Ethnicity, class and gender in Australia
1945-1996

Michael John Morrissey
University of Wollongong
INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY
in a
MULTI-ETHNIC WORKFORCE

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This report is one of a set of research reports commissioned for the Federal Government's Policy Discussion Paper on industrial democracy and employee participation. The research was done in the period from December 1984 to April 1985; researchers have made changes to the material since then.

The reports deal with the retail, mining, metals and engineering, finance, publishing, and food and beverage industries; employer associations, management, immigrants, outworkers and subcontractors, and women in the workforce. Summaries of these research reports are being published in a separate volume, Tradition, diversity and change: the environment for industrial democracy in Australia.

Should you want more information on this or other reports, please write to

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This report presents the findings of a research project undertaken by the Centre for Multicultural Studies for the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. This study was commissioned to provide information to assist in the development of the Government Policy Discussion Paper on Industrial Democracy. Its terms of reference are set out below.

It is well documented that first-generation non-English speaking migrants are a significantly disadvantaged group in the Australian workforce. It is reasonable to assume that the problems experienced by migrant workers in employment generally will mitigate against this group of workers obtaining the maximum benefit from industrial democracy initiatives.

The purpose of the proposed research is:

To ascertain whether migrant workers are proportionately represented in and able to participate in such a way as to obtain maximum benefit from employee participation and industrial democracy practices, where these are operating.

To identify whether and what obstacles exist to the satisfactory participation of migrant workers.

To examine whether, how and through what channels these obstacles can be overcome, or at least compensated for, to ensure equal opportunity for participation and to ascertain what resources exist to promote migrant worker participation in this area.

To identify:

- The areas in which employee participation and industrial democracy initiatives are likely to become of particular relevance to migrants (e.g. occupational safety and health, introduction of new technology).
- Means of initiating action aimed at promoting employee participation and industrial democracy practices in these areas.

To provide the basis for recommendations designed to:

- Overcome or reduce obstacles to the full participation of migrant workers in employee participation and industrial democracy initiatives.
- Promote and support migrant activity in such initiatives.

It is recognised that migrants do not fit into one simple category and that problems, needs and motivations will vary
in accordance with cultural background and personal experience. Recommendations should take this into account. However it is expected that principal recommendations, for example, those in relation to language facilities, training needs, etc. will generally be applicable.

In preparing this report the researchers were faced with a particularly difficult series of problems. In the course of extensive interviews with a wide range of people concerned with matters of industrial relations, it quickly became apparent that in Australia the question of industrial democracy has been raised only rarely and in isolated cases. Fundamentally our system of industrial relations was laid down in the first quarter of this century. Moreover, those isolated incidents generally have not involved migrants in any conscious way. Migrants, in other words, might have been involved as individuals in attempts at democratisation of the workforce, but in very few cases indeed have such attempts involved a conscious effort to grapple with the special problems raised by the existence of an ethnically diverse labour force. This placed us in the difficult position of having very little to report in any positive, empirical sense. The bulk of this report is taken up with analysing the obstacles to migrant participation in any widespread democratisation of the workplace.

This leads to the second set of problems. As we demonstrate in Part 2, it is by no means a simple task to disentangle the causes of the marginalisation experienced by some groups of migrants. Very often what appears to be a specifically migrant problem is in fact a pronounced form of something also affecting very substantial sections of the anglophone workforce. We discuss this particularly in Parts Four and Six, in relation to questions of union participation and English-language training.

A third set of problems affects every study that takes migrants as its analytical frame of reference and not just studies in the area of industrial democracy. This is that migrants are an extremely diverse group. In Part 2 we lay out some of the difficulties raised by this diversity and suggest that, rather than making blanket statements about migrants as a whole, or even about more disaggregated categories such as specific birthplace groups, we would attempt to distinguish between different industrial situations and processes. A corollary is that recommendations for future action should be based on a clear understanding of which group of migrants these recommendations are aimed at and why they are so aimed. In Parts 2 and 3 we suggest also that the ambiguity about the workforce experience of migrants arises, among other causes, from a failure to take this approach. Recognition of the fact that the Australian workforce is multi-ethnic and segmented should involve an abandonment of simple dichotomies such as native born/overseas born or even English/non-English speaking background. We have attempted to heed our own strictures on this subject through the body of this report.

Any study of any aspect of the Australian labour market must take into account the process of rapid structural change affecting
Australian industry. The question then arises as to whether particular groups of migrants will be affected by this process in ways that are different from the rest of the workforce. This is a question that begs an affirmative answer; given the concentration of migrants into particular occupations and industries demonstrated in Part 2. Our conclusion is that, although no blanket statement is possible about the relative effect of structural change on migrants and non-migrants, it is absolutely certain that substantial numbers of migrants will be affected adversely by structural change and in ways very different from their anglophone counterparts. In particular, we point out that a devaluation of unskilled manual labour and likely increase in emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills is likely to affect very harshly those who have low levels of education and second-language proficiency. The trend to subcontracted outwork in declining industries such as clothing also has had a disproportionate effect on migrant women. The questions raised in terms of industrial democracy are about such matters as relative participation rates in retraining and replacement schemes and access to information in the case of the former group. In the case of the latter, they are about fundamental recognition as a component of the workforce with rights to protection, organisation and accident compensation.

The question of participation in unions is particularly germane to the question of industrial democracy, given that the unions inevitably will play a crucial role. At one level the present situation appears fairly clear: migrants of non-anglophone background do not participate proportionately in leadership positions, even in unions where they form the bulk of the membership; most unions do not keep any particular record of the birthplaces of their membership; and migrants tend to be concentrated into areas where union coverage is most thin and the ability to enforce awards, or even the existence of awards, is most problematic.

However, the questions of the causes of non-participation and of the reasons why in particular instances the level of participation may be much higher than others are not simple. The pat explanations revolving around migrant 'apathy' and anglophone unionists' prejudice do not go far enough, in that they take no account of the structure of unions in this country and the effects of that structure on workers of all ethnicities. We argue that the question of migrant participation in unions should be seen as one facet of a process of raising the level of consciousness and activity of all workers; and we suggest some avenues that might be explored.

One such avenue is the question of English-language proficiency and the means of raising it. We provide a detailed discussion of this in Part 5 and in so doing question critically some of the assumptions underlying present approaches. In particular, we argue that the present structure of the Adult Migrant Education Program should be closely examined, particularly in regard to such questions as the Commonwealth-States relationship, curriculum development and course initiation. We question also the adequacy of the development of industry classes. While welcoming any extension of access to language instruction for working-class migrants, we argue that these
classes will never represent more than a piecemeal solution; that they are questionable on pedagogic grounds; and that they will never reach the large numbers of workers most in need of them. The concept of vocational English also is examined critically in the context of the Kirby report, and we attempt in this section, as in others, to relate the question of English-language training to wider questions of continuous worker education, this being a crucial question in view of the fact that workers with the worst English are often also the worst educated in other respects, including trade skills.

In the area of industrial English in particular, changing government policy has been of great importance. Generally, the policy of the Fraser Government was to downplay the question of migrants' workforce experience, an approach typified in the Galbally report, which stated baldly that there was no particular difference in this respect between the experience of migrants, or groups of migrants and the native-born.

Since March 1983 there has been a tendency to reverse this emphasis. Not only has the Adult Migrant Education Service been expanded and many of its staff been made more permanent but there has been a greater emphasis on workplace education, although in very difficult circumstances.

This has extended outside the question of English language learning. This Government has shown a much greater interest than the previous one in the position of migrants in the unions and has made a number of ethnic liaison officer positions available under the Grant-in-Aid scheme. Supplemented by schemes approved under the Community Employment Program (CEP), such as the South Coast (NSW) Labour Council's Ethnic Liaison Project, much valuable experience has been gained although the temporary nature of these schemes, particularly those under CEP, has been a distinct drawback. We argue for a more systematic and permanent development on these valuable beginnings.

There have been important changes also at the state level. The setting-up of the various State Ethnic Affairs Commissions generally has given questions affecting migrants a much higher profile than they have previously had, and in recent years this also has been true also of workforce issues. The Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission has been particularly prominent in this area, not only producing a steady flow of research papers on workforce issues but also becoming deeply involved in setting up an innovative pilot workplace English program for State railway employees. In NSW also there has been the recent statement by the Premier committing the State Government to the principle of paid time off to attend English classes. This has been reinforced by the recent decision of the Industrial Commission of NSW to vary the Water and Sewerage Employees Union's award to include the right to paid time off for language instruction, a decision that complements a series of other recent decisions assuring workers of the right to paid study leave, particularly for the purpose of attending Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) courses. It is our argument throughout that the course of democratising the workplace will be greatly assisted by extending and giving a solid structure to these scattered beginnings.
Part 6 examines the question of occupational health, particularly in the context of the recent NSW and Victorian legislation. This is likely to be an important arena for issues of industrial democracy/worker participation, given the emphasis in the new legislation on worker-elected safety committees. Two main issues need to be examined. Firstly, it must be asked if migrants or particular migrant groups run distinct or particularly severe risks of injury or illness; and if the answer is affirmative, the causes must be sought. Secondly, it must be asked whether the new legislation will alleviate these risks and what access migrants will have to structures set up under this legislation. In this section, as in most others, we point out the inadequacy of the data available to us to make informed judgements on a number of key issues. Statistics on work-related injuries are completely inadequate for the workforce as a whole and virtually non-existent for particular sections of it.

Finally, Part 7 attempts to pull some of these threads together by reviewing current philosophical and practical approaches to industrial democracy in the context of the structural position of various sections of the migrant workforce. Our conclusion is that some objectives of employee participation, such as a certain reduction of industrial injury, may be achievable within the current systems of industrial relations. But under the present system there is an objective conflict of interest between workers and management that cannot be ignored or removed simply by harping on questions of communication. Ultimately, democracy, industrial or otherwise, is a concept that has to do with questions of relative power between groups of people or individuals. To democratise the workplace it will be necessary to do more than 'give the workers a say'; it will be necessary to ensure that they have some means of ensuring that their say is heard and has consequences in action. In the case of large sections of the migrant working class, even the first step is problematical as they have no access to the language in which the 'say' is conducted. It also will take a large increase over current levels of provision to provide that access. In relation to the second step, we would argue that the current marginalisation of these sections of the workforce demonstrates the truly fundamental nature of changes in attitude and practice that will be necessary if this country is to face the last quarter of the century and emerge as a reasonably cohesive and unified nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are based on the premiss that the best way to increase the access of migrants to industrial democratisation schemes as they emerge in the future is to concentrate on improving their access to the structures through which these schemes are most likely to be negotiated. The fundamental and absolute condition of this is a systematic effort to upgrade the language skills of migrant workers, particularly those in relatively unskilled manual occupations who are likely to be the most disadvantaged in this respect.
Although language difficulties are the most obvious symptom of marginalisation they are by no means its only cause. The well-documented facts of migrant concentration in jobs offering low pay, a poor working environment and no prospect of promotion or personal development, particularly in the case of migrant women, demand that attention be paid to wider issues. In particular it must be realised that poor English generally is associated with low levels of education in the country of origin, reinforced by a lack of opportunity to rectify this in Australia due to occupational location. One result of this, among others, is often a very low level of confidence about ability to participate in educational or other programs, a factor that makes the development of bilingual outreach facilities extremely important, particularly in the case of working class-women.

Our recommendations are listed below. The majority are aimed at achieving the more equitable migrant workplace and union participation essential for more equitable migrant participation in industrial democracy.

We recommend:

1. The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations should consult other relevant government departments to consider the following for future action, in relation to questions of adult migrant education.

   - The possibility of establishing a national co-ordinating body based on, and extending the experience of, the British National Council for Industrial Language Training, as discussed in Part Five of this report. Issues to be covered would be the possibility of such a body providing centralised facilities for staff and curriculum development and for 'marketing' courses to employers.

   - An examination of the question of incentive schemes linked to industry classes, especially in relation to small firms.

   - An examination of legislative and other strategies to prevent employment discrimination against migrant workers as the right to time off for English classes becomes more widespread.

   - The relationship between English language learning and more general worker education on such topics as occupational health etc. This would involve consideration, among much else, of the relationship between the Adult Migrant Education Service and TUTA; and

   - The prospects of instituting the right to paid time off in recognised institutions as a statutory right along the lines of the Swedish Language Act. Whatever the benefits of extending the Classes in Industry program, this always will be a partial and interim measure that will not benefit large numbers of workers most in need.
2. Major Labour councils in areas of high migrant density should be funded to employ bilingual ethnic liaison officers covering the major language groups of the area, on the lines of the Illawarra Ethnic Liaison project. The functions of these liaison officers would be as follows:

- To provide information on unions and other aspects of industrial relations by dissemination of written material, holding public meetings and seminars, and production and use of audio-visual material.
- To provide continual feedback to the major unions on the concerns of their migrant members.
- To assist in the formation of, and act as support to, migrant workers' committees in major unions.
- To assist non-English speaking migrant workers in running for elected positions within unions.
- To assist migrant workers to be fully involved in such areas as occupational safety and health committees.
- To monitor redundancy and retraining schemes so as to ensure that workers of non-English speaking background are not discriminated against either by omission or commission.
- To act as an outreach facility for TUTA (see below).

3. Short term specific-purpose assistance should be given by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations to unions with high migrant membership to assist in varying awards so that the principles of paid study leave for all workers, and of paid leave to attend English classes, either on the job or off it, be extended to all relevant awards.

4. This assistance should be conditional on unions seeking to vary awards so migrant workers are not precluded from study leave for general purposes if they opt also to take English classes.

5. It should be adopted as policy that all requests to the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, or any other Department, for assistance, for example, under the Industrial Democracy and Employee Participation Cost Subsidisation Program, in establishing employee participation and industrial democracy schemes, occupational health training etc., should be examined to see whether consideration has been given to the question of providing equal access to all workers. In the case of concerns with a large immigrant presence in the workforce or of unions with a substantial immigrant membership, assistance should be contingent on provision being made to meet the special needs of these workers.

6. Given the prevailing ambiguity about the special occupational health problems of workers of non-English speaking background described in Part 6 and the present Federal Government's
commitment to employee participation in decision making on
questions of occupational health, the National Occupational
Health and Safety Commission should be charged with examining
these issues. Two areas of immediate importance are identified
below:

- Establishing the relative injury-morbidity rates for
  occupationally equivalent groups of workers of English and
  non-English speaking background and, should significant
differences emerge, investigating the reason for such
differences.

For reasons discussed in Part 6 it is unlikely that either
the records of individual firms or official statistics
would be viable for this purpose. But an interview sample
survey could be utilised, in which the elements of the
sample set would be selected by defining an operation
within the industry under scrutiny, then selecting for
interview on a random basis equal groups of migrants and
non-migrants engaged in performing that operation.

As a minimum result, a sufficiently large set of such
operation-based samples would give some idea of relative
injury frequencies. More complex questions would involve
investigating the relative frequencies of particular types
of injury and introducing controls for such variables as
the age of workers, length of employment at the job in
question, level of education and language competence, etc.
It would be of interest also to stratify the sample by the
type of industry and the size of firm, the latter measured
in terms of variables such as capitalisation or numbers
employed.

- Setting up a mechanism whereby information on occupational
  health is translated routinely into major languages other
  than English and disseminated in easily accessible form to
  relevant workplaces. The various state Ethnic Affairs
  Commissions could assist in this regard.

7. Given the paucity of empirical evidence on the short-term
processes that might be necessary in the democratisation of a
workplace with a high proportion of workers of non-English
speaking background, pilot projects should be initiated,
possibly using funding from the Department of Employment and
Industrial Relation's Industrial Democracy and Employee
Participation Cost Subsidisation Program. It is suggested that
approaches be made to organisations that already have shown an
interest in questions of employee participation and migrant
education (e.g. Victorian Rail), and that limited-term funding
should be made available to some such body as the Victorian
Ethnic Affairs Commission to monitor the program and publicise
lessons learnt from it.

8. A feasibility study be carried out on the possibility of
extending TUTA's programs in relation to migrant workers,
particularly with a view to enabling these workers to take
advantage of the proliferating award provisions for paid study leave. Of particular concern should be:

- Extension of courses in languages other than English.
- Special courses for migrant women and the possibility of liaison with TAFE in such areas as New Opportunities for Women courses (see Part 5).
- The development of bilingual outreach facilities.
- The relation between TUTA and the Adult Migrant Education Service in curriculum development.

9. The degree of participation of migrants in retraining schemes should be a matter of concern, as should the lack of available hard evidence on this subject. It is proposed that the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations institute an inquiry on this subject, in which a number of particular situations are studied to ascertain the experience of particular migrant groups, such as women, new arrivals, middle-aged workers and young people. If low participation is found, it should be a priority to identify the cause and to develop appropriate affirmative action strategies.
We noted in Part 1 that our brief contained a number of areas of obscurity, some of which are barely susceptible to adequate clarification within the confines of this paper. However, some attempt at such clarification must be made, since one of our central arguments is that inadequate specification of the precise content of some of the terms in which the experience of migrants is discussed is a direct cause of many deficiencies in analysis and policy formulation. As an example of this we point to the term 'migrant'.

Many people who write on such matters display an awareness that, as a category of social analysis, the term 'migrant' is deficient in the sense that the variety of experiences it encompasses is almost as great as those it excludes. Where such awareness is lacking, as in the case of writers who produce comparisons of, for example, earnings of Australian-bome and overseas-born workers, there is a certain implied circularity in method. Generally, such studies find very little difference between the social experience of these two categories of people, which is unsurprising given the heterogeneity of both categories.

Even where an attempt is made to disaggregate the term 'migrant', the result may not be much more informative. For example, the level to which the term is disaggregated may be quite arbitrary or it may vary in the course of a given analysis. In Part Three we criticise a number of articles for either or both of these faults.

It is true also that the form of disaggregation is important, so a majority of writers disaggregate along country-of-birth criteria. Most commonly, the distinction is made between migrants who are native English speakers and those who are not: frequently categories such as 'Southern European' are used in contrast to 'Northern European' and so on. These country of birth analyses are not without merit, since they have yielded some important insights. On the other hand they may be problematic for reasons which are listed below:

Country of birth versus ethnicity

It would be unproductive to go into the complexities of ethnicity theory, but it must be pointed out that the country of birth may not necessarily be the unique or even the dominant determinant of a person's ethnicity. To give an heuristic example germane to the topic of industrial democracy, let us propose that under certain circumstances the experience of growing up in a non-Anglophone family produces educational and hence labour markets disadvantage, even for people born in Australia. It is then possible to argue that an analysis based on even totally accurate unemployment figures categorised by country of origin would understate the unemployment effect of 'the migration process' or of 'non-Anglophone background'. We argue below, in fact, that the use of country-of-birth statistics causes the statistical disappearance of a number of problems affecting migrant families.
Ethnicity and gender

The labour market experience of non-Anglophone women is not the same as that of non-Anglophone men nor of Anglophone women, as most analysts would recognise. On the other hand, little attention has been paid to the experience of migrant women in relation to the labour market, and most extant material assumes a sort of additive model in which disadvantage associated with gender can be distinguished from that associated with ethnicity. In reality, migrant women make up a distinct labour market segment, not in the sense that the majority of migrant women are in this segment but in the sense that the largest group of people in this segment are migrant women.

