Queensland Land Rights

Latrobe Valley Strike

France - May '68

$1*

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Daisy Marchisotti who has a long association with the Aboriginal movement outlines the history of Aboriginal land rights struggles in Queensland.

In an interview with Greg Wicks, Max Ogden, Victorian AMWSU education officer, talks about the underlying issues of last year’s power workers’ strike in the Latrobe Valley.

In an accompanying article, Max Ogden examines socialist strategies at the job level in terms of developing alternatives to purely economic struggles within the system.

Janna Thompson analyses the myths and pretensions of Sociobiology, the pseudo-science which seeks to explain social behavior in terms of biological imperatives.

Eric Aarons looks at the May ’68 events in France and their general significance for socialists ten years after.

A socialist activist in West Germany discusses the anti-nuclear power movement in that country, one of the biggest and most successful of the many such movements springing up in the advanced capitalist countries.

Audrey Blake reviews a book by Peggy Dennis, veteran American communist, about the latter’s experiences of the communist movement over several decades.

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The struggle for Land Rights for the Aborigines of Queensland may appear to be a recent phenomenon, but its origins go right back to the first attacks against the white invaders, who were very quickly recognized as a danger to the indigenous peoples.

The Dutch navigator, Captain Willem Janz, arrived in the Gulf of Carpentaria and landed near Mapoon in 1609. He was driven off with the loss of nine men. On 16th July, 1799, Matthew Flinders landed on the southern point of Bribie Island. "There was a party of natives on the point and our communication was at first friendly," wrote Flinders, "but after receiving presents, they made an attack and one of them was wounded by our fire." Flinders named that place Skirmish Point.

In fact, practically every first intrusion by white men, whether explorers or squatters, was contested by Aborigines. A reading of white explorers' records of their journeyings clearly reveals this. Most of those attacks must be interpreted as the genesis of the Land Rights struggle, for the Aborigines were fighting to retain their tribal lands from a hostile enemy.

Tribal areas had exact boundaries and even Blacks from neighbouring tribes had to ask permission to cross tribal boundaries. This was understood by early settlers like the Petries, and has been confirmed by Justice Woodward in his Report on Land Rights.

In the south, where Aborigines had appeared to accept the white man's presence, their spirit of rebellion still lived. One of the earliest protests by Aborigines was on Stradbroke Island in 1830, when a white man who had fired at and wounded an Aborigine was later killed by them.

When the convicts were removed from Stradbroke to the mainland, the Settlement was handed over to the Moravian missionaries who taught the Aborigines to pray each day for "daily bread", though white bread only appeared on the missionaries' table. One day, Aborigines refused to pray, saying, "Blackfellow he no more pray 'im daily bread... You white fellow missionary go away. You bin plenty gammon blackfellow!" Maybe that was the first strike by Aborigines in Queensland!

Tom Welsby reports that on the death of two Aborigines who had been given "brass plates" for saving survivors of the wrecked "Sovereign" in 1847, "probate was never taken out in the estates of either Nuggin or Toompani, for they held no title deeds of land on Moreton or Stradbroke where for centuries past their progenitors had held sway. All owned the island in equal proportions. It was theirs to roam over at will, to live in, and use as they liked...."
An Aborigine named Dundalli who was hanged on 5th January 1885 in Queen Street, near where the present G.P.O. is, called from the scaffold to his wife and family to avenge his death. History reports "a great gathering of the Ninghi Ninghi Tribe, who swore revenge on whites generally, and on those blacks who had assisted in Dundallil's capture in particular". There were many other individual blacks around Brisbane who were brave and daring in attacking the white invader by various means and many suffered the white man's wrath.(7)

Cape York Peninsula was probably more hotly contested than any other area in Queensland, as can be seen from the records of the journeys of explorers Leichhardt (1842) and Gregory (1855-56). And Edmund Kennedy and most of his party were killed by Aborigines in 1848 near the tip of Cape York. Rowley has described how between 1864 and 1875, the Aborigines of Cape York Peninsula had waged a guerrilla war for their land over a period of seven years, at the cost of hundreds of lives.(8)

Since then there has always been spontaneous and largely individual rebellions against injustices, violence and oppression and for elementary human rights, but it was not possible for Aborigines to form any coherent or lasting organisations through which they could voice their needs. This was mainly due to the notorious Queensland Acts, the most repressive legislation in the whole of Australia, and now well known as such.

But it was also due to the intensive efforts of the missionaries to christianise the remnants of the defeated tribes. They did this by dividing children from their parents, keeping the former in dormitories under 24-hour white supervision to prevent the inculcation in the young of Aboriginal culture and tribal lore.(9) British imperialism was adept at subjugation of native peoples and well knew that language is the repository of a people's cultural heritage. Destroy language and you kill identity, and hence struggle. Missionaries were conscious or unconscious vehicles for promotion of this policy.

In fact, there does not appear to have been many, if any, conscious demands by Aborigines for land rights until around the late 1950's when renewed robbery of the last remaining reserve lands became rampant.

However, small groups of sympathetic white people had tried to raise the consciousness of the dominant majority and its governments on the matter of land and other rights for indigenous people. Several books and pamphlets from the 1940's on did advocate land rights for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Queensland.

A long-range program appeared in the appendix to a book by Gerald Peel, M.A. in 1947, calling for a "declaration by the government of the area (Daru included) as an autonomous region within the Commonwealth, with sovereign internal rights for its people, including the right to secede."(10)

Around the late 1950's two trade union organisers, one from the Building Workers' Industrial Union and another from the Amalgamated Engineering Union, visited Weipa and Thursday Island to check on the proposal to develop rich bauxite fields on the Cape York Peninsula. In their report, these men said that "unless public opinion can alter it, both church and coloured people will have to bow to the dictates of monopoly, or be pushed into the sea." Their statement was almost prophetic as regards the Weipa and Mapoon people.(11)

In 1958 a book by five academics was published by the Western Suburbs United Nations Association of Brisbane, and advocated, among other things, the "transfer of ownership of the present Reserves and Settlements from the Government to the Aborigines and Islanders".(12) One result of this work, was the birth of the Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Islanders (QCAATI) which later affiliated with the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), the first and still the only national Aboriginal organisation to withstand the test of time.

The first political party to propose of program for Aboriginal Advancement in Australia was the Communist Party. Its earliest published programs were presented in T. Wright's pamphlet "New Deal for Aborigines" in 1944 and Gerald Peel's work
above mentioned. A further program, compiled in co-operation with many Aborigines and Aboriginal organisations, appeared in 1967. All called for land rights.(13)

One of the first articulate demands by Aborigines for Land rights in Queensland was embodied in a “Declaration of Rights of the Queensland Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders; being the decisions of the first Conference of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Advancement League, Cairns, North Queensland, 29-31 July, 1960”.

This Conference set out a comprehensive list of demands and needs, one of the most important of which was that “the people need the Islands, Settlements and Mission areas to be made their absolute property, including minerals, timber, etc. on them”. The Conference also demanded the unrestricted right of movement to and from Reserves, self-government of Islands, Settlements and Missions; compensation and royalties for minerals taken from lands already annexed and the right of individuals to own and control land.

This Declaration of Rights was the Aborigines desperate response to the signing by the Queensland Government of the Commonwealth Aluminium Pty. Ltd. Agreement Act of 1957, which said not one word about Aborigines, their rights to their Reserves, nor did it reserve to them even the right to live in areas formerly occupied by them. It was as if they did not exist.

The Presbyterian Church argued for compensation for the Aborigines, but all they got was a promise of £150,000 ($300,000), which was eventually used to build a number of aluminium cottages without internal amenities such as kitchen sinks.(15)

This Act led to the excision by the Queensland Government of 1,485,000 acres out of a total of 1,600,000 acres of Reserve land on the Cape, for an initial royalty of five cents a ton of bauxite and land rent of £2 ($4) a square mile to be paid into consolidated revenue.(16)

It took a lot of political pressure to get even an area of 2,250 acres for the Weipa Aborigines (17) and this has since been reduced to 332 acres with “permissive grazing rights” to certain areas not immediately needed by Comalco.(18)

Many Mapoon people stubbornly refused to leave their Mission for several years until finally, on the night of November 15, 1963, they were ruthlessly and forcibly removed to Bamaga by armed police, and their houses and belongings burnt. November 15 - “a day to remember” they say. (19)

Mapoon Mission lands of 1,353,000 acres were thus confiscated and the name of their Mission wiped from the list of Reserves published annually by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Mapoon was first established in 1896 by the Moravian missionaries.

Comalco now became the owner of their homelands for 84 years with the option of renewal of its lease for a further 21 years.(20)

The Mapoon people have refused to give up the fight for their homeland. To appease them the Government has allowed them to visit “Old Mapoon” for holidays, and has called their new “home” at Bamaga, “New Mapoon”.(20a) However, in 1974 some of them, led by two elders, Mrs. Jean Jimmy and Jerry Hudson who gave up his job as head stockman for the Department at Weipa, returned to Old Mapoon and began to rebuild their homes and gardens.(21)

Their request for Commonwealth aid to regain their land was rebuffed by the Whitlam Government who were not prepared to forcibly resume their land, thus challenging the Queensland Government, even though the Commonwealth does have power to do this, and has actually done it in time of war.

However, a grant of $5,000 was made for the people to buy a truck to fetch supplies from Weipa, and it was suggested that they “have a town plan drawn up, so that there would be no delay in the progress of the
community once title was granted.” Senator Cavanagh, then Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, told them he was “optimistic that Queensland Aboriginals and Islanders would in the near future be granted title to their lands....even though the matter might have to go eventually to the High Court to see justice done.”(22) The Senator omitted to advise them how many long years that might take.

A little over twelve months later, the Whitlam Government was no more.

Premier Bjelke-Petersen’s retort to Senator Cavanagh’s visit to the Mapoon people was typical:

“My information on the so-called Weipa conference conveys that it is a determined attempt by radical people in North Queensland, as a result of manipulation by Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs’ officers and others, to create distrust and unrest among former residents of Mapoon.”(23) He went on to fill two and a half pages of Hansard with a vitriolic attack on the Australian Government and quoted from an alleged telegram he’d received from “Aborigines” bitterly attacking Senator Cavanagh. Some of the words of that telegram, viz. “....you are just as bad as your braggadocio false promises and time wasting tactics”, do not appear to be those likely to be composed by any Aborigine. It could be argued that that telegram was “organised” by some white person for some specific purpose. Nevertheless, when one reads Cavanagh’s airy promises, there seems little doubt that criticism was warranted.

Land Rights and Deeds of Grant

To digress a little, let’s contrast the Government’s actions on Weipa and Mapoon with its attitudes towards other Australians.

Ever since the first European invasion, the invaders’ governments have rewarded their friends with Deeds of Grant of chosen Crown Land. These days such Deeds of Grant usually entail conditions that set amounts of money be spent each year on “developing” such lands.

Queensland as a State, until 1957 when the Gair Labor Government was defeated, had retained most of its land as Crown Land. This was perhaps a legacy from the halcyon days of the first Labor Governments in this State. The election of a Liberal Party-Country Party Government in 1957 changed all that.

At December 1957 only 5.89 of the State was freehold land and 0.58 per cent was in the process of being freeholded; while 84.84 per cent was leased under the Land and Mining Acts.

By December 31, 1972, 6.61 per cent had been freeholded, 8.04 per cent was held under various freeholding tenures and 79.69 per cent was leased.(24)

The new Coalition Government greatly liberalised freeholding conditions and also increased the maximum area which could be held under grazing selection tenure to 60,000 acres. The largest area freeholded up to 31 August, 1973 was for 59,201 acres situated near Cooktown and in respect of which a Deed of Grant was issued to Lakeland Downs Limited in December, 1971.(25)

It was also revealed in Parliament on the same day that the owner of Lakeland Downs, Mr. C. J. Foyster (reputed to be a millionaire), also held Special Lease No. 33858, for 64,710 acres; that a Japanese company held a registered mortgage over that lease, and that Mr. Foyster was advertising to sell part of his interest - reportedly to “Japanese interests”.(26)

On 19 November, 1974, the Courier-Mail reported that the North Queensland Pastoral Company, Lakeland Downs Limited was ordered to be wound up by the Supreme Court, because the company “was unable to pay its debts”.

Recently Lakeland Downs was reportedly occupied by Vietnamese refugees, who were said to have abandoned it because they could not make a go of it.

In view of the Government’s intransigence in relation to Aboriginal Land Rights for Mapoon, this attitude towards land ownership by other people and interests is particularly significant. The word “racism” comes to mind, but that’s a dirty word according to Queensland’s Premier.

Similar policies have applied since 1965 as since that date there has been no legislative bar to the holding of land by non-resident companies or individuals, either freehold or leasehold, according to the relevant Minister.(27)
The unease of many ordinary Queenslanders regarding the Iwasaki project at Yeppoon and the reported buying up of Queensland land by Chinese from Hong Kong, Yanks from U.S.A., etc. and the unchecked entry into Australia of purported "refugees" from Vietnam who arrive with gold and diamonds, has finally penetrated the National Party. Their Executive now wants the State Government to establish a register of land owned or leased by alien corporations or individuals. (28)

In contrast to this soft line of the Government towards foreign ownership of Queensland is its parsimonious attitude towards Aboriginal Reserves, and its absolute refusal to even concede prior ownership by the original people of this State, or offer compensation of any kind for reserve lands being stolen.

A case in point is Mona Mona Mission. Of 4,518 acres, it was established in 1913 by the Seventh Day Adventist Church on Crown Land north-west of Cairns on the Atherton Tableland. It was closed in December 1962 to make way for the Flaggy Creek Water Conservation Scheme, and Aborigines demanded compensation for loss of their homeland and that the Government should provide homes for them. (29)

It was revealed in 1968 that in the year 1960 the Trans-Tasman Union Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church had indicated to the Government a wish to withdraw from material administration of the Reserve, but had agreed to maintain the Mission until December 31, 1962. (30) No doubt this Church, like others, was suffering a drop in donations to its Mission programs, and the grants by the State government were not sufficient to cover this gap.

Be that as it may, a re-settlement program was developed whereby former mission residents would be "assisted" to obtain suitable accommodation and employment in North Queensland, or be transferred to other Aboriginal communities.

