TOO MUCH ARMOUR...

...not enough brains
The School of Humanities & Applied Social Sciences, University of Western Sydney, Nepean will host an international conference on Cultural Studies and Cultural Production. The Conference will also serve as the inaugural meeting for the establishment of an Australian Cultural Studies Association.

The conference will provide a forum for the renewal of cultural studies in Australia, promote debate on the politics of culture in Australia and will host performances, films and videos with the aim of highlighting cultural production.

Topics:

- Future of Australian Cultural Studies
- Writing in the 90's
- Understanding Cultural Performance
- Recent Independent Film Making
- Politics & Culture
- Cultural Policy: Australia & Overseas
- Asian Popular Culture
- Feminism & Cultural Studies
- Critique of Multiculturalism
- Cultural Studies as an Academic Enterprise

Keynote Speakers:

Meaghan Morris
The Future of Australian Cultural Studies

John Frow, University of Queensland
Response to Meaghan Morris

Ian Angus, University of Massachusetts at Amherst
Inscription & Horizon: A Postmodern Civilising Effect

Tony Bennett, Griffith University: Putting Policy into Cultural Studies

Great interest has been shown in the Conference with participants attending from all over Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A., Canada and Europe.

For further information and registration details:

Carolyn Schmitt, Conference Co-ordinator,
School of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences,
University of Western Sydney, Nepean, Box 10 Post Office,
KINGSWOOD. NSW. 2747

Telephone: (02) 678 7375 Fax: (02) 678 7399
Deutschmark Über Alles

A string of streets in suburban Berlin tells the story of the stark differences in economic and political life which have developed between the eastern and western sectors of Germany after 40 years of separation. A walk along any of these streets which, for nearly 40 years, were divided by the Berlin Wall and the yawning gap between the economic prosperity of what was once West Germany and East Germany becomes clear. At the western end of the streets, salaries are between four and six times the salaries of those who lived in the East.

While the residents at the eastern end shovel brown coal for heating, further down the street on the western end all the apartment buildings are centrally heated. The residents of the west glide along in foul-smelling Trabants which, in some cases, have been flooded with new patients who waited for more than ten years before delivery. At the western end, renovations are almost a part of life. At the other end of the street, the paint is peeling off and the buildings are dilapidated and in a state of total disrepair. Several families still share the same bathroom.

Bridging the gap has become the prime consideration of German politics rising above all other issues as the country prepares for the first all-German elections since Hitler grabbed power in 1933.

Doctors in both the east and west have been flooded with new patients who have felt the strain of adjusting to the new life in western consumerist culture. Employees in the west complain that workers from the east show very little initiative. In communist East Germany it was not unusual for a worker at the end of the working day to begin about 8 am and to peter out by about lunch time with the afternoon spent queuing for basic items or carrying out administrative tasks.

As the morale in the east sinks, there are yearnings for aspects of life under the former regime. Not the corruption, or the constant secret police surveillance, or the lies or the lack of consumer goods, but the less complicated and less competitive life where the state ensured job security. And, as a consequence, careers were less important to families and friends.

In a West German television poll 78% of East Germans queried said they expected to be second-class citizens in the new Germany for a long time. As the euphoria over the unification fades and tensions between the 'Ossies' and 'Wessies' have increased, those from the east have found themselves defending what they thought was good about life in the east. The work of generous state benefits and childcare facilities meant that nearly 90% of working age were able to work in full-time employment.

By the end of the year nearly a quarter of the workforce in the east could be unemployed. And already unemployment is claiming more women than men. There is now 56% unemployment among women compared with 44% among men.

The lavish range of support was to help try to improve East Germany's poor birth rate. But East German doctors also permitted any woman to have an abortion during the first three months of pregnancy. In West Germany, women had to justify having an abortion on medical and social grounds before a panel of doctors, or run the risk of both patient and doctor ending up in court.

In the haste to create the new Germany, abortion law reform along with some of the more difficult questions of reunification, such as moving the seat of government from Bonn to Berlin, has been essentially placed on the back burner until after the December elections.

Whatever their anxieties, no one is about to give up their new life of freedom and access to an apparent cornucopia of consumer goods. Many expect that, in the long run, the financial status will improve and they have to wait for the second or third generation to enjoy the benefits of the wealth of East Germany.
The Berlin Wall was breached, as the aspiration of the original leaders of the 1989 revolution to reshape the German state into a 'new', 'true' and 'genuine' socialist state were quickly pushed aside by the stampede into the west for a taste of life which had been denied to them for 40 years.

Ironically, it was the short, stooped, stocky figure of Gregor Gysi, who took over the mantle of leader of the disgraced East German communists who, in the final days of East Germany, seems to be the only one defending the interests of the 16 million East Germans. He consistently tried to protect the social benefits of East Germans and argued for a better deal under unification. Mr Gysi has transformed the former communists, renaming them the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). Up until recently the party was facing a doubtful future. However, changes to Germany's electoral laws aimed at protecting smaller parties is likely to help the PDS back into parliament in the next few years.

Germany's governing right-of-centre coalition led by Chancellor Helmut Kohl has turned the 1989 revolution into a successful populist movement which should guarantee it a triumphal win in December. Eighteen months ago, with the German economy becoming sluggish and the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD) rising in the opinion polls, Mr Kohl's future appeared uncertain. Now the best that the SPD can possibly hope for is not to be completely crushed in the elections by the Christian Democratic-dominated coalition.

At the recent elections in East Germany, held to create five new states to draw the east into Germany's federal system, Mr Kohl's Christian Democrats won four out of five of the states. His party seems well on the way to victory in the December elections.

The SPD's candidate for the post of chancellor, the premier of the state of Saarland, Mr Oskar Lafontaine, is regarded with increasing doubt by party members and supporters because of his shifting position on unification. His constant comments about the cost of drawing the two Germanys together have also made him unpopular in the east.

The SPD's strong stance on the environment is of little consequence at present to an electorate in the west which is preoccupied with achieving the smoothest possible run to unification and an electorate in the east which is still somewhat immature and not fully versed in the questions of the environment. Except, of course, a fear that a sceptical stance on the environment might have an adverse impact on jobs.

This year's unification elections are likely to mark the end, at least in its present form, of the world's most prominent environmental party, Germany's Greens. The left of German politics is running out of steam. The end of the Cold War has cut the ground from under its feet. There are unlikely to be any more confrontations over missile placements, as there were during the last decade. The Greens remain opposed to Germany's membership of NATO. But neutrality is hardly stirring. Especially during periods of such upheaval and with so many distractions.

Teachers in the east say that while school life is more relaxed these days they are concerned about discipline and an increase in truancy. The call of free enterprise is apparently too great for many as often these truant pupils are found in the local market selling goods from behind a stall.

ANDREW McCATHIE is Berlin correspondent for the Australian Financial Review.
New Walls

Before the sun drops behind the sprawling Wedding steelworks next door, an aggressive jockeying begins for places in the queue outside the Authority for Foreign Nationalities in the new united Berlin. By daybreak, the makeshift tents disappear from the factory’s refuse lot and a line of 400 dishevelled bodies weaves its way through the rows of metal partitions.

The refugees from Iran and Lebanon, Turkey and Angola, Bulgaria and Romania hope that that day they will receive an asylum application, the first hurdle to taking up residence in Germany.

Throughout the old Federal Republic (FRG), the lines, tent camps and dark-skinned families huddled in train stations attest to the new wave of immigration that has hit the country. The heightened disparity between North and South, and the fall of the walls in Eastern Europe have produced a record influx of political and economic refugees. While the vast majority of the nearly one million newcomers over the last year were German or ethnic German, the movement of people from the East — particularly Poles, Romanians and Gypsies — has been met with an ugly popular resentment in both German states. Bonn and its Central European allies have countered with new walls of their own to shut out their eastern neighbours. Less than a year after their liberation, the eastern Europeans find themselves increasingly excluded from the European Community (EC) fortress, second-class citizens in an economically divided European House.

The tortuous procedure for gaining asylum is one of the more subtle barriers for potential immigrants. On the Democratic Republic (GDR)-Czech border, GDR soldiers physically evicted all Balkan peoples without hard currency. In September, 1500 Austrian soldiers were assigned to patrol the country’s eastern border. Rather than serve as a dumping ground for the West’s unwanted visitors from east of the Elbe now require either hotel reservations, an unspecified sum of hard currency or an invitation to cross the German borders. The Poles, explained Witold Kaminski of the Polish Social Service Office in West Berlin, feel that “through Solidarity in 1980 we gave the initial impetus to the revolutions in eastern Europe. We wanted to come back to Europe and now the door of the European house is being slammed in our face.” The insensitive date of the restrictions, he told the Berlin Tageszeitung, only rubbed salt in the Polish people’s wounds. (See Matters Arising in this issue for an interview with Taz’s editor.)

Above the objection of President Vaclav Havel, the West has managed to enlist the Czechs and the Slovaks in their campaign. At the Hungarian-Slovak border, east Europeans — as Gypsies above all — must have their border guards now work hand-in-hand with those from unified Germany.

As long as the cold war reigned, the western countries boasted that they were the sanctuaries for communism’s oppressed. Eastern block people were almost automatically granted political asylum. Any citizen from the East could receive a 30-day tourist visa to West Berlin. Austria cultivated its reputation as the international capital of the world’s refugees. Now, with certain exceptions, the East Europeans fall under the category of economic, rather than political refugees. While the courts eventually denounce almost all applicants political asylum, once they petition for the status they may live in Germany on a state social allowance until their case is adjudicated. Even if turned down, the majority of refugees are granted official visas to stay on in the country. In the meantime, they exist on the fringe of society. Gypsies in tent camps in the Saarland, Poles, Romanians and Third World people picking up un under-the-table work or selling cigarettes in subway stops. In the early 60s virtually all applicants were granted political asylum; in 1985 29% of applicants qualified; and last year the figure stood at 3.3%.

On 1 September, the 51st anniversary of Nazi Germany’s invasion of Poland, Bonn and the allied powers in West Berlin ended the city’s special status for East Europeans. Potential
The stopgap measures to seal borders are not sufficient to suppress and aggravate the conditions inherent in the lopsided distribution of global wealth, the real source of the immigration swell.

The failure to confront the North-South and East-West splits on an all-European, much less international scale, has left the retreat into the exclusive structures of nationalism the simplest option. The much-heralded fall of internal borders within the EC in 1992 has only forced its frontier states to thicken the external boundaries. The EC countries will only drop their own borders when the community assures its hermetic enclosure with fully coordinated policies regarding visas, asylum policy and immigration laws.

That these restrictions will also affect a certain category of tourists and seasonal workers is just one of the intended side effects. The restrictive policies serve equally to foster the nationalist and Eurocentric chauvinism that can justify the disparity of the economic status quo.

Until the concept of the modern nation-state is itself redefined, its mechanisms will perpetuate the inequalities inherent in its logic as well as that of the international economic order.

For the present, its structures provide the world’s prosperous with their best defence against the world’s have-nots. The Eastern Europeans’ painful transition to market economies and the break-up of the Soviet Union will present its neighbours with a flood of refugees on another scale entirely. Fortress Europe must dig in for the long siege ahead.

PAUL HOCKENOS writes for ALR on Europe from his base in Budapest.
It has been pretty clear for a while now that turning radio station JJJ into a national youth network is not going well.

A staff split was a painful but necessary step towards any attempt to rectify things, so the recent staff sackings were a logical and necessary management process. The remaining problem is that the wrong people lost their jobs. The people who should have been sacked are the ABC radio managers responsible for the station, and the senior programmers at it itself.

Sacking popular, knowledgeable and talented announcers when it is programming and management who have been letting the side down was so transparent an act of bureaucratic scapegoating that it drew a huge response at a public meeting at Sydney Town Hall, and an historic occupation of the studios.

Speaking of rhetoric, JJJ now talks about catering for a ‘youth market’ between the ages of 15-24, which is absurd. Somewhere smack in the middle of that age bracket is a major rite of passage: leaving school and often home as well, starting work or tertiary education. There is no such thing as a homogenous or continuous ‘youth market’ in this age range. School-age ‘youth’ tend to behave culturally quite differently from post-school ‘youth’. School-age culture has a greater tendency to homogeneity, with the formation of peer group identity through collective consumption. This important phase of cultural education is also characterised by a rapid turnover. Kylie Minogue might be huge one season, due to the peer identity effect, and non-existent the next.

By contrast, post-school youth culture consists these days of a diverse range of micro-cultures. The identity-effect appears mostly much looser and a little more difference and distinction is tolerated between formations of taste. This more subtle and diverse kind of youth culture is built on the learning experience involved in the previous one. Because post-school youth culture tolerates more diversity, it is possible for a radio station with a minority share of this audience still to have a significant impact.

Triple J was at its best when it catered to knowledgeable post-school subcultures, particularly the indi Australian rock, hard rock, dance music and black music formations. It is now trying its best to offend all of them by throwing bits of each other in a program format which is trying to be homogenous but ends up jarringly awful to all. Worse, it is trying to shift to a younger audience, but without the resources and promotion of a commercial station.

One either has to go for all of the school age ‘market’ or none of them is considerably less room for minor taste in the cultural behaviour in the group and, consequently, not much scope for a minority station. Indeed, the school age listeners JJJ has always had are mostly attracted to it by the perception that it is a more ‘mature’ cultural outlet than commercial pap.

The rhetoric of the management defending JJJ and the nostalgic and disenfranchised inner city scene seems misplaced. The strongest argument that can be made draws from even more hard-headed rhetoric the vacuity of ‘ratings, rating’s. Triple J should not be viewed as a service to a numerical mass of consumers - a ridiculous view for a station not selling advertising anyway. Triple J should be seen as having a vital contribution to make, not to the consumption of music, but to the production of it.

Music, as Austrade is well aware, is a successful Australian export industry, not to mention one which replaces imports with locally made products.
music business has grown in Australia and, in particular, Sydney through plentiful venues for live acts and good distribution for recorded product. There is something seriously deficient in the understanding of culture and cultural policy at the ABC. The commercial stations have done little for Australian music besides comply, barely, with local content guidelines. JJJ, on the other hand, has actively promoted it. Midnight Oil, INXS, Hunters and Collectors, Paul Kelly, Hoodoo Gurus, The Triffids, The Go Betweens and many other top quality acts which have gone on to international success in some measure all got support from JJJ, often at a crucial early stage. Without that sort of support the domestic industry, to say nothing of Australian musical culture, will be lacking an important tool for nurturing talent of the finest quality.

McKENZIE WARK writes on the media for ALR.

Private Waters

The British Labour Party has been grappling with its attitude towards privatisation ever since Maggie Thatcher started the world-wide fad for flogging public enterprises a decade ago.

But the question it faces as the Opposition party is the reverse of that confronting the Australian Labor Party.

"It has to decide whether it wants to renationalise anything," said Patricia Hewitt, social policy adviser to Neil Kinnock, the British Opposition leader.

Ms Hewitt, the Australian born and raised daughter of former Canberra mandarin Sir Lenox, visited Australia recently for the Evatt Foundation conference on the future of the labour movement.

Formerly Mr Kinnock's press secretary, she is now deputy director of a new British leftwing think-tank, the Social Policy Institute.

She said that ten years ago most of the British Labour Party was committed to renationalising all the industries Thatcher privatised. As well, the party's left wing coined the slogan 'renationalisation with compensation'.

Thatcher's 'shareholding democracy' was always more hype than reality in its long-term achievement. But enough ordinary folk have made a killing by buying and selling their British Gas, Telecom, and other shares, to be alarmed by the Labour Party's threat.

Labour has abandoned its 'no compensation' talk. It has faced instead the mounting costs of renationalising the ever-lengthening list of privatised enterprises. "Therefore the party had to be clear about its priorities - why it wanted something in the state sector and whether it wanted 100% ownership," said Ms Hewitt.

Its first priority has become the privatised water companies - water being the 'classic natural monopoly'. But to buy back all the water shares at current market price would cost $6 billion. Labour has decided to begin with strong regulation of the water companies, instead. In the end "this might work well enough to make ownership less important," Ms Hewitt said. However, the party is formally committed to buying back the shares in blocks till it builds up a significant holding.

The second priority is to renationalise the national electricity grid but to allow different production companies to feed into the grid itself.

As for British Telecom, the government retains a 49% share but this is expected to fall to 33% by the time Labour would have a chance to govern. Using dividends from its shareholding to build up dominance in Telecom is one ploy Labour is considering. "But even at 33% that might give a Labour government a significant degree of control," Ms Hewitt said. "Given other claims on limited resources that might be enough."

The massive cost of renationalisation is not the only reason Labour has reversed its earlier policies. Some of the privatised industries are performing well enough. The privatised National Freight Company, the subject of a worker/management buyout is, according to Ms Hewitt, "immensely successful and employees have done brilliantly".

Even Telecom is now performing better after a barrage of complaints in the first two years of privatisation. It had been fortunate to reap the benefit of major public investment in new equipment just before privatisation.

More than the privatisation of the industries themselves, what irks Labour most is the use to which the booty has been put. It is here the ALP privatisation policy diverges from the Thatcher model and why Ms Hewitt thinks Australians are mistaken to think we are experiencing a dose of Thatcherism.

"Apart from their intense belief that government can do almost nothing and the market can do almost anything, the main reason the Tories sold off the public enterprises was to pay for tax cuts to the rich," Ms Hewitt said.

ADELE HORIN is a columnist for the Sydney Morning Herald.
A card-carrying Christmas

Already dreading the tinkle of sleigh bells, the ominous 'ho ho ho's? Have no fear. Judy Horacek, ALR's resident cartoonist, has produced a set of six ideologically squeaky-clean cards for Xmas, to gladden the hearts of your friends, and thoroughly confuse your relations.

Among the subjects: herstory's discovery of Mother Xmas; the three shepherds and male menopause; and Joseph's and Mary's childcare plans. The cards sell for $10.80 for the packet of six, post-free. Write to ALR Xmas Cards, Freepost 28, PO Box A247, Sydney South 2000. (No stamp required if posted in Australia.)

