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With several authors contributing, *ALR* opens what it hopes will be a continuing discussion on the family and politics.

Following earlier publication of a variety of foreign policy viewpoints, we now include a World Disarmament statement of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.

Allan Ashbolt examines the media situation and the problems it presents to the trade unions.

Mark Burford analyses the background to the recent formation of a left government in France.

We reprint an abridgment of Monty Johnstone and Andreas Westphal's study of the Polish crisis.

Eric Fry considers the character and impact of socialist thought in Australia since the 1880s.


In Economic Notes, Gavan Butler looks at the relationship of the mining and manufacturing sectors of the Australian economy.

Reviews by Barrie Blears (*Power, Conflict and Control in Australian Trade Unions*) and Hugh Saddler (*The Energy Question*) complete the issue.

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(Melbourne) Steve Catt, Dave Davies, Philip Edmonds, Philip Herington, Brian Lowe, Brian Murphy, Olga Silver, Charles Silver, Bernie Taft, Roger Wilkinson.

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Box A247, Sydney South PO, Sydney 2000.

Political Responses to the Family

Under the rubric of "Political Responses to the Family" in this issue ALR publishes an abridged version of an American discussion paper on the family and politics. Given in July 1981 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at the annual convention of the New American Movement (NAM), a marxist-based organisation of US socialists, the paper provoked a vigorous debate on the issues raised by its authors, one of whom (Michael Lerner) is the co-ordinator of the Workers Occupational Health Centre, Oakland, California. Australians present at the NAM convention brought the paper back to Australia and here it has likewise had an impact, apparently arousing strong feelings both for and against.

Bringing It All Back Home

by Michael Lerner, Laurie Zoloth and Hon. Wilson Riles, Jnr.

The rightwing ideology that has gained national prominence and credibility in the past few years may soon be consolidated as the dominant world view in American life. The shooting of Ronald Reagan further intensifies the basic fears that are held by a majority of the American public: that personal life is in crisis, that life is no longer safe, that the few bastions of protection from the dangers of the larger world are themselves under attack. Because progressives and liberals have been reluctant to look seriously at these underlying feelings that are the bedrock upon which conservative ideas are allowed to flourish, they have consistently missed the point, and are now in danger of becoming relegated to a permanent minority status.

The reaction to the first half-year of the Reagan Presidency on the part of liberals and progressives has reflected this basic misunderstanding of what is really happening. At first, we hear a chorus of denial: the right wing had only won a minority of the total electorate, and only a minority of those who voted for Reagan did so because they agreed with specific rightwing programs. What this missed was the reality that, faced with the choices as they understood them, more people felt comfortable with a rightwing candidacy than with any other choice except not voting. Moreover, the current dominance of the media and institutions that shape public opinion by ideas that the right wing has been pushing for decades gives them an unprecedented opportunity to consolidate and grow, while alternative positions are virtually unheard of from any quarter.

We should understand that the ideas being put forward are not new: they have received considerable backing before by corporate America, but they were always counter-balanced by an ideology of liberalism that had access to the media through its control of the
government. The collapse of the alternative is accelerated also by the reality that those remaining liberals have thought that their best survival strategy is to talk increasingly as though they were really conservatives all along.

A second reaction has been to put forward shocked outrage as budget cuts for social welfare programs have been coupled with increases in defence spending. The liberals have talked of putting together coalitions to protest the cuts, uniting all sectors affected. But these coalitions only unite the very sectors who were opposed to Reagan in the first place, and despite serious coalition attempts involving organised labor, feminist organisations, third world groups and environmentalists, they were defeated in the last election.

Coalitions of the 1960s and '70s

The coalition-building strategy, perhaps culminating in mass marches and demonstrations to dramatise how badly the cuts will affect some sectors of the population, comes from a different historical age: the 1960s and early '70s, when millions of people took to the streets. But the difference is this: both Presidents Johnson and Nixon ran on programs of avoiding war and championing the oppressed. When they failed to do so, the movements in the streets could wear the mantle of moral outrage: the people were being lied to and betrayed by their elected officials. By uncovering public hypocrisy, we were, in fact, acting as the representatives of the majority of the population who had been tricked at the ballot box.

Reagan and the conservatives who were elected to the Congress did not lie to us; they were clear and forthright about their determination to cut social welfare programs, to dramatically cut the budget, to favor the needs of the corporations over the needs of the poor and to dramatically increase defence spending and take an aggressive and perhaps warlike position in the rest of the world. They won, they perceive themselves to have a mandate, and even demonstrations the size of the 1960s would not undermine that perception.

A third reaction has been for progressives to reassure themselves that everything will work out because Reagan’s economic policies won’t work. Consoled by the prospect of rising unemployment and continued or perhaps even increased inflation, they see the discrediting of rightwing ideology as an inevitable development if we can just weather the next few years. There are several objections to this. First, rising human misery does not necessarily lead to rising radicalism: it can just as readily lead to increasing despair, passivity, or willingness to support military adventurism to restore US economic supremacy around the world. Second, Reagan's economic doctrines were not what won the election, but rather his ability to speak to the fears and insecurities of daily life.

If the right can consolidate their hold over mass consciousness in the period ahead, no set of economic difficulties will be in itself sufficient to dislodge their political strength. On the contrary, they may then be in a position to identify new scapegoats, new enemies whose programs and positions have thwarted the effectiveness of their economic policies. Whether it be a focus on the ways that liberals blocked some of the cuts that they had argued for, or whether it be through pointing the blame at Arab oil, or at the international communist conspiracy or the Soviet Union, the right wing will have sufficient arguments for deflecting the criticism.

The point is that the right wing did not win by having a better set of economic arguments than liberals, but rather because they spoke to the basic needs of the population for a different quality of life. People are willing to endure economic hardships, wars and domestic unrest if they believe that it is part of a larger plan that will eventually lead to a world that they really want. The right wing has been able to harness moral righteousness and idealism as well as the fear and insecurity people face, and to address those needs in a way that has given them a political mandate.
Our point comes into focus most clearly if we see how the right has used the issues of family life and crime. For two decades the right has hammered away at these issues, while liberals dismissed them as merely the prattling of reactionaries. Carter's creation of an Office of the Family inside the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, without any serious funding for it, had about as much impact as his White House Conference on the Family: both were window dressing that were transparent attempts to avoid these issues rather than deal with them.

The family issue and the growth of the right

Equally important, the right had the popular impression going for it that progressives, liberals and the women's movement were all indifferent at best or hostile at worst to the family lives of most Americans. It is the progressives who have come to be identified in mass consciousness with the position that individual liberty is the supreme value, that "do your own thing" must take precedence over long-term commitments, and that individual pursuit of pleasure is the goal of life. To some extent, this was a misunderstanding based on the fact that the progressives had greatest access to media in the late 1960s and early '70s when the conjuncture of counter-cultural individualism and the early anti-nuclear family statements of some elements of the feminist movement were given dramatic public play. But to some extent it reflects a continued failure to understand and publicly legitimate the values that people seek to achieve in their family life. For many progressives there is a lingering suspicion of "family life", a suspicion based on their correct perception that many families are oppressive to the women and children within them.

The critics of the family suspect that many of the rightwing leaders who speak of supporting the family really have in mind a return to a patriarchal family with women subordinated and abandoning their work outside the home. That may be true of many of these leaders. But it is not for that reason that so many people are responding. Rather, it is the vision of a family as the place where one is supposed to get nurturing and love, regardless of one's actual achievements in the world, that moves people to desire a defence of the family and a return to family values.

It is not to the point to argue that such a picture of family belies the reality that exists in many families, or that ever existed. That women have often been oppressed in families is certain. But that does not lead to a conclusion that families or family life should be downplayed, but rather that necessary changes are needed with regard to this aspect of family life. But when most people respond to the calls for a defence of family life, it is not because they yearn for a place to oppress women, but rather for a place where human love and intimacy can be treated as the highest value.

It is in recognising this yearning as valid and noble that the right wing can validate itself and its political and social message. The core feelings of despair over the demise of family life are then taken by the right, and attached to a specific social and political and economic program that has little to do with actually achieving the kind of vision that most people strive for. But they will be supported as long as no one else can speak to those same needs and desires. For example, the right can argue that it is gays, the women's movement, or even "government intervention in private life" that are undermining family life, and though its analysis of exactly how these connections work may seem implausible or difficult to follow, it is nevertheless accepted by people and mouthed as a litany of truth. Why? Because most people have never heard any other explanation of the collapse of families. And because liberals and progressives are identified with cultural themes like "If this relationship doesn't feel good, don't hassle with it — just go on to another one" or "Sexuality should be divorced from emotions — it's just another kind of fun. Enjoy it like good food", they seem* to be undervaluing the importance of building lasting relationships.
It is time for progressives to consciously and publicly reverse these misconceptions by loudly and clearly identifying with the defence of the family, while insisting that the definition of family now be expanded to include single-parent families, extended families, gay families and kinship networks.

What really undermines family life?

The moment we take up the challenge of the family, identify with it, and really commit ourselves to building a program for support of the family, we are in a dramatic position to fundamentally challenge the analysis and policies of the right. Once we ask ourselves, "How do we create a society within which long-term commitments to love, intimacy and emotional nurturing are really possible?" we see that it is precisely a progressive program that makes most sense.

The right is in an impossible contradiction: because, in fact, the destruction of the possibility of loving, creative family life has been a product of the economic market which the right is committed to defending. People feel that they are losing control of what is happening in their personal life, that they are being manipulated by outside forces, and that their basic support structures — families — are in danger of falling apart. Their feelings are correct. But the right identifies this with gays, or the women's movement, or "government intervention". In fact, these problems grow out of the way the economy and the workplace are organised.

Consider the world of work. Most workers face jobs that are increasingly stressful, as human satisfactions decrease and opportunities for real human interactions are diminished. The fragmentation of work, the deskilling of the work force, the difficulty of maintaining working class solidarity and the overt attacks on trade unions — all combine to create conditions in which the individual worker experiences stress — and typically interprets this as a personal problem instead of a collective dilemma for all workers to solve. Because stress manifests differently for different workers (for some as headaches, for others as neck or back tensions, for others as high blood pressure, for others as colitis, insomnia, depression, withdrawal, alcoholism, drug abuse or frantic activity), most people rarely understand that they are facing a common work-related problem. Instead, they feel bad about themselves for having stress symptoms.

Male workers often compound these sources of self-blaming with a feeling that they should be tougher, and that the fact that they experience stress is an indication of personal lack of strength and manliness. In addition, because most workers believe that this is a meritocracy in which individual worth will be rewarded in the marketplace, when they experience their jobs as stressful they feel bad about themselves, sure that the stress is a reminder of their own failures as an individual to have achieved a better job. So a typical way that stress is handled is not by collective struggle to change the situation, but by individual denial, coupled with an internalisation of the stress. But that stress is then brought home, manifesting itself in tensions and irritations that grow out of hand.

When progressives have addressed these issues at all, it has usually been in a way that suggested that the individuals involved needed government help to deal with their "personal" problems. Whether it be in sponsoring alcohol programs for rehabilitating the alcoholics, or community mental health clinics and individual therapy for "the troubled individual" or more recently "employee assistance" programs at the workplace, the liberal position has always reinforced the basic view that the worker has a personal problem. On the other hand, the right wing insists that this is a reflection of a common social problem labelled as "the breakdown of the family". This is insidious because of where it lays the blame, but it has actually been empowering to many working people because it tends to undermine self-blame.

* This is often an unfair conclusion based on serious and important questions being raised about family. But this is the perception we must deal with.
The obvious move now is for progressives to join the right in defining these problems as common and social ones, but to correctly identify the source for this family breakdown in the current organisation of the workplace. This analysis leads us to say that the number one priority for supporting the family is to humanise the workplace in such a way that people come out of it strengthened in their ability to participate in loving and intimate relationships rather than emotionally wrecked. And this, in turn, raises the issue of democratic control of work as a necessary part of family support, the issue of health and safety at work, and even consideration of the 30-hour work week and strict prohibitions on forced overtime.

It is not just the workplace, but the economic structure as a whole that creates individuals who are unable to participate in long-term loving relationships. The central economic program of the New Right is a return to the competitive marketplace. It does not take too much argument to help show people that it is this very spirit of competition that creates people who are unable to fully love and trust each other. Schooled from earliest times in the message that everyone around us is a potential adversary, and reconfirmed in this by the constant struggle to get ahead in the world of work, most people enter into relationships scared and distrusting. The continual need to keep one's distance from other people, to be on constant alert for the ways that they will take advantage of you, the constant injunction of the “common sense” of capitalism to “Look out for Number 1” and, in the words of the theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel, to “Suspect Your Neighbour as Yourself”, creates a personality type that finds it hard to abandon the emotional armour and connect in deep and intimate ways.

A first priority in strengthening the family, as we have already seen, is to humanise the workplace and to undermine the competitive dynamics of the economy that create character structures in all of us that make loving more difficult.

But there are a host of other specific institutional supports that can be created for family life. One obvious example is an adequate system of child care. In the past, communities and extended families provided the necessary support systems for the raising of children. This is much less true today, and we need to take community responsibility for supporting those people who are raising children. Child care must be available both through community-controlled centres (funded both by the community and the large corporations who employ us outside the home), and through neighborhood associations developed on a voluntary basis and aimed at assisting parents and paying attention to the children of the neighborhood and their needs.

Strengthening families also requires a host of support institutions in the larger community. Health services must be freely available — and their use cannot be a function of anyone's income. Nothing destroys families more dramatically than sickness or death — and often these can be prevented if we have a more rational health system. It is precisely in the name of family support that we must argue for eliminating the profit from health care, and developing a system that is based on the real needs of the community. Family counselling services should be publicly supported so that people who are facing tensions can get support before the tensions have gotten out of hand. Birth control counselling and adequate education about the care and rearing of children must be given a much higher priority for public funding. We want strong families — and those are families based on having made a real choice about when and under what circumstances to bring children into the world, and families that have the material and spiritual resources to raise their children in a loving and supportive way.

Nothing undermines family life more than economic insecurity. Unemployment or the fear of unemployment creates fears that often get expressed in alcoholism, drug abuse, family violence, or even crime. Even in the less extreme cases these fears manifest in a
decreased energy for dealing with family relationships, less openness to loving contacts with others, and more fears about the world; Unemployment affects the employed worker as well — s/he constantly knows that s/he is expendable, and that creates huge tensions that are too often brought home.

Fragmentation

A major contributing factor to the dissolution of family life is the fragmentation of communities that has been deeply accelerated by our economic structure. Families are isolated from each other and now have few natural support systems to help them through moments of crisis or strain. As people have been forced to move away from their communities of birth in order to find new jobs and to escape the decay of cities, older ties have broken and extended families fragmented. But little has replaced these older ties, and people often find that it is difficult to form ties to the people who live around them, sometimes difficult to even know their neighbours. They often communicate in superficial ways about their own family lives, and get their information about what is really happening in others' families more from magazines and TV dramatisations than from honest communication with their neighbours. Because their own personal problems often seem more intractable than those that can be solved in the 27½ minute time span that is needed for TV people, some viewers come to feel that their own problems are worse (and they as people are worse) than others around them. This can lead to despair and defeatism as well as a desire to avoid honest discussion with their neighbours. The isolation increases, and with it the tendency to have no outside supports for dealing with family tensions. The usual pattern: long periods of covering up the tensions and unhappiness, followed by a sudden rupture that may lead to family violence, alcoholism, depression, separation, or divorce.

It is important to understand that the patriarchal family structure that worked in the 19th century does not function in the late twentieth-century society, and that attempts to recreate it inevitably backfire and undermine family life. Women will continue to leave family situations that are oppressive to them: this is a development that cannot and should not be stopped. So if we want to preserve two-parent families, we want to ensure that these families provide an equality of respect and an equality of power and an equality of financial opportunity and financial responsibility that are the only stable bases upon which long-term intimacy can be based.

In this way we must understand the movement for equality of power and respect for women represents a force for strengthening family life by creating women who will insist on the kinds of relationships that have real potential for genuine love and intimacy. The breakdowns of family life through much of the 20th century in the US has often been based on the following pattern: women who were forced into subordinate and unrespected roles in the family, slowly building up resentment and anger that were nowhere legitimated until the stress of this situation broke through, either in behaviours that were labelled "hysteria" or "depression" or "psychosis", or in resentful actions that got them labelled as "bitchy" or "self-centred", or in leaving the family and seeking divorce. It would be not only morally incorrect but practically unworkable to try to save the family by convincing women to accept this subordination and growing to like it. If two-parent families are to work, they will do so because this destructive dynamic has been removed, because women have gained real equality of power and respect, at work and home.

But it is important to emphasise that it is not in the name of unrestricted individual rights that we make this argument. Rather, it is because we share with many people of all shades of the political spectrum the fundamental belief that a truly human vision is one that is based on the mutual interconnectedness and mutual dependency and mutual love between people that we then proceed to argue for those changes that could make these kinds of relationships possible.
It is for the same reason that we insist that children be treated with respect in families. Not out of some commitment to "individual rights" as the highest value, but out of an understanding that truly loving relationships cannot be compelled and rarely emerge out of force or power plays. It is precisely when children feel most respected that they are most able to give the kind of energy and enthusiasm to their families that make families work best. We do not mean to imply here that equality of respect requires equal power in decisions for children. What it does require is that when limits and restrictions are placed on children, they are explained in ways that are appropriate to the development level of the child, with a full communication to the child of the respect and love that are ingredients in the placing of those limits. It also requires the opportunity for children to express their feelings, including negative feelings, about the situations they are facing in their family life.

**Single-parent families**

Support for family life does not mean only support for two-parent families. Single-parent families, extended families, gay families, and kinship systems are also an important focus of our support. Wherever people are making the kind of long-term emotional and financial commitment to each other to take care of each other and provide ongoing love and intimacy we have the development of a family arrangement. There can be no enshrining of the "nuclear family" as the only appropriate form — though it is a form that may still work for many people and should be respected as such.

On the other hand, we must avoid any tendency to suggest that people who are single are somehow to be blamed or put down for not being in a permanent primary relationship. The collapse of long-term relationships, as we argue throughout this article, is more often a function of the social and economic conditions in which we live than in any defect or moral fault of the individuals involved. One of the worst aspects of rightwing propaganda about the family has been the way that it has seemed to suggest that people were making evil choices if they did not remain in a family. On the contrary, we insist that women who leave oppressive marriages after unsuccessfully struggling to change them are making a valid and correct choice and that none of our support for the family is meant to suggest that they should rethink that choice.

On the other hand, we must also avoid the tendency to suggest that the current development of single-parent families represents a higher form of evolution or a very good alternative for most of the people involved. We hold that long-term loving relationships between adults are a more fulfilling way for human beings to be, and that the unavailability of non-oppressive and realisable options for this alternative is a tragic reality of this society.

Not surprisingly, the single-parent form is one that most completely fits the needs of the existing social arrangements. At a previous stage in development the patriarchal family seemed to play this function, not only reproducing labour power but also reproducing the authoritarian forms of social interaction that would mirror the world of work. But today, the single-parent family fits the needs of social control even better. On the most obvious level, single women find that the combination of stress at work and trying to keep a family together without even the minimal supports of another parent often depletes them of time and energy that might be potentially used for political activity or trade union participation. Without a second income to buffer against possible job loss or the incursions of inflation, it becomes all the more difficult to maintain the militancy of struggle at one's job. Moreover, without another parent to provide a ready source of emergency baby-sitting, single parents are all the more thrown into dependence upon the television as baby-sitter of last resort, with a corresponding increase of penetration by the larger economy into the consciousness and daily struggles of one's family. Nothing could fit better the needs of the larger economy.
There is a more subtle level in which this is true as well. While there are still some sectors of the work force that are kept in line by direct authoritarian control on the work floor, labour militancy is increasingly undermined by the workers themselves who are encouraged to internalise feelings about themselves that make them feel powerless.

The family, in all its many forms, is the key institution for passing on the accumulated heritage of our humanity, our wisdom, our loving, and our passions. Because it is critical to the lives of most of us (even those who do not see themselves as currently in a "family" often spend much of their psychic energy trying to resolve issues that were raised in their families of origin), we cannot simply abandon this terrain to the right and its cynical attempts to manipulate the issue for their own partisan gain.

Our concern about the family comes from an understanding that it is an important part of our humanity, and that the attachment that most people feel to it is based in part on their hopes for the future, their vision of what a good life could be, and their commitment to giving to their children the best that they can. Our interest in families is not merely instrumental in terms of dealing with the mass psychology of the right, but also flows from a deep understanding of the pivotal role that families play in the transmission of values and vision to the next generations. Because of this stewardship for the future, we have to fight for the best and most liberatory vision of what family life can be, and to fight for those changes in the society that could make that vision actual.

Within the ambit of the general discussion on the topic, Margo Moore, Judy Mundey and Joyce Stevens in "Changing the Family, Changing our Politics" present a somewhat different point of view to that expressed in "Bringing It All Back Home".

