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UNION STUDY CIRCLES

What is a Deficit? What is Fiscal Policy? Who are the Wets and Dries? What’s the Prime Lending Rate? What is the OECD?

These are the kind of questions being asked in a series of discussion groups or study circles on the Economy, that have recently been initiated by the AMFSU.

Late last year a number of stewards posed the problem of how to respond when members on the job ask them what is going on in the economy. After a well attended meeting to discuss this, it was decided that we ought to try and establish discussion groups in various suburban areas to assist people in understanding the new economic crisis.

A further meeting was called of a number of activists in the political economy movement, to seek their help in acting as tutors. This has been readily provided and the groups began operating in March, and most have continued and expanded since then.

The Metal Workers Union is acting as the organiser of the groups and each one has a metal worker activist as its convenor. However, anybody is welcome to attend, especially spouse, other family members and activists from other unions and this is seen as important because it broadens the scope of the discussions.

Far from understanding the major economic theories and the worldwide strategies of the multi-nationals, at the level which most of labour movement material is pitched, we found that the main concern was to simply understand the debate taking place in the daily press. Definitions of terms were regarded as an important starting point for those participating. As issues were discussed in the media such as the Summit and the ALP-ACTU Accord we were able to provide an effective discussion for those interested in these topical points.

Being a union-based education program, it was noticeable that people wanted to learn things which would help them handle problems of immediate concern at their place of work. Already we have the situation where some groups are looking specifically at topics like retrenchment agreements, technological change and early retirement and some are planning to take their learning out into the streets in the form of local action around prices.

Already some very positive effects are being shown as a result of these discussions. At least two groups report members going off to their local ALP branches and in one country area to their local trades and labor council. By putting up motions on the economy, in particular criticising the government's approach to the deficit, the study circles had immediate impact in the local community. Other reports show that group members have begun to read economics material in the daily press, particularly people such as Kenneth Davidson of the Age.

While we certainly don’t discourage action flowing from the group discussion, we are making a point that this is not expected nor necessary, and if people learn from being able to sit down quietly in somebody’s lounge room and have a discussion over a convivial glass, then that is what is important.

There is nothing particularly new in developing such localised learning groups, as it has been a feature in various forms of the left movement over many years. We have sought to base our activities on the model of the Swedish Study Circle which involves about 10% of the Swedish population every year. In particular the objective is that these groups will become centres of self-learning, with a minimal use of tutors, and a maximising of the use of the talents in the group itself. Each group starts with the problems as the group perceives them.

Already two groups have opted to develop in this way, and have asked members to prepare the introductory discussion material for the next meeting.

There are ten groups already operating successfully in various suburbs and provincial centres, involving approximately 100 people, and there are several more to be set up in the coming period. As each group develops discussion on the problems that are of concern to them the resource people at the union centre have to look for reading material and other sources to use. It has also become necessary to constantly update the address lists as each group grows, and therefore the administrative work becomes rather daunting. To assist with this process we are seeking funds from TAFE in order to employ a person a couple of days a week to handle this increasing workload.

The view of the existing groups is that they should not grow larger than 10 or 12 people, with 7 or 8 being the ideal. An effective learning atmosphere requires that people be able to participate in the discussion and not be intimidated by the size of the group. When groups become too big they will divide. It is our aim to develop more groups, so that they will be operating

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in about 16 different areas of Victoria.

Our biggest concern now is to strengthen the work of the resource people in order that we can adequately service each group with the required information and reading material precisely, to enable them to be as self-active and independent as possible. The key is that the groups are learning things which they feel are relevant, and at least in the initial stages, of immediate benefit, and this will mean quite a diversity of topics.

Nevertheless, having started on the overall question of the economy, it has opened up ‘Pandora’s box, and leaves nothing that cannot be discussed within that context. The development of mass consciousness about the economy and how it works, both at its micro and macro level, a grasp of the kind of things that concretely can begin to change the process, for example, resolutions at local labor party branches and local action of various kinds, and a deeper understanding of the positive aspects of the Prices and Incomes Accord, will be necessary if we are to develop the most positive potential out of the election of the Hawke Government.

Moving from the known to the unknown, is perhaps the most classic commandment of education. These discussion groups, or study circles, are an attempt to practise that principle, and although the starting point mightn’t be at the level of what many of us believe, or want to believe, it would appear to be somewhat more useful than expounding great theories which most people cannot relate to anyway.

Max Ogden

WOMEN FIRST

Most of the speeches made by those members of parliament elected for the first time last March have not been widely reported. Many of the new members are women and some took the opportunity of an inaugural speech to comment on the need to take initiatives for nuclear disarmament. During the first sitting of parliament during May most women MPs held their own demonstration on parliament house steps to mark international women’s peace day (May 24). To suggest something of the flavour of their concerns we print from Hansard an excerpt from the speech of Jeanette McHugh, the member for Phillip.

I want to thank the women of New South Wales for their support and joy in the result in Phillip, a joy which crossed all party lines. Not once before since Federation has a woman from New South Wales been elected to the national parliament. We have waited so long and so many should have been here before. I am very proud to have on my desk a pair of scissors and a paper knife that belonged to the magnificent Jessie Street. They were given to me. Among the many paths that the great Jessie Street trod bravely for us was, first, the path that could lead to this place. She stood for the seat of Phillip when it first created in 1949.

The fact that at this time this particular woman entered Parliament is part of an evolutionary process. I am a link between the older women of the Labor Leagues and today’s younger feminists. The older women fought their first battles for women’s rights in the workplace and for equal pay. I love and honour those women. Today’s younger women have taken on, as well as the old continuing struggles, the demands to meet new circumstances and new expectations in areas such as childcare and women’s refuges. Women from all generations fought against the forces of oppression and intolerance which would not allow a woman to make her own decision, no matter how painful or distressing, in relation to childbirth. I am glad, thanks to the courage and common sense of generations of responsible women, the single issue campaigns of the intolerant have become irrelevant and ineffective.

By chance, I have become that inevitable link between the all male representation from New South Wales of the last 80-odd years and the many women from that state who will from now on take their places in this parliament, both here and in the other place, with their male colleagues. But by far the most important thing for me is that I will be, I hope, a link between those generations of full time housewives and mothers whose ‘duties’ kept them isolated at home, politically either unaware or uninvolved, and those full time housewives and mothers who from now on, I hope, will become active participants in the decision-making process.

I have never thought that I have thought we can be swallowed up by the system. I have thought we can be swallowed up in the system. There are other women whom we must think of. Society depends to a very large extent on the unpaid work of women at home. I want those women to start asking back from society a fair return for the contribution they make to it — a fair return by way of better education, better housing, better health care, better transport, etc. Women must use their political potential to gain these better conditions.

The issue that is politicising women at present more than any other is that of disarmament and the nuclear arms race. It reminds me of how we were politicised nearly 20 years ago by the Vietnam war. Now, as then, women particularly have joined so many others and decided to show their concern and they are called dupes, just as we were then, by those who refuse to acknowledge that we care about human suffering caused by war. I am reminded that in the last election the Vietnam veterans, when asking both parties for an independent inquiry into the problems that had occurred as a result of their serving in Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood. One burly soldier said to me: “I couldn’t understand you, love, when you marched down the street in the moratorium years, but I certainly understand you now. The government has sent us to Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood. One burly soldier said to me: “I couldn’t understand you, love, when you marched down the street in the moratorium years, but I certainly understand you now. The government has sent us to Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood. One burly soldier said to me: “I couldn’t understand you, love, when you marched down the street in the moratorium years, but I certainly understand you now. The government has sent us to Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood. One burly soldier said to me: “I couldn’t understand you, love, when you marched down the street in the moratorium years, but I certainly understand you now. The government has sent us to Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood. One burly soldier said to me: “I couldn’t understand you, love, when you marched down the street in the moratorium years, but I certainly understand you now. The government has sent us to Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood. One burly soldier said to me: “I couldn’t understand you, love, when you marched down the street in the moratorium years, but I certainly understand you now. The government has sent us to Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood. One burly soldier said to me: “I couldn’t understand you, love, when you marched down the street in the moratorium years, but I certainly understand you now. The government has sent us to Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood. One burly soldier said to me: “I couldn’t understand you, love, when you marched down the street in the moratorium years, but I certainly understand you now. The government has sent us to Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood. One burly soldier said to me: “I couldn’t understand you, love, when you marched down the street in the moratorium years, but I certainly understand you now. The government has sent us to Vietnam, were quite clear in the recognition of where we stood.
good concepts being besmirched through misrepresentation. I am tired of being called naive because I join those who want to prevent war. I think it is more likely that those who do not realise they are being manipulated by the arms merchants are the naive ones. More and more Australians are becoming aware of the dangers to world peace because of the increase in nuclear weapons. On March 27 last, 200,000 Australians took to the streets to show their concerns.

A Labor government, as our policy sets out, must reject the escalation of nuclear weapons and work to bring about positive disarmament negotiations. Our government has the responsibility to call on all nuclear powers to reduce the size of their arsenals and to declare that we will not be part of a nuclear war machine. It is wrong, in my view, to allow Australia's uranium to circulate in such a way that it will inevitably enter the world nuclear weapons chains. I have long opposed the use of nuclear energy in any form and I have long been convinced that Australia should not mine or export its uranium.

The other disgraceful situation that comes about by the world's preoccupation with war is the huge expense involved. Perhaps there would be no expense involved. Perhaps the situation that comes about from what we want, no uneducated kids by the world's preoccupations, is wasted! What country can find a way to stop spending billions of dollars going into the arms to show their concern. It will be so rich that it can waste its richness in energy in any form and I can surmise no intention to waste our scientists to such a much better use. Our technological base has not changed much since the 1950s. New skills are required for the 1980s. Viable alternative employment opportunities are being encouraged and promoted. The Labor government can invest dollars and faith in research to establish new high technology, sunrise industries. These include biotechnology, software for personal computers and communications technology — a great deal of work in this area is being done in our electorate of Phillip at the University of New South Wales. Either we will have to develop our own technology in consultation with the workers or, as with most things to date, we will have to buy from overseas. To meet the demands of Australian society, the economy must generate more wealth. There is no guarantee of success of course, but there is the guarantee of further economic recession if industry and government fail to take up the challenge of the new, high technology industries... Finally I wish to talk about the reason for which this government was elected and the task ahead of us. The problem of unemployment in Australia was one of the key factors in the election campaign. The unemployment rate rose from 5 percent to 10 percent under the previous government. For the young it rose to 28 percent. Of course, it was worse for women and girls. The Fraser government promised more of the same policies — that is, it promised more unemployment and it lost office. Labor is committed to addressing the unemployment problem. We carry no illusion that it will be easy. Governments in other industrialised countries with socialist objectives such as our own have been elected with similar mandates and clearly have not been able to make any but very slow progress. But socialist parties have advantages over conservative parties in addressing the problem of unemployment.

We are prepared to acknowledge one of the key aspects of the long term unemployment problem throughout the industrialised world, that is, that the economic system as it has evolved, is more motivated by profit, increasingly dominated by monopolies and integrated on a world-wide basis, is no longer able to provide full employment and a reasonable standard of living for all. We cannot accept the philosophy that says to working people "You can have a job, if you are prepared to work at the internationally going rate of pay". We are not prepared to underwrite such a massive drop in the standard of living of Australians. In this approach we are joined by many of the small business, merchant and professional groups. We are prepared to look honestly at the causes of unemployment. We are prepared to take the far-reaching steps necessary to provide jobs and decent living standards for all. We are prepared to intervene in the economic system to stimulate employment through both the public and private sectors, a slow but sure process. We are prepared to consult and to plan for the longer term.

Mavis Robertson

DEFICIT FETISH

The Senate's rejection of Labor's attempt to recoup tax income lost by avoidance schemes, highlights again the issue of the deficit. Finance Minister John Dawkins rightly nailed the Liberals by demanding that they suggest how the $500 million lost by the defeat of the measure could be made up.

But behind Labor's effective blaming of the burgeoning deficit on their predecessors, incompetence and dishonesty, lies Treasury's monetarist phobia about deficit budgeting itself. Treasury head, John Stone, who was a contemporary of Bob Hawke in the Economics Faculty at University of WA in the late 1940s, has shifted the emphasis from wages to the deficit but his essentially restrictive approach remains. Stone's survival has dismayed many people... particularly since his minister is hardly able to counter with any alternative strategy.

Different lines were evident at the Summit, where the Victorian Government, and to a lesser degree South and West Australia, argued a case best articulated by the Council of Social Services. The size of the deficit is a further indictment of our civilisation in this age of science that more scientists are living today than in the combined history of the past 1,000 years and the majority of them are today employed to prevent more and more weapons of war. We can put our scientists to so much better use. Our technological base has not changed much since the 1950s. New skills are required for the 1980s. Viable alternative employment opportunities are being encouraged and promoted. The Labor government can invest dollars and faith in research to establish new high technology, sunrise industries. These include biotechnology, software for personal computers and communications technology — a great deal of work in this area is being done in our electorate of Phillip at the University of New South Wales. Either we will have to develop our own technology in consultation with the workers or, as with most things to date, we will have to buy from overseas. To meet the demands of Australian society, the economy must generate more wealth. There is no guarantee of success of course, but there is the guarantee of further economic recession if industry and government fail to take up the challenge of the new, high technology industries... Finally I wish to talk about the reason for which this government was elected and the task ahead of us. The problem of unemployment in Australia was one of the key factors in the election campaign. The unemployment rate rose from 5 percent to 10 percent under the previous government. For the young it rose to 28 percent. Of course, it was worse for women and girls. The Fraser government promised more of the same policies — that is, it promised more unemployment and it lost office. Labor is committed to addressing the unemployment problem. We carry no illusion that it will be easy. Governments in other industrialised countries with socialist objectives such as our own have been elected with similar mandates and clearly have not been able to make any but very slow progress. But socialist parties have advantages over conservative parties in addressing the problem of unemployment.

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The furore over relatively minor changes to the superannuation arrangements left unquestioned the massive tax subsidy going to people who are largely in higher income brackets. The need for a universal, portable national scheme is the way through the morass of thresholds and percentages that tended to dominate the debate. Control of the enormous capital in such a fund would give a progressive government much greater leverage in the area of job creation than is the case today where workers-owned funds are used by their own employers often against their interests.

The burden on employed people of high unemployment is often forgotten, not just because of dole payments which are too low anyway, but in revenue forgone. Even quite large subsidies, or relatively unproductive work in the public sector, make economic sense to sustain tax revenue. For example, for every $100 million spent in the building industry, $40 million is "clawed back" in taxes and cheques at various stages of construction.

The traditional Keynesian techniques have proved inadequate, as did monetarism, in tackling the depth of the current crisis. More fundamental measures, such as those hinted at in the Accord's job creation and planning provisions, are required to reverse de-industrialisation and develop the productive and service sectors. This cannot be left private capital which will further distort the goal of a diverse capacity on the basis of labour-displacing technology. The public sector, or decisive public equity, in private firms, will be central to this planning.

Development of this kind also needs the accountability to those who fund the public sector... the mass of average taxpayers... and the democratic input of those who work there. This is only the way to avoid the creation of new bureaucratic nightmares which serve as infrastructure for private capital and are the domain of petty authoritarian management. The focus of economic policy could thereby be shifted from the deficit to social need in conjunction with practical and popular measures for funding and management.
John Alford argues that propaganda designed to change so-called "false consciousness" is, in itself, futile and the effectiveness of a propaganda-oriented "correct line" political parties is highly questionable. He offers an alternative which includes breaking down the divisions between intellectual and non-intellectual workers as part of the process of generating organic intellectuals as working class activists who are in touch with everyday concerns of people. This article is based on a paper given at the ALR sponsored Marx Centenary Symposium in Melbourne, April 1983.

I want to discuss something with a strategic implication, namely the relationship between classes. In particular I want to look at the political relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled. Why is it that the great majority of ordinary people, whose daily lot is not one that meets their needs, who are economically vulnerable, pushed around in their working lives, alienated in their domestic existence, surrounded by urban desolation, and in the case of substantial sections just plain downtrodden, deprived and discriminated against, within the present social order, why is it that ordinary people acquiesce to the social order? This question is crude but it is not a new question. The left has been asking it for decades. Once the answer used to be that working class people were held down by the power of the state, or conned by their social democratic leaders. More recently, the answers have changed. "False consciousness" is the key. According to this approach, ordinary people are more or less brainwashed into an acceptance of the system as it is, especially through the media and the schools. They gain "illusions" about what is and what is possible. ("We live in the best of all possible worlds"). I'm painting a gross caricature of the approach. Leftwing theorists have written countless volumes of analyses which spell it out in great sophistication.

But whether its rough or refined, the strategic implication is the same — that is, that the task for the left is to counter the brainwashing, so that we can get people organised into collective forms of action against the boss and the state. This means basically a continuing emphasis on propaganda in various forms, convincing people about the "real" nature of the system, persuading them of the alternatives. And the main devices for this are a declamatory party press backed up by pamphlets, books, public meetings and public manifestations such as demonstrations and rallies. "The message" is all-important. And by implication so too is "the party line".

The "message" and the "party line" are inevitably focused on class interests, that is on countering false consciousness by explaining people's "true" class interests.

Well I'd suggest that the spectacular failure of the propagandist approach is evidenced by the small size of the left in this country. I'd also suggest that the problem lies in the analysis of false consciousness on which it is based, which when you think about it doesn't fit well with some hard facts. For instance, there are thousands of teachers who are progressively minded and who honestly seek to open their pupils' eyes to the world. And to take another example, the antipathy of the average Australian worker to those in authority, starting with the foreman, is well known.

What I want to do here is re-examine this view of false consciousness, and by doing so challenge the strategy which it implies. I'll start by looking at two of the assumptions of this view. One is the instilling of false consciousness is somehow an active process — that is, a process actively carried out by a particular group (those who rule) against another group (those who are ruled).

The other, related assumption, is that it is a one-way traffic, in which people have false consciousness pumped into their heads from outside. These two assumptions lie behind the
A propagandist approach alone, and the analysis of false consciousness on which it is based, has failed.

From the way it is experienced at the level of production. At one level, it affirms the apparent equality of the market-place — everything has a price; you pay your money and get your goods. Quid pro quo is the order of the day. At the other level, in the work place, the payment of wages for labor is experienced unequally, in the sense that the amount of wages is fixed but the amount of production is unlimited, except by the resistance of the worker, which is external to the bargain. And the day-to-day expression of this inequality is the more or less authoritarian role of the boss. Now the important point is that both these levels are real — neither is illusory, a point to which I’ll return.

The second element is “commonsense” — the diverse, fragmented opinions and perceptions that individual people have of the world, not only of what exists but also of what is possible. Examples would be statements like “It’s human nature to lord it over others if you get the chance”, or “I’m not smart enough to be a boss”.

The third element is “ideology”. Ideologies are more systematic than common-sense. They are more or less worked out bodies of thought about what exists, what is possible and what ought to be, in political terms. They tend to justify the positions of particular social groups. Liberal-democracy or the efficacy of the free market are examples. Now, by and large, the one-way traffic view of false consciousness only takes account of the third element: ideologies themselves, more or less identifiable with particular social interest groups.

The Gramscian framework of hegemony, however, embraces all three elements — the material world and its social relations, “commonsense” and ideology. And it puts them together in a way that explains why people generally consent to the existing social order but can simultaneously hold particular oppositional views.

How does it do this? Well, it starts from the recognition that people construct their own experience. Their ideology is constructed out of “commonsense” and out of the material and social world. And their commonse is constructed out of the material and social world.

Let me take the example of the commodity-form again to explain this. People believe in the free-market system unquestioningly, without thinking about it. They profoundly subscribe to a fundamental capitalist belief. But they don’t do so because they’ve been conned by the press or the school-teachers against their better judgement. They do so because their material and social world means that exchange-relations are “commonsense”. There is no conceivable alternative to the commodity-form. The quid pro quo is natural, unalterable and entirely rational. And this shows at the level of commonsense, in statements like “You can’t get something for nothing”.

Of course, the same point applies to the contradictory aspects of the material and social world. Other realities also validate fragments of “commonsense” and ideologies. For
instance, the role of manager in enforcing the unequal transaction of wage-labor leads many workers to construct the commonsense observation that “bosses are bastards”. And this observation underpins the militant trade union ideology, in its corporatist and oppositional forms.

Hegemony is not just a matter of what people think, but also of what they do, their habits and practices. And here we get to the other part of the Gramscian framework: the particular role of intellectuals. By intellectuals I don’t mean suede-jacketed academics in ivory towers. I am referring to Gramsci’s organic intellectuals. To quote from the Prison Notebooks:

Every (class) coming into existence ... creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.

Organic intellectuals are therefore not only economists and social scientists, but managers, engineers, lawyers, bureaucrats, journalists, educational administrators, and politicians. They are people who organise hegemony. They are its active side, and interact with the structural elements of material/social world, commonsense and ideology. Indeed, organic intellectuals can only perform their tasks within the context of these structural elements.

Take the example of the media. As countless studies show, the media can play an ideological role only to the extent that it builds on real perceptions of the real world, to the extent that they mesh with people’s commonsense observations of what is actually happening. A journalist can extol the virtues of the free-market (or attack the evils of central planning) precisely because this squares with one element of what people actually experience.

I said one element, and that raises the other thing about organic intellectuals. Their function of “organising” hegemony includes that of selecting some aspects of reality and commonsense and suppressing others as the basis for ideological formulations.

