contexts which existed then were different from our contemporary ones. And, at the cultural level, the white Anglo-Saxon Australians (WASA) of the gold rush days were not exposed to the multiplicity of cultures brought in by the immigrants of various races. It would not be too difficult to come to the conclusion that WASA in the 1980s are likely to be more tolerant of other races than their counterparts of the nineteenth century, simply because the former have had more exposure to and contact with people of other cultures. This view is even supported by Blainey himself as he has said that there has been a gradual increase and some “remarkable gains in tolerance and understanding ... in Australia in the last third of a century” (p. 25).

So his opposition to multiculturalism because of racial tensions in the gold mining era is not based on a sound and critical analysis.
While charging the immigration department with being "anti-British" (pp. 155-56), an accusation which is mostly unsubstantiated, Blainey appears to advocate a pro-British immigration policy: "There can be little doubt, however, that Australia gained far more and paid far less of the taxpayers' money for the young men from Britain (sponsored by the Big Brother Movement than from the young people from Kampuchea" (p. 114). The implication is that young men from Britain are therefore more desirable than the young people from Kampuchea.

His conspiracy charge against the government of favouring Asian immigrants is highlighted in Chapter 6, "The Secret Room", where the alleged "secret documents" are stored. In this room, which is supposed to be inaccessible to the public, lie "plans that run counter to the immigration principles" (p. 101). He even suggests that the "new Freedom of Immigration Act has not proved adequate for unlocking the door of this room" (p. 102). This is blatantly false! Dr. Andrew Markus, who lectures on Australian history at Monash University, points out that journalist Jack Waterford, through the Freedom of Information Act, has acquired access to this so-called secret room and its some 2,000 policy directives (Markus' review of All for Australia in The Age, 3 November 1984). Blainey has admitted that he himself has not tried to use the Information Act to gain access to the "secret room" (Canberra Times, 8 October 1984, reported in Markus' review). Moreover, the alleged "secret documents", e.g. Policy Circulars 37 and 1037, are supposed to be unavailable. But Markus has in his possession the latter circular on immigration from Lebanon. Blainey asserts that this document instructs immigration officers "to tinker with the (60 points) scoreboard in order to recruit immigrants from Lebanon" (p. 102). However, he does not explain the specific instructions this "tinkering" involved. Further, he neglects to explain the reasons why Lebanese immigrants were given special consideration, namely that their country was in political and civil turmoil. It was virtually at war, hence more immigrants were to be allowed in on humanitarian grounds.

On the question of public opinion he argues that "in June 1984 only three out of ten Australians supported the present immigration policy" (p. 44). This is used to justify his claim that present immigration policy is, to use his own word, "ahead" (p. 32) of public opinion. However, the question seldom asked is: To what extent have his widely publicised views influenced the public? In other words, Blainey may have not only reflected but also strongly shaped or formed public opinion since his Warrnambool talk in March 1984. But even if public opinion favours Asian immigration, Blainey would argue that "they (Asian immigrants) should come on our terms, through our choosing, and in numbers with which our society can cope" (p. 24). He does not, however, define the terms on which they should come and does not say what criteria are used to constitute "our choosing". It is easy to state that we will only take in "numbers with which our society can cope". But by what process of calculation does Blainey come to determine the numbers? By public opinion polls? It seems so, for he maintains that they reflect the views of a majority of Australians who regard the current intake of Asian immigrants as being too high. In that case, the majority of the polls conducted in the past have shown that the number of Southern European immigrants was thought to be too high; hence, according to Blainey, it would have been an unacceptable figure, one with which society would not have been able to cope. Yet history has shown this to be untrue! On the contrary, Australia as a nation has benefited from the invaluable contribution of these people. It seems that the above quote is one of those demands which only the victors in a conquest can afford to make. The ancestors of our present day Aborigines knew this too well. They, on the other hand, were not able to apply this rule to the early British settlers simply because their strength was no match for the gunpowder of the whites.

With regard to immigration restrictions, Blainey sees Australia as taking too soft a stand:

Our immigration policy is increasingly based on an appeal to international precepts that our neighbours sensibly refuse to practise (p. 54).

