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EDITOR: David Burchell. PRODUCTION EDITOR: Caroline Humphreys. BUSINESS MANAGER: Mike Ticher.
REVIEWS: Caroline Humphreys and Ros Bragg. ACCOUNTS: Mike Ticher DISTRIBUTION: Internews, 1 Seddon Street, Bankstown, NSW 2200 DESIGN: Ros Bragg. COVER GRAPHIC: Ros Bragg. TYPESETTING: Gloria Garton. SPECIAL THANKS: Stuart Shepherd, David Turner.
PRINTER: Spotpress, 105-107 Victoria Road, Marrickville 2204. PUBLISHED BY: Red Pen Publications, 1st Floor, 6a Nelson St, Annandale 2038.

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This is particularly noticeable in the United States, Japan and Germany, while Britain is in severe recession.

There has been a substantial reduction in nominal interest rates, though real interest rates have not fallen as far because of the decline in inflation. The most recent fall in interest rates led to a devaluation of the exchange rate, desirably and appropriately, but still not by enough. While these are important contributions to recovery, interest rate cuts alone are inadequate, for, as is widely noted, they are like pushing on a piece of string.

The November employment statement was particularly well-targeted: on TAFE and universities, transport infrastructure, labour market programs, research and development, industrial development and trade promotion programs. Every one of those allocations was entirely appropriate. The problem was that the total package and each of the allocations for those areas was inadequate. The package totalled $440 million or about $310 million net of the positive impact on employment.

(The week before, the British conservative government also announced an employment package. Britain has a population three and a half times that of Australia, and is in a somewhat similar current account and fiscal position. Yet the British program was for £11 billion—that is, about $27 billion: sixty times larger than our November package. If the Australian government were to adopt a comparable stance, outlays would be increased by about $7.5 billion.)

So fiscal policy should be aimed in a similar way to the November statement—that is, at programs which would both stimulate economic growth and employment, and improve national productivity and exports.

There is no shortage of high priority potential infrastructure projects. There has been little investment on rail for well over a decade, leaving a major backlog of maintenance, let alone desirable improvements. Many intercity highways need upgrading, notably the Pacific High-way north of Newcastle. The construction of urban ring roads would reduce delays. Provision of water and sewerage systems are inadequate in several Australian cities. A central element of the expansionary policies must be increased capital and recurrent expenditure on TAFE and universities. This year 160,000 people who have applied for places in TAFE will be unsuccessful.

In all the areas of highest priority, the multiplier is substantial, because the import leakage is small. There is no risk of additional public sector borrowing crowding out the private sector, because private borrowing is so flat. With a low inflation rate, we can provide a substantial fiscal stimulus and keep interest rates down at the same time. That need not be inflationary provided the Accord continues.

Defence cuts would responsibly make a contribution to these outlays. We are currently spending more than four times as much per capita on defence than Indonesia. All major Western countries are cutting their defence outlays. The United States has just announced further cuts, and major reductions of military expenditure are under way in Germany and Britain too.

There is no case for tax cuts at a time when Australia should be improving and expanding community services, and we have one of the lowest proportions of revenue collection to GDP amongst Western countries. An expenditure-wage trade-off would be appropriate at present; certainly not a tax-wage trade-off.

There is a simple theme to this memo. It was expressed recently by Professor Russell Mathews: “When there are so many Australians who desperately need jobs, and so many jobs desperately need doing, it does not require great ingenuity to use each problem as a means of solving the other. What is necessary is an end to ideologically-based policies to frustrate all attempts to achieve this result”.

JOHN LANGMORE is the federal member for Fraser.
And what a queen she is. A regal Samuel Johnson, no Danton. For­
history the way other nations do. We bouts of bragging followed by sulky
Australians. As a nation, we're un­
We're terminal adolescents, us
person, an autocrat in the style of
have no Thomas Jefferson, no

And what a queen she is. A regal
person, an autocrat in the style of
Elizabeth the First or even Victoria,
turned her mind was quite suf­
ence, we do have a queen.

Imagine, for example, if the queen got
it into her head that no sensible per­
needed to travel. Imagine that she
had decided her mind was quite suf­
ance, and yet she battles on. And
look at her dress sense: polyester to
the end. I remember once, in Scot­
land, finding myself at the side of the
road along which the royal motor­
cade was about to travel. The cars
came rushing toward me, too fast to
distinguish who was riding where.
But, just when it seemed my brush
with the house of Windsor would be
irrevocably blurred, I suddenly
noticed a bright orange glow. It was
the Queen clad in one of her more
electric outfits. She would have been
visible from 20 kilometres or more,
casting off light like the aftermath of

And what about the scarves? You
know, the ones dragged over her
head and knotted under her chin in
the style of Mrs Hilda Gronk, circa
1952. They were fashionable back
then, and useful for protecting less
permanent waves from inclem­
tent weather. What’s her excuse now,
apart from a stubborn reluctance to
wave goodbye to the age of the Mor­
is Minor? She must be the only per­
son who was actually there who is
nostalgic for Britain after the war. But
that's our queen. It's as though she
dressed from op-shops; all frocks and
oversized gumboots. She shows a
relentless affection for normalcy, 50s
suburban style.

This astonishingly ordinary aesthetic
sense is reinforced by her bland sense
of occasion. She is said to enjoy the
ceremonial side of her job, though she
seldom shows it. Instead, the queen’s
face is generally set in a mask of en­
durance. She stands there in her sen­
sible shoes, while the speeches are
being made and the curtains are
being drawn, rocking slightly back
and forward, her mouth set, her eyes
focused neutrally somewhere in the
middle distance. Her boredom is ob­
vious, and yet she battles on. And
don’t we admire her for it? “It
wouldn’t be much of a life would it?”
we cluck at one another. “I feel sorry
for her, really.” As if she were one of
us.

But, of course she isn’t. We know
nothing of her world view, if indeed
she has one, and less of her character
and personality. It’s all rumour and
conjecture the stories of how she
crashed with Margaret Thatcher and
how fond she was of Ronald Reagan.
She is a blank space, a void, into
which we project what we will. She
can be a battler, or a stateswoman: it
makes no difference to her.

And perhaps therein lies the key to
her popularity in Australia. We look
at her and we are transported back to
the 50s. We see her scarf and we think
of bumper wool prices and the first
cars built in Australia. As long as she
keeps her mouth shut we’re happy.

We’ve never liked thinking people,
after all. Our prototype intellectuals
were hard-drinking, self-consciously
prole boys of the 1890s the Lawsons
and the Patersons, the ones popularly
perceived to speak in our own lan­
guage. We don’t like it when someone
tells how we should be thinking. We
prefer to worship at the feet of our
own image.

WANDA JAMROZIK writes the
'Today's People' column for the Sydney
Morning Herald.
been introduced, nothing has been drastically reduced. However, demand.

January was to introduce a 'demand' ing. The wide differential between people's savings are daily diminish­

Now the queues are reduced and the fact that the other two neces­sary elements of the reform 'troika', stabilisation and privatisation, are to follow only after a long wait, makes its chances of success, from a purely economic point of view, small. The intention of the price increases of 1 January was to introduce a 'demand' side reform into the economy: to replace a distribution system based on low prices, goods shortages and queuing with a rationing system based on prices. The 'rouble overhang' of personal savings, which gobbled up any and all consumer goods which appeared on shop shelves, was to be reduced so that producers could respond rationally to changing prices and hence personal demand.

The impact of the price hikes to Rus­sians, in psychological and practical terms, can scarcely be overestimated. Gas, rent and electricity have increased by a factor of three. Basic staples increased in price two or three times or more between December and January, and most manufactured goods are now well beyond the reach of Russian rouble-earners. To give a few examples. The price of a kilo of salami rose from 3.6 roubles a year ago to 24R in December and then again to 75 roubles in January. The price of ten eggs rose from 1.4 R to 9R and then to 24R in December and then again to 45R. The price of a litre bottle of vodka rose from 12 roubles to 65R between December and January. Furthermore, many increases have been entirely arbitrary in nature, based more often on guesswork and cabal on behalf of retailers, rather than market forces. In no sense can the new prices be perceived as fair or even rational. And the Russians themselves are very aware of this.

When these figures are compared to the monthly earnings of Soviet citizens, things start to look very grim indeed. The minimum monthly wage is presently 340R; pensioners receive 342R per month; the average working wage is around 650R per month; while Yeltsin and Gorbachev now receive official salaries of 4,000R per month (plus many perks). Thus a pen­sioner theoretically could use up his or her entire monthly pension in buying six chickens or six bottles of vodka. In reality there are some mitigating factors. First, most Soviet citizens do have substantial rouble savings. Second, most households possess a considerable stock (zapas) of hoarded staples. Third, relatives from outside Moscow and supplies from personal dachas provide some relief.

Nevertheless reserves of roubles and supplies cannot last forever—nor can vegetables harvested six months ago. The real bite on living standards is likely to come over the next two months, by which time these forms of personal insurance will have been stripped away. If by then the current relationship of wages to prices remains unchanged hunger will, per­force, become widespread. If Yeltsin can deliver on stabilisation in June the cheap goods are likely to be snapped up by those few with roubles, and sold back to poorer unfortunates at a higher price (a similar process is going on with foreign food aid now). Al­ready life is daily becoming tougher, more unpleasant. The tension on the Moscow streets, in shops and in food queues is palpable, occasionally erupting into shouting matches and, in one recent case in Siberia, some deaths.

Since the radical Albalkin plan was mooted two years ago the Soviet press has discussed exhaustively the reasons why a price reform simply could not work without the supporting planks of privatisation and stabilisation. Yeltsin led protests against Gorbachev's price increase proposals on the grounds that they would simply inject new life into a failed economic mechanism at the ex­ pense of ordinary people's living stan­dards. Thanks to the intensive media debate of recent years the general public comprehends very well the idiocy of this solitary action in the absence of other supporting policies. In response a witch hunt for scapegoats to explain the extraordinary policy of implementing crushing price increases into an unreformed economy is daily conducted in the Soviet press. Geidar, Yeltsin's deputy prime minister, has occasionally
donned the black cape of the villain, but the Russian parliament more often collectively assumes the role.

Anxious to satisfy the heightened expectations fed by the defeat of the August 1991 Putschists, and impelled by his impulsive and lurching desire for political activity, Boris Yeltsin pushed ahead with this hasty partial economic reform without ensuring the necessary legislative co-operation of the Russian parliament in favour of the privatisation program. This is sheer political blackmail directed against a conservative but democratic coalition, but the implementation of this program, duly approved a privatisation program, but the implementation of this decision is likely to take some time.

In the meantime, Yeltsin has promised an impossible improvement in living standards from the middle of next year. A backlash of frustration and anger is well-nigh inevitable; Yeltsin can delay its political consequences only for a certain time. He could raise wages, to make the sacrifices made from 1 January look like a bad joke, or he could try to shift blame. He can point the bony finger at Geidar, his chief economist, or any of the 'Kamikaze Economists' who surround him. He could—as Gavril Popov did recently—blame his own parliament. When the inevitable difficulties of implementing privatisation mount, the old nomenklatura can be duly wheeled out for a last turn at a dastardly sabotaging role. How long this process would continue depends on his political skill. What we can say, judging by Yeltsin’s past political record, is that if his political future is on the line, he is unlikely to go quietly, as Gorbachev did. He is a political streetfighter, and his power struggles have always been protracted and destabilising; this was true of the lead-up to his fall from grace in 1987, and his meteoric rise thereafter.

If Yeltsin’s struggles become too destabilising he is, however, likely to arouse the opposition of those who are struggling for control of the new wealth in Russia: the emerging, indigenious bourgeoisie. For this social group the fate of Yeltsin in itself is of little concern. Their activity is predominantly short-term, speculative or export oriented and to a great extent parasitic of the domestic economy. Their interest is in continued stability, not disruptive reform. In the longer term it is only by accommodating or taming the new nomenklatura that Yeltsin can survive.

The fascination surrounding Yeltsin is thus to some extent a smokescreen which shrouds the damaging activity of the Russian business class. Unimpeded by communist—or any other kind of—controls, and devoid of any Tory ruling class type conscience, entrepreneurs are well placed to take advantage of the current political turmoil. This new breed ranges from Moscow Mayor Gavril Popov, an academic five years ago and now one of the wealthiest men in Russia, to the sons of old communists who recently purchased Moscow TV facilities at bargain basement prices, to the state employee flogging stolen beer off the back of a truck. For them, the existing profit extracted from the illogicalities of the hopelessly corrupt mixed command-market system is at least as good as anything a properly functioning market could offer.

For all that was written of the flowering of civil society under perestroika, the Soviet polity remains behaviourally a subject culture and a prime target for manipulation by self-interested elites. While as individuals Russians impress with their education and sophisticated culture, the legacy of communism weighs heavily against their effective, collective, political action. For seven long decades of Soviet power, Russians had heard promises, hoped for improvements, and been disappointed. Perestroika accelerated the process, and married it to a steady deterioration in living standards. Right now, Russians are absorbed in the hardly trivial question of day-to-day survival. The evidence of apathy is clear in the current popularity of inward-looking or past glorifying pastimes—anything rather than face the present. Theatres are playing to packed houses, depression fodder: Noel Coward and Oscar Wilde comedies, or solid pre-revolutionary pieces. Soft porn and detective novels are for sale at every metro, and religion, in particular Hare Krishna, is drawing many new converts.

Of course, discussing politics remains a favourite Russian pastime and their grasp of it would surely put most Australians to shame. Beyond chatter there are, however, no unifying ideas to rival the rallying cry of the democrats prior to August: Let’s destroy Communism’. Political action is a luxury reserved for a small number of committed intellectuals. In a society thoroughly atomised by Communism, people’s outlooks have become by necessity very parochial. The unit of identification here is not of class, or region, but the clan: that small group of contacts, family and friends, whom one must cultivate and trust to get by here. Wider identification may well develop over time though, one suspects, not via the importation of foreign notions of multi-party democracy, but through the harsh school of exploitation.

It is thus only within this constellation of forces in today’s Russia—of politicians who regard political office as meal tickets, emerging capitalists operating untramelled by government authority or public opinion, and a still largely homogeneous, passive, polity—that we can profitably examine the question of Yeltsin’s political future. Which begs the question; if Yeltsin goes, who cares?

PETER FEENEY, a researcher at the Soviet Studies Centre at Melbourne University, is at present studying in Moscow.
Last December the federal government released the final reports of the working groups which had been commissioned to spell out what ‘ecologically sustainable development’ might mean for Australia over the next few decades. The production of nine sectoral reports plus the collection of ‘executive summaries’ was the culmination of an intense and—in an Australian context—a unique process of consultation between government, business, union and conservation groups about the reconciliation of economic development and environmental conservation.

Yet after all this hard work the ESD reports caused barely a ripple of public discussion. At the time, we were all too caught up with the GST package and the ALP leadership drama it precipitated to pay much attention to ESD. So, at the beginning of 1992, does it mean that the GST package represents the future of Australian politics, and ESD—whose chief sponsors after all were John Kerin and Bob Hawke—might already be consigned to its past?

I doubt it. Whatever the fortunes of the GST package in the short term, ESD is here to stay. ‘Sustainable development’—the serious integration of environmental priorities into mainstream social and economic policy-making—is firmly on the global political agenda. The catalogue of environmental problems brought about by continued industrial development won’t go away.

And whatever the preoccupations of Australian policy-makers, the challenge of reconciling economic and environmental demands is reshaping global political institutions. This coming June in Rio, 150 world leaders and around 30,000 participants will meet for an ‘Earth Summit’, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which has the formal goal of producing global conventions on climate change and biodiversity, as well as formulating ‘Agenda 21’—a blueprint for ‘sustainable development’ into the 21st century.

‘ESD’ was a major part of the federal government’s response to the wave of environmental concern of the late 1980s. The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Culture, had led the way in promoting the concept of sustainable development. With a particular concern for the impact of Third World poverty on the global environment, the Brundtland Commission had argued that conservation and growth were interdependent rather than antithetical. Sustainable development was therefore an attractive concept for governments having to deal with anti-growth environmentalists. You could have growth and be green as well. In June 1990, the federal government issued its own discussion paper before establishing the more technically focused ‘working group’ phase in 1991.

After a brief period of public discussion about the general idea of ‘sustainable development’, the federal government established the nine working groups which were given the brief of applying a set of ESD principles to the areas of agriculture, energy production, energy use, fisheries, forestry, manufacturing, mining, tourism and transport. The membership of the various working groups was made up of representatives from federal and state bureaucracies, the relevant industry associations, unions, conservation and consumer organisations.

It is impossible adequately to summarise the recommendations. The reports vary in their coherence, degree of ‘greenness’ and in the applicability of their recommendations. The Agriculture report supported initiatives for ‘whole farm planning approaches’, the strengthening of integrated catchment management programs and extension of the kinds of community self help group activities already flourishing under the Decade of Landcare Plan. The Energy Production report was rather pale in its ‘greenness’, placing its hope in greater efficiency, pricing mechanisms, more competition and innovation in the energy supply sector, the choice of the most economically efficient fuel sources, and models of least cost planning, rather than any firm commitments to doing away with coal fired power stations and speeding up the diffusion of alternative renewable energy sources. The Energy Use report was greener in its more detailed attention to the greenhouse effect and acid rain.

The Forestry report recognised the ‘recent shift in values’ about forests and recommended a more efficient and dynamic timber and forest products industry—but the absence of the conservationist perspective was obvious and one would struggle to get from this report much of a feel for the often acrimonious debate about forest use in this country. The Manufacturing report linked the goal of environmental sustainability to the ‘clever country’ agenda of developing ‘a robust internationally competitive, export oriented manufacturing sector’ emphasising the positive commercial gains arising from new products and processes introduced for reasons of pollution control, waste management, energy efficiency and climate change. The Transport report talked about better vehicles and better fuels, but more importantly, addressed the need for co-ordinated approach to creating ‘better cities’ through greater use of urban villages, public transport and traffic calming.