For instance, the ideological stance of hostility to “union power” can be derived from ordinary people’s “commonsense” opposition to authority, which can include “big union bosses”, and which could in turn be based in real experiences of having to fork out union dues to tough union organisers who aren’t seen at any other time. Witness Fraser’s union-bashing.

And this task of selectively emphasising fragments of experience and commonsense is itself ideologically-driven. The ideology of the manager, journalist, politician or whatever kind of organic intellectual, is itself a more systematic version of “commonsense”, based on their experiences and observations from where they sit in the world. So the world looks different and their criteria of selection correspond to that. And of course, they get paid to do a certain job.

"Commonsense" notions like “You don’t get something for nothing” and “I’m not smart enough to be a boss” are based on experience on the material and social world, not only constructed by ruling class hegemony.

This organising role spans the whole of society. It entails keeping the finger on the pulse of the economic, social and political currents of society, and intervening, arranging, adjusting, compromising and so on, to the extent necessary to maintain the basic structure intact. It implies that capital and its organic intellectuals take account of all the groups in society, and develop strategies to minimise the opposition, ranging from accommodation to confrontation. This process of taking account of the whole of society is the essence of hegemony.

So what I’m saying is that “false consciousness” is not false at all, nor is it simply instilled by the media or schools. People’s conceptions of the social order are in fact quite valid. They have “true” conceptions in their heads of society as it actually presents itself to them in their daily life experiences. Hegemony is the organisation of this presentation, both structurally and actively, so that it is quite reasonable, or unavoidable for people to accept the continuation of the existing order.

They have an “organic doctrine of society”, a sense not only of what is desirable but also of what exists and what is possible. This last is important, because consent is not just a matter of people believing that their interests are more or less served by things as they are. It is also a matter of their capacities to do anything to change things.

Hegemony is an order in which the class capacities of those who rule far outweigh the class capacities of those who are ruled. They have the edge in knowledge, planning, organisational cohesion, inside contacts and links with elements of the opposing class, and confidence. Keeping this edge is the function of organic intellectuals.

By contrast, those who are ruled must overcome massive disadvantages in their capacities. Denied knowledge and understanding of what lies behind decisions and plans, divided and segmented by the strategies of capital, and excluded from the inside communications of the rulers, their horizons are limited by their modest view of what they can do. At the individual level, it is a matter of “I’m only a worker, who am I to say how things should be run?”

This view is itself a product of the observable daily-life reality that there is a division of labor between those who work with their hands and those who work with their brains, or within the latter category between those who are paid to create and initiate and those who are paid to do routine hack-work. At the level of the organised labor movement, the hallmarks are economism, sectionalism, and a tendency to react to capital rather than initiate. Even in its most combative sectors, the militancy of the labor movement is the militancy of the natural underdog, the assertion of its proper “rights” as a ruled class. Its strategies almost never touch on the prospect of it being the leading class in society.

What does this mean for our strategy? I'll conclude by suggesting four things. First, it means that propaganda in itself, no matter how massive, how well-argued, how well-produced, is futile.
Ideological arguments don't even touch the well-springs of experience and commonsense which underpin popular conservatism. Second, and by corollary, it means that we need a strategic approach which orients itself to people's experiences and commonsense, as it is for them, not simply for our own ideological preconceptions of their "real" interests.

Not only our language and our arguments, but the very issues and interests we see as important must change. We have to focus on aspects of daily-life reality about which people will take steps that point in the direction of social change.

Third, we need to conceive of how these immediate and sectional interests fit together at the broader level. We need to pose solutions for the whole of society, in terms that people perceive as realistic and reasonable. In other words, we need to develop and fight for positive alternatives, reforms in which the working class is not just the opposing class but the leading class in society. The labor movement has to evolve its own hegemonic approach.

Fourth, and in my opinion most importantly, we need to very explicitly orient ourselves to popular capacities as well as interests. In the shorter term this means fighting for reforms which expand the capacities of the labor movement to assert a say — things like disclosure of corporate information, trade union education, community organising facilities. These are reforms that ordinary people can perceive as reasonable from the point of view of equality and democracy, but which have a profound movement-building potential.

In the longer term, it means that we have to develop our own organic intellectuals from the ground up. We need to break the division between intellectual and non-intellectual labor, and evolve activists who are simultaneously in touch with everyday concerns and able to see the whole and see the possibilities. We need to evolve people who match and challenge the organic intellectuals of capital, precisely by doing away with the specialised function of the intellectual.

All this poses sharp questions about the existing left. It suggests a new orientation away from the propagandist organ and the "correct line" organised political party. It suggests a new role for all of us who want to change society.

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."

Karl Marx 1883-1983

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AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW 84
FEMINISM

Beatrix Campbell spoke at many meetings in Australia during her visit last April. The visit was sponsored by Australian Left Review as part of the Marx centenary. In this paper, based on the topic "Marxism and Feminism", Beatrix Campbell challenges socialists to think of the ways in which class struggle had demobilised the socialist imperative. In one sense, she asserts, socialism has been spoiled by men. In a critical survey of women's movement she polemizes with various strands of the movement and suggests that a problem for women is that it is a very unusual experience for them to fight to win or to win.

TRANSFORMING THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

I want to talk about the problems that we face in the women's movement, the problem of our demands that were formulated on the basis of certain material conditions which no longer exist because of the recession. I also want to talk about the differences between the tendencies within an increasingly dispersed women's liberation movement and not for sectarian reasons but to clarify the objectives of the socialist feminist movement. One of the contradictions that women face in relation to marxism is that on the one hand we have an experience of a political practice and political theory that demonstrates the ways in which the capitalist economy produces the means initially, the occasion for, if nothing else, of the combination of workers. But the unpredictable element in that experience of combination and if you like the alchemy by which workers' organisation gets produced is the problem of women — for us and for the workers' movement itself. We have to think about the ways in which the marxist theory of the operation of the laws of the capitalist labour market, have to be modified, potently, by the evidence of the resilience of patriarchy in that capitalist economy and in capitalist social relations. Once that modification is secured what becomes clear is that the economism of the western workers' movement which is part of its crisis and the crisis of socialism today, can be understood, not wholly but certainly partially by reference to an analysis of the patriarchal origins of the workers' movement. And so what we have really is two spheres that we have to look at as marxist feminists. One is the theatre of struggle in the enterprise and the way in which the position of men as breadwinners has been fought for and demanded and reproduced the subordination of women. The other is the struggle in society, at the level of politics. Here we see the development of the state, part of whose function is to intervene in social life and the sexual division of labour. It has become clear that any analysis of the state has to involve an analysis of the state's relation to the sphere of reproduction and the function of women, which is an increasingly unstable function in western societies.

What's important about all this is that feminism joins with the endeavour to renew the marxist movement itself. It seems to me inevitable, but difficult, to find some means of uniting the attempts of the men's movement, the men's marxist movement, to critically renew its old traditions and the development of a women's movement which exists partly as a criticism of the way in which the men's movement has developed. So the women's movement finds itself in an odd position vis a vis the men's movement which is that it is both part of the politics of the left and is a critique of the politics of the left. I think that there is a sense in which over the last decade that relationship of critique and presence has become clearer and clearer. My experience of the early days of the women's liberation movement was that it was terribly difficult for socialist feminists to relinquish a primary allegiance to the socialist movement. And there was a sense in which we constantly affirmed, its not men, its the system, that is the issue, and so the socialist feminist presence within women's liberation was often bereft of many of the political initiatives which in the end radical feminism was able to mobilise. This was because of the diffidence we had in addressing the problem of men, and the construction of masculinity.
and what the terms would be of an alliance between men and women in the socialist movement, given that, in a certain sense, the socialist movement was a men's movement. Historically it has been a movement that was in the image of men and in its practices affirmed a cult of masculinity. But it also was that the men's movement was the socialist movement, so our relationship to it was extremely problematic. And I think that our reluctance to explore the problem of men and masculinity was a function of socialist feminist attempts to remain within the pale of the socialist movement.

Here I want to say something about the ways in which feminists related to the attempts by the socialist movement to develop a theory of alliances in the post-war period, because I think that theory of alliance is extremely important to the way that we think socialist feminism. And its only now that feminism is able to confidently assert its critique of that theory of alliances. What was being tentatively explored in European communist parties and in the left in general was a crisis within the movement itself. What the movement was having to cope with was the development of a massive labour movement struggling directly with capital in the work-place and the gap between that and the development of mass socialist consciousness. This has preoccupied the marxist movement since its inception, certainly since the bolshevik period and the development of mass reformist non-revolutionary parties.

Now for feminism that problem has only more recently become clear, and we've brought our analyses to this gap between class struggle and socialist struggle. Feminism is now able to insert its critique of the ways in which class struggle demobilised the socialist imperative, because there was something about the way in which the men's movement articulated the interest of men and those interests always involved the subordination of women. That relationship, the compulsion to produce the subordination of women, demobilised and detonated the socialist imperative. So there's a sense in which one wants to suggest that socialism has been spoiled by men.

Now it would be easy to say we are the saviours of socialism, and if life was that simple we would save it and we would all live happily ever after, but the fact is that we still have to negotiate and relate it to that men's movement. When I'm talking about the men's movement, I think that the whole thing about alliances is clarified because the limits of the theory of alliances are revealed in the way that alliances are postulated. What you have is alliances between the working class and a catalogue of other categories — youth, blacks, women, the disabled, criminals, house-breakers, the discontents, right? Now what that formulation assumes is that this lot are not this, right? The working class remains given, and what has to be added to the mixture is this lot over here, who are not in the working class. Thieves are not in the working class, women are not in the working class, blacks we know are not in the working class. As it happens you then have the majority who are not in the working class but are on this side. And what can be an offence is that the panoply of discontents are all represented over on this side, and in a certain sense the real rebellions are represented here, but on that side we have this given category which is not problematic, which is the working class. At its worst this particular formulation of a theory of alliances says that this lot should shape up, and associate themselves with that lot, who are grown up, completed and who are really engaged in the real struggles with the real enemy. Now of course the problem with that is that the working class movement is problematic and in a sense the other groups represent a critique of this vast category, but this vast category doesn't know it yet.

The feminist movement has most clearly articulated the critique of this vast sector because in a certain sense it is saying the problem is with this group, which the socialist movement hasn't problematised. The women's movement is the first which comes along and says, that the kind of politics which are created here aren't a problem for us, because we cannot participate in it, even if we are allowed to, which for a very long time we haven't. We cannot participate because these politics are not in our image. There are no commodious places for us in these forms of class struggle. And yet clearly there's a sense in which this kind of class struggle does articulate some of our interests, but does it?
"No cause can be won between dinner and tea, and most of us who were married had to work with one hand tied behind us." Hannah Mitchell

A meeting of members of the Women's Social and Political Union which fought for women's suffrage in England. Hannah Mitchell was a member in the early days.

socialist feminist, a working class socialist feminist who says: "The revolution is not created between dinner and tea". The awful thing is the many ordinary banal complaints that women have about the conduct of political practice on the left which necessarily banish the means of women's participation in politics. So its not simply a matter of women inserting themselves into politics, it is a matter of them transforming the ways within which that struggle is conducted, because if it is conducted as it has until now it will always be conducted in the interests of a group that has historically and in practice reproduced the subordination of women. So one's left with the question, when thinking about alliances: what's in it for us? And its a rude question, and people think that you're rude for asking it. But the time's long gone when we don't have the right to ask it, and also it seems to me that the very conditions of the recession demand that we ask it because something has to be done to reconstitute what is now shattered in the movement.

Now another brief word about alliances. For a start we have this problem of the way in which the alliance is formulated and what is regarded as the centre of the alliance which is the male working class. I think that the way that theory of alliances has been formulated actually clarifies who thinks that its a men's movement. Its not just feminists, men don't admit it, but they think it too. Historically they have lots to draw on that confirms the kind of righteousness and piety of their position, because there's a sense in which there are many responses of women to the way that the men's movement conducts itself that relegate women to a state of political backwardness. We are the primitives as it were in the political spectrum whose reaction against the masculinism of the movement characteristics as recidivists, as backward, as, in some way, incomplete without I think, ever requiring that anyone make the effort to find out why it is that certain kinds of reactions are reactionary. It may be that they're not reactionary at all. It seems to me that this is something that the labor movement has always had the bad habit of looking at women's complaints against its ways of going about things as being necessarily conservative.

So what we're faced with in terms of the socialist movement is to review as
feminists what the balance of power is in those relationships of allies and alliances. An imperative for us is to find a way of making a socialist movement in which feminism is a distinct and autonomous part, making that movement in some way produce an authentic voice for women. It is clear, amidst the crisis of the left throughout the west, there is a fatal confusion about who its constituency really is, who it really represents, and there is a failure of popular resonance at the same time as a sense that the socialist movement is bigger and stronger than it ever was. What it doesn’t understand is that there is one fallback field left open for it and that is women, and what is also clear at this time as disarmament emerges as the political weapon par excellence of the left, that women are now being constituted willy-nilly and often in quite arbitrary ways, as fellow but progressive political force in a way that wasn’t clear before.

There is something else that I think we have to look to when we’re considering the history of these two different groups, not the history of class struggle, and the kind of movement that feminism has built for itself. There is a sense in which the habit of opposition and oppositionism is essential to the habits of class struggle. This is because there is a sense in which as long as you feel that you’ve got a clear set of objectives, a clear enemy our side is clear. All our side then has to do is struggle, bash away and demand things which the other side can always give and may be is prepared to give. One of the things that this form of struggle never does is demand that we take responsibility for recreating our collective self outside the determinants of that relationship. What I mean is that there are forms of class struggle which can recreate the working class as always subordinate, as always powerless, as never having the means within itself of becoming a ruling class. Historically that is the problem of the socialist movement which is that we, the working class, have never become, in the developed western sense, a ruling class.

It is not our habit, and one of the reasons why its not our habit is that the very form of our struggle constantly reproduces the working class as subordinate. It is in a relation of appeal, albeit aggressive appeal, but it is a relation of appeal to the enemy. The form that feminism historically has taken is quite the opposite, because in a further sense feminism starts from the belief that being subordinate is a problem, its horrible, its desperately damaging, and feminism well understands the nature of the contract between the subordinate psyche and the dominant psyche. It was in the very fibre of our being so much so that it was inescapable a part of the way in which feminism created itself as a political movement. It always has had this investment that part of the function of the movement is to enable women to survive the condition of subordination and come out of it on the other side as the kind of person who is not subordinate. So feminism is about transforming the human subject in a way that the habits of class struggle really have forgotten. I don’t think that was always the case with class struggle but certainly that is one of its characteristics now. It doesn’t take the collective self of the working class as a problematic from which it starts. Its way of being a class is a problem to it and its got to do something about itself in order to not be that any more.

So feminism, in its very form takes responsibility for the collective transformation of women’s way of being women, and it starts from the premise that femininity itself is a problem. So really feminism starts from a completely different place in every possible way from the working class movement and what it has to do is always to draw on and to recruit an experience of personal, often immobilising, discontent. But what’s also clear is that simply relying on experience to produce politics isn’t enough. And to rely on a format of organisation which facilitates that development is not enough to secure our presence in politics. So feminism is faced with an awkward dynamic, which is that the thing which has been the engine of our subordination is not the engine or not necessarily the means of our presence in politics. And it is not necessarily the engine of another of our imperatives which is to transform the socialist movement so that it represents us. Other forms of intervention are demanded of us.

I want to invite you to have these matters in your mind, because I think that the kind of political instruments that articulate frank discontent are very, very important, they’re also very problematic, and whatever it is that we do, we have to find political means that continue to honour workers’ discontent. I’m saying that partly on the basis of an insular experience of of discontent and how they’re represented at the political level.

What I’m driving at is that what’s important about feminism is that it is always about a kind of politics that sees us as the subjects of class formation, we are not simply the agents of social transformation, we are also the subjects of that transformation. So feminism has to hang on to that form of representation of itself, but is clear that that is also very problematic when it comes to dealing with the institution of politics.

Now I want to move on to talk a little bit about the problems that the women’s movement faces. For a start its clear that you can’t just talk about the women’s movement, and that we’re going to have to learn that there is a women’s movement and that there isn’t. It doesn’t all meet in the same place, we don’t get to the same things so we can recognise ourselves as a movement, and that can be an awful problem because it means we are not always sure if we’ve still got the movement. But really it is clear that there is a movement and that its alive and well and kicking in all sorts of different places, doing difference things. I’m not sure whether you have experienced that kind of anxiety but we certainly have had it and it is mixed up with the critique of femininity, the relationship to heterosexuality and the relationship to men, and it is the relationship to men which most significantly strategically, divides us.
Feminism takes responsibility for the collective transformation of women's way of being women, and it starts from the premise that femininity is a problem.
seems to me that there is no escape from thinking about those differences. Because inevitably, of course, the thing that unites all of us within those divides is that feminism necessarily disrupts women's relationship to men. It is a critique of normal heterosexuality. It is a critique of the construction of normal femininity and that means that it necessarily represents a disruption of the consensus of commonsense about what men and women are, and what their relationship to each other is. The problem is how do you mobilise politically around that piece of information.

What seems to me problematic now is that we have within radical feminism a form of politics which claims all that anger about men and heterosexuality. It builds an existential politics which bases itself on one of the primary features of feminism, which is that the personal is political. There is a sense in which radical feminism is only a politics of the personal. At the same time, of course, radical feminism has always kept alive very boldly, that personal dimension. It will never relinquish those feelings of anger, but it does work on the assumption that anger is the energy that you need politically, and there is a sense in which it seems to me, that in that respect the anger of radical feminism is both powerful and influential but has all the same problems that I described earlier in the habits of class struggle because it depends on always being in opposition. It depends on a sense of being powerless and in the end, despite the fact that it attempts to produce a powerful argument from a position of powerlessness, it depends on a sense of powerlessness. Strategically in the long term that's an orientation which is doomed to find itself always cast in the role of the victim. In fact it is dependent on victimisation.

It is also a fact that it does represent a kind of remobilisation of angers about many of the right things and it keeps alive and constantly re-ignites an anger which does belong to the tradition of feminism. I won't go into all the argument which no doubt you're all familiar with about how sexual politics are personal politics and are the politics of radical feminism. That tradition is something which I would never in the end wholly want to dishonour, or disclaim because it is a very important feature of feminist life. The thing that is worrying about it however is what is now happening to it. Because it is a politics which depends on a feeling of terror, something happens to the relationship to women in that politics. In the end what it does is to make men always, absolutely, immutably powerful. The only people who can be addressed influentially (within that scenario) are women. What we're now seeing is a concomitant to that first phase of radical feminism, which is a kind of representation of politics as powerlessness, victim and victimisation. But now a new dimension is added to it which is of betrayal and treachery. And there is a sense in which one arm of that tradition is now obsessed with the treachery of other women. So it becomes a politics which imploids against women. It is not a politics which attempts to represent the anger of all women. What I mean is that in the end it is doomed to be divisive.

And that is already emerging in the writing or the work of people like Mary Daly and Andrea Dworkin who has written a book about the mass of women being rightwing, being the traitors to feminism. It reproduces all those bad habits of blaming the victim that we're all so familiar with. And I don't know how we cope with it. Maybe we don't have to.

On the other hand, where does socialist feminism take itself, given that it has become very evident that the feminist experience, the production of a critique of normal life and of men's relationship to women, is difficult to represent politically, or to find strategic expression. Very often it also casts you in a relationship of exile from the mainstream of popular consensus and popular politics. I think therefore that an urgent objective for socialist feminism is to safeguard that experience of personal anger and personal discontent and the critique of personal life and secure its representation in the mainstream.

And here is where I come up to generalities really, because I don't know how you do that, but it seems to me that it has to be done. We have to think of both our responsibility for safeguarding an autonomous women's movement, which must be the reference point for women's participation in the world without which we do not participate in the world, while finding a form for our politics which allows intervention at multiple levels. On the one hand we must protect that dispersed autonomous movement but at the same time (and this makes us very busy and worn out) secure our intervention into socialism to save the socialist movement from itself. And we must also secure our intervention in the culture and in the institutions of politics which are crucially related to the condition of women and the transitions in the conditions of women.

So what we are left with as socialist feminists is that we've really got to get our act together when it comes to thinking strategically. We are engaged in, as it were, a civil war. There is a war between men and women and I don't mean that in the sense of heterosexuality has been death for women since it began. We have to assume actually that relationships between men and women are available to transformation. Women are not powerless. Men are not absolutely powerful. The relationship between the two can be interfered with and transformed. The question is, what will be the forms of political intervention that will secure that?

But at the political level, I think we have to imagine the movement as a strategic movement, and not as the piecemeal thing that we have so often experienced. What we have to go for, is a kind of emotional terrorism, and then actually think strategically about the battles that we have to fight because we can win them. And that is something that is very unusual in the experience of women — fighting to win and winning.

Ironically, the recession is both the best and the worst condition in which we have to place ourselves in politics, because it both clarifies the way in which that kind of intervention is necessary to us and is necessary to the socialist movement, but also endangers our demands. So there is an urgency in trying to think ourselves into a state which sees the kind of battles which we now wage in that civil war as being part of a war of both manoeuvre and position and that it is very important that we pick our fights very carefully, and go to win.