Period of residence

The more recently arrived migrant has almost always been the more disadvantaged and the importance of this factor has increased over the past ten years of deteriorating labour markets. While this may be reflected accurately in country-of-birth statistics for some ethnic groups it may not be for others. As an example, we may compare South-east Asian and Polish migrants. The vast majority of the former have arrived here within the past eight years and in that sense their arrival experience has been fairly uniform: that of attempting to negotiate a more or less depressed economy. The case of Poles is very different in that there have been, in a sense, two Polish immigrations, that of the immediate post-war period and that of the early 1980s. An unemployment figure based on Poland as country of birth would therefore tend to conflate the problems facing two quite distinct groups of people -- an ageing, generally unskilled and long-established group and a generally young, well-educated, newly-arrived group.

In addition to analytical difficulties of this sort, there is the further problem that any general statement about the process of integration over time must be qualified sharply by considerations relating to the social, geographical and workplace location of individual migrants. A stark example of this is the very low degree of correlation between English language ability and length of residence in Australia for some groups of migrants. Foremost among these are those who work in unskilled jobs in large industrial plants, living in areas of very heavy migrant concentration.

Social class

The relation between ethnicity and social class in general is full of the sort of analytical difficulties illustrated by the preceding example, paralleling the complex interrelations of ethnicity and gender. Here also it is unsatisfactory to attempt a sort of partial differentiation in which class is held constant and the ethnic component is studied in isolation, although this is, in fact, a commonly adopted approach. This is mainly because of the degree of segmentation that has developed in the workforce, a segmentation that has ensured that for many people class relations are experienced primarily as ethnic relations.
This is a rather abstract formulation but it has important policy repercussions. Not least of these is the question of whether migrants benefit greatly from programs that focus on redress of disadvantage presumed to be contingent on their ethnicity. It can be argued, for example, that targeted employment programs that have quotas for people of non English-speaking background simply reshuffle the unemployed along an ethnic dimension. The basis of this is the contention that such migrants are not unemployed because they are migrants but because a variety of secular and cyclical forces have led to an abrupt contraction of the number of jobs in areas where migrant employment is concentrated. A disturbing corollary of this argument is that migrants may have been the worst affected victims of such changes but they are by no means the only ones.

The variety of the migrant experience is brought out in Tables 1 to 7. These demonstrate quite clearly that particular groups of migrants, particularly Southern and Eastern Europeans are concentrated heavily, by comparison with the population as a whole, in manual occupations within the manufacturing and construction sectors; that most non-anglophone groups have substantially higher employment rates than the workforce as a whole; and that there is a considerable concentration in labour-intensive areas most likely to be affected by technological change. But overall, the first and strongest impression is one of diversity. The migrant experience varies by ethnicity, gender, date of arrival, age and location. Policy planning based on the category 'migrant' will have very little that is firm to work on and our emphasis on the need to disaggregate, to study specific groups and situations, is reinforced.
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(a) See the definition of the labour force participation rate in the explanatory notes.
Table 2. Female labour force by birthplace, March 1985

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<th>Participation rate (a)</th>
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</table>

(a) See the definition of the labour force participation rate in the explanatory notes.
Table 3. Employment concentration by industry and place of birth: females (1981)

'Please see print copy for image'
Table 4. Employment concentration by industry and place of birth: males (1981)

'Please see print copy for image'
Table 5. Labour intensity of manufacturing industry and concentration of immigrant employment

'Please see print copy for image'
Table 6. Foreign-born labour force: place of birth and date of arrival in Australia (March 1985)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>America</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>British Isles</th>
<th>E'rope</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Persons</th>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>Males</td>
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<td>Females</td>
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<td>51.7</td>
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<td>80.4</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>42.4</td>
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</table>

(a) See the definition of the labour force participation rate in the explanatory notes.
Table 7. The unemployed: birthplace by age (March 1985)

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<th>Born in Australia</th>
<th>Looking for full-time work</th>
<th>Looking for part-time work</th>
<th>Aged 15 to 19</th>
<th>Aged 20 and over</th>
<th>Aged 55 and over</th>
<th>Born outside Australia</th>
<th>Looking for full-time work</th>
<th>Looking for part-time work</th>
<th>Aged 15 to 19</th>
<th>Aged 20 and over</th>
<th>Aged 55 and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed (1000)</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Persons</td>
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<td>95.5</td>
<td>237.6</td>
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<td>30.1</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>231.6</td>
<td>171.3</td>
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<td>104.9</td>
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</table>

Note: The table shows the unemployment rate by birthplace and age group in March 1985.
In reviewing the available material it is necessary to ask the following questions:

1. To what extent does this material suggest that the labour force experience of migrants or of significant groups of migrants has differed from that of the native-born?

2. If such differences are discernible, to what extent are they explicable in terms of analyses presented in current literature?

In approaching these questions, a number of important methodological points must be borne in mind, particularly relating to the statistics on which most of the literature is based. The first of these has already been alluded to the question of using country-of-birth statistics. To use these figures for our present purposes is to imply that what Jean Martin termed the 'migrant experience' (J. Martin 1978) applied only to those born abroad. The vast bulk of literature on the education and socialisation of Australian-born children of migrants assumes that growing up with parents whose first language is not English is a factor that sharply distinguishes the experience of such children from others born in Australia. In general, a category such as 'non-English-speaking background' is regarded as more relevant than country of birth, particularly in relation to performance in the education system (Meade 1984).

Viewed in this way, country-of-birth statistics grossly understate unemployment rates for migrant youth and in so doing help to divert attention away from an important area, assisting to reduce public awareness of the differences between the employment experience of those of non-English and English-speaking background. There also have been further consequences. Given the heavy historical concentration of labour market programs on youth, a reduced awareness of migrant youth unemployment meant that migrants' needs were not seriously considered. There are, of course, many other reasons for this.

As an indication of what might be involved in this, we might envisage a demographic correction in which the unemployed Australian-born youth of non-Anglophone families are transferred from the 'born in Australia' totals to appropriate ethnic categories. Not only would this increase by a considerable proportion the overall totals for migrant youth unemployment, but also it would by a more than equivalent amount increase the gap between rates for those from Anglophone background and those from non-Anglophone background. This would occur because youth unemployment rates are higher than those of other age groups. It is beyond the scope of this paper to pursue this, since a complicated series of demographic calculations would be required. However, some idea of what might be involved can be judged from the following crude example. For the Australian population as a whole the total number of people in the 15-19 years age group is about 27 per cent...
of that in the 20 to 44 age group. For the 'born in Italy' category the equivalent percentage is less than 7 per cent. Thus correcting the 'Italian' category of 15 to 19 year-olds on the basis of the all-Australian percentage would more than quadruple the total number of 15 to 19 year-olds who are in this sense 'Italian'. This would be a total increase of more than 24,000. (It is stressed that this example is for heuristic purposes only.)

Another consideration in relation to these statistics is that they may understate migrant unemployment in a number of other ways, particularly such as suggested by Stricker and Sheehan (1981, Ch. 8) who have argued that migrants -- and particularly migrant women -- have formed a disproportionate number of the 'hidden' unemployed who have withdrawn from the labour force in numbers that are an increasing function of the overall unemployment rate.

In relation to our second major question, that of the reasons for differences in migrant/non-migrant employment experience, we encounter a complex set of questions. Schematically we might list the following reasons that might explain the relatively poor showing of migrants:

   a) In a tightening labour market, employers are freer to indulge prejudicial attitudes in selecting workers.

   b) Migrants are relatively deficient in educational qualifications and work skills, disadvantaging them in the eyes of employers who can afford to be more selective than was previously the case.

   c) Technological change is having the effect of devaluing the work skills of migrants at a faster than average rate.

   d) The occupational distribution of migrants makes them more vulnerable than others to the effect of structural and cyclical change.

   e) The industrial distribution of migrants has a similar effect as in d).

The first of these propositions is difficult to dismiss out of hand, but equally difficult to justify in terms of hard evidence. It is undeniable that extremely prejudicial attitudes towards some ethnic groups are widespread and by no means confined to socio-economic groups who have no effect on hiring and firing practice (e.g. Jakubowicz and Mitchell 1982; Morrissey 1984). It is also argued by some writers that in this country the process of labour market segmentation has gone so far as to amount to closure on ethnic lines.

The second line of reasoning, relating to work skills, is one that will be discussed in a separate section of this report, since the whole question of language training, from which the skills issue is inseparable, is so large and complex. However, at a very crude level, there is no great difference in published figures on possession of trade qualifications between non-English-speaking migrants and the Australian-born. Indeed, some migrant groups had a
considerably higher propensity to possess trade qualifications than the Australian-born; and in any case, inter-ethnic differences were dwarfed by the inter-gender difference for any ethnicity. Once again, it is difficult to interpret this data in terms of real life experience. The possession of a trade qualification does not necessarily mean that labour market prospects are improved if that qualification is not recognised in Australia. As we suggest in Part Four, the qualification, even if recognised here, will mean little if unsupported by a number of other skills, most notably literacy in English.

In relation to technological change, industrial location and occupational location, we also approach a very complex set of questions. As we have demonstrated above, there is certainly a pronounced degree of ethnic segmentation in the labour force, and this provides the basis for supposing that a given change of industrial practice could have unequal effects on migrants and non-migrants. However, the extent of such effects and their causes are problematical in terms of current available literature, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, there is the fact that in general it is difficult to disentangle the effects on the labour market of technological innovation and that of other structural forces, such as changes in relative international competitiveness, since these effects are often felt at the same time. The situation in the steel industry demonstrates this very well, with major steelmakers taking advantage of a period of depression to shed labour, alter production levels and introduce labour-replacing technology.

Secondly, and more importantly in terms of planning labour market programs, there is the fact that migrant concentration in particular industries does not mean that they are necessarily more vulnerable to labour-replacing innovation. As Kriegler and Sloan (1984) point out, migrants are substantially under-represented in the workforce of some industries where extensive labour replacement is to be expected, such as wholesale and retail trading, communication, insurance and agriculture. Thus the relative inter-ethnic effect of technological change depends on the relative rates and levels of job losses in those industries, such as the above, where migrants are under-represented and in those where they are over-represented, such as basic metal products, vehicle manufacture, whitegoods and construction.

Thirdly, prediction is complicated by the fact that migrants may be concentrated into occupations that are more under threat than those of non-migrants. This may be either in the sense that these occupations are more likely to disappear or in the sense that experience in such occupations may be an inappropriate basis for taking advantage of opportunities arising from innovation. As Kriegler and Sloan put it, in summarising one finding of their investigation of technological change in the whitegoods, vehicle and construction industries:

... insignificant numbers of managerial or professional and technical staff were likely to resign, retire early or be
retrenched . . . clerical and secretarial workers were overwhelmingly the most likely to be retrained to use the new technology.

Fourthly, existing literature has been deficient in that it has not attacked the possibility that structural change may have an unequal effect on jobs from region to region. Thus it is obvious that in areas like the Illawarra there are massive multiplier effects outside the steel industry resulting from structural change within it. To the extent that these multiplier effects are regionalised there will be an ethnic dimension to them, simply because of the abnormally high proportion of the Illawarra's population originating in non-English-speaking countries.

Fifthly, existing literature, in particular that which attempts to measure the employment position of migrants directly, is of limited value because the bulk of it focuses on the 1970s and almost all of it utilises data from 1981 or before. This is no more than one might expect, but it does mean that little can be said with certainty about any qualitative changes in the pattern of employment that might have been associated with the rapid increase in unemployment over the past two years. As an example of such a change, we suggest that lack of English-language ability becomes an increasing liability as unemployment rates rise. The overall figures for some of the most recent arrivals bear this out. As Harrison (1983, p.50) states:

One surprise the data have yielded is the extent of the differences in both unemployment levels and the occupational and industrial composition of the employed between recent migrants from English-speaking countries and those from non-English-speaking countries. Although one may well expect unemployment to be higher for those from non-English-speaking countries . . . the extent of extra unemployment is staggering. For males who have been in Australia one or two years, unemployment among those from non-English-speaking countries was 32.2 per cent compared with 10.1 per cent for those from English-speaking countries . . .

What must be stressed here is that some migrant groups are now facing unemployment rates that, if generalised to the population as a whole, would leave us with a situation similar to the early 1930s. Newly arrived migrants always have been the most heavily disadvantaged and, as Harrison's own figures show, there is still some tendency for new migrants to move over time toward the norm. However, the possibility must be taken into account that the obstacles faced by new arrivals are now so much greater than previously that one can no longer expect the integrative processes of the 1970s and earlier to work, even to the limited extent they ever did. This should lead us to treat the results of 1970s-based research with some considerable caution when using it to interpret the present situation. Moreover, this caution should be maintained irrespective of one's conclusions about the validity of results from these studies relative to the 1970s.
The literature in question tends to fall at two extremes, represented on the one hand by Strieker and Sheehan (1981, Ch. 8), who argue for a position of acute and worsening labour market disadvantage for migrants relative to the Australian-born and, on the other hand, a group of analysts who argue that labour force experience, relative to unemployment, has shown little variation across ethnic lines (Miller 1982; Bonnell and Dixon 1982 and 1983; Cook and Dixon 1982).

In outlining this literature it is important to realise that some of the questions raised in Part 2 of this paper are at the heart of the unresolved contradictions posed by this debate. In particular, the looseness of specification about what particular social process is under examination resulting from vagueness about which migrants are the subject of discussion and a certain tendency to vagueness about timescales. It is also interesting to note that the debate is entirely posed in terms of relative disadvantage as exemplified by relative unemployment rates, as was the authors' stated intention. Other forms of disadvantage such as the likely duration of unemployment for groups of workers with radically different main-language ability, geographical concentration etc. are not mentioned.

Strieker and Sheehan's argument is that from 1974 to 1979 'a major shift took place in the occupational structure of the employed workforce in Australia and this created a dismal situation for migrants' (1981, p.167). The reason for this was the concentration of non-Anglophone migrants in contracting occupations and of Anglophones in expanding ones. This was manifested in two ways: the fact that Australia 1979 unemployment rates by age group were in each case higher for those born outside Australia than for those born here (1981, p.158); and (they argued) 'in a major reversal in migrant participation rates' (1981, p.169) reflecting a withdrawal of migrants from the labour force and into the ranks of the hidden unemployment.

This argument was contested in a number of articles, most notably Bonnell and Dixon (1982) who used an econometric model to assess the effects described by Strieker and Sheehan and came to the conclusion that

Apart from the statistics for 15-19 year olds, we found little evidence suggesting a deterioration in the labour market position of migrants relative to non-migrants, (1982, p.19).

There have been a number of criticisms of this paper on technical grounds but these seem less relevant to evaluating the paper than consideration of the categories and timescales within which it operates. Thus the only section of the paper that deals with the period after 1976 is that which examines changes in participation rates. Here the comparison is of Australian versus non-Australian born. Given that migrants in this sense includes British and other Anglophone migrants, whose labour market performance has largely paralleled that of the Australian-born, it is unsurprising to find that the results do not bear out the Strieker-Sheehan hypothesis since this related to non-Anglophones specifically and to Southern Europeans in particular.
The other part of the Bonnell-Dixon paper deals with a direct evaluation of the effects of structural change on employment by ethnicity. Again, it is difficult to evaluate the results. Apart from the fact that Bonnell and Dixon's results qualitatively support the idea that migrants had suffered relatively badly from the structural change, there has to be a great deal of doubt about accepting results from the period 1971 to 76 as a test of the Stricker-Sheehan findings, which referred to the period 1974 to 79. Thus in relation to the first point, Bonnell and Dixon did find that, for example, 5.96 per cent of Yugoslavs had been displaced by structural change in five years. Their conclusion that this is not spectacular should be judged by asking what adjective one would apply to such a change if it took place across all ethnic groups, in particular since their own figures demonstrated substantial offsets to job losses in blue-collar occupations by increases in white-collar occupations for Anglophones. The second part is probably the more serious one however. In 1976 the labour market position of non-Anglophone migrants in the groups investigated by Bonnell and Dixon (Italian, Greek, Yugoslav) had only begun the slide it later took. In addition, the ethnic composition of the workforce has changed considerably since 1976. A much higher proportion now falls into groups not separately treated in these papers due to demographic changes such as the ageing of the longer-established groups such as Italians, and also due to high levels of immigration in the past eight years of ethnic groups such as the Indo-Chinese, whose unemployment rates are far in excess of those of native Anglophones.

The Bonnell and Dixon paper has been dwelt upon at length because it exemplifies some of the difficulties and contradictions inherent in talking about the labour market position of migrants, and also because it brings into focus the absurdity of making judgments about the present position on the basis of evidence that is almost a decade out of date. Certainly, some of the more recent studies bear out the proposition that the labour market for non-Anglophone migrants is deteriorating absolutely and relatively.

As an example of this we quote some recent work that, although relating only to Victoria, points quite clearly to the conclusion that the period of arrival may be almost as important a variable as the length of residence in Australia in terms of the individual migrant's labour market experience. This is largely because the nature of the Australian economy has been changing continuously over the past 40 years. Migrants arriving in different phases of post-war development did not encounter identical opportunities or problems.

To the extent that opportunities have declined and problems increased, work based on time series data becomes suspect; for example, we cannot extrapolate the occupational mobility pattern of the 1950s migrant cohort to the 1980s cohort if the latter faces radically different barriers to mobility. Storer's (1984) conclusions are quoted in full to illustrate this point.

Analysis of the detailed Census data provided for both Australia and Victoria indicated that:
Migrants of non-English-speaking background are most likely to enter the workforce, that is, they have higher participation rates than Australian-born. At the same time they have higher unemployment rates, with some groups having extremely high rates.

With a number of non-English-speaking background male groups the proportion of employer and self-employed is higher than for Australian-born. However, since 1947 they have increasingly moved from being either employer/self-employed to become employees.