Too many of us look inwards and criticise our own people instead of sometimes looking across the seas and seeing there a more extreme version of the faults that we criticise at home (p. 43).

But why should we judge ourselves by the extreme standards of other nations? Rather, shouldn't we judge ourselves by our consistency in practising the egalitarian principles which we uphold in theory? Blainey's type of pragmatic relativism ought to be ignored.

He further argues that:

In calling for a strong, long-term flow of Third World migrants, it (present immigration policy) foreshadows the sacrificing of vital Australian interests on behalf of vague international creeds (p. 52).

Blainey is so emotionally charged that he reads too much into the present immigration policy by accusing it of wanting "a strong, long-term flow of Third World migrants". Are we simply to accept such a statement without any evidence from him? And what exactly does he mean by the alleged "sacrificing of vital Australian interests'? Are we to understand that these vital interests are aligned with his own? In any case, we are still left in the dark as to the nature of these interests.

Blainey's use of certain words is deplorable: war metaphors are readily found, e.g. "invaded suburbs" (p. 123), "frontline suburbs" (p. 124); some descriptions of immigrants border on paranoia, e.g. they "pour in and eat into social services" (p. 134, all emphases mine). The word "pour" is also used to describe the entry of the Chinese into the goldfields in the nineteenth century (p. 134). By now it should not be surprising to see Blainey use the word "snatch" in reference to immigrants taking on jobs (p. 138). These are the words of a man who claims that his "views are not on the extremes, but sit very much in the middle ground, and such views do not usually arouse red hot reactions" (p. 131). However, perhaps the reason that his views have, in fact, aroused such "redhot reactions" is because they are in reality...
extreme views.

As for non-inclusive (or sexist) language, one does not have to look too hard to find examples like this:

*If an Australian girl married a Sri Lankan man, she would be eligible, ultimately, to be a citizen, but if an Australian man married a Sri Lankan girl, he would not be eligible to become a citizen* (p. 53, emphasis mine).

Now, no one would deny the injustice of the sexism above, even though it is not the point of Blainey’s focus, and it is precisely because of that that he is unaware of his own attitude towards both sexes; for he calls the female in the case of reference a "girl" and the male a "man".

Blainey’s offensiveness to Asian sensibilities is clear: "To be on the dole in Australia was like paradise compared to working hard in Indo-China. To find a well-paid job in Australia doubled the joys of paradise" (p.107). It illustrates how ill-informed he is on the cultural views of Asians toward work and unemployment. While he is quick to point out the cultural differences of Asian immigrants (p. 154), Blainey fails to understand that, for a large number of Asians, it is humiliating to be on the dole. Many would rather live off their relatives than register for unemployment benefits, while looking for jobs. Such statements expose Blainey’s ethnocentric view of Asian attitudes. Most of the newly arrived Asian immigrants wish to settle down quickly and quietly without drawing attention to themselves. They would like to contribute to society by working hard and participating in the general cultural life of Australia. In the light of this, Blainey’s comment can only be seen as insensitive and even provocative.

Moreover, if we allow immigrants from the Third World in too quickly, argues Blainey, pressures may then be exerted on our democratic institutions by these people. But he does not specify the nature of these pressures. The only clue given here is when he says that characteristics like "democratic government, freedom of speech, freedom to worship — are not common in Asia or the Third World" (p. 154). Thus, he seems to imply that because they may come from authoritarian regimes, their lifestyles might cause strain on our well-founded democracy. On reflection, this view is quite absurd because usually the main reason for migration is fear and impatience with authoritarianism; they would prefer the lifestyle which Australia has to offer than to revert to life under the old regimes.

While everyone has a right to their opinion, including Blainey, not everyone has equal access to the media to have their views publicised. Thus, Blainey has, with the maximum exposure given to his views, lent legitimation to racist attitudes prevailing in our society. Nowhere in the book has he conceded that these attitudes are morally wrong and that the social structure which engenders such views needs clarification. Neither has he made a call for a campaign against racism, nor said that the public needs to be educated on the issue. Rather, he prefers to have Asians kept out because public opinion is, for him, incapable of error.