CHINA AFTER TIANANMEN

*Australian Left Review* is to publish an important supplement on political developments in China in its February 1991 issue.

Among the issues to be covered will be:
- Deng Xiaoping's likely successors
- The resurgence in Mao Zedong Thought
- New roles for the police force
- The state of the economy

As well there will be articles on trade, the media and the arts. The supplement will be edited by Michael Dutton from the Politics Department of Melbourne University and Kitty Eggerking, ALR's production editor. It will be invaluable to any student of Chinese politics.

Bulk copies of the supplement will be available. Contact ALR on (02) 261 7668.
Nobel-Prize winner in medicine Sir John Monash as a further test of the collective dimness, by which he might convince himself of the proposition that Australians have a "very shallow understanding of our recent history" and which AAP reported as fact.

The media made up its collective mind about Jones years ago - an unrepenting eccentric. He has, of course, his own explanation for the label: someone once bestowed the title - perhaps it was that memorable day he produced a magnetometer from his coat pocket during Question Time to demonstrate some obscure meteorological point - and ever since the reputation has been recycled through the press clippings files. "Eccentricity is simply defined by the press gallery as being somebody who talks about different things to the subjects most people talk about," he says. And most people talk about sport, including "the great helmsperson", Bob Hawke, who, Jones generously acknowledges, "knows a lot about it". In a portfolio like science, there are many intangibles to be addressed, and sporting comparisons here are not as easy to come by as in other portfolios. (See Matters Arising in this issue for Gary Wickham's explanation of paradigm shifts in sport.)

He can understand the media critics and their labels, but he is incapable of reshaping that image. It's his perceived - even proper - role to goad, to chide Australia out of its cumulative inertia. Anyone can see that, can't they? Sleepers Wake!, indeed. He probably does these things because he cares, because he wants to set Australia on the road to glory, to develop the potential that he sees. He's been talking up Australia as the intelligent country for some years now, and you get the impression that he takes some credit for Bob Hawke's belated proclamation of Australia as the "clever" country, though it's dabbled with the usual Jones' wit: "I'd always said we ought to make Australia the intelligent country but that was too hard to spell."

But push as he might, he can't budge or cajole us into action. Think of his excitement when CSIRO came up with the notion of gene shears and his frustration when, after 18 months, no Australian company would buy the idea, even with the incentive of a 150% tax deduction! By contrast a French firm didn't need any persuasion. According to Jones, that company responded to the announcement of the discovery within two days, saying "it's right, we're going to get into it". We do seem to be beyond hope.

It's an irony for the Hawke government that, even though he was dumped as science minister earlier this year, Jones is still regarded as the government's scientific seller. It's irony, too, that while his chastising of scientists as "wimpish" publicists has turned them into effective lobbyists, he can't cure himself of his own unfortunate public relations. He's angry, rather than bitter, at being dumped... he can understand it all but he can't do anything to change his own act, albeit an act that has mellowed over the years.

Who knows how long Barry Jones will continue to play de facto science minister. He's not talking about his prospects, though it's rumoured that he's been offered a number of university chairs. If he settles on such a course, he might come closer to that other Emerson recipe for greatness: "great men are they who see... that thoughts rule the world."

Kitty Eggerking.
Would the West be right to wage war with Iraq? Fred Halliday and Joe Stork argue the toss.

Halliday: The core issue remains the question of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and, by extension, its regional consequences. The question that always has to be asked is how this affects the interests of the people in the Middle East as a whole. By that I don't just mean the peoples of the Arab world, but also Israel, Turkey and Iran, as well as those without countries who are involved, particularly the Kurds.

After two decades of everybody saying that Arab unity in the political sense had finished, that it had died with Nasser in 1970, that the Arab world would not unite, you now see a very strong unification current in the Arab world. You now have an apparent revival of the slogans of secular nationalism and Arab unity at a time when people were not expecting it. In that sense the Iraqi regime is the inheritor of policies and slogans that go back to the heyday of Arab nationalism in the 50s and 60s and, of course, added to that is the slogan of anti-imperialism, confrontation with the United States, with Britain and, at the same time, with Israel.

But the political character of the Iraqi mood is very different to that of Arab nationalism in the 50s and 60s. The Iraqi regime is a fascist regime in two senses. First, it is racist. Baathist ideology is a mythical, mystical and bombastic evocation of the greatness of the Arabs, as represented in the swaggering style of the regime, but also in the racist attitudes it adopts to non-Arabs, to Kurds, to Persians, to Jews and by extension towards the rest of the world. One can even see this racism in the way the Iraqi occupation forces have treated the different peoples in Kuwait. They have treated the Arabs reasonably well, they've treated the Westerners not that badly, but Filipinos, Bangladeshis and so on have been treated appallingly, raped, beaten up, killed, herded into the desert.

It's also fascist in the kind of terror which it carries out within Iraq: the killing of tens of thousands of people, the systematic torture of opponents, the reign of terror which has characterised this regime since 1968. I would compare the political record of the Baathist regime with that of Israel.

The Israeli regime has rightly been condemned for its policy towards the Palestinians. It has denied them their rights as a Palestinian nation, it has brutally suppressed the democratic rights of the Palestinians, and it has occupied the land of others. But if you compare the toll of human misery visited by the Iraqi regime on its own people, and now by extension on others, frankly there is little to choose between them. The Palestinians living under Israeli rule have more political rights and are treated less brutally, than the Kurds living under Iraqi rule.

If you add up all the casualties of the Arab-Israeli wars, including those in Lebanon, in the last 40 years, you will find that they certainly don't reach the level of destruction wrought by Iraq in its war with Iran. This is not a popular comparison to make, but it is an important one for setting this regime in some context.

Stork: An issue here is what I would call the class question: the use of resources, the exclusive appropriation of wealth by these small ruling families. Saddam is seen as an alternative to that in part of the Arab world. This is a misperception in many ways. The misuse and greed of the Sabah family in Kuwait, astounding as it may be, and they are far from the worst offenders among the princely families in the Gulf, has to be set against the tremendous misuse of resources by Saddam's Iraq. We're talking about a country that was responsible for 17 or 18% of the total arms imports in the Third World in the decade of the 1980s. It was not a case of a poor country invading a rich country, it's a case of a rich country invading a rich country.

Halliday: There's no doubt that Saddam's policies prior to 2 August, confronting the West and Israel, and even more so since, have aroused a great current of sympathy in much of the Arab world. And the longer this crisis goes on the more this sympathy will grow, including in countries that are officially allied against him — Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt and others. This is most evident among the Palestinians.

Now why people should sympathise with Saddam, including people who are well aware of his human rights record, is fairly evident. It is a protest solidarity. Here's somebody who is standing up for the Arab world, who is at last doing something. But if one stands back and asks: "Does Saddam Hussein's Iraq, both before and after his invasion of Kuwait, advance the interests of the peoples of the Middle East as a whole?" The answer must be "no".

Let's take two simple issues: overcoming the colonial legacy and the Palestinian question. If you are going to say that Kuwait is a colonial entity, then so is Iraq. On the logic Saddam has used to justify the occupation of Kuwait, that this entity was set up by colonialism, Iraq should also be abolished as a state, as was originally the plan after the First World War, on a democratic basis. There should be an independent Kurdish state; there should be separate states for other parts of the Arab population if they so wish. So you cannot solve the colonial legacy by arbitrarily changing boundaries. This is simply a red herring.

Secondly, Palestine. Saddam proclaims himself to be a supporter of the Palestinians. Most Palestinians seem to believe this.
validity is there for this? Look at Saddam's past record. The role of Saddam has been a manipulatory one. It is he who assassinated Palestinian leaders who wanted some kind of compromise with Israel. He has never taken the decisive step of saying that he is prepared to recognise a Palestinian state and an Israeli state - without which there can be no solution to the Palestinian question. One has to say that Saddam's record prior to 2 August has objectively served the interests of entrenched forces in Israel. Saddam Hussein does not want to see an independent Palestinian state.

Stork: We should try and address what seems to be the main issue here: what should be the response of progressive forces in the West to this invasion? I have come down on the position of neither imperialism nor fascism. However much we would like to see Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime vanish from the face of the earth, the question has to be asked: at what price?

The threat that Saddam represents, he's represented for a long time. It's not something that began on 2 August. He made a move on 2 August that set up all sorts of opportunities to reshape the political map in the region. But the United States should not be allowed to shape it alone. I think the issue is: do we support American military intervention in this instance? It was obviously not done in the name of democracy or human rights or any kind of anti-fascist crusade. It was done to preserve a friendly hegemony in the region; if not an American hegemony, then a hegemony of friendly forces, such as the Saudi regime.

Halliday: A lot of people outside the Middle East have opposed the American policy for general political reasons that are relevant, but may lead to mistaken conclusions.

One is a general hostility to war - and there's a mobilisation of peace sentiment around that. The fact is there is already war. Iraq has invaded Kuwait. And unless you adopt a thoroughgoing pacifist position, the normal, justified, response to aggression is to try to resist, to try to turn it back. That doesn't mean that all forms of response are justified. But the possibility of a military response to a war that has already been started by what is, in effect, a fascist state seems to me to be something that has been too quickly excluded by many in the peace movement.

Secondly, there are people who say we should not oppose Saddam because the Palestinians and other oppressed peoples in the Middle East support him. This, of course, goes to the heart of the nature of solidarity. Is solidarity about the uncritical support of whatever oppressed peoples say, or is it an attempt to distinguish between whatever oppressed peoples may say at a particular time and what, in the view of any outside observer, are the long-term interests of that oppressed people? And my argument would be that the long-term interests of the Palestinians, for an independent and democratic Palestine side by side with an Israeli state, do not lie in siding with Saddam, whatever they may now think.

This brings us to the question of what attitude to adopt to Western military activity in the Gulf. The premise of much of the discussion seems to be that whatever Western powers do must be wrong. If this means that whatever they do is self-interested, this is clearly the case. The United States has gone into the Gulf to protect its strategic interests and protect oil. But this is not the same thing as saying that whatever they do in the Gulf is to be opposed. There are plenty of cases where the actions of such states, however self-interested, may have positive consequences. The role of Britain and the United States in fighting the fascist powers in the Second World War is an obvious case.

And this brings us to the question of who does it, and at this point critics of Western policy tend to get rather vague. They say there should be an Arab solution. Well, frankly an Arab solution means no solution. An Arab solution means the Iraqis stay in Kuwait; we all know the Arab world is completely divided and infec tual. Then it is said that, somehow, a United Nations force should operate. Fine, that would be quite appropriate. But this will involve, among others, Western armies. So I would hope very much that there could be a peaceful solution to this question, but I do not object to the role of Western armies in this, in the pursuit of what are legitimate international goals.

I regard them as legitimate for two reasons. First, in my view the defeat of the Iraqi regime is in the interests of the peoples of the Middle East as a whole, including the peoples of Iraq. Secondly, if you do not stop the takeover of weaker states by stronger states, there's going to be more cases of this. The Arab states cannot live in a moral and political universe of their own without reference to the rest of the world. And to allow Saddam to get away with this would mean that this example went all round the world.

Stork: Whatever happens, I think it is vital to avoid a shooting war.

Halliday: It may well be that sanctions will persuade Saddam to withdraw. I think Saddam could withdraw from Kuwait. It comes down to a judgment of his, which we can't predict. But the question still has to be posed: if he doesn't, then what happens, and who does it? And I repeat, I don't think the region can come up with a solution, any more than it has come up with a solution on Lebanon or the Palestinian question, or the Sudan or Morocco. And at that point you have to say, which do you prefer: Saddam sits in Kuwait and becomes the undisputed dominant force in the region, or, somebody does something about it, even if it's the West? I would favour the West doing something about it.

Stork: Even if Saddam does sit in Kuwait, I'm not entirely clear who would be the dominant force in the region. What you will see - almost whether or not he withdraws - is a new coalition against him. It will most likely not leave him in Kuwait, but it could. It would be a terrible thing, but to tell you the truth I'm not sure how I would come down on that eventuality, because I'm not sure that the cure's better than the disease.

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This month the government will have to make up its mind on industry policy. And there's an air of disillusionment with Paul Keating's 'no intervention' line. But what kind of new ideas can save our manufacturing from a sad demise? We assembled a roundtable discussion to debate the issues.

Anna Booth is federal secretary of the Clothing and Allied Trades Union (CATU). Les Fallick works in the office of the Minister for Industrial Relations, Senator Cook. And Peter Roberts is a business columnist for the Australian Financial Review. The discussion was chaired by Sue McCreadie, economic research officer for CATU, and a member of ALR's editorial collective.

The union movement has always seen industry policy as a key element of the Accord. To what extent has that expectation been fulfilled? How successful have the industry plans been?

Anna: The most important consideration here is how industry has responded to industry plans. Where there is a small number of main employers and, in particular, the one employer such as with the steel plan, government has been able to target policies very precisely and get immediate responses. Where industries have a large number of diverse enterprises, such as the textiles, clothing and footwear industries [TCF], the time for response is necessarily much longer.

The years of decline of the manufacturing industry have caught us in a trap whereby the expansionary policies of the Accord - which the union movement always required to lift standards of living together with public spending on industry policy - have created demand which couldn't be fulfilled by Australian suppliers and which therefore was met by imports.

The problem was that Australian companies weren't fulfilling that demand and that other Australian companies weren't exporting sufficiently to cover those imports, and consequently we had the balance of payments crisis as the policy response of high interest rates to restrain demand. Such responses are recalled now as the bad policies of Fraserism. It's amazing that there's a political debate between the government and the opposition over the role of monetary and fiscal policy, and yet the industry policy debate is still by and large dominated by those who regard the free market and the complete abolition of tariffs as the way to go.

Peter: The question of whether the Accord has delivered industry reform has many answers. The response by industry has been really a function of the capabilities of management. Obviously within TCF, the companies...
quite deficient in management, engineering and other expertise.

The truncated nature of the industry since the 60s means that so many elements are missing. Management in this country is totally inexperienced in developing strategies to utilise technology, to develop their own technology, to design and market their own products in any international market. So it's asking a hell of a lot of management to respond to this government agenda when it is really not capable of doing so in most cases. Perhaps 10% of companies have responded excellently, a third of the companies are trying to respond in their own way, and more than half the companies I've come across aren't trying at all.

Les: The other side of the problem is management's will to respond. An essential element of the Accord from the outset was the conscious short-term reduction in our wages share of total national product in order to boost the profit share. Under the simplistic logic of an economics textbook, an increase in the profit share will lead to an incentive to invest. That hasn't transpired. To use Keating's delightful phrase, the bastards have taken the money and run. They have absorbed the increase in profit share. In some cases that was because they didn't know how best to invest it, but in many cases it was an opportunity to make a short-term gain, have some conspicuous consumption, a bit of short-term property speculation and laugh all the way to the bank.

We have to draw some lessons from that experience. One is that the free market doesn't automatically respond to an increase in the profit share. In fact real fixed capital formation, real investment, needs a certain guidance. A lot of investment in the private sector is in fact primed by public sector investment and if you let public sector investment fall off you miss the synergy between public and private investment. The public sector's pump-priming role fell off during the Accord, partly as a result of the balance of payments blow-out and partly as a consequence of the government's flirtation with the twin deficits doctrine - the belief in a rigid connection between the size of the budget deficit and that of the national account. But let's take some constructive lessons from this experience: let's not just say it's a disaster that management can't or won't get involved. The level of management involvement in training certainly needs to go up. But it's not so much a matter of the government picking winners as of having a productive strategy for guiding investment into key sectors and sustaining it.

Anna: We have to be careful that the Hawke government doesn't retreat into the notion that you can't intervene in the market. There are certainly forces within the government who believe that the best way to encourage activity by capital is to let it do its own thing. We have to recognise...
that in the immediate period, and probably into the medium term, interest rates in Australia are going to be higher than in much of the rest of the world. Therefore we have to provide some relief that has budgetary implications, whether as forgone revenue or increased expenditure, to offset the cost of investment in Australia.

Peter: I'd go much further and say the ascendancy within the government is anti-industry policy per se. The Button industry policies that have gone through have been resisted and undermined wherever possible by the orthodoxy that is in control in Treasury. One of the key roles of the union movement is to inform its members of this battle and its implications for the future of the workforce; to take the fight to Canberra and try to give more weight to Button's arm.

Anna: One of the best examples is the recent rejection of the guidelines for projects of national significance. The guidelines suggest it is possible by providing the information base and the necessary support for local industry to supply major projects which could in turn underpin spin-off developments in their own product area. This could ultimately lead to import replacement and export expansion. Those guidelines were rejected because they were seen as interference in the building of those projects. That was a very disappointing reaction to one very constructive initiative of the trade union movement.

Peter: In a way we're talking about the battle of industry policy against the pure economist's view of things. The union movement and anyone who's concerned about the future of the country has got to argue that governments should intervene and protect industries. Governments should attempt to alter investment decisions; they should deregulate in certain areas; and these things are not necessarily inconsistent with achieving world competitive industries. The success of the Asian countries has been based on intervention and government action to bring companies together with research bodies to achieve a national goal.

Of course there have been events, like the VEDC and Tricontinental fiascos in Victoria and WA Inc in Perth that have brought a bad smell to the idea of government intervention, particularly in picking winners. Does it mean we must redefine those objectives?

Peter: The government has a duty to decide what industries we should be good at and to divert national resources into achieving that.

Les: It's good press and good trade union rhetoric to have a single enemy, the government, pursuing a single, objectionable ideology - that being free market economics supported by a hidden, faceless and nasty bureaucracy in the Treasury and the Industry Commission. I see the process differently. The government has consistently had an interventionist industry policy. It has had plans; it has had selected, targeted assistance and it has held the union movement and the bureaucracy and every other vested interest seeking a handout at arm's length. The government has attempted to wean us off the notion that government knows best, and it has relied on the notion that spontaneous effects of the market would fill the gap, I won't do that.