Women from non-English-speaking background are more likely to be employers/self-employed than Australian-born.

Both males and females of non-English-speaking background are more likely to work as tradesmen, production workers or labourers and are under-represented in the professional and technical occupations. Between 1976 and 1981 there has been a growth in the professional occupations but a decline in the blue-collar jobs.

Migrant workers are employed disproportionately in manufacturing and construction industries. Indeed the data show that Melbourne industry is highly segmented according to birthplace.

Labour mobility:

Data provided in the 1981, 1976 and 1971 Census enabled comparisons to be made of occupation status and industry of employment of migrants of different birthplace according to both the period of arrival in Australia and the length of residence in Australia.

Data from the 1981 Census indicated that for all groups working in production jobs, recent arrivals from non-English-speaking countries are most likely to work in production jobs (90 per cent); migrants from non-English-speaking countries arriving in the 1950s have less than 50 per cent employed in production jobs.

Each successive 'cohort' or 'wave' of migrants from non-English-speaking background is more likely than its predecessor to have increasing proportions of its males enter production jobs. For example, of the Southern Europeans who entered Australia in the 1950s some 63 per cent were employed in production jobs in 1971 (after 16-21 years residence), compared to Southern Europeans who entered Australia in the late 1960s with more than 70 per cent employed as production workers in 1981 (after 16-21 years of residence). Further, the data shows that whereas 62 per cent of Southern European males arriving in Australia in the 1950s entered production jobs, by the late 1960s some 90 per cent of Southern European males arriving at that time entered production jobs. These data would seem
to indicate that both length of residence and period of arrival influence the opportunities and extent of obtaining occupation mobility.
It is quite obvious, given their central role in the Australian system of industrial relations, that unions will be the key participants in most of the processes with which this report is concerned. In the view of a great many people, not all of them unionists, unions already are the major vehicle of industrial democracy; a view reinforced by the increasing tendency of some unions to widen their focus of concern from traditional union activities to other areas, most notably occupational health and most significantly in the context of this paper, worker education. This being so, it is of fundamental importance that migrants participate fully in the activities of the unions if their various special needs are to be recognised and catered for.

Four main questions must be answered:

1. What is the extent of general migrant participation in unions at the level of membership?
2. What is the extent of participation at the level of activism (shop steward, paid official, elected official, etc.)?
3. What variations are there in participation at these two levels with respect to specific ethnicity, gender, particular industrial location, etc.
4. What signs of change can be detected?

The first of these questions is the easiest to answer. In terms of workforce shares, migrants generally have a higher rate of union membership than the Australian-born. The third of the above questions can also be answered, in part, by stating that:

1. There is considerable variation in the propensity to be unionised between different birthplace groups.
2. Women generally are less unionised than men.
3. Migrants from non-English speaking countries generally have much higher rates of unionisation than either migrants from English-speaking countries or the Australian-born.
4. This is particularly pronounced in the case of migrants from Southern Europe.
5. Female migrants from non-English speaking countries not only have higher rates of unionisation than any category of first language English-speaking women workers, including those born in Australia but also higher rates than male Anglophone workers.

These points may be summarised in tabular form from ABS material presented by the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission (1983).
### Table 8. Union membership: sex by birthplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Males ('000)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Females ('000)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Ratio of females to males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1186.9</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>616.7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK or Ireland</td>
<td>166.9</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada, New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA or Sth Africa</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>172.4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-speaking countries</td>
<td>322.7</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>146.0</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total overseas born</td>
<td>520.1</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>244.0</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1706.9</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>860.7</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 9. Union members by birthplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>November 1976(1) ('000)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>March to May 1982(1) ('000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1833.7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1803.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK or Ireland</td>
<td>248.1</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>248.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada, New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA or Sth Africa</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>208.7</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>247.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-speaking countries (2)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>295.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non English-speaking countries</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>468.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2512.7</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2567.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- = Not available
1 Proportion of all employees from the same birthplace
2 UK, Ireland, Canada, USA, New Zealand, South Africa
As always, there are a number of caveats about these tables and a few explanation difficulties. Firstly, and most obviously, they relate only to people defined as in employment. This is a particularly important point in relation to the figures for women, for three reasons.

Labour force participation rates for women not only are much lower than those for men but also are widely thought to be inversely correlated with real unemployment rates (Strieker and Sheehan 1981, Ch. 8). We feel that the question of industrial democracy is intimately bound up with the question of ability to enter the workforce, or stay in it, once entered.

These figures do not include the outwork sector. Nor could they, since nobody knows with any real certainty how many outworkers there are. But it is widely believed that this sector is large, growing, predominantly female and disproportionately migrant.

The birthplace category 'Other' includes the bulk of recently-arrived migrants but also large numbers of more well-established people. It is impossible, therefore, to establish the relative rate of unionisation for recently-arrived migrants even by crude extrapolations from birthplace groupings.

At the level of explanation the inter-ethnic and inter-gender variations in unionisation rates are susceptible to two lines of argument: one based in vaguely cultural terms, the other in structural terms. The first of these would propose that particular groups of people (specific ethnicities, men versus women) are more well-disposed to unions than others for a variety of reasons related to historical factors, culture and socialisation. The second places more emphasis on the ethnic and gender segmentation of the workforce. Probably there is some truth in both of these arguments but the latter has the advantage of the hard evidence of occupational and industrial concentration of migrants where the extent of unionisation and particularly of closed-shop agreements is greatest. However, the culture and sex arguments would have difficulty coping, for example, with the questions of why British migrants, coming from a country with a long and embedded tradition of unionism, have a lower rate of unionisation that Southern Europeans; why Yugoslav women have the same unionisation rate as Yugoslav men and why, at 75 per cent, this is the highest recorded for any statistical category.

This point is of importance when we approach the question of participation at the level of activism, since it is notorious that high rates of migrant membership of unions are not reflected in an equivalent or even substantial migrant presence in paid or elected positions in the union structure. For example, Hearn (1976) shows that in 1975, only twelve out of eighty Victorian unions employed any non-Anglophone migrants as full-time officials and that these made up only 3 per cent of such officials despite the fact that migrants thus defined made up more than 80 per cent of the membership of some unions.
For reasons discussed below there is evidence of change for the better in this respect in the past decade and particularly in the past five years. However, the current situation is far from ideal. Thus, although the timing of this project did not permit a full survey, a straw poll of unions with high rates of migrant density in NSW showed that virtually none of them had any clear idea of either the number or birthplaces of migrant membership; and in no case did the presence of migrants in executive positions reflect their membership of the union.

The following are some examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Estimated NES membership</th>
<th>Estimated NES leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W &amp; SEU</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2 officials (out of 33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT &amp; MOEA</td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>3 executive members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot Trades</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWIU</td>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>Approx 25 per cent of executive and approx 25 per cent of paid officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIA</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>approx 20 per cent of executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMWU</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>No executive members, 'some' officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWU</td>
<td>No estimate possible</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This data is taken from interviews with officials from the unions in question.

There are two competing explanations for this situation; one commonly heard from migrants activists in the unions and the other from anglo-Australian officials. The former is that the unions are dominated by anglo-Australians who are determined to keep the status quo; the latter is that, by and large migrants are apathetic or even hostile to unions.

Neither of these arguments is without some sort of foundation, but in both cases the foundations are shaky. Not only do they fly in the face of a great deal of evidence but they are also inadequate in that neither seeks for an explanation of the state of affairs it purports to describe.

It may well be that substantial groups of migrant workers are apathetic in the sense described; yet it cannot be gainsaid that
this is also true of large numbers of Australian-born workers, as low rates of participation in unions elections, poor attendance at branch meetings and so on have often demonstrated. There are also historical instances of migrant workers demonstrating a degree of militancy and organisational ability, which has come as a complete and in some cases unwelcome surprise to the anglo-Australian leadership of the unions involved. These cases may be isolated but they serve as a reminder that if some groups are apathetic or hostile, this should be explained not in terms simply of their being migrants or of a particular ethnicity or being women but in terms of their structural marginalisation within the industrial relations system. Not infrequently, apathy is the product of a conviction of total inability to change one's circumstances.

The case of Ford Broadmeadows is well known but still deserves some consideration in this respect. As described by Lever Tracy (1984), this involved the development over the 1970s of a situation where the most of the relevant union's members (the VBEF) were non-Anglophones, whereas out of ten paid officials, nine were Australian or British-born. In addition, the negotiation of closed-shop and check-off agreements with the company in the early 1970s . . . 'allow(ed) the union structure to survive insulated from its members' (Lever-Tracy p. 332). In this context, and often despite active opposition from union officials, migrant workers during the 1970s built a strong shop steward movement characterised by the development of constant consultation with and participation by the majority of workers 'on the line'. Not only did this organisation prove extremely durable during a series of disputes in the late 1970s and in 1981 but also proved remarkably effective in breaking down racism and ethnic fragmentation. Thus, in relation to the prolonged 1981 strike:

... it is true that most of the 300-odd Vietnamese were seen as the weakest link in the chain, but this was not allowed to crystallise into group hostility, and indeed most shop stewards showed a sophisticated understanding and an absence of racialism (which contrasted sharply with the views I heard in the union office). They're like the Turks in 1973, many of them wanted to stay on strike longer but they had no savings, no money to pay the rent or feed the children (Lever-Tracy 1984, p. 380).

In relation to sex-based explanations of docility and apathy, there are also examples that can be put forward to demonstrate that, at the very least, this explanation has far from universal validity. A good example is the strike by, in the main, migrant women workers in the clothing industry in August, 1983. The view of the union (Clothing and Allied Trades) previously had been that the membership, being migrant and female, was 'weak' and incapable of organisation. But after the strike the State secretary, with remarkable frankness, said:

I don't think the union has done its job properly. We haven't been looking after the membership to the extent we should. We have always thought our membership was too weak to take action. . . . the Victorian clothing workers strike, which officials said many members wanted to extend beyond 48 hours, will be

These examples are not put forward to demonstrate the intrinsic value of militancy but to suggest that if it exists, its existence should not simply be accepted but an explanation should be sought in structural terms. Significantly, the official quoted above went on to say 'that the militancy demonstrated in August 1983 was a relatively new phenomenon' and explained its emergence as follows:

... Since Arthur Calwell introduced migration to Australia... our employers were always down at the wharves as migrants got off the boats. They only stayed in the clothing industry for a short time because it is such a bastard of an industry. But the employers didn't worry. They'd just go down to the wharves again. But this... has changed over the last ten years as with the windback in immigration [there] apparently has developed a greater workforce stability in the clothing industry with more industrially committed employees (Australian Financial Review, 9 August 1983).

The alternative view of lack of migrant participation at the activist level -- racist exclusion by an entrenched group of anglo-Australians -- can well be argued for by way of example. Racism is endemic in Australian society and as a group, union officials are no more immune to it than academics or judges. On the other hand, as Storer and Matheson (1983) point out:

Running through the agenda [of the ACTU]... has been a continuing concern for what was happening to migrant workers after they arrived in Australia. Migrants should be paid award rates (Building Workers Union, 1949), unions should have the opportunity of instruction classes for migrants (Australian Tramways and Motorbus Employees Association, 1951), migrants should not be denied citizenship because of their political or union activities (Australian Railways Union, 1963), migrants should not be condemned to long periods in hostels (Sheet and Metal Workers' Union, 1967), information should be available in different languages (Federated Clerks' Union) and the affirmation of the principle of no discrimination in employment on the grounds of sex, age, race or creed (Trades and Labour Council, Queensland, 1969).

All of this should be taken within the context of the vastly increased level of concern over migrant issues in the 1970s and 1980s and of the general socio-political atmosphere of the 1950s and 1960s. Storer and Matheson cite one tragi-comic incident when the Immigration Department opposed a union suggestion for the dissemination of multilingual information on unions on the grounds that this would reduce the incentive to learn English and that in any case it would be impossible in any other language 'to express... clear and concise meanings of purely Australian subjects'.

There is more complexity in the relationship between migrant workers and union structures than is often realised and quite contradictory perceptions of this relationship are widely spread. It is also the
case that after decades of effort by migrant and non-migrant union activists, migrant workers remain to a degree marginalised in the union movement, some groups of them severely so.

We suggest that a major reason for this is that, even at its most progressive and sympathetic, the prevailing view of those in a position to define this relationship is one that locates the reasons for migrants' marginalisation in terms related entirely to language and culture without paying attention to the structural factors to which we refer throughout this report. In saying this we do not play down the importance of language in particular. It has been and remains the primary nexus through which the marginalisation of migrant workers is experienced. Rather we would argue that adequate strategies for attacking linguistic marginalisation cannot be developed without full reference to these structural factors.

To illustrate the set of attitudes we would criticise in this way, we will cite a survey of perceptions of unions on provision of services to migrants conducted by the ACTU's Social Welfare Research Unit (Social Welfare Research Unit 1979).

This survey covered 26 unions with a total membership of 824,212. The first finding of the survey, bearing out a point made earlier, was that none of these unions had precise knowledge of the numbers, still less the ethnic breakdown of their non-Anglophone membership, generally stating that they did not have the resources to find out. Estimates ranged from 3 per cent to 6 per cent but 'in every case, comments attached to responses suggested these were minimum estimates' (Social Welfare Research Unit 1979, p. 3).

However, more to the present point was the range of problems the respondents saw migrant workers as encountering.

Eight unions, covering 200,000 mainly professional and semi-professional workers, saw migrants as having no problems at all, one of them commenting that '... (we) have a considerable number of members who have come to Australia from various overseas countries and we cannot recall one problem' (Social Welfare Research Unit 1979, p. 1).

(To the extent that this comment represents reality, it is a good reflection of the diversity of the migrant experience to which we have alluded earlier.)

Of the remaining eighteen unions, some or all stressed one or more of the following as necessary.

- The provision of trained interpreters.
- Dissemination of multilingual information.
- 'In-plant' English courses.
- Occupational safety training.
- Counselling on social, educational, domestic and economic problems.
Increased cultural awareness on the part of union officials, possibly assisted by the provision of cultural sensitisation programs.

There is no way of denying the reasonableness of this list. What is more relevant is where it stops. None of these make reference to the actual participation of migrants in the union structure. They are concerned exclusively with improvement of communication between the union official and the rank-and-file non-Anglophone worker. It is precisely the sort of list that might be generated by a hard-pressed union organiser in a situation where the union had not even the resources to find out precisely how many non-Anglophone members it had and where they came from.

This tendency to lock migrant issues into the 'areas of communication and cultural dissonance can be illustrated also by reference to a kit used by the AMWU, a union with an estimated 40 per cent migrant membership and a record of awareness of migrant issues probably better than most. This is entitled the 'Organisers' and Shop Stewards' Kit on Industrial Democracy and Saving Jobs' and it contains eighteen items relating to such matters as the rights of shop stewards, negotiating guidelines on new technology, subcontracting, etc. In this kit there are barely six references to migrant workers, virtually all of them about questions of communication and provision of multilingual information. There is no direct attack on the special vulnerability of unskilled migrant workers to technological change. As a specific example the negotiating agreement on technological change for use in relation to the Victorian Railways, drawn up jointly with another union of high migrant membership, the ARU, states:

Affected employees will be retrained at the Authority's expense when the . . . (consultative) committee decides that retraining is necessary as a result of the introduction of new technology.

While admitting the existence of 'special training needs', identification of these needs is to be 'formulated after further investigation'. It is germane to note also that no attention is given to the ethnic diversity of the two unions' membership in question of constructing the consultive committee, which is to be the main body monitoring the process of technological change.

In making these points, it is not our intention to pillory the AMWU. It is scarcely surprising that a union faced with the manifold industrial problems of the early 1980s has not made a sustained attack on such issues as these, particularly when they have only rarely been raised, either inside the union movement or outside it. The basic problem was summed up for us in another context by a union official we interviewed, who told us that with the resources available to the union it was a near-impossible task to get health and safety committees set up in workplaces covered by his branch and that to attend to the needs of special groups would be a luxury.

In making recommendations for increasing the participation of migrants in the unions we have concentrated on provision of facilities that are outside the normal union structures yet
intimately connected to them and ultimately under their control. In adopting these strategies, we bear in mind the arguments presented in this section on the past and continuing limitations affecting unions' prevalent attitudes to and resources for integrating migrant workers. In insisting on maintaining closeness to the existing structures we reflect that the fact that separate migrant unions have never been a serious demand by any significant group of workers, migrant or non-migrant.

However, we would stress the need for specialised resourcing of some union structures, for three related sets of reasons. These are the overall structure of the Australian industrial relations systems and the particular consequences for some migrant workers; the union locations of migrants, particularly in relation to technological change and; some relevant experience over the past five years.

On the first of these it is noted that the system of industrial relations in this country is legalistic, labyrinthine and extremely difficult to understand, even for Anglophones born in this country. In particular, and as many observers of the system have remarked, it tends to engender a practice of full-time professional organisers and officials servicing a generally inert membership. For example, in a study of one union branch, Anderson (1984) concludes:

The ACT branch of the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union follows trade union tradition and aspires to be democratic organisation. As with other large unions of its type, participation is restricted to a small group of activists who are active within the formal structures and provide leadership at the job level. While minimal rank-and-file participation does not appear to be a problem in the day-to-day operations of the union, it proved to be a major obstacle in the leadership's efforts to communicate union policies and mobilise support for industrial action.

It need not, of course, be argued at length that workers who have poor English and limited knowledge of procedures in the industrial relations system will be doubly affected by this lack of participation; and a system that generally does not inspire the active participation of its Anglophone members is unlikely to develop - unaided - strategies to integrate its non-Anglophones.

The second point is that the union location of migrants increases the vulnerability to technological change, which in any case accrues from a number of factors we have already pointed out. The reasons for this may be indicated by the following quotation from a recent study of the current role of unions in relation to processes of technological change:

Those unions which have attempted the greatest impact on the introduction of new technology, through consultation, have represented highly skilled and/or white-collar groups. Of course, white-collar workers are currently exposed to a particularly high degree of technological change . . . (but) the strategic bargaining power of a high level of skill, or critical placement in the labour process, is more important in
determining the success of union intervention in technological planning (Markey 1984).

Again, it needs little argument that the occupational concentration of migrant workers is not such as to give them 'a high level of skill or critical placement in the labour process'. We have noted already the tendency of skilled and white-collar workers to have better access to retraining schemes as a matter of managerial preference. It would appear also that there are pressures arising from the structure of the union movement itself that may tend to reinforce this. This would strengthen our argument for attempting to graft on to the union movement structures with a particular focus on the concerns of the more marginalised groups of workers.