It is noticeable that exemptions from the Act in the year ending June 1962 were only 146 for the whole Aboriginal population of 26,000 odd living under the Act, yet at least 43 of those 146 came from Mona Mona Mission which had a population of only 285 altogether. Obviously, mission residents were being "assisted" rather heavily to leave the Mission before its closure. (31)

The Church received $46,000 compensation from the Government to "establish a full-time Pastor/Welfare Officer in Kuranda" where the Church's headquarters were. This sum was also to meet the cost of removing housing from Mona Mona to 16 "Special Lease" allotments in four or five isolated areas. (32)

Once the Mission was closed and Aborigines removed, the Government washed its hands of any responsibility for their welfare. The State Member for the area, Mr. Eddie Wallis-Smith, continually raised the matter of a water supply for some of these Aborigines who were living in huts at Mantaka, Kowrowa and Koah for several years until 1971, it was reported that the local Shire Council was finally preparing some plans to improve conditions for the people. (33)

In 1968, the Flaggy Creek Scheme was postponed and the Government decided to auction a 5-year leasehold of 4,000 acres. Mona Mona people requested they be allowed to return to their homeland, but the Government refused. Aborigines then organised to bid for the land. They went among the white people at the auction, advising them it was their land which they wanted back and asking the whites not to bid against them. In this way, they secured the lease at a reasonable rental. (34)

The Aborigines then formed a co-operative and applied to the Australian Government for a grant of $25,000 to help them establish farming, artifact and tourist facilities. After over a year's delay, they were granted a mere $5,000. They had themselves saved $1,600 for the venture from their meagre earnings. (35)

It is of interest to note that the Aboriginal Department's Annual Reports do not mention the reason for closure of Mona Mona Mission, nor record the Aborigines' efforts in 1968 to regain their land and develop it.

The Government's attitude to Aboriginal ownership of their land was again instanced when the Yarrabah Aboriginal people applied for a Deed of Grant of their Reserve lands, their application in the prescribed form having been forwarded to the State Land Commission, the normal authority
dealing with Land Grants. Their application was merely handed to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs which conveniently buried it. (36)

Again in 1965, Lockhart River Aborigines appealed through the Cairns Aborigines and Islanders Advancement League “to the conscience of all fair-minded Australians....to support our demands to prevent any further alienation of Aborigine land or transmigration of Aborigine communities to Bamaga”. They further demanded a “full public inquiry into the administration of Native Affairs in Queensland”. This appeal followed a two-year campaign by the Queensland Government to “persuade” Aborigines at Lockhart River to “leave our homelands for the doubtful blessings of Bamaga”, as the Aborigines put it. (37)

The people of Lockhart River have mostly all gone now either to Iron Range or Bamaga. Like other areas on the Cape, Lockhart River Reserve is reputed to be rich in minerals, gold and monazite being mentioned, among others.

The Palm Island group of about 9 islands, 26 miles east of Townsville, has been an Aboriginal reserve since 1918. Originally used as a place of exile or punishment for Aboriginal and Islander offenders against the Acts, this beautiful area has now become part of the City of Townsville. This occurred following reports of opening up the islands to tourist interests. (38)

The Islands' Community Chairman, the late Tom Geia, made urgent appeals for better facilities for his people at a Conference at Queensland University in January 1972. He died later that year in mysterious circumstances. (39)

The specific event which sparked off the transfer to Townsville City was a petition on which Aborigines claimed their signatures had been forged. It asked for Government intervention in the Islands' control. It was promptly acted on by Government dismissing the Community Council and ordering new elections which returned only one of the former Council. This new Council immediately agreed to transfer the Reserve to the Townsville City Council.

While the old Council had been pressing for full self-management of their Island, it is interesting to hear that members of the new Council recently raised the same demand. (40) In view of the repeated talk about the tourist potential of Palm Island, one wonders what the reason was for the Reserve being reduced by 53 acres between 1971 and 1972? N.Q. Message Stick of February 1977 also reports the sale of Orpheus Island in the Group.

The rising demand for land rights and compensation has sent Premier Joh and his Ministers into hysterical opposition. The inauguration of the North Queensland Land Council and their request for Commonwealth finance, resulted in the Premier's personal request to Prime Minister Fraser not to fund the Council. A leaked letter to Mr. Fraser states: “I note the assurance given in your letter of 9th December that your Government will not meet any request from the proposal Council for assistance.” (41)

The Conference setting up the N.Q. Council received a claim for Wentworth Station from the Karawa Tribe of Doomadgee Mission. (42) That this demand for land rights was a long-standing one is demonstrated by a letter received in November 1970 by the Queensland Council (QCAATI) from a resident of Doomadgee who wrote, in part: “We would like a little more acres of land for our stock,” and then, “We do hope one day we will have the right to own our rightful land”. (43)

Fifty members of the Karawa Tribe had signed a land claim sent to the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission in Canberra, and stating they had a deposit of $5,000 owned them from a cattle company for “service rendered”. Wentworth Station owner had agreed to sell to them. (44)

The Premier stated in February, 1977: "We don't want the (Land Fund) Commission used to dodge the Constitution so Federal enclaves can be set up in this State.” So, beware anyone who wants to help Aborigines regain some of their land through the Land Fund Commission!

However, the Commission pursued its objective and purchased a freehold block near Cardwell for a group of Aborigines and was negotiating the purchase of two leases adjoining. It was also negotiating the
transfer of a lease of a pastoral property on Cape York for the Aurukun people threatened with seizure of their Reserve for a mining project.

When the State Government heard this, a letter was sent to the Prime Minister by the Premier, stating: "My Government's policies in regard to the care and welfare of its Aboriginal and Islander population have been made clear, and are specifically opposed to the permanent development of areas by Aborigines or Aboriginal groups in isolation. My immediate concern is that the recent land purchases by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission are in direct conflict with state policies."(46) The State Government could do nothing about the purchased land, but blocked the proposed leases with the statement that: "the Government had alerted lands offices to check for people buying land on behalf of the commission then slipping the land to blacks". (47)

It may appear contradictory to people reading Director Pat Killoran's statement that "Aboriginal people of Queensland are not restricted in any way in ownership of land. There are many who own and hold title to freehold properties, perpetual town leases and special leases as normal members of the general community". (48)

It is well to remember the State Government's policy is assimilation.(49) In the Aboriginal view this means dispersing them in among the white community, and breeding out the colour - a refined form of genocide. And this explains the Government's fanatical opposition to giving land to Aboriginal tribes or groups. It is also held by some that the new 4-man Commission set up in 1977 to advise the Government, has the purpose of declaring Aboriginal Reserves "open towns" and their lands therefore open to developers as happens in all other towns. This could bring new millions to Government and land sharks' coffers and end in deprivation of Aborigines chances to own their Reserves and Settlements or even obtain the best blocks of land on them.

The latest in the long list of demands for ownership of Reserves by Aborigines living on them are probably those of Mornington Island and Aurukun. Both are under control of the Presbyterian Board of Millions as were Mapoon and Weipa.

A letter signed by Senator Neville Bonner as President of O.P.A.L. was distributed at the 1971 FCAATSI Conference and supported there by Rev. Jim Sweet (Presbyterian Board of Missions). It stated that "the Board of OPAL emphatically affirms and supports the claim to Aboriginal Land Rights and declares that the Aboriginal people have a right to secure tenure and ownership of tribal lands and reserves now occupied or set aside and that this right should not be subject to encroachment under Mining Regulations, except with the consent of the Aboriginal people concerned and with provision for adequate royalties or compensation; for the land to revert to its former ownership on cessation of mining operations and to be properly rehabilitated."(50)

An Aboriginal deputation later presented an 800-signature petition to the then Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Gordon Bryant) stressing the overall concern for land rights of the communities of Mornington Island and Aurukun. (51)

This petition called for the introduction of legislation to provide for Corporate Aboriginal title to all the Aboriginal Reserves; prospecting and mineral rights to corporate Aboriginal groups; purchase of suitable pastoral properties on non-reserved lands with ownership rights in Aboriginal hands and compensation for loss of "all other parts of the continent". It also called for establishment of a national trust fund, under Aborigines' control, in addition to normal government assistance. (52)

A second delegation of four Aboriginal officers of Community Councils from Mornington Island and Aurukun communities arrived in Brisbane on 18th September, 1974 with two Message Sticks seeking land rights, one for the Premier and the other for the Prime Minister. (53)

The leader of the delegation, Mr. Gavenor, Chairman of the Mornington Island Community Council, later said that after waiting three days, the group had finally seen Mr. Bjelke-Petersen for "two or three minutes" outside Parliament House, when they had given him the Message Stick. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam received them in Canberra and told them the
Australian Government wanted to be sure the laws it passed on with land rights in Queensland would survive any court challenge. (54)

Unfortunately before the Whitlam Government got around to considering such land rights laws for Queensland, the Government was sacked by Kerr.

Aurukun Mission began in 1904, yet it was only in 1957 that the last of the tribal people were finally persuaded to come in to the Mission. In recent times some of them have followed the lead of Northern territory Blacks in returning to their tribal areas and setting up outstations there. (55)

They are a proud and independent people and it was three of their women who were the first Aborigines in Queensland to write story books in their own language - Wik-Munkan - and the first Aboriginal women in Queensland to do so. (56)

The Presbyterian Church has fully supported the people in their demand for full consultation before any action is taken to mine their land. (57)

However, in spite of this, the State Government resorted to “rush tactics” in the dying days before Parliament rose for the Christmas recess in 1975. In three days ending on 12th December, the Aurukun Associates Agreement Act 1975 was passed and proclaimed, despite opposition from the Aurukun people, the Church Mission authorities and the Labor Party Opposition. (58) This Act is a most unjust document and an attack on the Aurukun people's rights. Their wishes have not only been ignored, their power has been usurped by the State Government through its Director, Pat Killoran, who as trustee agreed to an Act which deprives the people of even the right to walk across their land without permission from the mineral company. (59)

The Aurukun people accused Mr. Killoran of breaching his trust and won a Supreme Court case on this, but Killoran appealed to the Privy Council and the people were defeated, being levied $40,000 costs also.

CONCLUSION

So the struggle goes on. It needs much more support from the white community, especially from the organised working class. But deep-seated racist attitudes, mostly unadmitted by the white majority, greatly weaken the Aborigines’ struggle. Often racism is disguised by a veneer of paternalism. Sympathetic whites need to analyse their outlook and actions and to study the Aborigines’ struggles from the Aborigines’ point of view.

To this end, this article is concluded with mention of a very important resolution of the Senate on 20th February, 1975. It was moved by Senator Bonner and seconded by Senator Withers and after debate was carried. It is as follows:

“That the Senate accepts the fact that the indigenous people of Australia, now known as Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, were in possession of this entire nation prior to the 1788 First Fleet landing at Botany Bay; urges the Australian Government to admit prior ownership by the said indigenous people, and introduce legislation to compensate the people now known as Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders for dispossession of their land.”

It stands to the discredit of the present Australian Government, to its Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, and to its Aboriginal Affairs Minister Viner, that nothing has been done to implement the legislation proposed in that resolution.

5. Ibid p.125.
6. Ibid. p.115.

11. Undated roneed report "Weipa Bauxite Field and Thursday Island" by Building Workers Industrial Union (K. Loughlin, Organiser) and Amalgamated Engineering Union (F. Thompson, Organiser), p. 1.


17. Ibid.


20. See Clth. Aluminium Pty. Ltd. kAreement Act, op. cit., p. 8 which states, inter alia, "...the State shall forthwith grant to the company a special Bauxite Mining Lease...for an initial term of eighty-four (84) years, commencing on the first day of January, 1958".


24. Hansard 1, 2/8/73, p. 35.

25. Ibid.


29. Statement by Aborigines & Torres Strait Islanders Advancement League, Cairns Branch, and the Cairns & District Trades & Labor Council, undated, but probably 1961 or 1962. (In personal file.)


34. QCAATI Newsletter No. 62, Nov./Dec. 1968, also personal conversation.

35. Personal conversation.

36. Information from Mr. Joe McGinness.

37. Roneed document "Lockhart River Mission Notes" by the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders League, Cairns.


42. "Message Stick", op. cit.

43. Letter dated 11/11/70 from Doomadgee Aborigine to QCAATI.

44. "Message Stick", op. cit.

45. Melbourne "Age", 14/2/77.


47. Melbourne "Age", 24/2/77.

48. Annual Report, Director of Native Affairs for year ending June 30, 1965, p. 3.


50. Roneed circular (OPAL - One People for Australia League).

51. Press Statement, Clth. Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Gordon Bryant, 28/2/73.

52. Ibid.


54. Ibid, 21/9/74.


THE LA TROBE VALLEY POWER DISPUTE

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAX OGDEN

The La Trobe Valley maintenance workers' strike in 1977 was probably the biggest dispute for 50 or 60 years in Victoria.

Issues of the dispute are complex and often clouded in people's minds. As a contribution to an analysis of the dispute, Greg Wicks interviewed Max Ogden, A.M.W.S.U. Education Officer and a member of the Victorian State Committee, C.P.A.

BACKGROUND TO THE DISPUTE

March 29, 1977
The Central Gippsland Trades and Labour council served an eleven point log of claims on the S.E.C. The claim included a $40 wage rise.

April 6
The S.E.C. told the Council it would not negotiate on the log of claims.

June 15
A mass meeting of 2300 La Trobe Valley maintenance workers decided to impose overtime and availability bans.

August 5
200 workers walk off at Morwell depot in reaction to provocation from the S.E.C. in standing down two workers for imposing the bans.
August 6
Mass meeting of maintenance workers agree to a call by the shop stewards committee for a week long strike.

August 24
Workers agree to return to work and lift all bans after Commissioner Vosti refused to hear their claim while the workers were on strike.

August 25
Workers go back out after the S.E.C. sought postponement of the Arbitration hearing.

August 29
Workers agree to go back.

August 30
Workers go back out after the S.E.C. said it was only prepared to negotiate the claim in seven days time - provided there were no strikes or bans in the meantime. At four more mass meetings the workers decided overwhelmingly to stay out.

October 13
Workers agree to return after the Full Bench of the Arbitration Commission agreed to consider an “anomalies” case over the weekend.

October 18
Workers out again after the Full Bench gives them a flat zero.

October 25
Workers decided to return to work while Commissioner Mansini undertakes a “work value study”. (The work value case was supposed to analyse the difference in work load resulting from changes in work methods and wage relativities.) Mansini also to consider the setting up of a special award for the power industry.

March 1978
Mansini decision after five-month study: Rises between $1.60 and $5.50 per week. Maintenance workers in the building trades and those with less than two-years service with the S.E.C. received no increase.

April 1978
A mass meeting of the workers rejected calls for strikes or bans, but did approve a call for the Trades Hall Council and the A.C.T.U. to coordinate a campaign to secure a separate industry award.

Firstly Max, how important were the often referred to traditions of the Valley in setting a backdrop to the dispute?

Yes, there’s been a long standing tradition in the Valley of distrust of “the city”, and this reflects itself in the unions. Through past experience they don’t have much confidence in such organisations as the Trades Hall Council.

The whole lifestyle of the Valley tends to be a fairly insular one and this attitude has its negative and positive effects.

In relation to this dispute?

Its negative side was shown in that it was a while before a lot of people, including the stewards, knew what they were getting into, and how big the implications were. On the positive side it also makes for a high degree of unity, and more importantly, the fantastic role of the rank and file that was displayed in this dispute.

There are, I think, some misconceptions about the “colour” of the dispute. Some people saw it throughout as a struggle of “workers against capitalism”. Was it so?