Despite the difficulties in reaching consensus among often antagonistic interest groups, the ESD reports did represent a concerted attempt to develop a package of agreed measures which could make specific industry sectors more ecologically sustainable.
The prospects for wholesale implementation are not good, but at least they set some kind of foundation for a more serious, ongoing greening of Australian industry.

Why then has all this worthy policy work on issues of such enduring importance had such a muted reaction from the rest of us? The more obvious reason has to do with the phenomenon of (political) climate change. ESD was perhaps a victim of 'the issue attention cycle'. By 1991, the green awareness of the late 1980s had peaked, and the media had done as much as their ratings warranted to dramatise the environmental catastrophes that had been predicted for the next 50 years or so. Besides, by 1991 the economy was in deep recession. Debate about long-term environmental problems seemed a bit of a diversion from the real problems of jobs, investment and generating any kind of growth at all.

The change of political climate was perhaps outside the control of the Canberra bureaucrats managing the ESD process. However, they did have a lot to do with several other reasons for the reduced visibility of ESD.

The first was the very limited agenda set by the bureaucrats—an agenda which, as Val Brown and John Dargavel have observed, ignored most of the 'people' issues: employment, training, urban life, women's issues, immigration and multiculturalism. In midstream, the secretariat attempted to deal with some of these as 'intersectoral' issues (the final reports on these areas have yet to be released), but the fact remains that ESD was defined very narrowly in terms of the areas of primary and resource extractive industries. Also, notwithstanding the Prime Minister's directive to address 'the global dimension', the working groups had been largely preoccupied with national issues, thus deflecting some of the most basic challenges of ESD.

A second reason was the limited constituency involved in the ESD process. While the ESD broke new ground in involving elite representatives from industry, conservation and union sectors in the policy making process, it nonetheless created a relatively closed policy community.

Despite its avowed commitment to 'public consultation', the one day consultations in several centres around Australia following the release of the draft reports in August left many people with an active interest in ESD dissatisfied with the level of input.

The limited interest in ESD, Canberra-style, is also probably due to its highly constrained discourse. The environment is, after all, one of the great debates of late 20th century industrialised society. It raises questions of vision, of national purpose and of hope and despair about the future. It requires a public discourse about politics, ethics and religion, about the past and the future of European settlement in this land, and of our responsibilities to Australia's indigenous inhabitants. This kind of discourse is almost entirely absent from the ESD Reports.

To be fair, the constraints lay as much in the construction of the ongoing ESD process as in the working groups themselves. From the outset of the public debate in 1990, all of the major participants operated more or less uncritically within the dominant framework of market liberalism, ESD was interpreted technocratically as the 'finessing' of market processes in order to 'internalise' environmental externalities.

If the earlier phase of public discussion had been shaped by the discourse of market liberalism, the working group phase was dominated by the discourse of technical management. Environmental problems were conceived of in almost totally technical terms: no messy politics, no ideological passions, no political interests. The reports provide us with no interpretation of the past, no sense of understanding of how our cultural traditions and political and economic institutions have shaped our behaviour towards our natural environment. Needless to say, the reports are equally silent about how our traditions might need to change.

As a result, the ESD reports—like the Hawke government itself at the end of 1991—lacked any larger vision which could give political and cultural meaning to its economic policies. The business of government had been reduced to the technical tasks of fine tuning economic settings, leaving it to the market to provide any larger sense of national purpose. In comparison, even John Hewson's recycled Thatcherism seemed more visionary.

There is a risk that the inclination of the bureaucrats, the preoccupations of the politicians and the inattention of the electorate will allow ESD to languish, at least for a time. That would be a great pity, considering the work already done and the potential for developing the ESD consultative process further. Clive Hamilton, a policy researcher for the Resource Assessment Commission, has argued for the creation of an Office of ESD within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to continue the task of co-ordinating and developing ESD policies within the federal bureaucracy and consulting with state governments and major interest groups. Hamilton also favours the creation of a legislative framework in the form of a
Natural Resource Management Act which would establish the key principles and criteria of ESD, and establish environmental guidelines for development policies and proposals.

While such legislative and bureaucratic initiatives are essential, we still need a public debate about sustainable development which links the issue to other major policy issues. An Office of ESD could do much to further such a debate. The first item on the agenda would be to extend the discussion about ESD beyond the current focus on resource development. ESD is about people, about jobs, cities, communities, gender relations, production systems, industrial relations, the arts and so on. A key area is that of industry policy. Sadly, few of the movers and shakers in industry policy have seriously started to think green. Yet, as the ACF has pointed out, there are enormous investment opportunities and markets for ecologically adapted products and services.

Another agenda item is cities. Urban issues were dealt with in the ESD transport report, with recommendations for radical changes in land use and transport in our cities. Yet urban sustainability is not just about infrastructure, but also touches on questions of the quality of neighbourhoods, quality of life, levels of crime and access to educational, employment and other opportunities.

Eventually, the ESD agenda will need to shift from its currently nationalist concerns to a broader globalist orientation. After all, the really big problems of environmental sustainability have to do with the global economy, and are intimately connected with the huge disparities between the rich and the poor. Already, environmental issues are strengthening moves towards some form of world governance which could be more effective than the present UN. The global nature of problems such as the greenhouse effect, ozone depletion and acid rain has generated the political momentum for producing global conventions. Furthermore, the increased movement of large numbers of populations will mean that involvement in pre-emptive population management measures and more open migration policies will become part of the Australian ESD agenda. Sadly, in our current immigration debates, the environmental factor is used only as an argument to reduce our response to global population issues.

It should also not be beyond the wit and wisdom of an Office of ESD to facilitate the involvement of a much wider constituency in the ESD process. One of the disappointing aspects of the ESD process in 1991 was the lack of real recognition given to a wide range of local, regional and state activities concerned with reconciling development and environmental issues.

It is probably a bit much, however, to ask our Canberra technocrats to initiate a more philosophically reflective discussion about sustainable development. Nevertheless, someone has to do it, because ‘sustainable development’ remains a highly contestable term which more than a few people still regard as an oxymoron.

There is a lively philosophical debate about ‘the environment’ which floats around the edges of ESD, and which highlights the great metaphysical and spiritual divide between anthropocentrism and biocentrism. Advocates of ecofeminism, deep ecology, and the like attack the ‘dominant paradigm’ in the name of a ‘new environmental paradigm’ which they claim eschews the values of the domination of nature, patriarchy, mechanistic science and instrumental rationality in favour of non-intellective modes of experience and harmony with nature.

Sustainable development needs to be recognised as one important site among many in a multi-faceted debate about the future of liberal capitalism. With the collapse of centralised state socialism, liberalism, it seems, has become the unchallenged standard bearer for industrial progress. Yet the liberal vision of society, too, is under attack and a range of diverse ideological and political traditions, from civic republicanism, communitarianism, associational socialism, and feminism through to ecological naturalism and Christian radicalism jostle for attention.

Yet, as Boris Frankel has pointed out in his attack on ‘post-industrial utopians’, it is not enough for such traditions to offer a return to a simpler non-industrial past. They must deal with the real problems of maintaining the (industrial) life support systems for a global population of upwards of 10 billion people in the foreseeable future. It will mean the creation of political institutions and a moral environment—a public philosophy—which can provide the resources and guidance for transition towards a sustainable society.

Alan Durning has described the astonishing array of grass roots organisations around the world which are dealing with their situations of poverty and environmental degradation in creative ways. Yet as Durning points out, small may be beautiful, but by itself it is insignificant. There is a crucial role for mediating organisations—the non-government organisations which provide the backup resources for communities and which link them into larger networks of communication and sharing of resources and knowledge. A role for the Office of ESD?

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Royal Blues

The fact that the TV special marking the 40th anniversary of the accession of Elizabeth II set a new record for the highest rating show in British history, with an estimated 27 million viewers, demonstrates why only brief thoughts on the British monarchy are necessary. Notwithstanding the peccadilloes of the royal progeny and public gripes about the Queen herself, the vast majority of the British people are either benignly indifferent to or firmly supportive of both the present incumbent and the institution itself.

Hence, for a historian, the main interest lies in viewing the monarchy in a long-term perspective and deducing from some hints as to the origins of its present position.

For a start, it is self-evident that the British are very conscious of their own history. The monarchy goes back a very long way in that history, and played a large part in much of it. Hence, the present-day monarchy reeks of British history, personifies it and constantly evokes it. Continuity fosters stability, and adaptability fosters change without coercion. As Walter Bagehot commented of the aristocracy in the 1860s, so with the monarchy: its continued strength is not a bulwark against revolution, but a sign that it is highly unlikely. Moreover, there is something about both femininity and longevity in monarchs that engenders special loyalty, if not genuine popularity. Two out of the three previous monarchs who ruled for more than 40 years were women—Elizabeth I, who ruled for about 45 years, and Victoria, who holds the record at 64 years. George III managed 60 years, but has a mixed report card.

Given the erosion of its real political power, the strength of the monarchy clearly arises partly from its overtly non-partisan role, as an institution above sectional interests but nonetheless an integral part of the system. The Queen is the apex of the tripartite political machine of Crown, Lords and Commons, and has important constitutional functions within the parliamentary process. Although allowed only to consult or advise, encourage or praise, and warn, her continuous presence gives her influence. The Queen has so far had dealings with nine British prime ministers, not one of whom has taken her lightly. She also personifies the state, and ceremonially links the established Church, the armed forces, and various other organisations to the state, while the judiciary theoretically dispenses justice in her name. Honours such as knighthoods and peerages are awarded in her name. She, or members of her family, represent the state on a wide variety of occasions, both at home and overseas. Yet in all these things she projects an image of propriety, dignity, dedication and impartiality. It might be doubted whether an elected political figurehead could ever attain such a degree of acceptance and universality. Certainly most British observers feel that the way the monarchy has evolved historically and now works in theory and practice has contributed to, rather than detracted from, the quality of British liberal democracy.

Another major source of the strength of the British monarchy is its role as the pre-eminent symbol of national unity, the epitome of pomp and circumstance, and the centrepiece of spectacle and pageantry—a particular strength in this age of the global media circus. Its value as a lubricant of the machinery of domestic inter-relationships and a focus for national identification is enormous. It also assists overseas relationships, as well as contributing significantly to the tourist industry. Moreover, it contributes to continuity during times of change. During Elizabeth's reign, the nature of the British Commonwealth, the ethnic composition of the British people, and Britain's economic and political place in Europe and the world, have all changed considerably. The Queen has both played a part in this and remained a constant. She has travelled widely and met political and religious leaders of all sorts. Governments and their leaders have come and gone, while the Queen has kept on keeping on.

The third major source of the strength of the monarchy is undoubtedly the personality and performance of Elizabeth herself. Having become heir to the throne at the age of ten, when her father became King in 1936, she was trained for the position from childhood. She quickly developed the most important qualification for a successful monarch in the modern era, the willingness and ability to communicate with people and project a public image. She made her first radio
broadcast at 14 years of age. In her broadcast to the Commonwealth on reaching her majority she enunciated her frequently reiterated pledge, that the purpose of her life would be "service of our people". She is unlikely to abdicate in favour of Charles, since she says of her position, "It's a job for life." As television replaced radio as the major means of communication, she has become a household icon. Her serenity and sincerity are patent, and her former severity has been cleverly moderated. She is a consummate performer, at both the individual level and as the centrepiece of pageantry. The phrase "My husband and I" must be one of the best-known identifiers in Modern history. Royal 'occasions' are seen by hundreds of millions of people—about 750 million in the case of the wedding of Prince Charles. Her fortieth anniversary as Queen has been celebrated modestly, by Royal standards, but her Golden Jubilee in 2002 is likely to announce the survival of the British monarchy into the 21st century in the grand manner.

Finally, however, the strength of the monarchy is also an indicator of just how all-pervasive and self-perpetuating is Britain's class structure. The Royal Family, after all, is just the most eminent of the aristocratic families whose lineage is recorded in the Stud books of the peerage. It is worth remembering that of all the aristocracies in the world in the late 18th century, the British aristocracy has done far and away the best job of surviving and retaining influence. They are the only aristocracy to have their own house of parliament, and the fact that life peers constitute about half their number these days only makes the hereditary ones more exclusive. Their wealth and social, economic and political power is considerable. Their position is strengthened by the success of their chief. But that chief, by her lifestyle and ideas, also appeals greatly to the middle class, and even to most of the working class. The simultaneous transmission and manifestation of class consciousness in education, culture, the media, work and leisure, emphasises the virtues of the existing system and its acceptance by all classes. The 'value' of the monarch permeates everything.

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By the 1980s, however, that tradition had already waned. The bankruptcy of 'real, existing socialism' had leftist intellectuals disillusioned with socialism in general. When the wave of nationalism broke, it carried with it a shocking proportion of the country's academics and scholars. Today, where nationalism is the rule in every republic, opposition is mostly feeble and constructive debate is non-existent.

At the cutting edge of critical Yugoslav thought during the 1960s and 70s was the renowned Praxis school. A group of radical thinkers centred around the theoretical journal Praxis, the "Partisan professors" took Yugoslavia's official critic of Soviet communism to heart. With academic rigour, they applied their own left Marxist critique to the rigid brand of orthodox ideology that prevailed at home in Yugoslavia.

In the pages of Praxis and at the annual Korcula Summer School, the names of Europe's foremost radical thinkers—from Marcuse to Sartre—appeared with regularity. The Praxis group's ideas were integral to the 1960s Yugoslav protest movement. Yet, shortly after the movement's suppression, their own confrontation with the regime came to a head in 1975, eight of the school's leading theorists—the so-called Belgrade 8, including Miladin Zivotic, Mihailo Markovic and Zagorka Golubovic—were expelled from their university posts and Praxis was shut down.

Today, the former consensus that united the critical theorists from Belgrade and Zagreb has dissipated. Most have backed away from their earlier radicalism. Their post-Marxist paths have led in strikingly different directions, leading some to deconstruction and post-structuralism, others to various forms of liberalism and yet others to nationalism. Nevertheless, many of the former Praxis members remain in the political fray—but now at odds with each other as well as their Marxist pasts.

Armed with liberal blueprints, one branch of the Praxis group continues the tradition of dissonance from the platform of the democratic opposition in Serbia. Opposition groups such as the Serbian Democratic Party and the Yugoslav Democratic Movement find former Praxis people at the top of their leaderships.

From his office in the University of Belgrade's philosophy department, Professor Miladin Zivotic heads Citizens' Action for Peace. Although he distances himself from Marxism, he sees a continuity from many of the Praxis ideas to those of the liberal opposition today.

He argues that central to the Praxis project was a relentless critique of the governing ideology. Zivotic and his colleagues felt that ideology had mystified human relations to the point that the human agent lost his capacity for meaningful action. "We looked into the possibilities for the self-realisation of the human being in order to locate the possibility of self-government and radical democracy in society," he says. From the young Marx they relied heavily on the concept of man himself as the active subject, capable of transforming himself and the world around him.
Today, Zivotic considers himself closer to the ideals of Western social democracy and identifies philosophically with contemporary French thought and German hermeneutics. “What we tried to do in the 60s was to actualise the socialist ideals that the ruling polit-bureaucracy claimed to hold in theory,” he says over a stack of dissertations piled high on his desk. “Our critique of the system was always a quarrel with the family.” It is that socialist family to which Zivotic no longer belongs.

First, he says, a liberal democratic culture, complete with market economy, must emerge in Yugoslavia before the ideals of the 1960s are realistic. Then, perhaps, in a few generations’ time, socialism may become possible.

Social anthropologist and former member of the Belgrade 8, Zagorka Golubovic depicts Serbia’s intellectuals as being in a deep identity crisis. She explains that a kind of apathy prevails today among once-critical intellectuals. “Now that socialism is out of fashion, many of the former dissidents find it difficult to readjust to the situation,” she says.

In 1986, Golubovic herself was one of 200 Belgrade intellectuals who signed a petition protesting at the failure of the Yugoslav government to stop the oppression of the Serb minority in Kosovo. When Milosevic came to power one year later, it was under the pretext of that issue that he ignited Serbia’s belligerent policies towards the ethnic Albanian population in Serbia’s southern Kosovo province, an independent piece of Adriatic.

The esteemed figure of Markovic in its ranks has been a giant boost for the Serbian Socialist Party (SSP). His photo is regularly plastered on the front page of the SSP mouthpiece Politika and, like a good functionary, the former critic loyally toes the party line. In polemics against the ethnic Albanian population in Serbia’s southern Kosovo province, he legitimises the government’s gross violation of human rights. When student protesters took to the streets in March, Markovic stood by the regime’s hardliners. He recently justified Serbia’s refusal to accept European Community peace initiatives.

That Serbia’s belligerent policies have increasingly isolated it within Europe doesn’t faze Markovic. “One gets suspicious when one sees that it’s Germany, Austria and Hungary that want to recognise Croatian independence,” he claims. “It’s the old direction of German penetration into the southeast, the drive for access to the Adriatic.”

Markovic’s apologists have some of his colleagues indignant, others feeling vindicated. “Yes, philosophers in power…” sighs Zivotic, who naturally locates the root of his old friend’s politics in his philosophical assumptions. Markovic, he says, had always embraced a specific kind of totalising, metaphysical marxism. “You can plug in any variable such as nation or class into such a theoretical framework, but it won’t change the way of thinking. It’s a closed system and the result is self-evident.”

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The Vision THING

The economic statement is Labor’s crunch time. But the task has been formidable. Hemmed in by economic constraints, Labor still has to show a clear change of focus. ALR assembled a roundtable discussion to discuss the task.

Peter Baldwin is the federal minister for Higher Education, and minister assisting the Treasurer. Anna Booth is the federal secretary of the Clothing and Allied Trades Union. Peter Robson is joint national secretary of the Public Sector Union. The discussion was chaired by David Burchell and Sue McCreadie.

