
DESPITE the limits the author set himself with his book (a short history, mainly for students and scholars, and primarily an institutional history with little analysis of social and economic conditions), it must still have been a very difficult task to write it, and for doing so Dr. Davidson deserves congratulations.

It is also difficult to review adequately, partly on account of this framework, for history is a unity, not the sum of separate parts. Thus there is an overall thesis advanced which has quite some validity, but it suffers from lack of depth and all-sidedness. On the other hand, considering that the book was completed in 1967, the author shows more perspicacity about the nature and decisiveness of the changes in the CPA (only then emerging) than many critics with the benefit of another three years of more obvious and rapid development.

The facts assembled are of great value, although I believe lacking in some key areas, and one would hope that the wealth of facts would mean that this would stimulate serious study of the history of the CPA. But some of the reviews and comments on the subject indicate that the conclusions have been drawn before the study, and that the worth of any work is determined by how closely or otherwise it conforms with those preconceived attitudes.

From the right we have Peter Coleman (Bulletin, May 2) whose main criticism is that Davidson "does not see the party for what it is" because he (Davidson) leaves some doubts about unproved accusations of a bashing in a union over 20 years ago, though he (Coleman) can cite none since. (It will be interesting to see what Mr. Coleman has to say about the actual bashing of a girl student by Australian racists shouting "kill the reds" — SMH May 19 — which is today, and historically, more typical — as indeed is also the case in the use of violence in the unions). Writers on the left also show a tendency to judge historical matters by whether they conform with their already decided political conclusions. (See Doug White's review. Arena No. 21, and the resolution of a section of the Fourth International, International No. 12).

In order to try to avoid this error — admittedly difficult — I specify the three main criteria I use in judging the book: the validity of the over-all thesis; the adequacy of the facts; the accuracy of the facts.

The overall thesis is "that the vicissitudes of CPA history were due to the fact that it thought the Russian revolution was entirely relevant to Australian history. It was not" (p.183). Broken down from this broad generality there are involved such questions as the validity or otherwise of "Leninism" for Australian conditions; adoption or otherwise of the "Australian socialist tradition"; and in line with this following (or not) a policy of "National communism".

These are all large questions which I can only touch on here. The specific meaning which might be attributed to the term "Leninism" is very difficult to define, but accepting the way Dr. Davidson uses the term, I think he has tended to accept (as the Communist Party did; as I did) what was purvey-
ed under Stalin as “Marxism-Leninism” as being “Leninism.” It is not. But leaving this aside, I agree with Dr. Davidson that “marxism-leninism” was accepted mainly without question and that the results have greatly hampered the party’s development. Dr. Davidson also, I believe, makes organisation (“democratic centralism” — and in its Stalinist version) a weightier part of the whole than it was, (which is not to deny that it is important). It is also hard to see on what basis it is concluded that renewed emphasis on the importance of factory organisation was “another indication that the party had not changed its (bad) ways” (p.99). Even now when factory organisation is receiving considerable attention, it is hard to see why Dr. Davidson would think it should not.

“National Communism” also means different things to different people, but taking it (as Dr. Davidson does) to mean refusal to accept the hegemony of other parties — whether Russian or Chinese — or to regard their theoretical pronouncements and policies as beyond question, and the liberation of thinking given the realisation that issues must be analysed right through by each revolutionary movement, then the CPA has now indeed turned in that direction. (Some take “national communism” to ipso facto involve a departure from “internationalism”, but this does not follow from the above definition; nor is it characteristic of the CPA today.)

The question of the “Australian socialist tradition”, and the supposed return to it by the CPA, is far more problematical, both in the interpretation of what that tradition might be, and the desirability or otherwise of embracing it. Leaving aside organisation, the main issue raised by Dr. Davidson involves the attitude to be adopted to the Labor Party. He says: “Indeed, the new line logically led to the belief that the role of the CPA was to be a ginger group on the left of the ALP. As in the socialist parties before 1920 which actually adopted such a role, the first question also provoked the second. ‘Why stay outside?’” (p.168).

But the new line in my opinion does not involve such conclusions, either logically or in fact. And it was the tradition (it was only of a section, as Dr. Davidson himself points out on p. 4)), so much the worse for the tradition. It needed to be broken. The same might be said of the traditions of the other sections of socialists mentioned — those organised in isolated clubs, and those confining themselves to work in the trade unions. This does not mean that the attitude of the CPA to the ALP, as the mass party, has not varied widely and been gravely mistaken on many occasions; but this does not logically or otherwise lead to the conclusion that there should be a return to the “ginger group” idea. This has been followed by the Fourth International for over 30 years and by other, more traditional socialists, for about 80; but have they proved its revolutionary effectiveness?