### Changing the Family, Changing our Politics

by Margo Moore, Judy Mundey and Joyce Stevens

Australia is in the process of an economic restructuring which is throwing up tremendous problems and dislocations in people's lives. The present rate of unemployment, homelessness, high rents and interest rates, and the threat of a severe depression, the lack of amenities and social services in the new boom towns are just some of these problems. Politically, government is supporting the new capitalist development and withdrawing what little social support there is. Ideologically, the withdrawal of social support systems is being justified by blaming the breakdown of the traditional family for such problems as violence, homelessness, inability to get work and emotional instability.

Since the breakdown of the family is said to be the cause of such problems, obviously the capitalist solution must lie in reconstituting and strengthening family structures so that private profit can be maximised and social responsibility in such areas as education, health, child care, care of the aged and disabled, transport, etc., can be shifted back into the family at the expense, mainly, of women.

While the economy is not the final determinant of changes in personal and family relationships, these two structures intersect and help to shape one another. Powerful vested interests in the hierarchies of churches and the political right have long been the moral guardians and defendants of
the traditional family and they become more virulent and combative at times when economic and social dislocation might lead people to search for more radical solutions to difficulties in the public and private spheres of life.

In 1931, with rapidly expanding unemployment and a sharp decline in fertility rates, the Sane Democracy League called for the Australian public to "put on all the armour of God to wage the fight in defence of religion, home and family against the communist menace". Today's Right to Life, Festival of Light and Santamarias use, as a central pivot in their struggle against the left, a similar call to defend the family. Because of the inroads made by feminism and fertility control, they add to their crusade the defence of "the unborn child".

While most people on the left can perceive the reactionary politics of Santamaria's general analysis, it is still easy to be tempted to view the right's pro-family politics as the expression of the real needs of people based on their discontent with the dehumanising and degrading aspects of daily life. There is a desire for security and warmth in personal relationships and it is all too easy to think that this is realisable within the traditional family.

Any analysis of the relationship between men and women, the structure of the family and the ideological practices which take place within it in advanced capitalist countries, must quickly come up against the fundamental inequalities which exist between men and women, and the oppressive power relationships which stem from them and which are reflected in all aspects of our lives. No structure, including the family, can provide for positive human needs and values unless this oppression is attacked and overcome.

The oppression of women is an essential element in the structure of the traditional family and contributes to the needs of capital at work as well as at home. Any socialist transformation of society, then, must involve a fundamental change in the nature of the family as we currently understand it.

In this article we are attempting to look at some of the ideological practices in the family which help to produce and support prevailing sex, race and class practices, particularly as they relate to attempts at economic restructuring, and at some of the suggestions about how the left might respond to the fears and crises that are evident today in family and personal life.

Family and class

The family does not, of course, exist independently of other social relations but it is beyond the scope of this article to address in detail the effects of class on family structures and practices. It is also difficult to present a clear picture of what the "ideal" Australian family looks like. If we could rely on the media and advertising it would consist of a man and woman with two children, living in their own home in the suburbs, with the woman giving at least a part of her life to fulltime housework and child care. Yet, even in the 1950s, when a "home in the suburbs" became a reality for large numbers of working class people, the house and accompanying commodities were only made accessible by the involvement of increasing numbers of married women in the paid workforce.

By 1975-76, two-parent families where a mother stayed home fulltime with dependent children represented only 20 percent of all Australian families, and less than half of all families with dependent children. In over 50 percent of Australian families there were no dependent children, and there were more two-income families than single ones. (Australian Bureau of Statistics)

The changed economic status of many women inside and outside the family that this reflects has also been accompanied by some loosening of patriarchal structures in the family, particularly in those where women's educational and economic status are more viable. The right focusses on these factors and the small measure of control that women have gained in the areas of reproduction and sexuality to assert that these are the basic causes of disruption and dissatisfaction in the family and personal life.
They choose to ignore the fact that the "ideal" family is not accessible to most without the involvement of women in paid work, that past sources of "individual satisfaction" within the family have been founded on a sexual division of labour which still informs family practices and comes into sharp contradiction with women's participation in paid work. This division of labour is a base, and a powerful source of dissatisfaction and disunity in personal relations as well as in the arena of public activity and politics.

The sexual division of labour and sexism in the family

Historically, the roles of men and women within the family have been linked with the part women play in reproduction, though this fact alone does not explain why men's work in the outside world has come to be more highly valued than that of women in child rearing, housework and nurturing. The division of labour in the family, however, now seems to many people to be founded on some natural urge on the part of women to nurture and be mothers, and for men to go into the wilderness and perform valiant feats. These ideas have given rise to a view of what constitutes maleness and femaleness that pervades everyday practices, culture and ideology.

Men, therefore, are supposedly strong, competitive, aggressive, born adventurers and explorers, rational and unemotional and fitted for work in the outside world. In striving to fulfill their preordained destiny most men fit neatly into the competitive, acquisitive roles in production and consumption that help to keep capitalism functioning, even at times when it is being torn apart by its own contradictions. Work becomes an essential part of maleness so that unemployment is not only a financial disaster for many, but an emotional and psychic crisis which hinders political and social solutions to this problem. While unemployment grows, many men will work long hours for high pay, sometimes at the behest of high mortgage rates and other repayments, but always, ostensively, in the interests of "the family".

In fact, these practices cast women and children into a world of their own, or one where contact with father or husband is mediated by the mateship of work, sport and alcohol. Thus, struggles for a shorter work week are not seen as a way to help overcome unemployment or expand personal life, but as an opening to more overtime. Where militant delegates, eg, in the Pilbara, agitate for shorter hours, and it appears to threaten this "work ethic", they suffer defeat, while personal life becomes more and more restricted, violent and in crisis.

The focusing of men's lives into the arena of public life and away from effective contact with nurturing and child care expands men's potential for violence and aggression. While economic and other social factors contribute to violence in our society, the separation of male socialisation from nurturing and child care (which appear to be the most effective areas at present for developing practices of concern for the welfare of others) increases male violence and rape, particularly within the family.

Women, on the other hand, are supposedly weak, submissive, inward looking and caring, born mothers, irrational and emotional and fitted for work in the family circle. If they go outside to paid work this is also related to
their functions in the family so that the sexual division of labour is extended into paid work.

For the nearly 43 percent of married women who are in the paid workforce, this means two jobs and, for most women, a lifetime of caring for others at home and at work who, in return, are often violent, sexually aggressive, and emotionally unsupportive. While "motherhood" is extolled as the foundation of civilisation, women are expected, and many accept, that they will be the "power behind the throne" rather than actor centre stage. So that, even when women enter paid work, many continue to see themselves as mainly responsible for personal relations and unable to act in public life, and part-time work is seen as an increasingly appropriate resolution of their difficulties. This is reinforced by a labor movement and political parties which refuse to acknowledge the direct connections between the problems in public and personal life, and where issues such as child care and fertility control are never "mainstream" politics. Also, in both public and private life, women have lacked the support systems and nurturing that make public life tenable. While women have provided these supports for men, no one but the women's movement has provided it for women.

Those who extol traditional family life are often the same people who blame women for family breakdowns and the social consequences. Yet big changes have taken place in socialisation which make it impossible for the individual family to provide the living skills necessary for a modern world. Child-care centres, schools and peer groups have made enormous changes in family relations. Today's electronic media — TV, radio and records — exert an influence and occupy more time than most family interactions. They enjoy a large space in child-rearing and are new avenues for the promotion of values which support capitalism and patriarchy.

While many women go into paid work because of economic difficulties, and some would prefer to stay at home, changes in the family have made fulltime family life an even more unrewarding and damaging experience for many women and children. These difficulties won't be resolved unless policies are advanced that strike at the basis of the unequal sexual relations inside and outside the traditional family.

Individualism

Most psychological theories view people as primarily egocentric, and focus on the development of individual egos. In such a theory the relationship of mother to child in the formation of a new individual is of paramount importance. There is little emphasis on the examination of people as social animals who are subjected to a complex cultural structure within which they have a clearly defined place. There is much emphasis on such instinctual drives as "bonding", "maternal attachment", etc.

The isolation of children in the family, often alone with their mothers for the first 3-5 years of life, severely restricts their ability to form close social ties with a number of people. It forms a basis for the isolation and separateness many people feel in society while at the same time providing the only theoretical model for overcoming such isolation.

On the surface, then, the family may be seen as a collective response to individual loneliness in dealing with the world.

It is seen, not only as a retreat from the harsh realities of the outside world, but also as a place where people can have control over their lives, unlike at work. In reality, the authoritarian nature of relationships in the family and the sexual oppression of women by men mean that control in the family (as in the workplace) is enjoyed mainly by the most powerful. This has produced enormous conflicts between people in those relationships, so that their dreams of security and self-realisation cannot be achieved. The increasing frustration thus produced means that the family, rather than being a retreat, helps to produce personal violence, especially against women and children.

The forms of control within the family from
father to mother to children also stress the individual and authoritarian rather than the collective and co-operative. The privatisation of personal relationships and institutions.... my wife, my children, my house.... provides a distorted mirror image to the private ownership of the means of production.

The myth of the family as a private domain where real choices and decisions can be made supports the arguments that public money should not be spent on such things as child care or health, and make it difficult for people to fight for these things as their right.

**Romantic love**

The notion of marriage based on romantic love is a relatively modern concept, appearing in British history in the middle of the eighteenth century. Up till then, marriage had been based on the widely-held view that any two people of similar class and cultural background might form lasting personal relationships.

The "romantics" of the eighteenth century advocated "love" and "equality" between women and men as the foundation of marriage at a time when a sharper division between public and private life was taking place. While this had progressive aspects, its success rested on an idealised concept of motherhood and the possibilities for personal and sexual fulfilment within monogamous marriage. It gave rise to ideas such as "somewhere there is the right person for you", that man and woman as individuals are incomplete until joined together and that somehow things will work out".

The "success" of romantic love in marriage in fact rested on sexual double standards and the giving over of women to the domain of domesticity as their fulltime occupation, though this has never been fully realised in all working-class families. The romanticising of love has obscured the difficulties and potential that exist in all freely chosen personal relationships if they are formed between equals free of economic and sexual coercion.
It also blurs the fact that fulfilment in personal life depends, to a large extent, on other economic and social factors such as the possibilities for personal enjoyment in paid work and leisure. The failures in personal life that come from economic and social discrimination, authoritarianism and alienation at work can thus be made to look as though they are the failures of “romance” and “love”, ie, individual failings.

Romance and love are also seen as women’s payment for child-rearing and the nurturing of men. Motherhood is romanticised so that many women see it as their life’s purpose while this expectation in today’s shifting world moves further and further from real experiences.

The media exploits and reinforces these ideas in passive fantasies such as the Marlboro Man, Star Wars and the images of women in advertising. This not only affects the way we behave in our personal life, but contributes to passivity in public life and romanticised solutions such as “when the time is right a great leader will appear”.

Sexuality

As we are not born with a formed sexuality but have it shaped in the family and in interaction with social practices outside the family, sexuality reflects the ideas of individualism, romanticism and sexism.

The effect of this is that the dominant ideas about sexuality and eroticism are directed towards male-defined pleasure and reproduction, long past the time when birth control could make it independent, and when knowledge about women’s sexuality has established that their sexual pleasure is not necessarily connected to penis penetration. The sexual objectification of women, their exclusion from male networks, sexual harassment and the threat of rape form effective barriers to equal participation in public and private life.

The recognition of homosexuality, and particularly lesbianism, challenges traditional attitudes to men’s control of sexuality. Shared knowledge about female sexuality also provides the possibilities for political struggle inside heterosexual relationships.

Because, however, of unrecognised and unresolved conflicts in people’s sexual lives, sexuality is promoted in an unrealistic way which divorces it from other social relationships. Thus, many people’s expectations founder on a search for a sexual and personal life that is perpetually orgasmic and “exciting”.

While the development of more reliable (if still not safe) contraceptives has produced the promise of an extended eroticism in the lives of women and men, this comes into conflict with the “boredom” many experience in ongoing monogamous relationships. The commercialisation and sale of sex and eroticism as commodities, however, provides no acceptable alternative for most women and many men who strive for sexual relationships that have some ongoing and permanent component. Pornography and violent sex, which dehumanises women and sexuality, is offered to a mainly male audience while romanticised love in marriage (Mills and Boon et al) to a mainly female one. While these ideas play a large part in structuring people’s relationships, personal life for many will remain in crisis.

These contradictions within the family do not mean that there can be no place where personal relationships might be developed or where children could be nurtured in a supportive framework. Many people feel understandably terrified at the idea that life might promise little else but the workplace (or dole cheques) and personal loneliness. A significant minority have already moved out of the traditional family structures into child and job sharing, communal living, house sharing and homosexual households, while many more continue the struggle to reshape relations within the traditional family. Perhaps the historical tenacity of the family in its many forms is not only an expression of the need for satisfying personal relationships and nurturing, but also suggests that it may be an essential venue for the struggle to resolve contradictions between the needs of the
individual and those of the wider community. However, solutions which leave untouched, or shore up, the economic and sexual oppression of women, and the division of labour in public and private life, will be at best temporary and, in the long-run, create even greater conflicts even though the shapes that familial relationships may take in the future are far from clear.

It is, however, constructive to note that the current rightwing offensive is an attempt (too often effective) to make up ground lost to them during the 1960s and '70s. During these years there were big changes in attitudes towards a wide range of social practices. Forms of control were not only challenged in the family, but also in the school, at the workplace, in the community at large and in relations with the environment. For a short while, the attention of the Whitlam government to schemes such as the Australian Assistance Plan reflected demands for decentralised forms of control which also tackled grassroots problems. Such changes in traditional forms of authority and control are not made without dislocation and always bring forth sharp reactions from the right.

Yet "dislocation" and "disruption" — workers' participation and control of industry, student and parent involvement in non-authoritarian public education, the challenge to traditional practices within the family, and a control of the environment not designed for gross exploitation by multinationals — are all part of the struggle for a socialist alternative and changed priorities in the economic sphere. If the right is able to extend conservatism and authoritarianism as a way out of the present social and personal difficulties, then the socialist movement will be further weakened.

The left and labor movement are vulnerable on these questions because many of their policies remain pious words on paper, and because many of the men who could help change the priorities benefit from the labour of women at home, in union offices, and in segregated areas of the paid workforce.

The right plays on this vulnerability by trying to separate the practice of traditional authority in the family from practices in other areas. But they realise only too well that the ideology which supports control there extends into other areas of political practice.

The resolution of contradictions that today tear personal relationships apart depends on a strong and active women's movement, and the left showing, in practice, their concern for problems in personal life. Campaigns for shorter work hours need to be accompanied by demands for shared housework and child care. Lack of employment for women in developing areas, alongside of unlimited overtime for men, can be attacked as detrimental to all forms of personal relationships. Attacks by the right on women's access to safe contraception and abortion is a priority issue and the recent defeat of a pro-abortion policy in the ACOA a defeat for the whole left.

Community programs directed towards the problems of child care, the aged, the handicapped, with shared community control can also challenge traditional forms of control while tackling everyday problems. The linking of demands for control at the workplace with control over community activities, consumer involvement in health and education programs can all form a constructive response to rightwing attacks and point towards a socialist alternative for Australia.
A Policy Statement of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace

In a recent issue (No. 78, December 1981), ALR summarised and commented upon a federal parliamentary exchange between the Minister for Defence, Jim Killen, and Leader of the Opposition Bill Hayden, on US bases in Australia, and the nuclear war danger. Following the continuing discussion and debate, in this issue ALR publishes an important policy statement of the Australian Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace on world disarmament.

In this statement the Catholic Commission draws attention to the ever-present possibility of nuclear war, the Church's opposition to nuclear weapons and the need for Christians to work for the prevention and, finally, the ending of war. In particular, the statement draws attention to the dangers of any public willingness to countenance "limited" or "theatre" nuclear war.

It also calls for concerted action by community groups, especially Church groups, to work to change the arms-policy stances of governments and their allies as part of the growing people's movement in many countries for disarmament and peace.
The ever-present possibility of nuclear war calls for reflection on the consequences of such an event and the realisation that the kind of nuclear war for which countries possessing nuclear weapons have prepared themselves is immoral.

The use of nuclear weapons, then, and the threats they pose to large, non-combatant population centres through massive retaliation directed at cities escalation towards indiscriminate bombing which a limited nuclear military engagement would encourage collateral destruction of population centres which would be unavoidable in any purely military exchange, and the medium and long-term effects of nuclear war beyond the borders of combatant states and on succeeding generations lays the basis for indiscriminate and uncontrollable nuclear war.

**Church condemns nuclear weapons**

Such a war will involve the killing of innocent civilians on a scale which will be measurable in tens and hundreds of millions. Accordingly the Church cannot condone as a legitimate means of national defence the use of nuclear weapons in the manner in which the superpowers have prepared for their use. Recent thinking in the Church is towards the rejection of any use.

Further, the declared intent to use such weapons is also immoral as it involves making population centres hostages in the power play among the world's military powers.

It is therefore an urgent moral necessity for world leaders to divest their countries of nuclear weapons and to work to contain their spread. The questions of the legitimacy of a particular war and that of a particular method of waging war are separate. The abolition of war is an obvious goal which Christians must work towards. The Second Vatican Council itself maintained the right of nations to legitimate defence. We need to eliminate the belief, however, that the possession of a nuclear arsenal is necessary or proper for legitimate defence.

Those responsible for the defence of nations must be brought to face the terrible possibilities inherent in a system of nuclear deterrence. Christians ought to be a pressure group joining with others in making it plain to national leaders that this urgent moral question will not go away: that the political will is there, among ordinary people, to make nuclear disarmament, and, finally, the abolition of war, a possibility.

**Taking risks**

The search for an acceptable method of disarmament will require the slow and careful building of trust among leaders and nations. It also involves a certain amount of risk — as all trust does. A realistic and politically possible method of working towards disarmament is an agreement about reductions in the arms stockpiles and systems of the two superpowers. Because of the need to establish and build on trust, these agreements must be step-by-step. Because of the need to build up a climate of trust among people, they ought to be mutual agreements. The aim of such agreements ought to be the abolition of nuclear weapons as a first step towards total disarmament. There have been several suggestions for such step-by-step mutual agreements. Two which merit consideration are:

a) a resumption of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT). These talks have been stalled since the failure of the US to ratify the SALT II Treaty. It must be admitted, however, that they provide the only workable basis so far devised which offers any hope of eventual disarmament. They have not brought about a halt to the arms race, but they have contributed, even if modestly, to a lessening of the pace of the arms race. If the SALT talks are resumed, they will need to be vigorously prosecuted and conducted with the sense of urgency which the situation demands.
They will need to break the cause-and-effect patterns of the arms race between the superpowers. They will need to have as their final aim total nuclear disarmament, not, as has been envisaged in negotiations to date, mere economies within the context of a slightly less frantic arms race;

b) large-scale, across-the-board reductions in the strength of the nuclear arsenals. Such a proposal was recently aired by G. Kennan, former US Ambassador to the USSR, who proposed (May, 1980) that the US government ought to consult with Congress and propose to the Soviet Government a 50 percent across-the-board reduction in nuclear weapons by both superpowers, a reduction to be applied to all weapons systems and types and to be verified by existing means. Second and subsequent rounds of reductions could then be aimed at, building on the basis of the trust engendered by the accomplishment of the first round.

Such a method of disarmament cannot come about in today's climate of distrust and fear unless the process can be started again by means of a bold initiative able to break through the effects of current distrust, cynicism and despair. As a means of bringing about a start to the process, one of the superpowers should consider establishing its bona fides by taking a unilateral step in divesting itself of one non-obsolete weapons system. Establishing an atmosphere of trust involves, as was pointed out, some risk!

World poverty

It is becoming more and more apparent that the arms race involves moral questions apart from war. The level and pace of armaments in the world today — both nuclear and conventional — constitutes a massive call on the world's limited resources and income. There is enough food to feed everyone in the world today, and to feed them well. There is enough income produced to ensure that the basic needs of all the world's population are taken care of.

The basic reason why people go without food, shelter, housing, education and work is because of a complex of economic and political systems reaching beyond national borders, which effectively exclude the majority of the world's population from participating in their own development, and condemn a large minority of these (some 800,000,000) to the borderline of human existence.

One of these international systems which contributes to poverty and starvation is the arms race. At its present size it constitutes a gross and unacceptable drain on resources which could be used to build a just world order — one in which the needs of the poor could be met. The world's poor have a right to have their basic needs met. The fact that so many do not is an indictment on world governmental systems and national priorities which countenance this deprivation.

Related to the above is the fact that the arms race creates unjustifiable demands on the allocation of the world's resources. These are limited and the fact that so many go into the production and maintenance of the arms systems means that they are not available for productive use. It also means that the superpowers utilise resources on an enormously larger scale than the majority of countries — resources of minerals, energy and skilled people — resources that are needed in a world that is interdependent, for the development of the whole world.