Finally, if Blainey is correct (and this has not been established) that, on the whole, immigrants are taking more jobs than they are creating, and if the number of Asian immigrants constitutes 40 percent of the total intake (p. 172), why are they singled out as a target and not the other 60 percent of immigrants as well, who are also allegedly snatching jobs?

According to Blainey, the current intake of Asian immigrants is ‘too far ahead of public opinion’.
Re-dressing the Press

Reviewed by Beth Spencer

Redress Press is a new Australian feminist publishing cooperative which operates as a "book packager" — that is, something mid-way between an agent and a publisher. It initiates or accepts manuscripts and then contracts to sell the finished books to marketing publishers who handle the distribution.

In 1984, its first year, Redress (in conjunction with Wild and Woolley and the Aboriginal Artists Agency, and assisted by the Literature Board) published four books by women, one of them a black woman. This is a great achievement and it is to be hoped that Redress will maintain a similar or better proportion of black or migrant writers in the future.

**WELOU, MY BROTHER**


In **Welou, My Brother** Faith Bandier tells the story of her brother growing up in a country town in NSW. The book opens with a scene of Welou's father's funeral depicted from the boy's perspective. It then goes back to Welou's birth and traces his early years up until the final illness of his father Wacvi. Wacvi's story has been told in an earlier autobiographical novel by Bandier: an Islander shanghaied by whites and brought to Queensland to work the cane fields in the late nineteenth century, Wacvi escaped and came to live in NSW in an area farmed predominantly by Irish immigrants.

Welou is brought up to a mixture of cultures, partaking in the life of three different kinds of families: his own family who blend Island traditions with Christianity and a desire for the sons to acquire a white education and so escape the "life of toil"; the large warm Irish Catholic family that Welou goes to live and work with, enabling him to attend school; and the "old men" from the Islands, centred around Billy Bong, who becomes a special figure to Welou and a link with the past.

The dramatic tension arises from the fact that, although throughout the narrative Welou's mother's desire for his education — and via this his advancement in Australian society — is continually stressed, the picture of Welou at twelve years old that begins the book links him strongly with the life of hard manual labour and the old ways of the old men: "When the men who had come for his father's funeral shook his hand, they felt corns and callouses like those on their own hands."

But Welou's story is not the story of the victim, as one might expect from this scenario. Bandier has written a quite moving and thoughtful book which explores the complexities of cultural ties and desires, the conflicts and loyalties within a colonised and uprooted people as they try to make their way in a new country while preserving their links with the old.

The book cannot be classified as either "optimistic" or "pessimistic", in the same way that the characters are in no way reducible to representatives of "good" or "bad". Welou's fate is neither tragic nor triumphant — it has elements of both. The style of the book refuses such stereotypes and breaks away from the tradition of pleading a minority cause by presenting the hero/ine as either victim of oppression or successful (and hence atypical) rebel. There is a fatalism about the style that is nevertheless positive in that it is the fatalism of the pre-industrial, the community, where individualism and individual achievement is not the highest goal, the measure of success, where the pace of life is slower and one life flows into another.

The back cover recommends the book for "students of social and multicultural studies". Let's hope educators in Australia take the initiative and add this book to the secondary school's curriculum.

Colleen Burke's fourth collection of poems, *She Moves Mountains*, is a well-chosen and unified collection. This book is worth reading like a narrative, from cover to cover in one sitting. Unless, of course, like the poet, you have a toddler: "if you try and rest/ or read a book/ they climb all over you/ or throw the contents/ of the kitchen cupboards/ on the floor. Mix cocoa, spaghetti and flour in the middle, stir/it all up and offer you/the first lick". (p.54)

Sound familiar? Then you'd probably enjoy the book. Like this one and the title poem, the first poem is about Burke's daughter and sets the rhythm and tone of the volume as it locates the speaker as a working mother in inner-city Sydney. In this way, Burke seems to be announcing defiantly that mothering and writing, creativity are not only compatible but, indeed, complementary ways of interacting with the world.