Finally, there is evidence that the attachment of specialist individuals or units to existing union structures is an efficacious way of increasing consciousness of union issues and even, in some cases, action around them.

The process by which these initiatives have been made has been ad hoc at a number of levels, reflecting the fact that funding has come from a range of organisations (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, State Ethnic Affairs Commissions, etc.) and has been dispensed under a variety of programs (Grant-in-Aid, Community Employment Program, etc.). This has meant the various workers have a wide range of working conditions and job descriptions. But one binding factor is that virtually all of them are employed for periods of at most three years and in many cases considerably less. The more prominent ethnic liaison projects of this nature include those in the Trades and Labour Council of South Australia, Trades and Labour Council of Western Australia, the Victorian Trades Hall Council, the Labor Council of NSW, the South Coast (NSW) Labour Council, the Australian Railways Union, the Hospital Service and Miscellaneous Worker's Union, the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union, the AMWU, the Federated Iron Workers Association, the Clothing and Allied Trade Union and the Trade Union Migrant Workers' Centre (Victoria).

There is a wide range of other agencies including, in particular, the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission, which have taken an increasing and active interest in the workforce experience of migrants and who have appreciated the key importance of the union in this. Nevertheless, the existence of migrant liaison officers within the union structure has proved on a number of occasions a key factor in facilitating such innovative developments as the new English-language program on VicRail and the NSW Water Board decision. (Both are described in the section of this report on English Language learning.)

Our approach, in terms of recommendations, has been to propose the strengthening and programmatic funding of such liaison projects, attached chiefly to major labour councils in areas of high migrant density.
Throughout this report it has been stressed that exclusion to whatever degree from the main language of the country of residence is the major vector through which the social marginalisation of migrants is maintained. In relation to industrial democracy a brief reference to some of the relevant keywords -- consultation, communication, participation -- is a vivid reminder of the importance of linguistic competence in this field.

Thus it becomes a fundamental task to assess the number and characteristics of workers with English language difficulties; to assess the level and direction of current provisions for them; and to outline alternatives. Briefly, our conclusions are that

- The number of permanent residents of this country whose English language skills are sufficiently bad as to disadvantage them in virtually every aspect of working life is unknown but most reliable evidence indicates it to be unacceptably high.

- Lack of English language proficiency is not simply a result of the individual's personal characteristics, since it is reinforced by substantial structural pressures.

- The current levels and, to some extent, directions of provision for English language acquisition are inadequate.

- New approaches to the question of English-language teaching should be developed, in which the main concerns should be co-ordination, integration, extension and development.

First the question of numbers. This question is confused by the quality of evidence available and contradictions between some pieces of it. The most recent national data on the Australian population's main language competence is the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Language usage in Australia (Cat. no. 4504.0), of which the main findings of relevance to this report were that 65 800 people do not use English and 47 100 neither use nor understand it. These figures suggest a relatively minor problem but they have been widely criticised as a grotesque underestimate. For example, the NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission made a detailed critique of the ABS data, the main points of which may be summarised as follows (NSW Ethnic affairs Commission 1984)

- The ABS relied for its data on an assessment by 'a responsible adult member of the household in respect of him/herself and the other household members'. Self-assessment is a notoriously unreliable method and subsequent studies have shown that it is much more common for over-assessment of ability to take place than the opposite.

- The survey made little attempt to assess the level of proficiency over skills, and some of the tests were probably ineffective. Thus the question put to the respondent of whether he/she 'read books, magazines or newspapers in English should be
set in the context of a 1980 report that there was 'considerable readership of English language newspapers, surprisingly even among those with poor English ability'.

A comparison with the 1981 Census figure, which asked whether the respondent spoke English 'very well/well/not well/not at all' showed that:

- 252 546 people did not speak English well on their own assessment.
- 14 991 did not state their ability and 287 900 people did not answer the question at all, and a proportion of these groups were presumably, non-English speaking.

In addition:

- Since 1981 over 100 000 migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds have arrive in Australia.
- The tendency to over-estimate second language proficiency would have affected the 1981 data also.

On the basis of this the NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission made an estimate of 350 000 with 'fair to poor' spoken English, or none at all. They might have added that most micro-studies have demonstrated that any degree of deficiency in the oral/aural skills tends to be associated with an even greater degree of deficiency in literacy skills.

Probably the most useful alternative source is a series of micro-studies commissioned over the past few years to examine the tasks facing the Adult Migrant Education Program. Some of these studies undertook fairly extensive sample English testing, mostly based on the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ASLPR), the results of which are summarised in Table 10 (together with a resume of the ASLPR criteria).

Table 10. ALSPR scores, four language skills, selection from AMEP survey and research program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language skill area</th>
<th>Listening (a)</th>
<th>Speaking (a)</th>
<th>Reading (a)</th>
<th>Writing (a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debney Park</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodwood</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illawarra</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karatha</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mareeba</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria/ Western Suburbs</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Sydney</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Refers to percentage of sample in each study at or below minimum survival.
survival is defined as the ability to satisfy all survival needs and
limited social needs, can write a simple letter (e.g. to accompany a
cheque or a completed job application form), can write a note to
school explaining a child's absence, can take down a simple message
in note form.

The most obvious conclusion from these studies is that, whatever may
be the extent of second language deficiency in aggregate, it is
undeniable that it was an enormous problem in the areas covered by
all of the AMEP studies; areas, it may be noted, that were diverse
in terms of population composition, economic structure and so on. It
can be seen also that the problem of second language deficiency is
likely to be grossly understated if no attention is paid to
literacy, since the frequency of sub-survival rates in the reading
and writing skills was very much greater than for hearing and
speaking. In an area of very heavy migrant density the effects of
this could be quite staggering. For example, the authors of the
Illawarra study, on the basis of sample results, made the
conservative estimate that more than 17,000 adults in a region of
less than 250,000 people were for most purposes illiterate in
English (Morrissey and Palser 1983, p. 17). Other relevant and
disturbing results from those studies were as follows:

. Length of residence in Australia tended to be associated
positively with English language proficiency but there were a
great many other variables affecting proficiency levels, with
the result that substantial numbers of people who have been here
more than a decade still have second language skills which range
from poor to non-existent.

. Level of education in the country of origin was generally a
better predictor of English language competence than length of
residence.

. Women generally had less English language competence than men.

. There were large inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic variations in
second language competence; and also the rank ordering of mean
ASLPR scores by ethnicity varied from study to study.

A number of conclusions can also be drawn from these studies without
further elaboration. The first is that illiteracy is a major source
of disadvantage. When labour is in demand it locks people into the
lowest skilled jobs, locks them out of training programs and so on.
When there is mass unemployment of literate people it acts as a
virtual employment ban.

The second conclusion is that people who are disadvantaged by lack
of English are liable to be disadvantaged in a number of other ways
-- by lack of non-linguistic skills, by recency of arrival, by
gender and, most ominously, by vulnerability to technological change.

This vulnerability arises from the structural position of migrants
alluded to earlier. The vast bulk of jobs open to people with severe
second-language deficiencies will be manual and unskilled and also
will entail very low levels of linguistic communication. Non-English
speakers were fed into such jobs for three decades and the nature of
the jobs tended to ensure that they remained non-English speakers.
Moreover, whatever conclusion one comes to on the question of
relative numbers of technologically-related job losses for white and
blue-collar workers, it is virtually certain that large inroads are
being made into labour market segments in which migrants form the
majority of workers (e.g. Colley 1982).

Another aspect is that in the current economic climate, industrial
democracy will mean little to those penalised by lack of linguistic
ability from entering the workforce at all. The 're-anglicisation'
of what previously had been migrant jobs as indicated, for example,
by Callus and Quinlan (1979), and the astronomic unemployment rates
of newly-arrived non-Anglophones compared with newly-arrived
Anglophones, are both evidence that as unemployment rates rise, lack
of main-language proficiency is penalised increasingly.

Within this context we examine the relevance of current provisions
for English-language learning. Two main aspects will be
distinguished, namely the main sources of general provision of
language learning opportunities and programs aimed specifically at
the workplace. The latter will be dwelt on at more length since the
questions involved are more relevant to the central concern of this
report. However, a few relevant comments may be made about the
former.

First, although there have been substantial improvements in recent
years, the history of English teaching to adult migrants is one of
ad hoc methods, marginalisation, lack of professionalism and
under-resourcing. As an example of this, only since January 1975 has
the Adult Migrant Education Service in NSW had any permanent
teaching positions. Until that time all teaching staff were employed
on a casual, hourly basis and in that year only twelve out of a
full-time staff of about seventy were made permanent. At this time
more than 24 000 non-English speaking migrants were arriving in NSW
each year.

A great deal of this under-resourcing reflects the traditionally low
profile of adult education in Australia, as well as the thoroughly
marginalised position of migrant education within it. But it must be
stressed that there are other factors that must be borne in mind.
One of these is that there has never been a consistent program of
migrant education in Australia nor any clear philosophy about what
the system should be doing. Part of the reason for this is the fact
that there has never been a single body whose primary concern was
the development of migrant education. Not only has the topic
generally been one of rather lowly status within large ministries
but no single ministry or level of government ever has had complete
responsibility. Thus, in what Jean Martin was able to describe at
the time as 'the only serious public examination ever made of the
Adult Migrant Education Service' (1978, p. 68), the Victorian
Migrant Education staff had the following to say about their service
experience.

The MED staff have never known if they were really State or
Federal employees, nor where to turn to demand improvements in
the program and in their conditions of employment for brick walls abound. From one authority one may meet dumb silence, from another an ignorant shrug of the shoulders, from a third a 'tut-tut', from another the suggestion that things aren't so bad and from everyone, but everyone, a rapid 'passing of the buck'.

This was not an isolated viewpoint, for this refrain was taken up in the same year by the NSW Government Association of Adult Migrant Teachers and the NSW Government. Essentially, the burden of these complaints was not only about the confused distribution of responsibility between the States and the Commonwealth, to which might have been added confusion of responsibility between state departments but also the overall isolation of migrant education from general education provision, the dominant philosophy of migrant education as a transient need located mainly in the immediate post-arrival period and the general under-resourcing of the program, particularly in relation to income support for students wishing to take full-time courses. This point of view was again backed up by a report by the Victorian Good Neighbour Council in 1978 and by some of the reports commissioned by the DIEA to examine English language learning needs on a local basis in the early 1980's (See e.g. Morrissey and Palser 1983; King and Palser 1983).

This picture of confusion can be compounded by pointing out that within individual States there is even a proliferation of organisations charged with teaching English to adult migrants. For example, the situation in NSW is that both AMES and TAFE are responsible and that different structures within TAFE are responsible for providing English as a Second Language and English for Special Purposes respectively (Brennan and Morrissey 1984).

Although there have been a number of improvements recently, as listed above, and although it is to be hoped that the 1985 Review of the AMEP will produce positive directions for the future, it is still true that the situation has not changed fundamentally and that some groups of migrants particularly are excluded. A recent report on the situation in South Australia states that

... the programs goals and funding do not permit everyone who needs further English to participate immediately and therefore creates a demand for further English courses and other bridging arrangements into the mainstream of adult education. Migrants with limited educational background are at a particular disadvantage and migrant women are most seriously affected (Blesing 1981).

The 1983 NSW TAFE report on multiculturalism in TAFE echoes Blesing's conclusion and specifies lack of co-ordination by responsible bodies as the main flaw in the current system. Thus,

... there needs to be a more co-ordinated approach to the provision of English language learning opportunities that is well-publicised and extensive enough to make personal contact with small groups in dispersed locations. It is apparent that most of the learning needs identified could be addressed by either AMES, TAFE or BAE ... but these needs at the moment are
either unmet or not addressed specifically enough to be of significant assistance to the learner' (NSW TAFE 1983, App. 2, 1).

As stated earlier, the most immediately relevant courses to the subject of this review have been the AMES Classes in Industry (CII) program.

These courses were started in 1973 to teach rudimentary level of English to migrant workers. Fundamentally, the courses provided 36 hours of instruction at the workplace spread over a period of six weeks. The specific timing of the course, in particular the proportion conducted on paid time, was a matter of negotiation between individual employers and the AMES.

From the start the program has had only a marginal effect. It has been in the curious and virtually permanent state of being subject to widespread criticism, although the idea of industry courses consistently has shown up as being extremely popular among migrant workers (e.g. Galbally 1978; AIMA 1980; Morrissey and Palser 1983; Ubran and Environmental Planning Group 1984; Palser 1984; Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission 1984).

An average of fewer than 3,000 students a year have passed through the courses since their inception and current Commonwealth expenditure on the courses is only $186 a student which, for example, may be compared for purposes of perspective with the $5,000 a year distributed nationally to universities per effective full-time student. It must be noted also that the level of instruction imparted to students is very low and almost certainly far too low to facilitate in any substantial way the participation of migrant workers in the fairly complex processes of spoken and written communication likely to be involved in employee participation schemes. Thus in 1983, the average length of courses was 43 hours, which may be contrasted with the United Nations standard and the 240 hours paid educational leave available to non-Nordic citizens under the Swedish Language ACT.

These criticisms have been made almost since the inception of the scheme. The Galbally report (1978) noted the inability of courses of 36 hours to produce significant improvements in main language ability and stressed also that courses were poorly advertised and staffed and lacking in terms of accommodation and scheduling to meet students' needs. Nevertheless, the Committee of Review recommended an expansion of the program by 1981 to accommodate 6,000 to 9,000 students, which at the time would have necessitated increasing the level of funding by 400 per cent. This recommendation was repeated in the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs' review of the Galbally program (AIMA 1982).

Not only have industry classes received consistent support in principle from major enquiries of this sort but there appears to be wide and increasing support among ethnic organisations, the trade unions and the Federal and some State Governments. Thus the present Federal Government's 1983 election policy statement contained the following commitment:
To act in conjunction with employers to seek the establishment of English courses for non-English speaking persons at the workplace during working hours.

The Labor Party and major sections of the trade union movement agree that English tuition for workers is an industrial right... A Labor government would work closely with trade unions and employers to establish industry-based and occupationally relevant English courses for migrant workers.

A more detailed policy was outlined by the ACTU Congress in 1981 when it was resolved that:

Congress calls upon the Federal Government to adopt a comprehensive policy which will provide that

- At least 900 hours of professional instruction in the English language should be available in the first two years of arrival of non-English speaking immigrants.

- That the instruction should take the following form:
  - 300 hours immediately on arrival whilst the immigrant will be entitled to a minimum wage.
  - A further 600 hours of English instruction to be provided over a two year period on the job on full pay. Immigrants who are unemployed would be provided with equivalent hours of free instruction.

The commitment to industry courses also has been taken up by some State governments, most notably that of New South Wales, where the Premier announced in February 1985 that:

... as part of government policy, English on-the-job training will be extended to all public sector areas over a four year period from 1985 to 1989 so that, as far as practicable, government sector employees with limited communication skills will be given an opportunity, within working hours, to improve their standard of communication in English.

The level of instruction planned for was 50 to 60 hours, 'subject to the provision of resources by the New South Wales Adult Migrant Education Service'.

Finally, at a State level we have an increasing commitment to industrial English by State Ethnic Affairs Commissions and Labor Councils. Most notable in initiatives from these quarters have been the development of English classes for Victorian railway workers and the recent industrial commission decision in NSW varying the award of the Water and Sewerage Employees' Union to include on-the-job English.

However, in all of this enthusiasm for workplace-based instruction there has been a tendency to slip around a number of difficult questions. We would pose these as follows:
What, if any, are the limitations of the workplace as a location for instruction and how may these limitations be overcome?

What proportion of workers most in need will be covered by any likely extension of industry programs?

Assuming that industry classes should be extended, what is the best means of doing so?

What alternatives are there in relation to workers who will not be covered?

What sort of English language instruction should take place?

Generally, the arguments in favour of industry classes have been a high preference for such classes on the part of the target group and relatively low drop-out rates. But neither of these arguments are particularly weighty. The target group never has been presented with the choice of full-time paid courses outside the workplace and tends in any case to have very little experience of adult education and the general opportunities it might afford. Moreover, there are a number of reasons to believe that the rhythms and pressures of the workplace are inimical to successful language learning.

One such concern is whether workers in industry classes have the opportunity for sufficient reinforcement of lessons learned at classes, particularly when these classes are for a limited daily period interspersed with time spent back in what is very often a non-English speaking environment (Clyne, Jupp and Stern 1984). This is a particularly acute problem when taken in the context of shiftwork where, in extreme cases, workers may receive instruction over the whole course for only the one week in three, or other roster period, when they are on dayshift. These are not the only factors that constrain attendance or successful performance. Palser (1984) listed the following as affecting her sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraining factor</th>
<th>% of sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workmate complaints about special treatment for migrants</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from supervisors</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridicule from workmates</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruption to workplace</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too tiring to study and do job</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have to work harder to catch up with work not done in class time</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The VEAC (1984) study of industry classes also had some disturbing conclusions about the adequacy of existing classes. We quote their finding in full:
Once the magnitude and complexity of the numbers and needs research emerged (and this was very early in the project), it became clear that funds and time would not permit any searching critical evaluation of existing provisions for Industrial English. In addition, certain basic facts about the AMEP made it clear that the program as presently planned and funded by the DfEA could not possibly be adequate. We refer to the following facts.

- No funds are provided for pre-course research and development.
- Funding is provided on the assumption that no Industrial English course will be longer than 40 hours.
- The program is heavily dependent on casually-employed teachers, many of whom do not have specialist qualifications in the teaching of English as a second language.
- The funding level for Industrial English is based on a target number of students. No one could give us any indication of how the target number is established each year. It is certainly not derived from any survey of needs.

Given this state of affairs, any level of adequacy of existing provisions would be either accidental or miraculous. In fact, we heard a good deal of negative comment from workers who had attended courses or who had observed the experiences of those who did: they referred to such things as courses with inappropriate levels and irrelevant content; a lack of variety of approach; high drop-out rates; the inability to take further courses once one had been attended; lack of information about the availability of courses; and total lack of co-ordination and commitment by supervisors. (We were told of specific instances where the supervisor alone had made the decision of who should attend English courses, often on apparently arbitrary grounds). Given the facts about policy and funding set out above, such statements of dissatisfaction are hardly surprising.

The reference to supervisors selecting students is not an isolated case. In one of the longest established industry classes in NSW (Australian Iron and Steel, Port Kembla) this has been the general practice since 1974 (Morrissey and Palser 1983).

There are, then, acute limitations to the advantages of classes in industry if offsetting measures are not taken to overcome some of the difficulties alluded to above. It would not be going too far to argue that migrant workers actually may be affected negatively, in terms of participation, by mounting industry classes which do not pay attention to factors such as those raised by VEAC and Palser.