Where does Australia fit in all this?

Australia, of course, is not a superpower. It has no nuclear deterrent and has signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. Yet Australia has a role, and an important one, to play in the question of world disarmament. Australia is a major supplier of natural uranium. It has some 20-25 percent of the Western world's uranium reserves and, because of its strategic position, is able to influence (through the agreements it works out with customer governments) the use of these materials. Australia has used its influence on some significant occasions, notably in specifying the conditions under which customer governments can reprocess...
nuclear materials. Australia is challenged to do more, specifically regarding disarmament.

Australia, as was pointed out above, is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). It only exports uranium to co-signatories. The treaty formally commits signatories to refrain from developing nuclear weapons of their own. In consideration of this, the countries which possess a nuclear capacity undertake to share such technology for peaceful uses, especially power generation. But the NPT has another side to it which is not sufficiently emphasised. The powers which possess the nuclear deterrent are supposed to commit themselves to arms control. That they have not done so with sufficient seriousness is attested in the refusal of the non-aligned countries to sign any joint communique at the Second NPT Review Conference in 1980. Undoubtedly, this lack of commitment to arms control weakens the NPT which is the only mechanism the world has at the moment to contain the spread of nuclear weapons and to share nuclear technology.

It is not only logical, but imperative, for Australia to match its laudable concern for restricting the use of exported uranium with an equal concern for arms control. The lack of progress in the latter is imperilling the future of the Treaty upon which so much depends.

Australia has a certain role to play in the American military system. Additionally, Australia is committed militarily to the US through treaty arrangements. This gives Australia some leverage with the US government to promote weapons control with a view to disarmament. It should use its good offices with the US to do this.

The education of the public is a necessary step which should accompany international action for disarmament because much depends on the political will of an informed public. Indeed, disarmament will not be possible until there is sufficient demand from ordinary men and women to make it come about. To this end, we have advocated in the past and advocate again the setting up of a Peace Research Institute to monitor the degree of militarisation in the region and internationally, and to educate the public in the dangers of nuclear war and the steps which need to be taken to prevent it. Such an institute should be funded by the federal government as an expression of its commitment to world peace. (The Secretary General of the UN suggests that governments allocate 0.1 percent of their military budgets to peace education. This would be nearly $3,000,000 in Australia.)

We have been concerned to spell out what are clearly non-legitimate means of defence and to assert the corresponding duty of national leaders and ordinary citizens to seek to actively promote disarmament, both in our region and further afield, especially between the superpowers.

None of what has been said above negates the right, the duty, even, of a country to defend itself by legitimate means.

Concerted action

There is a great deal of despair in the community about the failure to make progress towards nuclear disarmament. While it is true that many of the factors governing the arms race are outside the control of the individual, it must not be overlooked that some factors are able to be affected by community groups, by people prepared to act together to affect the attitudes of their fellow citizens, the international stance of their governments and the strategic policies of their government’s allies. History has many examples of great international scandals (e.g. slavery) which have been brought to an end by the sustained activity of ordinary men and women prepared to commit their time and energies to bringing pressure to bear on those who make decisions. Such pressure is possible in the area of disarmament. It requires political will of a high order from national governments. This will require in turn that all of us shake off our despair or lethargy and begin to work with others to create a climate, a country, an international order of peace.
The Trade Unions and the Media
by Allan Ashbolt

For the sake of Social Welfare in Australia, STOP SENATOR CHANEY!

We are living at a time when the Fraser government has virtually declared war on the unions — class war of a peculiarly vindictive kind. And in this war, the government is using every propaganda weapon, every propaganda outlet it can find. If it succeeds in taming or terrorising the union movement, then the boundaries of political democracy will shrink to negligible proportions. For the union movement, despite its backslidings, mistakes and intra-mural wrangling, remains the spearhead of democratic action in this country and the measure by which democratic progress must be judged. Only the union movement, with its mass base and participatory processes, can contain and combat the pervasive power of capital. For us, as unionists, the problem always starts with capital and specifically with ownership and control of the means of production.
There seem to me to be several basic questions here:

(1) who owns the media organisations? (2) who controls the output in press, radio and television? (3) what are the consequences for the trade union movement particularly, and for the cause of social justice generally? (4) what strategy should be adopted to deal with this whole problem?

The fundamental pattern of media ownership in Australia is well enough known, and is indeed a matter of some notoriety. Disregarding a few maverick publications, it's reasonable to say that, at present, three groups — John Fairfax Ltd of Sydney, The Herald and Weekly Times Ltd of Melbourne and the News Corporation Ltd (the Rupert Murdoch group) — own nearly all the print media: the metropolitan dailies, the weeklies, the specialist magazines, various sorts of periodicals, and a fair number of provincial and suburban newspapers.

In the 1960s, when the union movement first looked at this problem seriously, Sir Frank Packer's Consolidated Press was still a force to be reckoned with, but today his flagship, the Sydney Daily Telegraph, is in the hands of Rupert Murdoch. The Packer group, under Sir Frank's son, Kerry (for ownership in Australia tends to be concentrated in families), has cut back drastically on its newspaper holdings. The main print products of the Packer group are The Bulletin and The Women's Weekly — and just let me mention incidentally that, for nearly twenty years, it also had a half-share in what was purportedly an ABC publication — TV Times. But the group's strongest effort now goes into television.

Contraction of ownership

This contraction of ownership over the past ten years is hardly surprising. The economic push is continually towards monopolisation of resources, in order to reduce production and distribution costs. In the newspaper industry there has been an ever-increasing contraction of ownership since around 1900, and if Murdoch's 1979 share raid on the Melbourne Herald had been consummated, there would now have been only a Big Two (Fairfax and Murdoch), instead of a Big Three. It's worth noting, too, that the Melbourne Herald survived, mainly because of intervention by the Fairfax group, which moved in to acquire a 14.7 percent holding. In the coming ownership war, Fairfax and the Melbourne Herald will probably form an alliance on one side, with Murdoch and Packer (who are already partners in Lotto), on the other side.

What must be realised about the Big Three or the Big Four (however you like to characterise the situation) is that each has an enormously wide spread of ownership. It's wide geographically — the Melbourne Herald is in every state except New South Wales and has been in Papua-New Guinea for years; Murdoch's empire stretches beyond Australia to New Zealand, Britain and the United States, and he has recently bought the London Times; the Fairfax group, with its fifty-three wholly-owned or partly-owned subsidiaries, takes in the Melbourne Age, the Macquarie radio network and all-state franchise for Muzak, the piped music used for pacification purposes in so many offices and factories.

The ownership is wide, too, in range of outlets, covering not only press, radio and television, but numerous associated activities. Murdoch's company, for instance, is the sole owner of Festival records; Fairfax and the Melbourne Herald are in pulp and paper manufacturing; the Melbourne Herald has long-standing ties with Hoyts Theatres Ltd, which has monopolised film distribution and exhibition for more than half a century.

The media often tend to be thought of in terms of newspapers, and within newspapers, of editorial opinion, political analysis and the high-minded imparting of information. But the interests of the media owners also encompass most aspects of what is commonly called entertainment — pop music, films (Murdoch has recently launched a film production company), paperback books, sport (as Kerry Packer has so effectively demonstrated with his World Series cricket), and of course television shows. The media
companies have become, in fact, multi-media conglomerates.

It’s also vital to understand that the media monopolies are locked into non-media business and trade. Fairfax, for instance, is closely connected with the Bank of New South Wales and the AMP Society; and the AMP Society is, in turn, a major shareholder in (if we consider only the television stations), TCN Sydney, ATV Melbourne, ADS Adelaide, TVT Hobart, QTQ Brisbane, BTQ Brisbane and TVQ Brisbane. The AMP's holding in TVQ Brisbane comes, I might add, by way of Brambles Industries Ltd, Pioneer Concrete Services Ltd, Ampol Petroleum and Ansett Transport Industries. To take another example, the Murdoch group owns F.S. Falkiner and Sons, the big pastoral company; and last year sold its investment in the Alwest bauxite venture for a surplus of 15 million dollars, bought a half share in Ansett Transport Industries, and through Ansett, picked up a 15 percent holding in Santos Ltd, the South Australian gas and oil producer.

You may recall that, when Ansett, during the reign of the now forgotten Sir Reginald Ansett, was given the licence for a Melbourne television channel, it prompted the question from curious observers: why is an airline operator in television? Now that Murdoch is the joint owner of Ansett, one might just as easily ask: why is a media magnate in airlines? To which the answer is, in polite capitalist jargon: he is diversifying his interests. Or to put it more realistically, he is extending his financial reach in the cut-throat world of monopoly capitalism. And so far he seems, by his own standards, not to be doing too badly: the two-airline policy looks like being abandoned, in favour of deregulation; and the Broadcasting and Television Act has been changed, so as to allow him the licence for the ex-Ansett television station in Melbourne, without forcing him to give up Channel 10 in Sydney.

That is the world, the world of monopoly capitalism, in which the media organisations function. That is the world to which the media owners belong and from which they derive their values. That is the world they have helped to make, the world they are determined to preserve. In that world, it’s hardly strange that a media magnate is in airlines, any more than that non-media companies like BHP, the jam manufacturers Henry Jones Ltd, the Swan Brewery, the Bell Group and the National Mutual Life Association are in radio and television, as either licence-holders or investors. To convey some idea of how crucial the media have become to the world of monopoly capitalism, I need only list the companies lining up with the Packer group in a bid for control of the projected domestic satellite system: IBM, Conzinc Rio Tinto, the Colonial Sugar Refinery, Myer’s, Ampol Petroleum, the AMP Society, Thomas Nationwide Transport (Murdoch’s partner in Ansett), James Hardie Industries, Australian Consolidated Industries, and the one corporation often ignored in considering Australia’s media giants — Amalgamated Wireless of Australasia (AWA). AWA has been a maker and supplier of electronic equipment since around 1920, and its powerful presence is still to be found in 16 television stations and 12 radio stations, metropolitan and provincial, throughout Australia. For the media industry is merely part of the much more massive communications industry, dominated by electrical engineering companies like the Radio Corporation of America and Bell Telephone in the USA, and by AWA, EMI, Email and Philips in Australia.

The role of advertising

The media industry is directly linked to the world of monopoly capitalism through advertising. One social critic (Humphrey McQueen: *Australia’s Media Monopolies*, p.10) has argued, and I think convincingly, that the commercial mass media are not “news and features backed up by advertising”, but are, on the contrary, “advertisements which carry news, features and entertainment in order to capture audiences for advertisers”. Advertisements, we must remember, are the main revenue support of newspapers and magazines, the sole revenue support of radio and television.
For me, the typical — almost proto-typical — newspaper is *The North Shore Times*, one of the products in Rupert Murdoch's suburban chain. A copy is thrown into my garden once a week, free of charge, because it's financed almost entirely by advertisements. Around 85-90 percent of the paper is given over to advertisements; the rest to gossip, municipal council reports, charities and sports results. If you take a benign view of *The North Shore Times*, it could be said to be publishing information on the availability of goods and services to consumers on Sydney's North Shore. But the operative word is "consumers". Readers of this paper are presumed to be not so much readers as potential units of purchasing power. That's on a benign view; on a more critical view, the purpose of the paper is neither to advance nor even to scrutinise the interests of the community which it professedly serves, but to protect the interests of those traders and business companies from whom it draws its income.

The revenue accruing to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on an average Saturday is, according to the Assistant General Manager of John Fairfax Ltd in evidence before the Norris Enquiry, one million dollars. In an average week, 55 percent of *The Bulletin* consists of advertisements, 45 percent of *The National Times*. On most weekdays the proportion in the *Sydney Morning Herald* is about 50 percent; on Wednesdays somewhat higher, on Saturdays, higher still. In almost any newspaper or magazine, the display advertising (as distinct from the classified advertising) surrounds, encases and virtually imprisons the main body of the news. On pages dealing with travel, food, wine and automobiles, the advertising often relates in kind to the type of material in the news columns. Most publications are laid out around the ads, built around the ads. The craft of sub-editing has declined to the point where it's now largely a matter of fitting news reports into spaces not taken up with ads. Now I'm not suggesting that advertisers control the news, either by command or by the expression of wishes, or by explicit threats and vetoes. What I'm saying is that advertising provides the economic and cultural setting, as well as the physical setting, for most newspapers and magazines. One of the results is that journalists come very quickly and clearly to recognise the connection between their earnings and the paper's advertising revenue.

In commercial radio and television, where the bombardment from ads is intense and almost unceasing, many commentators, interviewers and actors are now directly involved as hucksters in the selling of goods and the promotion of big companies. Reputedly independent journalists and interviewers speak openly on behalf of corporations like Esso with a product to sell and prestige to maintain. In such circumstances, there can be no doubt about who tells whom what to say; and no doubt, either, that the vaunted independence of these journalists has been compromised and diminished. But since the President of the United States was for some years a television spruiker for General Electric, perhaps this kind of activity has now been sanctified.

Another alarming phenomenon is that advertising has affected the very style of news, drama, musical and talk presentation in both radio and television. Programs, including the news, are constructed around so-called advertising breaks, which are not really breaks at all. In fact, programs are for the most part designed to give a continuity of tone, image and pace, so that the advertising merges into the news and entertainment.

Advertising is what might be called the standard-bearer of the consumer culture, and as such it represents one important form of control over media content. In speaking of control, I'm not referring here to the fact that most advertising agencies in Australia are American-owned. That's another form of control; imperialist control, which I mention only in passing. I'm saying rather that, in the print media particularly, advertisers help to define the market at which a newspaper or magazine is aimed. And market considerations in turn mould the paper's style — for example, the sort of topics that are chosen, the level of understanding that is
assumed, the sophistication or vulgarity of approach. In defence of monopoly, it’s sometimes argued that the various publications within the one organisation differ from each other in style. To a small extent that’s true; but in general there’s only an appearance of diversity. The differences in style arise primarily from differences in market orientation. Remember, I’m not contending that advertisers alone decide on the market for a publication, I’m contending that advertisers help to define the market. And definition is a continuing process, carried out in conjunction with editors and proprietors.

But how, you might ask at this stage, does monopoly ownership bear down on the employees, particularly on the journalists who appear to be responsible for the news content in the media? Well, let’s examine for a moment the structure, the operational structure, of media organisations. At the top of the pile stand the owners, few in number, immense in wealth and power, intent on safeguarding their interests. At the bottom are the media workers—a heterogeneous complex of reporters, printers, film directors, layout artists, scene designers, floor managers, film cutters, engineers, script assistants, photographers, technicians and various other operatives.

In the middle, a hierarchy of managers, editors and controllers hold the workers in place. The important factor is not who these people are, but at the top, what they own, at the bottom, what they produce, in the middle whose interests they serve. I might add that, at the bottom, among the workers, the division of labour is quite extreme, thus enabling the middle or executive level to exercise a considerable degree of control over the product. From our viewpoint, as unionists, the middle level is the key to the struggle.

I won’t suggest that the proprietors, either separately or as a cabal, habitually issue orders, directions or instructions to the staff down below. I won’t suggest that they deliberately set out to brainwash the public—except, say, when trying to get rid of a federal Labor government as in 1975, or to flatter the Premier of New South Wales when the licence for Lotto is up for grabs. But I will suggest that the proprietors, and the boards which they head, decide on the disposition of resources, formulate editorial policy in a general way and determine the value framework in which a newspaper, magazine or broadcasting station will operate. And I’ll suggest, too, that the task of the managers, editors and controllers in the middle of the structure is to keep that value framework intact and un tarnished. It’s the middle managers, representing the interests of the proprietors, recruited to protect those interests, who comprise the control points over journalists and other workers.

What to write

Of course, I’m aware that journalists often deny that any explicit control exists. A journalist may contend that nobody tells him what to write; that nobody gives him orders; and that his editor asks only for consultation. Whereas he’s usually conforming to a value framework already impacted in the style, policies and objectives of the paper; and he’s usually trying, either consciously or unconsciously, to meet the expectations of his employer. In short, he’s concerned with safeguarding and furthering his career in what happens to be a very insecure profession; a profession that lacks the status of law, medicine or even engineering, a profession that is tied to the organisational demands of the employer, a profession that exists in a kind of no-man’s-land between academic discipline and story-telling.

For myself, I avoid the word “bias” because it infers that bias is applied deliberately, like a technique. And that isn’t always the case. Bias is, if anything, built into journalistic practice, into day-by-day routines. It emerges in decisions about what events deserve to be covered, in concepts of what constitutes a news story or a news peg, in beliefs about how to write according to conventional news-value standards, in convictions about how the public benefit or the public interest might best be served. In my experience, I would not like
to try counting the number of times accuracy has been sacrificed for the sake of a "good" story or truth for the sake of "public" benefit.

I don't think we can ignore the fact, either, that the manipulation of news by sources of influence outside news-gathering institutions has become remarkably common during the past half-century. There are, for a start, all those captains of industry, commerce and finance, along with judges, archbishops, vice-chancellors and well-heeled conservative politicians who conduct in-club conversations with proprietors and editors, and whose views assist in framing what is sometimes called the conventional wisdom or the prevailing climate of opinion. Occasionally they'll intervene quite crudely with proprietors and editors to suppress information, kill stories or canvass a favorable (sometimes unfavorable) interpretation of events.

Then there are the lobbyists and public relations men who plant stories, fly kites, pump in rumour and scandal, offer meals and overseas trips as bribes, and shower editorial desks with handouts. (The handout is now one of the main supports of journalism.) And in this account of outside influences we must never forget those public servants who offer reporters assistance, guidance and confidential documents, especially when trying to destroy a Labor government.

Indeed, the media are often thought of as a battleground for competing interests — the interests of those who own the means of production, the interests of those who man the productive machines and processes, the interests of those who buy space and time, the interests of those who run our governments, the interests of those who seek publicity, the interests of those who read and view. It makes a nice pluralistic picture, with all these contending forces arriving at some sort of balance, with truth eventually emerging triumphant. But as the historian Lord Acton once remarked: "Truth always prevails in the end, but only when it has ceased to be in someone's interest to prevent it from doing so."

As unionists, we know that the economic interests of the owners are paramount; and by economic interests I mean not just the accumulation of profits and investments but the maintenance of what they would regard as social stability, of conditions out of which they can draw both financial power and ideological authority. These interests converge with the interests of the advertisers, especially the corporate advertisers, and shape the career interests, in some cases the sheer survival interests of the journalists, printers and other workers.

But there's a continuing tension between the owners and the workers, a tension that springs partly from wage quarrels and the efforts of proprietors to cut down on labour resources, but even more, I think, from the creative, investigative, interpretative nature of media work. This tension can be quite destructive — the incidence of cynicism is fairly high among journalists, for instance — but on the constructive side it has also led to a significant (though still scattered) resistance movement within the industry, a resistance movement aimed at giving reporters and program-makers more control over what they do and how they do it. We must never underrate the courage, honesty and skill of genuinely conscientious journalists.

The ABC and the state

Nevertheless, the political weighting of the entire media, including the ABC, is very much to the right. Words like "impartiality", "objectivity", "neutrality" and "balance" have little meaning when most information flows from centres of power and authority with financial and ideological interests to protect. One of our troubles in Australia is that we have been conditioned to think of politics within the narrow range of parochial party politics. So long as the Labor Party is allowed an occasional hearing in the press or on television, we console ourselves that standards of objectivity have been preserved. But achieving a balance of space or time between conservative and labor spokesmen is not the crux of the problem. The crux is how to alter the historical and social frame in which events are reported.
As for the ABC, which I suggested was as much to the right as any other media organisation, we have to recognise that it is not so much a creature of government, responsive only to ministerial pressure, as an ideological arm of the capitalist state machinery, disseminating values, ideas, opinions and attitudes which assume or in some way illustrate the basic benevolence of our social structure, our political processes, our foreign alliances, our economic priorities and our cultural aspirations. Not that the ABC should be regarded as a blunt propaganda instrument; its ideological purpose is woven much more subtly into Australian life. But its essential closeness to the capitalist state has been frankly recognised in the ABC submission to the Dix Committee of Review, a submission which calls for "corporate underwriting" of (so far as I can gather from the rather murky phraseology) costly high culture programs. Under this proposal, there would be no hard selling of products, only a discreet institutional method of advertising — perhaps a lead-in title like "This Week In Industry — presented by General Motors-Holden", or "The Esso-BHP Play of the Week", or "Utah Mining's Concert Classics", or "World Affairs — presented by Imperial Chemical Industries in conjunction with Conzinc Rio Tinto". One can hardly wait for the moment.