The poems web together to reproduce the world of the poet. One in which concern over nuclear proliferation, nervousness at resuming work after having a baby, the wonder and love and frustration of having a child, and grief at the death of an Irish hunger striker all impinge on daily life with equal intensity. There is no order, no hierarchy of concerns, no granting certain subjects are more "poetical" or worthy of a poem than others. There is a looseness but sureness in the form that reflects the setting of a house with a baby in the city: things are tackled as they arise, life is surprising, plans must always be tentative and hence not too ambitious: chaotic at times, but things get done and the poems, like everything else, renew themselves each day.

One of my favourite poems in the collection is called "A characteristic common to men and ferns".

... there is never time and like a jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing/ I muddle along ....

This is a good strong collection which moulds celebration and protest, humour and anger, mothering and creativity — and offers you a lick.


Mother's Day, by Leonie Sperling, is a very different treatment of a similar theme. The book consists of two novellas: *Thanatos* and *Narcissus*. Both novellas use a similar style and both deal with aspects of motherhood and the ambivalent relations of a mother to her child and to the world.

I did not feel — as the back cover claims — that it "makes us wonder how narrowly we have escaped fates similar to theirs", or even that it made me "examine my own life". In fact, the style so distances the characters — contains them in a kind of glass bubble (like those fancy paperweights that snow on the little village when you shake them) — that I could only occasionally respond emotionally to their plight, and never "identified" with them in the classical realist sense.

Nor did I find the book an "action packed .... thriller" — in fact the denouements are prefigured and anticipated throughout.

In a sense, this constitutes part of the book's interest: the plot(s) and theme naturally give rise to a range of publicity cliches — "controversial", "disturbing and disconcerting", "its rawness", etc. — in much the same way that a picture of a mother and her child habitually calls forth another set of cliches — "love", "self-sacrifice", "joy", etc. The same principle is at work: it is because the central mother-child relationships in the book are ambivalent (to say the least) that they are hence "controversial".

What is this thing, motherhood, that draws out such guilt and awe? This is what the book is about, although — to me — it theoretically explores the issues rather than emotionally and dramatically plays them out. While this makes it lose out on one level — I wouldn't say it was a book that I thoroughly enjoyed, nor did it make me dredge up unconscious feelings regarding my mother (I don't have any children so I cannot comment on the other side of it) — this absence of involvement, this "what-if-ness" of the style, makes it a very interesting and worthwhile text.
It is the kind of text that will, I think, accumulate meaning, will change as the world changes, as the discourse on motherhood and femininity changes, as human relationships change. It is like a kind of litmus paper, a gauntlet, a cheshire cat that smiles and disappears and reappears, the smile suspended, hanging, unpredictable. It is a book that I am reluctant to make any judgment on as a literary work.

Perhaps this, too, stems back to the sacredness of its topic: motherhood — I am not a mother, how can I enter adequately, as a reader, this holy of holies: a book exploring the emotions of a mother as mother.

Certainly it is a book that I would be interested to see some discussion about. I find the publicity hype to date unconvincing. More than that: evasive. It smacks of the twentieth century faith that if only we can bring it out in the open and talk about it, then everything will be all right. Supposedly this book does that, for all of us, so now that we have "examined our own lives" everything can start getting better and honest and open and .... I wonder.

Pamela Brown's Selected Poems 1971-1982: the more you get into this book the more you get into it. When was the last time you bought a poetry book? And actually sat and read it? Perhaps one of the reasons Brown doesn't usually make it into the boys' anthologies (such as The Younger Australian Poets, a recent anthology which, as one reviewer said, would have been more honestly titled: The Middle-Aged White Male Poets) is that her poetry is so over the top, distinctive, alive, just that little bit mad, dizzyingly apt. It needs to be read in big juicy slabs rather than austere little bites. It's not for tastings where you swirl a poem around then spit it out and go onto the next poet. It's for the deep dive, the pig-out. Yet it's lean poetry, you won't get weighted down with all those serious meaningfulness that poetry is "supposed" to be about; death and co., esoteric references to predecessors, etc. — English Department fodder.

These are poems you want to quote rather than write about:

so now i have to pack my forests
and baggages,
so now i have to pack my eagles
and teardust.
and the way you talked to overflow,
and the way you were so fast to change
into your many shades of sorrow,
and the way you swept the miracles
away from your shabby gentility,
and the way you trembled
as you chose the latest props.

so hello attache case face.
hellow briefcase face.
hello screaming suitcase.