Subjectively it wasn’t that in any shape or form. By that I mean that the Valley workers never saw themselves in that light. It only became in any way a political dispute when it became a very big public issue, when the government started to move on things like the Essential Services Act.

One can certainly say that it had no wider political connotations when it started. Quite the contrary. They were concerned about three main things:

- To try and level up conditions and wages within the blue collar sector where there is quite a disparity because of the type of awards that prevail.
To reinforce the relationship between tradesmen and non-tradesmen, and those sorts of groupings within the Commission.

To get a commitment to try and develop this towards an industry award; I might add, an enormous bloody job.

In fact, it was a very economist, fairly narrow log of claims. And these demands remained central to the dispute right through to the finish.

I remember two mass meetings where any question of politics coming into it was strongly resented as outside interference in what they saw as a dispute purely about wages and conditions.

Naturally, a dispute of this kind objectively takes on a "workers versus capitalism" position, which was exemplified by the role of the S.E.C., the media, the federal and state governments, and so on.

You’ve said that the involvement of the rank and file made the dispute a very democratic one. Criticisms have been levelled that the rank and file were “sold out” by the leadership, that the leadership manipulated the rank and file mood. How do you react to this criticism?

That’s absolutely absurd! Of all the disputes one could have seen this was quite remarkable for the level of rank and file control. They were determined to take all the important decisions. For instance, when John Halfpenny became involved, the stewards and the rank and file made it perfectly clear that he was there at their invitation and that if he did the wrong thing he would be promptly dispensed with.

I think it's also important to say that by the time the dispute had ended, John’s role was extremely highly regarded as having represented the rank and file and of having given good advice both at the shop stewards' meetings and the mass meetings.

At all the mass meetings, all John ever did was report the situation fairly briefly and answer some questions. The recommendations were always moved by Sammy Armstrong on behalf of the shop stewards’ committee.

I think it an insult to the workers to assume that John or someone else conned them into it. I think some people are a little selective when they make suggestions like these. Earlier on in the piece, our recommendation against their calling for quick arbitration was in fact rejected.

The C.P.A. has been criticised for simply wanting to solve the dispute, to get it over and done with, for not trying to develop the struggle to higher levels. How do you view this?

When you are thrown into the middle of any dispute it is extremely difficult. It's much more difficult than in situations which are initiated with much wider and clearer perspectives. The communists that were involved (mind you, very few) were confronted with an issue that had to be solved there and then. In that situation, it is not easy to try and develop wider and more long-range horizons - they can only come out by examination of the specific experiences. This is typical of the problems confronted by union activists.

I think to some extent the left (communists, if you like) were somewhat instrumental in helping interpret those specific experiences coming out of this dispute. The workers, and particularly the stewards, now realise that it's not possible to smash through the wage freeze on your own, even in a dispute as massive as this. They learnt, for instance, to think through the sorts of demands that need to be put. They learnt a most deep-going lesson on the Arbitration System, that it requires much greater planning and much greater unity throughout the trade union movement.

There is a lot of nonsense talked about people going into strike action and then you pound them with political newsheets - this is done by the little left sects. Far from this creating a wider political consciousness, the response from my experience has been one of total rejection as being interference and quite insincere.

I think that what one can do best is to rediscuss the issues with those who were involved, which we (A.M.W.S.U.) have attempted to do in this case. I’m confident that their future actions will be of a much more wide-ranging character, a greater
challenge to the S.E.C. and the seeking of wider unity throughout the Commission, than was the case in this dispute. (See addendum: "Points arising from the two-day S.E.C. Course, La Trobe Valley").

There were some criticisms of the public role that the C.P.A. played in the dispute. Some thought the Party was tardy in acting to publicise, to work to build the bonds of solidarity that were such a feature of the dispute and which developed despite the lack of co-ordinated public work. Do you think the C.P.A. could have done more, particularly in the metropolitan area, in this regard?

Yes, I think that’s a legitimate criticism. One of the problems however, is that because of the union and mass positions we hold, we find ourselves involved in the day to day issues, particularly in the big disputes, and therefore the people with most of the information at their fingertips find themselves too busy to produce things like news-sheet. But I think this must be overcome in the future. We must become more effective in putting our voice forward in the middle of those situations, so that it doesn’t remain for the little left groups to do. However, given the circumstances, I think the public contribution of Sam Armstrong and John Halfpenny, both well known communists, was outstanding.

One of the big problems in a dispute of this kind is that one is never too sure of what is going to happen, and there’s a tendency to put off doing something because there might be a return to work in a day or so. I think in the future that we must work on the principle that the thing is going to last for some time. Then if we do too much that’s better than doing nothing or too little.

What of the role of Hawke in the dispute?

Within certain limits, Hawke played a constructive and positive role. This can be compared to the role played by Stone, which was very destructive and negative.

Hawke realised very quickly that the rank and file were making all the decisions and anything he said would not necessarily have been agreed to. Towards the finish the A.C.T.U. was saying “we might have to withdraw our support if you don’t accept this”. That, of course, becomes a quite important factor in such a big dispute.

What of the Trades Hall Council?

From the outset we sought to keep the dispute out of the T.H.C. in order to prevent it becoming bogged down, and where people like Ken Stone could take charge of it. It was only done when the anomalies decision came down, when the workers walked off after being back for a few days, where Hawke made a very good statement and backed that up at a union meeting. Then a good resolution went to the T.H.C. and despite the fact that Ken Stone had strongly opposed such an approach at the A.C.T.U., he had to stand up and support the resolution. We were quite happy to do that then as it broadened the support.

It is a sad comment on the T.H.C. that in the middle of the biggest dispute in Victoria for fifty or sixty years, the T.H.C. didn’t meet for several evenings because there was a power shortage!

What of the role of the A.L.P.?

The stewards were very appreciative of the role of the A.L.P., particularly the parliamentarians, and the A.L.P. machine where a lot of money was donated.

A sub-committee of the A.L.P. state parliamentarians was formed, met regularly with the stewards, and were trying to do things to help the strikers through the political wing. All A.L.P. members of the state house were contributing to the strike fund.

The stewards thought that in the future this was an area that ought to be expanded and taken cognizance of earlier than it was.

How accurately do you think the grouplet newspapers treated the dispute?

Oh yes, calls for “total blackout” coming from the Sparticists were just ridiculous seen in relation to the level of consciousness that prevailed.
The point about these little left sects is that they don’t have to have any responsibility for their policies, because they are not involved. In that situation you can say whatever you like because it won’t affect anything or anybody. On the other hand, the stewards and workers involved have very deep responsibilities with every move they make.

It all comes back to the fact that the workers in the Valley were out after a very limited set of demands. If they had been a much wider range of demands, obviously you’ve got a much greater range of negotiation and can talk more about the political struggle in a more meaningful way.

The role of TRIBUNE? It has been suggested that TRIB didn’t report the issue “as it was”; nor in an optimistic light, and that it didn’t give as adequate a picture as other left papers.

One thing we should have done is to have despatched someone to the Valley. That was a serious weakness. I think that limited us in being able to give a more detailed up to the minute account.

I think TRIBUNE could have played more attention to some of the things emerging in the Valley. For instance, the women played a fantastic role, a story yet to be written; and the role of the Credit Co-operative which at one stage had loaned out $200,000.

There is a strong feeling that at the crucial point - the decision to return - solidarity was building state-wide and nationally. What do you think is the accuracy of that? What do you think would have happened if the workers had voted to stay out?

No doubt in most situations there are a number of options open. Bearing in mind that no-one was happy with it, I personally think that to have rejected the arrangement was much worse.

It would have gone on for a little while longer, however there would have been a larger number than previously voting against it. Then it was almost certain that the A.C.T.U. was going to back off, which would have led to a degree of isolation. Then there was the attempt to use legislation. Was it better to maintain the unity and to return to work and fight another day? After all, it was another battle in the war. So one has to take the longer view.

Another of the difficulties that was not realised by many people is that the maintenance workers in the La Trobe Valley are a minority of the maintenance workers in the S.E.C. A meeting of all the maintenance people, despite the fact that it was a struggle for their wage rise, would probably have outvoted the La Trobe Valley workers. As it was, a poorly attended meeting of one thousand in a metropolitan area, only voted
by a majority of eight to stop for forty-eight hours in support of the Valley. This was further emphasised by the fact that the financial support from these workers left a lot to be desired.

Probably the most important aspect to be considered was the public position. This had two aspects: one was the positive side. The enormous amount collected finished up around the $200,000 mark; the other side was that with so many people stood down over a long period of time, a lot of people were coming into difficult, even desperate, financial situations. We had to seriously consider that part of it.

How long could we go on paying strike money, as we in the AMWSU were to our members in the Valley, while at the same time many others of our members were out of work as a result of the strike and not getting money?

It was generally discussed that if it went much longer, the public position would have changed. It was amazing how well it was maintained as it was. People simply can't cop it forever.

It raises the whole question of workers' responsibility to other workers. One has to think about how far one group of workers can go on inflicting a considerable amount of problems on another - even if we know that these were accentuated by the S.E.C. and the government.

It has something to say about the kinds of actions we take, how we should try and hit capital hardest, without affecting too many other workers, etc.

Should the C.P.A., when it is so inextricably involved in such a dispute, be putting forward the same point of view as the trade union movement?

That is a very difficult problem. It is part of us not being able to develop a perspective that goes beyond the everyday economic struggles. Therefore, because we're so heavily involved in those things whenever they occur, it is very difficult to develop perspectives in the middle of a dispute. It is a different thing if the dispute is about wider challenging issues - then it is more simple to point to the more long-range questions.

It is very difficult to challenge the system when people are only on strike about relativities and their wages. It puts the whole question of the challenge to the whole society just so far away from the consciousness as to be almost irrelevant. Far from, say, the question of who should set the electricity tariffs - workers or the boss.

I think that our role has got to be much more to elaborate a socialist strategy for the working class. Then the policies that are taken up from time to time by the union will be in agreement with ours, except we are the ones who are seeing them and trying to develop them within that perspective.

I think that our role has got to go way beyond specific tactics and demands. These have to develop from the mass movement. Our task is to articulate the perspectives within which the specific demands and tactics evolve, so that they offer a more effective challenge.

At the beginning of the interview, you talked about the traditional insularity of the Valley. Do you think that this has changed as a result of the dispute? In other words what sort of lessons have been learnt in the dispute?

Well, I think the change was reflected in the A.M.W.S.U. Shop Stewards course (held in late November) that was attended by about forty stewards from all unions in the Valley. The long draft of future perspectives that came out of that course showed that people were much more prepared to look at it on a wider basis than just how it affected the Valley.

If we are able to put into practice all the ideas arising from the course, we should be able to change if significantly. That's a big "if". But most of the things were very concrete. For example, an overall shop stewards organisation in the power industry has to really develop before they embark on such an enormous project again; or taking up issues that unite much wider sections of the S.E.C.; or challenge the S.E.C.'s total control; the development of a regular bulletin throughout the industry, etc.

If they're carried out, we can say that the Valley dispute will be of great historical importance.
POINTS ARISING FROM TWO DAY
S.E.C. COURSE, LA TROBE VALLEY,
LATE NOVEMBER.

The following are a number of points that emerged from the two-day course held in the La Trobe Valley for the stewards to examine their recent dispute.

These, of course, don't represent any decisions or recommendations - just purely the points that emerged from the group and general discussions which took place following the various lectures and other activities over the two days.

1. Wide State involvement was regarded as absolutely necessary in the drawing up of a log of claims and activity that would proceed from that.

2. A State Council of S.E.C. Stewards and Delegates to cover all organisations involved with the S.E.C. For example, M.O.A. and F.E.D.F.A., etc.

3. That, in compiling any future log of claims, a considerable amount of research and documentation would need to be done, at the same time bringing the argument to the public and the S.E.C. generally.

4. That before embarking on any major action, attempts be made to get State-wide pre-publicity for the issues and the type of action to be taken.

5. That contacts be made with sympathetic elements in the media very early in the piece.

6. That under no circumstances, if it can possibly be avoided, should they be involved with Arbitration.

7. At all times examine very closely the type of action that is to be taken in order that such things as 'work to regulations', 'occupations' and other forms are looked at closely.

8. That it be aimed to have the whole thing handled as much as possible by Shop Stewards and Job Delegates.

9. That strengthening of the Central Gippsland Trades & Labor Council, as an important contact point for co-operation through the unions, be seen as very important.

10. That, in drawing up a log of claims, it be looked at in such a way that all sections of S.E.C. workers can make gains from it.

11. At all times to examine very closely the role of the Trades Hall Council.

12. That all unions involved be kept in touch with events, perhaps more so than was the case recently.

13. That steps be taken very early to build up a Distress Fund so that, as much as possible, reporting to job meetings in the middle of any disputes will be more concerned with the issues involved and less with the collection of finance.

14. That it is a desirable aim for an Industry Award, and flowing from that an
15. Under the heading of “Likely Issues”, the following are listed as being the ones which are more likely to unite right across the S.E.C.:
(a) Levelling up of conditions between blue and white collar workers.
(b) Election of, and limiting the powers of, Foremen and Supervisors.
(c) Discount power rates for S.E.C. workers.
(d) Greater control of a Superannuation Scheme by the workers involved in it.
(e) A greater voice in management of the S.E.C.
(f) A voice in the job planning.
(g) Claims to include a greater challenge to the general control the S.E.C. currently has over the workers in the industry.
(h) The questions of health and safety and the environment become very important, especially remembering the recent report of the high level of lung cancer in the La Trobe Valley.
(i) A demand to have meetings of both stewards and members in the employer’s time.

16. The need to maintain co-operation and communication with Members of Parliament associated with the Labor movement.

17. Under the heading of “Type of Things to be Done” immediately:-
(a) To begin producing a regular bulletin that keeps everybody informed right throughout the S.E.C. of developments relating to union activity.
(b) To establish a committee of stewards and others who would be available regularly after work, perhaps of a Friday afternoon, for contact with the local media in the La Trobe Valley to pass on any activities or actions that are taking place at any time right throughout the year.

18. Under the heading “Information Required”, the following points were made:-
(a) That, in seeking to develop an Industry Award, it is necessary to get the details of each and every award and agreement and regulation currently applying in the industry, and these to be closely studied.
(b) That we seek access to such information as the S.E.C.’s profitability, information on the state of the plant, information on pricing policies, and information on overall planning in the Power Industry.

19. In the area of the role of official union structure, the following suggestions were made:-
(a) That as a step towards an Industry Award, moves be made to consolidate Maintenance and Building Awards.
(b) That the unions involved in the dispute, along with the F.E.D.F.A., hold discussions as to the methods of sorting out the award differences.
(c) A thorough examination to be made of relativities in order that some acceptable formula can be arrived at providing for proper such relativities.
(d) That the A.C.T.U. may be able to assist in discussions towards such consolidation and the sorting out of award problems.

20. That we seek, as soon as possible, a forum for a discussion on a number of common questions for workers throughout the industry.

21. That preparations be got under way for a seminar on all aspects of the Power Industry, to be conducted some time next year for unions, interested people and employees and stewards throughout the industry.