The ABC is not at present much use to us. The ABC's central task since its foundation in 1932 has been to provide Australia with high culture programs, especially in music and drama, and with so-called service programs — education, rural, sporting, religious and migrant programs — in other words, programs which would be rejected by the commercial electronic media as unprofitable, yet which the capitalist state considers necessary for social health and welfare. The ABC has been expected to bring an element of bourgeois cultural stability to a situation that would otherwise be culturally lopsided and chaotic. The ABC was never a countervailing power to the commercials; it is a supplementary power, almost a prop. And whenever the commercials find profit in what has traditionally been an ABC area of activity, they move in to appropriate it — as has occurred, for example, in so much televised sport, especially Packer cricket. Make no mistake: commercial broadcasting, not national broadcasting, is the dominant mode of production and, in terms of resources, represents the dominant power. In totality, the commercial operators have more stations and more access to money. All broadcasting in Australia functions, socially and culturally, in a commercial setting.

The ABC and the commercials

Between the ABC and the commercial operators, there's a somewhat uneasy alliance based on the understanding that the ABC will accept the responsibility for high culture and so-called service programming. It's only when the ABC steps out of line or out of character, either by pulling audiences away from the commercials (as in the early days of 2JJ), or by disturbing the populace with radical thoughts and raffish language that agitation begins among newspaper editorialists and media lobbyists against the wasteful expenditure of taxpayers' money. The commercials resent the intrusion of the ABC into what they regard as their bailiwick of popular entertainment; they are afraid of the ABC's occasional (very occasional these days) adventurousness in news and political commentary; and since the advent of the Fraser government, they have been determined that the ABC shall no longer take the lead in innovative programming. Under these conditions, and with commissioners who reflect the ideological intentions of the Fraser government (the former chairman, after all, was for most of his working life, a top executive of BHP), it's not at all surprising that the ABC should have lately sunk back into political orthodoxy, cultural gentility, social conformity and intellectual timidity.

So the next time an ABC reporter asks you, during a strike: "Aren't you holding the public up to ransom?" or "Isn't this victimisation of the public?" or "Why do you persist in this contempt of arbitral procedures?" — don't be...
Although the ABC has always broadcast specialist or minority culture for such disparate sections of the community as schoolchildren, farmers, churchgoers, migrants, music-lovers and adult education enthusiasts, it has never considered the working class, or the trade union movement in particular, as a section of the community. The ABC has seldom made any programs which consistently and openly acknowledged the existence of the working class or which examined in a thorough-going way the social relations of production. Is it any wonder that young ABC reporters come to you with hoary questions like “Aren’t you holding the public up to ransom?” or “Can the nation afford a 35-hour week?” — when they, as ABC staff, have for years worked a basic 36 hour 45 minute week, without asking themselves whether the nation could afford it.

Alternative media

This sort of circumstance, where union leaders get bailed up with loaded questions, might be taken as a model in miniature of our problem. How do we ensure, for example, that strikes are reported in the context not of employer interests but of the struggle for social justice? How do we ensure that union views are published not just as fragments of an interview but as coherent ideas carrying social and historical validity? We could, I suppose, launch a daily newspaper — although according to an estimate by the Assistant General Manager of John Fairfax Ltd, the setting up of a newspaper would require a capital investment of $50 million. But whether 50 million, 5 million or 1 million, the point is that we would have to acquire tremendous financial and technological resources. That’s what ownership is largely about — the ownership of financial and technological resources, material resources, and exploiting those material resources for profit by the use of labour resources. Again, if we applied for a television licence in, say, Sydney — and by some weird miracle got it by outsting one of the existing commercial licensees — how would we gather together enough financial and technological resources in order to run a station? Would we ask John Fairfax Ltd for a loan of the Channel 7 tower, transmitting equipment and studios? Or Packer for the loan of Channel 9? Or Murdoch for Channel 10?

Moreover, if we were dependent on advertising to keep a newspaper or television station going, then we would be just another adjunct of monopoly capitalism. And this, I think, is what has happened to the labor movement’s radio stations around Australia. However valuable they might be for revenue-raising, and despite the occasional labor-oriented commentary which is broadcast, these stations are trapped in the consumer-oriented commentary which is broadcast. They follow the predominant programming patterns of the commercials and have effected little change or innovation. I’m not saying that they are incompetently managed; on the contrary, their efficiency in competing with the commercial outfits is, in a quite important sense, compounding our whole problem with the media. We can’t change ways of thinking among the people at large, and among journalists in particular, we can’t change the ruling class frame of political reference, by accepting and adhering to the values of capitalist commodity culture.

I don’t want to end negatively, so let me propose a modest method of tackling the problem that faces us as a movement. The ACTU should, I think, form a media-monitoring-and-teaching unit which would have these basic tasks: to monitor newspaper, radio and television reporting of political affairs generally and union affairs in particular; to analyse the content of this coverage in terms of style, approach and political weighting; to publish the results on a regular basis and to have the meaning of the results discussed at union meetings; to liaise with the Australian Journalists Association in preparing a more comprehensive and more stringent code of ethics, and in seeking more autonomy for journalists; to work with union members, delegates and officials towards a closer, more imaginative understanding of the difficulties and challenges facing fellow workers employed by the media; to assist union spokesmen in media performance and presentation.
The Polish Crisis
Is there a way out?

by Monty Johnstone and Andreas Westphal

Since World War II the Polish crisis has been the most open and prolonged social and political conflict in what is sometimes called real existing socialism. Debate in and between the international communist parties is sharp, particularly between the Communist Party of Italy and the Soviet Communist Party.

In this issue, ALR reprints part of an article published in the January 1982 issue of the British Communist Party's journal, Marxism Today. Written in November 1981, the article was overtaken by events. But parts of its analysis bear reprinting even now.

The portion of the article ALR is reproducing deals with the need for a social and political evolution towards what the authors call an historic compromise. Before the imposition of martial law, things appeared to be possibly moving in that direction. However, this undoubtedly difficult and complex process was cut short by the unfolding of the second of Johnstone and Westphal's three scenarios — a Polish army and police clampdown. The authors were among the very few who gave this possibility greater weight than direct Soviet intervention.

Whether military rule can really help to resolve the deep-seated difficulties Poland faces is extremely doubtful. More likely, Poland (and ultimately the whole of Eastern Europe) will have to eventually adopt some form of Johnstone and Westphal's first scenario. Only then would the social and political situation in Poland be reflected in the present name of the Polish state — People's Poland.

The struggles of the Polish workers in the summer of 1980 ushered in a new and stormy period in their country's history. August 1980 brought to the surface a long-smouldering structural crisis, in which political and economic elements are inextricably linked. The absence of democratic political structures had had disastrous effects on the economy which it will take many years to overcome.

The Gdansk Agreement of August 31, 1980 recognised the establishment of "new self-governing trade unions" as "authentic representatives of the working class". The formation and legal registration of Solidarity with its 9½ million members — followed by that of Rural Solidarity to represent three
million private farmers — represents something qualitatively new and without precedent in any socialist country.

Poland is today experiencing a crisis of hegemony. The Polish United Workers’ Party, recognised in the constitution as the “leading political force in society in the construction of socialism”, has committed itself to work for democratic renewal but is unable effectively to lead the people because it does not enjoy their confidence. The decisive forces in Solidarity and the Catholic Church, which do enjoy such confidence, do not aspire to become political parties taking over the leadership of the government from the PUWP.

In such a situation, the only hope for Poland would seem to lie in a historical compromise concluded between the PUWP, Solidarity and the Catholic Church to tackle the crisis on the basis of genuine socialist democracy and along the lines that can win the active support of the majority of the people.

The political system

The upheavals of 1980, like those of 1956 and 1970, represented the crisis of a certain model of socialism. On each occasion working class discontent, denied adequate channels of expression, had built up and finally burst out in explosions. They brought about changes in the Party leadership, important concessions and a denunciation of bureaucracy and of the autocratic practices of the previous Party secretary. Yet on each occasion, after a certain period, the pendulum swung back again to the same concentration of power.

The root of the trouble lies not in the character of individuals but in the nature of the power structures inherited from the Stalin period, within which successive Party leaders operated and enjoyed the corrupting fruits of uncontested power. What has been involved in Poland, as in other socialist countries, has been the subordination of all social and political organisations to an unchallengeable and irremovable governing Communist Party. The latter has, by an extension of the same process, been effectively subordinated to the Political Bureau and sometimes, within this, to the First Secretary and a small group around him.

The negative effects of this system in Poland reflected themselves in arbitrariness and growing corruption not only in the political sphere but equally in the economy subordinated to it. Lack of control from below not only deprived the working people of the democratic rights with which socialism promises to provide them in full measure. It also made for economic inefficiency and disregard for economic reality in general and the subordination of consumer interests and social welfare to capital accumulation. It deprived both the political system and the economy of the feedback mechanisms essential for preventing the accumulation of abuses, errors and the corruption that became so rife at all levels.

The Catholic Church, embracing 80 percent of the population, has in recent years represented an increasingly strong element of pluralism in Poland, although it has been anxious not to play any directly political role. The establishment and legal registration of the 9½ million Solidarity has, however, gone far beyond this in its effects on the country’s effective power structure. It represents an exceptionally powerful pluralistic phenomenon unique in the socialist countries.

Whilst repudiating allegations of wishing to take power, Solidarity is most certainly an extremely strong pressure group acting on the existing organs of power at all levels and, in practice, introducing elements of dual power into the Polish political system.

While Solidarity’s program resolution speaks of examining the need for setting up a second self-government or social-economic chamber alongside Poland’s present single-chamber parliament (the Sejm) to supervise economic policy, “radical” elements in Solidarity demand such a second chamber, which would be controlled by Solidarity, as a political counterweight or opposition to the PUWP-controlled Sejm. Seen in such a
context, it could at best be a recipe for constitutional confusion and deadlock, and at worst a prescription for escalating political confrontation.

Meanwhile the Sejm, which for so long played the role of a rubber stamp to the PUWP and the government, has been exercising more and more legislative initiative, as did the Czechoslovak parliament during the Prague Spring. On more than one occasion the government and the PUWP have been forced to back down and modify their proposals in face of opposition from both backbench Communist members and from the non-Communist parliamentary groups. In October this secured both the retention of concessions made to Solidarity on the self-management bill and the withdrawal — at least for the immediate period ahead — of a proposal for a temporary ban on strikes.

**Parties and elections**

Poland has always been, at least nominally, a multi-party state. Two non-Communist parties exist alongside the PUWP, officially acknowledging its leadership, which has since 1976 been enshrined in the Constitution. The Sejm, elected in March 1980, comprises 258 PUWP members, 113 from the United Peasant Party, 38 from the Democratic Party and 48 non-party members including three small Catholic groups. The non-Communist groups are now playing an increasingly autonomous role, helping to enrich the hitherto normally dreary and predictable Sejm debates. Outside Parliament the non-Communist parties have more and more been taking independent stands on political issues.

Up till now, elections have always been held for both parliamentary and local elections on a single list of the National Unity Front, led by the PUWP and embracing all the abovementioned parties and groups. There is today widespread agreement not only in Solidarity but among all except the conservative minority in the PUWP on the desirability of changing this thoroughly discredited electoral system. Thus, on October 8, Hieronim Kubiak, Political Bureau member and Secretary of the Central Committee of the PUWP, said: "The elaboration of a new pluralist formula for the National Unity Front, of a new method of election and of a reorganisation of the legislative system in the spirit of self-management and the expansion of civil liberties is an important task. Under no circumstances can there be any question of restoring the pre-August 1980 order." However, specific proposals seem to have been put off till nearer March 1984 when the next parliamentary elections are due. It should not prove impossible for Solidarity and the PUWP to negotiate an agreement before then on a new democratic electoral system, which will give the electors a possibility of political choice.

For some time there have been moves in some circles to form new political parties. The idea of a "Polish Labour Party" (PPS), launched by Jerzy Milewski, a Solidarity expert in Gdansk, has support among some sections of Solidarity, whose congress, however, declined to sponsor it. In Warsaw, Jacek Kuron, a former leader of KOR-KSS, has been involved in forming a "Club of the self-governing Republic", which has been the subject of police investigations. The attitude of the PUWP leadership to all such attempts is at present very hostile. How much popular support such projects get will depend to no small extent on how far the Peasant and Democratic Parties develop as autonomous organisations and are seen as giving expression to the views of the most important sections of critical non-communist opinion. Should the demand for a "Labour Party" obtain popular support, it would seem better to allow it to exist freely and legally and to confront its ideas and criticisms in open political debate. An extreme rightwing nationalist party like the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN) might, however, require a different approach.

One of the most important points in the Gdansk Agreement stipulates: "The activity of the radio and TV and of the press and publications should serve for the expression of a diversity of ideas, views and opinions. It should be subject to public control." Very
considerable progress has been made since then in that direction. However, the insistence of the PUWP on its "right" to control the media provokes continuous clashes and resentment, as does the persistent refusal to allow Solidarity to publish a daily paper on the spurious grounds of paper shortage, whilst organisations with much less support are allotted paper for theirs. The PUWP's break with the old authoritarian power structures would appear that much more decisive if it were to show itself less reluctant to extend to other popular forces the same democratic rights as communists everywhere demand for themselves.

Towards a historic compromise?

On the evening of November 4, Lech Walesa, Archbishop Glemp, the Catholic Primate of Poland, and General Jaruzelski met to discuss the formation of a Front of National Accord. Though at best only the first step in a long process, it could become the symbol of the desire of the three great social forces in Poland to lay a basis for working together for overcoming the crisis and democratising Polish society. This would be the perspective of a genuinely historic compromise.

This scenario would involve Solidarity giving up organising its activities in the expectation of a sharpening conflict with the government. Instead it would make proposals for social reform which would certainly compete with those of the PUWP. Such competition would, however, be seen as a necessary part of the working out of a compromise. The Catholic Church, as a conservative force in many social questions, would co-operate in the development of the socialist system. The PUWP would renounce any attempt to enforce its claim to exercise a leading role by administrative means and constitutionally prescribed privileges. Instead, it would struggle on different social and political levels to convince the population of its ideas and be prepared for the period ahead to give up claims to exclusive positions of political power.

One can assume that such a historic compromise would have to include agreement at least on the following planes:

The attainment of a compromise on self-management would have to proceed from the interests of the majority of society, which requires both the renunciation of economic sectionalism and PUWP domination.

A social control over the media would have to be established, putting an end to their use as an instrument of ideological domination by the PUWP and guaranteeing access to all forces associated with the historic compromise.

Possibilities would have to be created for giving institutional expression to the increasing pluralism that has developed in Polish society. This would entail candidates in local and national elections no longer being only permitted to stand on a single list put forward by the PUWP-controlled National Unity Front. This would not necessarily involve the formation of new parties, but would allow for regional initiatives and would enable Catholic groups and the already existing parties to contest separately if they wished to.

However, a second scenario is also possible. Such a historic compromise does not come about. Inside Solidarity those trends which are really committed to seeking such a compromise do not succeed in carrying the day. The PUWP, under pressure from Moscow, shows itself unwilling to give up sufficient of its prerogatives to be able to reach an agreement acceptable to Solidarity. The present political and economic tension becomes even more acute. In such a situation those favoring a return to the old set-up force the PUWP to change its strategy. The inclusive moves towards co-operation with Solidarity are broken off in favour of an authoritarian approach to overcoming the crisis. The PUWP on its own takes charge of the economic reform, and prevents any further discussion on a pluralistic reform of the political system. Such a strategy would certainly rely on support from a section of the population, which has grown tired after
nearly eighteen months of instability and disorder and is fed up with the inability of the Party and Solidarity to work together. This section of the population would be ready to abandon any comprehensive democratisation if the PUWP could convince them that it could at least effectively tackle the economic crisis. Such a solution would not be acceptable to the majority of Solidarity, as the attainment of its basic demands like access to the media, pluralistic reform of the electoral system and democratic participation in central economic planning would be blocked. Solidarity would therefore no doubt adopt a strategy of sharpened confrontation which would only leave the PUWP the option of suppressing the opposition movement, for example by mass arrests of strikers or the imprisonment of representatives of the "radical" wing of Solidarity.

The role of the army

Already today the importance of the army is increasing significantly, and could become crucial in enforcing authoritarian solutions either on behalf of the party or on its own account. For the first time in a socialist country a general holds the post of first secretary of the Party, along with that of prime minister and minister of defence. Alongside Jaruzelski, three other ministers are generals. At the end of October task forces of about 2,000 soldiers were given authority to go into the villages and take action to clear the supply lines and ease the shortages of food and other essentials, thereby taking over responsibilities of the local authorities. They were recalled after a month, but troops have now been sent into the towns for the same purpose. Both actions highlight the image of the army as the most — or perhaps only — efficient part of the state apparatus. At the time of writing, the PUWP Central Committee has just approved he drafting of a far-reaching Emergency Powers bill giving the government the right to ban strikes and meetings and extend the jurisdiction of military courts. It also appears to have watered down the idea of the Front of National accord. All this seems to increase the possibility of this second scenario, which could pave the way for a third and even more disastrous one.

The third scenario is a Soviet intervention, possibly on the invitation of a Polish government under pressure from within and without. Whilst Moscow has tolerated more far-reaching developments in Poland than would have been thought possible in July 1980, this does not mean that there are no limits. From the point of view of the Soviet Union four essential factors militate against an intervention. Firstly, unlike in Czechoslovakia, they would have to reckon with massive resistance in Poland. Secondly, the Soviet Union would create additional problems for its own economy by acquiring responsibility for the Polish economy. Thirdly, as a result of the ever more aggressive concepts of the US government there would be the danger because of Poland of an escalation of the two blocks on the military plane, not in central Europe but somewhere in the world. Fourthly, the growing success of the peace movement in Western Europe would be undone at a stroke.

The connection of developments in Poland with the development of the European left should be underlined. If the historic compromise that we have discussed can be achieved, it would give an enormous boost to the left forces that stand for a pluralistic socialism in Western Europe. An authoritarian "solution" or a Soviet intervention would give the rightwing ideologists ammunition for attacking socialism as being in principle hostile to democracy. However, the success of the West European peace movement in preventing the stationing of NATO medium range missiles could increase the tolerance of the Soviet Union towards pluralistic developments in Poland.

NOTES

Soon after the signing of the "Common Programme for a Government of Left Union" by the French Communist Party (PCF), Socialist Party (PS) and Left Radicals, the Socialist leader Francois Mitterrand remarked to his Second International colleagues in Vienna that in time the PCF vote in the French electorate would be reduced to 15 percent of the electorate with equivalent gains transferring to the socialists. At the time those claims may have seemed outrageous and extravagant but, today, with a communist vote of just over 15 percent in the presidential elections of May 1981 and the parliamentary elections of the following month, and substantial socialist victories in those elections, they seem positively prophetic.

The victory of Mitterrand in the presidential elections, and the left in the French parliamentary elections, marks a significant advance for the left in France. It compels us to look at some aspects of the history of the French left and its strategy for electoral victory as a way of understanding the situation of the socialist movement in France.

Here, I am examining the period of agreement between the left parties around the Common Programme of the French Left and looking at key aspects of the Programme itself and the events of the years 1972-78. What were the reasons for this temporary programmatic consolidation of the "Union of the Left"? How did the major parties, the PS and PCF, hope to benefit? What were the main points of agreement and difference? Why did the Common Programme fail and recede into history after the March 1978

* The author is a Politics' student at Flinders University, South Australia.
elections? What does the period tell us about the PCF and PS? These are the sorts of questions I seek to answer.

In many ways the logic of the recent socialist electoral victory and the communist setback was set up during the Common Programme years, particularly the time of its demise in late 1977 and early 1978. Then, the socialists, having made gains over the previous year, decided to seize the opportunity and move out alone, looking for electoral victory while the communists stepped back.

The Common Programme

The Common Programme was signed by Georges Marchais, PCF Secretary-General, and Francois Mitterrand on the night of June 26-27, 1972. A few days later the Programme was endorsed by the Left Radicals. Immediately the PCF went out and publicised the Programme, publishing it in paperback. It was, as Feenberg remarks, "the sort of book that nobody reads" but its symbolic importance as a concrete showing of unity was paramount. Soon after publication by the PCF, the socialists and radicals put out their own editions.

The Common Programme was a plan of major, progressive reform for French society in the economy, in democracy, in welfare and social spheres; and in foreign policy. The economic proposals of the Programme were basic. Major nationalisations in key industrial and financial areas of the economy were called for. In this enlarged public sector the workers would wield a greater influence through a system of "democratic management" which would put workers' representatives, probably from the trade unions, on the boards of management. The Common Programme also paid some attention to questions of quality of work, guaranteeing shorter hours, limited night shifts, regulation of work speed, increased job training, some access to study leave and technology and pollution controls.

In the social sphere a wide range of liberalisations and new freedoms were proposed, ranging from recognition of tenants' unions through increased cultural funding and new student allowances to extended maternity leave and free legalised abortion. In international affairs the Common Programme proposed to abolish the French nuclear strike force, stop arms sales to colonial regimes, recognise the independence of the remaining French colonies, work for the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and continue cooperation with the Common Market.