("Leaving", p. 70)

This book, like Brown's work as a poet, performer and filmmaker, spans the last decade and a half of urban fringe culture and the women's movement in Australia. As Kate Jennings says in her lively introduction: "It is a fever-chart, an ECG of the times when the new feminism demolished the geography in our heads, blew up the bridges of retreat, and mined the way forward". Reading them in the chronological order presented, one gets a sense of history without the poems being in any way severely dated. "700 teatowels marching backwards/ up lygon street", poems on the death of Neal Cassady and Janis Joplin, about drugs and booze and bohemians recreate a sense of the time and place and politics, but because the images and the phrases are her own and never the cliches and slogans and catchcries of the times, they are still fresh. Their muscles are still firm, they still come out fighting.

The poems are heavily laced with humour — cynical, indulgent, forgiving humour — without being trite. Without being devoid of warmth and emotion. It's not so much that the "tough poet image" cracks, it unfolds. Inside is a complex emotional political still-growing world in which the people, mainly women, wear "the kind of shoes that being alive makes so dirty", keeping a "wide angle on paradise".

Beth Spencer is a writer with an interest in feminist history and fiction.
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Autumn 1985
The Road to St. Kilda Pier

Reviewed by Mike Donaldson


I will ignore Milner's depiction of the Communist Party of Australia as "eurocommunist" characterised by "pale pink humbug" on the grounds that, as the title of his book suggests, he was writing from Melbourne in 1983/84, and I have assumed that his insights into the rest of the Australian left are not as ill-formed as his understanding of the CPA.

Milner commences his once-over of the Oz left by drawing a distinction between emancipatory socialism — socialism from below, and regulatory socialism — socialism from above, or statism. This enables him to juxtapose "stalinist communism" and parliamentary laborism as examples of the latter, and counterpose them to the former as typified by the IWW and currents within the "old" new left. This distinction drawn, Milner quickly clears away the undergrowth of existing left parties.

The ALP is not a socialist party, does not mobilise the population around issues, except to vote in compulsory elections and, when it is interested in socialism, is concerned with statist conceptions of it, with socialism from above. The CPA was an internally undemocratic instrument of Soviet foreign policy until, under the influence of Dave Davies and Bernie Taft, some of it stumbled toward conventional eurocommunism, as the rest headed for Peking and Moscow. The four trotskyist grouplets grow neither large nor small, and remain precariously dependent on the importation of blueprints drawn up overseas. Quod erat demonstrandum.

The task then is to save socialism from the ALP, eurocommunism, maoism and trotskyism, and the way forward is to form another ("from below") socialist party.

If all existing parties are so dramatically inadequate, why have a party at all? In what is the best part of the book, Milner handles this question head on. He points out that the working class in Australia, comprising as it does nearly three-quarters of the population, is the only social group potentially able to challenge the power of capital. The experience of revolutionary struggles to date is that capital has only ever been seriously threatened when oppositional politics has "taken on a proletarian character". It is difficult to conceive of a successful strategy for socialist transformation which would not take as its starting point the stopping of the flow of surplus value from the working class by and through the self-organisation of that class.

Socialists from the new party would also take socialism to the movements, unlike the "whole layer of Communist Party 'militants' who have been regularly elected to PND committees, but who have never mentioned in public either their membership of the party or the fact that they think some version or other of marxism might help to explain why there is a nuclear arms race".

factories, the party would be both developing and drawing to itself the actual, already existing, practical leadership of the labour movement in struggle (job delegates and shop stewards), without whom socialism could not be effected.
Milner concludes that "each of the existing left parties constitutes an obstacle in the way of any ... restructuring, and their combined weight is at present such as to prevent the generation of new party political forms". Part of what is required to get to the new socialist party is a new left magazine open to different views on the left so that the different varieties of radical politics can be tested against one another. What a splendid idea this is. Others have thought so too. Scarlet Woman is now in its tenth year of production, Chain Reaction has produced 39 issues and Australian Left Review began moving towards an "open concept of marxism" a decade ago, and towards a magazine format in 1981.