This government was conscious that the bureaucracy was not reliable and was not pro-Labor. If the government was going to intervene, who was going to do it? The Canberra bureaucracy? There wasn't the mechanism to do the kind of state intervention that MITI, the French and the 'Tigers' have done. Where we sailed on regardless - Western Australia and Victoria - we've recorded some spectacular losses. The government could do incomparably more than it's done to date on industry policy and, in my mind, you think we have to turn back the bureaucratic tide of anti-interventionism. Governments have been forced in a retreat from interventionism, because you can't elected consistently on a basis of high taxes. The Scandinavian experience shows us that. As a result, the trade union movement over the last five years has undergone rigorous introspection and has come up with a much more concrete set of proposals than ever before. Even in the much-studied textile industry we are a bit more than we used to be and we're not completely reductions in tariffs because we now understand the industry a lot better.

Anna: We understand that unless we do create a textile industry that's vibrant and can stand on its own two feet then workers will continue to be screwed. Because so long as workers are in an industry that's exposed to the swings of demand and supply, and so long as they are only needed for their automatism and not their skill, they will be put in strategic bargaining positions. No amount of union-
Activity can change that. We have to change the economic basis of employment in that industry.

That presumably leads to a dilemma for the union movement. Australia doesn't have a good track record on labour market adjustment. Unions can say to industry, "you ought to become more competitive and stand on your own feet with lower levels of protection". But unions don't run companies and can't force them to change. If they don't change, lower protection means they go out of business. How can unions tell members that they don't support high tariffs any more, when the result might be that they have no jobs?

Anna: That's an almost unwinnable position in this environment.

Les Unions can't do it all. The government is the only actor with the necessary overview to co-ordinate the process. Labour adjustment programs - taking people out of an industry, retraining them and directing them towards another industry - are community decisions that need the investment of community resources. You can fund that through corporate taxation so the employers don't get off scot-free. It makes more sense to force the government into roles like that because the private sector will never take them on, than to say the government ought to intervene in general because the private sector is incapable of restructuring. After all, the government is trying to drive the private sector to exploit the proper opportunities available to it.

Peter: The government has been reasonably successful in the existing industries, but it has been unsuccessful and unadventurous in changing some of the very basic institutional problems the country faces and in tackling some of the new industries. Financial deregulation has utterly failed to bring about the competition the government suggested it would. The banking system is basically a trading one rather than an investment one. There's a total drought of development capital, and this is costing us dearly in terms of early company failures and in the long run in terms of employment with the potential growth of these small companies. And the government has also been very parsimonious in assistance to new industries. Biotechnology is the key example. The government spends a few million a year assisting biotechnology research. We should have identified that ten years ago as a key industry for underpinning the rural industries and for opening new opportunities.

Les As the unions have increasingly become intimate with the industrial and political processes involved in industrial revitalisation, I'm a bit less sanguine about diving in boots and all into industry assistance. It's an extraordinarily difficult exercise. That doesn't make you an apologist, it just makes you cautious about throwing the taxpayer's money about.

At the same time, anybody who hasn't by now realised the failures of financial deregulation wants their bumps read. The Treasurer is finding ways of distancing himself from financial deregulation by wading into the banking community and giving them a hard time. It's quite clearly the case that deregulation unaccompanied by anything else doesn't produce competition, but rather a very nasty fight which leads to oligopolistic power based on retailing.

Anna: There's a kind of competition, but mostly the banks are falling over themselves to lend the most money to the most dubious characters in the commercial lending area. In the retail area they've focused on more consumer-oriented practices like interest on cheque accounts and much prettier facades for the banks. Certainly the scope of the finance and capital market of Australia has not been increased by deregulation.

Peter: Superannuation funds are an important future source of venture capital, of development capital for real businesses, as distinct from paper-shuffling businesses. The unions have got to think very carefully about how these funds are used. They should be committed in a prudent way to lead the superannuation sector into venture capital. The superannuation sector at present is very short-sighted. Those like AMP invest in 50 or 100 stocks and that's all. They won't invest in unlisted companies.

They are not helping to develop any new companies. This is a budding role for the union superannuation funds. Usually, superannuation funds look at investing one or two per cent of their funds in venture capital.

Anna: The ACTU is now working with the superannuation fund managers to develop just that approach. The major issue isn't risk; it's the time-frame you're prepared to accept for your return on investment. If you look at the manufacturing sector and the production of real goods and services, as opposed to paper speculation, you actually
find they’re less likely to fail completely than those high-risk, high-flying investments. People have been impatient and have wanted shorter term returns, but in superannuation funds it’s not necessary to have short-term returns. It’s necessary to have good stable returns and to be able to say to your membership that we’re investing your money in the best way for your retirement income.

In the past we’ve looked down on import replacement industries because of their need for protection: they were seen as cosseted and inefficient industries. However, in the clothing trade the most successful import replacement companies were those with advanced technology, quick response and good work organisation. That point clearly hasn’t got across to government circles. Is the present thrust of government policy and the direction of the unions towards export expansion above all else adequate? Or is there a case for trying to rehabilitate import replacement?

Anna: We should support export expansion, because it’s one half of the equation, but we shouldn’t look down on import replacement industries. For example the role of the Industrial Supplies Offices has been pivotal in the import replacement area. That’s also part of the ACTU’s proposals to the government for this year’s statement on industry policy.

Les: That goes back to the point that we can build on our successes. The trade union movement has to be consistent and willing to return to these issues and raise them again and again until we do demonstrate the successes. One of the problems we’ve had is that we’ve wanted a grand slam industry policy - a statement of some hundreds of millions of dollars that would fix everything up. It’s not a bad policy to go back to government time and time again and get a little more each time so that it’s digestible for the trade union movement.

Peter: The emphasis on exports is essential because companies have to be knowledgeable about selling into export markets to be world class. If they’re going to be import replacing they also have to be knowledgeable. Marketing knowledge is what Australian companies lack.

Anna: Peter’s example stands well for the wool and cotton industries. We’re unable to say as yet that we’ve made a success of the raw materials processing program of the TCF development plan, but as Les says we’ll keep going back to it. Unless and until a number of key producers in Australia, or in conjunction with overseas producers, decide to produce those goods for export, we are not going to have a world class industry. You cannot have a world class spinning and weaving program in this country producing simply for the domestic producers of clothing in an environment where the big users of cotton are in decline.

We’ve been talking mostly about large scale industry. For a long time we neglected small business in the industry development agenda? To what extent is that now being rectified?

Les: To an extent the structure of the union movement leads to that outcome. In TCF and metals there are plenty of small producers, and we’ve had successful plans for them, so it’s not impossible, but it’s certainly more difficult to get together with small diversified producers where there’s no central industry association. To go back to Peter’s earlier comments about management and the willingness of industry, with the lack of rigid discipline and competitiveness among small producers and their inability to deliver through their associations, we’ve often found ourselves shadow-boxing with them.

Anna: Some of the best examples of networking have occurred where there’s been a lead consumer like BHP and a satellite of suppliers who are related to each other through the power of that lead consumer. I’m interested in exploring the role of Coles-Myer in our own industry because the TCF industry that will survive will be the one that can supply on a quick response basis with the needs of the major consumers - the retailers in the first instance. We’ve been critical in the past about the level of retail concentration, because of their bargaining power. But now perhaps we can turn that on its head and harness the market power of the major retailer to organise their suppliers. Coles-Myer is now realising that it is in its interest to have quality suppliers and not to go for the cheapest unit.

Les: That model, where the lead consumer shapes suppliers into a viable network of their own, can provide the best of the market and intervention operating together. You get the flexibility and responsiveness of the market, but also the leverage of an elite or oligopolistic group of consumers. There’s a role for government there to encourage these tendencies but also to provide a countervailing power against the excessive leverage of oligopolies.

A few years ago the Swedish model was very influential. Now the model of the Third Italy is much touted - especially the experience of regions like Emilia Romagna — in creating networks of enterprises to co-operate in the production of different elements of a finished product. How far is it replicable here?

Anna: In our industry I think there’s a natural networking capacity, which is not fully realised because of the way in which makers-up are played off against one another. They desperately need to share resources and information in the area of advanced manufacturing technology, testing and quality control. The educational institutions have been important catalysts in the provision of training, where you can put that together with technology transfer and information transfer, there’s a real possibility of the whole industry being larger than the sum of the parts.

Les: There are economies of scale and small units can need to network or co-operate to produce the right design and marketing components for finished products. I can see that, but I don’t think it’s the solution for our industry. We need to pick and choose carefully from the overseas models. At the recent Evatt Foundation conference the message from the Swedish, Japanese and other Asian delegates was that you have to evolve situations that don’t require you to import major cultural...
Is there perhaps a feeling that we're running out of time to find these new solutions?

Les: I fear so. People have been fed on too thin a diet for too long. The feeling that we were all putting our shoulders to the wheel to do something, that we were trying to turn the country around, has ebbed away. In the last six or seven months in meetings with the rank and file I feel that as the recession has approached and things have tightened, they've become increasingly resistant to the siren song of the government or the unions. I would hate to think that we have discredited the whole notion of a successful pact between organised labour in the union movement and Labor in the political sphere. That would be a tragedy. I don't think it would lead to a spontaneous surge for radicalism: rather, it would lead to a drift away from labour movement politics to the environment movement for those who wanted to remain active, and to the video hire shop for the rest.

Anna: That's why there's a great onus on us in the union movement to deliver on the rhetoric of higher skills and higher pay. While co-operating in a radical restructuring of an industry which has hitherto been successfully protected, we've got to correspondingly deliver through award restructuring. We've got make sure that workers are positioned at higher skill levels and begin to have higher pay and can have access to training courses that are up and running and not simply on the drawing board. It's urgent that we don't lose the momentum. I fear that for a vast section of the workforce award restructuring hasn't begun and certainly hasn't been completed.

Les: It would make you weep sometimes to see employers dinging to simplistic notions of tradeoffs of the second tier. They're going for naive short-sighted opportunities when the union movement is actually offering them a much greater prize.

Anna: This brings us back to the capacity of Australian management. When you sit down with them and ask whether they've analysed the needs of this enterprise in terms of the seasons, the work organisation, the requirements of customers, and have they looked at what enterprise flexibility means for them, you find that for the most part they simply haven't done the work. They haven't done their labour turnover figures, they don't know what their absenteeism rates are. They're looking at workers' compensation in the simplistic terms of the premium they're charged by the insurance company. It's so bloody frustrating. As a unionist you can't go into every workplace and be the consultant and work out their claim for them.

The unions have been perceived as behind the eightball on sustainable development. Is there a contradiction between industry development and the environment? And is there a dilemma for unions between trying to protect the future of industry and trying to become more popular with young people, for whom the environment is a crucial issue?

Les: There isn't a dilemma. If in ten years' time we have not reached world standards for emissions and pollution control, then Australia will become a joke. There is going to be a very clear divide between countries of energy efficiency of the sort that took place after the first oil price shock. Then the divide was between those countries that absorbed the shock, re-oriented their industry and made their industry energy efficient, and those who didn't. Inside four or five years the Germans and the Japanese had changed their production techniques to accommodate it. We'll have to do the same in relation to the environment, and we'll have to simultaneously produce industries that are generating environmental solutions as an export product. The notion that we have the option of standing to one side and saying we'll just go in the old ways because otherwise people will lose their jobs is spurious. The fact that the trade union movement has become trapped into the notion that environmental policy is simply something to do with forests and forest products will come to be seen as one of the major miscalculations of the late 80s and 90s.

Anna: It's another example of how we've been drawn into wanting short term gains at the expense of the longer term. If we were to sit down with investors to look at the establishment of world class wool scouring plants, and we didn't take a responsible attitude to the technology that's used and in particular the waste product, then not only would we be alienating ourselves from the community, we would also be contributing to the demise of that particular company. Business has to be made to understand that.
While there is agreement on the importance of the Australian manufacturing industry becoming internationally competitive by developing export markets or competing more effectively against imports, there is still significant disagreement on how it is to be achieved.

Tariffs are being reduced, thus exposing firms to greater competition but whether positive assistance measures (such as those proposed by the Australian Manufacturing Council in its report The Global Challenge) should be provided is still hotly contested. There are differences too over the meaning and implementation of competitiveness.

Our understanding of competitiveness and the role of firms' external relations has emerged from a number of sources. The economic success of certain regions, such as Emilia Romagna in Italy, based on concentrations of like firms into 'industrial districts', co-operative or collaborative strategies being adopted by leading firms, and the work of Michael Porter whose book The Competitive Advantage of Nations has offered new explanations for success in manufacturing. These lessons are being applied by governments in Europe and the United States in programs to build more collaborative relations between firms and to improve their competitiveness.

These 'networking' programs aim to assist firms become more competitive by building collaborative relations in production through specialisation, or in the provision of common services. Australian firms and a few industry associations are also applying these lessons. The networking approach perhaps also increases the scope for more successful local and regional intervention in industry policy.

One of the more remarkable developments of the last 20 years has been the re-emergence of interest in the industrial districts as significant economic and political units across a wide range of advanced industrial countries. The key examples are Emilia Romagna, Baden-Wurttemberg, Sakaki, Jutland and Smaland (Scandinavia), Rhone-Alpes (France) and Silicon Valley and Route 128 (USA).

They were not only economically successful, but also characterised by a system of production centred on interdependent networks of flexible and innovative small firms operating in a complex environment of co-operation and competition. The re-emergence of the industrial district has been the product of wider trends in markets and technologies.

Since the early 70s, there has been a discernible shift in demand away from standardised products. At the same time, advances in process technology now favour smaller production unit manufacture. Small firms are better placed to serve specialised markets and fragmented demand (through niche marketing strategies) or perform specialised manufacturing services for larger firms who lack the required flexibility to respond and innovate to meet quick shifts in demand.

Large firms have responded to the changes in markets and technologies by devolving more of their functions to suppliers and subcontractors, and developing closer relationships with selected partners. They are spreading product development costs among their subcontractors and seeking to capture the benefits associated with the flexibility of smaller organisations. Some large firms are beginning to resemble 'systems integrators' - a network hub that concentrates resources on co-ordinating and stimulating the supplier network, developing proprietary technologies, concept design, marketing and distribution. For example, the German motor giant, BMW, currently contracts 75% of its components, and over 80% of parts purchased involve important collaborative work with a specialist subcontractor. BMW provides overall know-how and design services to the production network.

Changes in markets and technologies are producing a double convergence of small and large firms structures. Small firms are becoming more like large firms in that they are building wider forms of common services. The large firms are becoming more like the small as they seek to establish with their subsidiaries and subcontractors the collaborative relations that characterise the relationships of small firms in industrial districts.

All firms develop external relationships of some sort and some firms undoubtedly do it better than others - networks develop naturally. Network relationships can be distinguished from many other forms of inter-firm association in that network relationships assist in developing and augmenting a firm's core competencies and are usually the product of deliberate strategy.

There appear to be two major forms of network relationships: production networks and service networks. Production networks are based on the vertical buyer/sell
relationships. If an industry requires a large number of activities such as research and development, design, production and marketing of goods, different organisations will specialise in subsets of these activities accumulating idiosyncratic knowledge, experience and skills. The co-ordination of these activities can bind partners, through mutually-agreed plans and long-term obligations. For example, the role of a car assembler like Ford is to design and co-ordinate a complete production process. Most elaborately transformed manufactures of this kind are produced through some form of collaborative production arrangement involving diverse and specialised firms.

Production networks can comprise relatively small numbers of firms, independent of lead firm relationships. Wherever firms can co-operate and contribute a specialisation or expertise in the manufacture, design or marketing of an end product, production networks can form.

Information/service networks tend to be based on horizontal relationships, involving groups of firms that have certain technologies, related products, markets or customers in common. They typically attract groups of small firms, relatively independent of one another, seeking to achieve the sort of critical mass usually the domain of larger firms. They target areas where size is important - e.g. scale in export promotion, the provision of specialised training, research and product development, and strategic information gathering.

Companies such as Black and Decker, Country Road, AMECON, in addition to the automotive assemblers, are local examples of production networks. Black and Decker, for example, provided quality, product engineering, factor flow and layout and design expertise to Chief Kitchenware who are contract manufacturers of kitchen products.

The automotive assemblers now work closely with their suppliers on quality programs and the introduction of new production techniques. These relationships go beyond traditional sub-contracting relations as they involve the transfer of expertise. There are also established service networks in Australia. The Plywood Association of Australia, which draws together 17 plywood mills, has evolved since 1965 to deliver specialised business functions and services to companies in activities which they could not effectively provide or access themselves.

The Australian Furniture Research and Development Institute provides specialised engineering and scientific services to the furniture industry. Over 50 furniture manufacturers are now members of the institute. The Australian Electronics Development Centre provides training for the electronics industry, and all major companies in the industry participate.

However, there is considerable scope to develop networks further in Australia to improve the competitiveness of manufacturing industry. Development tends to be ad hoc and is not supported in a systematic way by public policy.

Networking offers a range of benefits for firms if successfully implemented. These include: reduced costs through scale in production and in the provision of services and functions; scope for increased specialisation and flexibility in production; opportunities for risk sharing in export marketing and research and development; and speedier access to information, new ideas, production capabilities and technologies.

Network programs recognise that firms can learn best from other firms through the transfer of expertise or competitive peer emulation. Networks reinforce these relationships, accelerate the learning capacity of firms and foster innovative behaviour. At the same time, network initiatives influence groups of firms and provide the means to impact more firms more quickly.

A sceptic may ask: if the benefits are so apparent and substantial, why does networking not occur to a greater extent or why, indeed, is it necessary for government to intervene?

Networks certainly occur 'naturally' (i.e. in the absence of public policy intervention), but in many instances firms will be reluctant to enter network relations. There is a range of reasons for this. Many firms will have negative attitudes towards co-operative relations with other firms. They may also lack the ability to network even if the benefits are clear. The central obstacle is that firms will often lack credible information on which to assess whether networking is in their interests. Certain factors also assist the formation of network relations, including a strong regional industrial identity.