From the beginning there were problems in the campaign to promote the Common Programme. The PS leader openly announced his aim of taking votes from the communists and the PCF showed its distrust of the PS. Marchais reported to the PCF Central Committee two days after the signing of the Common Programme that: "At the bottom, the ideology animating the Socialist Party is and remains absolutely reformist."

The PS was quick to distance itself from the PCF when necessary. They also wished to push the PCF on the issues of its Soviet link and internal party democracy. This sort of tension and pressure was to be maintained throughout the period of the Common Programme, often peaking, then being resolved before important election times.

Despite these sorts of problems, the Union of the Left was maintained, moving from one electoral gain to another until it seemed certain to succeed in 1978. However, the tensions of electoral balance, theoretical differences and campaign difficulties proved too strong.

The Common Programme ended with the narrow defeat of the Union of the Left in the March 1978 National Assembly elections. The final disharmony that led to this defeat began in 1977 with the renegotiation of the details of the Common Programme. In September, the negotiations which had floundered over differences in interpretation of the Programme, and revisions to it, came to a standstill. Francois Mitterrand had this to say:
What is happening in the Communist Party? What's wrong here? Isn't it because the Socialist Party has become the first party of France, of the left, because we have carried off so many victories? As for our partners, they have stayed at the level where they were.5

Mitterrand laid the blame at the feet of the PCF, as a party that was not willing to take part in government, even a government of the left, if it was not dominant. In the run-up to the 1978 elections the PCF had to face the fact that its strategy to "strengthen the left", strengthen the PCF within the left" had failed. This was emphasised by the strong socialist and the only mediocre communist showing in the 1977 municipal elections. The mid-1977 opinion polls showed 30 percent support for the PS and 21 percent for the PCF.6

This prospect of a secondary position in the left worried the communists, hence Marchais' announcement that "21 percent is not enough, 25 percent would be good".7 Given the votes of the Left Radicals, this was tantamount to suggesting that the Socialist Party step back to being the junior partner, clearly an unreal demand and one unacceptable to the PS.

Tactical manoeuvring

But these splits were not simply a question of tactical electoral manoeuvring. There were, as observers at the time noted, "differing interpretations of the 1972 version of the Common Programme" — differences over how a left government would behave in France. There were problems over updating, interpretation and extensions to the Programme. Nationalisation, wealth tax measures, the concept of self-management and the cost of the Programme seem to have been the main problems.

After the 1977 failure in the negotiations, each party went on the offensive. The PCF publicly claimed that the PS had "moved to the right" and merely wished to "manage the social crisis in the interests of big capital and continue to impose austerity upon the workers."8 The socialists published their own version of an updated Common Programme.

The head-on position between the parties was maintained until after the first round of voting in March 1978. After a disappointing showing for the left, a peace meeting was convened and a patch-up agreement signed. The final result showed that this rapprochement was seen as too shallow and had come too late. The left parties gained seats (the PS 9 and the PCF 12) but the gains were insufficient to win government.

The defeat of the left unleashed recriminations from both sides. The PCF Political Bureau stated firmly that: "The direct cause of the failure of the left to come to power lies in the disastrous and suicidal strategy of the PS and nowhere else."10

The Executive Bureau of the Socialist Party called upon workers to judge the "... strategy of failure of the Communist Party, which had deprived them of their victory and of the changes which would have come to each of them."11

Of far more interest was the outburst of criticism that arose within the PCF, an outburst that was spearheaded by intellectuals but seems to have had a substantial basis among rank-and-file militants as well. The debate that followed raised most of the key issues of the Common Programme.

The meaning of the Programme

What did the signing of the Common Programme mean for the PS and PCF? What did they hope to achieve with it? The answers reveal important tensions in the Union of the Left.

Both the PS and PCF wished to participate in a left government. There is no real reason to doubt this, despite the PCF’s late 1977 and early 1978 behaviour. The socialists saw themselves as an almost purely electoral party; in fact without parliamentary representation they had little power whatsoever. So it was clear for them. On the PCF, Georges Lavau noted that "for the moment, one thing is certain, that it wants to be in power. That is all we can say for sure."12

But neither party wanted the power of
government just for its own sake.

Of course both the socialists and the communists had made it clear right from the beginning that they wanted power and hegemony of the left. But they are political organisations of conviction and theory, both of them. They wanted government to put their vision into practice. Problems arose, however, when it became clear that the respective PS and PCF "visions" of the Common Programme were markedly different.

For the socialists, the Common Programme was a real programme of reform. It was exactly the kind of thing that a reforming social-democratic party and government should put into practice. The Programme amounted to the party's ends. The commitment of the Socialist Party to the sort of reform programme outlined in the Common Programme is made clear by its early 1972 pre-signing platform. It spelled out a series of progressive moves such as nationalisation of the banks and finance companies and some major industry, the setting up of a proportional representation electoral system, a ban on television advertising, legislation for free abortion and divorce by mutual consent, the repeal of the death sentence, nuclear dissolution and a move to wind down both NATO and the Warsaw Pact agreement.

Similarly, the late 1977 pre-election update of the Common Programme suggested by the socialists shows them sticking to reform. Among the proposals agreed to by both sides in the updated Programme were: an increase in unemployment benefits to two-thirds of the minimum wage, reduction of the working week to 35 hours, the setting up of low-cost housing schemes, a consumer-level price freeze, new checks on multinational ownership, an extension of the proportional system in municipal elections and increased funding for welfare.

In addition, the socialists made concessions to the communists, agreeing to a new wealth tax, an increased number of nationalisations and an increased minimum wage. Mitterrand was quite correct when he pointed out in January 1978 that the socialists had not abandoned the Common Programme and "were continuing to use it as their charter". That was true. What the communists failed to see properly was that the socialist vision was inherently limited and reformist.

The PCF vision

The PCF, on the other hand, had a different view of things. The Common Programme was not the end of things at all; it was the beginning, opening up a stage of "advanced democracy" which set up the possibility for a move to socialism. Socialism itself was something different. Early in the Common Programme period Georges Marchais pointed this out in a report to the PCF Political Bureau. He said:

The Political Bureau considers that, even if the enterprise is difficult and nothing is won in advance, the conditions and the means exist which will permit the experiment to have a positive outcome, and that the common programme constitutes a step forward in the general struggle of the working class and of our people for social progress, democracy and socialism.14

The PCF had a concept, however limited it may have been in theoretical scope, of a process, of transition to a new kind of French society.

This view of the Common Programme as part of a strategy for socialism arose from the PCF's adherence, as late as 1977, to the thesis of "state monopoly capitalism". This thesis tends to see the state in the phase of late or monopoly capitalism as being "fused" with monopoly capital. It is "a state with no autonomy that is purely at the service of the monopolies".15

Arising from this view are two important strategic aspects. Firstly, a broad, democratic alliance has to be built, encompassing all those who are in opposition to the monopolies. This alliance is to be built so as to encourage broadness and such as to approach "men (and women) as they are, not as they
should be. The PCF used the metaphor of the "bolted door" to illustrate the state in this phase. Only a huge and broad alliance could effectively confront the "bolted door" of the state and the monopolies. The Common Programme was an attempt to construct this alliance. Secondly, because the state is seen as a simple tool in the service of monopoly the winning of government power is crucial in taking this tool out of the hands of the monopolies and putting it at the service of the people. The achieving of government, through the Union of the Left, therefore assumes great importance.

While it is true that this view of late capitalism, and of the transition to socialism, was subject to major criticism, mainly from the left of the PCF, this need not concern us overly much here. The critics claimed that the state monopoly capitalism thesis did not embody an understanding of contradiction within the state apparatus and the relative autonomy of the state. Socialist transition, therefore, was a much more complex thing involving an interaction of various economic, ideological and political levels and complicated class alliances than just the simple anti-monopoly alliance. But these were all differences over the nature of the transition. That the PCF was talking about the transition to socialism was never in doubt.

With the bulk of the PS not seeing things this way, conflict was inevitable. Mitterrand, the real strategist for the Socialist Party, as well as its political leader, foretold the future that he planned for the communists.

The Communist Party is our natural ally .... I am not obliged to extend it any privilege; I am not obliged to give it preference. I observe simply that the unification of the Left involves the Communist Party .... And from this stems the importance which I attach to the formation of a political movement able first to achieve parity with and then dominate the Communist Party; and, finally, to obtain by itself a majority role .... One may doubt the sincerity of communist intentions, but to found a political strategy on the intentions one imputes to others makes no sense. What is important is to create the conditions which make these others act as if they were sincere.

When Mitterrand speaks of "sincerity" here he means keeping the communists within the bounds of the mainstream Socialist Party aims, that is, within the bounds of reform.

Austerity and capitalist crisis

Related to the question of what the Common Programme actually meant for the Socialist and Communist parties is the problem of how or whether a left government in France would cope with the capitalist crisis of the 1970s. For the Common Programme was formulated during a time of relative prosperity for the capitalist world. 1977-78 was a different matter entirely. The now familiar problems of inflation, unemployment, flagging production and lower consumer demand were very apparent to the parties of the left.

The socialists responded by stepping back. Their programme of reform, mentioned above, was maintained but restricted. Their commitment to wage increases, social welfare betterment, taxes on wealth and the like were tempered by the fear of exacerbating inflation and further dampening production. In the socialist sense and in the social-democratic sense, they wanted to retreat.

In Marchais' words, the Socialist Party's position would have meant giving up our position on the minimum wage; giving up the immediate increase of purchasing power; the full extent of measures to reduce unemployment; the immediate reduction of hours of work and the introduction of a fifth week of paid holidays; giving up effective nationalisation of banking and finance and of the nine industrial groupings put forward in 1971; giving up the tax on capital and wealth. It would also have meant giving up the democratic content of the common programme ....

He may have been a little off-beam with the claims about "giving up" nationalisation and any form of wealth tax but essentially the
PCF Secretary General was correct. In the PCF’s eyes this was nothing more than capitulation which would force “austerity” upon the people of France as a way to revive the economy. The PCF was not interested “in managing the capitalist crisis”.

For the PCF, as a responsible party of the left, is this really the response? Indeed, were they asking the right questions? Need the battle for left government be one of managing the crisis or nothing? That was how the PCF seemed to respond.

Did the PCF condemnation of the PS mean that it actually thought the socialists had changed their spots? The suggestion that the PS had “turned to the right” as the Communist Party claimed seems to indicate this to be the case. But how consistent is this view of a change with the view expressed at the same time that the socialists were always interested in managing the system and no more? Marchais, in a later section of the same report quoted above, claimed that the Socialist Party had not changed its nature since the signing of the Common Programme.

Six years of experience have shown that the Socialist Party did not undergo any real change .... Under the cover of a leftist and pro-unity phraseology, which allowed them to win over people who were sincerely in favour of unity and change, it remained a social-democratic party, which does not aim to bring about democratic change.20

The confusion of the communist leader’s position comes through. The real situation was that the PCF could no longer keep a basically social-democratic party from making the concessions any party of that kind would make in the face of capitalist crisis. The Socialist Party had strengthened its position in the Union to that extent. Now the problem for the communists was whether to take the measure of progressive reforms they could get (and remember that the socialists’ concessions were still quite “left” by comparison to most social-democratic policies to be found around the world at the time) or reject the alliance altogether.

Were the communists really sure that even their optimal version of the Common Programme would benefit France’s working people under the sort of conditions prevailing in 1978? After all, the Common Programme, even when including the new nationalisations wanted by the PCF, was still only a programme of advanced democratic reform — it was not socialism. Surely the very logic of the PCF’s Common Programme transition strategy would bestow the same status (if less favourably) upon the Socialist Party’s watered down version? It would still “open up” the possibility for change while substantially improving the lot of French workers and their allies.

None of the areas of concession mentioned by Marchais, not even the possibility of austerity measures, take from the Common Programme its strategic emphasis, its concept of change as a process rather than an event or a government decree, it seems that really the PCF had lost faith in its strategy, or didn’t understand that strategy when it came close to really putting it into practice. Rather than confront this the Communist Party almost seemed to prefer staying in a more comfortable but less responsible opposition.

The result was unsatisfactory for the left as a whole and for the Communist Party. The left was to remain out of government, meaning that no reforms, no matter how minimal, of the left programme could be put into practice. Within the left, the Socialist Party gave the appearance of being the responsible partner in the union, the one that was at least willing to make a go of governing even under difficulty. The Communist Party was seen, correctly, as the abstentionist party content to remain “within the fortress” with its solid 20 percent vote and make few advances. That this could in time weaken even that 20 percent support was a possibility not lost to critics within the party.

These same critics also took the view that many of the battles, including those over austerity and nationalisation, could have been fought out within a Union of the Left government rather than within a left fighting for electoral victory — an argument that makes perfect electoral sense, especially in
terms of the sort of socialist strategy mapped out by the Common Programme. The PCF would then have shown a proper willingness as a communist party to take on the responsibility of government even in difficult circumstances, as a part of the struggle for advanced democracy and socialism.

This is a position that was, in my view, more honest with both the electorate and communist militants, an honesty which the PCF failed to deliver.

Ownership and control of industry

The actual "break" on the left occurred over nationalisations. The immediate tension was over the interpretation of the 1972 version of the Programme. The issue was whether subsidiaries with less than 100 percent ownership by a major firm listed in the "group" for nationalisation would be similarly treated, a move which added over one thousand firms to the original group of nine; whether six more industrial giants, including all of the steel industry, would be added to the list, and whether a left government would nationalise a particular company in the event of its workers expressing a wish for the company to be taken into public ownership.

There were two crucial theoretical questions involved with nationalisation which, apart from the electoral and immediate economic concern of the cost of compensation, illustrated further differences. One involved the economic role of nationalisation. The other involved the question of self-management.

The socialists did not see widespread nationalisation as being all that important, while the communists obviously did. Holland cites a number of French sources to suggest that on interpretation of the 1972 Programme "it is possible to give the PCF a good deal of benefit on the overall doubt". He points out that, given that most large corporations are themselves composed of subsidiaries with varying shares of percentage ownership, it is not really clear that nationalisation would be meaningful had subsidiaries with a 51 percent or more holding by the major corporation not been included. Certainly it would have made government influence over the economy more difficult, something the socialists were less concerned about, certainly in the short term.

Many socialists were not firm on major nationalisation at all. For some of them, including economic adviser Jacques Attali, and former United Socialist Party leader Michel Rocard, the question of control was more central to both influencing the economy and improving the lives of workers. They took up the slogan first raised in 1968 — "autogestion" or self-management. It was not clear whether the official PS version of self-management was a form of participation in running industry or something more. In any case, they argued that the key to socialism was a change in the "social relations" of production and control rather than ownership and that therefore to demand major nationalisation alone was to bark up the wrong tree.

The communists disagreed, arguing that ownership remained crucial. Their model of "democratic management" was no real solution to the problem of control though. At best it offered another bureaucratic layer on the participation thesis. Under the PCF's proposal, industry would be run by a board with government and union representatives participating. Any active role would be removed from the rank-and-file worker and put in the hands of his/her union official. Not coincidentally, the French union movement was under the major influence of the communist-dominated Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT). The PCF proposal would give the party itself major influence when the government and union representatives were combined. This is hardly a fully "democratic" alternative.

The formulation of the Common Programme which read that "on the basis of a large public and nationalised sector, the government will favour, in law and in reality, the development of democratic forms of management" masked both the differences the parties had on this question and the fact that neither of them understood exactly what...
it meant when they appropriated the term autogestion. During the 1978 election campaign the PCF did an about-face and began using the term "autogestion", a term which they had previously derided. This did not seem to alter their view of the role of workers in management but is an indication of the influence and importance of the concept in France.

The left and the new social movements

An important feature of the May/June events in 1968 was the spotlighting of an emerging, articulate "middle strata" of salaried workers and professionals. The Common Programme was in some ways a response to this and represented a shift of these strata, or a portion of them, to the consolidated left. Both the PS and the PCF recognised the importance of this.

The Common Programme therefore had a strong flavour of developing new freedoms in the personal and private spheres of life and towards understanding the new "quality of life" movements that had their basis in the cultural shifts of the 1960s. A decisive nod was made in the direction of the ecology movement, the movement for women's rights and liberation, self-management as we have noted, the homosexual movement (to a small extent), the student movement and others.

The Union of the Left as a whole was successful in raising the hopes of these groups and these middle strata. The problem of party competition arose here again, however, the Socialist Party being much more successful than the communists in gaining voter support. As George Ross points out, the PCF was aware of the problem and engaged in a number of publicity-type operations stressing its devotion to democracy and freedom and the issues it knew appealed. But it was not believed. Why? Principally because of the party's past and the time needed to prove itself different. In any case, the party needed time to understand the issues itself. Ross observed that

While things were changing in the PCF, the party was unable to convince intermediary social groups that they had changed enough. Beyond this the PCF demonstrated an almost perverse reluctance to broach issues which were obviously salient to new middle class groups in ways which would be favourably received. In the 1970's autogestion, feminism and ecology (including the nuclear power issue) all caused great concern in new middle groups. On all of these issues the PCF scorned the arguments which were put forward by the protest groups which raised these issues.

The Socialist Party which had brought together some of the elements involved in the '68 events managed to gather this support. This was probably the most important area which confirmed the socialist advances through the period of the Common Programme while the communist position stagnated. The communists, quite simply, could not break out of their old logic. This was essential if it was to move beyond its position of the formal, staid French left opposition. Althusser, and others such as theorist Jean Ellenstein, saw this opportunity in the practice of the Common Programme. There was a need, he said, to abandon fortress-like withdrawal and (begin) resolutely involving the Party in the mass movement, extending its zone of influence through struggle, and finding in that mass oriented struggle, the real reasons for transforming the Party, by giving it the life that comes from the masses.

Strategy and alliance

When analysing the relationship between the PCF and the PS around the Common Programme, the communist leadership used to like talking about "the struggle for the common programme". I have emphasised a number of times already the competitive nature of the Union of the Left. Usually this competition is seen just in terms of votes but we now know it was more than that. Programmatic points, attitudes to social change and the allegiance of the working class and middle strata were involved too.

This raises the question of the nature of alliances. How do parties of the social-
democratic and communist left engage in electoral agreements and strategic alliances?

The socialists were clear on this. Mitterrand's many statements show that they hoped to win votes, limit the scope of communist influence and put their reform programme into practice. The communists were not so clear. At times it seemed that the communists were involved in the union merely to come to power and gain dominance over the Socialist Party on the left. But is that a sufficient view for a party concerned with socialist transition?

It is not enough to see an alliance of this sort in terms of votes alone. Of course, votes are important as a measure of support and as a way to gain office, thereby allowing policies to be put into practice. But Marchais' dictum of "21 percent is not enough, 25 percent would be good" goes no further than that at all. It is simply a statement of the desire to dominate the PS.

There are problems with Marchais' formula. Firstly, consider the trade union movement. With the Communist Party holding sway in the huge trade union federation, the CGT, need it worry about being an "auxiliary force" to the socialists in the wider political sphere? But more important than evening up the political balance, the communist role in the trade union movement gives it a strategic lever in the heartland of socialist politics, in the key organisations of workers' defence. The alliance can then be built and fought for at another political level. Democratic and socialist change can be struggled for in the workplace and in the union movement. That is, if the Communist Party understood and worked for other aspects of the alliance than the purely electoral.

The second problem with Marchais' approach was precisely that it did see the alliance as purely electoral. Hence the ease with which it could be sacrificed when it became clear that electoral advantage was not accruing to the PCF. But alliances for democratic and socialist transition must work at more than the electoral level. They must extend to involve classes and class fractions, seeking to win them over to more advanced positions. In communist jargon, alliances must be forged and won amongst the masses. The PCF made the mistake of leaving the agreements and battles at the level of formal agreement between parties rather than agreement and struggle between ideas amongst the people.

For example, the Programme was signed, it was printed and distributed but there was only a limited attempt to have it discussed and acted upon. Propaganda and slogans do not replace the taking up of issues in the mass way suggested earlier. That would be the sort of thing that would help to build the alliance on two fronts — one of formal party agreement, the other a transitional or "counter-hegemonic" approach to alliances. This was very much the "left" criticism within the PCF expressed forcefully by Althusser and Balibar. Ellenstein, representing the "right" dissidents was no less firm on the need to broaden the struggle for the Programme. At the time, left and right differences over the strategy seemed minimal, most of them having related to the earlier issue of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Democracy and stalinism

These were the issues which party activists were discussing in the period leading up to, and especially after, the defeat of the left in the 1978 elections. We have dealt mainly with the questions raised in the PCF and by communist intellectuals because it was in that party where the most discussion took place, at least as far as we can tell, and where the discussion reached a theoretical depth. The socialists certainly had their splits and dissensions after March 1978, but these seem to have been in the more traditional mould of leadership challenges and factional squabbles than major theoretical and strategic debates.