The magazine would be produced by "some appropriate type of pre-party political organisation". This non-party organisation would be open to members of existing parties and would develop into a "loose federation of activists working together around concrete political issues". The federation would be local and not national for "what is needed today in Victoria, is a Victorian socialist league capable of intervening in the political life of this particular city of Melbourne". These autonomous non-parties will eventually federate to form the new socialist party as the others liquidate themselves as organisations.

This will sound familiar to those who have been following the CPA "Prospects Debate". It is, as Milner admits on the final page of his book, the position adopted by the 23 "Taftists" in Victoria. How embarrassing for Milner (and for the Tafts), for Milner, on the one hand, wants "a socialism which smells of revolution and the overthrow of tyrants" and, on the other, finds his practical political position pre-empted, "for the last thing any socialist organisation deserves is to be marked from birth by the type of pale pink humbuggery which has, as much as anything, brought the CPA to its present sorry state". And so, as Milner prepares to launch himself into the void, he perceives that the Tafts and their mates are already there, waiting for him. (Will the new socialist organisation split???)

What is perhaps most enjoyable about St. Kilda Pier, the first major written contribution to the debate from outside the CPA and the Association for Communist Unity, is the sense of "newness" it exudes, a welcome "freshener" and an antidote to cynicism. For myself, I am reasonably sure that five years on I will be, as I now am, working within a marxist party which comes close to enunciating and developing that sort of full-bodied emancipatory socialism which is described so well by Milner. But I am also reasonably sure that Dr. Milner will be sitting at the end of the pier watching the waves roll by. And that is a shame.

Mike Donaldson is the president of the NSW South Coast district of the Communist Party of Australia, and teaches sociology at the University of Wollongong.

Labour and the Money Power continued from page 36.

Labour and the Money Power

can even have temporary endorsement reflects the loss of historical perspective present in the earlier ALP generation. Again, this suggests that it is exceptionally dangerous today to face up to the facts as they are, and to forget the lessons of history.

Among these, as Peter Love shows, it was never possible to control the money power through the bourgeois democratic institutions we have, and the former have always won in any contest. He also shows that it is not sufficient to galvanise the people; they must be galvanised in ways other than those which reproduce the system.

Alastair Davidson is well-known as a historian and writer. He is at Monash University.
Since the focus of critical theory has recently shifted from aesthetics to the media, this book will probably not receive the attention it deserves. It provides a clear and comprehensive account of modern marxist aesthetics — its essential directions and arguments — through the major representatives Lukacs, Benjamin, Brecht, Adorno, Marcuse and the Althusserians, in that (chronological) order, and also adds a political dimension to the debate which is lacking from previous analyses: the question of the emancipatory function of the art work. The author takes seriously the (explicit or implicit) claim made by the aesthetic theorists of the '30s and '60s that certain works of art have an enlightening effect. She therefore argues, quite rightly, that in order to support this claim, aesthetic theories "need to specify the practical basis within immediate experience for a changed consciousness. An account of the enlightening potential of the art work must attempt to find the foundations within the recipient's consciousness for a new, emancipated way of thinking". What is required is a "specifically democratic account of the process of ideological change", which can show "that the process of enlightenment does not merely involve the substitution of a correct consciousness, but crucially concerns the appropriateness of the response of the art work to the recipient's own dissatisfaction with his/her alienated consciousness" (p.2).

In support of her analysis, Pauline Johnson draws on Agnés Heller's The Theory of Need in Marx (1976) and her idea "that daily life in capitalism generates certain needs whose satisfaction requires the overcoming of an alienated social life". She concludes from this that "an aesthetic theory which successfully explains the emancipatory impact of the work of art is necessarily founded upon a convincing account of the radical needs produced by modern social life", it needs to "establish the specifically dissatisfied character of an alienated consciousness and the appropriateness of the response of the true perspective of the work of art" (p.5).