Nor are all the changes in attitude to the Labor Party to be taken, in my view, as errors. It seems “logical” to me that as the Labor Party changes its policy (actual or declared) then differences in approach are necessary. Dr. Davidson recognises this, but seems to place equal blame for the policy of the ALP in the cold war on the CP as on the Labor Party (see last par., p.103 and first par. on p.107). I do not think the view can be sustained that if the CP had been more “moderate” in 1946-49 the Labor Party policy would have been basically different.

The stress put by Dr. Davidson on “moderation” (e.g. pp. 99, 114, 139, 142, 143, 158) has a point, of course, for many occasions. But on other occasions, including the recent period.
something quite different seems to me to be necessary. The recently held 22nd Congress documents spell out the party's present views, and for some treatment see p.52 of the present issue. In general, on attitude to the ALP, it is interesting to note that around the time of the 1966 Federal election sections of the new left were enthusiastically looking to the Labor Party, and even joining it in some numbers. In 1970 many of the same people are "disenchanted" and dismiss or oppose the Labor Party altogether. (the same has happened in Britain). I think examination of history (which of course "proves" nothing in any conclusive sense) nevertheless provides much more evidence in support of the present CPA policy than for such extremes (to which it also has been prone in the past).

On the general question of tradition: True it is of great importance; but is more diffuse, less definable and deeper than a political attitude on a particular question. Furthermore, revolutionaries must inevitably set out to break at least some traditions; so they are not of value in themselves. And if a socialist tradition could be established in a period of 30 years (p.4), why cannot a tradition be established in 50? I would argue that it has been, to a degree, and agree with Dan O'Neill on this point (see p.64 on the present issue).

As to the adequacy of the facts presented it may seem captious, in view of Dr. Davidson's diligence, to raise the question. But I believe it is a matter of some substance that little is said of the CPA's consistent and considerable support for national liberation movements, right from the time of its foundation. This is not to say that there is no ground for criticism, but the general picture is very positive I believe, including on the Aborigines and New Guinea as well as for example the Indoncsian and Chinese revolutions, opposition to the war in Korea, and especially to the war in Vietnam.

True, Indonesia, Korea and Vietnam are all very different, but it should be clear now, if it was not before, that they all involved the same issues of anti-US imperialism in its aims in Asia, and the subordination of Australian policy to this. These issues loom very large today, but there are only passing references to them in the book. There is also a lack of treatment of theoretical development in the CPA's thinking over the period.

Accuracy of facts involves matters of substance and interpretation, as well as mundane questions. On the former I would dispute for example the imputation of opportunism in support for the Spanish Government in the civil war (p.85); the statement on p.95 that the "proletariat" became smaller during the war because of automation — in fact it became much larger; the view that the 12th Congress of the CPA exceeded the broadness of Dimitrov's united front (p.78); or that Frank Johnson skilfully hid his loyalty to Hill (p.154) — it was one of the most open secrets on record!

On the latter, most probably reflect poor proof reading. In the quotation on p.135 "moment" becomes "movement"; on p.63, six lines from the bottom there is an obviously out of place "not"; J. Nolan becomes J. Molan (p.155) and Horace Ratcliffe becomes Horace Ratcliff (pp.81 and 83).

While some of the above criticisms are substantial, the book is a very valuable one, indeed essential reading. I hope all communists and all others on the left do read it because of the vital issues raised, whether one agrees with a particular interpretation or not. I agree with Rex Mortimer (Nation, March 21) that there is far from adequate explanation of the deeper causes and motivations of the changes of the
last decade, though I think Mortimer himself shows surprisingly little understanding for one who was a prominent participant in it for a period. Of course the challenge is to have a go oneself. I will attempt in a coming issue of the journal to describe the processes, as I see them, that took place in myself and the party during the 60's.

ERIC AARONS


As, at the time of writing, six US students have been shot dead on campus by National Guards within the last twelve days, I should perhaps begin by stating that Anthony Ryle's book is neither on US students or this type of casualty. Rather, it is about the emotional problems and academic failures (not very often separate) of students in British universities, and about the role of the university in the treatment of such issues. Though much is of little direct relevance to the Australian situation, discussion of British university entrance requirements and student services from this psychological angle presents the reader with an interesting opportunity for making comparisons.