For the Communist Party and its internal critics, there was one overriding concern — the question of democracy within the party and the break with stalinism. It was the
strength or weakness of the party as an open and democratic organisation which would determine whether the whole range of tactical and strategic questions regarding the Union of the Left would be asked and answered at all. **Party democracy was paramount — a problem to be solved before others could be properly approached.**

Hence the stress all post-election comments placed on the need for discussion, self-criticism and openness. No matter whether the criticism came from the "right" or the "left" of the party, this emphasis was consistent. For example, Jean Ellenstein said:

> It has become clearer now that the PCF will have to carry out the initiatives symbolised by the 22nd congress to their conclusion in every field ....

> Whatever the issue .... many communists have asked questions about the methods used .... and have criticised them ....

> Let it not be said that these are intellectual problems for intellectuals. They are relevant questions hundreds of thousands of communists are asking themselves today. The party's refusal to discuss them in public appears to be more tragic than it really is. What would be tragic however is if it continued to reject the public discussion that so many communists are looking forward to. 28

and Louis Althusser:

> The defeat of the Union of the Left has seriously confused the popular masses and filled many communists with profound disquiet. A 'workerist' — or more precisely sectarian — faction is openly rejoicing at the break with the Socialist Party, presenting it as a victory over the social-democratic danger.... While they wait for an explanation from the Party leadership, the militants are themselves beginning to analyse the process that led to the defeat: namely, the line actually followed by the Party, with all its somersaults, and the vagaries of its practice .... 29

Ellenstein and Althusser joined forces to the extent that they, along with over 100 other party members, banded together to publish an open letter to the party leadership in the May 17 edition of *Le Monde*. Although there was a certain naivety in the expectations of the critics, in that at times they seemed to suggest that merely by opening up debate and by making some structural changes to encourage that debate, the problems of French communism would be solved, their criticisms seem justified and pointed.

**The PCF and the Comintern**

The PCF had had a long history of enclosed behaviour. It was the perverse "model" of Leninism that developed in the stalinist period of the Third International. In the period of the Union of the Left, in all its stages from the PCF's first suggestions in the 1960s to the break in 1978, there had been pressure on the Communist Party to break with its stalinist past. This would, on one hand, sweeten the pill for the socialists, hesitant about an alliance with the PCF and, on the other hand, take the party further towards establishing the independence and democracy demanded by the need to distance itself from the Soviet Union and find a place among the Eurocommunists.

Both these needs were mutually advantageous and, for a period, the PCF seemed to be responding in concrete ways. One of the great promises of the Common Programme for the communist movement in France and elsewhere was that it showed new, less sectarian, more open and co-operative ways forward, and showed the ability of communist parties to change. There were lapses of course. Even one of the PCF's most symbolic "breaks" with the past — the abandonment of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" formulation — was done in the old undemocratic way. Georges Marchais announced the fact on television one week before the 22nd congress decision and without adequate or reasonable debate. For democrats in the party, even those that agreed with the move, this was considered outrageous. But, overall, a hopeful process was occurring.
The events of 1977-78, the twists of the party line, the break with the PS followed by its hasty patching up between rounds of voting and the defeat of the Union must have brought unpleasant memories to the minds of many. These events amounted to a setback for the process of real democratisation in the PCF. The stifling of debate and the isolating of critics (and the later expulsions) after the election marked the defeat for this process.

The Union of the Left became impossible to restore after the 1978 election defeat. The Socialist Party regrouped and prepared to battle on as the major force on the left. The PCF retreated behind its traditional "buffer zone" of the 20 percent vote. Within the party itself the sectarian anti-Eurocommunist faction gained support while the critics mentioned above continued to be vocal.

Despite the conventional analysis which solely blames the Marchais leadership for the shift back to the methods of old, a more refined view sees the general secretary and his supporters playing a balancing act at the head of a very divided party. The party has remained in that divided state to this day. Despite the presence of four communist ministers in the government and despite continued hope for socialist change in France, the PCF has not consolidated or gained from the left victory in 1981. Reports suggest that party activism is at its lowest ebb since the 1930s; membership is down and party-sponsored surveys suggest its popular vote is now as low as 10 percent, well below the old "buffer zone".

Clearly, there is a need for a reassessment and overhaul of the PCF's current strategy. The recently concluded 24th congress seems not to have succeeded in that regard. All reports suggest that the party's course has been maintained with the leadership group being re-elected, the anti-Socialist Party and pro-Soviet sentiments confirmed, and the re-examination of the Common Programme concluding that it was all a mistake.

Beneath the veneer of unity, which seems to have been designed mainly to restore inner-party spirit, there are developments which foreshadow changes that may come.

The socialist government is now facing criticism from the left, particularly for its decision to cut workers' pay in return for shorter working hours. Many will look to the PCF and the communist-dominated trade unions for a response on the left. There is a suggestion that respected communist Transport Minister, Charles Fiterman, may head up a push for liberalisation within the party, and a dissident group led by former Paris city councillor, Henri Fizbin, publishes a eurocommunist-leaning weekly with growing support. This group, the Rencontres Communistes recently published the Italian communists' condemnation of Polish martial law in full, a direct challenge to the official PCF line. Even at the 24th congress there was official recognition that the party failed to properly "draw the right conclusions" from the Soviet de-stalinisation of 1956. A reassessment of that period is essential to any overhaul of the PCF's general strategy.

All indications suggest that those who hoped for the demise of the French Communist Party in the period of the socialist government will be disappointed. The PCF will be around for some time, during which it will face the responsibility of government along with its reluctant socialist partners. Several years of left government may give the PCF the chance to learn the lessons of the past and begin again the process of democratic and socialist transition.

NOTES

1. At the 14th Congress of the Socialist International on June 25, 1972.
3. Later abandoned by both the PCF and the PS.
To Live Better, To Change Life


17. In the context of the Common Programme, see Louis Althusser "What Must Change in the Party", *New Left Review (NLR)*, 109, p.36.


23. *ibid*, p.221.


26. Althusser, *op cit*, p.44.


33. *New York Times*, *op cit*.


35. *ibid*.

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Beliefs and theories cannot be understood separated from the society in which they exist and which gives rise to them. I will outline the main changes in Australia over a century, the setting for socialist ideas. I will not be able to say much about the other side of the coin, the ruling classes and their dominant ideologies, against which the socialist ideas were put forward. I have also to leave aside, largely, the individual men and women who formulated and fought for revolutionary principles, many of whom are commemorated and some of whom, themselves, are participants at this conference. My purpose is to show that, for a hundred years, socialism has been a force in the making of Australia.

We could trace socialist ideas back more than a century if we wished. As early as the 1830s some notions of producers' and consumers' co-operatives were current among the artisans of Sydney, derived from Robert Owen, and brought here by chartists and radicals. Later, in Melbourne, a scattering of European revolutionary exiles discussed socialist theories in their clubs. Socialist ideas that count, however, take root only when they answer the perceived needs of a working class in a capitalist mode of production.

From about 1860, Australia became a predominantly capitalist economy despite its distance from the world centres of capitalism, despite the pioneering which continued on its frontiers, and despite the hopes that gold or cheap land would make it a country of
independent producers or yeoman farmers. The most profitable industry was large-scale wool growing, the main support of the merchants and financiers who exported primary products to Britain and imported manufactured goods in return. The largest enterprises were British firms which controlled shipping, banking and the raising of new capital. The processing of raw materials and the supply of everyday goods was giving rise to some local manufacturing. Transport and distribution, building and construction were important in the economy, shared between many small businesses and a few large ones. The cities of Sydney and Melbourne were growing to populations of half a million as the centres of this economy.

This was commercial rather than industrial capitalism, a colonial economy dependent on Britain, not an autonomous one, providing a place for a substantial petty bourgeoisie — tradesmen, small owners, contractors, agents, shopkeepers, farmers, who were self-employed. Yet the mode of production — the way the economy was organised — was capitalist. A simple measure of this is the census of 1891 which recorded the sources of income of all breadwinners. Less than 15 percent were employers of labour, another 15 percent were working on their own account, and about 70 percent were wage or salary earners. This is a picture of capitalist relations of production in which more than two-thirds of the income earners are employees, although from the other side, almost one-third are employers of labour or self-employed, showing a broad, rather than narrow, top to the class structure.

Relations of production are not the whole of class relations, which enter into and are, in turn, permeated by, the entire web of social life — law, politics, family, ideology. Class, too, is a dynamic relationship, not a static set of categories. Nevertheless, a picture at a point of time is revealing so long as we recognise the forces which produced it and will change it. I only want to make the point that by the late nineteenth century Australia was a capitalist country and that therefore we find socialist ideas emerging in opposition to capitalist ideology. This dialectic is the one thing of which we can be certain.

Socialist ideas before 1890 were utopian, that is, the reality of capitalist society was contrasted with an ideal society based on abstractions such as "justice" and "reason". This ideal was so plainly superior, it was supposed, that it had only to be understood in order to be accepted by people of goodwill from all social classes. Its advocates were small groups of writers and speakers, fringe intellectuals and self-educated craftsmen, using the methods of propaganda and publicity to proclaim the truth. William Lane is the best known of them, more because of his weaknesses than his strengths. His emotional journalism accorded with the taste of the day; his conception of socialism was particularly innocuous — "Socialism means the brotherhood of man, the union of all for the securing of social justice"; his exodus to Paraguay and subsequent life as a conservative newspaper editor could be used to demonstrate the absurdity of socialist doctrines. Other socialists of the time were made of sterner stuff.

By 1890 there was a labor movement in Australia as well as socialist ideas. This labor movement consisted of trade unions, mostly of skilled workers which, over thirty years, had won improvements in wages, hours and conditions by direct bargaining with employers. They did not confine themselves to simple economism; they made their voice heard in public affairs — on immigration, the White Australia policy, government works, access to farming land, education, and legislation to protect employees. Seeking a better place for labour in existing society, they emphasised their respectability, inscribing on their banners "Defence, not Defiance". But their proudest banner celebrated the Eight-Hour Day, a reduction in surplus value and hence profits which no employer gave willingly and many still refused.

The unions had been successful basically because of the relative shortage of labour in this developing but distant part of the British world economy. They were sure of their
strength and confident about their future. So trade unions grew early and strongly in Australia, evolving a union consciousness which could lead to class consciousness. They were the potential mass audience for socialist ideas and even by 1890 some of the most active unionists were touched by socialism as an ideal.

A generation of prosperity ended suddenly in the early 1890s with a depression as severe and more prolonged than that of the 1930s. After a series of bitter strikes and lockouts, the trade unions were greatly reduced, though not destroyed. Turning to direct political action, they launched the class-conscious mass movement which created the Labor Party. The program of the Labor Party, as it was hammered out over ten years or more, had three components: full political democracy, trade union demands for the protection of labour, and Australian nationalism. Later, some social welfare provisions, such as old age pensions, were added and the national policies became more prominent.

The Labor Party was never a socialist party. Socialists had flung themselves into building it and had some influence on it in its early fluid years when socialist aspirations could be accepted as a distant objective. Genuine socialists were for ever thereafter confronted by the dilemma of whether they should work within a mass reformist party which did not seek more than palliatives, or stay outside it and risk becoming isolated.

I will not recount the comings and goings between the socialist groups and the Labor Party. Those who tried to influence the Labor Party were best represented by the Victorian Socialist Party which, under Tom Mann, became a political and intellectual force on the left. Those who stood outside the Labor Party found they could not win votes against it in elections, so became more doctrinaire in their hostility to the Labor Party and other socialists.

All these socialist groups took their theory from abroad, from Britain and the Second International. Their goal was some kind of state socialism, to be achieved by parliamentary means, for which they sought to find the right kind of electoral strategy. They were all products of their time, marked by a narrow Australian nationalism, almost invariably racist in their support of the White Australia Policy, declaring the equality of women only as an abstract principle, sectarian in their attachment to dogmas which reflected their powerlessness to shape events. For all this they kept socialist ideas alive as an opposition to the dominant ideology and they were not wholly separated from class-conscious unionists, on whom they had some influence.

The frustration of the socialists, which seemed everlasting, was being resolved by 1914. The Labor Party had to wait twenty years, to 1910, before it won office in the Commonwealth and New South Wales parliaments and was accepted as the alternative government in all states, forcing its conservative opponents to combine against it. What was the outcome of this first period of Labor in power? The reforms amounted to some industrial legislation to protect trade unionists, a little social welfare, a more comprehensive arbitration system, a modest land tax on large holdings and a weak Commonwealth Bank. More fundamentally, there was an all-round strengthening of the national government, accompanied by compulsory military training and an Australian navy. Most of this program followed on from earlier Liberal governments, as Labor became a consensus party. There was not much for the workers, not much to show for twenty years of rank-and-file devotion to building the party. Deep divisions were present in the Labor Party before the First World War.

Disillusioned militants turned to the IWW (the Industrial Workers of the World), the new force which revitalised class struggle in Australia, sweeping aside the old socialist groups unless they joined it. The doctrines of the IWW came from outside Australia, from the United States, but took root in this country because they made sense to class-conscious workers. The IWW told the
workers that they must constantly fight the boss at the point of exploitation, on the job, by direct action and unity; that the state was run by governments in the interests of the ruling class, so must be defied and eventually smashed; that politics was a trap, the Labor Party bogus, arbitration a trick; that workers must rely on their own strength, in industrial unions. They declared:

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common.... Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wages system.

By 1917 World War I brought Australia to a crisis which crystallised around the two conscription referendums. Australia entered the war on a wave of patriotism and Empire loyalty which provided a flood of recruits for the Army. By 1917 feelings had changed. At home, unemployment spread, prices rose, living standards fell, war profiteers flourished, at the front the slaughter mounted with no end in sight. So Hughes, Holman and other Labor leaders joined with every voice of the ruling class to call for conscription. In two referendums in 1916 and 1917, conscription was rejected, despite the weight of the whole establishment for it, censorship, intimidation and prosecution of opponents under the war powers. It was a great victory for a mass movement which formed on class lines.

The IWW spearheaded this mass movement. They completely opposed the war from the beginning. From the first, their slogan was: "Answer the declaration of war with a call for a general strike."

As Tom Barker, editor of *Direct Action*, put it simply:

Let those who own Australia do the fighting.... Workers of the World, unite! Don't become hired murderers! Don't join the army or navy!

The IWW was suppressed. They were prosecuted and jailed under the War Precautions Act, charged with treason, with conspiring to burn down business premises in Sydney (receiving sentences of up to fifteen years), leaders like Barker, who was born in England, were deported. Refusing to be silent and scorning to hide, the IWW stood up with great courage, defiant to the end.

By its nature the IWW could not be a tight and disciplined party which would organise and survive underground. So it was destroyed as an organisation. Yet its ideas of socialism did not disappear — neither its rejection of all capitalist ideology nor its method of militant industrial unionism. Reaction had not triumphed wholly. Lines had been drawn beyond which the rulers could not go: on conscription, or reduction of standards of living, on the right of workers to defend themselves through their trade unions.

**A revolutionary turn**

Although the revolutionary upsurge of World War I shook the ruling classes in many countries, only the Bolsheviks were able to seize and hold power. Their success was an
inspiration for communist parties formed in other countries, as in Australia in 1920. On the one hand, the Australian Communist Party sought to model itself faithfully on the Bolsheviks; on the other, it was the heir to the Australian socialist tradition and had to live or die in the Australian environment. So from the beginning there was always tension between the outside theories and the local circumstances.

This was not new in Australian socialism—it had always been the case. It was particularly pronounced with the Communist Party because, now the road to socialism had been opened in the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union must be defended against its enemies who would destroy it. The Third International centred there embodied the experience and wisdom of the world working-class movement.

The Labor Party had been decimated after it split in 1916. Nevertheless it endured after shedding its right wing, regained support, persisted as a more class-conscious, even embittered, party, adopting a hesitant Socialist Objective in 1921. The unions were prepared to strike in defiance of arbitration courts and governments to defend their conditions and move on to the offensive for a 44-hour week. By the mid-1920s both Labor Party and unions had distanced themselves from the reviled Communist Party without rejecting socialism as the ultimate goal of their reforms. The old socialist groups withered, leaving the small Communist Party to carry on their tactics of publicity and propaganda on the outskirts of the labor movement. Despite its new name and doctrines the Communist Party could only continue the educational role which the earlier socialist groups had followed.

In fact, the influence of socialist ideas was ebbing by 1920. In the uneasy 1920s, conservative politics prevailed, repressive measures by governments against revolutionaries were institutionalised, a determined effort was made in every way to hold to the values of the past. This could not succeed. Britain was no longer the dominant imperialist power; it could not offer prosperity or security to Australia. There, local manufacturing grew behind tariff protection; commerce, transport and communications enlarged their scale with new technology; the primary industries and mining came more under the control of finance capital.

The national bourgeoisie was more diversified, less dependent on Britain for capital or migration, or even trade. The capitalists devised a network of government intervention for their protection and to win popular support. They could only go a certain distance with this: they could not break with dependence as a truly national bourgeoisie, nor provide either welfare or ideals which would bind the working class to them. Politically this was reflected in Australia's status as a self-governing dominion of the British Empire, and in the strength of the Labor Party, and culturally in a strong strand of Australian national feeling and isolationism, side by side with Britishness.

In the crisis of the depression of the 1930s, the Scullin federal government, powerless against the hostile Senate and the bankers, agonised as it inexorably followed the dictates of the most powerful Australian and British capitalists to cut wages and welfare in order to restore profits. The story has often been told, so I will not give it here. The simple facts of hardship and desperation are overwhelming, when one in three were unemployed, often homeless and hungry, and all hopes of the future were swept away. In the shock and uncertainty, society was violently polarised, the majority certainly accepting the conservative answers, but a large part of the labor movement rejecting them and pinning their hopes for a little while on Jack Lang's brand of laborism.

**Depression and socialism**

Lang was no socialist, yet both instinct and cunning led him to denounce the British bondholders, the banks and the money power which battened on Australia. He dramatically presented himself as the fearless champion of the Australian people, not only the workers.
When it came to the point he went quietly after his dismissal by the New South Wales Governor and, in his subsequent career, became a virulent anti-communist. Nevertheless, large sections of the Labor Party had been radicalised. In 1931 the New South Wales State Conference of the Labor Party adopted a plan to achieve socialism in three years, which Lang managed to have reversed. The traumatic events of the early 1930s, when capitalism seemed on the verge of collapse and fascist groups drilled to save it, strengthened socialist ideas inside and outside the Labor Party.

This was the third crisis which had shaken Australia since the 1880s, appearing superficially as disasters thrust on Australia from abroad. In fact, Australia’s involvement in them arose from internal causes interwoven with its place in world capitalism, bringing to a head the contradictions in the mode of production, class relations and ideology within Australia. In the first, in the depression of the 1890s, the age of optimism ended and the employers triumphed over the unions, but the Labor Party was born. In the second, in World War I, the socialists were suppressed but the electors said no to conscription. In the third, capitalist answers to the depression were imposed, but a large part of the working class was radicalised.

So, although in each crisis the radical forces were defeated, at the same time the ruling class had been seriously challenged, forced to reconsider and change its methods of ruling, to accept a new relationship of class forces. Each left in its wake heightened working-class consciousness and a new form and force for socialist ideas.

For the rest of the 1930s, socialist ideas were centred on the transformed Communist Party while extending far beyond it. By 1929 the tiny Communist Party was abandoning hope of co-operation with Labor leaders and turning to denounce them as social fascists against whom the workers must be organised to struggle. The communists had not been surprised by the depression, having always foretold a new crisis of capitalism. They opposed Lang as much as any labor leader which, for some time, isolated them from many class-conscious workers. Then, from the early 1930s, the Communist Party grew in numbers, finding a base in the unemployed and the trade unionists who accepted militant leadership to restore their conditions. From the mid-1930s, communists in Australia, as elsewhere, worked for a united front to advance democracy and welfare at home and oppose the aggressive fascist powers abroad.

The socialism which the Communist party envisaged as its goal was centralised state socialism, as seen in the Soviet Union. The party tried to model itself on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; at least as depicted from Soviet sources, basing itself on democratic centralism which, in practice, meant tight party discipline and strict obedience to higher party bodies. Not that revolution in Australia was seen as an immediate possibility. The economic struggle was pursued through the trade unions where strikes and arbitration were combined and the driving force was the workshop party branch. In pursuit of the united front, co-operation of Labor Party and non-party workers was consistently sought. More widely, communists organised broad movements against conservative governments and in defence of democratic liberties. They advocated collective security abroad against both subservience to Britain and Australian isolationism.

This was a comprehensive program combining industrial and political action directed by a unified party for both immediate and ultimate aims. It drew on democratic traditions to incorporate Australian nationalism into the socialist movement and to promote a popular counter-culture. It proclaimed internationalism as more than an abstract principle, for the defence of peace, of Australia and, of course, of the Soviet Union. It provided both a philosophy and a guide to action in all spheres of social life, action which was proved effective as the Communist Party grew in numbers and force.