Beatrix Campbell is a socialist and feminist who works as a journalist in London. She is a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain.
Jill Mathews discusses some of the hard questions between marxism and feminism. She argues that marxism is patriarchal at its core. Marx, she says, analysed the masculine economy and called it universal. She challenges modern concepts of women and work and illustrates that it is not only housework which is ignored by the labour movement but most of the work of women that earns income and produces commodities and services for sale. Her solution is a politics which puts women first.

I want to talk about a politics that takes women's experience as central: a politics that sees women first; that works to create a space in which women are autonomous shapers and creators of our own meaning.

This politics takes as its starting point the power relations in which women are engaged.

Fundamentally, women are systematically controlled, manipulated and exploited as women within a series of relations from which men as men benefit.

This systematic oppression of women is expressed and experienced in every dimension of personal and social existence: economically and ideologically, politically, culturally, physically, sexually, psychically. Such systematic masculine sexism, or patriarchy, has created, over its history, a dual reality.

The world that women inhabit, the reality that we experience, the truths that we know are different from men's.

If we take for the moment the central materialist proposition that consciousness is determined by material circumstances, the recognition that women's and men's material circumstances are fundamentally different is of crucial importance in devising political strategies for social change.

How different is different? and how significant is it? I don't know. Feminism, or perhaps the set of feminisms, are in flux at the moment.

The process of deconstructing the universe back to its masculine specificity has reached a stage where the enormity of the task is being reassessed. We are becoming aware, in a different way from before, of how totally the world has been created in the social image of man; how totally reality has been perceived through masculine eyes; how deeply entrenched in masculine symbolism is our very language, both in words and structure.

We are becoming angry all over again.

We are not content to be simply The Other, marginally attached to this Men's world.

So, what about marxism — as a tool, as an ally, in the struggle?

There is serious and growing doubt among various groups of feminists about whether marxism has anything to offer a politics that takes women as central.

The reason for this is not just its manifest sexism at the level of individual relations, or social practice, or organisation, or political programme. That level of sexism certainly exists, and is slowly being challenged and changed within at least some of the marxist parties.

In no way am I intending to impugn the good intentions of many marxists, both women and men, in these struggles against sexism. But the real problem is rather more deeply embedded. Marxism, as a theory, is patriarchal.

This is not simply to call marxism sex-blind, or gender-free, and it cannot be corrected simply by adding women's oppression on to the whole list of other oppressions dealt with by marxists.

The solution is not simply a matter of equality of numbers, of affirmative action, of getting more women into positions of power within the party, the union, the committee — although these are crucial reforms.

Marxism is patriarchal at its core, in its philosophical assumption and its key concepts. Along with the capitalism it opposes, and the whole
The myth that women have only entered the workforce in large numbers in the post-war period is not borne out by the fact that women had always engaged in domestic capitalist labour such as private sale of skills, home produce and lodgings, operation of small businesses, and outwork. Yet, organised on such lines. Further, his focus on the point of production from the viewpoint of capital excluded all other socially necessary work that did not add directly enough to capital’s extraction of surplus value. Thus, the whole area of consumption and its integral relation to production is ignored. The work that is poorly organised by capitalism at the local and domestic levels is ignored. The uneven spread of the capitalist marketplace throughout industrialised economies is ignored.

Even more explicitly, for the purposes of analysis, Marx assumed that the ‘average laborer’ was the male head of household. He acknowledged the difference between the ‘labour power of men and women, of adults and children’ only to exclude from analysis all but the prime age male.

A consequence of this method of analysis was that the economic categories Marx used were those which tended best to explain the class relations, exploitation and interests of adult male workers in the commanding heights of the industrial capitalist economy of mid-nineteenth century Britain.

Apart from everything else, this form of analysis ignored the fact that capitalism was an intrinsically gendered system. The economic order then, as now, was a dual one.

The sexual division of labour was an essential organising principle of capitalism, not a mere excrescence or afterthought.

Marx analysed the masculine economy and called it universal capitalism. Marxists ever since have maintained this distortion. The very words they use have acquired meanings that apply only to the masculine economic world, but are used as if they were gender-free universals.

Notions of labor, of skill, productivity, workplace, unit, time, career, part-time, working conditions, unemployment, wages: all have a different meaning depending upon whether they assume the cock-eyed view that the masculine economy comprises the whole economy, or whether they accommodate the fully-gendered, dual nature of that whole.

Examples of such distortions are abundant, but a few will indicate the centrality of masculine experience.

The notion of work does not commonly accommodate domestic housework, childcare, or shopping; that of the social relations of production does not encompass sexual harassment; that of career does not take account of the rearing of children; that of the family wage ignores the existence of women supporting dependents.

We know very little at all about the history or experience of females’ economic life because the categories used in the masculine economy are wrong for the feminine.

Such masculine economic language symbolically organises a patriarchal reality...their hero of marxism is the worker.

This worker was ideally a male artisan. He learnt a specific trade as an apprentice, acquiring over time a
definite and definable skill, which he sold throughout his lifetime to capital. He entered a career at an early age, and remained within it steadfastly until death or retirement. All the critical terms of this model are male. Apprenticeships, by and large, were denied to girls. Skill, we have come to understand, is a description of what men do, whereas women doing the same work tend to be described as unskilled.

Women are denied a lifetime career because of the ideological assumption that marriage must remove them, at least for a time, from the waged workforce. This meaning of worker not only determines the meaning of work. It also establishes the criteria by which both working class membership and trade union membership are assessed. Economically, politically and ideologically, the male artisan has been used as the measure of work and of the working class, leaving out, by definition, unskilled men, especially those whose work lives are constantly interrupted by unemployment and who pick up work when and where they can. These men, and the casual poor, make up a large section of that anathematised group, the lumpen-proletariat. The artisan definition also excludes ethnic and race outsiders. Most importantly, it excludes women, especially married or familial women.

The hero of socialist Australian history is anti-woman, anti-homosexual, and racist because these attitudes were symbolic of the material circumstances of his work. The culture of these heroic workers was ockerism, centring around solidarity, drinking, mateship and exclusion. Their political culture demanded the domestication and subordination of women, and expressed itself in patriarchalism of leadership, hierarchy and authority. They were certainly valiant fighters against capitalism, but only as it affected their specific, sectional, masculine interests.

This definition of the working class and its model worker has become increasingly anachronistic. Because of changes in the organisation of capitalism, the hegemony of the male manual worker within the working class has declined, being replaced by a more diverse group of service and technical workers.

The politics of Marxist and other left groups, the trade unions, and the Labor Party, have begun to acknowledge these changes and to accommodate and adapt to the demands and interests of the newly visible workers. Because many of these workers in technical and service industries are women, there is an appearance of feminisation of the political process.

This feminisation is, however, only a limited acceptance of women into the masculine world, on masculine terms. The phallocentric, masculinist assumptions remain in place.

What has really changed for women and our experience of subordination? What has changed in our experience of work?

By and large, women's work has only been acknowledged if we are visible in the masculine economy, and even then, the only part of our work that counts is that directly organised in masculine capitalist forms. Trade unions, which exist to protect and further the interests of working people have only chosen to defend masculine work. Socialist and Marxist parties that have proclaimed working people to be the agents of change and overthrow of capitalism have only concerned themselves with that masculine class of workers in the commanding heights of capitalism, throwing occasionally, a token glance at working class families, as appendages.

Now, you all know the story about how women, over the last thirty years, have begun adhering to Engels' injunction to free ourselves by engaging in waged work. The story about how, until the 1950s, women comprised about 20% of the Australian
workforce, and how only about 6% of married women were at work. Then, in the post-war boom, women began popping out of the woodwork. By 1980, the percentage of women in the workforce had almost doubled, to about 37%, while 60% of married women were out there. As a consequence, several times removed, we have a much more women in trade unions, more women voting for the ALP, and new demands by working women for equal pay, no discrimination, and childcare.

This story is a load of patriarchal bullshit. It denies our historical work experience and our oppression. It denies our work.

I’m not talking here about housework, vital though that is. I’m talking about the denial of the work of women that earned income, that produced commodities and services for sale in the capitalist marketplace. Throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th, married women were extensively involved in an informal, or domestic, capitalist economy, the dimensions of which are impossible to know because the tools of masculine economic analysis were not directed towards it, regardless of whether those tools were wielded by census or tax officers, or labour inspectors, or trade unionists or Marxist theoreticians. Much of the work of this economy was based in and around the home. Married women, or rather familial women moved at times out of their own homes and into others, or into more masculine workplaces for short periods of time, where they undertook the same or similar work to that which they did in the home.

Alternatively, familial women brought into their homes paid work. In all instances, the crucial determinant was compatibility with their family domestic work in terms of time, space, movement and skills. Or, rather, the determinant was that of an integral fit between financial, emotional, ideological and material necessities and possibilities. All of this work was outside the restrictions, protections, surveillance and organisation of masculine capitalist work.

There were at least five types of this domestic capitalist labour:

- **Private sales of skills.** Familiar women sold their domestically skilled labour power to other household units. (Laundry, ironing, cooking, cleaning, childminding, casual prostitution).
- **Private sale of home produce/commodities.** Familiar women produced goods for their own families’ use, and sold the surplus, or produced extra deliberately for sale.
- **Provision of lodgings, board, bed and breakfast.** Familiar women sold the services and familial comforts of the home to strangers.
- **Operation of a small business from within or near the home.** (Corner shops, dressmaking, music teaching).
- **Outwork.** This form of domestic capitalist work was the closest to the forms of the masculine economy. It gained the attention of trade unions and socialists, but they were more concerned with sweating’s consequences for factory workers than with the economic survival of women working at home.

All this domestic capitalist work has been as much as ignored by Marxists as by masculine ruling class apologists when looking at the development and growth of capitalism in Australia. (As an aside, I might point out that even at the strictly waged level of the economy throughout the 18th century, women have been ignored if they worked around the home. The female counterpart of the heroic male artisan was the domestic servant...Where does she fit in Marxist economic theory?)

That was the past. What about now? Female domestic capitalist work still continues. Familiar women have kept on doing the same work as before, but now it has become visible. The capitalist marketplace and its forms of organisation have diversified. This new visibility to masculine analysts, not a new reality, is the source of the apparently revolutionary move of married women into the workforce involving:

- **Sale of skills.** Private sale amongst neighbors has become mediated through service companies and government agencies. Familiar women now do the same work part-time in laundromats, cleaning companies, home help services, family day-care and massage parlours.
- **Sale of commodities.** Local sale of home products has become organised by capitalist companies into distribution networks for commercial commodities... (Holiday Magic cosmetics, Tupperware) and home products have been transformed into luxury, handmade craft commodities.
- **Board and lodging** probably has declined absolutely, but still exists as a form of cheap accommodation, and is a growing aspect of the tourist trade.
- **Small business.** The registration of home companies is at a peak. Many of them now service specialised needs of companies, households and individuals.
- **Outwork.** There is no reliable quantitative information, but some analysts believe that the number of outworkers is increasing as more employers try to cut costs in time of depression. As well as in the traditional area of the clothing trade, outwork is progressively an important process in packaging and light assembly work, and especially in clerical work.

All of this new-old work is still organised around the same determinant as in the past — the compatibility of the two spheres of work, and the needs of existence, daily, and over the life-cycle. Although women have entered the masculine economy, our experience of it, our consciousness of it remains different from men’s.

As women’s work in the masculine economy is predominantly on a part-time basis. From 1965 to 1980, the number of female part-time workers increased from 289,000 to 814,000, more than a third of all women workers, and over three quarters of these are married.

**Patriarchal theory,** including Marxism, is trying to come to terms with this new visibility of women’s work. Patriarchal left politics is trying to come to terms with new capitalist processes. Processes, at least, that are new for men, who are increasingly being drawn into previously female work patterns: part-time work, outwork, domestic capitalist work, periodic unemployment, de- and re-skilling, parental breaks in career.

Such attempts to come to terms with a changing economy are still, however, being conducted from within a vision that takes men as the measure.

Patriarchal theory is attempting to appropriate women’s knowledge and experience and turn it to male advantage, then to claim that we are all benefitting. We are being wooed: we must not become subordinate wives. We, as women, can and must try to influence patriarchal marxist theory. We must retain our own meanings and experiences, our own difference, our autonomy. We are stronger than they, or we think. Our struggle is to determine our own issues; to transform ourselves and the world from the basis of our own experience and reality — not just relative to the boy.

We must fight a politics that appropriates our lives and turns us into that universal which is masculine. Only a politics that puts women first is any use to us.

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**Jill Mathews teaches history. She has taught at ANU and will soon take up an appointment at the University of Wollongong.**
When I was studying Social Work at Sydney University we had an American text on social theory, which in its introduction stated authoritatively that there are no historical laws determining social development. Having thus dismissed marxism in one or two sentences it went on for chapter after interminable chapter interpreting all human societies in terms of 1960s American liberal pluralism.

Richard Kennedy’s collection of essays, which is designed for use in university social work courses, is a far cry from the conservative humbug which passed as education material for social workers less than a decade ago. Taking as their basis a socialistic critique of welfare, the eleven contributors develop progressive explanations of a number of aspects of the present Australian welfare state.

Social work departments at Australian universities have been the scene of many struggles between students and staff, as the students’ desire for relevant education ran into the deep-seated conservatism and elitism of the social work profession. Many of the chapters in this book, by people from a variety of professional backgrounds, contain trenchant criticisms of the theory and practice of traditional social work. Winton Higgins, in an excellent chapter analysing the capitalist welfare state, describes traditional social work theory thus:

...it tends to be a hodgepodge of techniques and ‘sciences’ the elements of which suffer from the usual failings of bourgeois disciplines, compartmentalisation of knowledge and failure to make theoretical underpinnings let alone class biases.

With such a weak and essentially useless theoretical basis many well-meaning social workers are cast into situations where the human aspects of capitalist exploitation and alienation are most acute and their training and preparation provide them with no answers to the anger and resentment they encounter from their clients.

The greatest flaw in this book is that it provides no real insights into what the welfare worker can do in practice when faced with the victims of an inhuman and crumbling social system. None of the contributors are practising social workers and therein lies the failure of most professional welfare education — it is prepared and presented, in the main, by people who have very little knowledge of what life is actually like out there in the working agencies of the welfare state.

But despite this there is a great deal in these contributions for practising social workers and indeed for all those interested in how “welfare” has developed as a central lever of social control in contemporary capitalism.

Elizabeth Windschuttle and Judith Godden in separate chapters examine the role of women in the philanthropic associations of nineteenth century Australia. The growing understanding of how welfare work has been cast ideologically as ‘women’s work’ is very important to socialist welfare workers today in fighting against reactionary moves to cut welfare services by putting the burden back onto women who are presented as ‘natural’ voluntary carers.

A number of chapters deal with the role of the ALP in the development of state welfare policies. A contribution by Drew Cottle analysing the role of the ALP in the labor movement from 1941 to 1945 is extremely insightful in 1983 when another labor government speaks of national reconciliation and reconstruction while the burden of capitalist economic crisis is carried by the working class.

Les Louis looks in detail at the failure of trade unions in Victoria to fight for the unemployed in the 1930s. He details the systematic sell-out of the unemployed to the then Labor government by reformist union leaders. Once again many past scenarios seem chillingly familiar.

Unfortunately none of the contributors mention the most significant development in Australian welfare over the last decade — the organisation of welfare workers into a trade union. In New South Wales this union is playing an active role in the labor movement where it raises important to socialist welfare workers questions of welfare in a positive manner, and in the welfare agencies where members of the union are put in touch with the labor movement. The organisation of welfare workers into a trade union reflects the development of class struggle in the welfare field and the increasing importance of welfare spending and provision in the broad struggle between labour and capital.

This book provides good theoretical background for those who are engaged in this struggle. It is a valuable resource for all socialists who want to understand the dynamics of welfare in a monopoly capitalist state.

Brian McGahen is a social worker and an officer of the Social Welfare Workers’ Union.
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In the following series of two articles two Australian historians, ANN CURTHOYS and ROGER COATES examine the relevance of Marx’s work to the history of Australian political movements and the Australian labor movement. Both articles come from papers given to the ALR Marx Symposium in Sydney, April 1983.
All of us are interested in history. We approach present struggles in the light of our knowledge of how events happened in the past. We look for inspiration from past struggles, and want to avoid past defeats.

So, our understanding of history underlies our present politics. Perhaps the clearest example I can give is the present Aboriginal demand for land rights. This demand is grounded in history, in the fact that Aboriginal people were dispossessed from effective use of their lands (but not from their own feeling of belonging to that land) in a long and bloody struggle in the past. Any coming to terms by non-Aboriginal Australians with that demand must involve an understanding of that history, of the historical basis of the present struggle over land rights.

The works of Karl Marx have been very influential in modern understandings of history. Particularly influential has been Marx's materialist conception of history, his notion that major social and political changes are grounded in some way in changes in the mode, the forces, and the relations of production. One of Marx's most important contributions was his explanation of the rise of capitalism, and the ways its rise led to (and in turn further depended on) major changes in political structures, the relations between class and culture, and social relationships. One of the most difficult aspects of Marx's theory of history is the problem concerning his rock-bottom explanation of just why change occurs. One can argue, for example, whether his view rests ultimately on some kind of technological determinism, some inexorable change in the forces of production which throw up, after a struggle, new relations of production, and hence new social, political, legal, and ideological forms. In considering these questions, his theoretical writings, such as Capital, the German Ideology, and the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy, are very important, and many many words have been spoken and written on these and similar writings and the arguments contained in them.

But there is another way of looking at what Marx had to say about historical change. This is to look at how he himself wrote history. I'm thinking here not of those works where he tried to write about the whole of human history, defining major epochs and how one developed out of another. Such a project is of necessity very abstract, very general. I'm thinking rather of those occasions where Marx set about analysing brief and particular events, that had only recently occurred. These were mainly about French political upheavals—the revolution of 1848, the restoration of autocratic power in 1851, the Paris Commune of 1871.

In these works, Marx attempted to put his general conception of history to particular use, to explain why things happened as they did in those very stormy years. In them we see his general theories coming to ground as it were; we can see how Marx himself thought specific histories could be written. They are somewhat difficult to read today, for they involve a wealth of detail about events about which most of us know very little. Nevertheless they are still important works for us to take into account, for they provide a kind of model of Marxist historical analysis in practice.

So, how did Marx write history? What, if anything, can we still learn from these histories, a century after Marx's death?

I'd like to begin with four very well known quotations from Marx.

First, on history:

People make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted from the past.

The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

Then, on Social Democracy:

The peculiar character of Social Democracy is epitomised in the fact that democratic republican institutions are demanded not as a means of doing away with both the extremes, capital and wage labour, but of weakening their antagonism, and transforming it into harmony.

Finally, on class:

In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that divide their mode of life and their culture from those of other classes, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among them, and the identity of their interests begets no unity, no political organisation, they do not form a class.

All four of these quotations come...
September 1931. The Nazis have won power in the Thuringian Government and Hitler celebrates. Their supremacy in Germany is eighteen months ahead. In the 18th Brumaire Marx's approach is useful for understanding the development of fascism in the 20th century.
"Property, Family, Religion, Order". From that point onwards, the dominant conflict occurred within all the forces which had united to defeat the June insurrection.

A new constitution was drafted, guaranteeing universal male suffrage, and various liberal democratic rights — freedom of the press, of speech, of association, of assembly, of education, and religion. Under this new Constitution, the President was to be elected directly by the people. In the subsequent elections, on 10 December 1848, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was elected President, and the Royalists, known as the Party of Order, won a majority of seats in the Assembly. The Party of Order was in fact divided into two factions — those who were the spokesmen of large landed property, and those who represented financial and industrial capital. The paradox was that a parliamentary republic suited these Royalists, these supporters of a monarchy, because whereas under the old regime these two factions had opposed each other, now in the new parliament they could unite.

Against the Royalist majority were the Opposition in parliament, the largest group being the Social Democrats, which also represented a class alliance, this time between the petty bourgeoisie and the working class. In this alliance, the ideals of the petty bourgeoisie were dominant. The Royalist majority now wanted to crush the petty bourgeoisie as it had crushed the workers in June. There were several stages to this, but the decisive one occurred just after the Social Democrats had done extremely well in the by-elections of March 1850. In anger, the Royalists used their parliamentary majority to amend the electoral law to make three years residence in an electorate a condition for voting, thereby removing the vote from three million of the 10 million voters, mainly working class and petty bourgeoisie.

Further when the President acted unconstitutionally in authorising a military attack on Rome without Assembly consent, the Royalists endorsed his action, thus revealing little respect for the constitution and the rights of parliament.

But the Royalist victory over the Social Democrats was to prove a Pyrrhic one. Their own days were numbered. They had undermined the credibility of parliament and much of its support, flouted their own constitution, and thereby enhanced the personal role of the President, Napoleon Bonaparte, and also the role of the army as a guarantee of order. Bonaparte was not slow to seize on the benefits for him of this situation. One of his strategies was to build up a kind of private personal army, composed of people drawn from what Marx calls the lumpenproletariat. Another tactic was to change the ministry frequently, so that it consisted of ever more insignificant individuals, the better so as to exert his personal control over them. To counter Bonaparte's daily growing power, the Party of Order, says Marx, needed to have united with the Social Democrats to strengthen parliament itself, and to have maintained parliamentary control of the army. Both of these they refused to do. They failed to realise that a parliamentary majority is not always the same thing as effective power; they lost, says Marx, "all understanding of the rude external world".