The author works her way through all the major writings of the various theorists in order to judge the success of their theoretic enterprise in the light of the above questions. Lukacs' early theory of realism is regarded as unsuccessful because it is unable to explain "how the recipient is able to recognise that the work of art's totalising outlook offers a better, a truer perspective". The division between the falsity of everyday (fetishised) thinking and the truth of the art work remains, and Lukacs cannot explain "how realism is able to enter the dynamic relationship with everyday thinking" (p. 28f). The later Lukacs is more successful. His last work The Specificity of the Aesthetic (so far untranslated) overcomes the previous dilemma through the category of "species consciousness", which establishes "a totalising relation between individual particularity and social life" (p. 37).

According to the author, Lukacs' Aesthetic is able to show "that the dialectics of everyday life creates the need for a totalising species consciousness. The falsity of everyday experience and the truth of the artistic reflection of reality thereby enter into a dynamic relationship ... " (p. 46).

Having declared Lukacs' solution as the correct one, the author then contrasts it with the remaining aesthetic theorists, all of whom are deemed to be basically unable to equal Lukacs' achievement. First there is Benjamin, who gets the best treatment. Even though his position is contrasted unfavourably with Lukacs on the basis of his inferior — antiprogressivist and mystical — philosophy of history, the author acknowledges the 'humanistic' position which he shares with Lukacs and concedes that there could be a "fruitful dialogue" between both theories. Whereas Benjamin gets a sympathetic hearing, all other theorists do not fare very well. Brecht fails because of his conspiratorial position. Adorno's attempt "to establish the subversive capacity of authentic art leads to a paradox. While he gives to the serious work of art a formally subversive ability, the way in which he analyses the character of everyday thinking prevents the exercise of this capacity ... " (p.94). For Marcuse, "radical needs have been excluded from experience in a one-dimensional society. Revolutionary
praxis involves the subversion of, and qualitative change in the character of felt needs" (p. 100). And the Althusserians (Althusser, Macherey/Bakhtin and Eagleton) get the worst deal. Their attempt to develop an aesthetic theory is deemed to be altogether unsuccessful.

Whereas the reconstruction and explication of the various aesthetic theories is very sound, based on a thorough reading of the works and not relying parasitically on secondary material, the evaluation and 'political' judgment gives rise to some objections. Firstly, Agnes Heller's theory of needs, which provides the ultimate yardstick of the author's judgment, follows, directly or indirectly, Lukács' theoretical position. This largely explains why Lukács' aesthetic theory is credited with providing the most convincing solution to the question of the enlightening capacity of art, and why all other theoretical proposals are basically judged from a Lukácsian perspective. Secondly, if the author is right, then ironically the realist novel of the 19th century, which Lukács espouses as the model for his theory, must be considered as the fulfillment of the demand for an enlightening art work, whereas the works of Brecht or Kafka or Beckett are virtually denied an emancipatory potential. The author does not address herself to the relationship of aesthetic theory and art works at all — and therefore disregards the aspects of reception. Apart from the fact that the enlightening effect of art does not reside in the text or work alone, but crucially depends on the 'reading' (an important question in the light of her major thesis), it needs pointing out that Lukács' position is idealist if it assumes that one individual work of art or the oeuvre of one individual author alone can possibly provide a totalizing perspective. Is it not rather the conflict and interplay between different texts and different authors (e.g. of modernist and realist writers) which have provided a more totalizing perspective and which had an enlightening effect in the latter half of the 20th century?

The insistence on the classic realist text violates recent insights into the mechanisms of communication and aesthetic reception. Furthermore, it seems surprising that the author attempts to honour one theoretical position, that of Lukács, as the only correct one. Is it not, rather, that all the various theories contributed something to the debate and to the central question raised. Was not the process of enlightenment which these theorists hoped to initiate in the '20s/ '30s and the '60s the result of a constructive debate and dialectic interplay in which no one can be declared the ultimate winner? After all, Brecht, Adorno and Marcuse had much more impact on the intellectual movement in the '60s than did Lukács and, in recent years, Benjamin seems to have provided the most important stimuli for aesthetics and media theory.