Much of the response to the Coalition’s Fightback package has been specific and fairly technical: the government has tried to find holes in the figures; other critics have tried to determine the end-effect on income distribution of all the various new flows of money entailed in the package. From the point of view of the public debate, though, these sorts of responses presumably only have a limited impact. What are the areas in which the labour movement can attack the GST package at the levels of principles, of generalities, of directions, of visions?

Peter Robson: My view on the question is that the politics of it revolve around the government taking on the vision of the role of the state embodied in the package—a vision which involves the question of further liberalisation of the economic environment. The situation really demands a new vision and a new way of doing things. Just as the old state socialism’s dead, in my view, so is ‘economic rationalism’; it’s a failed economic formula. There’s got to be some new thinking and different directions to break out of that mindset. That’s what I hope Keating’s got for us—because if he has, he’s got a chance.

Peter Baldwin: The initial popularity of the Fightback package, it seems to me, stemmed from its success in conveying to the public the impression that it was, if only by virtue of the sheer weight of verbiage of its 600 pages,
an immensely substantial document. But if you look below the surface, of course, it’s not a very original document at all. The basic prescription of substituting a consumption tax for income tax revenue, and slashing public spending, is not an original one, and there’s absolutely no reason to suppose that that’s going to provide a solution to this country’s economic problems. As a general proposition, those countries that have introduced a consumption tax without some form of centralised incomes policy have had great difficulty handling the inflationary impact. In New Zealand, for example, when they introduced their consumption tax, they had to pursue an extraordinarily severe monetary policy in order to wring the inflationary impact out of the economy. They ultimately succeeded in doing that, but only at the cost of a five-year recession, and during that period they’ve gone from a country with relatively low unemployment, to one with higher unemployment than this country. So to suggest that the substitution of a consumption tax revenue for income tax, combined with expenditure cuts, is going to generate huge employment growth seems to fly in the face of experience. At the same time, it’s absolutely essential that we have a viable alternative set of policies and an alternative vision. And that clearly is what this economic statement is all about.

Anna Booth: From Labor’s point of view, on the other hand, the danger is that on the face of it the Fightback package offers what, until very recently, the government has failed to offer—a coherent program of reform. In fact, the present government has come out of a period of massive reform. And when you sit down and study the pieces, then the jigsaw does fit together to form a coherent picture. But that picture became blurred, I think, towards the end of the decade. And there’s not been a sense for some while now that Labor any longer has such a coherent plan.
Greg Sheridan in the *Australian* commented recently that the Fightback package raises the very basic question of the role of government in our society. He argues this is the debate we never had in the 80s—when we should have had it—and that the Hewson package now puts it firmly on the agenda. At the same time, the NSW government has now actually mounted a quite ideological campaign about privatisation. During much of the last decade, most of the arguments in favour of privatisation were managerial ones. But this campaign actually links privatisation with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the idea that privatisation is about moving enterprises from the ‘government’ to the ‘people’. How can Labor respond to that?

**Baldwin:** I’ve thought for some time that we on the Left ought to get a clearer perception of why we want certain sorts of enterprises to be in the public sector, and what we hope to achieve. We need to articulate a case for public ownership that’s based, in my view, largely around notions of market failure, and the need to correct for that. I think it’s a statement of the obvious that advocating public ownership as an end in itself, which of itself is going to produce desirable results, no longer washes. I think the role of public financial institutions like the Commonwealth Development bank is potentially very substantial. Up until now that potential certainly hasn’t been realised, but I think if we’re serious about restructuring and getting the debate about privatisation on to a different level, then we need to be focusing more on public financial institutions than we have tended to. We need to have a debate about what we want public sector institutions to do, and that has to include a rationale for keeping them in public ownership, not just simply affirming them in public ownership as a sacred goal in itself.

**Paul Keating in the 80s was notorious for his statements about what size he could get the public sector down to. Yet not long after his accession he was making statements about how Australians historically expected a certain role for the government in Australian society.**

**Baldwin:** Maybe that’s a sign of the times. I hope we’ve got past the stage where having a record small public sector to GDP ratio was a major goal of economic policy. That was fundamentally irrational and unproductive. I’m thinking here not only of this government, but governments worldwide throughout the 1980s.

**Booth:** I myself don’t think Australian business, and certainly Australian people, regard the role of the state in a mixed, capitalist economy with the sort of distaste John Hewson thinks they do. So what Peter Robson says is obviously correct. The economic statement has got to be comprehensive and it’s got to be visionary. It’s also got to be non-ideological—either in terms of economic rationalism, or indeed interventionism for that matter. It’s simply got to be a practical response to the problems that we face, with a realistic analysis of the world around us. And, if we can achieve that, we will find the Labor Party gets brownie points both from business and from the community. But if we don’t, then the Fightback package remains unchallenged, because it does present a coherent program—even though the detail of it can be proven to be quite appalling in its social consequences.

**Robson:** I think we’re heading in the right direction. Late last year, the Labor government was devoid of any clear-thinking and long-term policy. It was effectively being run by the two economic departments and the department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The platform was basically an economic rationalist one, and the conservatives were promising more of the same, but dolled up with a new tax deal. Now, to everybody’s great cheer, Paul Keating is doing two promising things. Firstly, he is consulting outside Canberra, which is a very important first step. Secondly, I think, he promises in a modest way to put an alternative package together, one which is based on an increased role for the state, but also, just as importantly, starts to give some government support for industry in the broadest sense of that term. This economic statement will make or break the Labor Party’s hopes of getting through the next election but, more importantly, it will also make or break the next five years for Australia.

**Booth: Fightback offers what the government has failed to: a coherent plan of reform**

I agree with Anna that the Hewson package is an internally consistent and comprehensive radical political package. If Hewson gets in, Australian industry will be battered for the whole of the 90s. At the end of that we will be in New Zealand’s situation—because there’s no essential difference between Hewson’s package and the New Zealand plan. We will just have an economy devoid of a viable industry sector. It will also be an economy stripped of what is already the smallest public sector in the OECD. And if this happens Australia will fail to pass the test of a modern, competitive economy and be condemned to ever-decreasing living standards. So it is a critical point in time. Bob Hawke was right, I think, to say that this election will be the most critical that we have seen. Hawke didn’t have the right sense of what was required, but Paul Keating has given himself half a chance.

The standard Left theory about the last ten years would say that Labor has paved the way for a Fightback type of package, with its ‘economic rationalist’ policies—tariff cuts, micro-economic reform, privatisation. Firstly, do you agree with that? And if so, is the strategy now to say, well, OK, we were wrong, we’re now going to go in another direction? Because if Labor doesn’t do that, the opposition can say, all we’re doing is pursuing the trend of the 1980s, except with bells on.

**Robson:** That’s where you’ve got to give Paul Keating his due. He’s been one of the best promoters of ‘rationalism’ Australia’s ever seen, and now he’s saying, for lots of reasons that the orthodoxy was wrong in significant
respects. He’s been big enough to be prepared to make the change. I think what’s important is that we learn from the mistakes of the 80s, but that we don’t try to unlearn the basic lessons of the last ten years. For instance, if you take the infrastructure question, I am one who believes now that there is a significant role for the private sector in infrastructure-building. If you’d asked me that five years ago, I would have said that only the public sector should be involved in infrastructure. I agree now that we’ve got to encourage the private sector to get involved in infrastructure, because infrastructure is absolutely critical in rebuilding the economy—and you can wait for as long as you want to in the current environment for the public sector to take on that responsibility, and nothing will happen. We’ve still got to look at a lot of these questions in a different light from the way we would have five years ago.

Baldwin: My personal view is that in certain areas we do need to change direction. Throughout the world the infatuation with small government, deregulation, privatisation and unrestrained market forces is on the wane. The great exception to that general statement is, of course, eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union—which, given the experience of their version of socialism, is understandable. But we have to recognise that those economies which have successfully brought about structural change of the sort that we’re supposedly seeking to achieve, have not done it simply through reliance on market mechanisms. They have had governments prepared to intervene and to exercise strategic direction over the development of key sectors. There’s certainly no simple correlation between economic success and the size of the government sector; that’s been obvious for some time. Even in the United States there’s far more preparedness to entertain notions of industry policy than was the case until recently. So in a sense Hewson’s package is rather out of time. It would have been very timely—at least in terms of going with the cycle of opinion—had it been introduced at the beginning of the 80s. But I think Paul Keating, with his great rhetorical skills, will be capable of portraying it as travelling back through a time-tunnel to the 80s.

Booth: The issue of whether to say ‘we’ve made a mistake and we’re going to rectify it’ is a big one. It is politically difficult for a government to concede that, on examination, its policies are patently not achieving their desired ends, that they are creating destruction rather than development. But this is what we have to do. And of all the politicians in Australia’s recent history, Keating is the person best able to set the political environment, rather than responding to an environment set by others, so that he can say, with pride and confidence, that a change of direction is the only sensible thing to do—and win acceptance from the part of financial markets, business leaders and the community for that. What is more of a problem is that others will not allow him to do that, or not allow him to have the confidence to do it. There are so many people around him counselling against it, and yet that’s just what has to happen.

Back in November and December, when John Kerin was treasurer, he argued that the correct response to the GST package was to point out exactly how radical a package it is, exactly how much it would affect people’s lives—the assumption being that this sort of radical change is not something that Australians are used to, or will countenance. I detect from what all of you are saying that you don’t consider the Kerin sort of response adequate.

Booth: There are two points here. The first is that we ourselves are talking about change. So it would be a mistake to use change as a bogey to appeal to people’s sense of conservatism and fear of change; that would defeat our purposes. Secondly, so far we haven’t managed to attack the Fightback package in its comprehensive, integrated nature. We have seen various ministers take on different parts of it, analyse them, and, in some cases—for example Ralph Willis with the Finance Department’s analysis—do a pretty good job of pointing out the flaws. But it has to be examined in its entirety as well as in the context of the Coalition’s other policies, because the agenda stretches further than Fightback.

Peter, you mentioned how small our public sector is by international standards. It’s the same case with the tax take, isn’t it? There seems to have been an acceptance on all sides of politics that we’ll be a low tax country, and there’s very little opposition to that. A lot of people are labouring under the illusion that they’re paying high taxes, when the overall tax take is still very low by OECD standards. Yet people find the Hewson package attractive, because they think that their personal tax rate is set at too high a level.

Robson: Our overall tax rates are among the lowest, but personal tax rates may not be. In any case, we went through that debate in the middle of the 80s, and we lost it, in many ways. It’s true that there are now more conservative and middle-of-the-road commentators pointing out that we’re not highly taxed. But you can’t realistically hope to bring back a high-tax regime, because basically people hate paying tax.

Booth: But they hate it more, Peter, when their wages are not growing. People’s living standards have been falling for a number of years now, and up until last year inflation has been ripping the guts out of people’s wage packets. It’s true that people generally don’t like paying tax, but they particularly don’t like paying tax when they see their disposable income dwindling in the light of inflation.

Robson: I still don’t think the argument’s going to be won, certainly in the next few years. It’s certainly right that it should be, because really the big sufferer from our limited tax take has been infrastructure. Infrastructure in Australia has deteriorated dreadfully over the past decade. And now we’re paying for it in a big way.

You were arguing before, Anna, that responses to the Fightback package should be pragmatic, rather than ideological. As in other areas, on tariff policy Fightback takes an ideological position in favour of zero tariffs rather than a pragmatic one. Presumably a pragmatic policy would mean saying: you’ve got a certain goal, what sort of policy instruments do you need to get there? If we’re looking at the past record of tariffs and admitting
that some of that was negative, if we reimpose them, how do we do it?

Booth: It's a real shame that we've got to a point where we can't even speak about the selective use of barrier protection in those situations, as a part of an overall set of industry policies. No matter where you are, from the executive table of the ACTU through to the cabinet table through to the board of the Commonwealth Bank, it's an absolute anathema. And while I wouldn't advocate a wholesale return of McEwenism, I nevertheless think that it's quite appropriate at times to use selective barrier protection for particular periods of time and for particular sectors of the economy. And even, for some sectors, for a very long period of time.

Robson: Our scorched earth policy with tariff reductions is crazy

Robson: I must say I've become a bit of a convert back to tariffs. Look at our Asian trading partners: none of them have ripped their public sector apart, they've used the public sector as a basis for developing the private sector. And they have no qualms about tariffs: it's virtually impossible to get into their markets in many areas.

On the other hand, there are still some sound arguments against protectionism. Our future lies in Asia, and we've got to build up our export capacity for the region. You can't do that while you've got an inward-looking, conservative mentality, which tariffs do induce. So on the one hand I think our scorched earth policy with tariff reductions is crazy. We've got to have a selective approach, a more interventionist approach; I accept that. On the other hand, we've got to understand that we are part of Asia, a region with totally different expectations from ours, and we've got to start to orientate our manufactures and our service sector to that.

Booth: The other, much less convincing argument in the anti-tariff armoury is the resource allocation argument. This suggests that other Australians are paying for the costs of tariffs through the lack of resources being diverted to other industries. Well, we have to deal with the times we're in. We're in a recession, will be for perhaps some years to come. And there isn't exactly a range of industries knocking down the doors to make use of Textile Clothing and Footwear employers' money—or such of it as is left after the speculators have gone.

Obviously the Coalition's industrial relations strategy is the linchpin by which the whole Fightback package stands or falls. That strategy would abolish awards, remove legal recognition for trade unions, and entrench individual contracts into the industrial relations system. What sort of campaign can be mounted against it, and should that be a priority target for an election campaign?

Baldwin: It is true that we are heavily constrained by the balance of payments and external indebtedness factors, and it certainly is also true that the government can't disregard the behaviour or the likely response of the financial markets. Having said that, my view would be that we've got a bit more room to move than conventional wisdom would have it. I for one would not be terribly alarmed were this statement to provide a further slip in the value of the dollar. I think we can tolerate a further slippage in the exchange rate, and I think on balance that would have...
extra incentives to invest, with extra incentives to capital to bring forward their investment plans, underwriting those on the expenditure side with public infrastructure, labour market programs and so forth. My view is that while those elements have a role to play, we have to strike an appropriate balance, and one that doesn’t just seek to accelerate private sector activity, but also acknowledges that we have to do something worthwhile for the long-term unemployed, who, based on the experience of the last recession, tend to be the last to benefit. The question is, would the sort of fiscal stimulus that we’re able to provide, given all those constraints, can we do something really imaginative? I would think that we could, but it’s going to have to be rather carefully structured, and it’s going to have to be appropriately balanced. And that’s the hard part.

Booth: Peter, it seems unlikely that the package can create a direct reduction in the rate of unemployment before the next election. What do you think the most important features of the package will be, therefore, to sell to the Australian people?

Baldwin: I acknowledge that the impact in TCF has been more severe than was originally anticipated, and I accept that we have to do something additional by way of assistance. But I don’t pretend that labour adjustment package was the be all and end all of solving the problems of workers in that industry. We have to create a general economic climate where people who are displaced have an opportunity to retrain and to find work elsewhere. Fundamentally, the jobs have to exist—and that’s the broad objective of the statement.

Robson: I’ve got two disagreements with you. First, it’s wrong to say the Left hasn’t considered the financial markets: we’ve been talking about structural adjustment and the money markets for ten years. In fact, quite frankly, the Left has sometimes lost total direction because it’s become so absorbed in the capacity of the money markets to affect things. I also don’t agree that the statement is just about setting the long-term direction and focusing on the restructuring of the economy.

Baldwin: I didn’t say it was: I said we had to strike a balance.

Robson: But there’s still an important difference in emphasis here. Too much emphasis is being put on the restructuring of the economy. The economy’s being restructured every day. Far more fundamental I think about this statement is that it needs to be a clear view from the government that it’s not going to leave it to market forces to do the job. It’s going to get involved itself, it’s got to start to rebuild various sectors, both for import replacement and for export purposes. And most importantly, it’s got to have emphasis on the here and now. I am dubious about labour market projects which are still focused on retraining. There have to be job creation programs as well. I’m happy to have them focused towards infrastructure and the tradeable goods sector. But when you go out into the country and the regional centres where structural unemployment is very high, if you keep focusing your job programs around skills development alone, there will be no impact on unemployment.

Baldwin: I don’t think I disagree with any of that. We have shifted the focus to some degree away from purely retraining. We’ve introduced a new program called Jobskills, which is a combination of work experience and training. I think we have a pretty good menu of programs now, and I think we’re in a position to provide better judgements about how those program elements should be combined. There is an argument about the scale of that activity. My personal view is that we ought to be doing those things on a much larger scale. The experience from a number of countries that use labour market programs on a large scale is that, contrary to the conventional wisdom throughout most of the 1980s, they have been highly effective in preventing the onset of longterm unemployment. I think we really do have to think about how we can avoid the creation of a class of people whose concept of the labour market is so distant and so tenuous that their employability starts to come into question. The social and economic consequences of that are quite unacceptable.
The Left has always had a lot to say about prisons; mostly, it seems, wanting to abolish them. David Brown begs to differ. He argues that it's not good enough to relegate prisons to the chamber of horrors. A new politics of policy is needed.

The last three decades in Australia and elsewhere have seen the return to the public gaze of prisons and forms of punishment. In the 1960s and 1970s the increased visibility of the prison owed much to the upsurge in prison disturbances and prisoner militancy, and to the emergence of prisoners, along with second wave feminists, aborigines, students, environmentalists, psychiatric patients, and many others as 'new' political subjects—and to the intellectual and lifestyle ferment around the Vietnam war, feminism, anti-psychiatry, the marxism of the new left, and so on. In the 1980s prisons and penalty remained in the public domain but increasingly as signifiers of a new rhetoric of retribution, a retributivism of supposed 'untruthful' sentencing policies, and of the mythical 'motel conditions' in prisons. At another level, prisons were brought back into the public eye as the site of deaths in custody and as potential incubators of the HIV virus.