The years 1850 and 1851 were dominated by innumerable squabbles and petty intrigues, as the Party of Order and Bonaparte competed for the political control of France.

In this situation, the Royalist majority began to disintegrate within itself. The two different Royalist factions split, and each side further subdivided. As a result the Royalists, the political representatives of the various sections of capital, lost the support of their own class. Both financial and industrial capital were disturbed by the Party of Order's squabbles and incompetence, fearing that political instability would damage the economy. They blamed the minor recession of 1851 on this political instability. As an alternative they looked to Bonaparte as the sole source of political unity and stability. As Marx put it, "Despotism or anarchy. Naturally, it (the bourgeoisie) voted for despotism".

But Bonaparte had other sources of support as well, in particular the peasants, still the mass of the people. The peasants were not a self-conscious class, and did not have their own political representatives. They looked, rather, for protection from other classes and switched their allegiance from the Royalists to Bonaparte.

The mistake of the Party of Order had been to undermine parliament itself, its only real base for united action. It had flouted the constitution, rejected petty bourgeois and working class participation in parliament, and failed to control the army. In the end the role of parliament as a power base for the bourgeoisie had been so weakened, that in December 1851, the Party of Order had no alternative but to acquiesce in the election of Bonaparte as the supreme source of power, and acquiesce in the dissolution of Parliament itself. Bonaparte then tried to maintain his central authoritarian power by appearing, as Marx says, the "patriarchal benefactor of all classes". But, says Marx in conclusion, he cannot give to one class without taking away from another. At this point the story ends.

Well, how do we assess this work? First, it gives the lie to the claim that Marxist history is necessarily abstract, unable to deal with individuals in all their complexity. The personalities of the chief actors in this drama are all dealt with, but in the context of wider social forces.
cretinism, which leads them in directions their supporters may not wish to follow. They may also fail to realise that their rule by parliamentary means depends on their capacity to contain their opponents, to maintain appearances of legitimacy. If they exclude certain classes from political representation, as the Party of Order sought to exclude the Social Democrats and thereby the petty bourgeoisie and the working class, the latter classes may join with other forces to defeat the bourgeois parliamentary leaders. The Social Democrats, in their turn, have a complex relations with their class base of support. If they reject their working class support, as the Social Democrats did in France when the Paris workers rebelled against the new forms of parliamentary rule in June 1848, then they will themselves be weakened in any further confrontation with the political representatives of the bourgeoisie.

Third, in this analysis Marx puts forward a very detailed conception of class. Here we don’t have simply two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, but a multiplicity of classes and sub-classes. The bourgeoisie itself is divided between landowners and finance and industrial capital. There are also the petty bourgeoisie, the working class, the peasants. Further, some groups — the clergy, the intellectuals, the army — appear as independent forces able to be manipulated by particular classes. Various class alliances may be formed, and subsequently broken. Some classes will achieve direct political self-consciousness and organisation; others, like the peasants, will not at this stage. Indeed, Marx’s terminology can become confusing, for at times he refers to the middle class, and its not always clear who he means by this. This problem of the middle class, and its relation to the bourgeoisie and the old petty bourgeoisie, remains with us.

Fourth, I think this text suggests that Marx cannot be read, here at least, as a simple economic determinist. While he is careful to describe the economic condition of France at the time — noting that the economy was buoyant in 1850 but passing through a minor recession in 1851, he does not see the political events as a simple reflection of this economic situation. He wants to stress that at the level of politics, and at the level of class consciousness and class alliances more generally, one needs to take a longer view. How each class responds to a recession will depend on the political options at that moment open to it. The industrial bourgeoisie will desert its political leaders and support a central leader such as Bonaparte because it fears the...
results of political confusion and anarchy both in boom and recession. The rise to power of a powerful ruler is not directly a result of recession, but of the inability of the various factions of the capitalist class to secure their own rule through a parliamentary democracy. And this inability flows from the complex structure of class relationships, itself a product both of economic developments and earlier political developments. The analysis of political conflicts, class alliances and economic conditions is interwoven.

Fifth, in this text Marx attempts to come to terms with the problem of the state, the implications for class struggle of the continual growth in the size, centralisation and complexity of the state machinery, the bureaucracy of government. I think he gets himself into something of a knot in this area. He wants to stress both the possibilities for the state's independence from any specific class, and also its role as an agency of class rule, and its not quite clear where he ends up. He refers to it as "this appalling parasitic body". At first he says that under Bonaparte, the "state seems to have made itself completely independent". But then he immediately says, "and yet the state power is not suspended in mid air. Bonaparte represents a class, and the most numerous class of French society at that, the small-holding peasants."

Although I don't think the question of the state is fully resolved here, what Marx does at least indicate is the growing complexity of political rule under conditions where the state machinery itself is vast, centralised and internally complex.

To summarise then, the significance of this work now lies in its ability to place individuals within their social context, its discussion of the relations between politicians and the class or classes they aim to represent, its detailed conception of class, its denial of a simple economic determinism, and its discussion of the state.

RELEVANCE TODAY

What relevance is all this to us today? I'd like to talk about this at two levels—first at the level current political issues, and second at the level of historical method.

Many arguments in this text, the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, have their echoes in the present or the recent past. There is its analysis of the relationship between parliament and other forms of power. In the modern world we also need to understand the conditions under which parliament can act as a form of rule, and the conditions under which it cannot. The *Eighteenth Brumaire* helps us to see parliamentary government in true perspective. As Edmund Wilson commented:

Never after we have read *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, can the language, the conventions, the combinations, the pretensions of parliamentary bodies, if we have had any illusions about them, seem the same to us again.

Following on from this, there is the trenchant analysis of *Social Democracy*, with its desire for harmony between Capital and Labor weakening its ability to truly confront its capitalist opponents. When these opponents, represented in this case by the Royalists, the Party of Order, acted unconstitutionally, the Social Democrats were helpless. The Fortunes of the ALP and the Labor government in the early 70s, and now in the early 1980s, can perhaps be illuminated by this kind of analysis. I am not suggesting here a simple transposition from France in 1850 to Australia in 1975 or 1983 — only that in so far as the two cases have something in common, we can find Marx's remarks about Social Democracy unerringly perceptive.

But I think the real importance of this text for us now lies elsewhere. It lies in suggesting the centrality of class in understanding the relationship between political struggle and economic structures and conditions. It suggests this centrality without resorting to either a simple view of class or a simple economic determinism. And this is just what I think we need today, both in developing political strategies and in developing understanding of our own history, our own past.

**POLITICAL STRUGGLE**

In terms of political struggle, we have not seen a sufficient challenge to the ideological hegemony of the forces defending capitalism. Our own social democrats, the ALP, are ever less inclined to talk about or work for socialism and the Far Left is fragmented and weak. Our class structure and relationships have been radically transformed by post-war economic, social and cultural changes, but we don't have a ready understanding of what these class relationships now are. In modern Australia, talk about class struggle, revolution and socialism has come to seem even to many on the Left as quaint, old fashioned, irrelevant and unrealistic. In its stead we have a multiplicity of specific movements — trade union, feminist, Aboriginal, gay, ethnic, environmental, peace. This diversity is important, and inevitable, but it should not be left there. Except for the trade unions these movements are all in different ways seen by most people as having little to do with class struggle as such, as indeed independent of and denying the importance of that struggle. But they all have a great deal to do with it. The case is clear enough for the trade unions, but what about the others?

Aboriginal political movements depend on an understanding of the forces which undertook and continue to oversee Aboriginal dispossession and discrimination. These forces are the forces of capitalism, with its complex set of class relationships. Aborigines are not outside these relationships. White racism, especially in country towns, has been used to argue that all whites are the same, all equally involved in Aboriginal dispossession and poverty. But its a matter of understanding the reasons for this racism and of reaching an understanding of how our specific kind of capitalism, our specific form of class society, has been built on a colonial and bloody past, the effects of which still affect the relationship between Aborigines and whites today.

I can't go through all the others, except to say a word about feminism. Here again, the question of sexism is often taken to undermine or cut across the significance of class relationships in this society. Some argue that Marxism has proved unable to deal with this important political movement, or that in doing so it loses sight of the central question of sexist ideology and practices.

This feeling that Marxism is not able to deal theoretically with sexual division, that it is sex-blind, is currently very strong. Of the recent ALR discussions of the legacy of Marx,
Taft identifies this as a problem in Marx's work. Toni Stephens sees feminism as having no necessary class basis and as a mass democratic struggle. Julius Roe sees Marxism as unconcerned with sexism, and the struggle for socialism so far as having done little to liberate women. Further, the most recent publication from the Intervention group, Interventions after Marx, consistently argues that Marxism is of little or no value to feminists.

Marx had in fact little to say about sexual division, though he is very scathing of the conservative uses of the cry "Defend the Family" both in the Communist Manifesto and briefly in the Eighteenth Brumaire. Yet I would challenge the view that we can learn little from Marx of relevance to the struggle against sexist ideology and practice today. And that is because those ideologies and practices occur, for us, within a class society. Different social classes practise sexism differently, for different reasons, and with different effects. The fact that there are certain common elements between classes does not negate this point. As long as we have a complex class society, any movement around feminist issues is bound to be split by conflicting class perspectives and demands, or else represent the interests of one class only. How can it possibly be otherwise? Going back to the Eighteenth Brumaire with its concern with class formation and class alliances in daily political struggle, its implications for an understanding of modern feminism are: here we have a movement which makes possible to a limited degree a class alliance around specific issues but which is also always subject to the possibility either of fracturing, or of the hegemony of one class over another. None of this is to deny the significance of the issues with which Feminism deals, but to reassert the relevance of the Marxist tradition, both politically and theoretically, to those issues. But I can't go into this further here.

I would like to conclude by returning to the implications of Marx's own historical writings for developing our own historical interpretations today. I've suggested that the main positive inspiration we can get from the Eighteenth Brumaire is that it indicates the centrality of the notion of class relationships for understanding the relationships between political struggle, social and cultural patterns, and economic structures and conditions. We need to apply this kind of approach, in very general terms, to our own past — from the processes of destruction of Aboriginal life and dispossession, to the emergence of a parliamentary democracy, to the vast effects of the massive importation of both capital and labour via

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**THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR MOVEMENT AND MARX**

Roger Coates

In Australia black and white societies have existed side by side, and together, intermingled, for nearly 200 years. The dominant society has been basically and characteristically capitalist, established in the first place by acts of state policy of the world's oldest and most technically developed capitalist country just as it was beginning to go into its heroic period of development and industrialisation.

The forging of the Australian colonies of Great Britain ran parallel to the industrial revolution, and the colonies promoted the growth of imperial Britain. Australian society and the emerging and evolving Australian nation can only be understood as a part of greater Britain, or Britain overseas. The ambiguous relationship of dependence and independence that still shapes so much in Australian life goes back to these origins.

Because mainstream Australian society was a transplanted society of a fairly unusual sort, it exhibited certain special characteristics: a small population thinly spread mainly around the coastal fringe of a very large land mass; an economy that developed, apart from the chance existence of large, accessible gold deposits principally as a supplier of raw materials for the metropolitan industries and markets; a truncated, incomplete society, very much a distorted reflection of some aspects of British society; a new society in which everything had to be started from scratch, in which there was a premium on improvisation; and because of the circumstances, a society in which certain bits of the British model took root more strongly than others.

Being part of greater Britain, in the Australian colonies things developed first as an extension of things British. Britain inspired and shaped the social classes, the political models and the social and cultural patterns. But inevitably differences occurred and led to a growing conflict of interests. As national and anti-imperial sentiment grew, the economy, population and evolving social and cultural patterns began to produce more clearly defined classes on a national basis. A fairly distinctive labor movement took shape in the context of the emergence of a national Australian sentiment, a labor movement that was both product and producer of this national ethos. A political culture that valued highly common sense, pragmatism, adaptability and the hip-pocket nerve
immigration, to the fortunes of Labor governments, the history of the trade union movement, and the political struggles surrounding the changes in the ordering of sexual difference and division.

There is already a body of work attempting this approach in Australian history. For example, Connell and Irving's *Class Structure in Australian History* is a notable attempt to interpret the relevance of class formation and relationships for general developments within Australian history. They are particularly concerned to develop an understanding of class relationships which includes the workplace confrontation between capital and labour but also goes well beyond that, into the political, social and cultural levels. And I could mention others, especially the work undertaken through the journal *Labour History*.

Nevertheless, those attempting this kind of analysis are in a small minority in Australian historical work. And I'm not talking here just about academic histories, but also popular historical works, in print, and on film and television. There has been an upsurge in recent years of interest in Australian history, and the audience continues to grow for these popular historical representations, in books, film, television, and other forms such as historic reconstructed villages, museums, historic homes and the like. This can be interpreted partly as an element in a renewed nationalism, an attempt to define Australian society as unique, as special. But it is also something, I think, much healthier than that, an attempt to come to grips with just what kind of society we live in, where we've come from, and where we're going. But most of these historical works and representations avoid the insights Marx suggested a hundred and thirty years ago. This is not surprising, for Marx's history had evolved. Attachment to the political practice of parliamentary government was the main organising principle of this British colonial milieu.

This labor movement took about half a century from, say, 1890 to 1945 to evolve and for its main characteristics to emerge fully. Of course its evolution has continued to this day. As society has changed the labor movement has reflected the changes.

One or two historians, looking for a useful concept to analyse some of the patterns of Australian history, have seized on a phenomenon that was first recognised in the USA of the 1890s — the phenomenon of populism. Growing out of the farming discontent and the labor unrest of the late 1880s and early 1890s, American populism produced the People's Party which ran presidential candidates in the 1892 elections. In 1896 and 1900 the charismatic but unsuccessful Democratic candidate, William Jennings Bryan, ran for US presidency on what was essentially a populist program. Perhaps the differences are more important than the similarities, but the parallels between the emergence of US populism and Australian labor are very striking, including time, economic factors, social development and ideas. Among the obvious differences is the proportional weight of the farm sector and the labor sector. In what was a much less geopolitically favored country and a much less developed social and economic milieu — very much still part of greater Britain — the developing Australian trade union movement had much more significance than its American counterpart.

The Australian labour movement took shape in the context of the emergence of a nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiment and within a British colonial milieu. Far left: The first display of Eight hour banner, Melbourne, 16 April 1856. Left: Seaman's strike, Melbourne, 1918, demanding a 50% increase in wages.

All this needs to be approached rather cautiously but perhaps labourism can be usefully considered as a form of populism. This may be a fruitful approach helping to focus on certain fixed points and the interrelationship of populist and class propositions, people and class.

The concept of populism has been adopted and applied by a number of political and social theorists to analyse various third world social and political phenomena, especially in Latin America and Africa. In some discussions the three most general populist propositions are social justice, democracy and nationalism. I would, in some cases, certainly in Australia, add liberalism, freedom, justice, etc. Obviously the order of importance and the balance of these

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propositions is going to differ from time to time, from occasion to occasion, and from place to place. In Australia populist-anti-colonial and national propositions have been very important. Democratic propositions were one part of the British model that took root more firmly and more quickly in the new Britannia than in the more complex, more class-ridden old Britannia. And the emerging Australian ambience took propositions about social justice more or less for granted. By 1913 Australian standards of social welfare and economic well being had made an impact on world opinion.

Another feature of Australia's heritage as a colonial society has been the relative significance of popular culture in the emerging national culture. What culture there was tended to be popularly inspired, and a national culture came from below, rather than from the top down. A characteristically Australian political culture, no less than a literary and artistic one, developed from below also. Although it has probably never been true that Australia lacked an indigenous high culture, it nevertheless remains a fact that most high culture has been imported. Even now exotic ideas dominate most serious and systematic Australian literary, philosophical and political discussion. Perhaps there is no better example of this state of affairs than the case of modern marxism itself.

Just why liberalism has been so persistent in English-speaking discourse is by no mean clear. After all if we follow the logic of a deterministic marxism, then an English marxism should have emerged very early to challenge British capitalism. In fact, among the early British radical publicists of political and social reform were several who, independently of Marx but following Ricardo, the radical side of the English Enlightenment, and the realities of the time, anticipated Marx's ideas of class, class antagonisms and class struggle and Marx's economic theories. And Marx himself drew on their theoretical discoveries. But none of these thinkers and publicists was capable of the systematic synthesis in which Marx excelled.

One possible cause of the persistence of the English liberal and radical heritage is the relative insularity of the English-speaking world; the effects of the long boom from 1850 to 1880 and the world economic domination of British imperialism are probably another, and a third, quite as important, may be the intrinsic worth of the liberal tradition itself with all that it contains. In any case the Australian colonies as much as the USA, if not more so, became attached to a liberal-democratic model and liberal discourse. Apart from the biblical authors, perhaps Adam Smith, Carlyle, J.S. Mill, Ruskin and Darwin were the most important influences in shaping 19th century Australian praxis. Towards the end of the century Marx began to make an impact. But as far as we know, among the enlightened educated, liberalism still held sway. It was among the growing class of largely philosophically and economically self-educated trade unionists that some, at first, very simplified versions of Marx's ideas began to make headway.

English liberalism, empiricism and until very recently logical analysis have generally resisted marxism. However there has been another British tradition stemming from early radicalism and other — Owenite, chartist and trade union — influences. This was largely a self-educated tradition. For the sort of reasons that I've touched on, autodidactism flourished in Australia, making it that much easier for the labor movement to break through so relatively easily in the 20 years from 1890 to 1910. Again carrying on an illustrious British tradition, the skilled printing tradesman — the compositor particularly — was the archetype of this breakthrough. Some of the names read like part of a list for a hall of fame of the early labor movement: O'Sullivan, Hinchcliffe, Holland, Watson, Ross. Not all of them by any means turned to Marx but at least two were to be found among the handful of early important Australian marxists. To them could be added the odd mason, operative painter, shearer, miner, seaman.

The strength of the autodidact tradition has been to keep theory and ideas close to everyday life and the practical tasks of building organisation, propaganda of action as Gordon Childe called it. It has triumphed in Australia in trade unionism, electoral politics and the forming of parliamentary governments. Its major weakness has been an inability to provide a sufficiently constructive alternative to simple material values and attitudes and economic policies. Of recent years these tendencies of the self-educated have sometimes been backed up or replaced by what often seems like old wine in new bottles.

The Marxist theories that were eventually taken up in explanation of the privilege, inequality and poverty existing in Australian life were the more accessible ones in some of Marx's simpler works and to some extent in the orthodox marxist manifestoes and theories of the Second International. These made a pretty heavily deterministic and economistic marxism. The most important of Marx's ideas that began to circulate were those to do with economics, ideas that helped to explain the inequities of wage labour; the labour theory of value and the idea of surplus value as the source of profit, explaining capitalist economic exploitation. Then there were all the ideas and concepts associated with the materialist conception of history — the existence of a class-divided society based on a certain mode of production, class interests and antagonisms as the basis of class struggle, all history as a history of class struggles, etc — these were powerful organising principles of the fight to change the social and political order.

Then, next in importance were more or less marxist theories of political and economic organisation. A considerable debate on the principles embodied in the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) preamble lasted for about 20 years. One important aspect of this was the debate about the role of the marxist revolutionary socialist party as opposed to the revolutionary union. And interwoven into this whole discourse was the debate about the value of reforms, or palliatives, as they were often known, and their relevance or irrelevance to revolutionary struggle. After the very traumatic 1917 suppression of the IWW, the problem of the state became an acute issue and this debate received a strong shot in the arm from Lenin's The State and Revolution and the flood of far-ranging theses of the first two Comintern congresses, which the relatively unsophisticated Australian labor movement found somewhat indigestible.

As it is an immense field I don't intend to deal in any detail with the Communist International and the various schools of thought — Leninist, Trotskyist, Stalinist, Maoist, Titoist, etc — that took Cominter doctrines as their starting point. I suppose the principal additional development of this period was the elaboration of the rather sketchy ideas on the nature of the Communist party and the transition to socialism left by Marx and
Engels. How much of this theory and practice Marx would have endorsed is of course the subject of much debate. But the important point for this paper is that there was really very little that changed, and nothing much happened to alter the basic nature of the discourse. Wage Labour and Capital and Value, Price and Profit were just as popular in the 1950s as they had been in the 1910s.

In the last ten years or fifteen years in the English speaking world there has been a major upsurge in marxism. In fact one could almost say that marxism has been made over and we no longer have the simple marxism of the 1940s and 1950s. In some ways we have more than one marxism, and this is a problem. We have diversity, complexity and a crippling disunity. And one pressing task is to find a way round this disunity.

The growing influence of Trotskyism politically and the intellectual importance of university marxism are, it seems to me, the principal recent developments of which we have to take note. Its difficult to make an assessment of the consequences. Obviously one consequence is that marxists much more attend to the whole of Marx and his successors' ideas and practice, but its difficult to identify any positive impact on the labor movement. These developments may even have had short-term harmful effects. However, all this is part of today's reality, and any problems have, somehow, to be overcome.

Where to begin to establish a national marxist discourse? The place may be with the growing number of tertiary-trained officials, researchers, advisers and staff of some trade unions and the parliamentary labor parties and the rank-and-file activists of the movement. Despite the dangers of social and intellectual elitism and oligarchic and bureaucratic groups forming, a way may be found to mobilise this milieu into the task of developing and disseminating a modern, non-doctrinaire indigenous marxism.