22. That many more people be encouraged to join the local Credit Union.

23. That, as soon as possible, a discussion be organised for the women in the La Trobe Valley to examine their experiences during the dispute.

24. That a big campaign be launched to join apprentices into the Union. This list to be circulated among the stewards in the industry to assist with the discussion on each campaign and the organisation of activities in the industry. There was also a number of points made as to how an Industry Union would work, if and when it came into being.
INTRODUCTION

Social Darwinists of the 19th and early 20th centuries used to argue that the rich flourished and the poor perished because of the operation of the biological principle of the survival of the fittest. This was an early, crude attempt to provide a biological explanation for social phenomena - by misusing Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Biological explanations for human social behavior have been out of scientific favor for over 40 years. But in recent times they have come back into fashion - dressed up in modern scientific terminology, bolstered by genetic theory and new knowledge about animal behavior.

Most Australians are now familiar with Jensen’s and Eysenck’s belief in the innate intellectual superiority of the white middle class. But Jensen and Eysenck are only the tip of the iceberg. A growing number of anthropologists, biologists, psychologists, philosophers are advocating a biological approach to human behavior; and a spate of popular books has appeared which claim to show that violence, aggression, competition, male dominance, political hierarchies and elites are not the consequences of certain social relations, but are natural to the human species.

THE SOCIOBIOLOGISTS

A Harvard professor, E.O. Wilson, in his book Sociobiology: A New Synthesis, heralds the formation of a new discipline called “sociobiology” which he defines as “the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior”.

Who are the sociobiologists? The best known are Wilson himself, whose book a reviewer in New Scientist called a model of the scientific method; Konrad Lorenz, who argues in On Aggression that aggression in humans is the manifestation of an instinctive drive; Robert Ardrey who presents “man” as an inherently violent, ignoble savage; L. Tiger and R. Fox who in Imperial Animal, Men in Groups try to show that many of our more undesirable
characteristics: bossiness, sexism, violence, etc. have an evolutionary-genetic basis; John Bowlby who tries to establish a biological basis for the mother-child relationship; Goldberg (Inevitability of Patriarchy) who argues that sexism is part of human nature; Elaine Morgan (Descent of Woman) who explains rape as a biologically selected response to a physiological difficulty.

As one would expect, there is among sociobiologists a natural urge to compete and form hierarchies. Those who regard themselves as respectable scientists readily attack "popularisers" like Ardrey and Morgan. (Interestingly, Wilson reserves his harshest criticisms for Morgan, who purports to give a woman-centred account of the development of the human species.)

Nonetheless, there is a remarkable amount of agreement among sociobiologists of varying degrees of "respectability" on what types of human behavior and what social institutions have an evolutionary-genetic basis. Aggression, bartering behavior, male dominance, competitiveness, violence, social hierarchies are on most lists. And the arguments in defence of the biological explanation are much the same from author to author.

**SOCIOBIOLOGY AS SCIENCE**

Sociobiologists argue that humans have natural, i.e. genetically caused, psychological characteristics and behavioral propensities (e.g. to act aggressively when territory is invaded) and that these traits explain the existence of certain social institutions (e.g. war, football). How are we supposed to recognise which of our characteristics and institutions (if any) are biologically based? Sociobiologists typically use the following criteria:

1. **Universality**: The trait or institution is found among people in every society. Male dominance, argue Tiger and Fox (Imperial Animal) is such a social universal. But sociobiologists do allow that people may not act in accordance with their natural propensities. In fact, Fox and Tiger claim that one of the problems of modern society is that we are frequently inhibited from doing what comes naturally.

So universality turns out to mean "universal in hunter-gatherer societies" (in which our traits supposedly evolved), although Wilson points out that people can have biologically based characteristics which are not universal.

2. **Unalterability**: The trait must be unalterable, or at least, not easy to alter. (The fact that "equal opportunity" for women has not resulted in equality of the sexes indicates that male dominance is a permanent fixture - so say Tiger and Fox.) But when pressed, sociobiologists admit that people can control their natural urges (e.g. Lorenz suggests that morality can be a check on aggression), and that they can be redirected into harmless channels.

3. **Existence of an animal analogue.** The trait is found in animals and animal societies, particularly in animals closely related to us, evolutionarily speaking. The argument is: that it is reasonable to suppose that we share genetically based behavioral traits with our animal relatives, just as we do genetically based physical attributes. Wilson adds, however, that it is possible for humans to have genetically determined characteristics which are not shared by any animal.

The main problem with these criteria is that they are completely useless. Nothing whatsoever can be established using tests which contain so many escape clauses. For if a characteristic fails to pass all of the tests - if it is not unalterable or universal among humans and their animal relatives - sociobiologists can still claim it to be biologically based. And if we do find a characteristic which passes all three tests, this still doesn't give us good grounds for saying that it is "natural". A universal type of behavior in humans and animals may simply be a common response to the same environmental problem. Anyway, if the social behavior of apes or dolphins turns out to be much more like ours than we have supposed, it may be more plausible to suggest that their behavior requires a sociological explanation, rather than an evolutionary-genetic one. Nor does "unalterability" prove that a characteristic must have a biological cause. We know very little about how social conditions affect behavior, but we do know
that traits which are socially caused can be extremely difficult to alter.

What these criteria do is to give sociobiologists absolute freedom to declare anything they like to be a natural human characteristic so that they can go forth freely to construct human nature without being hindered by the requirement of scientific testability. The way that sociobiologists build up their picture of the natural human confirms the suspicion that the drive behind sociobiology is a desire to believe that behavior commonly associated with competitive capitalism is natural and inevitable. For the natural propensities which they identify turn out to be the result of description rather than discovery.

You can take any piece of behavior, e.g. someone taking an examination in order to get into the public service; describe this behavior in an extremely general way - say, "competing for a position in a hierarchy". What label you stick it under depends on what instincts you are pre-disposed to think humans have. If you prefer to believe that all humans have a natural desire to seek a social role in which they can make a contribution to society through exercising their individual abilities, then you will describe the behavior accordingly. Now you have to find some examples of behavior in animals and in other human societies which can be given the same general description: "competing for a position in a hierarchy". Don't worry if you can't seem to find something which fits the description exactly. You are allowed a wide latitude in what you count as competitive behavior or a hierarchy. Ignore accusations of cultural bias. Use your imagination. Next you will have to come up with some evolutionary explanation for this kind of behavior. Again this shouldn't be difficult. Think of the survival value of being able to compete successfully for a high position; the way positions at the top make people more attractive sexually and enable them to breed and raise children with ease. Once you're over this hurdle, you can congratulate yourself on identifying an element of human nature. For such a little bit of effort you've accomplished a great explanatory task. For you're now not only able to explain the behavior of the examinee; you're also able to explain hierarchies and competition.

Sociobiologists have a standard reply to their critics: particular hypotheses may prove inadequate or vacuous, they say, but the thesis that some behavior is genetically caused is far more plausible than the position of the radical environmentalist who believes that all behavior is in all respects culturally determined.

After all, social arrangements in animal and human societies determine who can breed, and thus it is reasonable to suppose that the behavioral traits, as well as the physical features, possessed by the individuals who do the breeding are more likely to get passed on to further generations, thus tending to perpetuate the social arrangements which allow such characteristics to succeed.

In attacking the radical environmentalist, the sociobiologists are attacking a position that virtually no one holds. But if you hold the more reasonable belief - that both genetic and environmental factors are responsible for human behavioral characteristics and dispositions, then you are not committed to the view that it is possible to identify which characteristics or part of a characteristic are due to genetic factors and which to the environment. You are not even committed to the view that it makes sense to think of characteristics as being divided up in this way. For it only makes sense to divide up the labor of the genes and the environment if what they contribute is what geneticists call 'additive'. If genetic and environmental factors interact in a complicated way - the one influencing and in turn being influenced by the other - the contributions of each cannot be separated any more than it can be determined (or makes sense to ask) which worker made what part of a wall when one mixes the mortar and the other lays the bricks. The argument against radical environmentalism does not, therefore, make the position of the sociobiologist plausible. Indeed, a consideration of how genes operate makes it somewhat implausible.

Further, being able to provide an evolutionary explanation for something, doesn't mean that an evolutionary explanation is correct or even meaningful. For the checks on what counts as a viable evolutionary explanation are weak, if not non-existent, in sociobiological literature. In fact, Wilson shows in his book that we can give evolutionary explanations for traits that are detrimental to the survival and
breeding potential of an individual: A homosexual is not likely to do much breeding, but he/she is likely to contribute to the well-being of relatives by performing tasks for them, and since these relatives have a similar genetic constitution, they are likely to pass homosexual genes on to the next generation. Wilson provides a genetic basis for altruism and conformism in the same way. But what are the limits on explanations of this type? It seems that with a little ingenuity you can probably take almost any psychological trait or social institution and see it as in some way, directly or indirectly, contributing to the survival and well-being of either the individual or his/her relatives (in a hunter-gatherer society). As some of Wilson's critics suggest, finding "the evolutionary explanation" may make a good parlor game— but hardly good science.

**SOCIobiology AS IDEOLOGY**

There is clearly something wrong with sociobiology that goes beyond innocent intellectual confusion. Some of its critics (e.g. the "Science for the People" group in the US) argue that sociobiology is a modern version of Social Darwinism, and that like its predecessor, its function is an ideological one—to provide a pseudo-scientific rationale for particular social policies.

What of social and moral significance follows from the hypotheses of sociobiology? The correct answer is "Nothing". Logically speaking, nothing of significance can come from a vacuous thesis. Sometimes sociobiologists suggest that they are setting the limits of human behavior and social change. But, as we have seen, when pressed, they admit that humans can, and in our society probably generally do, act contrary to their biological programming.

Sometimes sociobiologists seem to be saying that bad consequences—unhappiness, frustration—result from suppression of natural propensities. But this, too, is dubious (even supposing that we do have natural propensities). For in a society so different from the primitive society in which our propensities supposedly evolved, it is more plausible to suppose that the best consequences come from acting naturally.

But we are dealing with something that is driven by needs and necessities which have little to do with the laws of logic. Marx in his time had to fight against the common belief that the economic behavior of people in a capitalist society was natural and unalterable. As long as the social basis of an ideology remains, the ideology is likely to reappear in new disguises, however often it is logically refuted. Sociobiology is the latest resurrection of an old set of ideas; it is a theory which is likely to be received favorably by people who fear certain kinds of social change; those who want some weapon to use against women's liberation, against radicals who criticise the existence of social hierarchies and elites, against those who think that we can build a society in which peace and co-operation is possible. It is no accident that the rebirth of the "human nature thesis" coincides with the growth of reactionary and anti-reform movements in many capitalist countries.

But there is another aspect to the late 20th century version of the ideology of naturalism which is revealed by Wilson when he thinks he is being most neutral and scientific, when he sees himself as providing an instrument for social planners.

The idea is that sociobiologists like other scientists provide information to the managers and planners of society about how to manipulate people and their environment so that the desired results are achieved. Of course, to the extent that the theories are bad, they won't work. But it is important to ask why people are attracted to theories like this—despite their obvious weaknesses, oversimplifications and omissions. The answer, I think, is not simply that they support conservative ideas. The attractiveness of such hypotheses is that they fit in well with current ideas about social management and control, with the view that managing society is a technological task for experts who have on hand scientific theories about social phenomena. Wilson even suggests that determining the goals of social management is the job of the sociobiologist. But is it legitimate to view the interaction between people, including interaction between rulers and the ruled in this way? Is it desirable to try to realise this basically anti-democratic and elitist model of social decision making? These are not simply questions for scientists, and they are not simply questions about facts, or the truth of theories.
In this article I wish to discuss the micro aspects of applying the sort of transitional socialist economic strategy which is being discussed fairly widely on the left at the moment - for instance in the CPA’s A New Course for Australia. It is necessary to hone in on the workplace to identify the best foundation on which to base such a strategy.

First of all, it would be useful to have a look at the problems associated with traditional wage campaigning as this impinges heavily on whatever we do in developing alternatives. It has been said many times, but is a truism that obviously needs repeating, that wage demands of themselves are not capable of developing a socialist consciousness nor, more importantly, a strategy for social change.

Despite the fact that socialists active in unions have been aware of this for many years, there is not much evidence that this is seriously thought about. There are several reasons for this:

* The first and probably most important is the sheer pressure of day to day work, particularly of officials, which makes it extremely difficult to get the time to come up for air and think about the problem.

* The second is the way wage campaigns are so often developed in isolation from other issues, which makes it more difficult to develop political consciousness. The way the industrial relations system operates means that this often happens even when a conscious effort is made to link issues together.

* The third is the confusion between trade union consciousness and socialist consciousness. Because a group of workers are militant, either one or both of two
possibilities are considered: that by continuing the way they are, socialist consciousness will develop automatically, or that militancy is the same thing as socialist consciousness. Nowadays we see more than ever how erroneous this view is, when small groups of elitist workers can take quite militant action, and yet maintain a very conservative political stance. This is especially true of the United States, but is also seen here.

Wage demands from time to time assume great political importance and obviously this is a possibility at the moment. As workers seek to break out of the indexation straitjacket, they find themselves more and more having to confront the Fraser and other big business governments. This could lead to developments like the miners’ defeat of the Heath government. In fact, the Victorian S.E.C. workers’ strike had some of these connotations as it seemed to have considerable public support, especially in the aspect of its confrontation with government.

The argument advanced here is that we need to understand the weaknesses of traditional wages campaigning and especially its isolation from other issues and strategies. Having done that, we need to redevelop it as part of an integrated strategy from workplace through to government and international politics. This is to provide a basis for more effective wage campaigns, so central to the day-to-day work of unions, so that there is a greater possibility of political consciousness growing out of these struggles.

What are the weaknesses of wage campaigns

1. Taken on its own, a wage demand never questions the right to exploit, only the price. The successful 1974 Metal Industry campaign, which saw national stoppages for the first time, despite some attempts at injecting politics, did very little, if anything, to question the right of exploitation.

As Andre Gorz put it so well “While it is necessary to demand satisfaction of immediate needs, this struggle no longer brings the entire social order into radical question.”

2. In a certain sense, the constant and isolated claim for wage rises reinforces the capitalist ethic, that everything and everybody has a price. If this ethic is imbibed and workers can be reasonably successful, then far from questioning the system they think it is not too bad. Of course this has changed a little lately, but with the sop of indexation there has been little questioning.

3. The weakness of over reliance on wage campaigns as a basis for mass mobilisation is clearly shown at the moment. The main issue has run into trouble and therefore action has dropped, because little attempt has been made to develop other issues.

4. Wage demands very often hide other, more deep-seated issues. More and more, it is recognised that such as boredom, lack of dignity and freedom, powerlessness, etc. are the real causes behind disputes. Unfortunately, as yet they are mostly manifested in wage demands because the method of coming to grips with the real issues are still tentative and only in their infancy.