However the 'brokerage' role is critical in creating and developing network relations. Brokers will sometimes identify opportunities for co-operation or assist the firms to do it themselves. They will encourage or cajole the firms to participate. The brokerage role requires a high level of communication and negotiation skills but the most important requirement is credibility with the firms concerned.

The approach taken by governments overseas in their networking programs has emphasised this brokerage role and provided the information that firms require to make the decision. The networks, to be successful, must meet the real needs of the firms involved. As a consequence, government network programs should require matching commitments for firms or fee for services to demonstrate industry commitment. Networking is a relatively low cost policy option. These agencies may already be playing a 'brokerage' role which can be built on or extended. Another and related consideration is that embryonic clusters at regional concentrations of industry are probably the most fertile grounds for initiating networking activity.

There are signs that these ideas are already prompting active responses from government, industry and unions. While by no means a quick fix for deep-seated and complex problems for manufacturing, networking initiatives could make a practical contribution to building the strength of manufacturing in Australia.

JOE BURKE and IAN COX are officers of the Australian Manufacturing Council Secretariat.
Tasmania's Labor-Green Accord, forged in optimism, has ended in bitterness. And it's mirrored elsewhere by a collapse of trust between the environmental and labour movements. Clare Curran looks at the competing interpretations of failure.

On 1 October Tasmania's brave new experiment in green and mainstream politics was rendered meaningless. The Labor-Green Accord, hailed by many throughout the world as a 'unique alliance', crumbled into dust in an impasse over the future of the state's national estate forests.

The breakdown occurred after conservationists refused to support the forest industry strategy proposed by the Labor government - the product of a year's negotiations.

Once again the battlelines are being drawn in the Tasmanian wilderness and neither side appears prepared to budge an inch towards a compromise. Tasmania is now left with a hung parliament. Instead of a Labor-Green alliance with a majority of one, Labor now governs with 13 seats, the Liberal Party holds 17 and the Green Independents five.

The situation is precarious for Labor, despite the government's prevailing 'no worries' attitude. It would take just one Green or Labor member to cross the floor and vote with the Liberals in a no confidence motion to bring down the Field government.

But despite that prospect, neither Field and the Liberal nor industry and union sources believe the Greens will take that step. Recent polls show support for both the Greens and Labor has slipped. It is in no-one's interest to go to an early election.

That the Accord was a farce now seems generally accepted by the major players in this tug-of-war over the state's natural resources. Serious questions have faced over how the Labor government could have deliberately set aside this internationally-acclaimed, 15-month agreement to meet industry and political interests. Right now the only winner appears to be industry, with the strong likelihood of a new major pulp and paper mill development of Wesley Vale proportions in the next few years.

Alan Evans, head of the Premier's Office, is widely considered to be a major force behind the government decision to push for an outcome on the forest strategy and to have Labor seen to move away from the Green position. It is this distancing tactic that is most significant, particularly in light of similar strategies used by the federal government in the recent decisions over the East Gippsland and South East forests. The decisions indicate the fear of an economic backlash for appearing 'too green'.
Labor governments everywhere are putting distance between themselves and conservation interests.

Evans argues the Tasmanian situation is not nearly as bad as it's been painted. He says there has been a shift in positions all round. And he claims the environment movement will be much more prepared to accept the forest industry strategy once it is in place and seen to be working. He says it was a calculated decision by the government to walk away from the Accord because hard decisions had to be made. That the government has left itself open to an early election if the Greens choose to withdraw support does not seem to worry him. "We are prepared to accept that risk."

There is private disquiet among Labor supporters that the decision to break the Accord was too hasty. But sources say it was inevitable that the Accord wouldn't last, that Labor and the Greens were locked into a death stance - with Field wanting to be seen to be running the show and the Greens wanting to distance themselves from Labor's economic platform. Predictably, conservationists consider Labor's actions in the last month as "politically stupid", motivated purely by the desire to satisfy industry interests.

But it is inevitable that significant industry pressure would be exerted on the Tasmanian government. In an economic climate dangerously affected by the excessive spending of the previous Liberal government, there is an obvious need for export-producing industry. It seems the conditions have now been set in place for such a development to occur. Whether it produces the much-hoped-for outcomes for job generation and export dollars is another matter. But will it be worth the trouble?

Renewed hostilities between the polarised forces of green and industry interests threaten to undermine the gains of the last 15 months. Will green and economic interests ever be compatible? For now, it seems not. A few things seem certain. While the political success of the five Independents in parliament may be short lived, the movement is not going to pack up and move on. And Tasmanian industry as a whole is backing the forestry industry; it seems to have dropped all pretence of seeking solutions. "We've reached the limit of compromise," said Mark Addis, chief executive of the Forest Industries Association of Tasmania.

Addis refers to a new pulp and paper mill as a certainty, not a possibility. The only question remaining is when. He thinks the mill will be established within three to five years, given the need to develop new guidelines for the processing. Further evidence of industry interest in the outcome of the forest industry strategy talks was the silent presence of North Broken Hill at the negotiating table for three solid
weeks. Alec Marr, campaign co-ordinator for the Wilderness Society, claims North Broken Hill has been frantically lobbying the government for yet another mill. And Evans has indicated there is a strong likelihood of a world-scale bleached Kraft mill in Tasmania in the near future.

Alec Marr is a member of the Combined Environment Groups (CEG) which represented conservation interests at the forest industry strategy negotiations. He argues that those talks were never meant to produce consensus between conservation, industry and political interests. At first CEG believed a consensus might be possible, but when the 1 September deadline passed and no one seemed bothered, the conservationists suspected another agenda was operating. "They acted weirdly. We couldn't figure out what the hell they were doing."

"A unique opportunity to investigate alternative strategies has been squandered"

A dispute between industry groups and farmers over allocation of woodchip export quotas raged around 1 September. Ten days later the parties were no closer to a final strategy and, according to Marr, it was at this point that a Forestry Commission representative proposed that the government intervene with its own strategy. A proposal by CEG for a ten-week extension was rejected, and the government imposed a four-day deadline instead. When that deadline passed and the government tabled its own proposal, the CEG refused to accept and withdrew from the negotiations.

Trades and Labor Council secretary Jim Beacon disagrees with the CEG version of events. He claims CEG had no intention of seeking a compromise. "We were anxious to develop a new position on conservation - looking for common ground. In the first year of negotiations we were keen to bend over backwards to accommodate them in the final position. But at the end of the talks it became clear that some people had no intention of reaching agreement." Beacon claims the final outcome is "good for workers and for industry" and "not so bad for the conservation movement".

While Beacon claims the strategy moves the industry focus from woodchip exports to more downstream processing, with prospects for job creation, Mark Addis presents a slightly different scenario. He says the increase in the woodchip quota was largely to get rid of the existing waste wood - not for processing downstream, but as unprocessed export product. And it will remain so until another major processing plant (like Wesley Vale) comes on line.

According to Beacon the unions want to get rid of the export woodchip industry and are looking to a new processing plant that would create more jobs. He points out that Tasmania doesn't have many options for industrial development. He accepts that a new mill won't create many jobs in the long-term and could mean fewer as the processing industry sets about consolidating its 40-odd smaller plants into larger ones. Without the strategy - and the increased woodchip quota - the possibilities for job creation in the forest industry were pretty limited, he says. "It's better than nothing."

For Beacon, at the heart of the issue is the refusal by the conservation movement to place importance on preserving people's jobs and livelihoods. He says he would dearly like the interests of the union and conservation movements to draw closer. "But it won't happen until they recognize we have a responsibility to our members. Putting conservation interests above that responsibility is a price we're not prepared to pay."

Investigating alternative job creation possibilities for the forest industries does not appear to have been a priority despite the injection of $8 million by the federal government last year to find solutions that would protect both employment and the national estate. More than a year later, with a strategy formulated (without endorsement by conservationists), only $2 million has been spent. Some of it appears to have been well invested in researching alternative industry options.

The most realistic - developing the veneer timber industry and plantation forests - could produce results, but not in the short-term. Overall, say the conservationists, a unique opportunity to investigate real alternatives - such as unbleached pulp processing - has been squandered. And there doesn't appear to have been an attempt to look for alternative job strategies outside the forest industry. The remainder of the money will be used for implementing a new strategy, developing more plantations and compensation packages for job losses.

Doesn't that concern the federal government? Bob Burto from the Wilderness Society in Tasmania, maintains the attitude of the federal government since handing over the money has been one of "bored indifference": "they just hope the problem will go away".

The extent of the state government's indifference to seeking a solution of its impasse with the Greens was shown by the recently released Simons report - a consultant commissioned by the government to investigate observable trends in the unbleached pulp industry. Marr: "They don't say there isn't a market for unbleached pulp, but they don't say there is. It maintains the information confidential."
Green Independent Christine Milne was recently quoted in the Launceston Examiner as saying the Greens were still opposed outright to a pulp mill unless there was no organo-chlorine discharge. She said the Greens were submitting a report on the Simons report into unbleached products markets and it would be highly critical of the consultant’s study.

So will the Greens pull the plug on the Labor government? Right now the general response is ‘no, not yet’. It is not in the Greens’ immediate interests to force an election where they would almost certainly lose two of their five seats. But while Field’s calculated risk depends on the Greens’ desire for political power, there is no doubt that his government is again at loggerheads with an old foe.

Marr says the conservation movement faces another five years’ hard work. While he believes the Accord was not a failure, it inevitably meant the Labor government would compromise on matters of principle. “Rather than a failure for the green movement, it confirms that neither party was capable of dealing with the major issues confronting the human race this century.”

He said the Tasmanian conservationists would turn away from expecting support through a government process towards the community, its traditional base. “We will continue the struggle all over Australia...and hope to speed up the formation of a political structure.” Marr says it’s no secret that many Australians are seeking a political alternative to the existing parties. “We’ve got to be prepared. The Labor Party is not the party that will save the planet.”

CLARE CURRAN is a journalist for Social Change Media in Sydney.

What’s in the forest strategy?

The forest industry strategy proposes setting aside 1.1 million hectares for wood production to meet a sawlog quota of 300,000 cubic metres a year. That is expected to increase the woodchip quota by 400,000 tonnes a year, a move which requires federal government approval.

The strategy also includes the immediate reservation of 4,300 hectares as additions to existing national parks (an increase of less than 0.5%). It creates multiple-use reserves totalling 155,000 hectares and puts 580,000 hectares into a deferred forest area for further evaluation. Eventual protection of these areas is dependent on efficiency improvements in the industry itself.

Most significantly, the strategy proposes the creation of permanent wood production zones which would require the approval of both state and federal parliaments to revoke. Such legislation would in effect turn all Tasmania’s state forests into permanent wood production zones, creating a precedent for other states to follow.

Mark Addis from the Forest Industries Council in Tasmania makes no pretence that this is merely a one-state campaign for industry. “There is a strong push in industry for that sort of legislation to get up elsewhere. The federal government is coming under increasing pressure from the states, industry groups and the union movement to legislate to secure the resources for industry in state forests.”

The Tasmanian government formally adopted the forest industry strategy on 1 October, but will take six months to draw up the legislation to implement it and to finalise precise boundaries for the wood production zones, new reserves, multiple-use reserves and to decide the fate of the 580,000 hectares of deferred forest area.

Rejecting the government’s strategy, the Green Independents said they could not accept a lift in the woodchip export quota above 2.89 million tonnes, until there was agreement over a range of other concerns. They want protection of all national estate forests, large areas of which are in the proposed deferred area, the introduction of nature guarantee legislation to protect flora and fauna on private forest land and the rejection of the proposal to give legislative protection to the permanent wood production zone.

The final cabinet decision offered the Greens some compromises - legislation to protect rare and endangered species in private forests and a complete scientific examination of 220,000 hectares of deferred forest by June next year. These were in turn rejected by the Greens for not going far enough.

Green Independent Bob Brown has said the implementation process only meant funding forest groups to bring in the strategy, and the timetable for scientific investigation of the deferred forest areas was not new. The commitment to protect rare and threatened species was merely an expression, he said, because industry refused to allow use of the term ‘nature guarantee legislation’.
The government's bold micro-economic reform agenda has passed through the waterfront, telecommunications, the airlines and the Commonwealth Bank.

The next logical step is the restructuring of the ALP itself - privatisation's greatest challenge.

Michael Salvaris has the inside story.

shaft of sunlight pierced the curling cigar smoke as the man from McKinseys cleared his throat and began his report.

"Without doubt, gentlemen, the cutting edge for Australian business in the 90s will be the political futures market. As the current deregulatory environment widens, we expect opportunities for investment in political enterprises to expand - and the rewards for those corporations that get in on the ground floor will be substantial.

"In our view, the political sector presents an excellent mix of short and medium term opportunities for market diversification and constructive tax management.

"First, major political parties bring with them nationally-known brand names and loyal customer support; this means almost unlimited prospects for targeted merchandising. Second, there will be unique opportunities for corporations to acquire a broader asset portfolio on highly advantageous terms. Many of these assets - parliaments, libraries, courthouses and such like - are not only desirably located but, according to our analysts, most show a pattern of historical undervaluation.

"Third, and most important, political equities will create outstanding opportunities for corporations to influence a more favourable business and labour environment over the next decade and beyond.

"To come down now to specific cases. Over the past six months, through our subsidiary Don Delphic and Associates, Political Consultants, we have carried out an in-depth corporate and financial analysis of all major Australian political parties. Using standard EGN redactions on a modified Glasner-Grope index, the party which emerges as the most attractive prospect for corporate diversification is clearly the ALP."

At the other end of the table, beverage baron Sir Dog Bloater twitched one florid jowl and leaned forward attentively. The man from McKinseys continued.

"The ALP has an assured 30% market share, which increasingly comprises two-income professional families. In terms of retail outlets, it has a well established network across all states and major population centres. Its financial structure does present some problems, with a high level of debt and over-reliance on poultry raffles for non-government sourced income; but the debt could provide excellent opportunities for negative gearing and other tax advantages.

"On the management side, the ALP's managers are seen as creative and flexible in interpreting their corporate charm with a well-disciplined labour force and shareholders who are not overly demanding. Our estimate is that the party..."
FOR SALE BY TENDER

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY BRANCH (INTACT)

SAVE THE DOLPHINS
current management would be sympathetic to corporate approaches, but generous redundancy packages will be indicated. However, in the current environmental climate, we believe that greenmail can be positioned positively.”

Bloater leaned back in his chair and grunted to a waiting aide, “Fix lunch with our boy in Canberra tomorrow”.

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Prime Minister Clarrie Chooke swept into his parliamentary suite. It had been another bad day. First, the release of the Walsh diaries; then the Americans’ refusal to invite Australian troops to join their ‘peace-keeping force’ in Tasmania; and now this latest madness from Treasurer Sid Creeping.

Catching sight of Creeping and party secretary Rod Pigge in his office ante-room, Chooke stopped briefly to adjust his scowl in the mirror, and waved them in.

“Jesus, Sid, you’ve gone too far this time. Privatising the party?” He drew himself up and his voice took on a new and statesman-like tone. “I have given my sacred word that while I am Prime Minister of this great party there will be no vandalism of our heritage. The tradition of Chifley and Curtin will be safe. The struggles of generations of Labor men and women...”

“Sounds familiar, Clarrie,” Creeping interjected drily. “Isn’t that what you said before we sold the Commonwealth Bank and the airlines? Of course, I could understand it if you thought this one was a bit too big for a bloke to take on in his twilight years.”

Chooke spluttered, “I knew it, you bastard. You’re setting me up. Well, let me tell you, my place in history is already...”

Pigge stepped between them. “Let’s just turn down the ego for a minute. More to the point, Sid, what’s the plan? How are you going to sell it to the media?”

Creeping grinned. “Piece of piss, mate. Fresh winds of change, new political map after Eastern Europe, bringing the party into the 21st century, that sort of thing.”

“Mmm,” said Pigge, “What about the ACTU: have you thought of them?”

“Of course,” said Creeping, “it’s stitched up already with Bill. We run it as an award restructuring issue, develop an industry package. Political parties are covered by the community services sector. We can buy off the party organisers with a favourable union amalgamation. Bill’s looking at the possibility of joining the Federal Political Workers Union with the Felt Hatters and Pastry Cooks and upgrading their award. Throw in a few tax cuts, that sort of thing. They’ll come along.”

Pigge persisted, “but how are you going to get the actual decision through?”

“Usual route,” said Creeping. “Foreshadowed announcement by PM, cabinet locked in to support PM, caucus locked in to support cabinet, conference delegates locked in to support government.”

Pigge was doubtful. “I don’t know. You can’t just decide to privatise the party. You have to create the climate, find a vehicle.”

“Well, okay,” said Creeping, “get Delphic to produce some research showing that ALP members want to be privatised. Or maybe you can slip it into your new preselection rules.”

“Very subtle, Sid,” put in Chooke wapsishly. Pigge scratched his chin. “Look, we’ve got to get a debate going, and develop some concrete proposals.”

“No problem,” said Creeping. “We can get some technical papers for cabinet done, and do the old two-option routine, hard and soft.”

“What means?”

“Full privatisation or part privatisation.”

Chooke’s eyes lit up. “And of course, Sid,” he said unctuously, “you’re the only one who’s truly capable of arguing the hard option.”

“Hang on a minute, Clarrie,” said Creeping, “that’s what you did to me on the consumption tax and Telecom. This time I want the soft option. Remember, this is the new cuddly Creeping.”

“Well-er,” Chooke said evasively, “we can talk about that later of course.”

“And once we’ve got the cabinet decision,” said Creeping, “I’ll do a rave at caucus about the need for a more export oriented and competitive party; it shouldn’t be too hard.”

“So, how are we actually going to sell this to the party itself?” asked Pigge. Chooke and Creeping turned on him in disbelief. “Don’t be stupid, Rod,” they said in unison. “We’ve got the numbers.”