One final thought about the prospects of marxism and socialism. In this paper I've laid some stress on the populist liberal and democratic propositions and their importance in the Australian context. It's a growing personal belief that in the process of a serious re-examination of socialist philosophy, which I think is needed, we have to lay more stress on the individual person and the complexities of the tensions between the individual and the group. In many ways, the old belief in collectivism has broken down. And while this has many undesirable side-effects, it's a reality that confronts the socialist project in the 1980s. "Doing your own thing" has become the verbal expression of a widespread attitude to life.

It should not be beyond the wit of marxists to grapple with this situation; after all it was one of Marx's primary concerns, perhaps expressed most profoundly in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and re-stated in a different context and language in the Communist Manifesto four years later. At the moment in Australia we are faced with what is a transparently populist call for national reconciliation; how should marxists intervene? Perhaps Marx and Engels gave us a clue at the end of Section II of the Communist Manifesto, the part called "Proletarians and Communists". They said, (paraphrased a little), that with a communist revolution...
The victims of the Indonesian 'incorporation' of East Timor are not only those who have died or been imprisoned. Many people are in exile. These are a forgotten people living in huts, humpies and tents on the outskirts of Lisbon in Portugal. Most hope to migrate to Australia, to be closer to home or to be reunited with members of their family. A photographic essay by Oliver Strewe.
Les Ayres sets out the pros and cons of the centralised wage fixation system in the context of the ACTU-ALP Accord and the current priorities of the labor movement.

This article comes from a paper delivered at the ALR Marx Centenary Symposium in Melbourne, April 1983.

THE CENTRALISED WAGE FIX

Before discussing the contemporary situation, it is worthwhile pointing out that in post-war Australia, there has always been some form of centralised wage fixation system. Given the unique nature of the Arbitration system in Australia, workers have always received a substantial proportion of their wage rises through National Wage proceedings. Certainly, from the period 1975-81 all wage adjustments came out of a centralised system. So, in debating this question we must recognise that we are really debating what form of wage fixation system we require to best meet the needs of the working class in terms of their economic demands and in terms of the demands for the implementation of socialist policies, i.e. to what extent do we wish to have wage increases secured centrally at one time for all workers in contrast to increases secured, by agreement or by arbitration, on an industry-by-industry basis — generally reflecting market forces operating in the economy at particular points in time.

The first point I wish to make is that the debate on the most appropriate wage system cannot be conducted in isolation. It is my view that the wage system must be viewed in the context of workers exerting influence in macro-economic decision-making, industry strategies, the level of employment, the activities of the state in the areas of social welfare, non-wage benefits that improve the standard of all those who have jobs industrial interests. They have had influence (certainly not the final say) on the wage level, on the hours of work, on some conditions of their particular members.

They have little or no influence on the decisions about the number of jobs, or in most cases, on the content or work of their members, the quality of activity that their members perform from eight to ten hours every day of every week. They have certainly had minimal, if any, influence on the investment decisions of the companies in which their members work, the level of employment with the company or industry, the strategy of the industry, the whole economic environment that determines the limits of wage increases, but determines the terrain on which the battle over wages is fought. Industry by industry negotiations have certainly meant that unions have had minimal say in respect to the total welfare of their members that includes the quantum of their pay packet, the level of taxation, the level of health costs, the quality of education for workers’ children, the expansion of employment opportunities in the industries where union members work and the heightening of political awareness of members to maintain progressive, socialist changes that will improve the total welfare of all in the working class (be they currently in employ or out of a job, be they disadvantaged, old or sick, male or female).

The point I repeat is that a debate on a wage system must be seen in the total context of workers exerting influence in macro-economic decision-making, industry strategies, the level of employment, the activities of the state in the areas of social welfare, non-wage benefits that improve the standard of all those who have jobs
as well as the total pay packet.

In putting the above, clearly I am endeavouring to bias the discussion on the nature of a wage fixation system within the context of the ACTU-ALP Accord and the opportunity that exists in that context, although it may not be acted upon by the unions or the ALP Government, or business in respect to union involvement in industry strategy, macro-economic policies or in particular the drive for increased employment opportunities.

I further point out, that it is my view, that if a centralised wage fixation system is utilised simply as a means to control wages, as I believe occurred in the British experiment, then, clearly, it is not a system that should be embraced by the trade union movement. However, in the current environment, I believe a return to a centralised wage fixation system presents opportunities for socialists within the working class movement that can be seized upon, should be seized upon but may not be seized upon by the union movement because of its fear of accepting responsibilities in the areas to which I have referred or may not be acted upon by a centralised Labor government. I hold the fear that if either of the latter two courses is adopted the political and industrial wings of the Labor movement face grave problems both in respect to exercising political power to achieve socialist changes and to achieving monetary and non-monetary benefits for their members, higher levels of employment and progressive policies of social change and industrial reorganisation.

The proponents of a centralised wage fixation system usually adopt the following reasons in support of their proposition:

**Centralisation will achieve greater distributional equity between groups.**

A centralised system achieves greater distributional equity between groups.

Without centralisation there has been and will be increased differentials between groups of workers within the economy both in terms of industry, sex and full and part-time categorisations of the workforce. Money goes to the industrially strong or the sectors of the economy that are not drastically affected by the recession. For example, some groups still haven't received the $25 and $14 1981/82 community wage movement, i.e. agricultural workers.

During a period of economic recession between 1974 and 1979, in general terms, workers received full CPI adjustments by way of indexation adjustments and the work value round. The question must be asked: "Can this result be achieved during a period of economic recession without a centralised system?" It should be noted that not one union has achieved an increase as part of the six percent 1982/83 campaign as determined by the ACTU Special Unions' Conference which determined that five key industries should spearhead the campaign.

The industry-by-industry approach is totally consistent with the free enterprise philosophy of the conservative forces within society and, it can be argued, reinforces the capitalist system (there is a question as to whether a planned approach in respect to wages is consistent prior to the establishment of a socialist state — no one, surely, can argue that there should not be a centralised planned wage levels and increases in a socialist system).

Centralisation avoids the economic costs and the alienation of workers from the community and other trade unionists associated with industrial disputes.

The centralised system rationalises the competing demands of workers and focuses a national economic debate on the need to at least maintain real wage levels and its consequent effect on consumption and employment.

In contrast, public awareness of the same struggle in a decentralised form is achieved by reports of, and the inconvenience incurred during, a series of industrial disputes. In the latter case, public awareness is usually unrelated to the need for wage increase and reflected in antagonism toward the union movement. It is worthwhile noting that as a union official I often have workers present a good argument as to why they deserve a wage increase but at the same time can quickly indicate how unions are crippling the economy by way of their wage demands and industrial disputes around these wage demands.

Centralisation avoids the economic costs and the alienation of workers from the community and other trade unionists associated with industrial disputes. It is my belief that such planning is advantageous to all the above-mentioned groups and ultimately advantageous to the economy.

Centralisation avoids the economic costs and the alienation of workers from the community and other trade unionists associated with industrial disputes.
A centralised system means that there is no overt struggle about the industrial wage and social wage at the workplace and from the lack of this overt struggle, it is possible that there is a reduction in the political awareness of union members and alienation from their trade unions and political parties.

I believe there is validity in this criticism of a centralised system but I suggest that it need not be so. If we are to achieve implementation of the Accord and in particular the demand for maintenance of real wages and the implementation of employment programs, there will need to be considerable pressure exerted upon those in power. The pressure need not, but may, include industrial action but I suggest that the pressure exerted must be done in a co-ordinated manner rather than fragmented around the demands at particular work sites. To achieve a co-ordinated campaign requires the two-way process of representation by union leaders. In this regard I draw your attention to my comments on the first argument against a centralised wage fixation system in relation to consultation with, input from and involvement of all unions and their members in a centralised campaign.

Flowing from the first argument against a centralised system it can be argued that trade union officials are giving up their responsibilities to look after those who pay their wages, i.e. union dues and elect them to office. As indicated above I accept the validity of this argument but believe it can be overcome by discussion and action regarding the total demand that not only embraces wages but the employment programs of governments and individual companies, investment decision of companies, the strategy of the industry and companies and access to improving social welfare and non-wage benefits to workers, e.g. health care and education.

I accept that the attitudinal change by union officials and their members is difficult to achieve. It is far easier to stand on a soap box and haggle over wages at the workplace or haggle over which union members do particular jobs than it is to be involved in and
influence work processes, investment decisions of companies, the nature of technological change and strategies for the industry. As I indicated above, most union officials at all levels of the trade union movement have been elected for policies and expartise that don't relate to these matters. It requires a greater degree of sophistication to analyse the books of individual companies, but I suggest that if we are going to influence the terrain that sets the limits of the industrial and social wage bargain, involvement in these other issues is a necessity. I further suggest that workers on the shop floor do have considerable knowledge of industry and company decisions and ideas for change and it will be the role of union officials to develop the process by which that knowledge and those ideas are harnessed and pursued.

Further arguments against a centralised system is that it does not allow for flexibility in the wage structure. It is very difficult within a centralised system to correct anomalies, to restructure awards to suit changed work processes and have paid rate awards to maintain parity with actual rates paid to counterparts on minimum rate awards. In this respect I believe there is a particular problem for central government workers. It is the experience of central government workers in the UK, USA, Canada and in Australia during the period of indexation (1975-81) that they slipped behind the wage levels of their counterparts in other areas of public and private employment. This situation is quite understandable as a central government must apply the results of a centralised wage fixation system rigidly as an example to the rest of the community. To do otherwise would leave the central government open to criticism that it is not applying its own policy and possibly lead to the destruction of the system itself.

The inflexibility of the centralised system is very difficult to overcome. Certainly, some provisions can be made within a centralised system for the rectification of some anomalies but they must be on a scale that does not undermine the whole system. A centralised system embraces the notion of greatest gain for all workers which may not be the maximum gain to some (the elite few).

A centralised system means all workers sharing the burden of economic recession, i.e. all workers may get nothing. Those who advance this argument are effectively saying that a centralised system may not reflect market forces and may delay general wage increases when the economy picks up or not reflect productivity and profitability in particular sections of the economy during a period of recession. Obviously, it is going to be very difficult for union officials and members to desist from pursuing wage increases in high productivity and profitable sections of the community during a period of recession. I can only indicate that the major argument for a centralised system is one of equity and trade union involvement in and influence on non-wage matters to which I have earlier referred. I point out that there are still significant sections of the workforce that have not yet received the $39 1981/82 community wage round. Equity, reduced differentials between skilled and unskilled; male and female; full-time and part-time workers must surely be a demand of the left. It is my belief that pursuit of sectional wage demands that may be achieved in some sections of the community will work against a policy of reducing differentials. I further believe that a coordinated campaign around a centralised wage demand that may be spearheaded by the industrially strong is preferable to small elite sections of the workforce achieving wage demands only for themselves.

The above criticisms of a centralised wage fixation system are valid but can be overcome. But in overcoming these criticisms and difficulties requires considerable education, understanding and a change in approach by union officials and union members.

It is my impression that the left is divided on the question of a return to a centralised wage fixation system. On the one hand there is a small group that is cynical and critical in a negative way about the Accord and the policy of a return to a centralised wage fixation system within the Accord. But it is my impression that those sections of the left that hold this view put forward no positive alternatives that will achieve the equitable demands of the trade union movement in respect to the industrial wage, social wage and involvement in and influence on macro-economic policy, industry strategy and company decision-making. The simple and isolated call for a return to collective bargaining or industry by industry negotiations is, in my view, not sufficient and a bankrupt policy as implicit in this policy is that it is someone else's role to achieve the trade union demands of equity, increased employment levels, restructuring of industry etc. and that the achievement of any of these demands will be on capital's terms.

The second approach of the left, to which I subscribe, is that a return to a centralised wage fixation system within the context of the Accord (i.e. not simply a system to achieve wage restoration) presents considerable opportunities for positive and broader action on progressive social policies that go well beyond concerns for the industrial wage. This approach recognises the difficulties and responsibilities of embracing a centralised system, involvement in macro-economic policy, industry strategies and company decision-making. There is the potential for losing independent identity and sharing the blame for capital's mistakes. To maximise opportunities presented by the Accord and a centralised wage fixation system within the context of the Accord requires considerable work, critical analysis, input, changed union processes and attitudes, acceptance of greater responsibility, the setting of demands and the priority of those demands and coordinated pressure. In this regard I believe the centre has done more than the left, and as such the left should not be so well articulated. The priorities of those demands have not been set and there is some alienation of unions and their members from the trade union campaign which includes the return to a centralised system.

Finally, and in summary I make the following points:

- It is not the system of wage fixation by itself that can be judged but the results that flow from it. The results can not simply be measured in terms of the industrial wage but need to embrace: the achievements of price control mechanisms; resultant income redistribution; investment and employment decisions by government and the private sector; the level of taxation; health care; education services; and finally, the maintenance of community support for and implementation of progressive socialist policies.

The results are dependent on and can only be evaluated against the setting of demands, the priority of those demands and understanding by and inclusion of and involvement in, the interests of workers and other repressed groups in society.

This setting of demands and priorities I believe has not been fully achieved in the Accord or at the Summit and presents immediate opportunities that must be acted upon by the left. In doing so it will be a requirement of the trade union movement to involve all levels of the trade union structure and other oppressed groups.

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In his address to the ALR Marx Centenary Symposium in Sydney and Melbourne in April 1983, Stuart Hall asked the audience to accept that there isn't any lost page of Marx's notebooks which will tell us where to go next. Hall finished his address by saying the only Marx worth celebrating is the Marx which is interested in thinking and struggling on an open terrain, a Marx who offers a marxism without guarantees, and without answers. The following article is based on his addresses at Sydney and Melbourne.

I want to talk about Marx and marxism, and to suggest some things about his relevance to our contemporary situation. I missed the 14th of March but a few days after that I went to Highgate cemetery just to make sure that Marx was there and I bring you the good news that he is. But there is a certain restlessness about the air in Highgate cemetery, a sense that though the body is there, somehow the ideas are circulating worldwide, and that restlessness is I think justified because socialists, whether they are marxists or not, honour Marx because he provided something of the scientific and theoretical stiffening which we all need at least once every ten years. He is honoured also because he gave a very important demonstration of what it is like to hold to an emancipatory socialist politic — but most of all and this is what I like Marx for — because he insisted on thinking critical and subversive thoughts.

He used to say that he hoped his own thought would be scandalous — a scandal and abomination above all to bourgeois professors. And I've taken that chastising note to heart.

I've been trying to learn from and argue with and to keep Marx at bay for more years than I'm going to tell you. Perhaps I should establish my credentials by saying a little bit about my first encounter with Marx. I was one of those clever boys in a clever colonial school, I'd been taught by a red-haired Scots footballer who stayed on in Jamaica because he liked the climate, and decided to teach us all history. In the 6th form he caught a whiff of anti-imperialism circulating in the corridors and he thought that it was his historic mission to inoculate us against the dangers of subversive ideas and to that end he had two vehicles or instruments at his disposal. One was a series of recordings of the speeches of Baldwin, for uplift, and the second was a series of pamphlets produced by the British Council on how awful Marx, marxism, stalinism, socialism and all that was, and he used to read alternately from Baldwin and these pamphlets and because he was an extremely good teacher, he made them sound really quite interesting. The more this long process of inoculation went on, the more I thought there must be something in it and I've been trying to think about that ever since.

That struggle with Marx, to keep Marx at bay so that he doesn't take over your head, which is his propensity, is made easy I suppose, in the era of what people now call the 'Crisis of Marxism', because now you can start further down the line. There is no need to insist that there is a single, unified marxism; you have only to come into any public meeting and you can see the 57 varieties. There is no need to insist that his was a dogmatically finished and completed theoretical labour — anybody who dares to end the critical volumen of his major work with a question; “What is class, then?” and dies — is clearly not in the business of wrapping the whole thing up. Indeed the notion that somewhere back there is the Book of Revelations or Old Moore's Almanac — a sort of litany than you look up when you are not feeling good, or to find out whether you should travel on Friday the 13th — a general book by which you guide and shape your life — is contrary to virtually every line that Marx wrote. He was irreligious, deeply secular, highly rationalist, critical theoretical and historical. In my view the crisis of Marxism liberates us for some future.
When one talks about the dangers of marxist revisionism (I particularly like that phrase) it seems to suggest that really to be tuned to the spirit of the old man, the working class ought to have stood still. It ought to look exactly like it did in the illustrations to Engels' *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* as soon as it doesn't look like that, we're not sure if it's there at all. We have to go round and try to find out where it is and why it's gone there, and how come it hasn't stayed in place. And yet if marxism has anything at all about it, it is the insistence that it is dealing with an historical and dynamic system that Marx had ever seen. Long before Marx ever hated capitalism he admired it and respected it. It had broken and shattered every other system of human history, it had surpassed it in its dynamic. And it was because he wanted to harness that dynamic of a major, massive world historical productive system to somebody who deserved it more than the bourgeoisie, that he began to see the origins of the world we now inhabit. The essence of what is scientific about marxism that I value so much. I want to talk about the things in Marx that I feel to be important and relevant in understanding the world today. But first of all I think I ought establish some priority of the things in marxism and Marx that I particularly value. I want to do that very quickly, because I don't want this to be a kind of scholastic exercise, but to give a sense of what it is about marxism that I value so much.

Above all, the fabric of historical materialism. Not every note and semi-quaver in it, but that broad understanding of historical development and especially of the material constraints in historical development, which ground that theory in some level of determinant relations, which don't simply pluck it out of the air, and watch it unfold according to our own hopes and dreams and ambitions. That is, I think, the essence of what is scientific about Marx. He is not scientific in the sense that the predictions always work out. He is scientific in the sense of providing us with some systematic entry into the understanding of historical development. That is the first massive achievement.

Secondly, I would say, the intrinsic modes of capitalist societies. This is not a penetrating insight into the capitalism of the second-half of the twentieth century. If you expect Marx to have penetrating insights into the capitalism of the second half of the twentieth century, you do believe he is an old testament prophet; you do believe he can see the future — indeed a hundred years ahead; and that is not what he is and therefore that is not what one ought to go to Marx for. Nevertheless, one continues to live in societies which sometimes call themselves capitalist and sometimes don't — but look pretty capitalist to me. I'm able to say they are capitalist with some confidence and conviction because one gets from Marx some sense of what it is like to be in the distinctive epoch and age of capitalist societies and why that is different from being in some other historical epoch. And whatever are the major and massive historical changes that have taken place in the last one hundred years, the basic grammar of capitalism continues to survive in the era of international corporate capitalism as it did in the era of the textile entrepreneurs. In so far as I am able to understand that, I owe a debt to Marx. Indeed, in so far as anybody is able to really understand that, they owe a debt to Marx. And I enjoy the experience of people who hate Marx, hate marxism and believe its all dead and gone but open their mouths about history, and speak another marxist truth. That is the unconsciousness of Marx operating at a level too deep for them to
understand. It is also the fate of bourgeois Marxists who think they have overcome Marx but who are, by that process, actually still in his grip. This I enjoy most, and I think its the kind of historical irony Marx would have relished.

But I don't want to go on talking about what's good about Marxism, because if it were all good we wouldn't be here together with our slightly furrowed brows, wondering if it is going to exist for another hundred years. So I want to go right to the heart of the matter, what's wrong with it then? What is this crisis about?

One has to remember Brecht's adage that you should always begin from the bad side not from the good side. If you want to cheer yourself up, you begin from the good side, but if you want to be a dialectician, you begin from the bad side, because one of the other things that Marx gave us, deeply and profoundly, is not a theory with substance in it, but of method of thinking, which he called the dialectic. It is the awareness of the continual contradictoriness of the world, that every time you see something, going forward in a good way, there's always some rotten consequence lying underneath it, which is going to walk around the block and kick you in the backside. That is the nature of history — it advances, and then it shafts you round the back.

You can always distinguish good Marxists from good reformists, because reformists always begin from the good side — it wasn't so good then and now its a bit better and its going to be a bit better after that and on and on and on and up and up and up. That is exactly what Baldwin used to say on those recordings back in Jamaica. On and on and on, and up and up and up, was Baldwin's wonderful phrase and I used to see reformism taking us out of slavery and imperialism and on a steady escalating path but along come Marxism and it says "You think you just won something, but just wait, for the unintended consequences of the good things in the world" (because) "unless you understand that advance and retreat are deeply implicated with one another, and that one has to have eyes in the side of one's head for the bit one didn't calculate, you aren't, as Hegel would say, thinking dialectically".

So lets start from some of the bad side. What is it that Marx didn't or couldn't or wasn't in a position to understand? He wasn't in a position to understand modern industrial corporate capitalism because he wasn't alive in it. He saw the origins rather than the further development of modern industrial capitalism. The idea that the forms of capitalist organisation and exploitation should change so profoundly over a hundred years but make no difference to Marx is impossible to sustain for very long. Of course there is a great deal about modern industrial corporate capitalism on a global scale, which has forms of organisation and complexities of operation, that are not written in the law of value in the form that Marx gave it in Capital and elsewhere.

Secondly, Marx did not see and therefore did not understand, the forms of modern imperialist capitalist relations. He saw the drive which capitalism had toward the construction of a world market, but the idea of a world productive system with a vast new complex international division of labour, which makes the poor of the third world into the proletariat of the first and which binds nation and nation together in a set of the most complicated and deeply implanted social and economic relations, is a world Marx did not confront. Consequently, there is a whole range of things about the relationship between the proletariat, or the working class or productive labour in the advanced world and the forms in which it connects to the poor and the oppressed — indeed to other apparently non-Marxist classes like the old peasantry — in the underdeveloped world which we will not find adequately explained in Marx.