Student Casualties' fourteen chapters deal with four overlapping issues: the character of the undergraduate and his university, the incidence and nature of psychological disorder amongst students, the qualitative questions of failure (including dropping out and failure to come up to potential), and more social problems such as drug abuse, sex, suicide, and protest in the university.

The first of these sections deals at some length with methods of university selection and the student's early commitment to the nature of his future studies. He notices that, for reasons he attributes to the disturbing nature of the modern world, undergraduates tend to place more importance on subjects demanding divergent, questioning thinking such as those taught in the Arts faculty and in the scientific-cum-humanitarian subjects of psychology and sociology rather than the more ordered, convergent ones. In sheer numbers, of course, the scientists and technocrats dominate the universities: speaking as the head of the University of Sussex Health Service, though, Ryle finds his majority of disturbed students amongst the divergent thinkers.

On the subject of the student's frequently disillusioned reaction to his university Ryle, without adopting a laissez-faire attitude to the institution himself, quite reasonably also blames student romanticism: 'Basically this is a disappointment at finding that the world here is no less imperfect than elsewhere . . .'

In the light of such thought it may still appear surprising that up to 42% of undergraduates suffer from anything from mild psychological disorders up to severe disorders requiring hospital admission. The most frequently occurring psychotic disorders amongst students are schizophrenia, manic-depression and schizo-affective disorders but frequently even these cases may be brought under some control presumably since students, being young, tend to be diagnosed early. Some extreme disorders seem no less frequent amongst non-student peers. Less dangerous neuroses, however, occur more frequently amongst students, especially in the humanities, are frequently related to questions of role-identity, and are often nurtured by the university atmosphere and tend to be most frequent amongst students from non-academic backgrounds.
The question of student failure is so widely discussed recapitulation of Ryle’s discussion seem unnecessary. Schonell’s *Promise and Performance* and A.C.E.R. reports have covered Australian students’ problems in these respects thoroughly. Ryle here adds his name to the list of those advocating freer examination systems and his chapter on exam neuroses repeats what are mainly commonsense and well known arguments.

Finally, Ryle looks at the generally social problems and issues encountered in a university. Most of these differ from peer groups’ only in degree — more drugs, more protest and, it would seem, less sex characterise student life. However the suicide rate of students is three to ten times that of the students’ peers. On these issues Ryle prefers to estimate rates and to recommend university attitudes — largely of tolerance and of civil rather than internal action when action is deemed necessary. There is little attempt to seek the causes of social phenomena as these are not seen as being in the psychologist’s domain except to the degree to which case histories suggest a cause for an individual predilection.

Should this fail to suggest an exciting or original book, Ryle’s aims have not been overlooked. What *Student Casualties* attempts is a handbook for student advisors, tutors and, if they can avoid indulgent self-analysis, undergraduates themselves. Ryle has acknowledged the student population as a minority but one whose problems are encountered in a special environment that is at once sheltering and provocative. What the book finally demonstrates is that students are as much adolescents as their brothers in the work force and, as such, are faced with problems of identity and role transference (son or daughter to adult, social outsider to member of society) the theory of which they may well be studying at the same time in any number of academic disciplines.

On the subject of documentation the specialist may well question Ryle’s references. *Student Casualties* is largely a well ordered but commonsense book whose rather theory-free layout is presumably intended to present a neutral front to the bigot or unsympathetic teacher who needs to be wooed into respect for students’ individual problems and his responsibility for seeing that they are attended to. However Ryle makes no mention of child development theorists of the status of Ausubel or Havighurst or Piaget (whose *Moral Judgements of the Child* — 1955 — gives a fuller account of Ryle’s own concept of adolescent development); on the subject of sex he relies on Schofield’s study that, completed in 1965, pre-dates the ‘permissive society’ and the bulk of the massive shift in sexual mores of the young and must be considered outdated. Equally unfortunately Ryle’s belief that drug takers are passive and sexually insecure or that there is no significant difference between students who have sexual relationships and those who do not are off-the-cuff and not substantiated in the text by references or case studies.

This should not detract from the general usefulness of *Student Casualties*. As a handbook it is so perceptive and well laid out it opens the possibility for some generalising both about the values of the student population and about the way the university may serve the students through health services that include a full time psychiatric staff, the establishment of a greater degree of teacher-student rapport and co-operation in situations where students require guidance, and administrative sympathy for the less well adjusted in the place of what is often mere bureaucracy.

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