The 60s and 70s exposure of the brutality of the prison, its counter-productive, stigmatising and recidivist effects on the one hand, along with, on the other, the apparent failure of the rehabilitative ideal, the widespread view of community correction as merely 'netwidening'—extending social control into the community in more subtle and sinister ways, created a climate in which the prison was seen to have failed as an institution. These two trends—a leftish opposition to prisons _per se_ as brutalising, and an apparent-
ly conservative reaction against the ideal of rehabilita-

tion—might appear on the face of it antithetical. Yet both

turns to indicate the impression of a prison system per-

petually 'in crisis', unable to fulfil its utilitarian functions,

able to protect the community from crime, to rehabilitate

or to deter the individuals incarcerated from offending

again when they were released.

Yet while there was considerable agreement over the

failure of the prison, responses as to why this was so and

as to what should be done were diverse and even opposed.

Among Australian prison movement activists a strong

abolitionist current emerged, drawing on Marx and the

'second' criminology. The prison was seen as fundamentally

an instrument of class oppression, part of the repressive

apparatus of the capitalist state protecting the existing

distribution of property and disciplining labour. It was,

like the capitalist system itself, to be condemned in general

while in the particular a struggle was conducted for those

'negative' reforms which would break down the power of

the prison and open it up to democratic scrutiny and a

phased abolition.

A particular interpretation of Michel Foucault's influential

work *Discipline and Punish* (1977) was later grafted by left

critics onto this class struggle explanation of the prison,

producing a much more nuanced attention to the detail of

specific disciplinary practices. For Foucault, the failure of

the prison, evident almost from its inception, was rescued

by the utility it provided in producing a delineated and

identifiable group of delinquents. This group could be

used to justify the creation of police forces, the expansion

of state coercive powers, the differentiation of 'delinquent'

from 'respectable' poor, and the neutralisation of popular

illegalities. In this account penal reform became the very

project of the prison, the reformed, humane and efficient

prison constantly being offered up as the solution to its

own failure.

A quite different response emerged from populist

politicians and those sections of the public convinced that

any problems with the prison system had their origins in

a loss of a discipline stemming from a process of reform,

such as that undertaken in NSW in the aftermath of the

Nagle Royal Commission of Inquiry. Penology's depressing

message that "nothing works", the failure of the

rehabilitative ideal, and high recidivist rates, all provided

a better platform for a minister like Michael Yabsley (Cor-

rective Services Minister in the first term of the NSW

Greiner government) to argue that notions of failure were

a product of misconceived objectives. The function of the

prison was to punish and this fundamental objective had

been obscured in the acceptance of the notion of prisoners'

rights and in the meddling social work practices of parole,

prisoner programs and 'alternatives'—what he calls "the

hokwash of sociological dictum" promoted by "small

groups of self-appointed society changers".

Yabsley's views are worth quoting at greater length:

We had the prisons crowded with counsellors, social

workers, teachers and various representatives from a

multitude of organisations, all intent on bringing a

sudden and irreversible change in those who were

considered to be unfortunate, disadvantaged, inade-

quate and who were in need of care, guidance, and

understanding. They would baulk at the 'just

deserts' model of punishment and have us adopt the

'rehabilitative model'. They would want to know

what right the majority had to lock up the few. They

would ask how is it that 'the incarcerated citizen

should forfeit all of his rights along with the loss of his

liberty'. 'Draconian' is the catchcry of this small

group of self-appointed 'society changers'. 'Wrong'

is the cry of the elected representatives of the com-

munity. 'Wrong' is the cry of the substantial majority of the

community.

In this sense, then, constant talk of the failure of the prison

in terms of some ends/means calculation derived from the

utilitarian justifications for punishment, as Paul Hirst has

argued, provided a fertile ground for the reassertion of

retributivist responses. Yabsley again:

Punishment is synonymous with prison, punish-

ment does have a deterrent value, so too must the

prison. Punishment is a lesson. It may not always

work, but it is the best, in fact, the most effective

instrument we have which can be consistently and

firmly applied to those who would attack us.
This is how we can understand Yabsley’s desire to be remembered as “someone who has put the value back in punishment”. The aim is, quite literally, to intensify the punitive force of the experience of imprisonment on prisoners. Hence the abolition of remissions, the intensification of penal discipline, the property confiscations policy, the slashing of welfare and rehabilitative programs, the removal of mechanisms of scrutiny and accountability, the reduction of parole to an afterthought, and the enactment of sentencing policies which are clearly having the effect of increasing the length of sentences and increasing the rate of imprisonment.

Unfortunately, the climate conducive to the rise of the new retributivism was fuelled by left-liberal reformers, who argued that the fundamental problem in sentencing and punishment was the confusion of and contradiction between the various aims or justifications for sentencing. The solution was therefore the adoption of a single and ‘coherent’ ‘predominating rationale’ for punishment and sentencing. Understandably disillusioned withutilitarian arguments, they looked for salvation to ‘just deserts’. In some cases the concern was to invoke the limiting effect of just deserts, to prevent incarceration for allegedly therapeutic purposes, to combat sentencing inconsistencies and promote certainty. In others, the concern was to use the sentencing battlefield to promote a particular philosophy of republican virtue in which punishment was seen as a right of the wrongdoer and centralised government and bureaucracy an enemy operating only to promote instrumental rationality over the authentic moral claims of the local polis.

Common to many of these arguments coming from a variety of seemingly opposed positions is that punishment can and should be analysed in terms of a single aim or function and that the prison is a singular and unitary institution. In contrast I want to argue the following propositions:

(i) As Paul Hirst has pointed out, means of punishment are not timeless or constant: rather they are “artifacts of social organisation, the products of definite institutional, technical and discursive conditions in the same way as other artifacts like technologies or built environments”.

(ii) As such they are not explicable in terms of some individual and singular ‘purpose’ but by the combination of conditions under which they become possible.

(iii) We need to acknowledge more clearly the diverse and differentiated nature of prisons, for example, as Mark Finnane has pointed out, the imprisonment of juveniles, of women, of Aborigines, or imprisonment in specific regimes such as prison farms or police lock-ups, are far from all of a piece. The histories, cultural meanings and material forms underlying these experiences are highly specific, and often highly localised.

(iv) Far from being purely sites for the exercise of an exclusively negative power to punish, prisons are also institutions for the “expression of social values, sensibility, and morality, rather than as an instrumental means to a penological end”.

(v) All of these considerations suggest a need to reconceptualise the power to punish, and specific penal practices and institutions such as prisons as forms of community resources, subject to political debate. In other words, prisons should be viewed not as the property of a technical penology, but as the subject of social policy debates of an allocational and distributive nature.

While the Australian rate of imprisonment is increasing nationally, the trends are very uneven across the states. In the period March 1988 to March 1991 (roughly the first term of the Greiner government) the number of people imprisoned in NSW increased by 44.5% while in Queensland over the same period it decreased by 4.8%. Both these states are subject to broadly similar sorts of macroeconomic forces and federal government policies while, clearly, the local political cultures are undergoing significant shifts. In other words, it is possible to reduce imprisonment rates through specific social, economic and legal policies tied to a reformist political program. But for that to happen we need to be able to think about imprisonment in different ways, to debate it in different terms to those stemming from a legacy of oppositionalism.

Prisons express a range of functions and values and have considerable social support; they are not going to go away. Nor are we likely to come up with many new forms of sentencing alternatives likely to replace completely the prison, at least as a backup for other less restrictive and totalising sanctions. And because prisons are not the effects of some singular logic or essence, there is no rationalist key by which they can be consigned to the chamber of horrors or abolished in thought by the adoption of the correct emancipatory logic.

Prospects for positive reform depend on an ability to undermine the new retributiveness where it is in the ascendency—as in NSW—or to improve the conditions for reform and innovation, where they are on the rise—as in Queensland. In order to do this we need to leave behind the particular sort of oppositionalism which sees all prisons as essentially the same, all penal practices as manifestations of repressive power and authority, the experience of imprisonment as given for everyone and as best evaluated according to the traditional legal criteria of time served.

The greater our understanding of the complexities and nuances of the penal system, its expressive and positive effects along with its negative ones, and its bases of social support and opposition, the better placed we are to bring about change, to move from the almost exclusive concentration on critique which has characterised the focus of liberal-Left critiques of the penal system to a preparedness to formulate policy.

DAVID BROWN teaches in law at the University of NSW.
Immigration is re-entering the political agenda. And so it should be, thinks Mike Ticher. But it’s world migration which is the most pressing issue. And in this respect the West has a serious case of bad conscience.

Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

If the Statue of Liberty were being built today, an inscription which wanted to express the same sentiments as the original could be much shorter. It could simply say: “Give me your economic migrants”. But of course it wouldn’t. Like all Western countries, the US is now doing its utmost to prevent the huddled masses ever having a chance to breathe free, to the extent of building large fences along various parts of the Mexican border and sending back thousands of refugees fleeing the chaos in Haiti.

The break-up of the Soviet empire, at a time when borders between European Community states are becoming increasingly irrelevant, has led to increasingly strident calls for tougher migration laws in EC countries. The rise of the extreme Right in France and Germany in particular has been closely identified with campaigns against migrants, both legal and illegal. Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, 18,000 Vietnamese refugees await forcible repatriation by the British government, with another 41,000 yet to be classified as either ‘political’ or ‘economic’ migrants. Since 1988, 80% of those screened have been put in the ‘economic’ category and therefore denied the chance to migrate to a third country.

The unashamed racism of those calling for an absolute halt to migration in Europe has tended to obscure some of the more complicated issues involved. Yet the dimensions of the problem, and in particular the questions it raises about the New World Order, demand a response which goes beyond mere outrage at the behaviour of Jean-Marie Le Pen and his cronies.
The scale of migration from East to West is no figment of their imagination. 500,000 a year are now leaving the Soviet Union alone, while Germany estimates that 200,000 people have entered the country illegally from the East in the past year, quite apart from those who have applied for political asylum (another 200,000). The TV pictures of thousands of Albanians attempting to enter Italy last year provided graphic evidence not only of the numbers of people trying to escape the ex-socialist countries, but also their desperation to do so.

Such massive flows of migrants are the inevitable result of the proximity of countries with vastly different standards of living, combined with the relaxation of controls on freedom of movement in the old Eastern bloc. The fact that the number of people applying to come to Australia dropped significantly with the onset of the recession indicates how intimately migration is linked to the international economy. It is the changing nature of that world economy which has led to most of the ironies, inconsistencies and hypocrisies with which the immigration stances of Western countries are now riddled. A few of these deserve specific mention.

Countries like Australia and the US which, in the past, have made a virtue of economic migration (or even elevated it to a national myth) now require capital and specific skills, rather than labour. Hence the pressure on their governments for policies which encourage the immigration of those who are perceived as potential producers of profit, rather than consumers of services. Anyone bringing in US$1 million is now entitled to automatic residency in America, with citizenship granted after five years. With only 6% of its population now overseas-born, America's immigration policy has become more a question of 'Give me your well-fed, your successful businessmen yearning to invest, your individuals with their own personal space...'

Italians, of course, made up a large proportion of those deserting Europe for the US (and Australia) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Now, however, Italy's own changing economic fortunes have made it the favoured destination, first of a steady stream of North Africans, then of the Yugoslavs and Albanians. The efficiency with which the latter were dispatched last year suggests that the Italians are unlikely to feel any urgent historical responsibility when it comes to accepting such 'wretched refuse'.

The same could certainly be said of Britain and France, whose immediate immigration problems stem largely from the consequences of their withdrawal from Empire. Britain's Nationality Act of the early 1980s severely curtailed the rights of entry of its former subjects, while it has been the first country to introduce fines for airlines which bring in migrants with invalid documents. Such is the zeal
of the British government in discouraging unwelcome arrivals, that Home Secretary Kenneth Baker last year became the first British minister to be found guilty of contempt of court, after defying a judge's order not to deport a Zairean refugee until his claim for asylum had been properly assessed.

In France, the ‘moderate’ right has capitulated disastrously to the siren song of Le Pen’s National Front as they jockey for position for the next presidential elections. Former President Giscard d’Estaing’s reference to an “invasion”, and Gaullist leader Jacques Chirac’s comments on the “smells” of immigrants have become notorious. The French fear most of all the burgeoning populations of their former North African colonies, and Giscard (among others) has suggested that in future French nationality, and therefore right of residence, be determined by parents’ nationality rather than place of birth. With the advent of free movement within EC borders the prospect of, for example, Turkish ‘guest-workers’ from Germany (who have no rights to permanent residence there) crossing the border to have their children in France is not one which appeals much to the French.

But it is the thought of refugees from the ex-Soviet bloc which particularly animates most EC governments. Having abused these countries for decades for refusing their citizens the right to freedom of movement, the West is now desperate to prevent them from exercising it. Their intention is to create a ‘Fortress Europe’, with more or less unlimited movement within the EC, but fiercely patrolled borders around it. Following a meeting of 27 European countries in October of last year to agree on guidelines for stemming migration from Eastern and Central Europe, French Interior Minister Philippe Marchand confirmed: “From now on, France’s external border is more Germany’s border with Poland and Italy’s border with Yugoslavia than the German/French or Italian/French borders”.

Germany’s frontline status makes the situation particularly acute there. It has been the most generous country in Europe in terms of allowing requests for asylum to be heard (even though only 5% of them are eventually accepted)—France, the next largest recipient in 1990 had only 56,000 applications compared to Germany’s 200,000. But the appalling incidence of racist attacks on foreigners, in both Eastern and Western Germany, has already frightened the Kohl government into speeding up the processing of applications, herding the asylum-seekers into large camps, and proposing to amend the constitutional right to asylum.

The unmistakeable trends in all these countries towards ever greater restrictions on entry raise questions not only about immigration policy in individual countries in the short-term, but also the nature of the new international order following the collapse of the post-war East-West dichotomy. In *ALR* 133 (October 1991), Diarmuid Maguire suggested three (related) interpretations of what the New World Order might actually mean: a more stable system achieved through East-West co-operation; the global triumph of capitalist democracy; and the future dominance of the United States. Without disputing the basic validity of this characterisation, I would argue that the issues raised by the migration question undermine at least the first two elements of this, and suggest a further dimension to the New World Order.

Firstly, the sudden rise of parties of the extreme Right in Europe threatens to be more than temporary. The election results in Belgium in November 1991, the upsurge of neo-nazism in Germany, continuing successes of the National Front in France and the enthusiastic commemorations of Franco’s death in Spain all suggest that the permanent stability of Western European democracies should not be taken for granted. The more optimistic conceptions of the New World Order could tolerate a certain amount of instability and uncertainty in the newly-democratised states
of Eastern Europe, but if the West is supposed to have 'won', extremism and turmoil in its bastions of capitalism and democracy hardly set an encouraging example to the rest of the world. Migration has already proved to be, at the least, an issue capable of inflaming passions far removed from ideals of ever-burgeoning peace and security.

Secondly, massive flows of migration indicate another possible characterisation of the New World Order—the replacement of the East-West division not with global harmony and stability, but with a new division, along North-South lines. In this interpretation, it's not just Africa, most of Asia and Latin America, but also the constituent parts of the Soviet Union and most of its former allies in Eastern Europe which would have to be counted as belonging to the 'South'. Judging by the present state of their economies this is far from being a fanciful suggestion. It's only by ignoring such gross (and ever-widening) economic inequalities that Western leaders can deceive themselves that the collapse of communism has brought about 'the end of history' or the dawning of a new era of peace, prosperity and democracy for everyone. Immigration policy is where such noble sentiments collide with reality.

The implications of such a conclusion are that if the West is serious about turning the New World Order into something more meaningful than simply its own economic and military hegemony, it will have to stop wavering on assistance to the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (not to mention the rest of the 'South') and commit itself to full-scale aid and assistance. The Italian government implicitly recognised this with their offers of aid to Albania in exchange for the Albanians preventing the departure of any more nightmare cargoes across the Adriatic. By contrast, the shameful refusal of the US to resume aid or trade with Vietnam, on increasingly incredible pretexts, promises no long-term solution to the refugee crisis in South-East Asia. Their pitiful offer of an additional US$600 million in emergency food aid to the Soviet Union at the end of January belied all of George Bush's fine words about "an opportunity that may not come again in our lifetime". Russian deputy prime minister Gennady Burbulis estimated that Bush's offer would be enough to feed the ex-Soviet Union for approximately 10 hours.

Perhaps the crucial difference between US and European attitudes is not the relative wisdom of their governments, but the frightening proximity of the European 'South' to its affluent neighbours, and its sheer size. The demise of communism in Europe has, if you like, moved the borders between the North and South much closer. Previously, with the exception of Mexico and the United States, they shared no significant common land frontier. That development should serve to concentrate minds in Western Europe, and to force its governments to reflect on the consequences of suddenly acquiring such undesirably mobile neighbours.

Perhaps the choice facing the West (or, more accurately, the North) can be summed up by an analogy to another country where recent change has been seen to be part of the emergence of the New World Order: South Africa. The North can be thought of as equivalent to an affluent white suburb in Johannesburg. Despite its prosperity (or rather because of it), the inhabitants feel the need to severely curtail the rights of entry of outsiders. They may be allowed in to work, but not to live. Security fences, alarm systems and ferocious guard dogs are thought to be necessary to secure property and the safety of the population. The dominant ideology favours unbridled capitalism and rails against the evils of the communist system which it perceives itself to have triumphed over. Yet the theory of the free market has to be thoroughly bastardised by strictly regulating the movement of labour, because of the gross inequalities of living standards between the insiders and the outsiders.

As the inequalities widen, the privileged few have a choice. They can retreat further into the laager, becoming ever more security-conscious and paranoid about those outside. The presence there of the 'other', the threat to their way of life, is a constant spectre to be raised by those on the extremes whose motive is pure racism. Alternatively, they can attempt to do something to redress the economic imbalance before the misery outside the gates and the repression and intolerance inside become unbearable.