And about the state Marx is vivid, brief, sketchy and wrong a lot of the time. He was most wrong about the tendency of the state to wither away. I can't find a single state that looks in the remotest like withering away. I just see them all growing and growing and growing — the liberal capitalist state, the monetarist state and the minimalist state, the law and order state and the socialist state. Especially the socialist state. They all just keep on, like topsy, growing and growing. So the notion that there is some unalterably inevitable law which will enable us to seize the relations which we want to transform through the state is wrong. The state is not going to say: "Cheerio, I'm off, mission accomplished, it's all yours. Here is where history begins. I belong to necessity and I'm going right now while you press on to freedom". Marx began to see at certain points in his life the coming of the state and the way in which the politics of modern societies would be condensed in the
state, and the nature in which the state would draw the radii of power in modern societies together. He glimpsed that, but the modern state of modern developed societies whatever their political complexion, was a problem which continued without Marx's understanding.

Now, you put those three points together, you will see that the notion that we can be marxists by simply carrying the sacred texts in our back pocket, is another proposition that doesn't stand up very long. I've not finished the catalogue yet, though, so don't feel too secure. Marx was wrong about the nature, speed and direction of class polarisation and the tempo and forms of the class struggle. Now, that's pretty big stuff after all. One of the texts that most marxists, or people who call themselves marxists, would think of as a founding text of marxism is the Communist Manifesto. That is the book of class polarisation and of the increasing tempo of the open class struggle, and I love it just like you do, but it is basically and fundamentally incorrect. The class struggle has not followed that increasing deepening of the tempo and simple polarisation that is the wonderful vision of the Communist Manifesto. It doesn't mean that there aren't other things in the Communist Manifesto which aren't correct, but its thrust does in many ways disable us for the multiple ways in which social and other forms of class struggle appear in modern society. And it does give us a mistaken guarantee of the increasing rapidity of our movement toward revolutionary insurrectionary revolution, which especially the history of the modern developed industrial capitalist world, has not satisfied. So I suggest that when you want inspiration, you take a Communist Manifesto, which for the hundredth year has been reproduced in a very beautiful edition, and read it. But I advise against taking from it what I call the 'Sinai Vision' of socialism, where the waters part and you go through, or the 'Jericho Vision' where you march around the wall seven times, blow the trumpet and WHACK! Down go the walls and the seat of power is revealed. I advise in this way because in modern society we don't know where that seat of power is. What do you get hold of?

to pop it on the head and that's going to be it, is a very profound misunderstanding. It is not only a misunderstanding, it unprepares us for the character, for the real character, of the struggle we have to conduct.

There is also inevitably in Marx, though not especially in Marx, but more in marxism, a notion of the inevitability of the crisis and of the overthrow of capitalism itself. Let me say that about this, marxists should walk on their hands and knees in contrition at least once a month. From Marx's early look at 1848 onwards, we've all thought it is going to happen faster than it has. There's one point where Marx and Engels said: "Well, I'm sorry, its not the death throes of capitalism, it is the birth pangs". But between the death throes and the birth pangs of capitalism is a whole history, much longer than my life or yours. We can hardly say of this: I'm sorry and I got it wrong. I thought it was going but it was only just beginning. This is something for which we all need a little of what used to be called "recognition of errors and abuses". We need a little text at the end in the margin, to say: "I'm sorry, I do confess to the international proletariat, I wasn't right about it". It's no laughing matter, of course. After all, in the period from 1917 to 1921, the marxist movement also thought it was looking at the last, not only the highest but the last, stage of capitalism, and it mistook the capacity of that system to reconstitute itself and restructure itself, on a profoundly new and expanding basis. On that basis we made errors in the capacity to construct socialism in one country which has proved to be one of the most serious barriers in the socialist movement to the construction of socialism in our times.

So our history is not only indexed by the incorrect deductions that are sometimes drawn about it, it is also marked and shadowed by the practices in error which we have taken as a result of misunderstanding the whole thing only too well.

I have tried to talk about some of the things that confront us in the second half of the twentieth century about which Marx said things, about which marxism has argued and debated, and which are critical to our understanding of how the modern world works. The idea that you could launch yourself into political activity in the modern world without understanding how some of those things really are, is inconceivable. But I want to say a word about something which is rather different from the substantive areas in which we cannot expect to find the keys in Marx's work. And something about the whole marxist approach or the marxist method, the marxist way of working. Though these problems and holes and weaknesses do not occur in Marx everywhere, they are sufficiently there for us to have to reckon with them when we try to use Marx as an instrument for understanding and analysing the world.

There is that tendency to find in what is revealingly called by marxists the economic, the guarantee of the end of political and social struggles, the method of thinking that sees the economic as his or her majesty. (I'm sorry I got into the habit of saying his or hers. The economic is always his). His majesty the economic according to this tendency would at some important part of history, detach itself from the complicated historical, political and ideological integument in which it functions, and would stride ahead of us, and lay out the end product of the different struggles that we are engaged in. We cannot see to the end, but his majesty the economic who wrote the script, including our confusions and our blindnesses and errors, has taken account of the whole thing and is now able to say "You press on because in the end, socialism is inevitable". But we live in a world in which socialism is not inevitable. We live in a world in which there are socialisms which are caricatures of socialism, and the thing that is most inevitable in our world, in a logical calculation, is its termination. Barbarism, which is the other alternative which Marx offered us, is much closer in the age of nuclear weapons, of thermo-nuclear warfare, and of the frozen blocs of Soviet communism and western capitalism, than is socialism. So the notion that there is some logic inscribed exclusively in the logic of capital,
and forms of the struggle but the end product, or the notion that every other contradiction in the society really begins with the contradiction between capital and labour are not true. All of us know in our heart of hearts, that, for example, the contradictions of patriarchal relations, saw off “primitive communism” and it saw off feudalism and it saw of early capitalism and it looks like its going to see modern capitalism as well. It is ancient in relation to the conflict between capital and labour. If you want to argue that various social contradictions, which frequently lead to vigorous and popular social movements in the world, do not exist in society outside of the structuring articulations of the way in which modern life reproduces its material conditions, that is to say they cannot exist outside of the articulated class and class struggle, I agree with you. But if you say that the class struggle and its principle contradiction generates all the others, so that not only do we know the end of the story but we also possess the key, I do not. The idea that there is a key which can be put in the ignition lock and turned so that we will all fall about — men will love women, blacks will love whites, the unemployed will love the employed and vice versa, is wrong. All these and other things which have divided and marked and intersected the apparent unity of the working class given by its economic position, are not going to be resolved and locked up by the end of a single and homogenous and predictable process. That law of inevitability has done serious damage to marxism. It has done serious damage to the marxist movement, because it has created a policy of inevitability. And it has created institutions which depend on the politics of inevitability. It has disarmed us, in relation to the complex new forms and arenas in which modern forms of social struggle, including the class struggle, has to be or have to be preserved.

O n the other hand, the thing which bourgeois critics of Marx most, namely that he claimed to be both a scientist and to be involved in the struggle, is exactly what begins to unlock that understanding of Marx that I'm trying to set before you. This is the Marx which makes us attend to the determinancy of things, but does not pretend to know what the end result of them is, that is to say the Marx which establishes the questions we ought to ask about the modern world but does not pretend to have all the answers. It is the Marx which sets the agenda of problems, and which gives us the categories, the tools of thought with which to begin to understand them, but it is not the Marx which save us from hard work. It is not the Marx that only asks questions when the answers are known. 

So, you might want to ask, what is it we are celebrating? I seem to be more convinced about the holes in the theory, I seem to be talking about a big can which is spouting water on all sides like a leaky boat, and yet come along telling you that its still worth thinking and talking about. Yes, I do. But I want to say in what terms I make that assertion. I make it because I know of no other categories that begin to enable us to understand some of the most fundamental areas and relations of modern society. If I want to understand its economic dynamic, if I want to understand the nature of some of its most profound antagonisms and contradictions, if I want to understand what are some of its most basic and profound formations, the categories of Marx seem to me to be superior to any other.

Secondly, Marx has a hard, difficult historical lesson and story to teach us which though we intone his name so frequently, we equally frequently forget. This is the nature of historical determinancy of things, the fact that there is no development, no social struggle, no social contradictions which proceed exclusively according to the will of men and women. We come into struggles, to forms of life, which operate on a given terrain. In part, what we do and how far we can go are inscribed in the historical constraints of the given terrain on which we operate. We are unlikely to be able to find 22nd century solutions to 20th century problems. We are given in the determinancy of things. History sets the terrain, it establishes the parameters, within which struggle and survival take place. It gives us the objective determinants of forms of social struggle and it constrains bitterly, sometimes deeply, sometimes it woundingly constrains the possibilities of constructing new forms of life. When you look at socialist societies in the third world, arising from the depths of poverty and attempting to construct socialism, you know that history is a hard taskmaster, that it has established the limit and constraint in which those people are likely even to begin to sniff material prosperities, success and the opening of opportunities in our and their lifetimes. It is history but we have to be the master of history, that Marx gives us the sense of the limits within which we struggle.
Frequently what is so disabling about the work of some marxist writers is that you know what is going to be said at the end, before the investigation has begun, that the questions are phoney, that such writers are functioning on a closed terrain. We all know the kind of investigation which does not enter into an open space as Marx did. Marx voyaged in unknown territory. He had the temerity to write down "I'm beginning to understand this new system that just began the day before yesterday, historically, and I think I understand some things about it". He did not say that he knew it all. If he knew all the answers surely he would have said what class was, instead he took time out and nature struck. That is not an excuse for the notion that he did really know it but he just didn't get to it. You have only to look at his notebooks which are absolutely full of pages copied out from other people's work. Its a thing of wonder that some marxist scholars have been reading these notebooks and thinking that Marx wrote this or that when in fact that notes are just another bit of Adam Smith that struck Marx as quite good.

The notion that Marx is a kind of super brain which descended out of Trier in Germany at a certain moment, that he knew everything, that he wrote everything that he could see to the end of history and he just unfortunately happened to die in 1883 is really going back to the Marx who must be Old Moore, an Old Almanac writer, an Old Testament prophet and we just mistook him. Such a Marx ought to be up from the Highgate cemetery, he ought to have risen on the second day at least. He ought to be passing amongst us because we need him. But if we do not feel good with that religious marxism we must opt for another, a story without an end, a narrative which doesn't have a conclusion.

That means we have to do something for ourselves, we have to discover what the class struggle is in the 1980s and 1990s, we have to discover what the relationship is between the peace movement and the working class, and we have to accept that there isn't actually any secret lost page of the notebooks which will tell us where to go next. There really isn't. The only Marx worth celebrating then is the Marx which is interested in thinking and in struggling on an open terrain, the Marx who offers a marxism without guarantees, a marxism without answers.

Good heavens, if someone teaches you where to begin, isn't that enough?

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Ray Southall sketches the influence of Marx in the nineteenth century. Following on from the Paris Commune of 1871 a distinct split emerged in socialist groups involving reformist and revolutionary tendencies. Southall argues that this split helps us understand the present-day division between the right and left in the labour movement and that in 1983 Marx's insistence on rejecting notions of a peaceful transition to socialism have been amply justified.

The influence of Marx in the nineteenth century is worthy of attention not simply in recognition of a man who died one hundred years ago but because it raises questions that remain of fundamental importance in the continuing debate between the obvious need for social improvement and the underlying necessity for social revolution. In that debate and the events that surrounded it, Marx's own position was perfectly clear. As Engels declared in his speech at Marx's graveside in 1883.

Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its own position and its needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation.

Marx's life spanned the formative years of the modern industrial working class. The industrial revolution which got underway in England in the mid-eighteenth century had extended across Europe by the time of his death. Wherever industrialism emerged it destroyed old social relationships and created its own servant class, the proletariat. Every advance in industrialisation brought in its train a corresponding increase in the size and concentration of this class of wage-earners, which, as it crystallized into a social force, found its interests diametrically opposed to those of the class it was called into existence to serve.

The proletariat was mainly recruited from the dispossessed peasantry and the destitute artisans, who were drawn into the growing centres of industry, where they joined with the labouring poor in the new factories. In many of these factories, such as the cotton mills of Arkwright in Derbyshire, the real relationship between industrial capitalist and proletarian was obscured behind a patriarchal veil, and, as late as the mid-nineteenth century, industrial capitalism still possessed an anachronistic feudal-workshop character in the 'shops' of the Birmingham iron masters. These anachronistic forms are important, since they provided the basis of utopian socialism.

Not surprisingly, the first programmatic generalisations of the proletariat's interests expressed the patriarchalism which still shrouded the fundamental antagonism between worker and capitalist. Hence these early forms of socialism, articulated in France by Fourier, Proudhon and Blanc, and in England by Robert Owen, and usually referred to as utopian socialism, obscured the real relationships of industrial capitalism and covertly looked to the re-establishment of feudalism, albeit a semi-industrial socialistic feudalism.

On the eve of the revolutions of 1848, therefore, Western Europe was industrialising and an industrial working class was becoming socially differentiated. The class-conscious worker subscribed to one or another of the utopian socialisms and possessed an outlook which did not set him apart from his peasant, artisan and petty-bourgeois neighbor. This was the situation when the revolution broke out in Paris and it is the one reflected in The Communist Manifesto, which Marx prepared that year as the programme of the Communist League.
The Manifesto was based upon an assessment of the strengths and positions of the various classes lined up for the revolution. It was addressed, Engels wrote, to:

Whatever portion of the working class had become convinced of the insufficiency of mere political revolutions, and had proclaimed the necessity of total social change, that portion then called itself Communist. It was a crude, rough-hewn, purely instinctive sort of Communism; still, it touched the cardinal point and was powerful enough amongst the working class to produce the Utopian Communism, in France, of Cabet, and in Germany, of Weitling.

The aim of the Manifesto was to provide those 'in purely instinctive' revolt with a theory and programme based upon an analysis of the historical role of the working class. The briefest and clearest exposition of the fundamental proposition of the Manifesto is that provided by Engels in the preface to the English edition of 1888.

That proposition is: that in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, social organisation necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolutions in which, nowadays, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class — the proletariat — cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class — the bourgeoisie — without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinction and class struggles.

With the appearance of the Manifesto, the working class ceased to be a blind and bemused force and began to develop its conscious revolutionary core. Published in Germany a few weeks before the Paris rising of February 1848, a French edition appeared in Paris in June. An English translation was published in Harney's Red Republican in 1850. In the meantime a Danish and a Polish edition had been put out. By 1888 it had been reprinted in Germany (12 editions), in Switzerland (several editions), England (four editions), France (two editions), Russia (two editions) and had appeared in Spain and in Armenia, where it was suppressed. Thus the Manifesto was recognised as offering a programme for an international movement and, with its slogan "Working men of all countries, unite!", provided the first step towards international working class unity.

The defeat of the revolutions of 1848 and 1849 and the police persecution which followed forced many revolutionaries into exile, mainly to England. The various emigre groups combined in London to form the European Central Committee, headed by Kossuth, Mazzini, Ledrun-Rollin and Ruge. The Committee was also in touch with the Polish emigres and was an attempt to continue the revolutionary international of 1848 as if nothing had happened between 1847 and 1851. The English Chartist Party, which had been declining since 1848, was sympathetic but held aloof. Marx and Engels, who in 1848 had supported the democratic leaders, since they represented a great progressive movement, now recognised that these 'leaders' no longer had contact with the continental workers and were acting as isolated individuals. After 1850, therefore, Marx and Engels emphasised the differences which separated them from the European democrats and warned workers against the slogans of Kossuth, Ledrun-Rollin, Ruge and company.

The period of reaction destroyed nearly all independent working class activity on the Continent and forced working class organisations into some form or another of left wing liberalism, as was the case in the German Progressive Party and the German People's Party. In consequence, the period following the defeat of 1848 produced, among the working class, movements which threatened to erase the program of the Communist League and with it the influence of Marx. Organised as a left wing of liberalism, working class groups adopted programs of reforms. In Germany, Lassalle, leader of a new working class party, the General Association of German workers, although claiming to be a follower of Marx, co-operated with Bismarck with a view to gaining some reforms; amongst them general suffrage. In France, working class organisations began to spring up again under the benevolence of Louis Napoleon. In England the trade unions began to agitate for a policy of social reform: The development of
Reformism is of prime importance to a consideration of Marx’s influence and will be returned to later.

The period of repression, which was more or less that of the Second Empire, ‘prescribed unity and abstention from all internal polemics to the workers’ movement, then just reawakening’, according to Engels. Marx and Engels, therefore, stressed the common interests of the working class and kept their criticisms to themselves.

On September 24th, 1864, a large international working class meeting was held in London, to which Marx was invited as representative of the German workers. This meeting founded the First International. The Geneva Congress of the International, which took place two years later, approved the Rules of the International written by Marx, and Marx’s instructions formed the basis on which its resolutions were adopted.

The General Council of the International, apart from its role as co-ordinator (e.g. in 1867 it procured money from the London unions to support striking bronze workers in Paris) was intended to direct and assist political struggles. Marx sought through the International to influence the English labour movement. As a result the International was able to lead the struggle of English workers for the franchise. More importantly, however, Marx saw in the International a means of influencing the French workers and believed that the co-operation of French and English workers in a new French revolution could transform the European political scene.

When, following France’s defeat by Prussia, the revolt broke out in France in 1871, the International played an important part in establishing the Commune; many members of the Committee which organised and directed the revolt and the setting up of the Commune were members of the International. That the Committee, dominated by the International, having set up the Commune, should have contented itself with carrying out reforms, albeit radical ones, while Thiers and his government were left in peace at Versailles to organise the counter-revolution, is significant in the light of future developments in the working class movement.

1871 marked a turning point in the development of working class politics. Jellinek in his book The Paris Commune of 1871 gives a sickeningly detailed account of the blood bath in which the reaction drowned the workers’ movement in France. But elsewhere, and especially in England, the movement which was only just reawakening when the First International was formed, was by this time well awake. Working class organisations throughout England had developed a great deal since the foundation of the International, and recognising this, Marx adopted a more openly critical attitude towards the various sects and creeds, especially the German and English ones. He had for a long time condemned Bakunin, since in Bakunin’s attempts to set up factions within the International he saw a threat to its existence.

Following the Commune a very distinct split appeared in the Socialist Groups. For the rest of this article I shall concentrate upon this, since this provides the best way of indicating the direction of Marx’s influence after 1871. It also helps to understand the present-day split between the right and left in the labour movement.

Already prior to 1871 reform movements were underway in Germany and England; in France they were cut short by the Commune. By 1871 most English labour organisations had adopted policies of reform, whether this was a cause or a consequence of the growth of trade unionism, it is difficult to say, but their connection is fairly obvious. A policy of reform could be carried out under a liberal government and the failure of the English workers to form their own political party until the beginning of the twentieth century was a tacit
admission of the opportunist aims of the labour movement in England. The defeat of the Commune served only to stress the futility of revolution, and the repression which followed it in France made the promise of the solid gains of peaceful reformism all the more preferable. Technically Marx supported the agitation for reforms but combatted any tendencies towards class collaboration. For Marx reforms had to be won without obscuring or compromising the revolutionary aims of the working class. His comments upon this tendency towards reformism are contained in a circular letter sent to a number of German communists by Marx and Engels. The occasion for the letter was the compromising, reformist program drawn up by "three Zuricher" for the Social Democratic Party, heir of Lassalle's Association of German Workers. Marx writes: The Social Democratic Party is not to be a worker's party, is not to incur the odium of the bourgeoisie or of anyone else; it should abdicate all concept of energetic propaganda among the bourgeoisie instead of laying stress on far-reaching aims which frighten away the bourgeoisie and after all are not attainable in our generation, it should rather devote its own strength and energy to those petty-bourgeois patchwork reforms which, by providing the old order of society with new props, may perhaps transform the ultimate catastrophe into a gradual, piecemeal and as far as possible peaceful process of dissolution. People holding such views 'in a workers' party', he wrote later in the letter, 'are an adulterating element' and if 'the leadership of the party should fall more or less into the hands of such people, the party would simply be castrated'. As we know, the Party, in Western Europe, was castrated. Imperialist policies overseas paid for reformist policies in the Imperialist countries.

This change in the political climate was reflected in the Second International. A Congress of the First International held at The Hague in 1872 decided to remove it to America, where it shortly died a natural death. Marx and Engels supported the move. since the old International no longer represented the new alignments nor reflected the new disposition of workers' groups. The Second International was founded in 1889. The new International adopted a programme for the international protection of labour, to culminate in a legal eight hour day. Its activities were concerned with labour conditions and with political struggle only in so far as it could be used to improve these conditions. In short, the Second International adopted a policy of reform. Marx had been dead six years and Engels lived on to see the Reichstag election of 1893, in which the Social Democratic Party gained hundred of thousands of votes for its reformist programme.

The split in the Socialist groups was over means not ends. This is to be seen plainly in the two different emphases given to the lessons of 1871. On the one hand that of the Socialists who considered that the Paris Committee, in its reform programme, had marked out the road leading to Socialist transition, on the other, that of Marx, who saw in the Commune the lesson that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes'. The difference between the two positions is fundamental: the reformists claiming that capitalism will succumb to a 'peaceful process of dissolution', Marx insisting that capitalism must be forcibly destroyed.