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In the Queensland outback town of Murrumbungle, the annual convention of the Industrial Fruitpackers Federation was about to come into session. Federation secretary Clem Mangles beamed down on the packed hall, noting with pleasure the attendance of the local media. A few other journalists he didn’t recognise - city fellers by the look of them - but he put this down to media interest in the new Russian banana markets that he would be announcing.

Guest speaker, Rod Pigge, somewhat fulsomely introduced, rose to his feet and delivered a rather rambling analysis of the relations between the federation and the Labor Party, which he described as long and fruitful.
ges in the fruitpacking industry, he said, were mirrored by changes in the larger society. Outworn shibboleths, discredited icons, were equally useless to apple-growers and politicians. We all need vigorous debate. In cryptic and obscure terms, but with a kind of messianic authority, he began to speak of the distinction between ownership and control in politics, in corporations and the dried fruit industry; of the need to free capital and plant seeds, to make political parties and fruitgrowers more accountable to distant markets and wider ownership. The parable seemed lost on the grizzled grape-growers dozing at the back of the dusty hall, and on the provincial scribes, but not their dry cousins.

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The cabinet debate was long and fierce. Each protagonist was armed with a pile of technical papers. Option A, Creeping’s option, was for full deregulation. The ALP would be floated on the stock exchange but there would be some cross-ownership restrictions. No person or corporation could own shares in more than three parties, or holdings collectively representing 70% of all votes cast. Ownership by non-Australian nationals would be outlawed, unless they could show they were really Australians at heart. These restrictions would be reviewed after two years.

Option B was argued by Communications Minister Ron Rambo. A maximum of 40% equity in the ALP would be sold to the highest bidder, but only bona fide political parties or their nominees would be allowed to bid. As part of a package to stimulate competition, the ALP would merge with the Tasmanian Greens and the Call to Australia Party; and the successful outside bidder would acquire the Victorian and ACT branches of the ALP as well as access to ALP branch membership records in other states, but only in safe seats. There would be detailed restrictions on the use by other parties of traditional ALP slogans.

After a debate lasting seven hours, Option B had won the day.

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Some had left the caucus room cheering, some weeping - and one, much later, on all fours, nursing a severe hangover. But as they gathered in bars and offices throughout Canberra that night, and though no one remembered just what he had said, everyone agreed that it had been a spellbinding performance by the Treasurer. From the moment he swept into caucus in purple opera cloak and a Collingwood beanie, Creeping had mesmerised them.

He had begun soberly enough. A political party was like a business. To be successful it needed fresh ideas, competition, exposure to the cold winds of change. Sure, the ALP had had a fine history but, over the years, it had run down its political capital and its stock of ideas. It was now poorly equipped to face the challenges of the Australian electorate in the next 50 years. Its policies were worn out, they weren’t competitive, they weren’t selling in the modern political marketplace. The indicators were bad. The ALP had hit the political J-curve. It registered poorly on the Gini index of voter redistribution. Campaign management relied too heavily on debt. There was not enough voter niche-marketing, no proper investment in high-tech, flexible policy formulation techniques. We were headed for a very hard landing.

Now his voice dropped and took on a more sinister tone. The problem was worse than any of us had imagined, he said. He reached into his satin waistcoat and slowly, like a hypnotist swinging a watch, waved before them a large, bulky report clearly marked “Australian Electoral Commission, Top Secret”. Internal investigations on the ALP showed that it was on the point of collapse. Withdrawal of public funding was imminent because the party’s required ratio of voters to assets had dramatically declined. Secret analyses by Don Delphic and the Treasury showed that a massive run on the party was imminent and a national withdrawal of votes only weeks away. All these experts were unanimous: only one action could save the party now, a massive injection of new private equity. The party had to be stripped down and old, shopworn ideologies thrown out, especially the archaic delusion that the ALP should be owned by its members. This view was not just sentimental but dangerous: it would condemn the party to the role of political yam gatherers for the next century.

Now again the mood changed as the Treasurer gently led his stunned colleagues into the warmer climates and greener pastures of political deregulation. They would become “the clever party”, with multi-skilled policy formulation reaping high voter returns which would be reinvested in a continuing cycle of political productivity growth each year. Stroke by masterful stroke, he sketched in the big picture. It was a glowing vision of a new breed of executive political entrepreneurs linked to high-tech Multipoll VDUs, capable of registering the minutest fluctuation in voter support and instantly adjusting policy changes. All that was needed was the courage to come forward and declare themselves for progress.

At this point the spell was almost broken as a couple of the Treasurer’s NSW colleagues leapt clumsily forward, with arms raised and strangled cries of “Hosanna!” and “I have committed sins of pre-selection”; but they were contemptuously waved back to their seats by the Treasurer. A few half-hearted objections from Left members were turned aside with good-humoured ripostes, such as “Cockroach”, “Germ” and “Meathead”, and the rest of the Left, grinning sheepishly at their discomfited comrades, were soon brought to heel. The vote to privatise the party was carried unopposed.

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Party secretary Rod Pigge frowned at the agenda paper. “The Left won’t cop this,” he muttered laconically. “I mean, we’re calling a special conference on whether to privatise the ALP, right? And you want them to confine the debate to two options, both of which mean privatising the ALP. They’re slow learners, but not brain-damaged.”
Senator Gary Grubb chuckled. "So we'll give them a third option, a Left option, a real one." Pigge raised an eyebrow. "Seriously?" "Sure," said Grubb, "just needs a bit of negotiation. I'll get back to you tomorrow."

A week later the national executive met. The decision was unanimous. For the purposes of simplifying the issue, conference would debate three options:

- Option A, the so-called Creeping option of full deregulation;
- Option B, the Rambo option for 40% outside equity with safeguards;
- and a third Option, C, that "the ALP will be restructured as a bolshevik revolutionary party, committed to a program of immediate nationalisation of all Australian land and business enterprises".

At a hastily convened press conference of the national Left, Convenor Percy Cheerful hailed this concession as a major victory for the Left and indeed for socialism in our time.

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Political commentators agreed that the special conference was a strangely subdued affair. The choice of venue - the Queanbeyan Remand Centre, for security reasons - perhaps contributed. Most of the headlines inclined towards the "End of an Era" and "Whimper not a Bang" variety, though some optimistic souls were able to salvage the line "Labor's quiet revolution".

In truth, most of the work had been done beforehand. The factional negotiating machine had swung smoothly into action months before. Dissent had been easily contained, with only a few hiccups, and heaven knows these were predictable enough.

The Centre Left, after weeks of agonised negotiation with the Right and Left, had eventually subdivided into seven new options. Their position was brilliantly retrieved by secretary Pigge with a "miracle resolution" of 37 paragraphs, and dozens of new and comforting safeguards to preserve the 'true essence of the ALP'. There would be strict control to prevent any "hostile" use of ALP ideas by opposition parties: these would be policed by a new Political Ethics Marketing Board; and new legislation would prevent the sale of ALP sacred sites at Barcaldine and Ballarat.

In the Left there was despair. Again they had divided ritually between the Ministerial Support Group and the Moderate Tendency. After an all-day caucus, and harsh disciplinary threats, all 38 delegates assembled dejectedly in the stretch tumbril taking them to the Conference Centre in dogged support of Option C.

Early in the proceedings, there was a ripple as five Labor premiers rose simultaneously to make a joint statement. Unless Option B was supported, they urged, the South Australian government would fall next month and almost certainly three other Labor states the following year. This contribution was warmly applauded by the Prime Minister, though with somewhat feigned spontaneity; on the previous night he had had the opportunity to point out to each premier the delicate relationship between federal state grants and the success of Option B.

Observers agreed that the Prime Minister himself put in a fairly lacklustre performance on the day, while the Treasurer's contribution could only be described as "sulky". Clarrie Chooke fulminated and postured for 15 minutes, comparing Australia with Albania, Uganda and Iraq where socialist parties behaved appallingly, not being privately owned. Treasurer Creeping divided his time between half-hearted banter with his old rival, Steve Tzar, the ageing Leftish pop-star, and an ill-tempered attack on the ALP. Labor had now become the Toffs' Party, he said: the "real" battlers voted Liberal. We had to rid ourselves of our obsession with "cloth-cap socialism" and other anachronisms like welfare benefits, government spending trade unions, equality, social justice and the rest of those "tatty icons".

The one real moment of excitement came later in the day. An attempt was made to firebomb the conference doors by a group calling themselves 'The Party Membef Collective'; they were repelled by security guards.

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Phil McCann reports: Brewing giant Bloater Industrie today announced the sale of its subsidiary, Liberal Holdings, the corporation which controls 40% of ALP Ltd. The move is seen as a concession to pressures from the group of bankers, following extraordinary losses in Bloater's property holdings and the conviction of its former chairman for stock market fraud.

The new owners, International Polling Group, the Japanese-American political and fruitpacking conglomerate, lost no time in spelling out a vigorous program of rationalisation for ALP. This is likely to involve eventual sale and leaseback of 87 state ALP outlets and multiple staff redundancies. However, as a foreign corporation which already has extensive political holdings in Australia, Interpoll needs the government to lift its current 4% limit to the required 55% before the takeover can be approved. In representations to the Treasurer, Interpoll pointed out that their proposed ALP rescue package will greatly increase political competition in Australia, with a chain of new political outlets promised covering every conceivable variety of take-away political opinion. Treasurer Creeping is believed to be sympathetic.

Earlier this year, Interpoll launched a nation-wide marketing campaign for its discount supermarket products. The Believer men's toiletries are to be discontinued, and the new Candle on the Mountain range has been developed after extensive market tests proved it more 'user friendly' and environmentally attractive than the former Light on the Hill brand.

MICHAEL SALVARIS is a social policy adviser and ALP activist.

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ALR : NOVEMBER 1990
The privatisation debate has left Labor and the wider Left with a crisis of values and priorities. Nothing will ever be the same. To open a much wider debate, here are two quite contrasting assessments of the political terrain after privatisation.

Terry Flew sees parallels in the demise of public ownership East and West.

While the Hawke government has formally abandoned its commitment to public ownership of some major government business enterprises with the privatisation of Australian Airlines and the part-sale of Qantas, Mikhail Gorbachev has announced a 500-day plan designed to reduce radically the role of the state in enterprise management, and greatly extend the scope of markets in the Soviet economy.

Even if the timing of these two developments is quite coincidental, their concurrence has not been lost upon media commentators and Labor politicians. At the ALP Special Conference in September, Bob Hawke went so far as to claim that a continued commitment to centralism and public ownership would put Australia in a league with only Albania and Cuba.

The fact that these changes are occurring simultaneously does, however, pose some real questions, particularly for the Left. For, despite their substantial differences, both Labourist social democracy and Soviet-type socialism shared a similar vision of how a state-controlled economy could benefit the mass of society. For social democrats, the aim was extensive ownership and regulation of key sectors of the economy to protect living standards from economic instability; social policies were the vehicle for achieving a
better society. The central planning model saw state control of the whole economy, through state ownership and centralised planning, as the vehicle for creating a new society, a socialist humanity.

The travails of Soviet-type economies, and their slide into economic stagnation, is a story well-known, and particularly well-told by East European economists. Essentially, an economy based upon state ownership and central planning could not make the transition from a system of growth based upon extensive accumulation (growth through the creation of new plant, equipment, industries, resources and sources of labour-power) to one based upon intensive accumulation which requires more intensive and efficient use of all of the above. In the advanced capitalist economies this transition occurred, through the almighty jolts of the Great Depression and World War II, through the emergence of the system of growth we have come to term 'Fordism'. Over time, the gap kept growing, especially in the 70s and 80s, as new generation computer-based technologies began to flow into capitalist economies.

The crisis of Soviet-type economies expressed itself in two particular ways. The first is associated with a shortage economy whereby the demand for goods and services chronically exceeds the amount in supply, leading to shortages and queues, under a system of prices fixed by the state planners. Queues are obviously not a desirable thing. However, it should be noted that the alternative under such conditions in a market-based system is price inflation. What makes them a particular problem is that the shortages get greater as the population becomes more affluent, and that the products which are available are of poor quality, as producers know they can sell whatever they produce, and are thus not responsive to consumer wants and needs. The shortage economy also interacted with the one-party political system, in that there were always two markets: one for those with political power, and one for those without.

The second set of problems is associated with a lack of dynamism in the economy. The requirement that production and investment decisions conform to plan targets (invariably set at over-ambitious levels), promoted conservatism rather than innovation at the enterprise level, a tendency reinforced by the shortage economy. The availability of state subsidies, and the impossibility of bankruptcy, also promoted the 'slack' economy. Such a system enabled full employment, but it also led to enormous resource wastage, as enterprises were making the 'wrong' products using antiquated plant and machinery and as the economic and social infrastructure became more run down. Gorbachev's original perestroika program sought to end this malaise by promoting greater enterprise autonomy from central planners, with particular stress on self-financing of investment, combined with reform of price and wage structures. It aimed to preserve a socialist system by reforming it, incorporating aspects of a market economy yet preserving state ownership.

Socialists have traditionally been suspicious of the market being critical of the two major claims made by its advocates: the ability to deliver efficiency and rational prices. The first claim is fatuous, since orthodox economic theory has defined efficiency in terms of markets, and inefficiency in terms of their absence. As Gary Wickham noted in October's ALR, the whole concept of efficiency lacks objective criteria, applicable across all industries, all social groups and all societies. The claim that markets deliver rational prices is also suspect. Putting aside issues such as monopolies, and the whole idea of a 'rational' price, it has become clear to those who have researched the question that prices in capitalist economies for most manufactured goods bear a close fit to cost of production, with demand factors mainly influencing
quantity supplied. The failings of administered pricing in Soviet-type economies is as much to do with political factors (the fear of raising prices for basic goods) as a failure of non-marketing systems as such.

What, then, can markets provide? In the area of most consumer goods, and non-labour inputs for producers, quite a lot. They enable production to occur without a prior, costly process of information-gathering. Production for markets, based upon calculations of monetary reward, also promotes innovation, in terms of introducing new technologies and in terms of new products. Markets also promote flexibility - for some goods and services, it is impossible to predict future demand with accuracy, other than through the success or otherwise of selling such commodities.

Even more importantly, in the Soviet economy, a move towards markets and away from the administrative command system allows for a substantial decentralisation of decision-making. Finally, markets do promote choice, in the sense that having money in one's pocket which can be used however one likes (well, almost!) is a real form of freedom that would be noticed if it was not there. The question for socialists is how to distribute income more equitably, rather than establishing a priori what people's needs are.

As part of the 500-day plan, Gorbachev is seeking to sell 42,000 state-owned enterprises. Who could buy them? There are three possibilities: the workers themselves, private capital in the Soviet Union, and foreign capital. For a socialist, the obvious choice is the workers themselves, since private capital in the Soviet Union has hitherto mostly been accumulated by corrupt means, and since purchase by foreign capital would seem to intensify the scope for stagnating socialist economies to become third-rate capitalist satellites. Worker-owned co-operatives would indeed appear to be a central plank of a democratic socialist economy. What will happen in the Soviet Union under the 500-day plan is unclear, although the signs look far from promising as prices rise while shortages remain, and unemployment rises while the apparatchiks retain effective economic power. In addition, the various Soviet enterprises look very unattractive propositions for a worker buyout. Clearly, the experiences of Soviet-type socialist economies cannot be translated into the Australian context. At the same time, those on the Left who ignore the lessons of these countries and their implications for future socialist strategies do so at their own peril.

What, then, has been the driving push to privatise Australian Airlines, partially privatise Qantas, and partially deregulate telecommunications? Evidence shows that it is not for reasons of alleged inefficiency arising from public ownership. Indeed, given the constraints on the availability of external funding, public enterprises in the 80s have had to learn how to produce 'more from less', at a time when many of their private competitors have proved to be quite incompetent managers. The push for privatisation in Australia in business circles largely arises from an ideological belief that the private sector is in some sense 'better' at running enterprises, with little evidence to support such a claim. Within the government, on the other hand, the pragmatic argument has prevailed that public monies could be better invested in other directions than the public ownership of business enterprises. Public enterprises have also been inadvertently snared by the prejudice in Treasury and elsewhere against public sector borrowing in any form. In the area of telecommunications, developments in computer technology, fibre optic cables, and satellite technology have clearly thrown into question the original rationale for a public monopoly in the area. The issue here is whether private competitors engage in 'cream skimming' - operating only in profitable niches in the sector - while leaving community service obligations and unprofitable activities to the public sector.

The central point, often lost in the debate on privatisation, is that public ownership and social control are not necessarily the same thing. With public enterprises, the insistence upon 'neutral' administrators and conventional market-based performance assessment often militates against the capacity of such enterprises to meet social objectives, such as providing services based upon community needs, catering to diversity, creating employment and improving working conditions. At the same time, private enterprises are not sovereign beings. Their scope for discretionary behaviour is constrained by groups such as suppliers, consumers, shareholders, financiers, trade unions, community groups and governments, as well as competitive pressures in the economy generally.

In the case of the airlines, the implication is that, while there were few compelling social reasons for retaining public ownership, there were also few compelling economic reasons for privatisation. It is a minority who use air travel regularly; yet as public enterprises, Australian Airlines and Qantas were constrained in their pursuit of competitive pressures in the economy generally. Telecommunications represents a more significant battleground. With the introduction of a private competitor, there will be greater pressure to abandon regulations and practices which have more equity-oriented objectives. The next great battle in this area is almost certain to be over the introduction of timed local calls, and perhaps also the removal of cross-subsidies to rural areas.

The general lesson to be learnt is that public ownership should be seen as a means to various economic and social ends, rather than as the end in itself. The vision of socialism which was based around nationalisation and state planning in order to eliminate the market is effectively dead. Australian Airlines was no more a beachhead of socialism than the Soviet Union was a desirable model for the Australian Left. In many areas of the economy, more effective social control may be achieved through regulation rather than public ownership, by some combination of both, or by diverse actions by individuals and groups (trade union, environmental, community) independently or around the policy actions of the state.