The analogy is crude, but not without some validity. The fear of economic migrants and the measures taken against them are an indication of the limitations and contradictions of the 'triumph of capitalism'. While the impending freedom of movement within the EC is trumpeted as the last word in level playing-fields, Vietnamese refugees rotting away in camps in Hong Kong, having risked drowning, sharks and pirates on their perilous sea journeys could be forgiven for thinking that they had fulfilled Mrs Thatcher's old dictum of 'getting on their bikes to look for work'. The North-South idea of the New World Order, with the economies of the North increasingly intermeshed with each other, but ring-fenced against the South, explains why their efforts are not appreciated by the developed world. It's Soweto for them.

Merely stating that it's in the North's own self-interest to do what it can for the remnants of the Soviet empire doesn't do away with any of the practical problems that entails which, of course, are legion. But as the US toys with isolationism, the sheer numbers of people attempting to flee the endless political and economic turmoil in the ex-Soviet Union should be a recurrent reminder of the fragility, and even absurdity, of the principles supposedly enshrined in the New World Order. If they are not, rather than extending democracy to people in the rest of the world, we may find ourselves having to defend it against them.

MIKE TICHER, ALR's business manager, comes from a long line of economic migrants.
Once upon a time, Karl Marx thought nationalism would wither away. Now it seems to be back with a vengeance.

Tom Morton spoke to Eric Hobsbawm about nationalism, its revival, and the prospects for the new, fragmented states of Europe.

Eric Hobsbawm is emeritus professor of history at Birkbeck College, University of London. He was born in Alexandria in 1917, and emigrated to Britain with his family in his youth. He is the author of such celebrated works of history as Labouring Men, The Age of Empire and Industry and Empire. He was also a key figure in debates within the British Left in the 1980s. His latest book, Nations and Nationalism, is published by Cambridge University Press.

One of the central points you make at the beginning of your recent book about nationalism is that nations are a modern phenomenon. They appeared essentially in the 18th and early 19th centuries and the idea of the nation simply wasn’t in people’s heads before then. Why is it that nationalism appears at that time and what is it about nationalism that’s new?

The first thing to understand is that there’s a tremendous difference between the sense of belonging to a particular group, such as being a Kurd, or a Jew, and the idea that being a Kurd or a Jew should mean having a state of the Kurds or the Jews. If you like, the idea of identity as part of an ethnic or linguistic group belongs to history, to society, to anthropology. Nationalism, on the other hand, belongs to a particular political program. It’s that political program which is new and basically, give or take a few predecessors, it only comes in with the American and French revolutions.

What is it that’s different about people thinking of themselves, say, as French, Spanish or American as compared to thinking of themselves as Romans or Greeks or Goths?
Thinking of yourself as French or Spanish is a political act which means thinking of yourself as a member of a Spanish state or a French state. It's perfectly compatible with thinking yourself as Breton or a Provencal or a Fleming or a Catalan. Practically all the old nation states, including Great Britain, France and Spain were in fact by modern standards multilingual, multiethnic and multinational. To be English or to be British does not mean to be a member of a particular ethnic group. To be English can mean being a member of an ethnic group, just as being French can mean that, but it's not the same thing.

So the emergence of the idea of the nation is tied up also with the growth of new ideas about the state and politics which appear in the 18th century?

There are two new ideas here. One is democracy: the idea that the state is composed of citizens, not of subjects. And that's expressed itself as a belief in the self-determination of peoples—a concept which originally has absolutely nothing to do with language, or ethnicity. Take the United States which is the classic example of the early form of the nation state. To be an American is an open invitation to anybody who wishes to accept the rights and duties of the citizenship of the United States of America, never mind where he or she comes from. And that basically was the situation of the original France, or the French Revolution, or the original idea of the democratic nation state.

According to this conception, insofar as you take part in the politics of a democratic society or a citizen state, you think of yourself as a citizen of that state and that gives you, if you like, a member of that nation. This is of course very different from the current idea of what being a member of a nation is. It's not until quite late in the 19th century that this idea became mixed up with, and today has been almost completely identified with, the idea of a particular ethnic group and a particular linguistic group being the people.

And the other idea is that these new states should be a particular kind of state, a state run by a central government which has a direct pipeline, directly from the centre to each and every last citizen. That's quite new. In the Middle Ages, people weren't governed that way. They were governed through intermediate lords and corporations, through intermediate autonomous groups. And if you put those two ideas together, you get the makings of the modern nation state.

One of the confusing things about nationalism is that, on the one hand, it is very much a modern phenomenon—if we think of the modern era as beginning in the 18th century with the Enlightenment. But on the other hand when people start thinking of themselves as belonging to nations, they imagine those nations as stretching far back into time. How important is it to the emergence of nations to invent histories and traditions for themselves?

Of course, sometimes they do stretch back far into time. The problem is the assumption that those age-old traditions mean the same as modern nationalism. There's probably not been a time when the Jews didn't think of themselves as different from the people among whom they lived. But until the 1890s, practically nobody thought that this implied that the Jews should have a state of their own in Palestine. In fact, most Jews didn't live in what is today Israel even in the days of the Romans. They probably lived in Babylonia, in Egypt and elsewhere. The sleight of hand arises in the combination of something which has existed for a very long time, such as the idea that Jews are different from non-Jews, and the much more modern idea—in fact the entirely non-traditional idea—that this should require a particular territorial state. I'm not talking just about the Jews in this regard; I'm talking about any ethnic or linguistic group which makes this claim. That claim almost certainly implies inventing history.
In many cases these peoples have to invent history because very often their history isn’t that old. For instance, there is the case of the current dispute in the Caucasus between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno Karabakh. The argument is over which of the two the enclave really belongs to. This is entirely conducted in terms of mediaeval history because originally it belonged to neither; it belonged to a people which has now disappeared called the Caucasian Albanians. And so Armenian historians claim that the Armenians that live there now are the lineal descendants of these Caucasian Albanians while the Azerbaijanis claim that, in fact, they are the original Caucasian Albanians who have just taken to talking Azerbaijani. That’s the kind of argument which is used to justify current disputes and conflicts. But of course if you could talk to people in the 15th century in these areas, this dispute would have seem completely meaningless.

How does that process work? Who are the agents of reinventing history, reinventing traditions?

Often it used to be “patriotic” historians. In places like Georgia and the Caucasus historical novels were important, and schoolteachers passed on these ideas in class. Today, of course, it’s the media in general. For that matter it could be operatic composers; it could be composers of folk songs; it could be almost anybody. There’s a huge process of invention going on. I’m bound to say that we historians are in this respect a little bit like poppy growers in Pakistan; we provide the raw material for the drug addicts. Only, unfortunately for nationalism, professional historians don’t provide the right kind of raw material.

In your book you argue that in the latter part of the 19th century the nature of nationalism changed and that, in fact, it’s the emergence of modern forms of the state which transform it. How did this happen?

Part of the transformation occurred through the spread of the franchise. Once universal suffrage becomes the norm, candidates feel that there’s an advantage in appealing to the voters on the strength of those things that voters think they have in common—and being Irish or Polish in multilingual societies would be one of those things. And so that becomes quite an important issue. It still doesn’t necessarily explain the modern kind of separatist nationalism, however. Scottish and Welsh nationalism in Britain is longstanding, but it hasn’t always necessarily led to Scottish or Welsh separatism. What it has more usually meant is that, for instance, Welsh voters tended to pick one of the all-British parties—in this instance, first the Liberal Party, then the Labour Party. It took a very long time before Welsh nationalism turned into a specific demand for Welsh autonomy. It didn’t become a major issue in Wales until the 1960s.

Is there also a sense in which the modernising state appropriates some of the rhetoric of nationalism from the kind of democratic nationalist movements which came to prominence in the 1848 revolutions for conservative ends?

There’s no doubt that among the older nations towards the end of the 19th century nationalism switched from being a cause of the Left to one of the Right. In this it was assisted partly by the appeal of imperialism, and partly by the enormous migratory movements which actually brought ordinary citizens face to face with a lot of foreigners, often for the first time. And partly, of course, by the threat of the then new political movements like the labour movement and the socialist movement.

But you also quote the interesting example of Colonel Pilsudski, the liberator of Poland—who himself was a democrat and was identified with the Left. You cite Pilsudski as saying it’s the state which makes the nation and not the nation which makes the state. What do you think he meant by that precisely?

He meant what everybody actually knows; that that there is very little grass roots drive in nationalism until you manage to set up a state. If you’ve got a bottle you can put some wine into it. It’s not the wine that makes the bottle, but the bottle which contains the liquid. Pilsudski knew perfectly well that there were a lot of people who called themselves Poles, but there were also other people in historic Poland who were not Poles. To become Poland and to get a Polish national sentiment was impossible until there was a Polish state.

In Yugoslavia right now the conflict there is seen partly as a conflict between Catholic Croatia and Orthodox Serbia—and we can see similar kinds of conflict elsewhere in Eastern Europe. How important is religion in the making of modern national identities?

It can be an alternative, or a component: but it’s not very often that it is a primary component. In the case of the Croat-Serb conflict, almost the only thing apart from history which distinguishes these two peoples who look the same and talk the same language, is that one is Roman Catholic and the other is Orthodox Christian. But that’s not particularly typical. For example, Islamic fundamentalism is only by the sheerest accident a nationalist factor. To the best of my knowledge Islamic fundamentalism has not actually generated a nationalist movement anywhere.

You make the point in your book that there was an idea current at the end of the 19th century that nations had to be of a certain size to be real nations. For instance, the Sicilians, or the Basques, or the Bohemians or the Welsh wouldn’t qualify to be a nation because there weren’t enough of them or because they didn’t occupy a big enough territory. How important was that for the development of nationalism in the 20th century?

It dominated the way the map of Europe was redrawn in the middle of the 19th century. But at the end of the 19th century they dropped the idea that a nation had to be a minimum viable size. And one of the reasons why the peace treaties at the end of World War I were such a mess was precisely because they drew up frontiers in terms which had no relationship at all to the historic or economic viability of nation states. They drew them up at least in
theory on purely ethnic/linguistic criteria. And now the chickens of the Treaties of Versailles and Brest-Litovsk are, so to speak, coming home to roost.

The same idea seems to dominate the thinking of, say, the European Community—the idea that somehow the small nations like the Baltic States, and even the component republics of Yugoslavia, don’t quite qualify to be nations and things would be much easier if they’d stay in these larger units.

Well, wouldn’t it be easier?

Perhaps it would be. But isn’t there a sense in which we’ve missed the political boat by saying in the West that you should stay together because you won’t cause us so much trouble if you stay together as Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union? Haven’t we perhaps promoted conflicts in these areas by saying you’ve got to stay together because you’re not big enough?

I don’t actually think that is so. The people who argue that it would be better if the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia stayed together are not the people who created the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. We find ourselves faced with a situation in which a lot of new states—in some instances, in the case of the Soviet Union, almost phantom states—are appearing out of the ashes of former federal states. Obviously we have to make the best we can of this, and sooner or later, no doubt, we have to recognise them. But do you honestly believe that a Europe composed of a lot of places like Macedonia and Slovakia is going to be more stable than the Europe we’ve had for 40 to 50 years? Do you believe that the Soviet Union composed of all these quarrelling successor republics is going to be the basis of peace and quiet in the area between Vienna and the Pacific Ocean?

It does seem that we don’t have the analytical tools to understand what’s going on, because it seems as though that within every nation there is a sub-nation or a smaller nation trying to get out. For instance, in Slovakia, you have Slovakia which considers itself perhaps separate from Czechoslovakia. Yet within Slovakia you have a Hungarian minority saying we don’t belong here either; we want to be Hungarians separate from Slovakia. Why has that happened? Why is there this kind of atomisation and disintegration into the smallest possible unit?

It’s happening because the idea that states should be composed of one ethnic or linguistic group, every nation a state, is totally unrealistic. There are maybe 170 states in the world today, and of these I suppose at best a dozen come anywhere near being ethnically or linguistically homogeneous. So it’s patently clear that this is not really a world program. The distribution of peoples over the face of the world including the face of Europe is a lot older that the idea of independent nation states—particularly ethnic nation states—and consequently most of these are in fact just as mixed as larger states from which they break away. What’s more, in the 20th century, the modern economy means that people are constantly moving. So even if you’ve got one homogeneous state as a result of expelling or killing off all the foreigners, somebody else is going to come in. This is how the modern world economy works; it’s an economy of migration. Consequently the idea of a territorial state based on a particular ethnic/linguistic group is not one that can work for any length of time.

It does seem to have come back with a particular virulence now, though, doesn’t it?

That’s right.

Why?

Because these countries are falling apart as political entities. I don’t believe there is intrinsically more ethnic hatred in Yugoslavia than in Spain, or, for that matter, in Great Britain. The difference is that Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union fell apart politically from inside. And naturally they are breaking up along the political fracture lines. They’re breaking up into the republics—Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Slovenia and so on—which were supposed to be nationally and ethnically defined. We don’t even know how many of the inhabitants of the Ukraine, Moldavia or Byelorussia initially really felt about secession. It’s pretty certain that in the Soviet Union three years ago, with the exception of the Baltic states, there was no serious mass demand for secession anywhere. They have to secede because the whole box of tricks is falling to pieces; they have to secede in self-defence. Once they secede they have another set of problems.

At the same time as the idea of the modern nation state emerged in the 18th century in Europe and the Americas, there was the emergence in Europe of another kind of idea which has become important in our own time: the notion of a United Europe. You find it in the writings of the German philosopher Kant and some of his contemporaries. I wonder if you think that in our own time the idea of Europe can be a kind of counterbalance for these forces of fragmentation.

Personally, I doubt it. I think the most likely thing is for people to have multiple identification. They might say: I’m a European, when confronted by the Americans or Japanese. But I don’t see that this is going to replace the sentiment of being English or Portuguese or Czech. But then I don’t think we want to abolish the sentiment of being Czech or Croat. What we want to do is to stop people killing each other over it. It has now got to the stage where only a very few among the Irish kill each other over the question of being Irish. That’s a step forward. No doubt in God’s good time this may happen in Eastern Europe, but it will take quite a long time. I think we look forward to a pretty gloomy and conflict-laden time for the next few years.

TOM MORTON is the producer for ABC Radio National’s The Europeans. Excerpts from this interview appeared on The Europeans in January and February.
The decline of class-based politics has seen a revival in the idea of citizenship as a basis for democratic politics. But Carole Pateman is sceptical. She argues that advocates of citizenship and new democratic theories fail to take account of the gender-based assumptions of the political traditions they hope to recover.

In discussions of electoral politics the point is sometimes made that the achievement of formal rights, such as the suffrage, is not the same as the ability of all citizens to enjoy those rights on an equal basis; or, to make the same point in another way, formal rights do not necessarily mean that citizenship is of equal worth to all citizens. Another important point that is frequently overlooked is that all individuals are not necessarily incorporated into the political order in the same fashion. The meaning of citizenship can be very different for different groups and categories of the population. Yet theorists of democracy, who currently place a good deal of faith in citizenship as a political value or idea, still fail to confront some major problems about the status of women, and blacks and other minorities, and so gloss over the implications of that status for 'democracy' itself.

Theorists who advocate radical, participatory forms of democracy should be particularly concerned with limitations upon democracy and the problems posed by the structure of the relations between the sexes. There has been a revival of interest in participatory democratic theory since the mid-1980s and, in particular, a focus on a revived conception of citizenship as a new organising principle for democratic politics. These theorists have available to them the feminist scholarship developed over the past twenty years. But, like most other political theorists, they either do not read feminist political theory or fail to engage with feminist arguments. New arguments about participatory democracy still tend to ignore the question of women and democracy and never look at the contemporary women's
movement, even though it advocates a radical form of democracy and provides a multitude of examples of attempts to put participatory democracy into practice.

Similarly, no attention is given to the problems debated by feminist political theorists, such as men’s power over women, the political significance of sexual difference, the relation between the public and private spheres, the bodily integrity of women and pervasive sexual violence, or the position of women in the workplace. Only a handful of democratic theorists have begun to discuss the question of the relation between domestic life and the public world of politics, or, for instance, to consider reproductive rights in addition to the more familiar list of democratic rights. And it is feminist scholars, rather than those identified as ‘democratic theorists’, who have begun to write books about women, feminism and democracy.

Part of the reason why women and feminist arguments have so minor a place in democratic theory is undoubtedly that democratic theory, like conventional electoral politics in the West, is still largely the preserve of men or, more exactly, white men. Much more important, however, than male domination of the profession, is the acceptance of a view of the political which systematically excludes crucial features of socio-political life from scrutiny. Feminist critics of political theory have posed a fundamental challenge to the canon; they are arguing that a new democratic theory is needed because the discipline rests on a patriarchal conception of its subject matter, a conception which inhibits the creation of a new democratic theory.

The claim that the central category of political science and democratic theory, the political itself, is patriarchal, is complex, but involves the following two arguments: first, that the manner in which the political has been constructed excludes women; second, that the way in which women have actually been included in political life is different from, and subordinate to, the incorporation of men as subjects and citizens.

Political theorists have not extended the scope of their critical inquiries to ask why certain social and political relations are seen as falling outside, or as not relevant to, their scholarly investigations. They have not examined how the modern notion of the political was developed by the classic contract theorists in the 17th and 18th centuries but, instead, have accepted their construction as obvious and self-evident—and then have interpreted the relevant texts in the light of that same view of the political.

Democratic theorists have failed to take seriously (or often even to mention) the discussions in these texts of the political significance of sexual difference. Nor have they examined how conceptions of the political meaning of manhood and womanhood were integral to the modern separation of a public sphere from domestic and intimate relations or private life. Therefore, they ignore—by tacitly taking for granted—the separation of the private sphere, identified with women, from the public sphere, identified with men. This patriarchal division between private and intimate relations and the public world of economy and state is the concern of feminist scholars. Democratic theorists, in contrast, focus on another division, a class
division, within the public arena, between private enterprise (the economy) and the state (the public realm). Democratic theorists assume that the public sphere, in the sense that feminists use the term, is their proper subject matter. They also assume that they can study the public world in abstraction from the private sphere, which is irrelevant to their inquiries. They therefore display no curiosity about the patriarchal division between public and private, which is a major structural feature that distinguishes modern liberal societies from other societal forms.