Undoubtedly enough, wherever a reformist programme was workable it was accepted by the working class parties, since they preferred peace to violence, although one of the gravest errors of the Second International was to adopt an attitude of formal pacifism. At the close of the nineteenth century, reformist programmes were operable in Western Europe and the revolutionary focus shifted to Russia, carrying with it the influence of Marx. The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, which later became the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), was already by the turn of the century becoming a party of that new type which Marx had foreshadowed, in his criticism of the programme of the German Social Democratic Party, a party dedicated to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism by the working class.

One hundred years after his death, Marx's insistence upon the character of socialist revolution and his total rejection of 'adulterating' notions of a peaceful transition to Socialism have been amply justified. Nevertheless the argument between Marxism and reformism continues and where the living influence of Marx flags it is with tragic consequences to the working class, as was brought home to the nineteenth century in Paris and to the twentieth century in Chile.

**NOTES**


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BOOMS AND BUSTS

Charles Silver uses his interpretation of Marx's analysis of the contradictions within the capitalist mode of production to explain the history of the Australian post-war trade cycle in boom and bust.

In the 1970s capitalism entered a new stage. There were fluctuations in income and employment during the long boom of the 1950s, 60s. But the overall trend was for rapid economic growth. Since 1970 fluctuations such as the present crisis take place within an overall trend to relative stagnation. Why? The explanation is important for the immediate policy area and for the future of capitalism. In today's conditions more people see the need for change.

I begin with Marx's explanation of economic crisis. The impact of changes in capitalism since 1867 are discussed later.

Marx on contradictions and crises

For Marx, the compelling force in the capitalist mode of production is the production of surplus value (profit) on an ever expanding scale. Surplus value becoming money capital, must be reinvested. The saving-investment process is central to expansion, and to the accumulation of huge quantities of extremely efficient instruments of production. At times this process leads to long booms. But, overall, the capitalist system is unplanned and motivated by private profit; so at other times the saving-investment process leads to periods of stagnation such as in the 1930s and the 1970s, and economic crises as at present. The same factors explain short term fluctuations, and long-term or secular trends.

Two basic features of the capitalist mode of production are pursued in order to increase the rate of profit, and thus the accumulation of capital. They are interrelated; together they create a barrier to the accumulation of capital at its earlier rate.

The first trend is described by Dean Jorgenson, a Harvard economist:

"Traditionally businessmen faced with investment decisions have chosen to emphasise spending on machines and other capital equipment over manpower." The capitalist mode of production has brought about an unplanned expansion of "the productive powers of society". We know that with computers, etc. this process is continuing at an accelerating rate.

The second trend, implied above, is that because of greed for accumulation and profit, capitalists have always attempted to restrict the rate of growth in wages and salaries: human needs are a cost in the capitalist mode of production.

But this is only the first "act" in the process of capitalist production. After surplus value has been produced the whole product must be sold profitably or the capitalist will lose a part or all of the capital. Surplus value must be "realised" through profitable sales.

The conditions under which surplus value is produced become a barrier to continued expansion. At the point of production, expanding productive capacity means that an increasing volume of goods and services is thrown onto the market if available resources are fully utilised. This requires a rapidly expanding market. But greed for accumulation also ensures that wages and salaries will rise less rapidly than investment and productive capacity. Wages and salaries are the basis of consumer spending which, in turn, is the largest item in the demand for goods and services.

It follows that after the initial stimulus which accompanies investment, consumer demand will rise less rapidly than productive capacity and output. Again, as much of the output of the capital goods industries is produced to increase productive capacity in the consumer goods industries any continuing decline in the rate of increase...
in consumption spending will reduce the demand for capital goods as well.

Marx sums up: "But to the extent that the productive power develops, it finds itself at variance with the narrow basis on which the condition of consumption rest(s)". Here, Marx had in mind the trade cycle where booms have always led to crises of over-production expressed in an "excess" of people, an "excess" of capital, and an "excess" of goods.

With the experience of the early 1930s, and from a very different standpoint, Keynes was concerned with a much more serious problem for the future of capitalism than the trade cycle. He argued that with laissez-faire capitalism, the millions of unemployed in the 1930s reflected a chronic contradiction which had developed between productive capacity and consumption.

Both Marx and Keynes argued that if expansion is to continue in a capitalist economy there has to be a parallel development of the major sectors of the economy such as productive capacity (investment) and consumer demand. They agreed that given private enterprise, productive capacity will expand much more rapidly than consumer demand thus leading to "excess" capacity. Marx saw Capital's exploitation of labour as the basic reason for this contradiction.

Are there contradictory rates of development between productive capacity and consumption in the postwar period? If so, does this help to explain short-term fluctuations in income and employment and the development of the new stage in capitalism after 1970?

**Short term fluctuations: the trade cycle**

The trade cycle with recovery and boom followed by crisis and recession has always been a feature of capitalism.

At the April Economic Summit a clash developed among employers with mining and banking interests taking a hard line based on reduced wages to restore profits while the embattled manufacturing industry were sympathetic to an expansionary policy and were willing to compromise on wages.

Why?

Statistics in Table A for two of the seven cycles since 1949-50 help to answer this question, with 1952-53 and the September quarter 1982 (for 1982-83) being the crisis years.

A glance at Table A shows that in both cycles investment outlays, for example on machinery, are bunched together, and at very high levels in the recovery-early boom phase of the cycle. Thus gross private investment (GPI) increased by 18 percent in 1949-50 and 17 percent in 1980-81. These sharp increases in productive capacity required parallel increases in demand. In fact in 1949-50 consumer demand rose by 6.3 percent while in 1980-81 it rose by only 3.7 percent. One reason for the relatively slow growth in consumer spending was the slow growth, relative to GPI, in average earnings — 1.3 percent in 1949-50 and 4.7 percent in 1980-81. And these are pre-tax earnings!

Why the actual crisis? In the pre-crisis year productive capacity is still positive so productive capacity is at its peak. But in this year there is always a decline in the rate of increase in consumer spending (see column 3 in Table A on this point).

Column 7 in Table A shows that the decline in the rate of increase in consumer spending in the pre-crisis year is partly due to the decline in the rate of increase in average earnings in that year. In their attempt to maintain profit levels Column 8 shows the CPI as rising sharply in the pre-crisis year — a factor in the decline in the rate of increase of average earnings and consumer spending in the pre-crisis year.

The result of high levels of productive capacity and a decline in the rate of consumer spending in the pre-crisis year could only be an unplanned increase in the level of stocks — see Column 6 of Table A. Excess capacity relative to demand precipitated the 1952-53 crisis and with a decline in the overseas demand for Australian minerals the crisis of 1982-83.

Hence the relevance of the ALP's pre-election economic program to "embrace the policies of expansion" — and the danger in policies that put the emphasis on "sacrifice" in areas of human need.

**Stages in the development of capitalism**

We now come to the long term stages in capitalist development. The second world war brought the 1930s depression to an end. The war was followed by the long boom of the 1950s and 60s. Four economic crises during this period showed that there were still tendencies to over-production. Why the overall expansion? In the 1950s and 60s there were offsetting factors to the trend in monopoly capitalism to stagnation. Post-war reconstruction, a larger government sector, and for Australia rapid industrialisation and high levels of migration were the basis of the overall expansion during the long boom. Particularly in the USA rising arms expenditure absorbed much of the "surplus" that arises with the capitalist...
countries consumer spending averaged 50% of G D P occurred during the productive capacity by much more than equipment in 1970 would have increased GDP in 1970. 70.73% of GDP in 1950 and 60.2% of GDP in 1970.

Table A: Rates of increase in GDP, gross private investment, etc at constant prices 1949-50 and 1980-81 — September quarter 1982. Usually the columns show percentage increase over previous year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% increase real GDP</th>
<th>% increase cons'ptn spending</th>
<th>% increase gross private investment</th>
<th>% increase employment</th>
<th>% Increase in stock levels average</th>
<th>% increase earnings</th>
<th>% increase consumer price index</th>
<th>Company income as % of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>11.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>11.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>-7.7</td>
<td>-3.2</td>
<td>-306</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>12.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-81</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept '82</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>-6.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-118</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B: Rates of increase in investment and consumption during the long boom in various countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Investment as % of GDP</th>
<th>Conspt’n as % of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 OECD</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>70.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>countries</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>60.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>70.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>60.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>18.30</td>
<td>70.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td>60.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>51.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Australia’s gross private investment as a percentage of GDP increased from 11.48 (1948-49) to 17.35 in 1970-71.
(2) South Korean exports rose from 2% of GDP in 1953 to 3% in 1960 and 36% in 1976.

Source: Statistical Year Book of the UN, 1964 and 1975 editions.

Table C: Savings and investment in Australia during the long boom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% increase in productive capacity</th>
<th>% increase in consumer spending</th>
<th>% increase in G D P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>-7.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>-7.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Australia shows similar trends in these variables. (Thus these years saw a vast increase in productive capacity in Australia, particularly in manufacturing. What of demand for the product? In 1948-49 Australia’s consumer spending was 70.73% of GDP. After 1948-49 there was a continuing decline in this percentage to 60.53% in 1970-71.)

How important was this decline in consumer spending as a percentage of GDP? In 1970-71 Australia’s GDP was $33,649 million. If consumer spending was still 70% of GDP (as in 1948-49) then consumer spending would have been 70% of $33,649 million — or $23,554 million. In fact consumer spending in 1970-71 was $20,402 million. So the decline in consumer spending as a percentage of GDP in those years meant a decline in consumption by 1970-71 of $3,152 million. To get this decline in perspective, in 1970-71 Australia’s primary production was valued at $2,042 million and its mining production at $1,057 million. Thus in the 1950s and 60s there were significant increases in Australia’s productive capacity — with rapid industrialisation. And a decline in consumer spending as a percentage of GDP that was approximately equal to the value in 1970-71 of Australia’s primary and mineral production.

South Korea is of special significance because it is representative of the newly industrialised countries. Multinational corporations are often seen as planning a new international division of labour with manufactures transferred progressively to low wage, high technology third world countries. Table B gives some idea of the reality behind this “planning”. Between 1953 and 1976 investment for South Korea increased from 8% of GDP to 26%; in the same period consumer spending declined from 82% of GDP to 65%. This is the typical, if exaggerated, pattern of capitalist development. Assuming only a home market, the only outcome of this pattern of development would be overproduction. The multinationals anticipated this result and mode of production.

Table B gives the basis for assessing whether disproportionate rates of growth in productive capacity and demand during the long boom were a major contributing factor to the end of the long boom and the relative stagnation of the 1970s—80s.

Table B shows that during the long boom there were significant increases in productive capacity. Thus, for the 24 OECD countries investment rose from 18% of GDP in 1950 to 23.8% in 1970. The increase in productive capacity was probably much greater than shown in the table: because of advances in technology, $1m. (at constant prices) spent on capital equipment in 1970 would have increased productive capacity by much more than $1m. spent on capital equipment in 1950.

Significant declines in consumption as a percentage of GDP occurred during the long boom: e.g. for the 24 OECD countries consumer spending averaged 70.73% of GDP in 1950 and 60.2% of GDP in 1970.
hence placed emphasis on developing "export zones" for manufacturers in Asian countries. South Korea's exports increased from 2% of GDP in 1953 to 36% in 1976. The growth in exports on this basis of superexploitation could only increase the excess capacity problems in the industrialised countries including Australia.

A further example will illustrate this point. Table B shows that capital formation in Japan increased from 17% of GDP in 1950 to 35% in 1970 — it more than doubled. This was a basic factor in the Japanese 'miracle' of rapid economic growth of the 1950s-60s. Over the same years consumer spending for Japan declined from 61% of GDP to 51%. The contradiction between the rapid expansion of productive capacity and the decline in consumption as a percentage of output has helped to bring the Japanese miracle or rapid economic growth to an end. The search for markets has contributed to Japan modifying her rigidly anti-communist stand in regard to China and the USSR. At present, Japan's GDP is increasing in real terms at about 2% a year.

In summary, Table B shows productive capacity as expanding much more rapidly than consumer demand. Four recessions during the long boom showed the tendency to overproduction. During the 1950-60s "offsetting factors" to this tendency, such as rapid industrialisation and the expansion of government sector were dominant. With the scaling down of the Viet Nam war around 1970 the contradictions leading to long-term relative stagnation again became dominant.

'New' and 'Old' factors which led to the present stage of capitalism

There are significant differences between the competitive capitalist of Marx's day, the monopoly enterprise of the 1930s and the multinational corporation of today. Capital has become international in its operations while retaining a "base" in developed countries such as USA. Examples of this are seen in capital moving offshore to industrialise low-wage Third World countries, General Motors world car with its threat particularly to the Australian component parts industry, and "tax havens" to escape company tax. The multinationals seek to control each economy in their interests. Thus at the April Summit a clash developed among employers. Mining and banking interests, headed by Sir Rod Carnegie, took a hard line based on reduced wages to restore profits, and reduced levels of protection for Australian manufacturing industry. The embattled manufacturing industry, and small business interests, were prepared to compromise on wages and they were sympathetic to a more expansionary policy. They know from experience that the central problem is excess capacity relative to demand.

Thus the multinationals introduce "new" contradictions. But they remain capitalist enterprises. As such they exacerbate the "old" contradictions. Thus on the supply side they have the vast resources to accelerate the development and use of advanced technology. Expanding productive capacity requires an expanding market. But on the demand side the multinationals use their power to resist the rate of growth in wages and salaries, assisted in this by inflation. Apart from measures to advance their interests, they favor "small government". It is shown above that in the monopoly-multinational stage of capitalism you get periods of stagnation such as the 30s and today — as well as the trade cycle.

It is important not to ignore, or to exaggerate, the significance of the "new" factors:

*on capital moving offshore between 1963 and 1976 exports of manufactures from Third World countries increased from 5.9% to 8.26% of the world export of manufactures. But in the same period the share of OECD countries in the world export of manufactures increased from 80.49% to 82.76%. The production and export of manufactured goods is still centred in the industrialised countries such as the USA. Increased exports from low wage, high technology Third World countries can only increase the gap between productive capacity and demand in the industrialised countries. The problems of the Australian clothing, textile, footwear industries illustrate this point.

The decline in employment in Australian manufacturing industry is often attributed to special features of the Australian economy such as small market and a high cost structure — or to capital moving to the more profitable resource area. These are factors in the relative decline in Australian manufacturing industry.

At the same time it has to be noted that in the OECD area the numbers employed in manufacturing declined from 74.8 million in 1974 to 71.1 million in 1977 — a decline of 3.5 million in three years. West Germany and Japan have been amongst the leaders in economic growth and the application of advanced technology. In both cases the decline in employment in manufacturing has continued into the 1980s. Measures to increase research in Australia and development of new industries are to be welcomed particularly if there is union participation. But the decline in employment in manufacturing in industrialised countries, including those most advanced, throws doubts on theories that concentrate on the special features of Australian manufactures only and see increased international competitiveness as the way out.

The implications of the present stage of capitalism

What of the future?

We are at the beginning of a new technological revolution. This gives society a choice. With private profit as the aim, experience already indicates that technological advances will result in mounting social problems, the most obvious of which is rising levels of unemployment.

Today a series of intermediate demands and movements in areas such as social wage, education, child care, poverty, quality of life issues relevant to the environment, urban renewal, concern about the results of work — raise issues that are important in themselves, consistent with the present and future level of development of the productive forces, and point in the direction of a society in which the motive force for productive activity will be the meeting of human needs.

NOTES:
1. This treatment is based on K. Marx, Capital, volume 3, Ch. 15, particularly pages 238-240. (Progress Publishers, Moscow 1977.)
2. P. Samuelson, Economics, 11th ed., p. 204. (On p. 189 Samuelson has a table showing consumption as a percentage of national income declining from 88.9% in 1929 to 78.2% in 1978!)
3. OECD, The Impact of the Newly Industrialising Countries on the Production and Trade in Manufactures, p. 19

Charles Silver is a retired school teacher from Victoria.
Three contributors to workshop sessions during ALR's Sydney Marx Centenary Symposium present their views on aspects of the movement for socialism in Australia. GAVAN BUTLER examines the developing place of the state and the relationship between the changing role of the state and the development of socialism. MAVIS ROBERTSON looks at the disarmament and feminist movements and suggests that these "most successful" movements of our time derive their success from the plurality of views and actions contained within them. ANN SYMONDS writes about the role of Australian socialists within Labor governments in office.
The subject of my remarks is one aspect of the developing place of the state and the relationship of this with the development of socialism. Only to a very limited extent during the major part of what I have to say will I speak of what I think must be the principles of socialism in the twenty-first century.

First, then, a few proportions about the presently developing place of the state. The two principal arenas of conflict within society are that of the determination of the proportion of the society's product which is devoted to the maintenance and reproduction of labor power and that of what is done with the surplus product. The two arenas overlap, of course. For example, struggles by unions over wages and supplementary payments and campaigns for a more progressive basis of taxation for the financing of social services are in part attempts by workers to command some portion of the surplus product, to win partial control over the disposition of the surplus. There is a good deal of ambiguity in campaigns for the greater social services are in part attempts by the state. The two principal arenas of the disposition of the surplus product. By the same token, an attempt must be made to weaken those instrumentalities of the state which are or have become the servants of special interests in the business community. On the other hand, it is sensible to devise some overall planning or programming apparatus. In one country this may take the form of a planning commission for which personnel have been trained in Ecole's Nationales d'Administration; in another it may take the early form of a clumsy image of himself as national conciliation.

The sixth proportion is that, whatever the form of the overall programming apparatus, it will be outside any parliament constructed in the liberal democratic tradition.

The final proposition is that each regulatory activity of the state, each particularistic intervention, should be understood as establishing a contract between two or more fairly tightly specifiable parties, including the state itself (as instrumentality). The contracts are the settlements of disputes. The term "social accord" is to be interpreted as an agreement about what terms of settlement are to be regarded as legitimate. The legitimacy of various terms of settlement of social disputes is alternatively established, though, in the course of negotiating the particular contracts. Both of these processes are important.

**Gavan Butler**

**PLACE OF THE STATE**

must be kept as spare as possible and the part of that apparatus which deals with social security and social services must be weakened in case the people involved should be successful in commanding for themselves or for their "clients" some share of the surplus product. By the same token, an attempt must be made to weaken those instrumentalities of the state which are or have become the servants of special interests in the business community. On the other hand, it is sensible to devise some overall planning or programming apparatus. In one country this may take the form of a planning commission for which personnel have been trained in Ecole's Nationales d'Administration; in another it may take the early form of a clumsy image of himself as national conciliation.

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**Gavan Butler**

Now, what prospects for socialism are there in these processes and developing structures? In the first place, I believe the idea of contracts being the constituent elements of a social order is a very powerful one. It is easily and widely understandable; and it is an idea that has been lurking in public discourse for a long time, as in discussion of this or that "deal", of what "the deal" is in this instance or that. There are problems in realising the potential of the idea, however. One is the problem of alerting people to repercussions or implications of particular arrangements which are not immediately apparent. Another is in ensuring that an affected party is not said to be represented and is not therefore committed when it has not, in fact, been alerted. A third problem exists in achieving bargaining strength. The socialist objective in the negotiation of successive contracts must be to chip away at the basis of power of capital. What the chipping away involves is the insertion of terms of settlement covering the greater accountability of large corporations to the public — (including the disclosure of information), worker control — even by means of works councils, and public equity participation by one means or another. The state is a capitalist state in so far as the conflicts it must handle arise from capitalist production; but it is never fully coherent as a capitalist state. There is room for the pursuit of socialist objectives in the evolution of institutions and the contracts they serve to establish.

Alongside the establishment of contracts and the impact of the terms of contracts on the rules which govern a society, there are, of course, other matters that are simultaneously important. The first of these is that the process of establishing contracts has to be monitored. In a "liberal democracy", the parliament has the power to legislate. Now it seems universally true that legislation is losing ground to administrative regulation; but the parliament's capacity to prescribe is protected and is protected in so far as the parallel corporatist exercise needs to be legitimised. Planning contradicts the capriciousness of a liberal democratic parliament, to be sure; but, it seems to me, the legitimisation of the former cannot be internally achieved, at least not completely so, and will require the continued existence of the latter. Socialists must adopt that position and must continue to attend to parliamentary politics if only in so far as parliament allows for the monitoring of contracts. There will continue to be conflicts between the general programme and what seem to be
Years ago when I was young, members of the Eureka Youth League read and studied a series of texts which we thought was Marxism. While some studied Marx, the received message from the more simplified texts came to me like this: Water when it boils turns to steam, therefore, in social life, when capitalism comes to the boil it will inevitably give way to socialism. The key word was inevitably. Such certainty informed millions of people around the world. It sustained many of them in the face of real adversity and, in my case, developed a confidence that even though the socialist project might be a long way off, it, like Christmas, would turn up.

I do not denigrate those who found the strength, partly through simplified theory, to develop the human will to move mountains. I admire the Vietnamese, and not just the Vietnamese, who received our support in the 60s and 70s. But in Australia such confidence was not only misplaced, it became an obstacle to social progress. There is nothing inevitable about socialism in Australia.

It is to the credit of various Australian Marxists, most of all to the communist party, that slowly and painfully they began to come to terms with some Australian realities. The task is by no means complete but the complexity of society and the difficulties embodied in changing society, institutions and ourselves, are better understood. That class conflict is inevitable is illustrated on a daily basis but it is not inevitable that such conflicts are resolved positively for the working people or according to any text-book solution.