The outbreak of war in 1939 with the Soviet Union neutral under the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact cut across communist policy,
leaving the party uncertain and soon to be made illegal, without being seriously damaged. Then, from mid-1941, with the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union and the Japanese threat to Australia, the communist policies of the 1930s were widely seen to have been vindicated, the appeasers and Menzies government completely discredited. All the allies joined in admiration of the Red Army. The Curtin government marshalled the country for an all-out war effort with a high level of national unity, wholeheartedly supported by the Communist Party and most of the left. The far-reaching controls imposed by the central government were accompanied by full employment, social security and the promise that a rising standard of living would continue after the war.

The largest socialist party

So, for a few short years, from 1941 to 1945, the largest socialist party Australia had seen was in firm alliance with a popular reforming government, and nationalism and internationalism marched hand in hand. What would happen when the war was over? The Communist Party and socialists outside it hoped that the united front would continue, that the Labor government would carry out far-reaching reforms of capitalism, while also taking for granted that there would be resistance from reactionary forces, there would be further economic crises and, out of these struggles, some time in the future, socialism would be won.

From their position of strength in the unions, the communists led large strikes for higher wages and the forty-hour week. The Labor Party sought industrial peace through arbitration, a prospering Australian capitalism moderated by government controls and eased by welfare measures. Meanwhile, the first shots of the Cold War had been fired, the world was dividing into two camps and, despite Labor nationalism, there was no doubt Australia would be an ally of the United States, taking over from Britain.

1949 was a turning point, not only in Australia. The world capitalist economy was entering a long period, twenty-five years and more, of expansion of the productive forces nowhere more visibly than in affluent Australia. Australia's growth and prosperity was comparable to that of the second half of the nineteenth century and with much the same foundations — an influx of capital and migrants, a strong demand for its exports, now particularly minerals. The capital came from the United States and Japan rather than Britain; the migrants were European as well as British, the markets were world-wide, with Japan's share rising. The scale of industry had grown, methods of production had been transformed, transnational firms were now dominant in the most profitable sectors and Australia remained a dependent economy integrated into their world strategies.

The working class was segmented by the diversity of migrants who filled the lowest levels, the opportunities for advancement open to old Australians and the drawing in of new sections, especially women, in a time of full employment. These changes were accompanied by a relentless offensive against any kind of socialist ideas or, indeed, any criticism from nationalists or liberals who defended older bourgeois principles. The Cold War was waged at home as well as abroad.

Under these circumstances, the influence of socialist ideas weakened. In 1949 the Communist Party had challenged the Labor Party for leadership of the working class, and failed. By now the socialist ideas shaped in the 1930s had lost their force. The Communist Party tried to maintain itself by moderate industrial policies, concentrating its attack on American imperialism and the danger to world peace. In the long run, nothing could prevent its decline and splits which were part of the decline of the whole left in advanced capitalist countries. The splits were more effect than cause of its weakness. Since world socialism was now varied, not monolithic, with conflict between its parts, hope could be pinned on different overseas models, none of which convinced Australian workers. Socialists lamented the delay of the revolution in the West; apologists of
capitalism celebrated the end of ideology, by which they meant the common acceptance of bourgeois practices.

Socialists were now divided. At one end of the spectrum, they turned to the Labor Party which had again purged itself of its extreme right wing in the split of the 1950s. Others emphasised trade union militancy which, in more confident days, they would have seen as mere economism. Some clung in increasing isolation to the earlier doctrines around which their consciousness had been formed. Among the growing number of intellectuals, students and young professionals, a New Left trend emerged, trenchantly criticising the narrowness of old socialist ideas without being able to formulate any agreed strategy or any which could command solid support.

Surviving Trotskyist groups had a new lease of life temporarily as their manifestoes seemed to offer an alternative. Since objective conditions were recalcitrant, emphasis was often placed on the power of a few to change the world by strength of will, a variety of Left Wing Communism. The Australian working class was now sometimes written off as innately reactionary, the reverse of earlier optimistic beliefs that it was inherently progressive.

This fragmentation of the socialists was, on the one hand, marked by a search for new ways forward; on the other, by disputes and doctrinaire attitudes, characteristics of revolutionaries in a non-revolutionary period which they could not change. This is not to disparage the courage with which they stood up to decades of attack and persecution, nor to see these years as simply a wasteland.

Socialists had been dispersed but they had not disappeared. They led such powerful movements as that against the Viet Nam War and such continuing ones as the radical women’s movement, those against racism and the ravages of capitalism on environmental conditions of life. They spearheaded the trade unions’ defence of their members’ needs and refusal to be shackled by arbitration courts or employers. Ideologically, the battles never ceased and, out of them a wide, richer, more complex understanding of socialist theory as a tool of analysis was built up.

In this period, for the first time, marxism as a body of knowledge became widely available, its concepts permeating, even if in a diluted form, the way in which the world was seen not only by activists but by ordinary people. It was necessary that, during this period, socialists should give much of their effort to contesting the hegemony of capitalist ideology. To a degree, intellectual leadership — I don’t just mean pronouncements by prominent intellectuals — was won away from the establishment which wielded power despite the acceptance of the status quo in practical matters.

By the mid-1970s the long period of expansion of world capitalism was coming to an end and there could be no possibility of Australia being exempt from this decline regardless of the wishful thinking of the boomsters. So new class conflicts emerged. Immediately, defence of the material gains of the previous period becomes the starting point of mass action. In many other ways, international as well as local, new contradictions are bringing forth new responses.

What can we say in review? Above all, that socialist ideas and action for them are part of Australia’s history. For a century, socialists have been the vanguard of opposition to the ruling classes. The record is in no way a simple story of growing strength and impending victory. On the contrary, the socialist movement is in many respects weaker than it has been on occasions in the past. Nor is it merely a narrative of gains and losses, of advances and retreats. The class struggle does not follow a straight path. We know that the working class does not determine events but we should also remember that the ruling class does not rule untramelled. We always have a dialectic of class relationships, whether we are looking at the economy, political power or ideological hegemony, and the labor movement and socialism are part of past, present and future society in Australia.
In the popular imagination the state of Queensland is now the "Deep North". It is regarded by many "southerners" as a bastion of provincialism and unswerving reaction where antipathy towards leftist or even liberal viewpoints becomes more pronounced as one heads into the Tropics. It appears as if it's always been so.

Like all mythologies, this view of Queensland has a certain basis in reality. The Bjelke-Petersen government is reactionary and it actively fosters a nasty type of provincialism whose primary function is to disguise its sell-out to transnational capital. Some, perhaps quite a few, Queenslanders, also share the government's views. But the pervasiveness of this mythology also rests on prejudice and a widespread ignorance of Queensland history.

How many Australians, indeed how many Queenslanders, today know that the stretch of Queensland from Mackay to Cairns was once "The Red North"? As a "southerner", that is, an inhabitant of the south-eastern corner of the state — and also a history student at the University of Queensland in the early 1970s, I certainly never had an inkling of the outstanding anti-fascist campaigns and industrial struggles waged in the north in the 1930s and '40s.

It was only through later contact with the "Old Left" in Brisbane that I heard tales of "The Red North" and I must confess that I was sometimes inclined to relegate these accounts to the realm of leftwing mythology. This view changed with the publication of material around the time of the Communists and the Labour Movement Conference in 1980.* However, it was not until I obtained a copy of Diane Menghetti's recently published book, The Red North, that I could fully appreciate the extent to which North

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The Red North: The Popular Front in North Queensland by Diane Menghetti, History Department, James Cook University, 1981. 227 pp. $5 from the History Department or $7.50 from bookshops.
Queensland in the 1930s and '40s led the rest of Australia in its commitment to internationalism, and the strength and breadth of its working-class organisations. Menghetti's book focuses on the communist-led "Red Front" in the period 1935 to 1940. The North Queensland Communist Party actually achieved its greatest strength and influence later in the 1940s but, as The Red North makes clear, its successes in that decade are impossible to understand without a thorough analysis of how communists worked in the northern region of Queensland in the 1930s.

The "bolshevisation" of the CPA in the late 1920s and early '30s had had a devastating impact on the fledgling North Queensland organisation. Ted Tripp, the local communist leader, was purged and the adoption of a rigid "social fascist" line towards the Australian Labor Party (ALP) had decimated or extinguished a number of CPA branches. The "social fascist" line was relaxed after Hitler came to power in 1933 and communists were able to win increasing support for their militancy in the mines and on the canefields. Under the capable leadership of Jack Henry, a cane-cutter, and Fred Paterson, a barrister, the CPA in North Queensland was in the process of recovering by the mid-1930s. However, its rapid growth from 1935 was the result of more complex factors: greater opportunities for industrial militancy; a conservative state Labor government and an even more conservative leadership in the Australian Workers' Union, both remote from the realities of life in the north; the presence of large migrant groupings which became increasingly active in response to the rise of fascism in Europe; the evolution of a distinctively "indigenous" style of political work; and the creative application of a "united front" policy.

The decision to form a "united front" of the working class was not formally taken by the Queensland branch of the CPA until January 1936. This decision, of course, was very much in keeping with the declaration of the Comintern the previous year to subordinate world communist activities to the fight against international fascism. As Menghetti points out, this "new line was scarcely more appropriate to Australian conditions than its predecessor; neither 'revolutionary conditions' nor 'fascist threat' provided an adequate description of the realities of the political situation in this country." (p.21)

However, it did allow Party policy and trade union policy to be determined more or less nationally and, most importantly, stressed the necessity of co-operating with social democratic forces. In any case, communists in North Queensland had started to build a "united front" well before the policy was formally initiated. They were also in the process of extending this to a "popular front" which included "intellectuals", "working farmers" and small shop-keepers.

**Turning point — 1935 sugar strike**

The real turning point was the Weil's Disease strike of 1935 which has been immortalised in Jean Devanny's novel Sugar Heaven. Weil's Disease was the popular name given to fevers caused by three varieties of leptospirae which were prevalent in northern sugar areas in the 1930s. The virus was spread by rats urinating on wet ground or cane stalks, and sometimes proved fatal. Burning the cane before harvesting was the only known method of preventing its spread. However, burning was opposed by canegrowers on the grounds that the sugar content of the cane was reduced and that some stands would be lost completely if not harvested immediately after the burn — despite a clause in the sugar workers' award which specified lower rates for workers harvesting burnt cane.

At the beginning of the 1935 crushing season, the Australian Workers' Union had won an agreement to burn the cane in the Ingham district only. In all other areas, cane was to be burnt only on the written order of a health inspector. Fear of Weil's disease was intense and heightened by the discovery of infected rats in the Cairns and Innisfail districts. The sugar workers were mostly seasonal workers, not afraid to take militant action for short-term gains. Meetings,
initially called by communists in the industry, quickly voted to declare all unburnt cane "black". Within a few weeks, more than 2,000 cutters and 1,000 mill-hands had struck. Menghetti argues that the efficiency and speed with which the separate districts were organised suggests that "the Communist Party had orchestrated the strike in advance of the season". (p.34) The Brisbane Trades and Labor Council certainly thought so, for it passed a resolution condemning the Communist Party for its tactics, and the rightwing leadership of the AWU, of course, opposed the action.

It was a bitter strike lasting for two months: the industrial court ordered secret ballots and cancelled all cane-cutting agreements in the Mourilyan area; the AWU used strong-arm tactics; 150 police were sent up from Brisbane; striking cutters were evicted from their quarters and scab labour was widely employed. The strike was defeated though, in July 1936, a general order for burning the cane before harvesting was handed down by the industrial court. Nevertheless, as Menghetti shows, the strike was, in many senses, a victory for the working class. The struggle was an extremely broad one involving entire communities in the north. It drew in normally apolitical groups like women and migrants, and even won the support of many small shop-keepers and a number of the smaller growers who were, themselves, often former cutters.

**Italian workers**

The AWU refused to provide relief and its policy was to divide strikers into the smallest possible groups and then conduct secret ballots. Communists, in contrast, stressed rank-and-file control, unity of the four mill areas and were prominent in organising relief kitchens and accommodation. And, unlike the AWU which regarded the sizeable numbers of Italian workers as communist dupes who could not understand the issues or "our language", Communist Party members recognised Italians as fellow workers whose rights had to be respected. Communist activists always ensured that leaflets were available in Italian and that Italian workers addressed meetings as well as translating speeches. Meanwhile, the AWU still upheld its 1930 “preference agreement” with the Australian Sugar Producers' Association and the Queensland Cane Growers' Council which allowed migrant workers to compose no more than 25 percent of mill workers and cutters.

Menghetti argues that it was in the relief kitchens that the differences between the approaches of the AWU and CPA became most apparent. Relief committees were set up in all local centres and sought the broadest possible support — from the shop-keepers, small farmers (often Italian in origin), the miners of Collinsville and the "progressive" section of the Queensland public. Women became active on relief committees organising entertainment (the men did the cooking) and Italian migrants were, for the first time, involved both socially and politically. Italian gang cooks ran the Mourilyan relief kitchen and the novelist Jean Devanny reports that the militant cooks "harangued" the men in Italian as they ate. The taste of Italian food was not, however, nearly so novel as the "almost unprecedented sight of Australian girls with Italian men". (p.57)

Despite isolation, poor educational standards and the apathy of the ALP, communists and anti-fascists were able to use the skills and support they had gained during the strike to mount a powerful solidarity campaign when the Spanish war broke out in 1936. Of the twenty-one branches of the Spanish Relief Committee set up throughout Australia, sixteen were in North Queensland; of the twenty-eight Australians who went to fight in Spain, nine were from the region. Despite low wages and widespread unemployment, large sums were raised to aid the Spanish Republicans. Support for the campaign was so strong that in Ingham only two families were reported as having refused to donate. The broader anti-fascist movement, which waxed and waned "down south", was similarly energetic in North Queensland. The first Australian anti-fascist demonstration in Australia, in fact, occurred
in the tiny sugar town of Halifax in 1925. After 1935, anti-fascist migrants, including anarchists, achieved "a new level of cooperation" with the Communist Party which, in turn, increasingly won Italians, Yugoslavs and Spaniards to its ranks. (p.85) Italian anti-fascist clubs in northern towns affiliated nationally and by 1939 were numerous and strong enough to hold a co-ordinating conference in Townsville.

Women's movement

The Weil's Disease strike of 1935 gave, perhaps, an even more dramatic fillip to the women's movement in North Queensland. Menghetti argues that its strength and independence was somewhat of a paradox since "neither local Party members nor the northern community in general were more liberal in their attitudes towards women than other Australians". (p.95) She suggests a number of explanations for this (including Jack Henry's "shyness of women" (p.96) but only a few seem pertinent. The movement's founders were the wives of strikers who themselves had taken the initiative in 1935 in Innisfail to form the first Women's Progress Club; there was no "directive from the District Committee". (p.96) The burgeoning women's movement was also strongly influenced by Jean Devanny, a militant feminist and communist "with some standing in the southern Party" (p.96) and it may also have benefited from the more relaxed, less authoritarian attitudes to organisation in the north.

After Jean Devanny's tour in 1935 (on behalf of the Movement Against War and Fascism), Women's Progress Clubs proliferated throughout the region. Officially, "non-sectarian" and "non-party", they were nevertheless heavily influenced by communists or the wives of communists. After 1937, the Clubs sent delegates to the annual District Conferences of the CPA and their activities often reflected CPA policies. Politically, Menghetti says, the Clubs were a "fairly typical front" (p.100) but displayed "an unusual degree of independence for a contemporary women's organisation". (p.101) They interspersed their political activities with both feminist agitation and "traditional pursuits" — hospital visiting, exhibitions of horticulture and handicraft, and arranging social functions. This approach was so successful in Collinsville that representatives of the Ladies Home League and the Ladies Hospital Guild were out in force for the arrival of J.B. Miles, the CPA National Secretary, in July 1936. The Collinsville Country Women's Association (CWA) sent a representative to CPA conferences, and in 1942 the Gladstone CWA circulated a petition calling on the federal government to lift the ban on the Communist Party.

At least among working-class people, such activities gradually eroded the image of the Communist Party as "sinister and foreign". (p.109) The CPA was the driving force behind the Unemployed Workers' Union and helped provide much of the practical assistance which enabled working people to survive the Depression. Menghetti asserts that another important factor in weakening the "Red Bogey" in the north was "the unusually extensive social life of the Party". (pp.115-116) Dances, balls, card parties, picnics, bazaars and discussion groups provided entertainment throughout the region — though some of these activities (such as the Spanish Relief Queen competition) may now seem ideologically suspect.

Crucial in promoting the work of the CPA was the large number of local bulletins and, after May 1937, the North Queensland Guardian, edited by Fred Paterson. The paper adopted a consciously broad approach: it omitted the ritualistic hammer and sickle from its banner; it sought (and obtained) advertisements from local shop-keepers; it stressed the compatibility of Christianity and communism; and it included "Turf News", a children's column and a women's section as well as covering international, national and local events.

By the late 1930s, North Queensland was the biggest "red" area outside the Sydney district. Its electoral support increased, the CPA often
working closely with the ALP in contesting elections. As early as 1936, Fred Paterson won 81.1 percent of the state vote in Collinsville but it was not until 1939 that he was elected to the Townsville Council and, at the same time, Jim Henderson became a councillor for the Collinsville Division of the Wagaratta Shire. (In 1944 Fred Paterson became the Member of Parliament for Bowen, the first and only Australian communist to win such a distinction.)

Later in 1939, the communist-led "Red Front" suffered a sharp and sudden demise upon the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact and the Soviet invasion of Finland: not even the well-integrated North Queensland Party could withstand two such shocks in the international situation. The position was exacerbated in 1940 when the Menzies government banned the Communist Party. A number of Italian communists were interned and Menghetti remarks that "the story of the internees and the political violence they faced in the camps, and of the hostility of local communities towards their wives and children who struggled to maintain the family farms, has yet to be told". (p.162)

After the German invasion of the USSR, support for the CPA grew again. Nevertheless, anti-fascist migrants remained in internment camps and the North Queensland Guardian was never again published. Menghetti's excellent account ends there. The spectacular growth of the CPA and the "Red Front" in North Queensland after the lifting of the ban in December 1942 remains untold. It is to be hoped that Menghetti — or another student from James Cook University — will continue the work.

The Red North is, I believe, one of the most important books ever to be published about Australian communist history. Unfortunately, it will not be as widely read as it deserves because of James Cook University's limited distribution system. This is a great shame for so much of the experience of the "Red Front" is politically pertinent today. The Red North avoids the institutional approach of Alastair Davidson's The Communist Party of Australia and Robin Gollan's Revolutionaries and Reformists, and gives the best account, so far, of how communists worked and lived in their own communities. The book is not without one or two problems, of course. It concentrates on the sugar-growing areas to the neglect of the mining communities of Collinsville and Scotsville, and contains a few errors, for example, the foundation date of the Union of Australian Women is given as the later war years and the terms "united front" and "popular front" are used interchangeably. Greater use of the actual words of the communists interviewed for the book would have made for a more lively text and it is a pity that the research (originally undertaken for an honours thesis) wasn't supplemented by interviews with North Queensland communists living "down south", for example, Ted Bacon, George Bliss, Alice Hughes, Dick Annear and Albert Robinson (who died in 1980).

The Red North also raises more questions than it can possibly answer. Why was the "popular front" so popular in North Queensland as opposed to other parts of Australia? Why did the Communist Party there achieve a degree of "naturalisation" and integration unheard of in the rest of the nation? What caused the disintegration of the "popular front" and the CPA in the north in the early 1950s? Why is there only one branch of the Communist Party north of Brisbane now when the Cairns district alone had seventy during the war years? What happened to all those North Queensland communists, those "useful people", as Menghetti calls them? (p.165) Have they been obliterated from history as cleanly as Fred Paterson's name was removed from the Townsville park built in his honour in 1944? Menghetti concludes that the "Red Front" was likely to have produced "more substantial long-term gains for the community than for the Party" — and this, of course, is how it should be. She reminds us, too, somewhat sadly, of Jack Henry's words: "It was not lost; no, nothing is ever lost". (p.166)
Late in 1981, the Bureau of Industry Economics (BIE) finally reported on its study of the prospective demand by the mining sector of the Australian economy for commodities produced by manufacturing industries. The study was of “backward linkages” between mining and manufacturing only; it did not consider “forward linkages”, that is existing and prospective supplies of Australian minerals to local processing and fabricating industries. Nonetheless, it is an important study in a number of respects. It provides careful predictions in place of rather opaque information, such as that garnered by W.D. Scott & Co. in relation to expansion by Hamersley Holdings Ltd, and in place of guesswork and reference to experience in other countries. It is important, also, in that it indicates how relatively unimportant are the mining sector’s backward linkages in comparison with value added in the mining sector itself. The bulk of the value added is to be found in the gross operating surpluses of the mining corporations.