The classic theorists present the sexes as differentiated 'by nature', so that the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subordination. All men are seen as self-sufficient, independent, equal and self-governing; there is no natural jurisdiction of one man over another. The government of men must therefore be created through voluntary agreement or consent, and all men have the capacity to take part in political life. In contrast, women lack these attributes and must be governed by men. The place for which women are fitted is private, not political, life; they must be excluded from citizenship. A certain view of manhood and a certain view of the political were thus developed together, and the political was made in the masculine image.

When democratic theorists discuss these texts as a foundation of modern democracy, they typically pass over this central aspect of the classic theorists' argument. They do not, therefore, have anything to say about the significance of a construction of sexual difference that assumes that men are the political sex, or anything to say about women's inclusion into the political order. Women had a very long fight to become citizens, but their exclusion from citizenship did not mean that they were left outside of the scope of political power and public policy. Arguments about democratic citizenship are usually conducted as if what is said about men can be generalised to women too—or, more accurately, the terms of the argument are not presented as being about men, but assumed to be about an ostensibly sexually neuter 'individual'. A brief consideration of one aspect of the incorporation of men as citizens will illustrate this important point.

Citizenship in the English-speaking democracies since the late 19th century has been citizenship in a developing welfare state. Political theorists have had a good deal to say about the welfare state recently as rightwing governments have attacked the welfare budget and institutions, but the manner in which they have framed their discussions presupposes that the welfare state provides an answer to a certain problem. The problem is the poverty of (a greater or lesser proportion of) male workers generated by the capitalist market economy.

If a worker is unemployed or, through sickness, old age or some misfortune, cannot sell his labour power on the market, his resulting poverty means that he lacks the resources to enjoy the rights he has as a citizen. His poverty sets him apart from his fellow citizens, and he may eventually pose a threat to public order. The welfare state provides a solution to this problem. As a worker, a man can make a contribution (pay for 'social insurance') that then entitles him to benefits if he cannot sell his labour power. The benefits maintain his standard of living, and also maintain his standing as a citizen. The welfare state and its entitlements thus makes democratic citizenship of equal worth to all citizens.

Paid employment has been a major mechanism through which men have been incorporated into citizenship, although this argument about the welfare state is usually presented as if it applied indifferently to men and women alike. The questions that democratic theorists do not ask are whether the argument is in fact generalisable to women, or whether there has been another status for women that corresponds to that of 'worker' for men.

Or, to make the point slightly differently, theorists of the democratic welfare state do not ask about the citizenship of the worker's wife. The worker's wife might be in paid employment herself, but even if she is, these theorists have failed to recognise that, as a worker, she has had a quite different relationship to citizenship in the welfare state from that of her husband. From its initial stages, the structure of the Anglophone welfare state was patriarchal and the very different treatment of men and women has only recently begun to be dismantled. This fundamental feature of citizenship in the welfare state has been very well documented by feminist theorists and historians for some time but their work is not considered by democratic theorists.

The argument about citizenship and the welfare state focuses on the worker and citizen and hence on the public world of employment and politics. No attention is paid to private, domestic life, which is implicitly accepted as a natural basis for the public world and so as falling outside the purview of political theory. Domestic life is also implicitly accepted as the realm most suitable for women. The 'worker' maintains the home through his wages, he returns there from his day's labours and is looked after by his wife. The economic dependence and, hence, subordination, of wives is so taken-for-granted in democratic theory that the fact that this is a creation of the 19th century—and not a 'natural' arrangement—is completely overlooked.

The structure of the welfare state provides a clear illustration of the differential incorporation of women and men into citizenship, and of the lesser worth of women's citizenship despite their formal equality as votes. This is not, however, the only matter that is overlooked in discussions of democracy. Democratic theorists have yet to ask whether women make a contribution to the welfare state that has any significance for their citizenship or for democracy. A contribution has been demanded of women but, paradoxically, not a public contribution, like that of men; women have been required to supply private welfare. As part of the task held to be suited to them because of their sex, women—almost invariably married women—have cared for children, the sick, the aged and the infirm in their homes, and the current crisis of the welfare state would have been much worse if the state had been responsible for providing these services.
Arguments about the welfare state and democracy, like debate about injustice, concentrate on distributive issues. The large inequalities of income and wealth in the English-speaking democracies, and the lack, for example, of a national system of health insurance in the USA so that many individuals have very limited or no access to medical treatment, together with the differential allocation of welfare benefits between the sexes, means that questions about distribution are extremely important. There are, however, two problems with the conventional arguments. First, the issue of distribution within the domestic sphere and how it is connected to the workplace is rarely considered. How the (male) worker distributes his wage to his dependents—or if he distributes it to them at all—is assumed to be yet another matter of not great interest to students of democracy. The fact that half the citizen body relies—or, now that most wives today are in the labor force but earning less than their husbands, relies partially—on the benevolence of another citizen for the resources necessary for the enjoyment of their citizenship, is typically passed over in silence. Women’s standard of living is not regarded as a relevant issue in its own right for democracy.

The second problem is with the ‘distributive paradigm’ which now covers much more than the allocation of material goods. In recent arguments, the distribution of such ‘goods’ as self-respect, rights, opportunities or power have been discussed as if they are no different from cars or income or wealth. The result is that rights, for instance, are treated as a bundle of things that individuals possess in greater or lesser amounts, so that their distribution can be compared. The question is not asked of what it could mean to talk of ‘distributing’ a right. Rights are not material things which can be owned but relationships that help define the conditions for individual and collective action. More generally, the distributive focus of so much political theory means that the problem of subordination, hence also the problem of freedom, is rarely discussed. In democratic theory, attention is directed to fairness, or in the case of radical theorists, exploitation, rather than subjection and lack of freedom.

When democratic theorists examine the distribution of welfare benefits they typically ignore both the allocation to men compared to women and the social structures that determined the patriarchal character of the distribution. That is, they ignore the patriarchal power and subordination of women that is consolidated in the welfare state. The neglect is encouraged when power is brought under the distributive paradigm. The consequence is that the institution of women that is consolidated in the welfare state. The fact that half the citizen body relies—or, now that most wives today are in the labor force but earning less than their husbands, relies partially—on the benevolence of another citizen for the resources necessary for the enjoyment of their citizenship, is typically passed over in silence. Women’s standard of living is not regarded as a relevant issue in its own right for democracy.

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So far, I have concentrated on women and women’s citizenship in the English-speaking countries because this has been the focus of my own recent research. However, new political science that illuminates women’s subordination in the West could also assist in understanding what is happening to women in the ‘new world’ being created in the Third World and newly industrialised countries. For example, the construction of women as dependent (i.e. subordinate) ‘housewives’ in the census categories of the 19th century has happened again in the mid-20th century in a broader context. Exactly the same assumptions about public/private, production/housework, men/women structure the United Nations System of National Accounts used from the 1950s around the world to measure economic productivity and growth. As Marilyn Waring shows in detail in her pathbreaking study Counting for Nothing, the UNSNA excludes women’s work, despite the fact that millions of lives depend on the unceasing daily toil of women.

When the Chair of the group that first developed the UNSNA was awarded a Nobel prize, the comment was made that ‘the system has become accepted as so self-evident that it is hard to realise that someone had to invent it’. Exactly: it has been ‘self-evident’ since the late 19th century that tasks assigned to women because of their sex are not ‘work’. Only the activities of men in the public market are included within the UNSNA ‘production boundary’. Women are ‘dependents’, not ‘producers’. Households in general are seen as nonproductive, except for production for the market by agricultural households. More recently, a value has been imputed to some non-monetary household activities—but carrying water, weeding, the collection of firewood, subsistence crop production and housework are excluded. These are precisely the tasks that are typically consigned to women. UN manuals explicitly exclude unpaid domestic work from ‘work’. As Waring emphasises, since domestic work is never defined it becomes a ‘residual category’ that includes, beside the tasks that are thought of as ‘housework’ in the West, ‘all food processing, kitchen gardening, animal tending, food and water collection, fishing, hunting, gathering and manufacturing for home use’.

There are, it is claimed, practical difficulties of data collection and conceptual problems that prevent women’s work being counted but, as Waring notes, ways are found to include men’s non-monetary work and the informal economy when required. The major obstacle to the inclusion of women’s productive ‘contribution’ in the UNSNA is the same as the obstacle to including women’s ‘contribution’ to the welfare state in the West. To do so would lead to scrutiny of some awkward matters: men’s power, patriarchal institutional structures, the division between public and private and the political significance of sexual difference would become visible. The construction of categories like ‘productive’, ‘housework’, ‘market’ or ‘private’ would cease to be ‘self-evident’. Questions would be raised about the kind of ‘development’ and ‘structural adjustment’ in the Third World that can lengthen women’s hours of work while shortening men’s, that can give jobs and land to men, and push women into poverty and into economic and sexual subordination to men. In short, the normal science of politics would have to be reconstituted.

CAROLE PATEMAN teaches in political science at the University of California, Los Angeles, and is the author of The Sexual Contract (1988). This is a much shorter version of a paper delivered to the International Political Science Association’s World Congress held in Buenos Aires last year. Responses to this article will be published in upcoming issues of ALR.
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ALR: MARCH 1992
Baby Boomers

Romaine Rutnam suggests a provocative vision for parenting and parenthood without the domination of medical technology.

In the two-year period surrounding my fortieth birthday, eighteen of my women friends, colleagues and relatives gave birth to their first child. Only two of them were under 30 and, as I recall, they were the only ones to have uncomplicated pregnancies and/or births. Many of them would consider themselves feminists of some sort; most of them have benefited from feminist actions in that they are economically independent and are committed to careers outside motherhood.

It was during that time that I began researching the history of IVF technology in Australia. For me it was a time of revelation on many fronts. I learned about the strength of the drives in many Australian women and men to overcome the limits placed on their lives by the inability to bear their own children. I also learned about the impressive body of feminist research which had uncovered the drives of European science and medicine to dominate nature and overcome the limits placed on human activities by biology and other constraints.

One of the ideas I have drawn from this experience of IVF and similar medical research is that it highlights a conflict between different strands of feminist thought, which have very different implications for the lives of women (and men). One of these strands argues that feminism is about increasing all kinds of choices for women, which will allow us to live in any way we please and with (at least) equal freedoms to men. Our T-shirts say it all: “No limits for women” and “We don’t want half the cake, we want the whole damn bakery!”

Another strand is critical of the outcomes produced by male science. It argues instead that feminism must be about creating different kinds of knowledges and policies which recognise the importance of diversity in human and other species and which respect the need for balance in our ecosystem.

For me, IVF and other new reproductive technologies are a continuation of European culture’s confident and simple belief in the benefit of putting our resources into expanding the boundaries of human action. Since we have learned that women’s bodies (and possibly men’s too) tend to become less fertile once over 30, and childbearing becomes more risky, the latest answer given by this culture is a high-tech and invasive one: get women to have their eggs removed and frozen while in their 20s, and reimplanted years later either in their own bodies or in that of a younger ‘surrogate’ mother. The contemporary answer which many of us in Australia have come to take for granted is the less high-tech but still invasive and costly (in physical, emotional and financial terms) solution of increased intervention in childbirth.

These solutions certainly expand our choices, and some feminists have welcomed them while arguing that women and men must be allowed to make fully informed choices about using any of them. What I want to discuss is whether feminists shouldn’t start to be more critical of the choices we, within our culture, make.

I want to argue for creating a social policy—a cultural expectation, really—based on an acceptance of biological differences and limits, which encourages women to have their first babies at the healthiest time physically for both themselves and their children (the mid to late 20s). This would require our society to take the task of parenthood far more seriously than it presently does.

It would require boys as well as girls to be brought up to respect and care for their bodies, listen to them, and not take their future fertility for granted. It would say to young women and their partners that parenting is a serious and important option for their future, although only one among many. And it would say to those who choose to become parents that their careers and studies have to be accepted as taking second place to childbearing and parenting for some years in their late 20s and early 30s.

This would mean provision of adequate childcare facilities in all tertiary institutions and major workplaces, and an acceptance of part-time paid work for all new parents, both women and men. Parenting would need to be better subsidised or supported by so-
cial resources in some way—perhaps the ideal would be that those choosing parenthood (and they may be single women or lesbian couples as well as heterosexual couples) would be paid a full-time wage for part-time hours for up to the first five years or so. Such support may well need to be predicated on greater equality in incomes, particularly between women and men, so that single women or lesbians weren't penalised more by parenting than women who were in a supportive relationship with men. It would also require finding imaginative ways of valuing the skills gained from parenting plus part-time work, so that those of us who choose not to parent are not given an unfair advantage in career opportunities.

I think the strongest argument against this is that women may not be ready to have their first child(ren) by their late 20s, mostly because they might not have found a mate they wanted to bring up children with. I accept that our culture must be free to encourage and not penalise diversity of responses. However, I also imagine that a society which took parenting seriously in the way I've tried to describe might make women freer and more financially able to enjoy having children at this time without waiting for 'the perfect mate' if s/he hasn't turned up by then. Perhaps in the sort of society I am imagining, the trauma of separation and divorce would be lessened for all concerned if the expectation of the one mate also fell by the wayside.

I accept that the position I have put forward comes close to the 'biology is destiny' view which many feminists have for long resisted. But I am also saying that healthy motherhood is not the only destiny for women, and that at least in the foreseeable future it will be healthy for our planet if all women do not choose to reproduce.

I also acknowledge that parenting required far more than just physical fitness at the time of childbirth, and includes questions of maternal and paternal psychological maturity, supportive relationships and adequate financial resources. However, greater age in first time parents doesn't automatically guarantee any of these. One of the children in my 'sample' was born after all her grandparents had died, and her father will be 60 before she becomes a teenager. While I welcome a society which does not restrict family supports to biological networks, I still think that the latter are culturally and symbolically important to sustain.

One conclusion I have drawn for myself from IVF is that we, as feminists and women, need to be discriminating about the choices we make. The criterion for making those choices which I find most relevant in the 1990s is that of ecological sustainability. As a woman of middle age, my choices about reproduction are moving on to choices about ways to age and die. What is common in all these choices is that feminists have offered us two opposing ways to view them: we can either actively seek, welcome and choose all possible options, or we can accept our bodily limits and restrain our own demands upon society accordingly.

We are living in a time when public policy is increasingly forcing restrictions in demand upon us. In relation to health policy, I would like to see such restrictions made according to the criterion of what is sensible in terms of sustaining life on this planet. Just as I think we have to ask serious questions about a policy which continually expands reproductive choices for the richest among us, I think we have to question health policies which put more and more resources into WHO Europe's target of 'adding years to life' for the richest in the world at the expense of high infant mortality and life expectancies of around 60 for the majority of the world's people.

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Upon the birth of my daughter four years ago I had the occasion to experience first hand the degree of cultural significance given, in our western society at least, to 'biology': in this case, the biological connectedness of parents to their offspring. I don't think my experience was uncommon; my daughter was 'claimed' as part of my family via biological connectedness. My daughter's arrival heralded new ways for my (biologically connected) family to affirm what are essentially social relationships. New categories of relationships were established—aunt, uncle, grandmother and grandfather—with biology as the social binding. At one day old my daughter was minutely examined: she had my mother's hands, her father's feet, her great-grandfather's head shape, her uncle's nose and so on.

What was interesting was that at that stage my daughter's father and his family had severed social relations with each other. The 'biological similarity', or, as I would prefer to say, the urge to connect my daughter with her paternal family via biological symbolism was not evident, even to those with well-meaning intentions. Conflict on that side has since been resolved, and my daughter has been duly incorporated into her father's family by the same process of 'recognition' of biological similarities. This experience has brought home to me the power of the biological metaphor. The force of the metaphor rested not on biology in itself, but on its use (in many societies) to affirm and strengthen social relations.

I have been researching the development of In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) in order to outline a feminist critique of science and technology focusing on the power relations involved. Of course, examining IVF involves discussing a wide range of areas such as the concept of fertility, pregnancy and birth, and the meaning of parenting, science, technology, and medicine. One of the most pervasive, although by no means victorious, influences on the cultural construction of reproduction (i.e. on how we think about pregnancy and childbearing) is the medical model.

Conception, pregnancy and birth are socially mediated biological events. Biological events do not have to be medical events, but with the rise of the 'male midwife', the precursor of the obstetrician during the 19th century, reproduction was brought within the confines of the bio-medical model.

Reproductive technologies refer to a range of medical interventions in the processes of pregnancy and childbirth, and with the advent of IVF the process of conception has also become a medical issue. In other words, every aspect of women's reproduction has been brought under the auspices of the bio-medical model.

The biomedical model contains several assumptions about the body: the individual body can be separated from the social body (i.e. the social context), the body performs like a machine with organs carrying out certain functions, and that the mind is separable from the body. In other words, the body is strictly of the flesh, a 'biological given', part of 'nature'. Diseases are conceptualised as neutral entities which reside in nature—that is, in the body.

During the development of medicine as a profession the medicalisation of reproduction was one of the last areas of human activity to be brought under the auspices of the bio-medical model. It is not surprising that reproduction was one of the last areas to be incorporated, since the bio-medical model is attuned to curing infections and disease. Yet reproduction is not a disease or even an abnormal condition. In order for reproduction to be included as a medical condition, then, it has to be pathologicalised to some extent. Pregnancy then is perceived as a somewhat abnormal state for the body, with accompanying medically defined 'risks'. A pregnant woman's age is used as a medical factor in assessing the degree of 'risk' involved. Given this tendency, it is likely that a woman perceived 'at risk' will then have her pregnancy and childbearing made problematic.

The medical definition of 'risk' is a constantly shifting one. The age for a woman to be considered 'at risk' varies from country to country, but the general trend is that age considered safe for reproduction is getting lower and lower. It is significant, however, that the degree to which a woman may be perceived to be 'at risk' is mediated by social factors, such as her location. Women in urban Australia, for example, are much more likely to undergo some form of routine intervention such as ultrasound during pregnancy because the technology is available.