We shall return at the end of this section to the questions of how these issues may be dealt with. Before we do this it is important to answer our second question: namely, that which asks what proportion
of workers in need will be covered by any likely extension of industry classes.

There is an element of speculation in this question since there is no possibility of predicting the major causal variable governing the expansion of the system; that is the amount of resources put into it. However, some reference to recent history may be instructive.

From the outset it must be stressed that the coverage of industry classes is very low and tends to be confined to larger establishments, since small firms do not have the resources to organise such classes. Thus the initial processing of the BAS survey of technological change summarised by Kriegler and Sloan (1984, p. 114) showed that only 6.8 per cent of the firms surveyed conducted English classes and only 3.9 per cent provided industrial retraining in languages other than English, even though 23 per cent perceived language difficulties making technological change more difficult and 49 per cent saw the same cause impeding worker retraining.

This impression of limited coverage is borne out by other results. Almost invariably a small group of large, predominantly public service employers have dominated the industry program. Thus the South Australian programs over the past thirteen years have covered only thirty employers (International Language Training Service 1984, p. 3). Plimer's figures for NSW in 1982-83 show that thirty-three organisations participated in the industry program, of which sixteen, accounting for 64 per cent of total courses, were government organisations. Again the VEAC review of the industry program, sponsored by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, commented that

Virtually all clients have been employers with large workforces (greater than 200 persons) and a scale of operation that can facilitate the removal of individuals from the work station with minimal or no effect on production [my emphasis] (Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission 1984, p. 3).

The words we have emphasised are of great importance in relation to our discussion (below) of industrial agreements as a method of proliferating the industry program.

It must be stressed also that the present system is based almost entirely on the volition of the employer. In other words, it is the employer's perception of gain from courses that will govern the decision to invest in industry classes or not. Generally, the attempt to sell courses to employers has revolved around supposed gains in terms of increased productivity, reduced accident rates or greater job satisfaction for employees. It has never been established that any of these benefits accrue to employers and judging by the very small coverage of industry classes it would seem that the vast majority have decided they do not. Thus the occupational segmentation that affects many workers has meant a relatively low emphasis on linguistic communication and in such areas workers often adapt by the development of factory pidgin, which enables them to perform their job quite adequately (Clyne).
Again, as discussed elsewhere in this report, it has never been demonstrated satisfactorily that non-English speaking workers have higher accident rates than occupationally-equivalent Anglophones (Morrissey and Jakubowicz 1980). Finally, because of high unemployment rates, employers may judge that job satisfaction consists largely in having a job. Certainly, it is highly unlikely that in the present context, workers' satisfaction will figure very largely in expenditure decisions.

Another factor that will affect management decisions about industry classes is employers' past experience of such classes. This is a subject upon which there has been little empirical research to date, apart from the 1980 AIMA Review of Multicultural and Migrant Education which surveyed employers sponsoring language programs, finding that 78 per cent were generally satisfied (AIMA 1980, p. 101).

The 1984 review of the industry program described the motivation of participating employers as being 'multifarious' although apparently, 'better communication between employer and employee, altruism and the enhancement of corporate image were the motives most frequently mentioned' (Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission 1984, p. 141). Apparently, however, 'most of those participating saw positive benefits: arising from the courses'.

It is difficult to know what credence to give this last conclusion since apparently it is based on consultations with only eleven employers and six associations of employers (Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission 1984). Certainly some detailed studies of specific programmes are less encouraging. For example, interviews in Port Kembla with Australian Iron and Steel management in 1981 indicated concern about the apparent difficulty of assessing whether any significant improvement in workers' English had, in fact, resulted from attendance at courses (Morrissey and Palser 1983). Palser's recent research (1984) on NSW's State Rail Authority classes found that

Those managers and supervisors interviewed were generally not enthusiastic about the potential benefits that English classes . . . would bring to the workplace . . . In general the problems associated with running English classes tended to out number the perceived benefits.

Generally, management did not feel that the admitted poor English competence of the workforce impeded seriously the efficient performance of work. Another important point in this respect is the likely work destination of new migrants. In present circumstances it seems unlikely that small firms would provide an adequate habitat for industry classes for obvious reasons, some already alluded to. However, the workforce in the larger industrial establishments in which migrants have previously been concentrated is likely to stabilise or even contract in the foreseeable future. To the extent that last-on, first-off policies apply, any contraction will affect newly-arrived workers and in any recovery it seems reasonable to suppose that English-speaking workers will be given preference in re-employment. As examples of these trends, Kriegler and Sloan
(1984:54) found that Mitsubishi (SA), one of four firms studied in depth, did not find it necessary to hold English classes, even though the firm places a great emphasis on management-lineworker communication and even though the lingua franca in parts of the plant was Italian. This was because all but a small minority of workers had been at the plant for more than seven years. Whether workers with poor English tend to be pushed first when labour is being shed is a question on which there is little hard evidence. But where there is an ethnic concentration in recruiting, this can happen. For example, South-east Asians in the Illawarra steel industry have, over the past three years, lost most of their jobs due to having few years of service (Bowen 1984). We have scattered evidence also, such as that of Callus and Quinlan (1979), indicating the 're-anglicisation' of these areas in periods of high unemployment.

English language education on the job

The most easily argued conclusion, then, is that even given a rapid and widespread expansion of the classes in the industry program, there will be considerable groups of workers who will not be covered by this and these include a high proportion of those most in need.

To say there are objective limitations to what industry programs can achieve in terms of coverage and to argue that there are often severe difficulties in the operation of those courses is not to imply our lack of support for such programs. We argue instead that industry classes will never be a sufficient answer to the question of increasing participation by migrants in industrial democracy schemes, however necessary a component they may be of any such answer.

This attitude leads us to consider ways in which industry class coverage can be extended. Basically, the coverage of industry classes in extent is a function of funding. The incidence of classes (where they happened and to whom) seems to have been a product of a series of ad hoc arrangements between individual employers and Adult Migrant Education Services.

There are some limited signs that this is changing, the most important of which arises from the recent commitment of the NSW Government and the NSW Labor Council to the provision of industry-based classes. The decision of the Industrial Commission of New South Wales (Sweeney, J., no. 2126 of 1984) to vary the award of the Water and Sewerage Employees' Union to include paid time off in working hours to attend English classes is not only an extremely important precedent providing a means for extension of the industry program, it is also one that underscores the extreme importance of migrant participation in trade unions. Fundamentally, as declared by the NSW Labor Council...

... the union movement strategies to ensure that English language classes are not a privilege but an industrial right have been to:
Precipitate a test case.

Seek appropriate variation to awards.

Embrace the right to learn English in industrial agreements.

Advocate for legislation to ensure a right to learn English in the workplace.

Advocate for government policy relating to public sector employees (Miltenyi 1985, p. 6-7).

While these objectives are far from being met, for reasons to be discussed below, the Water Board decision represents a particularly important step forward when set in the context of a recent tendency for awards to be varied in order to equalise access to paid time for attendance at general educational, particularly TUTA, courses (ACTU Circular no. 220/1984 RLG/BD). There are some signs also that the precedence of the Water Board decision may serve as a model in some limited areas of the private sector. For example, at least one private agreement has been signed between the Clothing and Allied Trade Union and a small clothing manufacturer providing not only award wages but paid time for English classes for a number of outworkers in Sydney and Wollongong (Illawarra Mercury, 13 April 1985). (This agreement occurred too late in the production of this report to be given close attention.)

However, there are some points that should be observed about the Water Board's decision.

First, it was not a test case in the sense set out in the Labor Council's strategy document. The union's claim was assented to by the board and although a precedent is thus established there is no automatic flow-on. Each future case or attempt at an industrial agreement will have to be fought on its merits. Second, the agreement makes no firm decision on the amount of English language instruction. Third, and most important, the judgment was made on the grounds that both parties have submitted that the cost of the claim will be negligible . . . [and that] the (Water) Board has also submitted that the proposed variation in many ways formalises what has been occurring in the Board (Sweeney, J., Industrial Commission of NSW no. 2126 of 1984).

What this means is that there will be severe difficulty securing agreements with any employer who can establish that the costs of agreeing to classes will not be 'negligible' since, as was recognised in the Water Board judgment, this would establish contravention of principle II of the Accord (Miltenyi 1985, p. 5). In fact, the Labor Council's strategy document itself admits to the limitations of present approaches in stating that at this stage we have been concerned with introducing English classes into the government sector. We are conscious of the employers' argument relating to cost, breach of the Accord, and,
flowing on from that, the possibility of discrimination against migrant workers (Miltenyi 1985, p. 6).

We should stress also that this consideration affects small employers to a much greater extent than large ones. Given that small firms are unlikely to have the sort of spare capacity available to replace workers attending classes at 'negligible' cost, it is very likely that the Water Board precedent will be considered not to apply to them. In fact, this consideration has affected even large, state concerns. In Victoria, the railway unions did not include English classes in a recent log of claims on the grounds that this would be held to be a breach of principle II and would prejudice other elements in that log of claims.

One may, therefore, summarise the argument so far as follows:

1. Improvement of migrant workers language skills is the sine qua non of their genuine participation in a democratised workplace.

2. Employed people classes in working hours are a preferred and preferable means of upgrading language skills.

3. However, the present system is deficient because of the deficiencies of the work environment as a place for language education, and because no organisation or body exists to negotiate the remedy of these deficiencies.

4. In addition, reliance on industry classes alone is an inadequate approach, since there are severe and probably non-negotiable limits on the extent to which these classes can be proliferated, given present legislative and funding provisions.

We would argue, therefore that development of the system beyond its present limitations would involve the following steps:

1. Setting up a co-ordinated body whose exclusive concern is the development of adequately-serviced industry classes.

2. Legislative measures to ensure that English-language classes in paid work time are available to workers in concerns too small for the establishment of industry classes to be feasible.

3. Measures to ensure that migrant workers are not discriminated against by employers once English classes in paid time become an industrial right.

The first of these should be a body for which a prototype might be found in the British Industrial Language Training Service. We stress the word prototype. There would be distinct problems in importing the British model wholesale, not the least of which would arise from the Commonwealth-State roles in the provision of adult migrant education and the implications of this for a national body. We would envisage the proposed body playing a more active role in liaising with trade unions to secure the spread of language training clauses in award provisions. Nevertheless, the British organisation provides
a basis for a discussion and negotiation through which a version suited to the Australian environment may be developed.

Essentially, the Industrial Language Training Service is a national network of about thirty specialist units co-ordinated by the National Centre for Industrial Language Training (NCILT). Broadly, its work falls into three areas. The first of these is an assessment service that upon negotiation with individual employers, assesses language and communication problems in the particular workplace then prepares a package incorporating two other services. These are, firstly, workplace-based and work-related language training for people whose first language is not English. The courses are structured around the specific circumstances of these workers in terms of their past, formal and informal English-language learning and workplace needs including non-linguistic skills. At the same time, courses are run for native English-speakers whose work involves contact with migrants, dealing mainly with communication skills, cultural awareness, examination of prejudicial attitudes, etc.

The function of the training centres themselves is to liaise with a wide group of migrant, employer, trade union and training organisations, whereas the National Council is charged with staff development within the service and also with a program of continuing curriculum development. In 1981 more than 200 workplaces were involved in the scheme, including a large number in the private sector, and in the period 1975 to 1981 more than 20,000 people had gone through ILT courses. As an example of their work we reproduce in Appendix I three case histories published by NCILT.

However, we have consistently stressed the inadequacy of industry classes in isolation and the inadequacy of current means of proliferating them. Although the establishment of an ILS would alter the picture greatly, it would not attack the fundamentals of the problem. While access to English classes is based largely on the voluntary co-operation of employers it will be denied to large groups of people who need it most. The obvious solution to this is legislation to make paid time off to attend English classes a legally enforceable industrial right.

The most obvious precedent for this has been Sweden, where since 1973 the Swedish Language Act has given non-Nordic migrants 240 hours time off to attend Swedish language and 'social education' classes. This system has greatly influenced, for example, the policy of the ACTU in relation to this issue but also has been rejected by other bodies. In its Courses in Industry Review, VEPG states that:

It is notable that unemployment rates for migrants in Sweden far exceed that (sic) of Swedish citizens. Although this may partly be explained by migrants lacking vocational experience, it is also likely that the cost of paying migrant workers while attending language courses has led to employers giving preference to Swedish-speaking workers.

VEPG offers no evidence on this point. Neither do they relate their statement to the fact that Swedish employers also carry considerable costs for educational leave for Swedish-born workers and that
unemployment rates for most migrant groups in Australia, which, of course, has nothing to compare with the Swedish Language Act, also are well above average.

Nevertheless, it may be seen as axiomatic that if paid time off does come to a total, sufficient to make significant inroads into lack of English competence, it will place, particularly newly arrived migrants in a disadvantageous position with regard to employment, if the costs of the program are placed on employers. There is no reason why the costs should be so placed, except to the extent that the employer can be shown to be benefiting from the program in terms of productivity and so on. If, on the other hand, the reason for such a program is that access to the main language is a precondition of the exercise of basic democratic rights, as it is in Sweden, then there is no justification for offloading the costs of it on to one particular group.

This, of course, leads straight to the questions of incentives for employers, particularly monetary ones, and of stronger legislation to prevent discrimination in employment.

We have recommended that both of these should be the subject of more investigation, since both of them are complex and difficult areas. But they would be essential measures to accompany any attempt to extend legally-enforceable access to language learning programs. Unfortunately, very little has been done on the question of incentives but any further work would aim at establishing a number of key parameters, namely:

- The real cost to employers of work-release programs.
- The variations in the above according to the size of the firm, degree of capitalisation and effects of enhanced linguistic skills on productivity.
- The extent to which the above can be discounted by benefits accruing directly to employers.

These are matters that have not been investigated in any systematic way and are of obvious relevance to formulating policy on employer incentives.

Finally, in the narrower context of English language learning, we question the sort of English that is to be taught and the relationship of more general education to English language instruction if migrants of non-English speaking background are to be empowered to participate in industrial democracy or employee participation programs.

We emphasise these questions for a number of reasons, the most important of which are:

- The needs of particular groups of migrant workers are not, as we have stressed throughout, uniform, and this applies to English language learning needs as much as to any others.
The existing level of confusion on the subject of needs-based teaching, particularly in relation to what is often described as vocational and occasionally industrial English.

The existing tendency to describe barriers to migrant participation exclusively in terms of low English language competence, without reference to other factors that may be of great importance.

Space will permit only an outline of the issues involved here, some of which are extremely technical. But in terms of our recommendations, we see an industrial language service having as major functions provision of a focus for clarification of these issues and embodiment of such clarification as is achieved in programs of curriculum development and teacher in-servicing.

As an entry to these questions we draw attention to Recommendation 7 of the Kirby Committee, which was that

The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs should, in consultation with the DEIR, seek to develop appropriate vocational English courses and courses which combine English language training with vocational skills training to assist unemployed migrants (Kirby 1985, p. 97).

Although this relates mainly to labour market programs for the unemployed it is of obvious relevance to the employed also, particularly in the context of retraining programs in situations of technological change. The essence of the problem is that the term vocational English goes undefined in the Report and that the pedagogic value of any given definition goes unexamined.

This is not a trivial point as may be illustrated by further reference to the recent DIEA-sponsored review of industry classes and the response to it of an author with considerable experience in the area. The authors of the review asserted:

Most professions and vocations have associated with them a body of language unfamiliar to the lay person and which must be mastered by the new employee. This applies equally to workers from both English-speaking and non-anglophone backgrounds.

On this basis they recommended that course content contain some 'desirable' combination of 'everyday' and 'industrial' English, to which the response of one critic was as follows.

It is unfortunate that the consultants have adopted the usage of this conceptually and pedagogically loose term. There seems to be some analytical confusion in the report as to whether industrial English has to do with the context of the language program or the content. The consultants have not resolved the issue raised by Quinn and Wales (1983) of two possible definitions: 'English for the job' or 'English of the job'.

The consultants have overlooked current debate regarding the artificiality of the dividing line between industrial English
versus everyday English or work-related curriculum versus non-work related. In opting for a balance between the two, the lack of definition in the report is glossed over.

As mentioned above, the consultants assert that industrial English 'often possesses a high degree of relevance for the student'. Apart from the lack of definition of what 'industrial English' actually comprises, this statement seems to be unsubstantiated. It ignores also the reality of the characteristics and status of many migrant workers in the Australian workforce, namely:

- Migrants in the workforce are not a homogeneous group; they are diverse in their characteristics, principally time in Australia, age, work skills and educational backgrounds. Due to this diversity 'industrial English' is by no means appropriate for all.

- Many migrant workers have spent a number of years in the same job and perform their duties satisfactorily. Lack of 'industrial English' is not relevant to their work needs.

- Migrant workers often perform lower status, unskilled jobs. Job mobility and upward mobility are limited for many. Even if the broader definition of industrial English is adopted, i.e. 'English for the job', the opportunities that English on the job may provide to the worker are limited (Palser 1985, p. 3).

The point may be elucidated further by reference to an initial examination of the Victorian railways project. The authors state that:

Care should be taken in course design to ensure that a narrow definition of 'English on the job' is avoided. 'English on the job' may or may not be taken as meaning English for the job; it is certainly not solely English of the job. In other words, the language material needed to improve a worker's English competence, and hence the capacity to do his or her job more effectively, need not necessarily be English about the job situation.

They then locate this statement in the following context:

A range of 'needs analysis' techniques should be used in course preparation, with an awareness that all the current techniques have their limitations. A Munby type of needs analysis will reveal a great deal of the language of work but little else. Recording authentic work situations will reveal abundant 'extraneous' material, which may be very valuable. Discussion with supervisors ('What sorts of things do these workers need to be able to say?') will produce a narrow and usually unreliable distortion of natural communication. Although each of these techniques can contribute something, all of them should be balanced by a process of negotiation of course content and feasible objectives, conducted in such a way that all parties
(workers, supervisors and teachers) are committed to the content and objectives determined.

These issues are raised in order to demonstrate the complexities of what may be involved in the area of curriculum development if effective industry-based courses are to be developed. There is no organisation in Australia that can develop and extend expertise in the areas of needs analysis and negotiation nominated as crucial by Quinn and Wales, except on a one-off basis. The almost universal practice up to the present seems to have been that the major input into course content has come from management, often resulting in a narrow 'English for the job' approach (Morrissey and Palser 1983; Palser 1984).