The recent BIE study

The study covers prospective developments in the mining of black coal, iron ore and uranium, and in the extraction of oil and gas. According to the BIE in 1980, the prospect for the decade of the 1980s included an increase in the capacity of black-coal mining of approximately 120 percent (involving a total expenditure on open-cut mining alone, with associated infrastructure, of some $6,813 million in 1979-1980 prices), two new iron-ore mines adding about 15 percent to capacity (and costing a total of $820 million), the development of uranium mines at Ranger, Yeelirrie, Beverly, Honeymoon, Koongarra, Roxby Downs, Lakeway, Ben Lomond and Jabiluka (involving a total of $5,850 million plus $1,525 million for the liquefaction plant adjacent to the North-West Shelf). The total capital cost of the projects mentioned, during the 1980s, was estimated to be about $17,500 million in 1979-80 prices, of which nearly $4,000 million was thought likely to be required for infrastructure in the way of towns, rail and port facilities, pipe-lines, etc. The BIE considered that the identified projects would constitute about 75 percent (by value) of all mining developments likely during the 1980s. The total prospective investment in the mining sector was thought likely to amount to a maximum of 2.0 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the mid-1980s, which is slightly higher than the previous peak of 1.6 percent in 1970-71.

The point of the BIE’s exercise was to estimate the impact of the developments it identified on Australian manufacturing industries. That is, it was concerned with the mining sector’s direct demands for manufactured inputs during both the construction and subsequent operation of the projects, plus the impact more generally of any increased capacity within the direct supplying industries. The procedures the
BIE used for these estimations merit some consideration, if only to clarify some problems which should lead one to be cautious about the results of the study.

Estimates of the direct demands for manufactured inputs during construction were derived as follows: "In the case of open-cut coal, the pattern of input requirements was derived from information provided by the Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited for the Gregory coal development in Central Queensland .... Engineering data provided by the Bureau of Mineral Resources, Geology and Geophysics was used to determine the inputs for iron ore and uranium. The necessary information for oil and gas developments was provided by Esso Australia Ltd, Oil Drilling and Exploration Limited and the Bureau of Mineral Resources. The patterns of input usage associated with five of the six infrastructure activities were also derived from the requirement of the Gregory coal development. For trunk gas and liquid pipelines, the input usage was based on information provided by the pipeline authority." (Report, p.23.)

That is, (i) the BIE generalised the requirements of what it considers to be "typical projects", and (ii) for information on the "typical projects" it depended on particular operating companies, whose executives would have known that the results of the study would be political data.

Estimates of direct requirements for manufactured inputs during mine operation and of the impact on manufacturing of expanded capacity and production within the supplying industries required the use of input-output tables compiled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). These are tables which relate the output of each of a number of industries with outputs of other industries which are inputs into the first industry. Partly because of a perverse decision of the Fraser government to give a low priority to ABS work input-output tables, the most recent data available to the BIE was for 1975-76. The BIE does claim to have been able to incorporate in its computations some changes (for example, in labour productivity) during the period 1975-76 to 1979-80; but no such claim can be made with respect to, for example, trends within various industries in the proportions of locally produced to imported inputs.

The results of the study

The general result of the study is that, by the end of the 1980s, the impact on GDP of the operations involved in the various projects identified will be much larger than the impact of developing or constructing the projects. (see Table 1.)

The average impact on the manufacturing sector represents only about 2.3 percent of total production in the manufacturing sector in 1979-80. However, the prospective effect on three industries is much greater than the effect on manufacturing as a whole: about 40 percent of the increased expenditure would be for construction, earthmoving and materials-handling equipment, for locomotives and rolling stock, and for industrial machinery and equipment. The average impact on the construction industry itself would represent about four percent of value added in that industry in 1979-80, while the average impact on transport would represent about 2.5 percent. The average impact on the rest of the Australian economy would represent a little more than one percent of the relevant value added in 1979-80. Apparently only about 10 percent of expenditure would be on imported inputs. It is to be noted that the impact of the mining developments on the value of the Australian dollar in terms of overseas currencies was not considered in the BIE study.

Of course, each of the different sorts of mining development would have (or will have) a different impact on each of the sectors of activity mentioned above. So, for example, the impact of expanding capacity to mine coal by the open-cut method would be greatest in the fields of construction and the manufacture of earth-moving machinery and equipment and of industrial machinery and
equipment, whereas for the development of off-shore oil and gas reserves, the greatest impact would be on the construction and transport sectors.

The BIE study also included consideration of the employment likely to be generated by the developments selected. The estimates are set out in Table 2. Given the scenario chosen by the BIE, the maximum employment would be generated in the mid-1980s. The peak of employment would be reflected in construction, transport and storage, in wholesaling and retailing (19,000), in "business services" of various sorts (9,000) and in the manufacture of basic metals and fabricated metal products, transport equipment, and other machinery and equipment. Only in transport and storage, apart from mining itself, would employment continue to grow throughout the 1980s. The BIE was careful to point out that the figures presented in Table 2 do not reflect likely net additions to employment in various industries: some existing mines will be closed down during the 1980s, and such closures will affect the number of jobs not only in the mining sector itself but in other activities.

The demand for minerals during the 1980s

Behind the BIE's selection of likely mining developments lie a number of predictions about what will happen within the international economy during the 1980s. The most important of these predictions was that the price of crude oil would remain at about the same level it had attained by 1979-80. Second, Japan and several of the economies of South-East Asia were predicted to grow at significant rates ("to record sound growth"). The first general prediction clearly has a bearing on the demand for steaming coal, oil and gas, and uranium. The second also has a bearing on the demand for energy resources; and it has a bearing on the demand for iron ore and coking coal. It is to be noted that the BIE admitted that its forecast for the development of uranium mines during the 1980s might well prove to have been optimistic.

Since the conclusion of the BIE study, the relative price of crude oil has fallen and recession in the international economy has been confirmed. The Department of Industry and Commerce has reappraised the prospects for various resource developments but has yet to publish the results of the reappraisal. In the meantime, some relevant information has been published by the Australian Federation of Construction Contractors (AFCC). The BIE estimated that the peak of construction activity associated with its selection of mining developments would occur in the mid-1980s; in September 1981, the AFCC predicted that the peak in construction activity would occur in 1983-84; but in March 1982, the AFCC predicted that the peak would occur in 1982-83. Among the projects included in the BIE study, the plant for processing gas from the North-West shelf for export to Japan has been deferred, as has been the expensive development of coal-mining facilities at Hail Creek in Queensland. It appears also, from the AFCC report, that the Roxby Downs project for the mining of copper, gold and uranium will shortly be deferred. An article in the Journal of Australian Political Economy of June 1981 confirms that the BIE was indeed optimistic in its predictions for uranium mining during the 1980s. However, it is not the questions of whether particular developments will be deferred, or for how long, that are central to these Notes; the question is rather that of the impact of mining developments if and when they do proceed.

Table 1 indicates that, in the BIE's scenario, approximately 65 percent of all value added in the Australian economy as a result of the mining developments would accrue within the mining sector itself. This figure is an average for the decade of the 1980s; by the late 1980s the proportion would rise, in fact, to 75 percent. What this means is that how the value added in the mining sector itself is distributed is substantially more important in determining the overall impact of the developments on the rest of the Australian economy than backward linkages are likely to be (at any rate, under the present government's policies as they relate to such linkages).
Value added is distributed between wages and salaries, profits, depreciation allowances and taxes. Let us imagine that each of the 15,234 extra persons expected by the BIE to be employed in the mining sector by the late 1980s according to its scenario were to be paid $30,000 per year (in 1979-80 dollars). That would represent an addition to the mining sector's wage payments of some $457 million. Such a figure would account for almost exactly 7 percent of the additional value added expected to accrue to mining in the late 1980s — but only 7 percent.

As is well known, there are special taxation concessions applying to mining companies. Many that were removed by the Whitlam government were subsequently reintroduced by the first Fraser government. These concessions relate to the treatment for tax purposes of expenditure on plant for mining, exploration and selected transportation: their effect is more generous to the companies concerned than are the normal depreciation allowances. The reintroduced concessions were subsequently augmented by a provision whereby the various "eligible" expenditures incurred in the exploration and development of oil and gas fields can be written off against income derived from any source. The effect of the various concessions available to mining companies during the earlier mining boom of the late 1960s was to reduce the proportion of tax paid by the companies to their gross operating surplus (including depreciation, dividends, interest, land rent and royalties paid to the states) to 14 percent or about half the proportion paid by companies in other sectors. By the second half of the 1970s, it appears that the proportion had risen to about 30 percent, which was slightly higher than the proportions obtaining in most other sectors. It is to be stressed, however, that no account is taken in these calculations of the possibility that apparent gross operating surpluses can be reduced by transfer pricing and that the practice of this procedure may be expected to be more common in the mining sector. On the other hand, companies in the mining sector pay royalties to state governments whereas no such payments are made by companies in other sectors.

If there is another boom in mining investment in the 1980s, the proportion of company taxation to companies' gross operating surpluses can be expected to decline again. A proportion of 30 percent in the late 1980s would yield revenue by way of company tax of approximately $1,800 million in 1979-80 prices, given the BIE's scenario, whereas a proportion of 15 percent would yield a mere $900 million out of an anticipated additional $6,000 million in gross operating surpluses. The majority of the remainder would take the form of profits to be distributed as dividends or retained, of interest, and of depreciation allowances. This portion of the value added in the mining sector itself would swamp the total of additional gross operating surplus in all other industries which, according to the BIE scenario, would feel the impact of the expansion of mining.

In fact, the BIE concluded as follows: "The correct conclusion is that the benefits (of mineral developments) will be substantial but only a modest proportion will be distributed through the linkages between industries associated with the development and operation of the mines. The major impact will flow through the distribution of income generated within the mining industry itself (as between taxes, after-tax profits, depreciation and wages)." (p.75)

In this context, a number of issues become immensely important. They are (i) the guidelines for foreign investment, which have been progressively relaxed by successive Fraser governments, (ii) the justifiability of special taxation concessions to companies engaged in mining and, indeed, of the "normal" depreciation provisions of the Income Assessment Act as they apply to mining companies, (iii) the identity of the institutions lending to the mining companies, the rates at which they are paid interest, and the distribution of the profits of the lending institutions, and, of course, (iv) the incidence of transfer pricing. These issues are expressed in a different way in the concluding remarks.
There is a set of contracts under which the operations of mining are carried out. There are those between the mining companies, unions and the state which determine the levels of wages, salaries and supplements. These contracts are explicit and implicit: the implicit contracts relate to the determination of overaward payments as against awards. There are other explicit contracts between borrowers and lenders and between mining companies and the state governments which issue them leases; and there are implicit contracts in regard to rates of dividends paid by the mining companies and bonuses payable by life assurance companies which have invested in or lent to the mining sector. And there are broader, implicit politico-economic contracts that are not commonly identified as such.

Mineral resources are owned by the people. In principle, companies exploiting the resources do so on behalf of the people; and the state acts as the agent of the people in establishing agreements with certain companies. Implicit politico-economic contracts are made between the mining companies and both state and federal governments. In entering a contract each company — or each industry — accepts certain terms. Those terms may cover the degree of local equity and the maximum period which can elapse before a company is "naturalised" (that is, before it becomes more than 50 percent locally owned); they may cover exporting, protection of the environment, taxation, or royalties. A state government might also attach conditions to mining leases prescribing the extent to which minerals would be processed locally; or a federal government might attach conditions to export licences which would prescribe the extent to which plant and equipment used in mining would be purchased from local suppliers.

Under successive Fraser governments, mining companies contracting to exploit Australian mineral resources have had to accept only relatively weak conditions, which is hardly surprising. Under the terms of the contracts that have been made, the bulk of the income generated in mining accrues to a few large corporations, most of them transnational, which are subsequently bound by almost no restrictions on what they do with that income. It is time that the old contracts were torn up and time that the mining companies were expected to accept stringent conditions or to vacate the mining sector in favor of public enterprises.

NOTES


2. According to Susan Bambrick, Australian Minerals and Energy Policy (Canberra: ANU Press, 1979), p. 208, it appeared that 89 percent of the expenditure involved in the expansion of Hammersley's facilities was to be for work done in Australia. However, it may have been simply the proportion of contract expenditure accounted for by firms registered in Australia, perhaps mere assemblers.

3. Value added is the value of sales of output by the enterprises involved in the sector less the value of materials purchased from other enterprises.

4. The most recent information is reported in the Australian Financial Review, March 29, 1982. See Peter Simonds, "Outlook Worsens for Spin-offs from Resources Boom".


7. In 1975-76, the ratio of gross operating surpluses to wages, salaries and supplements paid by mining sector enterprises was 1642/909 whereas in manufacturing the ratio was 3389/10312 in construction it was 1529/3804. This meant that in relation to wages, etc, paid, the gross operating surplus of the mining sector was about five times that in the manufacturing sector and about four times that in the construction sector. See ABS, Australian National Accounts, 1977-78, Canberra, AGPS, 1978, Cat. No. 5204.0.
TABLE 1
Estimated total impact of developments in mineral investment and production: annual rates, $ million, average 1979-80 prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Early 1980s</th>
<th>Mid 1980s</th>
<th>Late 1980s</th>
<th>Decade average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value added in:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3 792</td>
<td>6 528</td>
<td>3 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Australian production</td>
<td>1 349</td>
<td>6 060</td>
<td>8 167</td>
<td>4 808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross value c.i.f. of imports</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 1 743 6 779 8 674 5333

Source: BIE, *op. cit.*

TABLE 2
Summary of employment effects of investment and operating phases, by period and industry group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Early 1980s</th>
<th>Mid 1980s</th>
<th>Late 1980s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of persons</td>
<td>Proportion of current employment (a) (%)</td>
<td>No. of persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>7 933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>19 736</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>35 035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport &amp; storage</td>
<td>5 139</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>16 818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>22 303</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>27 185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>23 032</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>43 251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>70 720</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>130 222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: (a) Employment associated with mineral developments as a proportion of total employment in each industry as at May 1980.

as cited in BIE Report, *op. cit.*

This collection of essays on various aspects of the trade unions is most timely, given that many in the radical and industrial movement are embarking on the further development of a forward-looking strategy. It presents to the reader discussion on a wide range of subjects including the relationship of the trade unions to the ALP, a number of views and descriptions of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, the media's manipulation of the trade union image — and other aspects such as the ACTU, trade union democracy, shop-floor activity, the union activity of women and so on.

The writers are many and varied and range from Sir Richard Kirby, with his scarcely-concealed dislike for the Fraser government's attempts to coerce the court, to a fine socio-political treatment of the law and industrial conflict by Breen Creighton of Melbourne University. They manage to cover a wide range of trade union territory.

Looking at the book in more detail, Edward Davis argues in the chapter "Trade Unions and the Media" that for a great variety of reasons, not just sheer monopolistic ownership and class bias, the press has been able to present a very bad public image of the industrial movement in general.

Kathryn Cole, in "Unions and the Labor Party" does a good job in tracing the relationship between the unions and the ALP and discusses the dichotomy between the political and industrial wings. She also looks at the Whitlam era and includes a very good treatment of the developing white collar and services sections. She views them as having limited connections with the Labor Party or politics. Her account of the lack of trade union ideology inside the ALP is interesting and she concludes that the unions at federal level don't really achieve full advantage from their actual input into the party.

Don Rawson's treatment of the ACTU's history and future prospects is also useful. Among many aspects, he points out that the apparent ALP support for the ACTU, in terms of those who belong to Labor Party affiliated unions, has decreased from the peak of 1969. This decrease in support, he believes, leaves many question marks for the future. Rawson also asks if the activities of the ACTU have outgrown its actual strength, but goes on to trace the significance of its recent growth. Rawson believes that the ACTU has a more important role to play relative to non-Labor governments and this raises some interesting questions.

Perhaps one of his most interesting observations is the growth of militancy in various non-manual sections of the workforce, together with a breakdown in traditional voting patterns. This has led to a very different ball-game than that recognised or understood by old-style Labor supporters of the 1940s, '50s and the '60s.

By researching varying membership sizes, leadership methods and political influences, Edward Davis, in "Trade Union Democracy", has a look at union structures. He generally concludes that there isn't a correlation, necessarily, between the size of a union and its internal democracy, one way or another. He suggests that considerable care and thought is required in viewing the relation between internal union organisation and the way the rank and file can influence decision-making. His research gives a limited insight into this area; readers will have to add their own views and experiences to his conclusions.

Industrial legislation

Of a number of treatments of the question of industrial laws and their enforcement on the trade unions, I was impressed, as mentioned earlier, with the chapter by Breen Creighton on "Law and the Control of Industrial Conflict". This chapter gives a good class-related analysis of the framing of industrial legislation and goes on to uncover how unworkable the law can be if the union or unions and their members decide that they will deliberately flout the law, or operate in such a way as to render it inoperative. He also looks at many of the penal provisions of the Arbitration Acts and sets them out so the reader can learn, in some detail, their actual meaning and application.

Richard Mitchell and Stuart Rosewarne set out to expose the basic contradictions that lie at the bottom of the Liberal-National Country Parties denials of class antagonism in their union policies,
and their constant statements that usually place all blame for disputes on trade union action. This is well discussed in the context of the moves by the Fraser government to ostensibly protect the “rights of the individual” (in terms of union members) over and above the rights of the group. The authors agree that there are problems but, basically, they see these moves are being made to hamper the democratic activities of the rank and file and associate the union movement with an aura of autocracy and bullying.

The chapter on “Shop Stewards, a Western Australian Study” is particularly interesting because a number of contradictions in the nature of the steward’s role are uncovered. To me it reveals how stewards view themselves principally as leaders and how little trade union organisation has come to grips with further democratising rank-and-file struggle. In other words, energy is channelled (and restricted) into the “big man theory”, ie Bob Hawke, the union hot-shot. Little attention is given to the rank and file who are not trusted to develop their shop-floor organisation. The article demonstrates that workers are protected by the structure from making mistakes, and all their tactics are basically decided centrally. Consequently, they miss out on political lessons which are useful only for individuals such as the embryonic union official in the shape of a shop steward. This is one conclusion I draw from this study; perhaps other readers will get a totally different impression?

Edna Ryan and Helen Prendergast generally paint a not-too-optimistic picture in “Unions are for Women Too” although, at some levels, others could say that Ryan and Prendergast have placed too much emphasis on “window dressing” exercises by unions. There remains a tremendously long hard road to hoe for women to gain their rightful place in the unions.


The first edition of this book was published in 1976. It was, and has remained, the most comprehensive, accurate, balanced and clearly written introduction in English to the physical background to the consideration of energy problems.

It deals with energy flows in the biosphere and in human society, the principles of thermodynamics and energy resources. It gives brief accounts of all the many important energy extraction and conversion processes.

This new edition retains all that, with some appropriate updating and the excision of a few short sections which have been overtaken by events. It also eliminates the special emphasis which was previously given to the British situation. (Even in the first edition this emphasis was by no means excessive compared with the average American book purporting to give a world perspective.)

In its concluding chapters, the book concentrates on the need to plan for a transition to relatively scarce, relatively costly energy sources. It emphasises the (not original) point that until recently the historical trend of the energy industry has been from costly and complex energy sources to cheap and simple ones. All future trends must be in the opposite direction.

On the whole it is rather gloomy about the future, expressing particular concern about the prospects for the ordinary people in underdeveloped countries. Nor are the authors very hopeful about the potential of solar and other renewable energy sources over the next twenty or so years (though they are more optimistic about energy conservation). They are sharply critical of both the optimistic vision of Lovins and the mindless growth-for-ever perspective of his opponents.

What this book does not do is deal with any of the important economic issues relating to energy, with the exception of the relationship between energy and GNP, which is well dealt with. Nor does it explicitly address political issues, though the authors’ general sympathies can be read clearly enough between the lines (they are for the poor and weak and against the rich and powerful). This is not meant as criticism; the authors set out to deal with a particular set of topics and do so very well at convenient length.

This does not mean that people whose prime interest is the politics of energy should not bother with this book. On the contrary, if you do not already have it, go out and buy it, because it is the best compendium of the background factual information needed to make a sensible contribution to the energy policy debate. However, if you already have a first edition, I doubt if the improvements in this new edition, welcome as they are, make it worth buying to replace your old copy.
Cover photo Diane Arbus  
design and graphics by Gregor Cullen.
Here is a unique social document where Polish men and women speak for themselves about the great issues being faced in their country today. The voices are sometimes strident, sometimes cautious, and mostly optimistic. They offer different versions of events which have been in the headlines over the last year. Taken together, they express history in the making.


Next year in March 1983, *Australian Left Review* proposes to organise a number of events to mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Karl Marx. These events could include symposia, seminars, conferences and other discussions.

We believe that this proposal for 1983 could be a valuable project where the influence of marxism can be considered and through which the problems and possibilities of the socialist movement in Australia can be assessed. We would hope that such a project, attracting the support of a variety of socialists, will also contribute to the unity of the Australian socialist movement.

We invite interested persons to contact either of the existing editorial groups in Sydney and Melbourne and to join with *ALR* in establishing a Marx Centenary Committee.

*ALR Editorial Collective,*
*PO Box A247, Sydney South 2000.*