Civilisation at the Crossroads: social and human implications of the scientific and technological revolution, $4.50 (300 pp.), 1969.

Some copies of this very important pioneering work are still available. Published by ALR in 1969, the book is the work of a Czechoslovak interdisciplinary research team headed by Radovan Richta. It appeared late in 1967 in Czechoslovakia and undoubtedly resulted from the deep concern with the crisis in economy, politics and ideology which came to a head there at that time.

Its findings in turn provided the theoretical basis for the Action Program developed by the Czechoslovak Communist Party to meet that crisis.

These national aspects do not, however, detract from the universality of the problems dealt with. The book is a first-class piece of research and analysis about issues confronting all advanced industrial societies, as apt today as it was when published. Over 300 pages of text are supplemented by extensive tables and references. At today’s prices, it is selling cheaply.
5. Wage demands are nowadays often a divisive issue. Apart from the fact that there are now myriads of awards and agreements, the main arguments advanced by unions, especially in over-award campaigns, involve comparison of worker with worker. For example, comparison with the going rate in the district and relativities between skilled and semi- and unskilled workers are crucial factors in seeking a wage rise. This means that there is a vested interest in keeping everybody at different rates, so as each can have an argument.

It is interesting to note that recent research showed that only 7 per cent of unions bothered to utilise company balance sheets, indicating that capacity to pay does not rate highly in reasons advanced for wage increases.

6. A further aspect of the divisiveness of wage issues is that they seek individual solutions to what are mainly social problems. This is considerably reinforced by the nuclear family and its attempts at solving its social and economic problems on its own. This brings about the need to raise more forcibly the issue of the social wage, i.e. social services, pensions, health services etc. and the whole role of the nuclear family as it impinges on the workplace.

All these points are not to suggest that unions drop wage demands. That is not only impossible, but would lead to a demoralised working class, making it more difficult than ever to build consciousness. But it is to suggest that we have to look more deeply at the issues likely to provide a challenge, and that wage demands become an integral part of that whole strategy and not isolated as is currently the case.

The problem is that we tend to see exploitation only in economic terms whereas it is many-sided. The basic reason for exploitation is to provide profit for the exploiter, but it is expressed in such things as inhuman working conditions, unhealthy environment, authoritarian structures leading to indignity, demoralisation and lack of confidence. It is this expression of exploitation that has to be challenged if we are to begin the process of consciousness-raising, and we must not allow it to be obscured by having it expressed only in money terms.

To understand fully the production process and then to begin to exercise some control over it, is the first step in consciousness-raising. This is because it is the area that workers know best, and therefore can see the need for challenge, and how it can be done. Almost any worker in any work-place could tell you how his/her job could be made more efficient or easier, but of course it rarely pays to open your mouth as it could be the end of the job.

At this stage it is worth outlining the experience of the metalworkers at Fiat in Italy, over the last few years, to show what a challenge over work organisation can mean. The unions in Fiat began to raise the issue of work organisation in the mid 'sixties as a basis for rebuilding the union after a period in which little was achieved. Job conditions and work organisation were the issues, because first of all they were the issues about which the workers felt most deeply, and secondly, the issues through which capitalist exploitation is felt most.

"It started with a mere questioning of the factory's methods of organising work, then it developed into demands for checking rights and after that into demands to influence the methods of work itself (piecework, workloads, numbers of workers on the job). Gradually, from here, there were demands to alter working conditions (job ratings and therefore the way a job is done) until the question of investments was reached, what type they should be and where they should be made."

The struggle began to make inroads into work speeds, setting of the piece rates, work hours, a wider range of work for each worker, workloads and so on. This, for the first time, provided a wide basic knowledge of how management organises the work process. It began to demystify the Taylorist method of work fragmentation, and so-called scientific management. As each gain was made it provided a basis for new consciousness to make the next claims that would further encroach on management prerogatives.

What is important is that the union leadership fought extremely hard to prevent these crucial issues from being sidetracked
by purely wage demands, but sought to have such demands made within the context of the overall challenge.

Initially in the middle and late sixties, there were many problems and the workers tended to make only the most obvious demand - higher wages.

To quote again from the report given at an international conference in France in 1974...."The risk was that Fiat might try to limit the trouble by granting wage increases that would have obscured the underlying problems. In fact there was a definite chance that just a wage demand, even for considerable increases, would leave enough room for Fiat to manoeuvre and solve the problem without any real change in industrial relations dominated by the management, and their 'company loyalty', productivity-first, philosophy, and not all workers were aware of this."

In 1969 an important victory was achieved which gave the workers rights of control over timing and workloads. However, this victory had a more significant feature to it. "In order to check observance of these new rates on the assembly line, Fiat recognised a number of 'experts' the union would appoint, selecting them from various teams. From this came the 'team delegates'. In fact, the union decided to have the 'experts', or 'delegates' elected freely, in a secret ballot, irrespective of union affiliation or membership. In this way, they became not just representative of the union, but the direct expression of all the workers and the bearers of their teams' opinions before management."

This very important development in fact created a shop committee (as we know it) that cut across traditional lines of skills, trades, union membership, and helped to eliminate long-standing causes of division. This development was a significant step in the subsequent coming together of the metal unions in Italy. This was only possible because of the challenge launched on the production process.

The big step forward in 1973 was the demand to have a say in Fiat investments.
This was coupled with important campaigns around work environment (dust, humidity, noise, heat, etc.) and health, which had many workers' groups monitoring and noting all the relevant facts on these issues and making some gains. The password in this period became "a new way of working". The agreement reached at this time was that ten billion lire would be set aside for improvements in the working environment, experiments with "assembly islands" (new organisation to break down the assembly line), and an agreement to invest in the south of Italy.

This latter point was to diversify production into such socially useful commodities as rolling stock, buses, earth-moving equipment and to provide employment in the south where it was most badly needed. Due to the onset of the economic crises Fiat was able to frustrate the agreement re the investment.

However, this fight was renewed with greater vigor this year (1977). As with the earlier period it was necessary to struggle against the simple solution of only going for higher wages, thus benefitting those in work and leaving the wider problems to governments and political parties. After considerable struggle this year the results recently achieved are as follows: "Fiat has to provide 5,000 new jobs over the next $ \frac{3}{4} $ years distributed in various areas of the south, acceleration of the process of production diversification in the field of the means of public transport, reduction by half-an-hour of the working hours of shift workers, agreement on the introduction of new technology in important processes, improvements in the work environment and new rights of control."

This constitutes an important and principled victory, especially given the current economic circumstances. To put the strategy into perspective, a last quote from the 1974 report... "It is difficult to explain these struggles on work organisation without speaking at the same time of the general demand for a change in economic policy; may we just emphasise the close relationship between these claims, also because this explains how the workers have come generally to request a policy of development of the south as the main point in a program of deep social reforms - housing, health, public transport, etc. - that by itself would not have been possible without a clear consciousness of the role played by the factory and how work is organised there; and the fact that the movement was able to continually return to work organisation problems as a basis for action on the shop floor, showed that the workers realised this was the hub of capitalist contradictions."

A comment accompanying the report on the recent victories makes it clear that the challenge on work organisation at the point of production was closely allied to, and part of, the general strategy being pursued at the level of national politics in Italy.

It is interesting to note that important gains made by the Swedish workers earlier this year also centred around work environment, health and job security. After a long struggle the unions succeeded in having legislation come into effect on January 1, 1977, which gives the shop floor much greater power over hire and fire, stand-downs, shop steward rights, safety and the environment, and access to company books and information.

The lesson from all this is not that we should follow slavishly the Fiat or Swedish examples, but to study the strategy and tactics used. The keypoint is that they seem to have successfully linked exploitation at the point of production to a long-term strategy, including legislative programs; something that we have not been very successful with in Australia. We suffer usually from one or two problems - we try and develop consciousness from too high a level, requiring a considerable degree of abstraction, or when the issue is close to the bone, it is not seen as relevant in the development of consciousness.

The type of basic issue of work organisation or work environment will be different depending on the industry, skills, sex (some issues will be more important to women than men), and so on. For example, the Lucas Aerospace workers, because they are a highly skilled workforce, appear to have been able to start at a higher level of abstraction than the Fiat workers, i.e. they did not have to go through a couple of the earlier stages. Nevertheless, they would need
to have the general strategy of challenging management at ever higher levels, starting from the most widely based demand applicable at the point of production, and linking that to wider political issues outside the workplaces.

It must start with such demands as preventing the further fragmentation of work (an aspect that is increasing with new technology), with demands to improve the work environment to make it healthier and more pleasant, to break down hours and importantly to challenge the rights of supervision. After all, if a group of workers can’t confidently challenge supervision, and at least the lower levels of the hierarchy, they are hardly likely to be able to challenge the government or the system. Each one of these issues will require a well worked out log of claims of its own.

An important integral part of this has got to be a wage policy that is based on whole new criteria. As the work organisation and hierarchy is demystified, workers will get a new appreciation of each other’s value to the process, and base wage scales on that. Use of wider skills, co-operation, development of a team spirit, etc., led the Fiat workers to begin to break down the traditional and artificial relativities and status differences and make wage demands that have begun the long process towards a socialist appreciation of people’s worth to the community. Such a development is inevitable once we begin to control the work process. A similar process has occurred in the self-managed factory “Dynavac” in Melbourne. Wage relativities have been compressed because the workers set the rates and they have developed a complicated set of criteria concerned with a range of issues which has helped to break down much of the divisive aspects of wage rates.

It is becoming urgent in the current economic circumstances that we evolve a strategy that goes beyond the traditional economism and pragmatism of the Australian labour movement. It has to be a strategy that takes up the immediate issues at the job face which challenge the power structure, and be prepared for it to develop through various unavoidable stages over a number of years. The stages should lead to major demands and struggles for whole alternative socially useful programs for the companies or industries, devised by the workers, and in alliance with and impacting the wider political developments in the country.

The crucial elements must be:

1. That they begin where exploitation is best understood and manifested, which is usually at the point of production.
2. That the demands are winnable.
3. That they challenge an aspect of the boss’s control.
4. That each succeeding demand opens up the next winnable demand.
5. That it is within the context of an overall socialist political strategy.

The way to get started is not simply to repeat ad nauseam to workers that they are exploited, but to provide the necessary skills which will enable them to do something about those aspects of exploitation which they already identify with and wish to act upon.
1968 was a vintage political year.

It saw, in February, the Tet offensive by the liberation forces in Vietnam. This shattered US military and political strategy to maintain and strengthen imperialist positions in the region. It battered the already shaky morale of US troops and changed the political situation in the US itself to such an extent that L.B. Johnson announced he would not recontest the Presidency. Tet made it politically impossible for a long period for US ground forces to be committed against liberation movements anywhere - clearly a factor in the struggle in Africa at present. Through the Tet offensive, the “Third World” asserted its growing presence in the life of our times.

1968 also saw the “Prague Spring” in Czechoslovakia, revealing the aspirations of people in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe for “socialism with a human face” through the radical extension of democracy in economic, cultural and political life. It showed that the communist parties of those countries were not necessarily unchangeable and monolithic bureaucracies, but had the potential to perform, once again, the function of articulating the yearnings of the people and projecting the vision of a society closer to that of the founders of Marxism.

But August of the same year also showed the enormous obstacles still to be overcome for the realisation of this aspiration. The Soviet Union led the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact countries, except Romania, in an invasion aimed to restore the previous type of regime by the use of force, relentless pressure, duplicity and persecution of those who opposed them.

1968 also saw, in May, the upheaval in France. This demonstrated that the contradictions of capitalism had not disappeared with modern economic development and the measure of working class affluence which had been won in the course of it. In a way, it showed that these contradictions had intensified, and that given expression - in this case by the student movement, however unclearly - they could unleash tremendous political forces for radical social change. The working class, which many were beginning to write off, along with the developed capitalist countries themselves, as a source of social advance,
stepped back into the limelight.

Before canvassing the messages from May '68 in more detail, let's recall briefly the main events which took the participants themselves, and the regime, completely by surprise and electrified the world.

On May 2, 1968, the university authorities closed Nanterre, the complex in the western suburbs of Paris which houses the Faculty of Letters of the University of Paris (the Sorbonne). This action followed several weeks' agitation by leftwing students culminating in the occupation of a lecture room.

On May 3, students occupied the courtyard of the Sorbonne and tried to occupy a lecture room in protest at the summoning of a student leader, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and five others before a university disciplinary court because of their involvement at Nanterre.

The Rector, M. Jean Roche, called in police who used tear gas to clear the quadrangle, and suspended all courses. Violent clashes between police and students then took place in the nearby Boulevard Saint-Michel, about 600 students being arrested. Most were released later, but on May 5, four were sentenced to two months' jail for carrying "arms" (clubs, etc.) "with intent to commit violence".

On May 6, 10,000 students became involved in a pitched battle in the Latin Quarter with the riot police (CRS - Compagnies Republicaines de Securite). About 600 students and police were injured and 422 demonstrators arrested.

The students were protesting over the closing of Nanterre and the Sorbonne, over the arrest and imprisonment of their colleagues, the brutality of the police and the defects in the French system of university and higher education. These included severe overcrowding (the number of university students was about 600,000 compared with around 180,000 in 1958); the housing of great numbers in impersonal quarters (cites universitaires); the lack of personal contact between students and teachers; lack of job opportunities for graduates, particularly in the social sciences; the irrelevance of course content, and the bureaucratic way in which the institutions were run.

May 7 saw further mass demonstrations, this time with few clashes, and a student strike at all Paris universities and many provincial centres.

On May 8, 20,000 people demonstrated in the Latin Quarter, but no attempt was made to break through the police cordon around the closed Sorbonne. The Minister for Education, M. Alain Peyrefitte, and President de Gaulle made noises about democratising the universities and adapting them to the requirements of the modern world.

On May 9, the university authorities decided to resume lectures at the Sorbonne and Nanterre, but the Minister vetoed this because of fears that the students would occupy the buildings.

On the night of May 10, students erected up to 60 barricades in the Latin Quarter. These were stormed by police using tear-gas, and return fusilades of paving stones were thrown at them by the demonstrators. The better trained and equipped police won the physical encounter but politically the ground was opening beneath the government.

Returning from a nine-day visit to Iran and Afghanistan on May 11, Prime Minister Pompidou announced that, with de Gaulle's agreement, the Sorbonne would be opened next day, that measures would be taken to enable candidates to sit for their examinations and that the Court of Appeal would consider the petitions of the jailed students for an amnesty. These decisions, he said, were "inspired by a profound sympathy with the students and by confidence in their good sense" and that "indispensable" university reforms would be carried out. He called on students to "spurn the provocations of a few professional agitators and cooperate towards a rapid and total concord".

But it was too late. By now, the communist-led union confederation (CGT - Confederation Generale du Travail) and the originally Catholic-oriented CFDT (Confederation Francaise Democratique du
Travail) called for a 24-hour general strike (the Socialist Force Ouvriere did not come in at this stage). The strikers denounced police suppression of student demonstrations and demanded an amnesty for those arrested, the reopening of the Sorbonne and Nanterre and the removal of police from the premises. 200,000 workers and students marched in Paris while similar demonstrations took place in other centres.