TERRY FLEW teaches in economics at the University of Technology, Sydney.
A phenomenon noticeable throughout history regardless of place or period is the pursuit by governments of policies contrary to their own interest.” So the American historian, Barbara Tuchman, begins her work, *The March of Folly*, an assessment of misguided public policy from Troy to Vietnam.

It is now understood how, for much of this century, Australia’s economic policies were pure folly. How Australia sheltered from the world - its economy quarantined behind tariff walls, White Australia and inflexible wages - while other economies traded their way to success.

The result has been a Third World pattern of trade, where the nation’s prosperity is bonded to fluctuations in commodity prices. Australia is the only advanced nation whose ratio of exports to production has not increased through the post-war period. Not so well understood, however, is the role of the Labour movement in fashioning Australia’s economic institutions in the first decade of Federation. The ALP at this time was in a privileged position, holding the balance of power in the new House of Representatives. It developed the clever strategy of ‘support in return for concessions’.

This was designed to protect Australian workers from the defeats of the 1890s: high unemployment, falling wages and broken strikes. So came the historic compromise of conceding tariff protection to manufacturing interests in return for centralised wage fixing. This was accompanied by support for White Australia, defending workers against an inflow of low wage Asian and Island labour. The Labour movement’s defensive strategy was suited to its time. Australia had much to defend - the world’s highest living standards, robust mining industries, strong agriculture and well developed cities. The ethos of a lucky country was woven into the public culture. The policies of domestic defence were accepted by both sides of politics.

This entrenched some shallow priorities within the ALP: devising policy around social conditions in the short term, ahead of economic reform and growth. Government enterprise and social regulation were often seen as an immediate solution to social problems. Their function was to protect working families from the exploitation of business, especially the feared ‘money power’. This analysis can be drawn from an important work by Francis Castles, *Australian Public Policy and Economic Vulnerability*. Castles compares the way in which Australia and the smaller European states have responded to the vulnerability forced on them by world markets. Europe’s social democratic parties have developed the policies of domestic compensation. This means industrial restructuring, wage flexibility, labour retraining and income maintenance within a strong welfare state.

Castle’s conclusion is crucial: “it is immediately apparent that the strategy of domestic compensation has an inherently more dynamic growth potential than that based on domestic defence. Grabbing competitive niches in new markets is built into the former whilst tariffs serve, precisely, to insulate the economy from competition.” This is the basis of domestic compensation, building a dynamic economy within which governments can redistribute the benefits of economic growth. Gradually, as other economies have grown past Australia, domestic defense has meant domestic decline. This is the root cause of tensions in the labour movement today. Australia’s problem on the external account have forced the ALP to make a bold transition to a new style of economic management. Yet the old Left still clings to the folly of domestic defence.

This has meant reinterpretating the 40s as a romantic era, ALP reform. It is difficult, however, to see Curtin as Chifley as anything but austere and empirical. Fin Crip’s biography describes “Chifley’s socialism as the run-of-the-mill, loose Australian trade union variety... he was mastering particular issues, not for compounding social doctrine, for correcting specific injustices rather than in promoting flaring crusades”. Moreover, Chifley’s addressto the 1949 NSW Labor Conference - the memorable “light on the hill” speech - proudly boasted how “no government in the history of Australia has ever given to private industry so much assistance and advice and help as has been given by the Commonwealth Labor Government”.

The ALP is now divided in its interpretation of tradition and the role of the public sector. Perhaps traditionalists should try the words of Gough Whitlam, where the public sector “should be intent on competing where possible and initiating where desirable. It is important to protect the customer as the employee. Sins of capitalism in Australia today are areas of omissi

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*Mark Latham sees a brave new world for social democracy.*

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**FEATURES**

**ALR**: NOVEMBER 1990
rather than commission”. What Whitlam saw in 1961 is no less relevant in 1990. The role of the public sector is to perform those functions unfulfilled by the private sector, not to lock up public resources in industries like banking, where the private sector is already competitive and efficient. Or markets like the domestic airlines, where the private sector will not only be more competitive but more efficient.

Whitlam, with his emphasis on the social wage and regional equality, was the first ALP politician to break the mould of domestic defence. He dragged the party away from its narrow obsession with nationalisation, wage fixing and pensions. In many respects, Whitlam achieved in ALP social policy what Paul Keating is attempting for the Australian economy. That is, an historic transition from the policies of domestic defence to a strategy of domestic compensation. This means replacing a regulated and heavily protected economy with one built around structural efficiency and competitive markets. The Australian economy has changed less since the Second World War than any in our region, right through the arc from Pakistan to South Korea. Australians prefer to apply Western standards in thinking of themselves as a young nation. Increasingly, however, the standards of the Asian region in which we live see Australia as an old world economy. Our good fortune in escaping war and internal upheavals has left our parliaments, legal bodies, companies and economic infrastructure much older than those of many nations overseas.

In each of the three world economic crises since 1970 - the two oil shocks of 1973-74 and 1979-80 and the collapse of commodity prices in 1985-86 - Australian corporations were shown to be as vulnerable and inflexible as any in the developed world. Domestic investment in new products and enterprises is weak. Among Australia’s top 50 corporations only one, Sarich, could be classed as a new company.

The challenge of economic growth now rests with modernising the economy and finding greater competitiveness on world markets. This cannot be achieved solely by Australian standards. Policy makers must understand how the pace of change is only relative to the economic restructuring of our competitors. The task faced by Keating is immense. Just as the international recession in 1974-75 ended the social programs of the Whitlam government, Australia’s vulnerability in the world economy has shackled the Hawke government.

While government revenue increased through the economic growth of the mid-1980s, it has not been used to fund new expenditure programs. Instead, it has been channelled into the budget surpluses needed to address Australia’s balance of payments and debt crisis. Whereas real federal revenue from 1983-84 to 1988-89 increased by 24%, real outlays remained constant. The potential of Labor’s instruments of equity, those welfare programs and community services which promote an equality of opportunity for all Australians, remain unfulfilled. While this has strained the party’s patience, the government has had no other choice. Its policies not only have to repair the complicity of earlier governments but keep pace with the fastest growing economies overseas. It not only has to introduce sweeping structural reforms but drag its own party out of the old Laborism of domestic defence.

For the ALP this means redefining its goals for equity and economic performance. Understanding how the real issue is not private versus public ownership in the economy, but monopoly versus competition in key markets. It means acknowledging that only competition in Australia’s infrastructure can lower costs and boost productivity. No longer can the ALP prop up public monopolies, with their inefficiency and complacent customer service, in the name of equity. That is why the telecommunications debate was so important. It is not equity Labor defends in uncompetitive markets but all the privileges and waste of monopolies public and private.

Government intervention in the market economy is needed to maximise competition and incentives. Other policy tools can be developed as instruments for equity. Government spending and taxation, if well targeted, can improve both the nominal income and social wage of the less privileged. The relative size of government is no longer a worthwhile guide to reform goals. What matters most is that ALP governments can generate public resources and allocate them to areas of need. Social democracy has set itself the task of sustaining those things the market either cannot provide or actually takes away. The Hawke government has substantially abandoned the policies of domestic defence. This has been the real significance of its tariff reductions, industry plans, award restructuring and training, occupational superannuation and targeted welfare payments. Its agenda now continues under the banner of micro-reform in transport, communications and new federalism.

By far the biggest reform for the labour movement, labour market deregulation, has been left till last. Like tariff policy, it is difficult to understand how, in the long term, centralised wage fixing has helped Australian workers. If Australia is to trade successfully and build a growth economy, it needs a wages system which rewards industries and employees for their contribution to national income.

Centralised wage fixing has also prevented depressed regional centres from offering wage incentives to industry and comparative advantages in the market. This is where the folly of domestic defence is most exposed: trying to argue that thousands of unemployed workers in regional centres, living in an uncompetitive nation, is somehow in the best interests of the working class.

In the end, for Barbara Tuchman, “persistence in error is the problem”. She points to the lack of self-confidence by which politicians rarely admit mistakes and pursue new options. History shows how good leadership comes from lateral thinking. An ability to abandon past practices when they no longer serve the public interest. This is the real test for the ALP: to continue to turn around the march of folly.

MARK LATHAM works for the NSW Opposition leader, Bob Carr. He is the author of Reviving Labor’s Agenda (Pluto Press, 1990).
**Revolutions in Sport**

Rugby League great Arthur Beetson was as revolutionary as Einstein.
Gary Wickham explains.

Equating Arthur Beetson or Polly Farmer with Einstein or Copernicus probably sounds far-fetched. But there’s reason in this madness.

All sports undergo revolutions in technique not dissimilar to the revolutions in technique that shape different sciences.

Revolution is not too strong a word. In a much celebrated, much condemned book on the history of science, published in 1962, Thomas Kuhn described the development of sciences using just this term.

I have no idea whether Kuhn is or was a sports fanatic; I don’t think it matters. His ideas have a great deal to offer an understanding of the way sports work.

Kuhn argued that scientists usually go about their business more or less in line with a particular ‘right way of doing things’, a particular dominant paradigm of technique. They judge their performances, and their performances are judged by others, in terms of this dominant paradigm.

Think of Rugby League before Beetson or Aussie Rules football before Farmer. The ‘right way’ of attacking as a front-row forward was to keep in close to the ruck, run straight and hard and, especially, keep the ball tucked in close to the chest to avoid having it dislodged by either ground or opponent.

The paradigm for all Australian Rules players in the pre-Farmer era was to kick the ball long to position. Handball was to be used only as a last resort.

This was ‘normal’ Rugby League and ‘normal’ Australian Rules. Players, coaches, commentators and spectators alike practised ‘normal’ Rugby League or Australian Rules as a community of Rugby League and a community of Australian Rules, just as Kuhn described the practice of ‘normal’ science among different scientific communities.

But normal science, according to Kuhn, has a habit of breaking down every now and again. This is the crux of his argument.

The normal way of doing things, the dominant paradigm, begins to be openly challenged, perhaps because it’s not doing too well at solving its own puzzles or perhaps because some mavericks working outside the dominant paradigm, on the edge of the community, using an alternative paradigm, start getting some spectacularly good results, or perhaps a combination of the two.

More or less quickly a scientific revolution occurs. An entire community starts doing things in the way of the mavericks.

The shocking new way becomes the normal way, the alternative paradigm becomes the dominant paradigm. Anyone who stays loyal to the old way is left behind, a fool at best, a heretic at worst. Einstein’s paradigm of physics taking over from Newton’s is a good example, as is Copernicus’ paradigm of astronomy taking over from Aristotle’s.

Back to football. In the 60s, Beetson starts standing in tackles, at the edge of rucks, often approached at a stroll, actually holding the ball out (sometimes even one-handed!) for other players to run off him rather than clutching it to his chest.

In the same period Farmer (and Cable and others) start using the hand-pass not as a means of getting out of a tight spot, but as an attacking weapon.

In both Rugby League and Australian Rules a revolution occurred; a dominant paradigm of playing technique shifted very dramatically. Not quite overnight, but over only a few seasons, what was wrong became right and vice versa.

Only the ‘old codgers’ stayed loyal to the old ways. During the brief revolutionary period just about everyone was converted (or sacked) - players, coaches, commentators and spectators.

Now, only 20 years later, nearly every Rugby League forward is expected to have unloading skills at least approaching the Beetsonesque, and nearly every Aussie Rules player is expected to have handballing skills at least approaching the Farmeresque. Every coach is expected to teach these skills and every commentator and spectator is expected to appreciate them.

All this, I believe, is evidence of the worth of the ‘paradigm shift’ or ‘technical revolution’ theory of sports. For example, not from football, but from high jumping.

In the space of just a few days’ competition - during the 1968 Olympic everything about the ‘right way’ to high jump changed. American athlete Dick Fosbury’s ‘flop’ technique completely marginal before the Games was so successful (Fosbury won from a world ranking of 56th in 1967 to gold medallist in 1968) it became dominant virtually straight away.

The straddle paradigm, which had dominated the scissors, eastern cut and western roll paradigms for years, itself became an alternative. The flop paradigm was completely ‘in’. No one even had a chance to defend the old dominant paradigm.

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What exactly happened behind the scenes to make world tennis players opt for baseline play with double-handed backhands and massive topspin forehands in preference to the serve-and-volley game?

What exactly happened behind the scenes to make Bob McCarthy running out wide in attack or to make Terry Wallace start kicking the ball...
quickly from the centre that its exact target didn't really matter?

Surely these events didn't happen without someone behind the scenes doing something?

We can usefully categorise these different revolutions in terms of the involvement of coaches and/or administrations.

Some revolutions in individual sports occur through genuine mavericks, individual playing revolutionaries, if you like, perhaps working quietly with a coach before bursting forth with their revolution at a public event, catching the administration of their sport completely off guard. The Fosbury revolution again provides a good example.

Some revolutions involve maverick play by individuals in team games which is either encouraged or at least tolerated by coaches but not necessarily directed by them. This category includes the McCarthy and Beetson revolutions in Rugby League and the Wallace and Farmer revolutions in Australian Rules. A bit of creative borrowing by players and/or coaches might go on, as in the way the Beetson revolution involved importing, modifying and perfecting a technique from English Rugby League but, where this occurs, there's no need for a separate 'behind the scenes' category. These two categories - softly directed or non-directed maverick play in individual and team sports - involve flexible, aware coaching techniques and either flexible, aware administration or administration which doesn't know what's going on.

Another category focuses on individual coaching mavericks, coaches who stand alone as sporting revolutionaries. This category includes the 'total defence' and 'total football' revolutions in Rugby League. Jack Gibson - it's hard to think of a better term than 'coaching genius' - was of course involved in both these revolutions. His 'total defence' paradigm changed the face of Rugby League in the 70s (when he coached St. George, Newtown and Easts). This paradigm introduced new patterns and new standards of defence.

The 'total defence' revolution was the basis for the 'total football' revolution.

Gibson experimented with 'total football' - total defence combined with total attack (many more players running to create options, much more adventurous passing, use of the chip kick, and so on) in the late 70s and pushed it further in the 80s when he coached Parramatta. Gibson, of course, had a co-revolutionary in the total football revolution throughout the 80s in Warren Ryan (Newtown, Canterbury and Balmain).

This category - coach-directed revolutions - necessarily involves flexible, aware administrations. One unfortunate spin-off of this category has been the emergence of a cult of the 'supercoach', a situation where sports administrators (and spectators) are constantly on the look-out for the new coach who can solve all the performance weaknesses displayed by the players they administer (or follow). More sensible administrations will realise that coach-directed revolutions require careful analysis of the new paradigms involved, not mindless 'super coach' worship.

There's still another category, one in which highly centralised administrations take the initiative and direct the revolution from the top. The tennis revolution is the ideal example. This revolution had its roots in the backrooms of European tennis, particularly in Sweden. Administrators decided, probably in the late 60s, that a European-style paradigm had to be developed to counter the serve-and-volley paradigm perfected in Australia and dominant throughout the world in the 50s and 60s.

Armies of coaches were trained in the new baseline paradigm and set about producing a 'new breed' of player. The success of this revolution barely needs mentioning. A string of tennis clones, from Borg to Lendl to Graf, have perfected the baseline game with double-handed backhands and topspin shots, fuelled by changes to racquet technology. The 'Aussie' paradigm and most of the Aussies have been left behind.

I think this example shows that revolutions can be manufactured by aware, powerful administrations. Whether this is the ideal type of sporting revolution should remain a matter for debate.

GARY WICKHAM teaches in Social Science at Murdoch University.
It’s times like these...

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Unification has been a cultural shock for Berliners. Mike Ticher reports that the 'socialist' East now seems in many ways more conservative than the West.

You know we have never really liked the Germans." It’s a sentiment you might expect to hear in many parts of Europe in 1990, but perhaps not from Germans themselves. But for young, leftwing Berliners, 'German' implies all the attitudes which they reject - it calls to mind the stereotype (which is so widespread outside Germany) of materialistic, dutiful, conservative, orderly and fundamentally dull people. Berlin has long been a centre for such non-conformist opinions, largely because of the large number of young men going there from West Germany to escape military service.

The self-consciously Left and alternative 'counter-culture' (a word which does not sound ridiculously dated in Berlin) which grew in the 60s and was an important impetus to the success of the Greens in Berlin, remains extremely strong among many young people, to an extent unimaginable in almost any other West European country, not to mention Australia. The signs are obvious even to a casual observer that West Berlin is one place where materialism and apathy have not overwhelmed grassroots political activity.

In Kreuzberg, the inner-city suburb which is the hub of alternative activity, the graffiti is ubiquitous and strident anti-Nazi, pro-revolutionary movements all around the world, exhortations to solidarity among the residents and warnings to police not to raid squatted flats. In Berlin public swimming pools, there are signs urging women to report sexual harassment. The only national daily paper published in Berlin, the Tageszeitung ('Taz') is run as a co-operative, with equal wages for all, and broadly supports the Greens and others to the left of the SPD. The political manifestation of all this is the presence of the Alternative List (the Berlin equivalent of the Greens) in the ruling coalition on the municipal council.

Now, however, the German Left is going through a severe identity crisis, and nowhere more so than in Berlin itself. The catalyst, of course, was the opening of the Wall and Kohl’s subsequent rush to reunification which so dramatically seized, and still holds, the political initiative. For many Berliners, both East and West, the initial euphoria has rapidly given way to suspicion and antipathy.

In the East, as Westerners constantly tell you, "they want everything yesterday". Threatened by growing unemployment, rising prices and no security of tenure in houses and apartments previously owned by people in the West, the East Germans have become rapidly disillusioned (although most certainly not to the extent that Kohl could possibly lose the election). In the West they talk of the 'invasion' by the Easterners which has made West Berlin intolerably crowded and dramatically worsened its already critical housing shortage.