Economic circumstances, and possession of private health insurance, may also play a part in determining the degree of 'risk' involved. If we examine the extent of 'necessary intervention during birth, for example, we find that the chance of a woman undergoing caesarian section delivery is far greater if she is covered by private health insurance. My point here is that what is perceived as a medical condition, as a risk, may be mediated and influenced by social circumstances.

Reproductive technologies such as Chorion Villus Sampling (CVS) and amniocentesis have been introduced as pre-natal tests which claim to detect certain foetal conditions deemed by some as undesirable. These tests may be offered to pregnant women over 40, 37, 35 or 32 depending on the particular definition of risk in relation to age. The tendency to utilise these tests as a routine procedure is a manifestation of the general pathologisation of pregnancy. A technique initially introduced for a very small group of women considered 'at risk' during
pregnancy becomes a routine procedure for many. With the proliferation of reproductive technologies involved with surveillance of a pregnant woman's body, the chances are that more 'risks' will arise.

At the moment, age is a dominant factor in determining 'risk'. I would argue that that this is part of an attempt to contain reproduction within the bio-medical model. The tensions involved in attempting to incorporate reproduction into the bio-medical model, in line with the 'disease model', are great. By introducing age as a medical factor, the tensions are somewhat alleviated. In other words, the expanding medical definitions of 'risk' currently based on age, allow more pregnancies to be pathologised, or at least problematised.

It is from this perspective that I approach some of the issues raised in Romaine's article above. I agree that one's fertility should not be seen as a never-ending resource and should be seen as a potential. Fertility is actually a relationship or interaction rather than a static entity, since fertility can never be 'assessed' on one's own. Reproduction, a fulfilment of fertility potential, is a biological event which is quintessentially social. I agree that parenting should be given more importance, and social infrastructure should be put into place which meets the needs of parents and potential parents so that more acceptable options are created, thus enriching the lives of children and all adults.

In addressing some of the main themes raised by Romaine, I wish to add to the debate around reproduction, parenting and non-parenting. Of course, these issues have always been present; the expansion of reproductive technologies have highlighted these debates and brought what was previously considered by many to be 'private' into the 'public'.

My first sense of unease came when reading that, of a sample of eighteen pregnant women, the only ones who had 'uncomplicated' pregnancies and births were those who were under thirty. Without knowing further details, one might hypothesise following my previously made point about 'risk' in the bio-medical model, that perhaps pregnant women of a certain age are more likely to have their pregnancies and/or births complicated rather than having complicated pregnancies and/or births.

On a more general theme, the advocacy of a social policy which encourages childbearing between the ages of 25 and 30, because this is deemed to be the 'healthiest' time, comes close to accepting the bio-medical model of reproduction—a model which separates the biological body from the social context, and which asserts (in this case) that reproductive organs and fertility in general are at optimum performance levels and should be utilised at that time. The implication here is that reproduction is seen primarily as a biological function, and this function should be performed at peak times which are defined and redefined by the biomedical model.

Reproduction is a life event which may or may not take place according to one's life situation. In brief, even if one has children before the age of thirty, the desire to have another or more children may arise at a later stage because of changed social and/or financial circumstances, or even simply the desire to do so. Biological fitness may be one factor to take into account at such a stage, but in privileging biology over other factors there may be a tendency to view reproduction as a strictly biological rather than a more broadly social event.

There is also the question of the ecological sustainability of the choices we make about reproduction. Romaine seems to imply that ecological sustainability may involve making choices either to have fewer children or no children at all. This seems to rest on the 'overpopulation' thesis that high population contributes to impoverished circumstances both individually and nationally. This is a contentious argument which does not hold up under scrutiny. My response would be that the concept of ecological sustainability needs to be clarified to avoid adopting unwanted and 'hazardous' conceptual frameworks in our debates.

In general, I don't see any necessary opposition between feminist demands for increasing choices, and the recognition by feminists that there need to be different attitudes which respect both diversity and a balance in the ecosystem. There need not be any opposition if the choices created come from women themselves. At present, 'choice' is confined to a series of yes/no decisions in relation to a number of options presented to women. Some of us may be able to 'choose' from a virtual supermarket of reproductive options, but do not participate in the creation of the choices themselves.

Our bodies tell a story about who we are and who we have been, and what has happened to us in our lives. One's life history is essentially a social history. In this light I would regard 'biology' not as a static entity passed on to us via genetic inheritance, but as a physical symbol of our social life—our biology is at the same time our biography.

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Desmond Morris, I’m afraid, is at it again, treating us like animals to achieve his own ends. In the published results of his recent keen observation of babies at breast (Babywatching, Jonathan Cape, 1992), we ought not to be surprised to discover that mother’s milk is best and that the healthy baby will be the one whose needs are met immediately. Morris doesn’t say that any other treatment will produce an increase in juvenile delinquency but, never fear, some of his mates will say it for him.

These are, of course, familiar arguments which suggest that ‘nature’ knows best and that we defy ‘her’ at our peril. And the calls for demand-feeding and breastmilk are often accompanied by concern that women’s new liberated lifestyles are preventing them from filling this, their ‘natural’ function.

Those who support these views find arguments where they need them, and sometimes the defences are in direct conflict with each other. On the one hand, humans are considered to be more than animals by definition. This philosophical position lauds rationality over emotion and denigrates the animal, bodily side of ‘man’. On the other, we are constantly reminded that we are territorial like animals, that life in the real world is like life in the wild—there are scarce resources, and only the fittest will survive. In certain situations we will be invoked to ‘rise above our instincts’; in others doom is forecast should we dare to defy them.

It seems that, whatever position is taken on nature, women remain its victims. In one version, women are seen as quintessentially body, not quite ‘rational’ and hence not quite suited to all those positions of influence and responsibility which men fill so well. In the other, they are accorded more value as ‘mothers of the race’, but the effects are much the same—leaving women responsible for the nurture and care of the next generation and far from seats of power.

What holds these positions—which at first glance look contradictory—together is a traditional vision of society which sees the nuclear family with the mother at home as essential for social order. And the way in which arguments are manipulated to defend this vision shows that the point of the argument is considered far more important than how you get there.

Sociobiology, which is Morris’ particular hobbyhorse, unfortunately has a commonsense quality which makes it popular. We’ve heard for so long that if birds do it, and bees do it, so probably do we. The inconsistencies in the sociobiological gospel are legion, but we ought to be grateful when proponents make such obvious errors of logic as Morris has indeed done in this recent study. He has, quite simply, caught himself out. He has found a maladaptive human trait and performed conceptual somersaults to try to cover himself. Instead, he’s made a farce of his position.

Allow me to outline the argument briefly. The problem is ample breasts. Morris found through observation that babies ‘confronting’ large breasts had difficulty feeding and breathing at the same time. Hence they appear to be ‘fighting the breast’. But the poor loves are simply struggling to find air. The solution to the physical problem is simple. Push a finger into the breast to provide a space for the gasping infant’s tiny nose.

Indeed, the solution is so simple that it is a wonder that Morris pursues it any further. Clearly, he feels that the average mother cannot be credited the good sense to facilitate her child’s breathing.

Given his decision to pursue it further, however, the theoretical problem is not so easily resolved. According to the sociobiological gospel, we are sup-
posed to have taken up habits and developed features which are best for the survival of the species. And yet here we are with a characteristic which, unless less carefully watched, could lead to extinction. The long, narrow feeding bottle is simply much more efficient than a ‘full, well-rounded breast’, as Morris concedes.

An additional theoretical complication is the fact that apes, those most commonly looked to as our progenitors, do have long narrow breasts, more like milk bottles. The puzzle then, for Morris, is to explain why in this particular characteristic we have broken away from our ape role-models and in a regressive direction. How, Morris asks, can we explain the inefficiency of the ‘full, well-rounded breast’?

The answer, Morris claims, is relatively obvious when you think about it. Clearly, for humans, ‘full, well-rounded breasts’ serve another biological function. They act as a ‘specific sexual signal’.

We are given little additional information about this ‘sexual signalling’ and are really left on our own to interpret it. Most animal sexual signalling is meant to increase the likelihood of mating among superior examples of the species. So the healthiest peacock would have the brightest feathers, and the strongest baboon the reddest ass. Yet, in the example of large human breasts, their selection might have led to mass asphyxiation.

The only possible explanation seems to be that ‘full, well-rounded’ breasts provided a less sophisticated but equally necessary sexual signal, that they indicated to men who were the women, a crucial first step down the road to species reproduction. And then, I suppose the logic follows, due to natural selection, the women with the ‘fullest, most well-rounded breasts’ were chosen for mating because they were the easiest to spot.

I don’t know about you, but I find this argument a little unconvincing, even within the terms of sociobiology itself.

I mean, why didn’t apes need this kind of signalling device? Male apes seem to be able to identify females even when they are ‘flat-chested’—which is the case, says Morris, when they are not feeding their young. Must we then conclude that human males were either myopic or indifferent to other kinds of sexual signals?

The latter hypothesis, just measurably less unlikely than the former, gets Morris into even hotter water. If Morris is indeed imputing a ‘preference’ for large breasts onto prehistoric man (I can just see them guffawing over Playboy-like cave paintings), he would surely need some evidence for this claim. Pointing to their existence as a kind of proof is patently circular. That is, they exist because men liked them. And, if he’s implying that the large breast is analogous to a baboon’s red ass, he still hasn’t explained why humans used a maladaptive trait to ‘sexually signal’ to each other.

There are other completely different versions of what might have happened, of course. Given that large breasts in Morris’ scenario lessen the likelihood of survival, perhaps they indicate some kind of mass primaeval death wish. Another possibility is that they persist despite their maladaptation because small-chested women are doing more than their share of reproduction.

I can’t help wondering if, indeed, the answer to the puzzle is even simpler than this. Has Morris considered diet? Does it make a difference if there is an increase in fat in what one eats, which is likely to happen when you stop munching leaves? Or perhaps ‘full, well-rounded’ breasts are more common in certain climes than others?

Despite the considerable problems large breasts create for Morris’ theory, none of these options is pursued. I am left to conclude that he may be having difficulty seeing past his personal preference in the sexual selection stakes. At least, with this explanation, his argument regains a degree of consistency—as quintessentially traditional.

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Father Knows Best

Peter Pan has changed since we last saw him filling the big screen as an early 1950s Disney cartoon—and not for the better. He's bad tempered, greedy and insensitive. Why, he couldn't even make time to show up for his son's crucial baseball game. But that's life when you're a corporate lawyer too busy for anything except those vital mergers and acquisitions. No wonder Wendy tells him he's become a pirate.

Though the premise of Hook seems at first a little bizarre—Robin Williams as a fortysomething Peter Pan—it is, in fact, a technically brilliant rehash. It's not a sequel to Peter Pan, but it is: and it's Peter Pan without the rebel element (i.e. young Peter) who has instead become the father.

'The word' that's a big word in Hook and it obviously means a lot to Spielberg, who has a son under ten himself. 13-year-old Charlie Korsmo, playing Peter's son Jack, has that wide-eyed but sulky quality that worked so well for him when he was Junior in Dick Tracy. Jack is introduced first of all to us as a boy whose father isn't always 'there' for him; Peter, who long ago lost touch with Never-Neverland, is now out of touch with his own son.

The horror of this, Hook seems to be saying, is above and beyond any other evil deed or fantastic voyage that anyone in Hook might care to go through. Captain Hook himself, played by a wickedly dashing and over emotional Dustin Hoffman, has the perfect revenge against Peter: to make his kids love Hook more than they love their real father. That this is achieved with comparative ease says little for family bonding, though eventually 'the kids' (did I mention there were two of them?) There is actually a younger daughter who is convenient-ly forgotten for most of the picture) do turn around and love their dad again once he proves himself a flying hero.

Were Spielberg not quite so keen on bringing the Dad/Pan figure (himself?) into things he might almost be a Richmal Crompton for the 90s. Crompton (author of the William books over a 40 year period in the first half of this century) had a similar faith in the resilience and legendary sturdiness of boys and their myths.

If Spielberg had one arresting concept for us in Hook it would be the idea of the power of a boy's imagination: a wide-eyed, grubby boy with a grin from ear to ear. Pre-sex, pre-doubt. All those 'things that boys do' pop up in Hook's scenes among the 'lost boys': pride, warrior spirit, immense hunger and greed. They abide in treehouses atop some fantastic island in the way the J M Barries and Spielbergs of this world assume all boys would like to live.

Which is not to say that Spielberg is unremittingly sexist. After all, here's the man who made The Color Purple, even if he did take out all the lesbian content. But his concerns—especially when it comes to fantasy—are extraordinarily male-oriented. This is high-lighted by the pivotal moment in the story of Hook, the moment when Robin Williams sheds a few stone and takes to the skies in an ecstasy of Pan-ness. This is when he finally isolates his 'happy thought': that he has a son.

He flashes back to the moment Jack was born and he recaptures all the pride he feels in his boy. That he is father to a son is what's important: the younger daughter is not mentioned. (For her part, the daughter, when she's occasionally seen, expresses a fairly singular fondness for her mother. Spielberg is challenging Freud on families in this one, it would seem.)

For his part, Jack is starting to model himself on Captain Hook: the sort of scenario where tension or apprehension flies out the window because we know the father-son thing is a bond too strong to break. Nevertheless Jack can't cope for a minute without some sort of father figure in the vicinity—which is why he starts dressing like a pirate and looking confusedly troubled, as only Charlie Korsmo knows how.

Maybe we can hardly blame Jack; there really aren't too many strong female figures in Hook at all. Wendy—now fifty years Peter's senior—at least has some stem words for him, but that's about it. One might expect Hollywood's premier female box office draw, Julia Roberts, starring here as Tinkerbell, to put in her two cents. But no: she's so totally besotted with Peter that all she seems capable of is either fond laughter or—at one curiously tasteless point—confessions of deep and almost sexual love. And as for Peter's wife Moira, well, basically, she's seen and not heard.

Of course, one can hardly blame the few female directors in Hollywood from shying away from children's and family movies. But when this freckle-faced, male-oriented boyish Americana is the only option, The People Under the Stairs with its rotting corpses, cannibalism and child abuse starts to look rather more attractive.

DAVID NICHOLS is too busy to think.

Politics and the Accord is billed on its back cover as providing “a dissident, heretical critique of current ACTU and labour movement policies” which is critical of the “failure of the Left to provide a progressive strategy for economic and social change”.

The authors survey the Accord as the labour movement’s first coherent response to the global restructuring of capitalism following the collapse of the long post-war economic boom. Their major economic criterion for assessing the Accord’s success or failure is employment—and they conclude that the “Accord’s employment record is largely illusory”.

The most vaunted gains of the Accord in the area of the ‘social wage’ are dismissed as “actually intensifying the trend back to a selective welfare system, from which many workers obtain no benefit”. And the authors describe the Accord as having imposed a wage freeze on workers leading to the real wage of a fitter declining by $103221 p.a. since 1983-84, or by 5.4% when social wage increases are factored in—a wage freeze costing workers, the authors claim, in the order of $13 billion.

If this wasn’t enough, the authors further claim the union movement under the Accord “is being transformed in the image allowed for it by employers, at the cost of its autonomy and vibrancy”.

However, much of the economic analysis underlying these assertions suffers from an inadequate grasp of Australia’s economic history. The authors seem to be unaware that Australia has had a history of repeated balance of payments crises (1840s, 1890s, 1930s, 1950s and 1970s). Their ahistorical analysis also leads them to attribute the current crisis to the Fraser government’s mishandling of the resources boom. While this may have been a factor, the underlying structure of the Australian economy is the main culprit.

The ACTU is condemned for being too accommodating of the workplace reform strategies of employer organisations such as the Business Council of Australia (BCA). According to the authors, flexibility in its various guises (functional, numerical and wage) is seen as an employer strategy to undermine trade union structures and worker solidarity. According to the authors, the ACTU’s move to decentralised bargaining is portrayed as a collaboration with employers to undermine the Left’s ‘traditional’ national training and skills formation agenda. The authors are also critical of other major ACTU reform proposals such as union amalgamation and rationalisation (a framework described as “rotten with contradictions”), award restructuring, superannuation and industry development.

More broadly they oppose microeconomic reform, International Best Practice, and public sector reform proposals such as privatisation. Even mild reforms such as corporatisation are seen as excluding “community involvement in these enterprises’ management, the very rationale for which is to serve socially determined priorities”.

The authors depict the public sector as crucial to their concept “of a collective society, where social control of economic and political life might take precedence over the unfettered market”. In this view the market is the satanic force to be exorcised. It is “hostility to a market economy directed by private capital” which is “the starting point for union organisation”. With this starting point, is it any wonder that their alternative takes on an air of irrelevance in a world where non-market economic systems have disintegrated? Moreover, on this fundamental point they are sadly out of step with more thoughtful Left thinkers who are seeking methods to harness market power to achieve social goals. For instance, Le Grand and Estrin (in Market Socialism) have pioneered a left reappraisal of the value of markets. The authors might also have heeded High Stretton’s sensible advice that:

Wherever they [markets] work as they should, especially where they work without generating undue inequalities of wealth or power, Left thinkers should value them as highly as any privatiser does. Indeed, more highly: the Left has such necessary tasks for government, and so much to lose from inefficient or oppressive bureaucracy, that it should economise bureaucracy in every way it can. (Political Essays.)

This ideological hostility to the market undermines the credibility of much of the analysis and alternatives contained in Politics and the Accord. At times, the analysis degenerates into a kind of crude kindergarten Marxism. The book is steeped in the language of irreconcilable class conflict. References to ‘bourgeois individualism’, the ‘commodification’ of labour, ‘production for profit, not use’, and ‘production for use rather than surplus value’ do not help clarify the argument. Often these catchphrases are a substitute for reasoned analysis.
Even hoary old conspiracy theories get a rerun. Rightwing opponents are accused of being trained at US State Department and CIA-funded university programs. The Federated Ironworkers Association (FIA) is particularly singled out though it is unlikely to be devastated by the force of this criticism. Both this un-reconstructed Marxism and this factional point-scoring are insurmountable obstacles to the development of credible alternative labour strategies.