All those held in custody by the authorities were released, the police were withdrawn from the Sorbonne, and meetings of university staff from all over France were held. One of these meetings unanimously passed resolutions expressing solidarity with the students' feelings of disquiet and the "incomprehension" they were experiencing. It condemned as absurd the centralised running of the universities, the delay in implementing expansion plans and demanded far-reaching reform of university education "to adjust teaching and research to the needs of contemporary society".

On May 14, students occupied the Sorbonne without resistance. Prime Minister Pompidou told the National Assembly that everything concerning the universities had to be "rethought" along the lines of greater autonomy and adaptation to economic and social realities.

But occupations spread like a huge wave. Universities all over France were taken over on May 15 and 16 by action committees in the name of "student power". Many declared themselves independent of the authority of the state. One of Paris' three national theatres, the Odeon, was taken over by 3,000 students after one of them had proclaimed from the stage at the end of a performance that it was "closed to bourgeois audiences" and had "become a permanent centre of cultural exchanges, contacts between workers and students, and uninterrupted meetings".

Factories were occupied all over the country. All the plants of the nationalised Renault works, the Sud-Aviation plant, Berliet (heavy vehicles), Rhodiaceta (synthetic textiles), shipyards at Nantes, Saint-Nazaire (including naval yards), le Havre and Marseilles, a government armament factory at Bayonne and many others. By May 19, more than 2,000,000 workers were "out" - or "in" 120 occupied factories.

All transport in Paris came to a halt and most air traffic. Power plants were occupied, but the workers continued to supply electricity for domestic use. A number of coal mines were taken over and strikers occupied most of the large railway stations throughout the country. The Cannes film festival was abandoned when technicians came out on strike and film directors, in support, refused to let their works be screened.

By May 20 over six million were on strike; by May 21 over eight million and by May 24 over ten million. Schools were closed or occupied by pupils, as were many department stores by their staff. The workers in state radio and television services (ORTF) came out demanding official assurances of greater objectivity in the presentation of televised programs, especially of news. Strikes occurred at the Marcoule and Pierrelatte nuclear plants and artists, dressers and stage hands came out at the Folies Bergere.

A vote of censure on the government in the National Assembly moved by the Communist Party and the Federation of the Left was narrowly defeated, and the CP and others demanded an end to the de Gaulle regime. But the government, while promising to negotiate with the unions over wages and giving lip service to the desirability of "participation" (by the workers in the running of the factories, by state employees in the government enterprises and students in universities), refused to discuss political issues.

The unions fell in with this offer and on May 26-27 a tentative agreement was reached between union, government and employer representatives providing for -

- a 30 per cent increase in the minimum wage
- a 10 per cent wage increase (7 per cent in June, 3 per cent in October)
- reduction of working time by one or two hours
- adjustment of wages according to the cost of living
- a five per cent reduction in basic contributions to social security benefits
* increased family allowances and an increase in pensions
* promises to end discrimination between the sexes in employment, for a greater voice for trade unions in management and welfare matters and legislation on union rights in enterprises
* the days lost through strikes to be gradually made up by the workers, who would receive immediately a 50 per cent advance on wages lost during the strikes.

These proposals were apparently favored by the union leaderships, though the CGT said they were “insufficient”. But in any case many meetings at occupied plants and elsewhere overwhelmingly rejected them.

The Minister for Education resigned (this was one of the student demands), and de Gaulle announced a referendum for June 16 promising university, social and economic reform, including adapting the teaching and training of the young to the evolution and needs of the country, participation of students in the running of universities, distribution of the benefits of industrial expansion, especially to the least favored, participation of workers at all levels of management and maintenance of full employment.

But for reasons discussed later, the peak of the struggle had been passed, and the initiative was passing to the government.

While the Federation of the Left (led by Francois Mitterand) and the Communist Party were belatedly discussing possibilities for an alternative government, de Gaulle, with his wife, bodyguard and staff left Paris by helicopter, ostensibly to fly to his country home at Colombey, about 300 km away. The journey took eight hours, and it later emerged that de Gaulle had, in fact, landed at Baden-Baden, HQ of French forces in West Germany, to confer with Commander-in-Chief Massu and other officers.

On May 30 de Gaulle returned to Paris, dissolved the National Assembly, declared general elections for June, postponed the referendum and declared that France was “threatened by a totalitarian Communist dictatorship”. He said that if the French people were prevented from expressing themselves (in the elections) “at the same moment when they are prevented from living, by the same methods which are used to prevent the students from studying, the teachers from teaching, the workers from working” he would “be obliged, in order to maintain the Republic and in conformity with the Constitution, to adopt other methods than an immediate vote by the country”.

Communists and Socialists correctly labelled this as a threat of civil war and coup d’etat, but were clearly on the defensive.

Troops, including tank units, concentrated around Paris. The right also organised politically, and about half a million marched through Paris chanting “de Gaulle is not alone”, “Communism shall not pass”, “Mitterand to the firing squad”, “the Communists to Moscow”, “Cohn-Bendit to Peking”.

A new government was formed with Pompidou remaining as Prime Minister. Nine new people entered the government, twelve ministers remained but with new portfolios, while another eight held on to their old ones. The elections were announced for June 23 and 30.

Workers now began to return to work, police cleared strikers from communications centres and certain sectors of industry agreed to implement the tentative agreement of May 27. By mid-June, most strikes were over, the last to end being that of the journalists of ORTF on July 12.

From June 10 to 12 students and other demonstrators clashed with police in various parts of the country. In the Latin Quarter of Paris, 1500 were arrested for “identity checks”. The Odeon surrendered to police on June 14, the Sorbonne on June 16, and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts on June 27.

In the first round of the elections the Gaullists and others of the right got 10½ million votes and the left 9 million. In the second round the figures were 6.7 million and 6.1 million respectively. Because of the electoral system, Assembly seats went 350 to 91.

Events of such vast sweep do not lend themselves to simple assessment, even in retrospect. Many labels which have been applied such as “a revolution betrayed”, “a bloodbath averted”, “ultra-left fantasy (or provocation)” can find support in this or that
episode. But they throw little light on the motivating forces and issues, serving rather to plug partisan judgments previously arrived at.

One thing that stands out is the **quality** of the demands and the methods of struggle adopted in pursuing them. The demands included:

- for autonomy - against authority
- for direct democracy - against rigid institutionalisation of human relationships
- for meaningfulness in learning and links with social realities - against use of the great potential of knowledge and the strangling of its excitement to shore up an irrational system.

These attitudes of the students were adopted not only towards university and state authorities, but were also displayed in disenchanted with the model of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and with the existing working class political and union organisations. These were felt to reproduce many of the aspects felt to be so repellent in society at large.

The methods of struggle included massive demonstrations, strikes and erection of some barricades, but the characteristic one was occupations of institutions and workplaces (by no means new in France - though far greater than ever before in extent - showing also the importance of building on good traditions).

Both the demands and the methods of struggle, which were adopted to one degree or another by millions, reveal how deep and potentially powerful as a means for social transformation is the striving of people for control over their own lives, for human community, for "self-management". This expresses positively what is felt negatively as humiliation, boredom and alienation.

While it would be a great exaggeration to locate in such demands the **sources** of the movement for women's liberation, there is little doubt that there are strong connections, as in the stress on control by women of their own bodies and fertility as well as the end of sexist discrimination and attitudes which treat women as sex objects and subordinates them to the control of men.

Similarly, the demands for self-determination of Aborigines, American Indians and other oppressed minorities which exist in a larger society, while not having their origin in the demands of '68, are powerfully reinforced by the currents which burst forth then.

When Prime Minister Fraser promises self-management to Aborigines in Queensland (self-management like the rest of us have, he says - how true!) he is not only displaying his customary duplicity, but is recognising the power of a deep aspiration running through the whole of society.

May 1968 was in a period of boom rather than of the chronic economic crisis the capitalist world is experiencing ten years later. This further highlights its significance, though the adding of new expressions of capitalist contradictions does not automatically lead to a fusion into a stream of still more powerful revolt. In fact attitudes which overemphasise the directly economic as the road to socialist consciousness and action ("economism") have had some resurgence in the crisis. But the potential for fusion is there.

The greatest failings of the political parties and union organisations of the working class were that beneath some student fantasies and actions taken without thought of consequences they did not discern, or sufficiently discern, a new and positive content. Thus they could not produce, however imperfect, the elements of a political and social program which was needed to bring about the final demise of a virtually impotent government, but gave it the latitude for revival. (The mobilisation of military power which could have been effectively used was a later development greatly assisted by the loss of momentum manifested in the economist direction given to the workers' demands.)

A different conception, designed to win the maximum extension of real people's power within workplaces and institutions (and even organs of the state itself) could have altered the conditions under which future struggles took place to the substantial advantage of the forces of social transformation.

This would have been so whatever the immediate fate of the great upheaval itself,
which in any case could not be maintained forever. Few analyses hold that a social revolution was there just asking to be made.

Reinforcing these lacks was another weakness of most, if not all communist parties of the period. They came, to a great degree, to so over-emphasise the role of parties of the period. They came, to a great weakness of most, if not all communist of them were correct.

organisation was also seen as the source of product of the organisation. The coming, in effect, to regard struggle as a leadership as to almost reject spontaneity, coming, in effect, to regard struggle as a product of the organisation. The organisation was also seen as the source of all consciousness and the ultimate authority as to what was right and what wrong, what possible and what not. Marxism had become so congealed as to appear to give all this theoretical imprimatur.

A more favorable development apparently occurred in Italy. In his interview with historian Eric Hobsbawm, Giorgio Napolitano, member of the secretariat of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) says:

Between the end of 1967 and the beginning of 1968, we went through a critical period: we were acutely aware of the danger of a break with new forces - especially but not only students - that were moving in a revolutionary direction, even if in confused and often unacceptable forms, and did not identify with our Party, with its political and ideological heritage. Instead they challenged it; they seemed almost beyond our reach. In our ranks there were different reactions, and certainly not all of them were correct.

Some tended toward total rejection, some toward excessive concessions. All in all, a line of self-critical investigation prevailed. We tried - without 'selling out' our heritage, without demagogically pursuing or taking over as ours the positions that were raised in opposition to us - to analyse the divergent and components of the student protests, social, ideological, political or cultural. We tried to see how much influence our own insufficiencies at all levels might have had and to draw conclusions even to the point of correcting certain of our attitudes, of overcoming some of our inertia.

Napolitano also says of the so-called "hot autumn" of 1969, which extended over a much longer period than the events in France:

The great strike movement which developed in Italy in the autumn of 1969 cannot in any way be called spontaneous. In 1968 and 1969 the unions had serious difficulties and had to carry out a major effort at renewal, but they fully affirmed their leadership in shaping the struggles of 1969. precisely because they had understood the lesson and the thrust which had come from the young people's protest - the push, above all, for a new democratic relationship between organisations and masses, for more active and direct participation by the workers (especially the younger generation of workers) in the conduct of the struggles. So the protest touched only the fringes and did not penetrate deeply into the working class. (The Italian Road to Socialism, pp. 35-37.)

It is known, of course, that not all share the view that the PCI responded adequately to the situation, and that a group led by Lucio Magri left the party and formed the II Manifesto group.

Magri nevertheless partly confirms Napolitano in a backhand way when he says:

...Italy is the only country in the West where the crisis of '68 and the following years has had the working class as its protagonist, and not only students and intellectuals. And it didn't last a month like a May in France, but it lasted for years... Even in these last eight or ten years, there has been a steady growth in the mass character of Italian democracy - and not only the mass character but often the anti-capitalist character of the mass struggles, above all, of the workers' struggles. One can never emphasise enough the new and different character of the working class struggle in Italy, the ways in which it differs from everywhere in the other capitalist countries.

In its aims and forms, from 1968 on, the working-class struggle has not been simply a militant but narrow economic struggle... For example, I don't think there's ever before been in the history of workers' struggles in the West, a struggle that took on as its characteristic trait, at the mass level, the demand for equality. All Western unionism is characterised by a strong competition among the various strata of workers. In Italy, precisely the poorest workers - the mass workers, the assembly line workers - became the protagonists of a demand not for their own advancement, but for general equality. Even technicians, white-collar workers, professionalised workers made the demand for wage equality and general equality in living conditions their own. This shows a very high political level, as does the struggle for control over the organisation of work, the struggle against overtime, the struggle against the commercialisation of health care, the struggle for control over investments, and the struggle to obtain 150 hours of study each year for workers.

Then there are the forms of struggle: the building of the workers' councils, the struggles run daily not by the union bureaucracy but department by department in the workplace, the fact that the workers' councils are not elected from within the unions, but by all the workers, who choose their delegates to the council and have the right of immediate recall.
Beyond the aims and the forms of these advances, there is also the concrete democratic result, not only in terms of legislation...but also in terms of real power relations. By means of this pressure from the mass movement, Italy has become the only country where mass layoffs in the factories have been almost impossible during the course of a very violent crisis...Then there is the cost of living escalator mechanism. Italy is the only country that has succeeded, even in periods of crisis, in consolidating and developing this mechanism. Because of this, inflation still has not been able to cut real wages, at least for the employed working class. (Socialist Revolution, No. 36, Nov.-Dec., 1977)

Tackling the period from a somewhat different angle, Santiago Carrillo, general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain says:

The way, even within existing society, even before socialist forces enter government, is through energetic and intelligent action for the democratisation of the State apparatus. The starting point lies precisely in obtaining a situation in which bourgeois ideology loses its hegemony over the ideological apparatuses. To the extent that this objective is achieved, even partially, the results will be reflected in the coercive apparatus.

In this respect, May 1968 in France was an interesting experience. At the outset the forces of public order operated with brutality; but in the course of the struggle, these forces resisted their being used by authority as a repressive instrument against the people. A series of stands were taken in the professional police unions which protested against being used by the authorities and showed a wish not to confront the people. Some moments of wavering also occurred within the army.

Perhaps the reason why these tendencies did not go further was that, at that time, there was no real alternative power facing the established power. The left was disunited. I think it is not unjust to say that the political forces representing it were taken by surprise by the magnitude of the crisis and were not ready to overcome the disunity and lack of preparation in the short time during which the disturbance of the established power lasted.

At the same time, the new characteristics of that crisis, which could not be resolved by street action alone, or by a frontal attack against authority as in other classic crises, required various democratic initiatives, including new elections, to support the mass struggle with a serious and responsible alternative such as that offered today by the Union of the Left. The lack of such initiatives facilitated the action and the excessive weight of immature, anarchist groups, which intimidated broad sections of the middle strata as well as the State apparatus itself, and reduced the influence of the left which had for a moment been so high among the masses.

This enabled the authorities, after weeks of impotence, to regain the political initiative and to benefit from the holding of elections. ('Eurocommunism' and the State, p. 52.)