One thing that is inevitable is that those engaged in the socialist movement today will not be around when people gather to consider Marx 200 years after his death. More to the point is whether anyone will then be around, that is, will the world and human society survive. Marx and his contemporaries could not have contemplated an important part of present day reality — the ever-present danger of nuclear war. Marx may have been less of an optimist if he could have foreseen that part of the pay-off in humanity’s struggle to control nature is the existence of nuclear weapons.

It there is to be another 100 years, or even 10, a priority has to be given to achieving nuclear arms control leading to disarmament. This is not to suggest that everyone drop every other concern and concentrate on the disarmament movement. This would be an impossibility, not only because there are always pressing and immediate concerns, but because a force capable of achieving disarmament will only exist when it is connected to the everyday concerns of ordinary people.

In this connection, I believe that it ought to be recognised that almost everyone is aware of the nuclear danger. Indeed it is a matter for optimism that opinion polls show this, together with a significant Australian opposition to nuclear war. Of course not everyone who is aware of the nuclear danger can rattle off all the facts and figures or string together all those symbols like ICBM, MAD, MIRV, ACBM. Expertise in technical arguments, so loved by military strategists and arms control negotiators and often taken up with such vigour by men in the disarmament movement may just be one more way to make ordinary people feel that they are inadequate to the task, that we may be safe with experts who “understand” and that we must accept to live with the bomb.

It might be worth saying that in some disarmament actions where women predominate, much of the technical argument is set aside and words are given a more human meaning. As an example, in the early arrests at Greenham Common, women were “bound over to keep the peace”. Some refused on the logical grounds that their actions were to keep the peace while those who arrested them and brought them before the courts had something other than keeping the peace in mind.

My point is that movement activists sometimes display a certain arrogance towards all those people out in the community who don’t come to demonstrations. We assume that they don’t know the facts or don’t care. But
it does not impress most people to be told that the nuclear arsenals are capable of killing everyone on earth a dozen times or more since common sense tells you that you really can only die once.

The enormity of the problem of dismantling the nuclear war machines cannot be underestimated either. Simple solutions, no matter how attractive they may seem to those who propose them, are just not on. It might look good on a poster to say: Take the nuclear weapons out of the hands of the imperialists or out of the hands of the Americans or out of Reagan's hands if that is your analysis of the source of nuclear war threats. It might look good to say US Bases out a preference I share, or No nuclear weapons, east or west, which happens to be my particular preference. But the problem is that most of us do not even know what a nuclear weapon looks like, whether manufactured in the east or west. Even if we did know where they are stored it is not very likely that we could snatch them away from those who control them and it is doubtful that we would know what to do with them if we did.

This is not to trivialise a crucial issue but to stress that most people, including many people who are committed to action to end the threats of nuclear war, do not have much confidence that they can do anything very effective about this problem. Simple solutions often increase their doubts.

The need to connect daily concerns with the fundamental question of nuclear disarmament is not some phoney addition which seeks to convince people that there is an immediate and demonstrable connection between, say, being unemployed and the existence of United States military facilities in Australia, although it is worth noting that economic crisis followed by war has been a more obvious pattern in contemporary history than economic crisis followed by successful socialist revolution.

What really faces those who know the world and our society could be more rational, more just, more humane and more safe is that large numbers of people need to develop the confidence as individuals, as social groups, as classes, as nations, so that they can exercise some control over their lives, make meaningful choices and influence events.

In one sense, this notion has been one of the important plusses for marxism wherever renovations have taken place. In theory, and sometimes in practice, Australian marxists have contributed to a new politich which stresses the right to exercise control and the development of a democratic political practice. It should be said, however, that much of the credit for this renovation belongs not to the marxists but to the women's movement, in all of its diversity. Perhaps this is because there is a connection between exercising one's right to control one's own body and exercising one's right to live.

But people who cannot be certain that they have sufficient control over their situation to be sure that they will have a job next week and people who do not even know where to turn when they are subjected to domestic violence or racial discrimination are not likely to have much confidence that they can effectively tackle such big questions of world politics as nuclear war, imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. If there is to be a perfect solution we will always miss out. We have to be in the actual political processes and forget about a great day which will never come. If the process involves complication as, for example in the disarmament movement in Australia where the labor government has set its parameters within ANZUS we should not sit on the sidelines with our correct political line intact but rather find the ways to develop understanding and actions which can alter present options. It has been done before — in the Vietnam war — it can be done again.

Here it is not possible to do more than indicate some directions which I think must be taken if there is to be a new phase for marxism but it is important to add that unity is not a dirty word.

The most successful movements of our time, not least the disarmament movement and the women's movement, are noted for a plurality of views and actions. Perhaps the very success of these movements derives from the fact that uniformity and conformity are not demanded but plurality is welcomed. Within a broad concept there is no insistence on that famous correct line.

The socialist movement, such as it is, remains divided within itself and from the wider movement. Perhaps it is the fact that the forces against us are so powerful that we find it easier to fight among ourselves — to blame the women's movement, the gays, the blacks, the CPA, the ALP, the SPA or one or other brand of Trotskyism for our difficulties, anyone but ourselves. Unity cannot be imposed and certainly can't be negotiated by leaders, however defined, but if we keep on trying to focus on perceptions of our enemies while we are acting in our various ways to give expression to the real and genuine movements for justice and democracy, for peace and disarmament, to end exploitation and oppression, it may become easier to work together. This would not end differences or the discussion of differences but it might put them in a more useful perspective, that is, determining what is primary and what is not.
In general, discussions in the labor movement ought to be concerned to inform rather than confront the various sectional interests of the movement. As an example it would surely be more useful to organise a round table discussion between feminists and some male trade union activists where each explained their positions than to continue the many separate discussions in pubs, clubs, conferences and seminars where each section of the movement complains of the other and attributes every possible evil motive to those who don't agree with them. The forces arrayed against us all are enormous, we should not, therefore, dissipate our limited strength but conserve it for the real battles against those who exploit us and seek to destroy us. Without that perspective the next years, one, ten or a hundred, will continue to be determined by capital and will be rather gloomy. Marx's legacy, and we ourselves, deserve better than that.

Mavis Robertson is a member of the National Committee of the CPA and a member of the ALR collective.

Waiting for the Revolution?

My comments concern that part of the left which, broadly speaking, is informed by a marxist theory of society while working as part of a labor government and being concerned with the work that society generates for such departments as Youth and Community Services.

The dilemmas we face today have a long history. There are fundamental contradictions in our society which are the major cause of economic misery and suffering. To overcome such contradictions requires very radical, deep social change but we have learnt through our own experiences that there are definite limits to "parliamentary socialism" which the forces of capital will not allow to be breached.

So here I am in agreement with the revolutionary left and against the Fabian conception of socialism. But then I disagree with the revolutionary left when it comes to a choice of one's practical political activity. The choice, as old as marxism, essentially comes down to either deciding to be a pure revolutionary and work only for the end of capitalism or deciding to work within the capitalist system on the basis of a judgement that pure revolutionary activity is both futile and irrational in the current situation. The left in the labor party makes the latter choice, estimating that revolution is so far off, it would seem, that to act as if it was near or could be realised in the near future through practical activity, is political folly.

The choice often is not clearcut. The rhetoric of one's option is often mixed with the practice of the other. But I think a coherent position can be maintained for the left, even if, at times, the choices all seem rather distasteful.

It is realised that by working in the parliamentary system which is set within a capitalist economic system, fundamental exploitation cannot be resolved. This is the task of revolution. Nevertheless, if present-day practice cannot bring the possibility of revolution nearer just now it is important to take all available opportunities to alleviate suffering and inequality. I am arguing that as there is no current possibility for revolution then suffering has to be treated from within the political system, with all the compromise that this necessarily implies. Thus work, as in youth and community services, seeks to tackle problems of homelessness, unemployment, isolation, hunger, the lack of opportunity to care for children, the violence which poverty engenders. Now all these problems can be traced back to the inequalities created by capitalism but revolutionary activity is neither halting these missions nor enhancing the value of socialism. Our historical predicament is that only by the changes that can be achieved within capitalism can the values of socialism be furthered. Such changes are limited and do not go to the prime cause, but they do stop the worst excesses of economic degradation.

So while I do not believe that socialism will be achieved by parliamentary or social welfare means I do believe that reformist practice is the only moral choice which history allows. In other words, the desire to end capitalism has a moral motivation.

Ann Symonds

Ann Symonds
A familiar argument against this position is that if reforms did not take place, if labor parties and trade unions did not compromise with capitalism to alleviate the wrongs of the system, then revolution would result. In other words activity for reform is seen as anti-revolutionary. This argument has an initial and obvious appeal but experience tends to deny it. When there is an economic crisis there is no consequent rise in the expectancy of revolution. If the argument was valid the revolution would be the nearer the more people would suffer. But this is not the case.

The revolutions that have occurred have taken place in non-western, non-industrialised countries, amidst a complex pattern of historical circumstances. It is a failure of marxism that is cannot explain these historical facts. This is a source of the much publicised crisis of marxism.

It is a convenient but simplistic argument to claim that reforms halt the "inevitable" revolution. I would further contend that the parliamentary/trade union activity for reform maintains a revolutionary potential by preserving an element of class consciousness in times of capitalist strength. Even if it is only in a small way, the labor movement does uphold a sense of class against those forces of capitalism which seek to impose a social consciousness of the isolated individual. And some reforms do maintain the idea in the community that social change to improve and determine one's own life is possible.

The consciousness of self-determination has to be continued, even if in a limited form, as a basis for future radical change. So rather than being anti-revolutionary, the labor movement keeps up a certain consciousness on which any future revolution will depend. In our times it is not such activities which stifle some imminent revolution but without such practice the socialist tradition is in danger of being lost at any popular level.

Our historical experiences rule out the Fabian conception of achieving socialism but also deny the political practice of the pure revolutionary. With the revolution so far beyond any foreseeable future, the only rational and valid political practice is within the political system of capitalism. It is here that the values of socialism are pursued and only in this way can the prime constituents of a socialist consciousness be preserved.

On such a basis I think it is possible to maintain a position within a labor government and a concern primarily with social welfare and still see society and history in marxist terms.

As for the future, to speculate about marxism in another hundred years is a very un-marxist thing to do. Marx never went in for such futurology, at least not in detail.

But in the near future, the danger seems to me that the marxist tradition could be lost. One role of the left should be to try to maintain that tradition. It should be kept alive for the essential insights it provides to the nature of capitalism. And it should be upheld in the labor party left because, if a revolution is ever to eventuate, it will be due to a popular labor movement, not to a few academics or revolutionaries. Of course the labor left should always try to halt other forces of oppression at work in society, whether they fit into a marxist analysis or not.

In summary I believe that if the labor movement does not maintain some sort of marxist or socialist perspective then marxism, as an historical force in Australia, will die. And, conversely, without marxism, the labor movement would be hollow and would offer no effective resistance to capitalism. The resistance now offered may be small but it may be all we can do and, as I have tried to say, we should do it.
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Jack Mundey outlines the rapid depletion of non-renewable resources and the widening gap in both wealth and consumption, between the advanced industrialised and third world countries. He argues that if there is to be any chance to establish a degree of global egalitarianism the control of transnational corporations must be broken and future socialism ecologised. This means self-managed forms of socialism concentrating on the building of a sustainable economy based on the genuine needs of people and not on growthmania and a slavish bowing to a consumer ethic.

**GROWTHMANIA OR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY**

Marx's analysis of capitalism in the 19th century was brilliant. The basic tenets still hold as the 20th century concludes. Marx, Engels and other revolutionaries had a vision of a humane society in which genuine egalitarian values would be applied, poverty and capitalism abolished and the working class would be decisive in fashioning a new socialist society.

Human beings could then begin an all-round development — economically, politically, socially and culturally.

Those hopes haven't been fulfilled. Even those countries which have abandoned capitalism have failed to measure up to Marx's vision.

In the mid to late 19th century, Marx could not have been as concerned with ecology as he would be now, for the simple reason that the myriad pressures on the eco-system which are so apparent to us did not exist at that time.

Marx, however, was not oblivious of the restrictions of nature. The first premise of human history, of course, is the existence of living human individuals. The first fact to be established, then is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relationship to the rest of nature, he said, adding Communism as completed naturalism is humanism, and as completed humanism, naturalism.

Given the much lower pressures on nature at that time, it is understandable that Marx was less concerned then than he would have been a century later. It can hardly be doubted that if he were alive now he would give a higher priority to population and ecological problems. For example, the total population of the world was then the same as that of China now. Three-quarters of the world was still unsettled by Europeans. Part of North America, Australia and Asia were just being penetrated and much of Africa was still unknown to Europeans.

The first half of this century saw economic growth falter as the great depression threw capitalism into a giant spin. The depression virtually continued until World War II.

Technology unleashed for destruction in 1939-45 was transferred to "peaceful" use after 1945 and between then and 1973, capitalism experienced an unprecedented and prolonged boom.

There was production of consumer durables which gave rapid rise to the material living standards in all the industrialised world. Saturation advertising force-fed the consumer revolution.

In the three-quarters of this century the world output of goods and services increased by over four percent per year.

Oil played a central role in this century's third quarter economic boom. Between 1950 and 1973 yearly world oil production increased from less than four billion barrels to over 20 billion. This record growth in oil output, and the associated growth in natural gas, fuelled a record growth in world economic output.

In addition to making overall economic growth easy, cheap oil revolutionised agriculture, spawning spectacular gains in food output. Although the frontiers of agricultural land had largely disappeared by 1950, world grain output doubled between then and 1973. This unprecedented doubling of the world grain harvest raised output per person 31 percent and improved diets throughout the world.
The key to this record growth in food output was chemical fertiliser based on oil and natural gas. Between 1950 and 1973 the world’s farmers increased their use of chemical fertiliser fivefold, paralleling the fivefold increase in world oil production during the same period. In this same period, world population increased from 2.5 billion to 4 billion people.

Closely tied to oil, automobile production rose rapidly. In 1950, there were 50 million vehicles registered in the world. In 1980 the figure was a staggering 400 million.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the gallant Vietnamese resistance to aggression, and the oil crisis of ‘73 profoundly affected world capitalism and basic economic activities slowed. The “magical boom” was ending.

On a world-wide per capita basis, the decade of the ’70s saw the output of fish, beef and grain peak and decline. The same was the case with the two most widely used fuels, oil and wood.

Population is now approaching five billion, and humanity is moving into uncharted territory.

The relationship between population size and the sustainable yield of the earth’s biological resources system is uncertain and to an extent unpredictable.

However, with the ongoing depletion of readily accessible non-renewable resources and the widespread deterioration of the economy’s biological support systems, economic growth has slowed markedly. Bourgeoning population and immense resources usage in the last 30 years are having a lasting impact on our finite globe.

"GROWTHMANIA" OR A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

or most of humanity, particularly those people in industrialised countries, the century’s third quarter was a prosperous one. At four percent per year, economic growth exceeded that of even the fastest growing populations. Overall global economic growth was more than double population growth, and from 1950 to 1973 living standards rose throughout the industrialised world.

However, few stopped to calculate that a four percent rate of economic growth, if sustained, would lead to a fiftyfold expansion in a century.

Even fewer considered the pressures this would put on the world’s resources, both renewable and non-renewable.

At the same time, population is rising rapidly. Even the most optimistic demographers agree that there isn’t any chance of stabilising world population at a figure less than 10 billion in the first part of the 21st century.

New economic trends call for dramatic attention to population policies to avoid declines in consumption levels. Political leaders in a few countries have already begun to grasp this. Unfortunately, all too many have not.

Surely we must consider what production and consumption is desirable and necessary. The rich industrialised countries consume far more resources than the third world. For example, the USA with only 6 percent of the world’s population consumes 36 percent of resources annually.

Unfettered growth must be replaced by production for social use, and marxists should play a greater role in raising the need to stabilise and then reduce total population if we are to have any possibility of global stability and respect for future inhabitants.

Likewise, we should oppose human chauvinism and fight for a harmonious relationship with other forms of animal and plant life on this small planet. In fact, human survival depends on this happening.

Capitalist economists continue to view the economic system as a mechanical process in which supply and demand functions are continually readjusting to each other in forward and backward motions like swings of a pendulum. Pick up any introductory economics text book and it will tell you that economics is nothing more than the give and take of supply and demand curves.

While socialist economists reject the market mechanism, they agree with the capitalist economists that the overall economic environment is never depleted. As to where the new supply is supposed to come from, both capitalist and socialist economists assume that new technology can always find a way to locate and exploit previous untapped resources. The resource base itself is considered inexhaustible.

Professor Herman Daly, in Towards a Steady State Economy, succinctly explains "growthmania":

Growthmania counts the costs of economic growth as benefits. We take the real costs of increasing GNP as measured by the defensive expenditures incurred to protect ourselves from the unwanted side effects of our production as benefits. We take the real costs of increasing GNP as measured by the defensive expenditures incurred to protect ourselves from the unwanted side effects of our production as benefits.
effects of production, and then add these expenditures to GNP rather than subtract them.

We count the real costs as benefits — this is hypergrowthmania. Since the nett benefit of growth can never be negative in this Alice-in-Wonderland accounting system, the rule becomes 'grow forever', or at best until it kills you — and then count your funeral expenses as further growth. This is terminal hypergrowthmania. Is the water table falling? Dig deeper wells, build bigger pumps and up goes the GNP! Mines depleted? Build more expensive refineries to process lower grade ores, and up goes GNP! Soil depleted? Produce more fertiliser, etc. As we press against the carrying capacity of our physical environment, these 'extra effort' and 'defensive' expenditures (which are really costs masquerading as benefits) will loom larger and larger. This creates the illusion of becoming better off when in actuality we are becoming worse off.

If any society cannot adequately employ all citizens desiring work, society should treat the unemployed in exactly the same manner as the employed.

Automation and technology must be used in the interests of the entire population. Clearly 'work' must be redefined. New methods of distributing wealth must be accepted and unashamedly promoted as both moral and ethical and at the same time economically necessary and justified.

Arrogant slogans such as "conquering nature and using nature for man's benefit" must be replaced by "humans learning to live in a more harmonious way with the rest of nature".

Ecological sanity and population equilibrium are areas of marxist neglect in the 20th century. They cannot be neglected now if humankind is to survive in a civilised manner in the 21st century.
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One of the largest underground coking coal mines operating in the Illawarra region is at South Bulli and is operated by the Bellambi Coal Company, on behalf of the owners Shell Australia, McIlwraith McEacharn, and AMP. The jobs of the 800 South Bulli miners hang in the balance as the mineowners reconsider their investment options.

The Combined Mining Unions Committee at South Bulli approached the Wollongong Workers Research Centre in December 1982 for a report on Shell’s corporate strategy in coal and the immediate past profitability of the South Bulli mine.

That report was released in April 1983 and is now available to the general public. A wide range of issues is covered in the report including Shell’s coal strategy, the way the recession is being used to introduce new technology and the various advantages of joint venture operations to this.

The report is a must for all those interested in keeping up with developments in the coal industry and the attempt by the oil TNCs to develop an oligopoly over the entire energy field.

**TASMANIA: THE SQUEEZE**

*Social Wage Committee, Tasmania, 1982, $0.60.*

If you have ever thought that there was more to Tasmania than dams, but weren’t really sure, then this booklet is for you. It sets out in a readable and accessible fashion a brief sketch of Tasmania’s political economy. It goes some of the way to explaining why such a large proportion of the organised working class in Tasmania, see the problem, as Bruce Petty so aptly put it, as “the flooding of the workforce below middle class”.

In the style of *Australia on the Rack*, this booklet is worth much more than sixty cents. Buy it, read it, and give it to a greenie.

Available good left bookshops, or Social Wage Committee, P.O. Box 196, North Hobart.

"Unemployment happens to real people, not to an amorphous mass called ‘The unemployed’", so says Turner in the introduction to *Stuck*. In the tradition of Wendy Lowenstein’s brilliant *Weevils in the Flour* this book is the oral history of more than 30 unemployed Victorians. The book is valuable for it covers unemployed workers from a very wide variety of backgrounds, and the stories of the 16 unemployed women workers, is particularly useful in reminding us that the working class is not a masculine entity.

Turner reminds us of the dreadful isolation that competing for so few jobs can engender among those out of work: "At job interviews sometimes there are eight or nine girls, all waiting in the same room, which is terrible...In your heart you feel for each girl, but you just want to come out on top" (Alison, aged 20). The book as a whole reflects this, because of course its real. Nonetheless, unemployed people are also angry as well as fearful, strong as well as intimidated, resolute, as well as timid, and perhaps the former personal qualities don’t come through quite as clearly as the latter. Maybe this is because the research work was done, as far as I can tell, early in 1982 or late in 1981. December 1982, of course, was the turning point, and the fight back is now well and truly on.

Nonetheless, Turner should be congratulated for *Stuck*, is a fine book. It can be well deployed in a teaching situation, and should be forcefully thrust upon bigotted workmates and relatives.

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**SHELL MOVES IN**

*Wollongong Workers Research Centre Report No 20 April 1983, $3.50*

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**TASMANIA**

*Penguin, 1983, $6.95*
"I have the impression (some feminists) are relying too much on an existentialist concept of woman, a concept that attaches a guilt complex to the maternal function. Either one has children, but that means one is not good for anything else, or one does not, and then it becomes possible to devote oneself to serious undertakings."

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