The major practical proposal emerging from *Politics and the Accord* is the development of a centralised national skill formation and training system funded by employers and linked to a national skills-based wages system.

By transforming the industrial relations and training systems from institutions of wage earner security, to institutions capable of influencing economic restructuring, Australian labour might yet define its politics in opposition to private capital's unfettered domination of the market.

The book's proposed wages system, in classic collectivist fashion, is designed as a lever to restructure the Australian economy.

It involves a rigid three-tier process of wage movements, including national across-the-board increases, skill payments and industry level collective bargaining. The authors explain it like this:

> [All] Employers should face an across-the-board claim—if they cannot use labour resources efficiently enough to meet that claim, they should be restructured out of business, and the labour relocated to industries capable of increasing living standards.

One wonders what individual workers would feel about their enterprises being 'restructured' in this manner, particularly at a time of recession. Even more eccentric is the argument that 'in the interest of sustainable development, it is imperitive...that we mount further campaigns to reduce labour hours'. (Surely a rerun of the 1980s shorter hours campaign is the last thing required at a time of high unemployment.)

However, despite these major analytical flaws and contradictions, the book provides a novel and important insight into the crisis of the Australian Left.

The authors depict the Left as suffering a "crisis of legitimacy" attributed largely to the decline of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). Its successor, the New Left Party, according to the authors, has failed to establish an ideological identity and is therefore unlikely to mobilise a significant constituency. The Accord, with its attendant reduced role for mass activism, has meant that a new generation of Left activists hankers for "a return to the halcyon if imagined days of wage militancy"—Australian Scargillism. And while the mainstream Left harbours doubts of a private nature about the Accord, according to the authors they are "suppressed for reasons of self-preservation".

The authors conclude that "the actual course of the Accord has not encouraged further policy debate and formulation within the union movement, if only because dissent is met with accusations of treachery". Their solution to this malaise and "organisational disarray" is the development of links with two key social movements—the social welfare lobby and the environment movement.

They concede that the command economy is an insufficient condition for socialism. However, they decline to offer a meaningful socialist alternative. They merely express dissatisfaction with "the social, environmental and economic devastation being wrought on the community by a market economy dominated by private property rights". This inability to move beyond critique underlines the policy bankruptcy of much of the Australian industrial Left.

The crucial issue the book ignores is whether the rapid pace of change brought about by the globalisation of the Australian economy can be reconciled with the labour movement's continued commitment to centralised wage fixing, the Accord and centrally directed trade union structures. For increasing sectors of the Australian economy, enterprise bargaining is the only viable industrial relations alternative: a point now recognised by the ACTU, the federal commission and Labor governments.

Trade union survival in this new world requires the acceptance of change. Diverse and more flexible patterns of industrial relations are not solely the demands of 'New Right' employers. Workers in the highly segmented labour market of the 1990s are demanding the right to choose the way they arrange their working conditions and hours.

To remain relevant, unions must respond to the increasingly heterogeneous lifestyles of their members, and develop a 'customer' focus. Trade union services need to be tailored to the changing needs of their client base rather than to the ideological constraints of trade union officials.

A competitive market for trade union services is the best method for ensuring responsive trade unions. Competition between unions should not be dismissed merely because it does not conform to an outdated collectivist view of the world. As long as the union movement does not have to justify constantly its continued existence to its members and potential members, there will be no effective force to push unions to a more relevant future.

There is need for a thoughtful Left critique of the Accord. Such a critique would explore the political economy of labourism with particular emphasis on the industrial emasculation of the trade union movement under its modern corporatist form. *Politics and the Accord*, while useful as an insight into the thinking of a section of the Left, does not fulfil this need.

**MICHAEL COSTA and MARK DUFFY** are the authors of *Labor, Prosperity and the Nineties: Beyond the Bonsai Economy* (Federation Press, 1991).
Died Free

Jimi Hendrix—Electric Gypsy, by Harry Shapiro and Caesar Glebbeek (Heinemann, $34.95). Reviewed by Peter Beilharz.

In 1968 I was fourteen. Blissfully innocent of global events, I spent much of that year arguing with my friend Vivian Lees about the existence of God. Hendrix or Clapton? I was a devotee of Clapton. Viv was right. Viv became a rock entrepreneur; within months my brother and I were playing 'Purple Haze' with an English working class immigrant nicknamed Hendrix. It was Hendrix who revolutionised guitar playing, but more than that.

Some of the phenomena is explained by Shapiro and Glebbeek in Jimi Hendrix—Electric Gypsy. It's a massive, glossy, even scholarly work—baby photos, reference to Hendrix Archives. Hendrix was an icon then—Hendrix poster one end of the bedroom, Che Guevara on the other. Now he's even more of one as postmodern readers avidly gobble up biographies, and we continue to suffer this consistently perverse need for heroes: even ones with clay feet. And collectively we seem to have a massive need to romanticise the 1960s, when bands could get away with anything, endless jam-sessions, preening narcissism, dopey self-indulgence—flowers in our hair, dreams of Woodstock and Malibu, scoring big.

Hendrix’s biographers rightly draw attention to his novelty in this setting. Not just his technical originality (the string-biting and all that) but his capacity to synthesise all kinds of heresies—Little Richard, Dylan going electric, anticipation of Prince. Certainly Clapton was a straight player by comparison, even when he was off his head. Maybe that's why I liked him. And anyway, Cream were a better band (leftwing weakness for notions of teamwork and all that). All this was also caught up with the transatlantic traffic which began to characterise rock and roll into the 60s—Hendrix had to come to London in order to be recognised, the Stones to America. But the inflexion was also American—even Cream's first single, 'I Feel Free', sounds more New York than Ronnie Scott's Club. And there's the theme—freedom. Hendrix’s theme was 'Stone Free', his autograph on photos 'Stay Free'. What was this freedom? Part of it was freedom to indulge, no doubt about that; the 60s was a period of the cult of hedonism. Blow your mind, indulge your body. Rock and roll was a form of social mobility for working class boys with deprived backgrounds—Wyman, Clapton, Hendrix, cheap guitars bought on hire purchase, borrowed amps and dreams, hopes of freedom—freedom from 9 to 5, freedom from poverty, freedom from constraint, sexual freedom (free love—free women), free time, individual utopia. Free, free, free—who wrote or sang about friendship or reciprocity while we all just wanted to be free?

Funny looking back on all this, through the memories, the documentaries, the growing pile of assisted autobiographies, Noel Redding, Wyman, David Crosby, Mick Fleetwood. Piles of tragedy, 'friends' lost or gone crazy, nicked for drug use, gone, forgotten, ageing. It's hard to imagine how anybody would romanticise it all—just as it's hard to imagine Canned Heat playing a whole session consisting of three chord boogies and endless tedious solos, phallocentrism rampant.

Alongside the self-indulgence, however, there was also a sense of limits, of help—in Australia, with Chain, sometimes with the Aztecs—and certainly there was some soulful and searing playing by those white boys who chose to play the blues. Nor is it easy to look at rock and roll today with rose coloured glasses—transformed into sexualised visuality by MTV. No wonder people go back to the raw feel of the early Stones, or to the simple soarng beauty of 'The Wind Cries Mary'.

Hendrix's biographers detect something of the significance of this when they write of gentleness and violence in his music. This is at the core of his romanticism—an unending revolt against convention, authoritarianism, insincerity and moderation, an extreme assertion of the self, a celebration of the value of individual experience. Only they write in praise, where some of us today may twitch—it all seems so period, and so postmodern. For freedom and experience do not seem, finally, to be enough to satisfy us, any more than the utilitarian pursuit of happiness or the welfarist utopia of provision. Our lives are made of more ordinary stuff. If we choose not to burn out but to survive, we have to learn to live with disappointment, complexity and frustration, tedium and responsibility as we search for love, work and recognition. I'm not sure what freedom means, in this context, but it would likely involve something more modest and more social than the 60s seemed to promise.

PETER BEILHARZ'S Labour's Utopias: Bolshevism, Fabianism, Social Democracy was recently published by Routledge.

ALR: MARCH 1992
Someone asked me the other day whether I believe in a ‘free market economy’. I’ve been getting a little tired of the usual, obvious answer to this question, so I came up with a new one. What we really need, I said, is a free market in economists. This is a simple proposition which would add immeasurably to the common wealth if implemented. Since it is consistent with their doctrines, I expect a stampede of support from our ‘economic rationalists’. In fact, it is a proposal so rational I can’t imagine why they haven’t thought of it themselves.

It works like this. First, we remove all restrictions on immigration for economists. In economic terms restrictive immigration practices are really only a form of protectionism anyway, so I can see no problem with this. Then we put all economists on one-year contracts. At the end of the year all such positions are advertised internationally. The positions are given to the best qualified candidates who will do it for the least amount of money. Think of the savings! There must be thousands of economists around the world who would gladly work in our universities for less than the award rates. As for the exorbitant salaries the private sector pays its economists, surely these could be halved at least.

It may be possible eventually to dispense with the expensive business of producing our own economists altogether. There are countries with an obvious comparative advantage over Australia in the production of economists, such as India and Hong Kong. Both have good universities where English is widely spoken. Surely it would not be difficult for them to produce good economists for the Australian market. Local economists would have to match the prices offered by foreign competitors or get out of the market. Naturally, one feels a twinge of compassion for all those economists who will join our manufacturing workers on the dole queues, but we need not shed too many tears. The market will provide for them. They won’t feel as bad about it as the rest of us would, either. All they have to do is keep filling in the forms and pray for the invisible hand to find them something productive to do.

This is only the simple version of the scheme. Even more exciting is the idea of performance criteria for economists. Since economics seems these days to believe efficiency is all, let’s design a quantitative measure of the efficiency of economists: an ‘eco-rating’. Every economist in the land will get an eco-rating every quarter. Those who don’t contribute to the efficiency of the economy at all will simply have their positions terminated. This way, a reduction in the overall number of economists can be added to a reduction in their unit cost. If worked at maximum efficiency, there is no reason why a first-rate economist of the future couldn’t do the job of two or three of our present, over-priced, over-protected economists. Exposing them to the brute force of market mechanisms will soon sort them out, as I’m sure they would agree.

It might be tempting to extend this policy to all kinds of intellectual workers right away, but this would be most unwise. Nobody else outside of Canberra actually has much faith in such a policy, and might take steps to oppose it. This would be fatal to what is, in any case, very much an experimental policy.

This brings me back to my original answer to the question: do I believe in a free market economy? Frankly, I don’t believe in anything for which no examples can be given. Which is why I don’t believe in unicorns, Big Foot, the tooth fairy or the free market. Being professionally sceptical doesn’t mean I have a closed mind, however. This is why I think an experiment is in order, and I think economists themselves ought to be the guinea pig for it. In the great tradition of 19th century science, which in many other respects they still uphold, economists should experiment on themselves.

McKENZIE WARK teaches in communications at Macquarie University. Some of his best friends are economists.
I applaud ALR's efforts in covering the environment/industry issue in a manner which is rarely done elsewhere. Rather than simply seeking to score political points ALR chooses to throw up contradictions and quandaries on all sides of the debate.

That said, Claire Gerson's article 'Obsessed with Size' (ALR, December) contains a number of outright mistakes, several oversimplifications and considerable selective quoting of the facts. The net result is that the complexities and hard choices that the Australian community may well have to face as a result of the greenhouse issue are understated.

"Since the 1973 oil crisis many OECD countries—such as Japan and what used to be West Germany—have reduced their energy consumption." This is categorically wrong. Energy consumption continues to increase in virtually every country in the world, as perusal of relevant OECD and IEA publications shows. It is true that energy consumption is growing more slowly than GDP, and that there is no fixed or linear relationship between energy consumption and economic growth. But to say that absolute energy consumption is falling is not only wrong, it misleads people into believing that the energy use problem is already half-solved.

Claire cites the Californian experience, but neglects to mention that California has minimal fossil fuel sources of its own and therefore has to import its requirements or find renewable alternatives that are more locally available. The result is that the Pacific Gas and Electric utility does source a significant minority of its power from renewables, but Californians pay more than twice as much for their power as do Australians. The result is that California is not internationally competitive in energy or in energy-intensive products. By comparison, Australia is one of the world's leading exporters in these areas. The Californian road is not immediately open to Australia.

Again, the Danes have no fossil fuel resources of their own, and so have a vested interest in seeking to reduce their reliance on energy imports. This more or less applies to the EC as a whole. The Danes have not been averse to buying a little nuclear power as the need arises, while Sweden has reneged on its commitment to the early phase-out of nuclear power.

Combined Heat and Power, as outlined by Claire, is a good idea. Its easy application to Australia is limited by two factors. First, we do not have the requirement for the enormous amounts of low level domestic heating that the North Europeans do, and CHP is not capable of providing the high level process heat that Australian industry needs. Second, CHP plants must be located in urban areas, so heat can be piped to nearby homes and businesses. Australia has chosen to locate its power plants in non-urban areas close to fuel sources so as to minimise transport costs and to reduce the emissions load in the urban air-shed.

Finally, the material from the National Institute for Economic and Industry Research is much more equivocal than Claire suggests, and would represent a marginal increase in employment. Further, it was contingent on at least half of the required new equipment being locally sourced—a proviso that would require interventionist industry policy on a scale not yet contemplated in Canberra, and which Victoria is in no position to implement.

The point of these criticisms is not that there are no solutions, or that Australia should ignore the greenhouse issue, or that there should not be major changes in the way we provide energy services. But the possible changes will be major, they will be traumatic, and there will be winners and losers. The problems will be made worse if the public is not informed of the consequences of the decisions that may have to be made.

Peter Colley
United Mineworkers Federation
Sydney.
What could be less sexual than dog meat?

For the first time in several months, The following passage from Modern Meat by Orville Schell (Vintage Books) sums up some of my feelings towards dog food. The speaker is a US meat inspector (you know, one of those blokes who can spot a frozen Skippy at two hundred metres, and thus ruin an honest export trade).

Like a samurai, Harris gracefully slices into the bile duct of a large gelatinous liver before him and then holds his butcher knife aloft..."If I'm rejecting an organ for human use but it can be used for dog food, I put a grid on it. If I reject it completely, I put Xs on it. That means it can only be ground up for fertiliser.

Apart from the striking resemblance to the works of Brett Easton Ellis, and the interesting reference to Japanese culture, this makes quite clear that dog food is literally that which humans are not supposed to eat. Here, the "large gelatinous liver" is revealed explicitly. But canned dog food veils its contents and renders everything the same colour and texture. We are never absolutely sure what is in the stuff, beyond the fact that it's not for us.

And yet dog (and cat) food is marketed in much the same way as people's food. The market is segmented, rather like the aforementioned liver. There is yuppie dog food, for the puppy who has it all. The advertisements for this sector of the market feature executives rushing home to open gourmet treats for their ignored pets (this is the tuna-flavoured equivalent of buying the wife lingerie, I suppose). The lighting in these advertisements is soft and glowing, and the fodder is, we are assured, of unquestionable pedigree. The gulf between human and beast is mediated by quality china, and the pets go for it in a comparatively civilised way.

Then there is the Volvo sector of the market. The professional dog breeder is portrayed, speaking, I presume, to those of us who value rationality, financial planning and sacrificing pleasure so that the Doberman can go to a "good school". These advertisements never feature fluffy dogs, like poodles, and certainly not mongrels. The emphasis is on sturdy, medium sized dogs, forward planning and common sense. Dog breeders are specialists, after all. The dog food they advertise will surely make our poohs intelligent, or at least able to top obedience school and get a good position, thanks to our long term view. A Fightback! policy for the Ridgeback, and all in a can.

Homebrand dog food is seldom seen on television, except in the occasional sensationalist current affairs program, where poverty is illustrated through the depiction of pensioners tucking into it. ("My God, James, can't they even afford Chuck?") The contents of these two-colour cans is of doubtful friendliness, if not definite hostility, towards dolphins. It sits next to the budgie food, which I defy any ingenious advertising executive to render exciting.

Now we of the vanguard occasionally like to pretend we can escape the market and stand outside its pernicious operation. We hold up the umbrella of alterntiveness against saturation by the piss of consumerism, but our feet still get wet. I now present my ultrasound tips for keeping a person's best friend in correct line condition. You will still have to buy things, but the things will at least not come in cans, and will be identifiable, rather than coyly draped in euphemism.

Dogs were not designed to be vegetarian, but neither were they meant to live on meat alone. Speaking as a St Bernard owner (note the appeal to expertise), my sixty kilo pooch likes nothing better than pulling plums off trees, and loves beer and pasta scraps. Indeed, his diet is based around rice. Cooked rice, vegetables and moderate amounts of raw meat will keep fido fit, lively and politically active.

The raw meat should be undeniably the bloody and cruel stuff that it is, rather than the stuff that comes in cans. There is nothing wrong with unabashed offal which proclaims itself as such, rather than the sludgy brown that slugs out of tins.

Any vegetarians who find the contents of this month's column offensive, yet feed their pets canned food, should consider trading the German Shepherd for a gerbil. Dorothy E Shuttleworth, in the indispensable text Gerbils and Other Small Pets (Dutton and Co) informs us that the peace-loving gerbil "can get along very well with a diet of birdseed and rabbit pellets. Sunflower seeds are their special delight". Perhaps gerbils are the pet of the future, if this is true. In the meantime, I'll have one hand on the rice, and another on the lambs' kidneys, while two tonnes of quivering Pavlovian greed depletes the ozone layer in anticipation.

Penelope Cottier.
"As a professional journalist, I read everything I can to be as well informed as I can; as wide a spectrum of newspapers and magazines as I can lay my hands on. Consistently during a year of enormous and fundamental change in Australia and around the world, ALR has been in the forefront of accurate and informed comment. ALR is essential reading to know what is going on in the Left but also to get a reliable and informed view of the nation and the world. I can't recommend it too highly."

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