The first and most vital message from the events of a decade ago is that the content of socialist demands in developed capitalist countries must firmly embrace self-management (whatever the words used to describe it). The forms of struggle, so far as they can be chosen, should also assert elements of self-management in practice - for example, occupations and work-ins, and in general extension of the rights of workers on the job, students in schools and universities, service and state workers in their institutions and departments. These are not only very effective means of winning even small demands, but they also shift the power relations between the classes, build up a tradition, and prefigure the new society.

Self-management and the great extension of democracy it embodies - especially direct democracy - does not do away with all the problems of developing an effective representative democracy under socialism, or answer all policy questions at the level of the "macro-economic" or society-wide planning. But it forms the basis for these too.

The next, not entirely unrelated, lesson is that revolutionary parties should re-think the relations between their work, and/or leadership, and the mass movements which develop independently of them (in the sense that the party does not "call them forth", though party members may participate in them).

Lenin’s formulations about the limitations of the spontaneous movement, about it being able only to produce trade union, not socialist consciousness, which had to be brought from "outside" are open to question in a number of ways. But it should not be forgotten that his central stress was that socialist consciousness did not arise directly from the economic relations or conflict between workers and employers, because these were too narrow to effectively generate it.

Today there are more movements (often called social movements) than ever before: women’s liberation; Aboriginal rights to
land and self-determination; anti-uranium; defence of the environment; citizens for democracy and so on, as well as the traditional trade union or industrial ones.

They should not be posed one against the other ("class" issues here, "trendy, middle class" issues there) but all be seen as related and that mutual inter-relations and influence along with general political activity are needed to generate an adequate socialist consciousness.

Similarly, while the views of political trends and parties will inevitably find expression in social movements as they do in unions, those who put them forward should not seek to dominate as though all the flow of wisdom was one way (1968, not to mention struggles in other years show this is certainly not the case), or as though members of a party are a "special mould" of people different from ordinary mortals.

Political parties - for us, of course, the Communist Party - are still essential. We should concentrate on defending socialist principles against opportunism from right or left (be a more effective "conscience" of the movement), elaborating realisable perspectives which lead in a socialist direction and have the potential of helping the progressive and left movement regain the initiative it has lost and rebuild its unity, putting our organisational and tactical skill as well as our personal dedication at the service of the movement, and living to the maximum extent we can the new values we espouse. By doing these things we will certainly attract new adherents, enrich ourselves, and become a greater "weight" than we are now in the political arena.

It is interesting, if rather regrettable, that one reaction among students to the recession of the 1968-69 tide was to seek to build rigidly-disciplined "cadre" groups with many of the characteristics they had formerly criticised in communist parties and other organisations at the time. There was also a trend in the field of theoretical analysis which often tended to separate from practice and gravitate towards a new dogmatism.

Old lessons often have to be learned anew.

Somewhat similarly, achievements made in the period have sometimes produced unforeseen negative effects. For example, the protection against the sack won by Italian workers has helped, in the view of journalist Flora Lewis, the upsurge of the ultra-left and terrorism. She writes:

It is virtually impossible to fire a registered worker in Italy... Registered workers and union members have become a kind of privileged class, regarded with anger by that new part of the proletariat which is confined, without protection to the hidden economy (under-the-lap without proper rates, social security provisions etc. - E.A.). The growth of the extreme Left - militant, anarchistic, anti-communist and often violent - is based on this new proletariat, as well as on the students, who are really a subclass of the same group. (Financial Review, April 12, 1978.)

Political battles are seldom finally disposed of, but often have to be re-won in new forms. This is generally true of programs. While their careful formulation is important, still more important is that their even partial achievement creates a new political situation, including a new state of consciousness among the participants in the struggle, requiring extensive revision of the original program. Programs are not fixed "blueprints" for the future, though principles of course remain, but means to advance through struggle towards the future.

This bears on a third major lesson. That is, that the forms of struggle are likely to have to change rapidly as the situation itself changes. Political parties have to master the art of shifting rapidly from one form to another, if they wish to retain the initiative. Their progress in this respect is unlikely to be furthered by dreams of a re-run of 1917 (or 1968) or, especially, by an "all or nothing" approach which rejects the need to advance through struggles for more limited objectives. Those who want all at once are likely to get nothing. Such approaches fail by focussing on the demands as such independent of the existing level of consciousness of people, and the struggle needed to transform it along with the situation.

When upheavals occur, up to and including ones of the exceptional scope of May '68, those with the "all or nothing" attitude will not have prepared even themselves to take advantage of it, let alone decisive sections of the people.

Development of a "counter-hegemony" is a long and painful process.
Many people beginning a study of marxism become bogged down in mastering preliminary concepts and never get to apply the theory to complex, economy-wide problems. Of course this is to some extent inevitable. Marxism is a science with a complex object; on top of this it has not been developed in as systematic a way as several of the other sciences. But the main difficulty is that most people come to marxism much later than they come to other sciences. Whether this first contact is through the labor movement or in a more conventional academic setting it remains true that a number of basic concepts have to be understood before anything very interesting can be said; we cannot rely on schools teaching about the use-value/exchange-value distinction in the way they explain the basic concepts of mathematics, physics and biology. This puts a special onus on those teaching marxism to connect the basic concepts with some more interesting results of the theory.

One way I have found of doing this is to discuss the theory of reproduction. This immediately leads into an examination of crises, the question most people want marxist economics to deal with.

The problem is that Marx’s own approach here requires a great deal of working through to understand. Later marxists have perhaps been more systematic, but at the expense of a greater use of mathematical formalism which certainly hasn’t made their accounts more accessible to beginners.

The approach I’ve followed is to use a series of diagrams to outline the main relationships. I am not claiming any originality for what is explained; enough will have been achieved if the theory becomes clearer in the process. This material has been used successfully both in schools for Communist Party militants and in university undergraduate courses. I hope ALR readers find it useful as well.

We start with a single commodity: something which is both useful in the sense that it can satisfy a need and which can also be exchanged for other commodities on the market. It is these two properties - use-value and exchange-value - that give the commodity its special character: we therefore represent a commodity showing both these properties, thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>use-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exchange-value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

for example

| basket of fruit |
| satisfies hunger, used for food |
| ½ hour of labor time |

| spear |
| used to hunt animals |
| 4 hours |

| machine lathe (fill in your own) |
The exchange-value of a commodity is of course just the amount of socially necessary labor time required to produce it, as we have represented it in the diagrams.

The next step is to show an exchange, say between a fruit gatherer and a spear maker:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8 baskets of fruit</th>
<th>8 baskets of fruit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>satisfies hunger</td>
<td>satisfies hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 spear

used to

hunt animals

4 hours

used to

hunt animals

4 hours

Note what we have shown here is an exchange of equivalents; that is, both you and I are parting with and receiving exchange-values equal to four hours of labor time. Neither of us has been cheated.

Of course, this sort of exchange is pretty inconvenient; it depends upon a fruit-gatherer who wants a spear meeting a spear-maker with a craving for fruit. This problem is solved, however, if a single commodity with an appropriate use-value is selected to serve as money, the universal equivalent. Thus:

1 ounce of gold

compact, durable, divisible, uniform

10 hours

becomes

1 ounce of gold

universal equivalent

10 hours

that is, money

This enables the fruit gatherer to sell her his commodity to any available buyer for money and then subsequently to use this money to buy other desired commodities from owners who perhaps have no particular need for fruit but who can then use this money to buy other, desired commodities. Exchanges now look like this:

Or, if we add in the other buyers and sellers:

So far we have described the network of exchanges that take place in any commodity-producing society but we require one additional element to specify such a society as capitalism: the human ability to labor productively (and so produce commodities) must itself be a commodity, the commodity labor-power. Labor-power, like any other commodity, has both a use-value and an exchange-value, the latter being of course the amount of socially necessary labor-time to produce it. Thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>use-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exchange-value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor-power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ability to produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value of means of subsistence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that the laborer can produce in a given period commodities greater in value than the value of the means of subsistence she/she consumes is the key to exploitation.
The capitalist as buyer of the commodity labor-power and hence the owner of the commodities produced when that labor-power is expended, appropriates the difference between these two quantities of value; this is the origin of surplus-value.

After this quick revision of the main concepts we are now ready to explore the way capital reproduces itself through the whole economy. We begin with the capitalist class, and within that class with one particular capitalist. For capitalist production to take place, what must this capitalist do? First, he must divide his capital (which we assume at this stage is in the form of money) into two parts: the first he exchanges for commodities that are suitable for use as means of production, the second part he uses to buy labor-power. Marx called the first part constant capital, \( C \), and the second variable capital, \( V \).

Next, these two are brought together in the labor process. Commodities are produced whose total value is greater than that of the means of production and labor power consumed; the difference is the surplus value produced, \( S \).

The total product, \( C+V+S \), now must be put on the market, and it is at this point that the picture becomes more complex since the total social product is in fact sold on a number of different markets. Thus while an individual capitalist may produce only means of production or only commodities that will be used as means of subsistence, the total product of the whole capitalist class is made up of both. Moreover, the ratio of means of production to means of subsistence is not arbitrary; for the simple system we are constructing to be sustained, this ratio must be \( C:V+S \). These capital and consumption goods are then sold - the capital goods to other capitalists, which completes the upper circuit on the diagram. Note that we have shown two different sets of exchanges for consumption goods on the lower part of the diagram. The reason will become clear in a moment.

However before the diagram becomes more complicated, it might be worthwhile following through the upper, capital goods circuit. The exchange that occurs within the circuit is of course between different capitalists. In this sense the circuit does not really have a beginning or an end. Or rather, the end - the fact that there are capital goods on the market - is as necessary as the beginning we posited - the fact that there are capitalists with money capital who want to buy means of production. By the way, we should also note that this exchange is an equal one - the exchange value on both sides is equal to \( C \) and that after it takes place a quantity of money (again equal to \( C \)) has returned to where it began.
So far we have accounted for how capital goods come to be on the market; we now must do the same thing for labor power. The picture, with the circuit of labor power included, looks like this:
The rest of the diagram has the same meaning as before but we have not marked in all the detail so what has just been added stands out more clearly.

Again, this is a circuit so it does not matter where we begin: let's start with the box marked "wages". Following the arrow downwards we come to an exchange: wages in the form of money are exchanged for consumption goods on the market - we have just seen how these got to be there. Next, these commodities are combined with unpaid household labor within the family to produce the commodity labor power. As we follow the arrow upwards and across to the right we come to a second exchange: this time the laborer sells her/his labor power to a capitalist and receives in return - wages - where we began. Again we should note that both the exchanges in this circuit are exchanges of equivalents: the exchange value involved all the way round is V. An implication of this is that the unpaid labor in the home that transforms the consumption goods purchased with the wage into labor power does not add to the exchange value of labor power.

To finally complete this picture we need to add one more factor: capitalists' consumption. This takes the form of an exchange between some of the augmented value now in the hands of the capitalist class and those consumption goods not purchased by the working class. (This is why we at the beginning showed two exchanges for consumption goods but only one for capital goods).

The first thing we note is that all the circuits have been closed and everything balances. For instance, look at the box marked "Capital", which as we mentioned at the beginning represents value (in the form of
money) held by the capitalist class at the start of the process. This starts off as C+V which is then expended on means of production and labor power. But at the end of the cycle, after all the capital goods and consumption goods produced have been sold an amount of money equal to C+V+S returns to this box (that is, the sum of all the incoming arrows on the left hand side). At the same time an amount S is spent unproductively by the capitalists on their own consumption (the arrow leaving the box at the bottom) leaving a total of C+V, ready to begin again.

Next, we should emphasise that in a society embodying these relationships one class, the capitalists, are able to consume part of the product without taking part in production despite the fact that all exchanges between laborers and capitalists (and between capitalists too, of course) are equal exchanges. Exploitation is built in; it is not a question of cheating.

Finally, the diagram we have constructed shows how the system reproduces itself but it also shows that this happens under certain conditions:

(1) All commodities produced find a market so long as the ratio of capital goods to consumption goods produced is C:V+S; otherwise part of the product will remain unsold.
(2) The capitalists consume the whole of the surplus, S. This means that production begins again on the same scale; total investment at the beginning of the second cycle is still C+V. This is the situation Marx called simple reproduction. In fact capitalists in general do not consume the whole surplus; part of it is reinvested and the scale of production thus expanded.
We have assumed that instead of consuming all the surplus, capitalists reinvest some fraction of it, \( a \) (where \( a \) is between 0 and 1). This has a number of consequences:

1. At the end of the first cycle the total product is still \( C+V+S \) but the way it is divided between capital goods and consumption goods must change. These are no longer in the ratio \( C:V+S \) but now in a new ratio, \( C+aS:V+(1-a)S \). In other words, the value of capital goods produced has been increased by a factor \( aS \) and the value of consumption goods produced decreased by the same amount. Without this restraint the system does not balance.

2. Capitalists’ consumption has fallen from \( S \) to \( (1-a)S \).

3. There are now two factors that determine the rate of accumulation of capital: the actual size of the surplus, which in turn depends on the rate of exploitation, and \( a \), the proportion of the surplus applied to new investment.

At this point we have nearly reached the limit of the usefulness of this diagrammatic approach since a series of closed looks cannot adequately represent an expanding system.

For example it leaves open the question of how the investment in the second circuit takes place: is the new investment divided between means of production and labor power in the same ratio as last time (that is, preserving what Marx called the the organic composition of capital) or does the capitalist channel this investment into new plant to perhaps gain an advantage over his competitors?

Nevertheless even this simple approach does permit us to draw some conclusions. Most important is that capital accumulation can proceed at any rate within limits ultimately determined by the rate of exploitation: in other words, by the class struggle. Cutting working class living standards is not an impossibility for the capitalist class; it will not drive the system into a crisis of underconsumption. On the contrary, it is highly desirable from the capitalists’ point of view; all it requires is an adjustment in the composition of output, by a shift away from producing consumption goods to producing more capital goods.

This is why appeals by labor movement leaders for a boost to living standards in order to promote economic recovery do not cut much ice with governments or Arbitration Commissions. And it is also why the government’s own pronouncements do to some extent describe what is going on in the economy, though in a sort of Alice-in-Wonderland way. What the capitalist class wants is an increase in the rate of exploitation, but in the process it must increase the proportion of capital goods produced at the expense of consumption goods – hence Fraser’s “investment led recovery”. Since as we have shown, both are equivalent movements, isn’t this more palatable than talking about increased exploitation?

**A NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS**

ALR is only too happy to receive contributions on any subject of interest to the left and the labor movement. We prefer the length to be less than 5,000 words but exceptions are made in special cases.

We prefer articles, on whatever subject, to be accessible to all interested readers prepared to make an effort, and therefore request that unnecessary jargon or ‘academese’ be avoided. For time and space considerations, we reserve the right to cut articles where this does not affect the basic sense of the discussion. Occasionally we propose style or sub-editing changes but only in consultation with the author(s).