Finally, we stress that the question of English language instruction, narrowly defined, does not exhaust the possible and needed approaches to increasing migrant workers' participation in the democratisation of the workplace. Most studies of English language proficiency have indicated that low levels of such proficiency are associated with low levels of general education (particularly in the country of origin), low levels of participation in general adult education and locations in the workforce (or out of it) which tend to perpetuate disadvantage. Although lack of English will be the major factor preventing participation, lack of knowledge of such things as the structure and operation of the unions, company organisation and rules for the conduct of meetings, to name but three at random, will also tend toward exclusion. In the case of employee participation and industrial democracy schemes, a quite sophisticated understanding of such issues may be required if a person is to participate fully. It is to be stressed in this context that this is not a problem that affects migrants only; and also that some groups of migrant workers are more affected than others. Women tend generally to have lower levels of English-language proficiency and general education than men and also tend to work in areas where these disadvantages are most likely to be perpetuated.

It would seem reasonable then, that the question of education in English language should be placed in the general context of what the Swedes call 'social education'.

This is an enormous task and we have been able to do little more than recommend further studies. However, it should be realised that there are a number of agencies already operating in the area of 'general' adult migrant education. TUTA runs occasional courses for migrants in languages other than English; TAFE has developed a fairly extensive English for Special Purposes program in which a number of courses, such as (Migrant) New Opportunities for Women, concentrate on general and social education (Brennan and Morrissey 1984). It should be a priority in the task of curriculum and course development to integrate and extend these beginnings. We propose (Recommendation 8) a pilot study to examine ways of doing this.
6. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

The question of occupational health and safety is, in relation to migrants, a particularly difficult one for three reasons. Firstly, there is a paucity of knowledge at even the most basic statistical level about the incidence and causes of occupational injury or illness affecting migrant workers as against non-migrants. Secondly, and as a result of this lack of genuine knowledge, the popular wisdom in this area is replete with myths which have gained the status of fact. Thirdly, in the two major industrial States and hence the states of major migrant settlement, new legislation only recently has come into operation (NSW and Victoria). The effects of this new legislation generally are impossible to predict and this compounds the problem of making statements about the position of migrants. For these reasons our main recommendation (Recommendation 6) on occupational health is posed mainly in terms of systematic investigation of such questions as relative accident/morbidity rates for occupationally equivalent groups of migrant and non-migrant workers.

There exists a widespread belief that migrants suffer more industrial injury and illness than non-migrants. This view is particularly pronounced in the medical profession and among migrant welfare workers, yet the quantitative and causal dimensions of this alleged difference are problematic. There are two sets of reasons for this. Firstly, basic data is scanty and in any case of questionable validity in the area of occupational health generally. In relation to migrants specifically, these problems are compounded.

To understand the deficiencies of occupational health statistics one must understand the mechanism of data collection and the forces at work on the interpretation of this data. In New South Wales the major legislation relating to industrial injury statistics was, until the passage of the 1983 Occupational Health and Safety Act, Section 48 of the Factories, Shops and Industries Act, which requires notification of certain categories of injury to the Department of Industrial Relations (NSW). A brief reading of Section 48 makes it quite obvious that a wide category of injuries was, in any case, not legally required to be reported. In addition, under-reporting both legal and illegal has been notoriously widespread; DIR simply did not have the manpower to police Section 48 effectively, particularly in the case of small-scale industry, and in any case there were loopholes that allowed employers legally sanctioned opportunities not to report injuries. These opportunities arose because a reportable injury was defined in terms of time lost from work by the injured worker. The widespread practice of placing injured workers on 'light duties' within the workplace meant that quite serious accidents went unreported and quite legally so, since less than the stipulated length of working time had been lost.

If the incidence of occupational injury is a matter of educated guesswork, morbidity rates for occupational disease are in the realm of pure speculation. Epstein (1978), for example, details the enormous proliferation of new chemicals developed in recent years. In a great many cases their effects on humans has never been
investigated. Even where the aetiology of certain conditions is known and accepted to be associated with particular industrial processes or materials, it is only rarely that an industrial origin can be conclusively demonstrated rather than one of a number of alternative non-industrial causes. This is true particularly of illness with long latency periods such as mesothelioma. The truth is obscured further by the fact that research into the health implications of new or established industrial processes often is tainted by expectations of profit or loss, as the long and undying saga of the asbestos industry demonstrates quite clearly. In this, of course, is in the area of physical health. But it should be added that the relationships between particular occupations or patterns of work and mental illness or stress-related physical conditions such as stomach ulcers are also relatively open questions which further complicate the issues involved.

In short, there is very little statistical basis for any estimate of the overall dimensions of occupational health problems if we adopt a realistically broad definition of occupational health. Equally, it is unlikely that we will be able to answer questions about a section of the workforce, such as migrants, when no answers are available for the workforce as a whole.

The second major source of statistical ambiguity in the study of migrants' occupational health arises at the level of interpretation as opposed to basic data collection. Even if reasonably comprehensive figures were available for industrial injury in the workforce overall and also for the migrant fraction, there would remain substantial problems in establishing the meaning of any statistical differences between the two groups. These would arise because the statistical profiles of the migrant and non-migrant populations differ with regard to a number of key socio-economic and demographic variables. Among the most important of these are the age pyramids of the respective populations, their respective occupational distribution, mean income levels and labour force participation rates.

Not all members of the workforce are equally vulnerable to industrial injury or illness. Broadly speaking, the risk is least in white-collar professional, managerial and service occupations and correspondingly greater in manual manufacturing, mining and construction jobs. Migrants as a group are concentrated in high-risk occupations to a much greater degree than the population as a whole, tend to have lower incomes and go to work earlier in life. This being so it would be no great surprise if reliable statistics demonstrated that migrants suffered higher rates of industrial injury or illness than non-migrants. Their occupational distribution alone would lead us to expect this to be the case.

However, the problem does not end here, since the fundamental question is whether or not migrants have particular problems with regard to occupational health and safety which cannot be explained by reference to their occupational distribution. To answer this question at a statistical level it would be necessary to have data available that relates the experience of migrant workers to that of occupationally comparable non-migrants. Such data does not exist and
the lack of it results in a great deal of confusion, particularly when the general deficiencies of occupational health statistics are taken into account. The following examples will serve to illustrate this point, the first being a Department of Labour and Industry study (1978) of accidents in the year ending June 1978 whose major finding was that

Migrants from non-English speaking countries do not suffer from a significantly higher ratio of accident per worker than that experienced by the population as a whole. (Indeed, the rate may be lower.)

Unfortunately, this firm conclusion is too weighty to be held up by its statistical supports. The data on which it is based is drawn from reported accidents according to the requirements of the Factories Act. As already noted, it is a matter of certainty that a very large proportion of accidents were not reported either because the Act did not require them to be or because of inadequate enforcement. There is evidence also that under-reporting may be most serious in sectors least well policed by either DIR or the unions and it is in precisely these areas that the migrant presence is heaviest. Moreover, there are methodic inconsistencies in the report such as the use of Australian rather than New South Wales figures to assess the non-English speaking migrant fraction of the labour force, which is stated variously as being from 9 to 16 per cent. With such deficiencies it would be difficult to view this report as having any value at all apart from demonstrating the irrelevance of official statistics.

The majority of studies of migrants' occupational health do not make any attempt at wide-ranging statistical statements. Generally, such studies concern particular plants, industries or doctors' practices with high concentrations of migrants. Although these studies often are valuable in many other respects, they cannot avoid the statistical traps outlined earlier. The basic reason is that although they establish quite clearly that migrants in the areas studied do encounter unhealthy and dangerous working conditions, the extent to which their problems differ from those of non-migrants in similar jobs remains unclear. A good example of the deficiencies of this approach is contained in the following quotation:

Our reasoning was that firstly if migrants perform the dirtiest and most boring jobs; and secondly if migrants are not used to working in factories, machines, presses etc.; and thirdly if they are under a great deal of emotional pressure; then we would expect a high incidence of health problems and injuries related to work (Constantinou 1976).

So far as it goes, the reasoning is impeccable but it does not go far enough in view of the methodology adopted, which was to take overall accident figures for a group of factories and categorise them by ethnicity, without any attempt to standardise for the occupational structure in these factories or to assess the generality relative to other industries of the results produced. In other words we can deduce very little about overall migrant/non-migrant accident ratios. More to the point is that three
different explanations — occupational profile, industrial inexperience, emotional stress — are put forward to account for the postulated high migrant accident rates. On the basis of this or any other study of its sort, it is impossible to discern the relative influence of the factors mentioned. This is not a trivial point since if the reason for alleged high migrant accident rates are to be found simply in the occupational profile rather than in, say, the unfamiliarity of migrants with a factory environment, than the policy and research conclusions that result are bound to be very different than if the reverse is the case. This matter cannot be clarified statistically unless corrections are made for occupational structure.

Apart from the need to establish the basic facts of occupational health as they affect migrants, the area of most interest will be that of facilitating the participation of migrant workers in structures set up to monitor the safety of working practices.

New legislation in most States either has contained, or will contain, provisions for employee participation through such structures as elected health and safety committees. In some cases, this legislation pays overt attention to the question of migrant participation. For example, the New South Wales legislation requires that an Occupational Health, Safety and Rehabilitation Council should be set up, and that the Council in turn should establish a committee for the purpose of assisting it to exercise its functions in relation to persons of non-English speaking background (Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1983, No. 20, Part II, Section 11).

This committee was set up in 1984 and has identified the main problems to be faced as those of data collection and ensuring that, as training schemes are worked out for elected Workplace Occupational Health and Safety Committees, these contain provisions for meeting the needs of migrant workers (Occupational Health, Safety and Rehabilitation Council, Committee for Persons of Non-English Speaking Background Report, n.d.). This, together with other matters, such as publicising the content of the new legislation, would require many more resources than are at present made available. The committee, as presently set up, is composed of people in full-time employment elsewhere and it has no secretariat or research assistance.

Generally, it can be said that the question of migrant participation in matters relating to occupational health is a facet of the more general question of participation examined elsewhere in this report. In particular, the question of participation in trade unions will be crucial, since in Victoria the unions will be heavily involved in setting up and running workplace committees and South Australia also will probably follow this lead in the near future. The question of English-language training is also absolutely fundamental. Although much emphasis has been placed on the provision of information in languages other than English, there are severe limitations to this approach. Most obvious is that workers in small concerns, particularly where there is no ethnic group that is dominant
numerically, will be excluded. Even in large concerns with a multi-ethnic workforce, minority groups will not be catered for. For example, at BHP's Port Kembla plant, management estimates that more than seventy languages are spoken. Clearly, translation is feasible only in the case of the more heavily represented language groups.

Even given these limitations, provision of written and audio-visual material on safety issues in languages other than English is still an important priority. This task is performed by a number of organisations such as unions, Ethnic Affairs Commissions, individual employers, etc. There is no systematic attempt at coverage of the non-Anglophone workforce on even basic safety issues and the situation probably leads to a fair amount of duplication. For this reason we have recommended a degree of centralised initiative to co-ordinate provision of information to non-Anglophones.
The underlying themes of this report have been the diversity of the migrant experience and the lack of reliable data or research on which to base an adequate account of the varieties of that diversity. Writing in 1979, Ford noted that there had been virtually no systematic study of migrants in the workplace. In fact, most of the studies of migrants' work experience had been at the rather abstract level typified by the work discussed in Part 3. With very few exceptions, the position has not altered since 1979, so a number of questions crucial to the democratisation of the workplace cannot be answered satisfactorily and will not be answered until there is an adequate examination of the work process as it affects particular groups of migrant workers.

Within the concerns of the present report there is a further dimension of ignorance to be contended with. Virtually no case-studies, with exceptions dealt with below, attack the problems of a multiethnic workforce. In the twenty-two case studies grouped in the Work Environment Branch's Digest of case studies (Department of Employment and Industrial Relations 1984) there are literally less than twelve references to migrant workers, most of them in passing rather than as a substantive object of attention.

With these restrictions it has been inevitable that this has been less a report on industrial democracy per se than on the conditions that must be met before migrant workers could be expected to participate successfully in any move to general democratisation of the workplace as might take place. The bulk of this has revolved around such questions as language and communication, since these are accessible to reform in the short term. However, it should be stressed that a great deal of the disadvantage and marginalisation endured by significant sections of the migrant workforce does not originate in problems of language, communication and cultural dissonance. The cause lies instead in the structure of Australian industry, a structure that ensures large sections of the migrant workforce are locked into industrial situations where they have virtually no control over their working lives. Any prospect of democratisation must be set within the reality that the main reason that migrants are employed in these situations is that they have been cheap labour. The cheapness of this labour has been reflected partly in appallingly low wages in the outwork sector or in the persistence of working conditions that would not have been permitted had the workforce been born in Australia. It is salutary to quote the summary of findings in CURA's 1975 study of migrant women workers:

In their visits to factories the research team was conscious of the contrast between the comfortable physical conditions in offices, basically staffed by Anglo-Saxon, middle-class persons and the conditions on factory floors where migrant women worked. In the factories we visited the physical conditions ranged from reasonable to appalling. In most factories where migrant women work conditions were found to be extremely poor in terms of temperature, pollution, noise, odour, physical danger,
ventilation, lighting and facilities. However, conditions varied according to industry and factory and were usually better in the larger factories.

In the meat industry women worked in cold, draughty conditions on concrete floors, often slippery with water and blood. In some food industries women again worked on concrete floors usually in damp, poorly ventilated areas with high levels of noise from production machinery and pungent odours from food. In the clothing industry, factories were generally crowded, dusty and poorly ventilated. In metal and electrical trades industries dust was again very noticeable and ventilation poor. In the boot industry, the odour of chemicals, the noise of machinery, the cramped conditions, poor ventilation and humidity on the shop floor were most noticeable.

Canteen facilities and eating areas were often inadequate and in some cases non-existent. Toilet facilities were extremely poor and occasionally unhygienic. Our observations showed that in many cases factories were dangerous because of slippery concrete floors, noxious chemical odours, inadequate fire escape facilities, sometimes with unguarded machinery without multilingual safety signs.

The observations of the research team were substantiated by the statements of migrant women. In response to questions they wrote of headaches, sore eyes, coughing, chest complaints and aching legs caused by noise, smell from food and chemicals, heavy dust causing chest complaints, poor lights causing sore eyes as they concentrated on fiddly detail work, lack of temperature control, dampness and poor ventilation. There were also complaints about accidents at work due to the lack of multilingual safety signs and the difficulty of receiving medical attention.

A very systematic, determined and fundamental attack over a long period would be necessary to make an impression on systemic exploitation of this sort. It is doubtful whether either the theory or practice of industrial democracy in Australia is at present capable of contributing much to such an attack. As Short (1983) stresses, industrial democracy can (and does) mean virtually anything to anybody:

Any number of so-called definitions are available, and the Anglo-Saxon literature in this area has mushroomed in the last ten years; but most attempts at definitions have been generalities -- how else can one relate to such different political economies as Yugoslavia, West Germany and Sweden? One writer has said that the term '. . . is in danger of becoming a shibboleth, so vague and ambiguous as to have little or no general meaning'. Another despairing commentator has concluded that any attempt at definition is doomed from the start (Short 1983, p. 2).

Within this context all of the very few industrial democracy and worker participation schemes which have recognised the fact of a multi-ethnic workforce have concentrated exclusively on questions of
communication and cultural dissonance. Typical of this approach was a scheme carried out in British Leyland's Zetland plant, where the main problems of the migrant workers were described as

- Their own lack of information about Australian laws, systems and behavioural requirements.
- Intolerance and lack of understanding of cultural differences shown towards them as migrants.
- Insensitivity to the range and depth of migrants' settling-in difficulties, displayed in the lack of institutionalised means of dealing with them.

The answer to this communication problem was to utilise a human relations model relying heavily on the identification and involvement of natural leaders or activists among migrant workers and the use of specially prepared audio-visual materials. It was hoped this would bridge 'the information gap' in 'feedback and work performance . . . job instruction and safety . . . pay matters . . . (and) grievance procedures'.

To anyone acquainted with assembly-line production and the place migrants occupy in it this line of reasoning breathes a faint air of unreality. It is implied that only a failure in management-worker communication forced migrants 'to live with a constant sense of job insecurity . . . to have a nagging suspicion that the company was interested in them only as factory fodder . . . [to feel] threatened by the idea of seeking relief from the personnel department'. The air of unreality thickens with the reflection that the Zetland plant abruptly closed down in 1974, throwing 4 000 workers, of whom 75 per cent were migrants, on to a contracting labour market. A problem of communication may well have existed but one wonders whether it was the migrant assembly-line operatives or the social workers who were picking up false messages.

A similar program to that used at Leyland was set up in other Sydney plants with the avowed objective of reducing high rates of turnover and absenteeism among migrant workers. As analysed by Callus (1979) these schemes failed, in the sense that labour turnover and absenteeism rates were not reduced. This was not because of any organisational deficiencies in the programmatic execution of this 'human relations' model but because the model itself was irrelevant. At these factories workers did hard, repetitive, dirty jobs on rotating shifts. The worst jobs were done by migrants, many of whom were recent arrivals in Australia and heavily in debt. These migrants had lower turnover and absenteeism rates than native Australians and expressed their main grievances as low wages and discriminatory apportionment of overtime. In such circumstances, many industrial relations specialists propose that frequent job changes and absenteeism are in fact a disguised form of industrial action by workers, arising out of an objectively degrading and alienating work environment. A program aimed at 'bridging the cultural gap' between management and the migrant workforce is not likely to do much to alter such behaviour patterns if the conditions which engender them are left unchanged.
As much as the data and theoretical questions outlined above, these general questions about the relationship between ethnicity and social class will be at the heart of future debate concerning the democratisation of Australia's multi-ethnic workforce.
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Workplace one

The Industrial Language Training Centre was asked to discuss communications in this company at the suggestion of an Industrial Training Board training adviser and of the training organisation used by the company.

The company makes aluminium die castings. It has a workforce of around eighty. Almost all the shopfloor workers are Punjabi Indians. All work long hours, sometimes seven days a week.

The company was concerned about the level of scrap and also about quality control inspectors from customer firms who visit the company and wish to discuss with the quality control staff the work that is being done for their firm. Several younger men work on quality control in the inspection department. It was decided that suitable quality control training needed to be organised for these men. Doubts then arose as to whether some of the men had sufficient English to copy with this technical training.

The ILT team interviewed employees whose mother tongue was not English from both the inspection department and other sections of the works. Time was also spent with key foremen, managers, technical staff, etc. After discussions with the company a group of five trainees was selected for a language training course. Three of these were from inspection. Two were from other areas but might be expected to move into inspection. The language training started well ahead of the quality control training. It is planned for the ILT staff to sit in on the quality control training once it begins.