Dorothea Hahn, a journalist on the Taz, explains: 'It’s a completely prejudiced feeling [against the East Germans], but you have to understand how radical the change was. In the 1960s, my parents' generation used to light candles in the eastern windows of their houses, in memory of their ‘dearly beloved brothers and sisters on the other side of the Wall’. Until 9 November there was this officially friendly attitude towards the East Germans, and no one had anything against them, but also hardly anyone had any actual contact with them. Then, all of a sudden, we are confronted with millions of them, most of whom I suppose have already visited West Berlin or West Germany. For Berlin it has been quite a cultural shock.'

For the Left in particular, the East Germans (or perhaps more accurately, the Prussians) represent everything archetypically German. What's more, their 'Germanness' appears to have been exacerbated, rather than alleviated, by the experience of living under a nominally socialist government for 40 years. The experience of Claudia Rhein, a young West Berlin trainee video producer, is perhaps typical. She speaks of the 'bad socialisation' of her boss, a 45-year-old Easterner, resident in the West for ten years. 'His style is very authoritarian and aggressive, the women workers in particular find it hard to get on with him, because he has been unable to adapt to ideas of feminism and of democratic and cooperative ways of working which most young people in West Berlin are accustomed to,' she says. It is this 'actually existing socialism' which is now perceived to have fostered fundamentally reactionary social values!

Politically, of course, this has translated into a rejection of everything which the communists theoretically stood for and institutionalised, including feminism, internationalism and equality. East German racism, which has manifested itself in attacks on Vietnamese students and constant grumblings about the influx of Poles into the country, is viewed with horror by vehemently anti-racist West Berliners, accustomed to the constant reminders on the walls of "Never again fascism".

For the Left in West Berlin, this realisation has produced a profoundly schizophrenic attitude to the East, described by Ralf Foeks, a former federal spokesperson for the Greens, as "a calamity for the Left-Green opposition". On the one hand, the Left is concerned to retain whatever can be salvaged from the ex-communist state - social services, public transport, the right to abortion and so on. On the
other, they are shocked and frightened by the values of the people produced by that system.

As Dorothea Hahn puts it: "Many people in the West would have liked the East Germans to be different from what they are. Foeks is particularly critical of what he describes as the Left "wallowing in nostalgia" for the GDR, and especially of joint actions with the ex-SED (now renamed Democratic Socialist Party) against 'incorporation' of the GDR by the federal Republic.

Hahn echoes this failure of the Left to come to terms with the reality of the GDR: "I think very few of us knew the concrete dimensions of political repression, corruption, torture, social inequality - not because it was impossible to know, but because we simply didn't ask enough questions. We were far too convinced of the superiority of socialism."

The population of a unified Berlin is set to increase from 3.5 million to seven million before the end of the century (compared to 4.5 million before World War II).

This will put a huge strain on its physical resources. For West Berliners it will mean the end of their "splendid isolation", their subsidies from the federal government, their weighted wage packets and the special identity created both by the Wall and the vibrant alternative culture. The city will lose its fundamental function as a political symbol in exchange for a greater role in the German economy, particularly in such areas as government and the public service, banking, publishing and, perhaps, industry, of which it currently has very little. In other words, it will move into the real world and become more like any other large European city. It's easy to see how this loss of identity and privilege can help to induce the 'nostalgia'.

"I think there will be very many social problems, there will be more crime in Berlin, lots of unemployment, lots of social inequality, more poverty and more homelessness," says Hahn. "The long-term there will be underprivileged people, the underdogs of the future rich Germany.

"What was the GDR will become the economic 'south' of Germany, the slum of Germany. And who knows whether this will shift politics to the Left or the Right?"

MIKE TICHER, ALR's former advertising manager, is sojourning in Europe.

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Informing on infertility

Romaine Rutnam reviews the meeting of feminist thought and the IVF controversy

I first began taking an interest in the conflicting issues raised by the development of In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) technology when I attended the "Liberation or Loss?" conference in Canberra in 1986. Most memorable was the almost palpable hostility and distress I perceived among the audience at a plenary session, when an IVF client claimed: "I was born with the right to have a baby and nobody will take that right away from me if there is another way, including women's groups".

Beatrice Faust wrote in Women, Sex and Pornography that 'the right to choose' sums up the women's movement. On the other hand, Robin Rowland's writings between 1984 and 1988 show her wrestling with the theoretical problems of balancing the value of that slogan in the campaign for women's access to safe contraceptives and abortions, with her strong sense that women (and men) should not have the right to choose IVF, 'surrogacy', sex selection and other related eugenicist technologies. (See Corea et al, Man-made Women.)

Martin Golding's history of the notion of human rights notes the connection between the development of the idea of an individual's rights with that of capitalism "with the individualism it entails". He concluded by noting a problem for the concept of rights that emerged from the "inflationary" claims:

Perhaps we have had an inflation in our moral economy, an inflation in demands put in terms of rights, to the point that the concept of rights is beginning to lose its value as moral tender. We seem to need a new concept in order to be able to think clearly about these hard decisions. But what could this new concept be? (Bondman [eds], Bioethics and Human Rights, pp44-50.)

I'd like to suggest that the growing literature on feminist ethics can make useful contributions to the way we "think clearly about the hard decisions" on choices between reproductive (and any other) technologies. This literature offers not a new concept but a new perspective, contesting the norms by which we judge our choices and actions - on ethical values. The basis of what has been called a distinctively feminist perspective on ethics is the germinal book by Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women Development, which discusses her empirical research on moral development and decision-making.

She argued there were distinct differences in men's moral choices based on the language of autonomy, right and justice. Women, by contrast, tended to be more concerned with other values like social interdependence, responsibility and non-violence in their decision-making. In a later essay, she prefers the terms "in justice perspective" and "the perspective" to highlight the contrasts in these two distinct means of organisations of our perception and change our understanding of ourselves and our environments. These values flow from the daily activities which
women, primarily, have for centuries performed: caring and nurturing not only the powerful, menfolk, but also the powerless in societies - the young, the old, the disabled. Nancy Hartsock, for instance, suggested that this sexual division of labour could contribute to the fascinating distinction she found in the way male and female political theorists have talked about power. She notes in Money, Sex and Power that the vast literature on power written by men, power is seen in terms of power over, or domination of others, while the very few women who have written about political power talk in terms of the power to, or empowerment of others. She suggests that the occlusion of men from intimate identification with others through childcare may explain why men have systematically privileged the intellectual habits of abstraction, compartmentalisation, and a denial of a role for the emotions in producing knowledge; why their values seem to protect the separation and opposition of individuals, which can so often lead to violence and a breakdown of human relationships.

No matter how these values arise, there can be no question that the skills and knowledges produced by women segregated into the private realm are constantly devalued by the organised "public" disciplines of "malestream" science and medicine. Thus, age-old contraceptive, abortifacient and birthing techniques developed by women are devalued and set aside to make room for the modern "scientific" technologies, the dangerous effects of which the women's health movement has catalogued for two decades now. (See Ehrenreich and English: For her own good. 150 years of experts' advice to women.)

There are other important ways in which feminist ethics challenges traditional ethics. One is that ethics should be context-rich rather than ahistorical, should be concerned with judgments made in the full knowledge of power differences in particular situations instead of the balancing of abstract and timeless moral principles. So feminist ethics would judge IVF, for example, not in terms of abstract principles like the doctor's duty to relieve suffering or the citizen's right to health care or the right to life of the human embryo: they would also look at IVF's effects on - what it actually means for - the power relations within our society, between men and women, between rich and poor, for people of different races and so on. A related important distinction between traditional and feminist ethics is that while the former prides itself on developing universal categories like justice and rights, the latter argues for judgments which are embodied in distinct individuals. The ethical relevance of the fact that human beings have two different bodies, two sexes, has been developed by several Australian feminists, including Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz and Moira Gatens.

The relevance of this insight to practical policy choices may be seen in the issue of career patterns for men and women. Using universal criteria like justice and equality, male policymakers who accepted the early feminist demands for equality in the workplace assumed, and acted upon the basis, that these patterns should be the same for both sexes. The tendency for feminists in the 60s and 70s to forget or postpone childbearing until their careers were well-established appears to have contributed to the increased demands for, and expression of rights to, infertility treatment (including IVF) in the 80s. An alternative policy, based on an acceptance of biological difference and limits, would encourage and support women to give birth at the healthiest physical time (in their 20s) and reorganise careers and other social institutions like childcare around that requirement. (See Anne Phillips [ed]: Feminism and Equality.)

It's illuminating to note the differences between these feminist values and

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Judy Horacek

"Your government is on the verge of collapse - make a woman the premier"... Yep, that's all it says.
those of Australia's IVF researchers. When Carl Wood, Australia's human IVF research pioneer, was interviewed by The Age the day after Candice Reed was born in June 1980, he was quoted as saying "This particular project is attractive in the sense that it serves two basic functions, the relief of human suffering - infertility - and the right to have children. But it is unattractive to health administrators because the percentage of success is so low". By portraying IVF as fulfilling basic human functions, and any opposition to it as thus inhuman, Wood courted and achieved public sympathy and financial support.*

From the early 1970s, the attitude of Wood and his colleagues was that it was their job to produce "more efficient reproduction and family planning", while it was a task for others to tidy up the ethical and legal aspects of their work after them. They suggested, for instance, that they could improve the efficiency of 'nature', women's bodies, by encouraging women in their 20s to have their eggs removed and frozen, and reimplanted years later (either in their own bodies or in that of a "surrogate") after their careers were well-established. This, of course, is "the medical model of health" at work, in contrast to the social view I used above.

It's possible that the supreme confidence Wood and his peers had in their benevolent efforts to enhance the mechanics of the human fertilisation process led to two notable omissions in their research practice, which I consider to have potentially harmful effects on the women who have chosen to try IVF. The first was Wood's failure to include any women in the group he set up around him to assist in developing his research protocol and procedures. This seems completely consistent with the general attitude of scientific experts that it is unnecessary to consult potential users (particularly those of the female sex) about how they might weigh up the possible risks and benefits of the procedure. In the case of IVF, this meant that no women were involved in the decision taken in the early 1970s that ovarian stimulation through clomiphene citrate was a lesser risk than repeated cycles of surgery under general anaesthetic. While this failure did not contravene the ethical standards governing medical research of that time (those found in the National Health and Medical Research Council's [NHMRC] Statement of Human Experimentation of 1966 and 1976), the second omission quite clearly failed to meet one of those explicit guidelines. This stated: New therapeutic or experimental procedures which are at the stage of early evaluation and which may have long-term effects should not be undertaken unless full provision has been made for long-term care and observation [my emphasis].

In 1985 the NHMRC's Medical Research Ethics Committee noted of the Monash IVF program that "there is no long term follow up of births", but made no further comment or recommendation on the matter. In 1989, two Melbourne IVF specialists were quoted in The Age as saying they knew of no research that had studied the long-term health effects on women of IVF. Thus, to date, Australia's IVF researchers and practitioners, as well as the guardian of their ethical practice - the NHMRC - can be seen to have failed to meet the standard of the feminist ethic of care or responsibility in this case.

The philosophical basis of this scientific hubris, what David Suzuki and Peter Knudsen have translated in Genethics as "a mix of bloated human pride and self-confidence", can be traced to the Biblical order for men to "have dominion over" and to "subdue" Nature. This task of controlling the natural environment and of pushing back its limits has been vigorously followed by European science since the time of Francis Bacon. The consequences have included the "miracles of modern scientific medicine" as well as the incredibly affluent and leisureed lifestyles of the rich in rich and poor countries alike, but at the cost of what is increasingly recognised as an ecological catastrophe.

I began by noting that the conflict raised for some feminists by the slogan "the right to choose". Gilligan has noted the importance of the notion of rights in women's self-development in transcending the pervasive feminine ethic of self-sacrifice and responsibility to others, to include responsibility for themselves too. However, I agree with her view that our rights claims on society should be balanced by our sense of social responsibility to those who are the least powerful in our communities. Rowland has argued that the meaning of the word "control" problematic, because it carries with it the connotation of the scientist's desire to dominate, have power over, nature. The problems are very real. I support Mary O'Brien's view that the chronological link between the flowering of feminism in the 60s and 70s and the greater availability of cheap, effective chemical and mechanical means of stepping over the limits of frequent childbearing in women's lives was no mere coincidence. It seems inconsistent for heterosexual feminists to choose to use existing science and medical technologies to minimise the risks of health of constant pregnancies and the pain of childbirth, or to become voluntarily and permanently infertile through sterilisation, but also argue that science needs to become "feminised", to become a process of knowledge-making that is not based on nature's domination.

Perhaps a way out of this dilemma can be found in the temporary restriction of medical research to priorities aimed at fulfilling the World Health Organisation's goal of reducing inequities in health through empowering the least powerful groups in our national and global communities. Out of such an empowerment - the expansion of knowledge/power among women, aborigines, working class people, to enhance social solidarity and balance of power between human and our natural environment - may come a better understanding of what a sustainable scientific theory and practice might be.
Feminist finesse


Next time somebody asks you "what's all this feminist stuff, then?", you will be able to send them away to read Rosemarie Tong's Feminist Thought, a remarkably friendly and sophisticated overview of contemporary feminist theory. When they come back mumbling, "It's all very well in theory, but it can't work in Australia", you can deftly reach for Marian Sawyer's Sisters in Suits, a detailed and practical account of feminist involvement in the formation and administration of Australian public policy over the last two decades.

You will not be the only one using the books. Feminist Thought has been almost continuously out of stock since it came out late last year; the capitalists at the publishers, Unwin and Hyman, and at the Australian distributors, Allen and Unwin, seem to have totally underestimated the demand. (So far, there have been no reports of inflated prices paid on the black market.)

So why all this fuss about yet another feminist text? First, the thousands of students in various women's studies and other courses which deal with feminist theory need a textbook. Of the three frequently used books, Eisenstein's excellent Contemporary Feminist Thought was published in 1984 and focuses mainly on radical feminism in the United States, Burton's Subordination is not useful as a general introduction, and the outstanding second edition of Feminist Frameworks by Jaggar and Rothenberg costs $49.95. This leaves Tong's book, which surveys the whole spectrum of contemporary feminist theory, a steal at $24.95.

Second, the book is both friendly and sophisticated. It starts by explaining that not all feminists think the same way, and that there are such big differences between different feminist theoreticians that it is useful to group them into several distinct theoretical perspectives. The author draws on her long experience as a lecturer in feminist theory to provide plenty of graphic examples and ingenious explanations of difficult concepts, and succeeds in presenting the strong as well as the weak points of any approach she mentions.

All theorists are treated with a sympathetic but critical eye, and no one is made to look ridiculous or evil. Tong includes up-to-date material in her discussion of the commonly described liberal, marxist, radical and socialist feminist varieties of feminist theorising, and uses new pigeonholes for those who do not fit easily within the old categories. Her discussion of psychoanalytic, existentialist and postmodern feminism will save some poor souls from getting lost forever in new, unfamiliar feminist jargon and long sentences. To those few who have learnt to navigate the swamp with confidence, Tong will provide novel interpretations and food for thought.

Sawer's book is equally important, but for quite different reasons. Sisters in Suits is a blow-by-blow and meeting-by-meeting account of who did what in the myriad agencies and programs initiated, staffed and co-ordinated by Australian feminists (feminist bureaucrats) since the early 1970s. It is the first book-length study of what Australian women have achieved in terms of public policy machinery during the current wave of the women's movement. Because of the amount of detail it contains and because the Australian experience is in many respects unique, the book is likely to be a standard source for years to come. In writing it, Sawyer has relied closely on recollections of the women who populate its pages. She does mention theoretical concerns, but rarely takes a few steps back to look systematically and critically at what it all means.

Yet the book's weakness is also its strength - the readers actually get a sense of what it feels like in the bureaucratic jungle and can use it as a guidebook before themselves venturing inside. Incidentally, there is abundant evidence here to debunk any blanket statement regarding the unrelenting patriarchal nature of the state.

Some male politicians and bureaucrats are awful and others supportive; feminists and femocrats support each other, disagree, make mistakes and become exhausted; programs which look good turn out to have serious problems; feminist demands might be resisted for years and then approved in minutes for odd and unforeseen reasons.

Last but not least, the book contains interesting photographs of Australian "sisters in suits".

PAVLA MILLER teaches sociology at the Phillip Institute of Technology.
Waves of change


With these two books comes some welcome and sorely needed insights into the complex political events in New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea over the past decade and a half.

Both are written by journalists with many years of first hand experience and whose knowledge of their subject is unparalleled among their colleagues in the Australian media corps.

The noise of the crowd was much worse. Chants of “Strip her naked!” “Kill her!” blended with “Australia go home!” ...The police had now come through the melee and one inspector took me by the arm and yelled, “Run”. I’d forgotten that the Police Station was just there about 100 metres away. We ran the gauntlet of twisted faces, spit and punches, grabs at my shirt and my hair. The faces and the arms were so close I could easily have yanked an arm or a shoulder and repaid a punch or two. But it took all my efforts to control my shaking and particularly to keep looking through people - to stand above the situation and, although I was so close, not make eye contact with anyone.

Helen Fraser’s book Your Flag’s Blocking our Sun is a personal account of the dramatic four years she spent in New Caledonia between 1981 and 1985.

Her time there began with the first assassination of a European independence leader (Pierre Declerq) and climaxed with the pro-independence election boycott in late 1984 and its aftermath, a period which left almost 20 people dead.

As the only Australian journalist based in the French territory, Fraser faced the wrath of the far Right. The above incident, which occurred at a gathering of 5,000 Caldoche who were laying wreaths for two gendarmes killed in a melee at a Kanak land protest, was just one of a number of incidents.

As well as facing danger of that sort she, and her son who was eight when they arrived in New Caledonia, faced death threats and even an attack on their fifth floor apartment in the centre of Noumea.

The hostility and personal abuse Helen Fraser experienced as a reporter during the time is testament to the passions of the far Right Caldoche and the intense animosity of the settlers to Australia’s perceived support for the Kanaks.

But this book is more than a story of personal courage. By relating conversations in villages, at independence movement conferences and at roadblock protests, it gives an insight into the feelings and motivation of those involved at all levels in the independence struggle.