There is one last objection to be raised. Pauline Johnson dismisses, in her final conclusions, the "false democracy of a radical populist alternative" — i.e. the attempt by some leftist intellectuals to "describe alternative cultural styles" and to "locate a nascent resistant consciousness within a variety of popular culture practices" (p. 148). The author's rejection of popular forms seems to be at odds with her search for a democratic account of the foundations within immediate experience for an enlightened consciousness. If the masses of people never read the classical enlightened art-works, then through which medium can they ever be reached? If popular culture and the mass media do not provide the channel for such critical consciousness-raising, what will? Are the latter merely producers of false consciousness, without any insight into radical needs — as some leftist media theory would have it? — or do they have the potential to provide the ground for a revolutionary consciousness? The book leaves these questions aside, even though they are being raised by some of the theorists whom she discusses — notably Benjamin. It is here where the tradition of critical aesthetic theory can most fruitfully be continued.

Dr. Jan Bruck is in the Department of General Studies at the University of NSW.

At the age of twenty, Rigoberta Menchu, a Quiche Indian woman from Guatemala, decided to teach herself Spanish, the language of her oppressors, in order to communicate better with her companeros, and to tell the rest of the world the story of the sufferings of her people in their struggle against oppression. In these conversations with Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, Rigoberta talks about her childhood and culture, her relationship with nature, life, death and her community.

Her family spent about four months of the year working on their land in the mountains, but were forced, the rest of the time, to go south and work on the big plantations, fincas, picking cotton and coffee beans. Before she was twelve, she had seen two older brothers die of malnutrition and another die from poisoning after being sprayed with pesticides in the area where he was working.

After the coming to power of the Garcia Lucas regime in 1978, her younger brother was captured and tortured, before being burned alive in front of his family and members of the community. Her mother was also kidnapped and tortured to death by the army. And, in 1979, her father was one of the companeros who occupied the Spanish embassy in the capital, in order to draw international attention to the atrocities being perpetrated against the Quiche people. He, along with his companions, was burned to death inside the embassy.

Despite these and other horrors of which she speaks, this book is infused with a deep sense of humanity. Her profound identification with her Indian culture is one source of this; another is her view of herself as a Christian. For her, the Bible is a crucial weapon in the struggle. Exodus provides an example in the life of Moses who tried to lead his people out of oppression ... to learn about self-defence, they studied the Bible ... the example of David shows that children can contribute to the struggle ... But for Rigoberta, unless a religion springs from within the people themselves, then it can be used as a weapon of the system.

In this book she reveals aspects of her culture while still “keeping my Indian identity a secret”, for she understands very well that to keep the secrets of community identity is a form of resistance. In learning to speak Spanish and in writing this book, words are her weapons and they serve as an inspiration in the struggle of her people for human dignity and freedom.

Footnote: The film And the Mountains Tremble is based on this book.

Margo Moore

FACING IT by Paul Reed. Published by Sunshine press, 1984, $11.95, paperback, 217 pages.

In a recent letter to the Sydney Morning Herald, a reader suggested that all homosexual men be banned from working in the catering industry because they might infect the general public with A.I.D.S.! In the light of such hysteria, it is good to read a novel which sympathetically explores the reality behind the newspaper hype.

Although, in the U.S.A., 30 percent of A.I.D.S. sufferers are not homosexual, A.I.D.S. has quickly become known as the “gay disease”. Since homosexuality itself is often seen as a form of illness, or as a sexual perversion, a common view is that A.I.D.S. is a self-inflicted illness. The level of guilt, fear and depression associated with it is therefore very high.

In Facing It, both Andy and his lover David are activists in the gay community, and we trace, in the course of Andy’s illness, the history of the early discovery of the disease, played out against the background of medical politics ... the fights over funding ... the prestige for doctors associated with certain types of research ... In this novel, however, the struggle is personalised, as Andy tries to come to terms with the imminence of his early death and the relationship of his disease to his sexual and political identity as a homosexual. In the struggle to reconcile the conflicts this represents, his relationship to David and the maintenance of a sense of community within the gay movement are crucial.

David faces his own problems ... from his feelings of grief and anger as he is faced with the death of his lover, complicated by his sense of revulsion and fear that he might develop A.I.D.S. himself, or be a carrier and infect others.

Although, as a first novel, Facing It is not without flaws (it tends to be a bit too noble at times), still, it is a valuable contribution to understanding the personal and political crisis which is confronting the community at large, and the gay community in particular.

Margo Moore
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