The trainees are all under thirty. All have at some time attended evening classes but have given up because of long work hours. All are motivated to improve their English. They have little contact with English speakers other than in shops and the pub. All watch television. One of the first aims of the course was to help people assess their use of English and think how they could extend their contacts and make the most of the limited resources available. Also, since the training was only three hours a week, the trainees were introduced from the outset to independent learning materials and methods. The syllabus and methodology were planned to prepare the trainees for technical training and to give more general help with English. The company's quality control supervisors were involved in the training from the beginning, coming into the training room, making tape recordings, demonstrating equipment, etc. The ILT team is now going through the company's written instruction material, advising on translations and on clearer ways of passing on information.
Workplace two

A full-time union official suggested a company where he felt there was a language training need. He was particularly interested in training for two Asian shop stewards, and arranged for contact with the company.

The company manufactured hygiene and hospital products and employed a number of Asian workers who were concentrated in certain sections of the company.

The company was interested in improving communication in general and was in the process of a fairly significant reorganisation of staff because of a major redundancy program. The angle that initially interested them was safety. Also they became aware that new legislation on sterilisation requirements and on sickness benefits would need to be conveyed to all employees and that the usual written notice would be inadequate.

It was agreed that a survey would be conducted involving interviews with managers and supervisors and a language assessment for those employees whose mother tongue was not English. The ILT unit asked to assess all employees who fitted into the latter category but the company decided to limit the assessment to the sections where there was a high percentage of Asian employees.

Employees with a fairly wide range of language competence were assessed and were divided into four groups. The supervisors interviewed generally saw the potential language training program as designed to deal with 'problems' only, that is with employees with whom they could not communicate rather than as related to equal opportunities - as the ILT staff did. Their reactions at this stage were very much that the need for training had existed ten years previously but that now there was no great problem.

The unit submitted a report suggesting that there were training needs at all levels. Interestingly, at this point an incident occurred with an employee who had not been included in the assessment which suggested that because of the reorganisation of jobs immigrants who appeared to have sufficient English to cope with the well-known routines of their jobs were quite unable to cope with communications when a change was required. The supervisor concerned was very shocked to find how little communication was possible outside the familiar routine.

The company at this point nominated some more employees for assessment and asked that the first course should be run for employees with a very limited command of English. A group of seven was selected: five men who spoke Mirpuri, a variation of Punjabi, a woman who spoke Punjabi and an Italian woman. Only one of the group was literate in the mother tongue and all were completely illiterate in English. They had all been working for the company for at least eight years and had worked alongside English speakers. Nonetheless none of them had acquired more than a skeleton knowledge of English. Three had a fairly extensive passive vocabulary but none had any
control of syntax. The youngest member of the group was in the early 40s and four were over 50. One one had had any education in the country of origin. All had children who had been at least partially educated in this country and all possessed televisions, tape recorders and, in some cases, videos. The members of the group came from four different sections and therefore had different job training needs, some of which would have to be tackled by the ILT staff on the job rather than in the training rooms.

It was with all this background in mind that the industrial language trainers set about planning the first course.

An example of training for native English speakers

The following example is one from the work program of a West Midlands unit in 1982. The training lasted one full day and was aimed at supervisors and managers. Training for social workers or speech therapists or trade union officials has some of the elements described here and other elements more specifically related to the particular field of work, for example, family relationships, going into people's homes, an examination of Punjabi phonology, etc.

Ten trainees from different workplaces attended the training course. In several cases ILT had already run language projects in the workplaces but the size of the company had made it difficult to organise on-site training for a group of managers and supervisors; in other cases the employers were considering using the service.

The program was designed to encourage trainees to work together and so allow discussion to arise as naturally as possible. It was also designed not to intimidate trainees by appearing to demand some sort of academic background. The program consisted of eight sections, each section beginning with an exercise to help trainees think themselves into the situation and decide what they wanted to find out. For example, the section on names started with leading questions for trainees to try and work out a description of how the British system operates. After the complexities and illogicalities of the system had been explored the trainees both knew what they wanted to find out about, say, Pakistani Muslims' names and were well prepared to find that they Pakistani system of addressing other people was very different from their own and for clear reasons. The program is set out below. Use was made of tape recordings, slides, video material, hand-out training notes, etc.

Communications in a multiracial workplace

1. How much do you already know about immigrant workers in the West Midlands?

2. Arriving in Britain and starting work - first hand accounts.

3. How important is a shared culture? What assumptions do we all make?

4. Names - what's in a name?
5. Case-study set in a multiracial workplace - BBC Worktalk film.

6. Interpreting - a work study exercise.

7. Be thankful you learnt English early - in what respects is it difficult to learn?

8. How can you make your English easier to follow?
LIST OF CONTACTS

The following is a list of organisations to which persons interviewed were affiliated. In many cases more than one person per organisation was interviewed. In all cases interviews were on the basis of strict anonymity and also that the views of the individuals did not represent the organisations to which they were affiliated.

Many individuals whose organisational affiliation is irrelevant (e.g. academics) were also interviewed but are, of course, not listed.

All our interviewees are warmly thanked for their assistance.

Adult Migrant Education Service (NSW)
Adult Migrant Education Service (SA)
Adult Migrant Education Service (Vic.)
W.L. Allen Foundry Company Pty Ltd
Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights' Union (now the AMWU)
Australian Bureau of Statistics
Australian Chemical Industries
Australian Council of Trade Unions
Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs
Australian Railways Union
Australian Trade Union Training Authority
Australian Workers' Union
Australian Building Construction Employees and Builders Labourers' Federation
Broken Hill Pty Ltd
Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia
Council of Adult Education
Dynavac Pty Ltd
Ecumenical Migration Centre
Department of Education (NSW)
Department of Employment and Industrial Relations
Ethnic Communities Council (NSW)
Ethnic Communities Council (Vic.)
Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia
Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia
Federated Storemen and Packers' Union of Australia
Federation of Ethnic Communities Council
Ford Australia Ltd
Garden Island Naval Dockyard
Department of Immigration (Vic.)
Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs
Department of Industrial Relations (NSW)
Labor Council of NSW
Labour Department of SA
Lidcombe Workers' Health Centre
Ministry of Employment and Training (Vic.)
Mitsubishi Motors (SA)
Modern Maid and Staff Pty Ltd
National Institute of Labour Studies (The Flinders University)
NSW Anti-Discrimination Board
NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission
Office of the Director for Equal Opportunity in Public Employment (NSW)
South Australian Ethnic Affairs Commission
South Coast Workers' Health Centre
State Rail Authority (NSW)
State Rail Authority (Vic.)
Department of Technical and Further Education (NSW)
United Trades and Labor Council of South Australia
Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation of Australia
Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission
Victorian Trades Hall Council
Water and Sewerage Employees' Union
Williamstown Naval Dockyard
Workers' Compensation Commission (NSW)
Workers' Research Centre (Wollongong)
Yugoslav-Australian Information and Welfare Society (NSW)
The objective of this article is to review some of the recent literature on the effects of technological and structural change on the migrant section of the Australian labour force and also the experience of migrants in relation to labour market programs in the period 1979-84.

The major conclusions will be that a lack of conceptual clarity associated with the use of analytical categories of dubious relevance has clouded the issues affecting migrant labour force experience. This has been set in the context of a relatively low level of activity in relation to labour market questions affecting migrants and together these two factors have contributed to generating labour market policies which do not even start to meet the real needs of many sections of the migrant labour force. In our concluding section we suggest some possible new approaches.

i) The background

In order to understand the relative neglect of migrant labour market issues it is important to realise that the practice of multiculturalism in the crucial period of labour market deterioration in the late 1970s and early 1980s was one which was informed by an extremely conservative model of ethnicity. It was also directed by a government which was firmly committed to residualist social policies and to denial of the existence of structural causes of group disadvantage in Australia. Thus the central strategy of conservative multiculturalism has been to define as exclusive causes of migrant disadvantage factors connected with language and cultural dissonance: and in so doing to rule out of consideration the question of social class, the most important manifestations of which are related to, or arise from, the labour market. This "ethnicity model" (Morrissey and Jakubowicz, 1980; Eipper, 1983) permeated official analyses of questions affecting migrants, in particular those of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (A.I.M.A.) and the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs which between them controlled the vast bulk of research funding for these matters.
Space does not permit these assertions to be supported by anything more than a few instances, although a detailed historical treatment can be found in Jakubowicz, Morrissey and Palser (1984) and an affirmation of this point of view in the recent review of A.I.M.A. (Committee of Review of A.I.M.A., 1983). However it is worth stressing the fact that the thoroughly belated and entirely ad hoc targeting of migrants as a group with special employment problems, described below is entirely explicable when one looks at some of the central policy documents relating to migrants. Thus the keynote report of the late 1970s virtually ignored the labour market, stating boldly that:

"the main causes of unemployment among migrants are the same as those for Australian-born workers." (Galbally, 1978:91)

This, it might be noted, was an astonishing statement given that evidence of sharp ethnic differences in unemployment rates were already quite visible at the time the report was being written. In fact the report itself contained some of these figures and reacted to them only with a suggestion for investigating "the special needs of migrants in the NEAT programme" (Galbally, 1978:91).

Nor was this emphasis amended as labour market conditions for migrants continued to deteriorate. The A.I.M.A. evaluation of Galbally (A.I.M.A., 1982), as one commentator put it, contained "no discussion or even acknowledgement" of the deteriorating employment situation (Birrell, 1982:15). Other sources such as the Ethnic Communities Council of N.S.W. were even more condemnatory, stating that:

"the discussion on employment is verbal window dressing, naive, partially informed and a grossly insulting trivialisation of the working lives of immigrant workers (sic) ... the evaluation failed to assess the relevance or value of existing government training and unemployment programmes for adults and youth, ... (it) ... almost totally ignores questions of structural unemployment, no proposals or recommendations take these into account ..." (Ethnic Communities Council, 1982:14)

ii) Statistics

The factors discussed above almost certainly contributed to a fairly low level of research activity on labour force issues but there are other factors contributing to the present uncertain state of knowledge which have to do with the inap-
appropriate theoretical structures within which a great deal of past research has been located. Much of this arises from the use of extremely ambiguous analytical categories relating to ethnicity.

As an entry to these problems, consider some dimensions of migrants' labour market experience as presented in Tables 1 to 3. At the most superficial level these figures illustrate the folly of talking about a single migrant experience since they show up a great deal of diversity both along gender lines and between specific birthplace groups with regard to employment, unemployment rates. At a deeper level, however, it might be asked what, precisely, these tables are supposed to tell us. Presumably the mere fact of keeping separate employment statistics on, say, Italo-Australians means that there is a supposition of some distinctively “Italian” labour market experience. (We do not, after all, bother to cross-reference employment statistics by such variables as height, weight or hair colour). The question then arises as to where this “Italian” experience begins and ends; more precisely we are led to question the relationship between place of birth and ethnicity.

It is very common that children born in Australia inherit the ethnicity of their parents, or that such terms as “second generation Italian” can legitimately be used. Thus, a recent study included the following, not unusual, assumption in its statement of methodology.

...“the term ‘Greek’ includes persons of Greek origin who were born in Australia or Greece; the term ‘Italian’ includes both first and second generation Italians and the term ‘Anglo-Australian’ includes the control group in the survey whose ethnic background is entirely Australian or British” (sic). (Young, Cox and Daly, 1983).

The essential point here is that employment statistics based on ethnicity as defined in the above quotation would look very different from those based on country of birth. Specifically the employment experience of migrants and their Australian-born children would look very much worse when compared with that of native Anglophones than the picture presented by country of birth statistics. Moreover the difference between country of birth and ethnicity-based statistics would be much greater for some groups than for others.
Table 1  Civilian Labour Force by Birthplace, May 1984.

Table 2  Civilian Labour Force by Birthplace, May 1984.
Both of these points may be illustrated as follows. We may assume that, leaving aside factors such as differential rates of hidden employment, all "Vietnamese" employment is represented in the A.B.S. figures since virtually no Vietnamese of working age was born in Australia. By contrast very large numbers of working age "Italians" were born in Australia. Thus for the Australian population as a whole the total numbers of people in the 15-19 age group is 27 per cent of that in the 20-44 age group. For those born in Italy the equivalent percentage is 7. Quite obviously the "ethnic Italian" unemployment figure will be much higher than the "born in Italy" figure since the former would include large amounts of youth unemployment excluded from the latter. By contrast the "ethnic Vietnamese" and "born in Vietnam" figures would be identical.

It is important to stress that neither of these formulations presents as unquestionably superior to the other. The reason is that they are both, in a sense, metaphors (or perhaps, more accurately, shorthand terms). To whatever extent people who are ethnically Italian operate at a disadvantage in the Australian labour market it is not the fact of their being Italian which causes this disadvantage (apart from the possible effects of naked prejudice). Rather it is a group of
characteristics supposed to be generally common to Italian immigrants such as lack of competence in English, lack of industrial skills or qualifications and so on. Country of birth statistics are, then, a relevant prediction of labour market experience only if the immigrant group is relatively homogeneous with regard to such characteristics as these. For "ethnically-based statistics" (in the sense described) to be effective it would be necessary that both the immigrant group and their children exhibit a high degree of homogeneity. In short it would presuppose that such disadvantage as is experienced by the immigrant parents is, in fact, passed on in substantial degree to their Australian-born children.

Whether or not this degree of homogeneity actually exists is an empirical question. In some important respects it might be argued that no migrant group is sufficiently homogeneous to use a simple ethnicity or country of birth categorisation since ethnicity is cross cut by a number of other factors among which we might list the following as most important.

- Ethnicity and gender

The labour market experience of non-Anglophone women is not the same as that of non-Anglophone men nor of Anglophone women, as most analysts would recognise. On the other hand little attention has been paid to the experience of migrant women in relation to the labour market and most extant material assumes a short of "additive" model in which disadvantage associated with gender can be distinguished from that associated with ethnicity. In reality migrant women probably make up a distinct labour market segment, not in the sense that the majority of migrant women are in this segment but in the sense that the largest group of people in this segment are migrant women.

- Period of residence

The more recently arrived migrant has almost always been the more disadvantaged and the importance of this factor has increased over the past ten years of deteriorating labour markets. While this may be reflected accurately in country of birth statistics for some ethnic groups it may not be for others. As an example we may compare South-East Asian and Polish migrants. The vast majority of the former have arrived here within the last eight years and in that sense their arrival experience has been fairly uniform; that of attempting to negotiate a more or less depressed economy. The case of Poles is very different in that there have been, in a sense, two "Polish" immigrations, that of the immediate postwar period and that of the early 1980s. An unemployment figure based
on Poland as country of birth would therefore tend to conflate the problems facing two quite distinct groups of people; an ageing, generally unskilled and long-established group on the one hand and a generally young, well-educated, newly-arrived group on the other.

In addition to analytical difficulties of this sort there is the further problem that any general statement about the process of integration over time must be sharply qualified by considerations relating to the social, geographical and workplace location of individual migrants. A stark example of this is the very low degree of correlation between English language ability and length of residence in Australia for some groups of migrants. Foremost among these would be those who work in unskilled jobs in large industrial plants, living in areas of very heavy migrant concentration.

-Social class

The relation between ethnicity and social class in general is full of the sort of analytical difficulties illustrated by the preceding example and paralleling the complex interrelations of ethnicity and gender. Here also it is unsatisfactory to attempt a sort of partial differentiation in which class is "held constant" and the "ethnic" component is studied in isolation (although it is, in fact a commonly adopted approach). This is mainly because of the degree of segmentation which has developed in the workforce, a segmentation which has ensured that for many people class relations are experienced as ethnic relations.

In relation to the question of homogeneity of the "ethnic" as opposed to "migrant" group matters become even more complicated since the degree to which children actually do inherit the ethnicity of their parents is subject to enormous variation depending on a wide variety of factors. At the most basic level there is a wide variation between birthplace groups in the propensity to intermarry with native Anglophones. Recent work on first language retention indicates similar wide interethnic variation in the propensity to maintain the family's native language in Australia (Kalantzis et al., 1985). Again, a wide number of studies conducted under the auspices of the Adult Migrant Education Programme demonstrate substantial inter-ethnic variation in second language competence. Here again the question of social class becomes inextricably mixed with that of ethnicity. Thus the best predictor of second language ability is the level of education in the country of origin. This, however, will generally exert a strong influence also on the eventual employment of the
migrant in Australia. A reinforcing effect then sets in with workers in unskilled blue-collar occupations showing generally very low rates of second language acquisition (see, for example, Morrissey and Palser, 1983).

This pattern of variety, as well as the influence of social class is replicated in studies of migrant youth. For example a 1975 study of schools in areas of high migrant density showed that both children of non English-speaking background and native Anglophone children in these schools had, on average very low levels of academic achievement in relation to state norms, particularly in literacy skills (Dept. of Education, 1975). Also, in spite of a number of studies showing overall that migrant children generally had rather lower levels of academic achievement than non-migrants (e.g. Williams et al., 1981; De Lemos, 1975) that caveat enjoined by Jean Martin should be borne in mind: namely that

"differences among migrants of different non English-speaking background are so great that to pool all the students together in a single background is often very misleading ... We can ... give some indication of the pervasiveness of these differences by stating that on virtually all our measures of performance ... the category of students of non English-speaking background has higher standard deviations than have students of English-speaking backgrounds": (Martin and Meade, 1979:15)

What can be distilled from all this is the theoretical ambiguity of birthplace or ethnicity categorisations in analyses of labour market or educational experience. This ambiguity becomes even more pronounced, however, if even more aggregated categorisations are employed or, even worse, where comparisons are made on the basis of different categorisations. The following example may illustrate this:

iii) Structural change and unemployment

The effect of structural change on migrant workers has been the subject of some controversy in recent years and the results have not been entirely enlightening. A number of factors make it a matter of extreme difficulty to clarify the situation.

First, we have the fact that in general it is difficult to disentangle the effects on the labour market of technological innovation and other structural forces such as changes in relative international competitiveness since these effects are often felt at the same time. The current situation in the steel industry demonstrates this very well with major steelmakers taking advantage of a period of depression to shed labour,
alter production levels and introduce labour replacing technology.

Secondly, there is the fact that migrants' concentration in particular industries does not mean that they are necessarily more vulnerable to labour-replacing innovation. As Kriegler and Sloane (1984) point out, migrants are substantially under-represented in the workforce of some industries where extensive labour replacement is to be expected such as wholesale and retail trading, communication, insurance, agriculture, etc. Thus the relative inter-ethnic effect of technological change depends on the relative rates and level of job losses in those industries such as the above where migrants are under represented and in those where they are over represented such as basic metal products, vehicle manufacture, whitegoods and construction.