The events during the 1984 election boycott were, in many ways, a forerunner to the 1988 protest in which over 30 gendarmes were held hostage in a cave on Ouvea island.

The 1984 protest marked the beginning of the latest phase of the independence struggle with various pro-independence parties coming together to form the FLNKS (the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front) and the declaration of a provisional government of Kanaky.

It also saw the ambushing and assassination of ten Kanaks, including two brothers of the independence movement’s president, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, and the killing of Kanak leaders Eloi Machero and Marie Nonaro by the French military.

Helen Fraser covered all these incidents for The Age and for Radio Australia, and they now appear in the book.

Fraser left New Caledonia before the 1988 protests and the subsequent debate over the Matignon Peace Accords signed by pro- and anti-independence leaders later that year. She has been back regularly and her book contains a short epilogue giving an account of her interviews with Tjibaou and his deputy Yeweine Yeweine, and with Kanak militant Djubelly Wea just two weeks before he was assassinated Tjibaou and Yeweine.

While in New Caledonia Fraser spent much time with Tjibaou and Yeweine and some of her conversations with them appear in the book.

The book’s title is taken from a report by Yeweine Yeweine to a visit by French overseas territories minister: “pull down this red white and black flag for it is blocking our sun”.

As well as the political events that became the focus of so many people’s lives during the early 80s, Fraser gives a warm account of everyday life in New Caledonia, of her going...
People, Politics and History

Tel 02

Ninion

Monia

James Nyaro, a rebel leader from the

experience in a Kanak

want to play, with the

the Melanesian resistance to Indonesian

have 'horses' who

make the runs for them. The game is

a half metres long fashioned out

local lepeu tree and a ball made

of the sap of a banyan tree by tribal

elders.

There are few books available on New

Caledonia in English; this one is one

of the best. If you are planning a trip to New Caledonia it is a must...if not, it is a fascinating and affectionate introduction to politics and life in one of the largest island states.

Sean Dorney's book, Papua New Guinea - People, Politics and History since 1975, while containing many personal stories is, as the title suggests, more a history of the country since independence.

Dorney first went to PNG in 1974 and, apart from a two-year stint back in Australia following his expulsion a decade later, he has spent most of his time there.

The expulsion order came in retaliation for the ABC TV's decision to screen a 4 Corners interview with James Nyaro, a rebel leader from the Melanesian resistance to Indonesian rule in Irian Jaya, which had been filmed on PNG soil.

In his book Dorney makes sense of the complex forces which make up Papua New Guinea's political life.

Although the title suggests the book begins in 1975, it actually goes back much further into PNG's pre-history as well as analysing the record of various Australian ministers and administrators responsible for PNG before independence.

In the post-independence period the book covers everything from the Bougainville crisis, PNG's emerging and unique style of parliamentary politics to the massive problems the country faces with corruption and law and order (including the Barnett inquiry into corruption in the logging industry). It also examines PNG's handling of its economy, the problems associated with setting up provincial governments in areas where regular contact with the Western world has only been established in the last 40 years and where almost all leaders and public servants have not had the opportunity to gain more than a primary education. Add to that the question of whether a coup could succeed in PNG, PNG's fragile relationship with its gigantic western neighbour, Indonesia, and the history of its relations with the rebel Melanesian liberation movement in Irian Jaya (the OPM) and you have a full picture of the complexity of modern PNG.

Dorney has been at the centre of political developments in PNG now for a decade and a half. The real strength of his book lies in the detail it provides, in Dorney's amusing and perceptive anecdotes, and in his determined optimism about the country's future.

JEMIMA GARRETT reports on Pacific affairs for Radio Australia.

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ALR : NOVEMBER 1990
Eric Gill's is not a name on everyone's lips these days, yet every visitor to London has seen his work - he designed the typeface Railway Letters which is still used in all London Transport signs, posters and timetables.

Other typefaces he created - particularly Gill Sans and Perpetua - are still in regular use and their availability today as electronic typefaces, for use in computer publishing, is evidence of their continuing appeal.

In his day (he died in 1940) Gill was about as famous as a typographer can be, although naming 12 famous typographers is almost as difficult as picking 12 famous Belgians. But Gill was much more than a typographer. He was a calligrapher, a carver of inscriptions, an engraver, publisher and illustrator, and a sculptor who enjoyed an international reputation between the wars. Indeed, in 1928 the British sculptor Henry Moore worked under Gill on sculptures for London Transport's headquarters.

But Gill's public reputation in his lifetime rested less on his work, like the extraordinary Stations of the Cross in London's Westminster Cathedral, than on his highly-publicised views on sex. Gill's public proclamations on the subject frequently created controversy, as did his many unashamedly erotic engravings, drawings and sculptures. But, as Fiona MacCarthy's excellent biography makes clear, his private life was as much a part of his lifestyle as the live-in mistress.

And, as if he didn't have enough contradictions in his life, Gill also progressed through most of the radical artistic and political movements of his time. His loathing of industrial capitalism and the shoddiness of its products took him through the tail-end of William Morris' Arts and Crafts movement, then on to the Fabian Arts Group and then a succession of other allegiances.

By the time he was middle-aged, his pacifism, outspoken support for Republican Spain and commitment to workers' control were bringing him into collision with Church authorities almost as often as his outspoken views on sex.

In view of all these contradictory facts, was Eric Gill merely a monstrous hypocrite? The contemporary popular image of him as 'the Monk' certainly suggests a man who wanted to have his cake and eat it too, but MacCarthy's biography makes it clear that he was even more complicated than even the complicated facts suggest.

Gill was certainly part of the tradition of scandalous, eccentric English artists. A tradition that stretches back at least William Blake and would certainly include Gill contemporaries like the painters Stanley Spencer and Eric Ravilious who were likewise possessed by a strong personal spiritual vision) and Augustus John (whose extended family included multiple mistresses). But Gill was also at odds with this tradition; vehemently rejecting the norms of the Bohemian artist, standing aside the normal rules of society.
He saw himself very much as a simple craftsman (and craftsman is certainly the way he would have put it) in the medieval tradition (the tombstone he designed for himself records his profession simply as "stone carver"). He liked to compare himself with anonymous workers who had built the great Catholic cathedrals, like his beloved Chartres. But despite his rejection of all theorising, criticism and pomposity as "art-nonsense" he certainly enjoyed his role as sage, prophet without honour, and teacher. He insisted that his apprentices stand when he entered the room and always addressed him as 'master'.

And yet, alongside his self-conscious mediavalism, Gill was also very much a modernist. Whenever he pontificated on architecture, sculpture or lettering he would always stress the function of the work. His vision of a church as merely a canopy over an altar or "a place where chaps get together to pray" is closer to Le Corbusier's view of a house as "a machine for living in" than it is to the medieval craftworker's view of building hymns to God from stone.

The tension between his instinctive modernism and his gut loathing of most things modern is part of the appeal of his work. It's a conflict that parallels the present one between the view that science has ruined the earth, and the hope that science will find a solution to the environmental crisis; a desire for a simple life among people who use computer networks to organise rapid protests against logging threats. Many of the contradictions which beset Gill have been compounded, rather than resolved, since his death.

Even Gill's view of women is more complicated than it at first appears. The most sympathetic reading of Gill's writings cannot hope to conceal that his opinions on women's sexuality and social role were deeply reactionary, even when judged by the standards of his day. Yet there seem to be traces - in both his art and his relationships - of something more human than the misogyny which is the normal mark of the 'womaniser'. Gill appears to have been sincere in his liking for women; as well as his lovers he had many close women friends. The significance of his many affairs is more ambiguous than one might suppose; he never concealed them from his wife Mary, nor did he ever contemplate abandoning her for a younger woman.

And Mary and Eric's sex life appears to have continued, to their mutual pleasure, throughout their married life. Gill would certainly never qualify as a champion of women's rights but nor is the simple label 'sexist' a complete description.

This month marks the 50th anniversary of Eric Gill's death. It is hoped that this fine biography will play a part in the re-examination of this complex, fascinating figure who despite some repulsive qualities, and perhaps because of his myriad contradictions, may still have some relevance for us.

JIM ENDERSBY is ALR's designer.

The INDEX

ALR has compiled an index of contents, beginning with issue no. 85 (Spring 1983). Articles are cross-referenced, with a brief description.

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WPG 105

Firstly, as you see, I’m not an “ex-reader” — I merely said I would not renew my sub.

Secondly, your quote permits the assumption that I condemned ALR as a whole in terms that only a vociferous rightwinger may use, presenting an absolutely one-sided estimation. In fact, my letter was a condemnation of what I saw as trendy, academic, nonsensical rubbish that swamped the few serious articles and debates of issues facing the Left. It was this side of ALR that provoked my condemnation.

In justice, I concede that since penning my letter ALR has improved substantially, exhibiting a quality more desirable in an ALR.

I make no claim that my criticism sparked this desirable change, but take the opportunity of hoping that more pruning of the apolitical padding will strengthen ALR’s appeal and purpose as a serious Left magazine.

Vic Bird,
Forster, NSW.

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**ALR : NOVEMBER 1990**
I have followed with great interest the debates in these pages about the Labor Party and its policies. It may seem naive of me, but the question I always find myself asking is not what the ALP should do about privatisation and branch structure; it is whether the ALP actually exists.

It may seem obvious that the Labor Party exists. After all, one can see its spokesmen - even the occasional spokeswoman - on the telly practically every night. There is always a face, a name, a voice, a line and a personality to impress upon us, via the screen or the radio, the presence of the party. The party has become institutionalised in the language and style of the media.

This is no guarantee that the party really exists. These are times in which more money gets spent on a television show called Miami Vice than on the police force in that city which it mythically represents. Hence one is entitled to ask whether more effort is being put into creating a simulation of the Labor Party on television than into actually building and running a political party which represents, educates and mediates its constituency, and which translates that constituency's needs, values, aspirations and symbols into political power.

The Labor Party traditionally existed in Australian cultural life as a local thing, organised territorially, neighbourhood by neighbourhood. This branch structure still exists, but it so endangered a part of our political heritage that it might as well be classified for preservation by the National Trust. The motor car and the television have made it redundant as a cultural and social institution, reducing it to a tedious organ of factional manipulation. Localities no longer function as integrated social and cultural units. Hence the branches cannot really have any but a residual effect on the cultural and social life of the country other than as an AA for compulsive rorters - political junkies anonymous.

As traditional and locality allegiances in politics break down, the failure of the ALP to develop cultural and social means of cementing people together around a social democratic policy consensus and worldview might prove disastrous. Take the slow decline of the American Democrats, who have been stomped on by a Right more willing and able to use contemporary cultural and media strategies to cement together a Right-wing hegemonic force and gain popular consent for it (as Larry Grossberg argued in the last ALR). The complacency of Australian Labor in the face of such lessons is a worrying thing.

Modernising the ALP seems to have meant spending vast amounts of money on opinion polling, public relations, media 'handlers' and huge TV advertising campaigns. All these things are necessary, but they form a purely reactive media politics which tailors itself to public opinion as it already exists and does little to actively create a social democratic culture. Labor has done nothing at all for the broad strata of culture and media workers who support it, so perhaps there isn't any goodwill out there for Labor to draw on even if it had the imagination to start drawing up a communication, education and cultural policy. Let's hope the ALP doesn't find itself in the position of British Labour of suddenly realising how important these things are - while spending a decade in opposition.

While reform of the party machine itself might be a wonderful thing, its importance for the public at large is greatly exaggerated by insiders. No amount of democratisation will make the tedious business of rorting and rounding up the numbers into a popular pursuit for the masses. Democratising the structure might make the party more fun for the avid political junkies within it and on its fringes, but for most Australians the ALP will continue to exist as the Bob and Paul show and a bunch of TV ads in election year.

Given how tedious those ads are, it's a wonder we even bother to vote the buggers back in, but is there any choice? The Tory parties ceased to exist a long time ago and are now completely simulated. The Liberals are now the shortest distance between the big companies' cheque books and their advertising agency. The Nationals have replaced Paul Hogan as the nation's premier stand-up comedy routine. One ends up voting Labor by default, casting our lot with it out of nostalgia for the days when political parties still existed.

Unless a more creative interventionism in cultural life is practised by the party and the movement, the very possibility of using the ALP as a political vehicle might disappear. Without a viable social democratic culture there is nothing to check this tendency. The rise of the green vote and the Democrats is surely evidence that many voters doubt the existence of the Labor Party. The average TV viewer is not stupid, after all. She or he knows that Miami Vice is not a realistic version of police life. And they know the ALP they see on TV is not a political party.

McKenzie Wark.
DEAR DR HARTMAN

For Delicate Delegates

Hello patients,

It's time someone started talking about the psycho-sexual plight of union officials in this country. It's not widely known but the ACTU recently asked me to open a special private clinic in Melbourne to cater exclusively for the enormous pool of unmet psycho-sexual need.

(The ACTU has engaged me on a contract basis, of course. I'm paid a huge fee as a private consultant. I'm glad to say the ACTU people didn't rattle on too much about infantile notions like awards, wages and conditions. They've become too politically mature for that.)

Of course the new clinic has been full ever since it opened. Here's a typical example of the union patient we are seeing. A lass was an union delegate in a section of a state public service - last week she was pushed to the limit.

Two of her workmates, both members of the union, came to her with a conflict. Allegedly the dispute was over shared access to a computer terminal, but everyone who worked within ten feet of them knew it was basically a personality conflict dressed up as an industrial dispute. My delegate 'negotiated', she 'conciliated', she 'arbitrated'. She was patient, reasonable and wise. Finally the delegate snapped. She screamed: "I'm going to have to use the King Solomon approach in resolving this dispute." (You may remember King Solomon once settled a dispute over a child by offering to cut the child in half. She rushed out to her car, grabbed a chainsaw, tore back into the office and sawed the disputed computer in half! She then screamed at the two astonished members: "Your dispute is over. You can boot up half each!" She's been an in-patient at the clinic ever since.

Personal conflicts are bad enough, but then you've also got to handle the genuine disputes between the chiefs and the Indians. And if you're working in any of the many white collar areas, it can get very difficult indeed, because both the chiefs and the Indians are often in the same union, and you're all trapped on a very small reservation.

When a dispute is on between a worker and a supervisor, it's the union delegate who's got to go into the chief's tee-pee with a very cross Indian. Often the Indian has got a genuine and reasonable grievance - in fact the poor bugger's got a dirty great arrow sticking out of his back. The union delegate has somehow got to get them to stop shouting at each other and smoke the peace pipe. Then the chief has to be persuaded to pull the arrow out of the Indian's back! It's a delicate job, and all the more so when the delegate wants to remain friendly with the chief, because they've worked together for years, play sport together, are best drinking buddies and are related by marriage.

I had another patient the other day who had developed an odd union variation of the condition known as meeting psychosis. This patient worked for the Public Sector Union and he had reached the stage of calling meetings at home.

Each night he insisted that the family turn the telly off and sit in a circle in the loungeroom. He then put butcher's paper up all over the walls, armed himself with a big black texta and forced the family to identify 'strategies' for amalgamating the KCU (the Kitchen Cooking Union, which has two members - his wife and his mother-in-law) with the GGU (the Garbage and Garden Union, also with two members - himself and his son). Once the KCU/GGU negotiations were on track, he then forced them to form a FYC, a Family Youth Caucus, whose job it was to find ways of luring his teenage daughter into joining the new amalgamated Principal Family Union.

It seems the daughter had been refusing to attend the nightly meetings. She was always off in her bedroom watching L.A. Law on her very own TV, bought with wages from McDonald's. Her father kept screaming at her: "Can't you see you're being exploited as non-unionised slave labour by a grasping US multinational?" To which she'd scream: "I love every minute of it!"

I had another PSU patient who was a candidate for meeting psychosis. She had been in so many tough wage negotiation meetings, for so many years, that she now negotiates automatically in every life situation. For example, last weekend she wanted her son to do the simple task of vacuuming the inside of the family car. She couldn't simply ask him to do it. Instead she began with a platform claim: "Son, clean the car inside and out." Her son, who was used to her negotiating techniques by now, was quite happy to wash the hub caps, and that was all! She said: "Son, if you want to go shopping tonight, you'll wash and vacuum, but you don't need to polish. That's my bottom line."

He adopted his fall back position: "I'll wash the outside, empty the ashtray, but nothing else. Otherwise I'll put on emptying the garbage for week!" She screamed: "Don't threaten me, I pay the food bills." He saw she was really angry, and decided to put her in a win-lose situation. "Look, Mum, you need a clean car, I need lunch. We can get something here. I'll wash the car if you do the vacuuming and make me a sandwich."

My PSU patient happily went off to get the vacuum cleaner. She'd enjoyed the negotiating battle so much she didn't even notice that she was doing the very job she had wanted her son to do.

Send your problems to Dr Hartman's secretary, Julie McCrossin, care of ALR
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Ngaire Naffine PhD, is Research Fellow, University of Adelaide and Visiting Scholar in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University.

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Anne Cranny-Francis is Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Wollongong.

Polity Press September 1990
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BAD ATTITUDE
The Processed World Anthology
Edited by Chris Carlson & Mark Leager
Bad Attitude is a collection of writings and graphics from the extraordinary Processed World magazine. Dedicated to giving voice to the lumpenproletariat—the gofers, grunts, and supernumeraries of the Information Age, it contains blistering first-hand accounts of life at the bottom of the ladder.

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Bad Attitude has sold 16,000 copies worldwide since publication in Autumn 1988. Where America described the continent as ‘a block of light, modernity in the pure state, neither dream nor reality, but a primitive hyperreality, an achieved utopia’, Cool Memories is the other side of America, the disillusioned side, presented in the form of a diary.

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And he points to the dangers of an emerging ‘market Socialism’ which could exacerbate social inequality without delivering political freedom.

Boris Kagarlitsky was elected to the Moscow Soviet in April 1990.

Verso October 1990
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