Thirdly, prediction is complicated by the fact that migrants may be concentrated into occupations which are more under threat than non-migrants. This may be either in the sense that these occupations are more likely to disappear and or in the sense that experience in such occupations may be an inappropriate basis for taking advantage of opportunities arising from innovation. As Kriegler and Sloane put it in summarising one result of their investigation of technological change in the whitegoods, vehicle and construction industries

"...insignificant numbers of managerial or professional and technical staff were likely to resign, retire early or be retrenched ... Clerical and secretarial workers were overwhelmingly the most likely to be retrained to use the new technology."

Fourthly, existing literature has been deficient in that it has not attacked the possibility that structural change may have an unequal effect on jobs from region to region. Thus it is obvious that in areas like the Illawarra there are massive multiplier effects outside the steel industry resulting from structural change within it. To the extent that these multiplier effects are regionalised there will be an ethnic dimension to them quite simply because of the abnormally high proportion of the Illawarra's population originating in non-English-speaking countries.

Finally, existing literature, (and in particular that which attempts to measure the employment position of migrants directly) is of limited value because the bulk of it focuses on the 1970s and almost all of it does mean that little can be said with certainty about any qualitative changes in the pattern of employment which might have been associated with the rapid
increase in unemployment over the last two years. As an example of such a change, we may present the possibility that lack of English language ability becomes an increasing liability as unemployment rates rise. Certainly the overall figures for some of the most recent arrivals bear this out. As Harrison states:

"One surprise the data have yielded is the extent of the differences in both unemployment levels and the occupational and industrial composition of the employed between recent migrants from English-speaking countries and those from non-English speaking countries. Although one may well expect unemployment to be higher from those from non-English speaking countries ... the extent of extra unemployment is staggering.

For males who have been in Australia one or two years unemployment among those from non-English speaking countries was 32.2% compared with 10.1% for those from English-speaking countries ..." (1983:50)

Even bearing these difficulties in mind, however the currently available literature has done little to throw light on current trends. Generally this literature has fallen towards one of two extremes, the first of which is exemplified by Strieker and Sheehan (1981) whose argument is, in brief, that in the period 1974-1979 "a major shift took place in the occupational structure of the employed workforce in Australia and this created a dismal situation for migrants in contracting occupations and of anglophones in expanding ones. This was manifest in two ways, namely: the fact that in Australia 1979 unemployment rates by age group were in each case higher for those born outside Australia than for those born here." (1981:158); and (they argued) "in a major reversal in migrant participation rates" (1981:169) reflecting a withdrawal of migrants from the labour force and into the ranks of the hidden unemployed.

This argument was contested in a number of articles, most notably Bonnell and Dixon who used an econometric model to assess the effects described by Strieker and Sheehan and came to the conclusion that:

"Apart from the statistics for 15-19 year olds, we found little evidence suggesting a deterioration in the labour market position of migrants relative to non-migrants". (Bonnell and Dixon, 1982:19).

There have been a number of criticisms of this paper on technical grounds but these seem less relevant to evaluating the paper than consideration of the categories and time scales within which it operates. Thus the only section of the paper
which deals with the period after 1976 is that which examines changes in participation rates and here the comparison is of Australian versus non-Australian born. Given the "migrants" in this sense includes British and other anglophone migrants whose labour market performance has largely paralleled that of the Australian-born, it is unsurprising to find that the results do not bear out the Stricker-Sheehan hypothesis since this related to non-anglophones and to Southern Europeans in particular.

The other part of the Bonnell-Dixon paper deals with a direct evaluation of the effects of structural change on employment by ethnicity. Here, again, it is difficult to evaluate the results. Apart from the fact that, as they admit, Bonnell and Dixon's results "qualitatively" support the idea that migrants had, in fact, suffered relatively badly from structural change there has to be a great deal of doubt about accepting results from the period 1971-76 as a "test" of the Stricker-Sheehan findings which referred to the period 1974-79. Thus in relation to the first point, Bonnell and Dixon actually did find that 5.96 per cent of Yugoslavs, (for example), had been displaced by structural change in five years. Their conclusion that this is not "spectacular" should be judged by asking what adjective one would apply to such a change if it took place across all ethnic groups, in particular since their own figures demonstrated substantial offsets to job losses in blue-collar occupation by increased in white collar occupations for anglophones. The second point is probably the more serious however. In 1976 the labour market position of non-anglophone migrants in the groups investigated by Bonnell and Dixon (Italian, Greek, Yugoslav) had only begun the slide it later took. In addition, the ethnic composition of the workforce has changed considerably since 1976 with a much higher proportion now falling into groups not separately treated in these papers due to demographic changes such as the ageing of the longer-established groups such as Italians, and also due to high levels of immigration in the last eight years of ethnic groups such as the Indo-Chinese whose unemployment rates are far in excess of those of native anglophones.

The Bonnell and Dixon paper has been dwelt upon at some length since it exemplifies some of the difficulties and contradictions inherent in talking about the labour market position of "migrants" and also because it brings into focus the absurdity of making judgements about the present position on the basis of evidence which is almost a decade out of date.
It was also intended to demonstrate that a great deal of work on specific industrial situations involving specific migrant groups will be necessary before a clear picture of labour force experience can be produced. When we turn from attempts at analysis to review the execution of labour market policies, however, the prospect is even more bleak.

iv) Labour market programmes

The programmes examined are those operating up to and including the Wage Pause Programme. At the time of writing, hard data on the Community Employment Programme were not available but there were indications that the criticisms made below of Wage Pause could equally be levelled at the C.E.P.

In attempting to assess migrants' experience of these programmes we must rely to a great extent on more or less informed guesswork and inference. The reason why may be seen from an attempt to find explicit references to migrants in the available literature relating to these programmes. An entry point may be given by the proceedings of the Conference on Youth Employment, Education and Training held in 1981. The keynote paper, an overview of youth employment and unemployment (Gregory and Stricker, 1981) did not once mention migrant youth and neither did the discussants of the paper rectify this omission. In fact only one of the otherwise comprehensive papers at this conference paid any reference to problems of migrant youth (Keeves, 1981) and, significantly, this related specifically to the school system which, for reasons discussed below has been a more intensively studied area than the labour market in matters relating to migrants. Even papers referring to countries other than Australia with high recent levels of immigration did not address this topic. (Smith, 1981; Pankhurst, 1981. See also Connell and Musgrave, 1981; Kirby, 1981; Scherer, 1981; Dixon, 1981).

In citing the proceedings of this conference it is not with the intention of criticising the participants for lack of thoroughness in their approach. Rather, the purpose is to illustrate a general point: that if, for reasons already discussed, we have only a cursory knowledge of migrant labour force experience in general terms, we have for both these additional reasons virtually no knowledge of their experience of labour market programmes.

One reason for this, of course, is that until the inception of Wage Pause, no programme identified migrants or any
migrant sub-group as a particular object of policy implementation. This may have been a function of the overall pressures in what one might term the "migrant research industry" to ignore labour market or - more broadly - class factors and also it may reflect the haziness of analytical procedures, both of which are detailed above; but there are other reasons also. First, as the Bureau of Labour Market Research points out, until very recently over 75 per cent of expenditure on labour market programmes has been on youth training and assistance (B.L.M.R., 1983:2). Given that there have been a number of statistical and methodological disjunctures which may well have led to an underestimate of the seriousness of migrant youth's labour market problems it is entirely probable that concentration on youth has compounded the tendency for migrants not to emerge as an object of policy in this respect.

Whatever the reason for this invisibility, however, the evidence for it is fairly plain. Thus a careful reading of the B.L.M.R. report quoted above shows that the word migrant does not appear once, a fact we highlight without any intention of pilorying the B.L.M.R. since the report in question is probably a fairly accurate description of what actually happened. One might even sharpen this point by reference to another; that even though (and justifiably) the 1980/81 programmes contained reference to "special groups" only ex-prisoners are nominated in this category. This should be seen in the context of the fact that large numbers of refugees were arriving at the time, including a high proportion of young people likely to experience employment difficulties of a magnitude that requires no elaboration.

A further demonstration of lack of awareness of the migrant dimension is provided by a recent publication of the Department of Education and Youth Affairs, Youth Policies, Programmes and Issues (1983a). This 250 page study presents, among other things a mass of statistical information in the form of over sixty tables ranging in content from school retention rates to the marital status of cohabitants yet not one of these tables contains any information on country of birth or any other aspect of ethnicity. The first 21 pages of the report, a synopsis for the benefit of a visiting O.E.C.D. team, does not mention migrants at all (pp.xii-xxxiv) and in the lengthy chapter on "Employment and Training Programmes" (pp.110-187) the only indications of awareness of the ethnic composition of the Australian population are a few passing references to ethnicity. Not one paragraph deals specifically with migrant youth.
These omissions were to some extent corrected by a short report by the Ethnic Liaison Officers' Working Party on immigrant and refugee youth (D.E.Y.A., 1983a) which was able to present some statistical information, reproduced in Table 4. These statistics taken mainly from the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations “are not claimed to be accurate” (D.E.Y.A., 1983b:39) and would be of only limited value even if they were. For reasons we have already discussed comparisons based on Australian as opposed to overseas birth reveal very little. We can, however, draw a limited conclusion from the fact that major programmes such as the CRAFT scheme are not included in the above table, and that people with language difficulties were virtually excluded from the SYETP which accounted for 25 per cent of spending on manpower and training schemes in 1980/81 (B.L.M.R., 1983:1). In a separate section on apprenticeship training the working party found that virtually no information exists at present on migrant’s access. However, it is a fairly reasonable assumption that the exclusion of migrants in general (and of those with English language difficulties in particular) from workplace-based programmes such as SYETP would be replicated in the case of apprenticeship programmes such as CRAFT (which in 1980/81 accounted for over 38 per cent of total expenditure on relevant training programmes. (B.L.M.R., 1983:1).

In relation to other programmes, the Working Party found that no information was available on migrant participation in the Community Youth Support Scheme although the investigations of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs had led them to believe that it was “quite low”, particularly in the case of young women (A.I.M.A., 1982: para. 11.40). A similar pattern emerged for the Education Programme for Unemployed Youth where “with a few notable recent exceptions activities and programmes funded under transition have not been directed at ESL skills or at education programmes compensating for earlier education in another language and with a different curriculum (D.E.Y.A., 1983:38).

The major differences between previous schemes and the Wage Pause Programme were, in the present context, a heavier emphasis on older workers and a specification of migrants as a target group. The record of the programme in terms of placements is summarised by the B.L.M.R. (1984:128) as follows in Table 5. On the face of it this seems a fairly dismal record relative to migrants since “Persons with
language difficulties" received only 0.6 per cent of placements (as opposed to 0.5 per cent for ex-prisoners, for example). Those born overseas are recorded as receiving only 7.8 per cent of placement which greatly under-represents their presence in the labour force and gives no clue as to the percentage of non-Anglophones in this group.

There are severe difficulties of interpretation here, however. First, migrants may have been present in any of the remaining target group placements except one (Aboriginals). Secondly, this is equally true of people classified as having language difficulties. Thirdly, the C.E.S. has no statistical classification of "migrants with language difficulties" (the guideline target) but two separate classifications: "born overseas" and "persons with language difficulties". It is an open question how many of the former have language difficulties and how many of the latter are migrants. Generally speaking, A.B.S. data on language competence is of little help here since it is highly suspect and at variance with a number of intensive studies. Not withstanding these difficulties the B.L.M.R.'s conclusion was that:

"the target disadvantaged groups of Aborigines, disabled persons, migrants with language difficulties and out-of-trade apprentices are represented but their limited share of the jobs created does not compensate for their over-representation among the unemployed"  
(1984:143)

This, of course, is a heavy criticism if we accept the proposition, based on a theoretical analysis, which Sloan and Wooden advance, that:

"to achieve the equity objectives of manpower policy, it is essential that... (labour market programmes)... be targeted on those groups in society who are considered genuinely disadvantaged in the labour market. Further, targeting on groups whose market power is weak should generate lower wage pressure than if the expenditure were not targeted. Finally "windfall gains to the employer are less likely to accrue if employers are impelled to recruit from a group which they would normally exclude". (1984:52, see also Smith, 1981 and 1983)

The question of participation is, of course, only one aspect of the relevant picture; equally important is the question of what people participate in. Thus Sloane and others place a great deal of emphasis on training which, she says:

"offers the possibility of reversing potentially life-long disadvantages faced by certain groups in the labour market".

50
We have already noted the strong possibility that migrants have not benefitted in this respect, merely on the grounds that they have participated in programmes far less than their labour market position would seem to merit. There are additional causes for concern, however, in that, apart from the question of targeting for inclusion, there has been little thought given to the question of targeting for needs.

If we assume that some migrants have both different and additional handicaps in securing employment relative to native anglophones, it follows that they will have different needs: primarily (although not exclusively) language-related. It has already been shown that programmes preceding Wage Pause engendered responses to this in only a few instances. Under subsequent public sector job creation programmes, it has been the practice to favour projects which involve an element of "training" but no systematic guidelines exist describing what, for particular disadvantaged groups, such training should actually be. In practice, also, it will be extremely difficult to monitor what training has actually taken place. The essence of the problem is that the labour market handicap of
Table 5  Wage Pause Program: CES Placements by Main Disadvantage by Age Group and Sex  
(numbers and per cent in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th></th>
<th>PERSONS</th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aged under 25</td>
<td>25 &amp; over</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Aged under 25</td>
<td>25 &amp; over</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Targeted disadvantaged groups</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Aboriginals</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.6)</td>
<td>(5.7)</td>
<td>(6.1)</td>
<td>(2.9)</td>
<td>(3.6)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Disabled</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.9)</td>
<td>(6.7)</td>
<td>(5.9)</td>
<td>(4.1)</td>
<td>(5.0)</td>
<td>(4.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Persons with language difficulty</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.3)</td>
<td>(1.1)</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td>(0.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Out-of-trade apprentices</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.8)</td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
<td>(0.0)</td>
<td>(0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Targeted disadvantaged groups</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Single Bread winner with dependents</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.9)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td>(2.2)</td>
<td>(0.5)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td>(1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ex Prisoners</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td>(0.9)</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. First Job Seekers</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0.0)</td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td>(4.3)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td>(2.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Labour Market Re-Entrants</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.1)</td>
<td>(0.9)</td>
<td>(0.9)</td>
<td>(0.0)</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
<td>(0.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Born Overseas</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(10.1)</td>
<td>(7.5)</td>
<td>(5.7)</td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
<td>(8.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Groups</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Other' disadvantaged</td>
<td>1447</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>3192</td>
<td>1108</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>1473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Specified</td>
<td>1538</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>3559</td>
<td>1187</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>1681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(38.2)</td>
<td>(33.1)</td>
<td>(33.2)</td>
<td>(39.2)</td>
<td>(28.6)</td>
<td>(35.9)</td>
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<td>(100.0)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3793</td>
<td>5269</td>
<td>9062</td>
<td>2827</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>4103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a person with poor language skills will scarcely be improved by a limited period of employment which does nothing to enhance those skills.

This raises an important question about the logic of targeting, a question particularly relevant to migrants, although not exclusively so. Generally targeting has involved concentration on a number of categories which may encompass an extremely heterogeneous collection of people. If, as seems to be the case, the equity objective of current programmes, then there is a strong argument for targeting programmes towards other manifestations of disadvantage than mere location in a more or less arbitrary category like "migrant". It can also be argued that simply placing a person in a job for six months is not necessarily the best way of alleviating disadvantage.

The preceding account of labour market programmes may be interpreted to support the following proposition; that the broader the targeting categories of job creation programmes and the greater the degree of potential employers' discretion in selecting individuals from within those categories, the more are the most disadvantaged excluded from the programme and the less will the causes of disadvantage be attacked. As an example, let us cite the B.L.M.R.'s finding on "demographic concentration" in youth training programmes that:

"in employment-based assistance females were more likely to be placed in lower skilled jobs provided under the flat rate subsidies of SYETP whereas males were more likely to be assisted under age-tired subsidies of GTA on-the-job training. Access to skilled trades training was almost exclusively for very young males who were new entrants to the workforce". (1983:24)

In other words gender-based occupational segregation was actually reinforced, and it is probably unnecessary to ask the additional question of how many of the relatively small number of females gaining access to skilled trades training were migrants. Similar questions with regard to "employer discretion" can be raised by the gender breakdown of Wage Pause placements by state which varied from the three lowest female employment rates of the Northern Territory, South Australia and Queensland (12.8 per cent, 15.9 per cent and 17.6 per cent) to the highest three of 41.4 per cent, 41.7 per cent and 53 per cent for Victoria, Tasmania and the A.C.T.

The main concern in this respect is that the programmes under review have catered to a great deal of employers' discretion and have utilised extraordinarily broad target categories. In such a situation it is likely that potential employers will tend to cream off applicants who will be least
in need of training and whose employment will necessitate the least alteration of established work routines. It is to be asked for example, whether the migrant women actually employed under existing schemes are employed primarily because of their membership of a category or because they genuinely do exhibit the characteristic features through which the social penalisation of many migrant women is demonstrated; i.e. lack of English, relative poverty, social isolation, low education levels, unfavourable geographical location and so on.

The general point is that where a programme whose major objective is equity is fed through a system which has massive institutionalised inequalities, then we shall tend to find those inequalities perpetuated within (and by) the programme itself. Although it is difficult to establish just what these programmes have done for migrants with any degree of precision, the indicators from available literature are that migrants have suffered a degree of exclusion and that possibly the most disadvantaged have been the most thoroughly excluded. This raises important questions about the relevance for migrants of both current targeting philosophies and programmes whose major area of operation is actually in the work force.

Conclusion

The conclusion to emerge from the foregoing sketches of some aspects of labour market experience in Australia is that attempts to make global statements about the labour market experience of migrants are likely to produce little more than confusion; and that disaggregating along regional or ethnic lines is unlikely to alleviate this. In the period of very rapid structural change through which we are now passing it will be necessary to have much more precise knowledge of the difference processes affecting migrant workers if only in order to ensure that future retraining and relocation schemes are not as completely irrelevant and inadequate as they have been in the past. This will only be achieved by detailed studies of specific groups of workers in different industries and workforce locations. Moreover these studies will be successful only if conducted in full awareness of the fact that migrant workers are differentiated by gender and located within a class system.

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