We ask that all manuscripts be typed, double-spaced, on paper no larger than quarto size.

We ask those authors who do not hear from us about publication of their articles in a reasonable time to recognise that this is purely due to pressure of other work on our small collective. Usually we have not forgotten you.

**APPEAL FOR BACK NUMBERS**

Remaining gaps in our stock of back numbers have now been filled with the exception of numbers 36 and 38. We make a special appeal to readers who might have copies of these two issues which they no longer require to send them to us so that requests for them can be met. In addition, we would still be grateful for copies of numbers 29, 32 and 41, as numbers of these held by us are still small.
Review:
MAKING SENSE
OF OUR PAST
Audrey Blake


Peggy Dennis is a remarkable woman and she has written a remarkable book which spans fifty crucial years of the international communist movement. The book's dedication to her husband Gene, the General Secretary of the CP USA 1946-1959 who died in 1961, says a lot to the communists of the period. It is from Charles Dickens:

'It was the best of times,
It was the worst of times,
It was the age of wisdom,
It was the age of foolishness,
It was the epoch of belief....'

The author's earliest years were in the socialist Sunday school (her parents were Jewish revolutionaries, exiles from Tsarist Russia), the Young Communist League, and then from 1929 together with Gene, Party organising in various American cities, the America where 'Politicians talked about prosperity around the corner, but meanwhile there was no social security, no unemployment insurance, no welfare department, no government responsibility to feed, clothe or house the millions thrown on the scrap heap of capitalism'.

Her first visit to Moscow was in the winter of '31. She went there with Tim, their baby, to join Gene who had begun work for the Comintern. Soviet life was tough and elemental but to those who cannot understand the enthusiasm and belief we had then for Soviet Russia her record will help, especially if it is remembered that, 'Back in the States twenty million were out of work, millions more were hungry and homeless, social security was a revolutionary demand being fought for in the streets'.

Gene left after a few months. He was to be away for three years working as Comintern representative to the communist parties in South Africa, the Philippines and China. In those years Peggy worked as a teacher in the Anglo-American school for the children of foreign workers, as a researcher in the Profintern (the Red International of Labour Unions), studied in the Lenin School and finally became a courier for the Comintern taking money and messages and expediting the movement of cadres into the illegal anti-colonial movements and the anti-fascist movements. This work was difficult, dangerous and involved a gruelling routine of isolation. Of this work which is so often dismissed as sinister Peggy writes: 'Only the Comintern placed its international resources of organisation, finances, personnel and know-how at the disposal of these democratic and independence struggles. Whatever its own internal weaknesses and rigidities, this support was the Comintern's greatest
achievement. Less than ten years later, the
war alliance of Britain, the US and the Soviet
Union leaned heavily upon these organised
resistance movements in Europe, Africa and
Asia'.

In 1935 Peggy and Gene returned to the
USA but without the five year old Tim. Their
Soviet stay was to remain secret, the recent
American recognition of the Soviet Union
could not be jeopardised by right-wing
versions of their four year stint of Comintern
work. So a five year old Russian speaker was
an impossibility. 'And it was only for a short
time. They had promised.' But Tim never did
come home except as a translater for
Krushchev on his American visit, and to
stand guard of honour at the coffin of his
dead father in '61.

Their work '35-'37 was in Wisconsin and it
was a creative, wonderful time of communist
activity - there as everywhere. The
Comintern had left behind its childish (1931)
view of fascism and its maturer position of
1935 meant that the American communists
would 'defend every inch of the democratic
gains made by the working class', would
struggle against fascism in defence of
democracy, would move into the mainstream
of political life. Peggy estimates: 'Not before
or since has our Party successfully carried
through such a complex and valid policy and
activity as it did in the years 1935, 1936 and
1937....we developed, not in articles and
reports but in action, the broadest, most
flexible coalition relations within the
mainstream. At the same time we delineated
clearly our own independent Communist
identification'.

In '37 Gene and Peggy were in Moscow
again - Gene as the American rep. to the
Comintern. And that's where and when we
Jack Blake and I - met them and became
close friends. Jack, representing the CPA in
the Anglo-American Section, and I was the rep.
of the Australian YCL to the KIM - the Young
Communist International.

These were terrible years for Soviet
communists but in the Luxe, the old building
on Gorky Street where we all lived, and in the
Comintern building, we were insulated
against most of the terror. Gene and Peggy
knew more because a number of friends from
their earlier years had vanished and queries
were curtly choked off. But they didn't talk
about it - they were vigilant - as we all were.

"Vigilance" meant no questions unless you
needed to know the answers for your work;
anything else was "petty bourgeois
liberalism". But though they knew more
than we did they were just as
uncomprehending. Belief can open one's
eyes - it can also be the great blinder. Before
starting work in the KIM I was interviewed
by Brigadirov, a Russian from the
Comintern cadres department, who warned
me to be vigilant and not to mix with
Russians. Within a few days Brigadirov
himself was "taken".

Occasionally, a room in our corridor of the
Luxe would have a lead seal on the door; our
neighbour had been taken. If they were
Russians we didn't know them. If they were
other non-English speaking people we didn't
know them either - 'the English speaking
comrades became an insulated group'. Peggy
comments:

'In 1961 and again in 1965 when for a short
time Soviet people talked to me freely of those
years, I found that our reactions in the Luxe
had been not too different to those of the
Soviet citizens. Many told me the same story.
When the security police came for one's
neighbour, one shrugged uneasily. "The
evidence must be there, the Party would not
act otherwise." When the police came for you
or your wife or husband or brother or sister or
mother or father or uncle or aunt or close
friend, "you knew it was a horrible mistake;
you believed it would be rectified in a few
days". And they waited in silence for almost
twenty years for the Party to correct its
"mistake".

Peggy is revealing on the long factional
struggles of Browder and Foster (who were
both in Moscow that year) which resulted in
the return of the Dennises in order that Gene
should be the 'balance' between Browder's
reformism and Foster's sectarianism. Again
Tim had to be left. I remember the night they
departed. Tim was to return to the
International Children's Home the next day.
Molly, a mutual friend, saw him to bed
and then our 'phone rang; it was Tim wanting
Jack. Much later Jack returned - young Tim,
he said, had wanted a man-to-man talk about
life. The children of communist
functionaries did not have it easy.

This book is useful on the German-Soviet
Pact, Molotov's defence of the pact, the
phony war, the early and later policy of the
communists. 1941 saw the Dennises in
Moscow again but only for a brief period - Gene to return home three days after the Nazis invaded, Peggy three months later. Again Tim had to remain. Peggy made a decision to have another child: 'Not as a substitute for Tim, who was now lost to us in the cauldron of war; not even as any reaffirmation of my love for Gene. This was for me and my need alone'. Gene Junior was born December 7, 1942.

The post-war years - Browderism, the deep-rooted, long-standing animosity between Browder and Foster, and Browder's expulsion led to the election of Gene as General Secretary of the Party. The cold war, the long McCarthy operation which aimed to break the back of the whole democratic movement made this an incredibly tense period. I. F. Stone wrote, 'Washington is living under the shadow of terror'.

In 1950 Gene went to gaol for six years and Peggy and her seven year old son faced the long years with a pact 'to live each day as though Gene were coming home tomorrow'. With most of the Party leaders in gaol, anti-communism of a truly terrible virulence put the prisoners' lives in danger and their position was not helped by the almost fatal blow self-inflicted when the 'outside' Party leadership took almost the whole organisation underground. The 'expendables', those left above ground, included the 160 Smith Act defendants, their wives and families. They became 'a Party unto ourselves, the only visible Party activists fighting for the constitutional and civil liberties of communists as part of the fight against McCarthyism'. Peggy became the chairwoman of the national committee called Families of the Smith Act Victims and the mass work of this organisation was effective and courageous - a beautiful example of communist mass work. But, 'As to personal problems each of us had, none of us was equipped by our Party experience to respond to each other on a simple human level'. Here and elsewhere the author reveals her understanding of the lessons she has learned from the rise of the new movements of the sixties, in particular the movement for women's liberation.

1955 was the year of Gene's release. He had learned much: all the experience of his life reached out to a new development. He urged 'a most positive approach to all honest Socialist and Marxist oriented groups and individuals'. He projected 'friendly debate and co-operation' combined with 'sharp political and ideological struggle' that could lead eventually to the unification of all socialist-minded persons into a 'new and broader mass party of socialism'. He rejected the established use of democratic centralism, which, he said, in practice stifled democracy and perpetuated bureaucracy. Foster and his supporters were horrified at this 'revisionist' line. There was wide support for Gene but the 20th Congress report of Krushchev, revealing the horrors of Stalinism burst with a shattering impact which the Party leadership was unable to cope with. A four year destructive battle began and Gene retreated from some of his innovations.

Many comrades left the Party. Foster merely shrugged 'Good riddance' and demanded punitive organisational action against those who remained and didn't agree with him '...many were our most effective workers in the mass movements'. Revisionism was declared to be the main danger by the 1958 conference of the twelve Parties of the socialist countries. Gus Hall, the present leader of the CP USA began the campaign to oust Gene and to take his position. Two days before the convention opened Gene suffered a stroke and the next year he died of lung cancer.

For anyone who has not yet felt the need for new thinking on the question of inner-party struggle I would refer them to this book and especially to the pages which describe Gene's funeral and the organising of it by the Party.

Peggy visited the USSR three more times, in '61, '65 and '72. In between she worked on the San Francisco paper People's World and welcomed the movements which developed in the sixties. Not so the Party leadership which felt these to be 'outside' the Party: only Left movements led by the Party were valid.

The author's analysis of the post-Stalin USSR are of great interest. Her commitment to the land and people of the October Revolution and the herculean struggle against the Nazis remains but it now entails a deeply felt critique. She writes of the lessons learned in the Eastern European socialist countries from the '56 Hungarian rebellion and the Warsaw strikes and demonstrations of the same year. But the
Soviet invasion of Czecho-slovakia showed where the real difficulty was still located.

The US Party learned the wrong lessons and launched a renewed era of "ideological purity".

Peggy's last visit to Moscow was for three months, six weeks of which she lived with her son Tim, his wife and child. She was impressed with the improved living standards, bothered by the lack of 'a socialist quality' to everyday life, aghast that no one would discuss Czecho-slovakia except to say, 'We should have shot them all as Stalin would have done'. And one other matter - the Jews:

'In casual exchanges of non-political subjects among these circles of upward-moving Party activists, I heard strange phrases, all the more disturbing because they were said so nonchalantly. Referring to a mutual acquaintance of those present one says and the others agree, "For a Jew, he's quite a good fellow". At another time I am told, "You can appreciate how capable he is, he holds such a responsible position even though he is a Jew". Among these bright, political career-minded persons, none can give me an answer to the question why blatantly anti-semitic articles appear repeatedly in popular Soviet magazines, in the form of book reviews, when a glavlit - an official government censor - has to approve everything that appears in print.'

Back in America Peggy found that her life was culminating in a struggle with the Gus Hall leadership, ending with her resignation from the Party in '76, fifty years after she'd joined. The resignation letter (printed as an appendix) is one more step in her fight for what she believes. She looks to the future: 'Surely, the real champions of the best interests of our people are myriad and still need to combine forces in that struggle for that new and better society we call socialism'.

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For all of you who have been undergoing extensive brain surgery, engaged in an under-the-polar-ice-cap submarine mission, or otherwise out of touch with Western industrial society, there is a film called Star Wars which has out-snatched the box-office successes of socko hits like Jaws and King Kong.

With Star Wars, the consumption nexus between art and advertising has found its fullest expression to date as promoters rush to sell their products via the film: Star Wars mini-posters in cereal boxes, Star Wars give-away glasses at take-away food chains, Star Wars badges and stils at trendy kids’ clothes shops displaying space-suit weather gear, etc., etc. Star Wars surrounds and invades us, from theme music to bubble gum cards, from May the Force Be with You badges to the speech of our kids, most of whom seem to be cursed with total recall of the film’s hokey dialogue. If you think you were weird when you pre-pubescently fell in love with Lassie, Black Beauty, and Cheeta, just consider the implications of anthropomorphising robots. Two of the “characters” in Star Wars are See-Threepio (C3PO) and Artooedetoo (R2D2); the former at least speaks, the latter merely bleeps.

Now, all of this slightly testy commentary relates to a degree of nervous exhaustion induced by the SW bombardment in both the public and domestic spheres, as well as a degree of bewilderment at finding my under-7s deeply enamored of both the inane and the inanimate. This is not to say that I am immune from some of the film’s blandishments. It moves at a cracking pace, has some good lines and stunning visuals and special effects. Also, it is an orgy for genre enthusiasts, containing bits of just about everything: Robin Hood, Shane, The Italian Job, Dambusters, 2001, The Longest Day, Peter Pan, The Robe, etc. About the only genre missing is the witty, intelligent and literate comedy crime drama like The Thin Man - where are you, William Powell, now that we need you?

At quite an obvious level, SW is about The Good Guys vs. The Bad Guys: way in the future, the Republic is battling to save the universe from the Empire’s cold, tyrannical, technological hegemony. The Republic’s princess (don’t ask me - apparently royalty and republicanism coexist quite merrily in the future, perhaps along the lines of that bland “self-determination” found today in demented, depoliticised constituencies like English Canada and Liberal Australia) sends a plea for help via R2D2 to Ben-Obewankenobe, one of the last of the powerful Knights of the Force. R2D2 and C3PO are guided to Ben by Luke Skywalker, the orphaned son of another Knight. After Luke’s aunt and uncle are killed by Imperial stormtroopers in a manner evocative of Old Testament bloodbaths, Ben, Luke and the robots engage Hans Solo, a hot-rodding sky jockey to take them to the planet where the rebel Republican forces are regrouping, to rescue the princess, to steal the plans to the Empire’s fortified, war-machine home planet, and by dint of human pluck, tenacity, and spirit, to defeat the Imperial forces.

Just in case any of you are sitting on the edges of your seats wondering how it all comes out, let me tell you that humanity and justice wins out over cruel, cold, computerised tyranny: after two thrilling Dambuster sorties down a Charge of the Light Brigade valley of death, Luke (aided at the last, crucial minute by Solo who, aw, gee, shucks, turns out after all to be the nice guy we all thought him to be under his hard, look-out-for-number-one self-employed entrepreneur exterior) drops the key fortress-destroying bomb. Tellingly, as the target nears, and Luke zig-zags his way down the approach run, he hears Ben’s voice, urging him to trust in himself, in the power of The Force. Luke pushes away his computer targeting devices, and accurately unleashes his bombs on his own judgment. Result: Empire, 0; Republic, 1 - another win for love, warmth, humanity, republicanism, individuality, enterprise and grit.

Given all this monumental dualism and free enterprise special pleading, you’ll hardly be surprised at the associations conjured up through costume and characterisation:

The Empire: Led by the icily malevolent Peter Cushing (of Hammer Horror fame), its supreme war council wear bottle green Russian-style uniforms, with modified Chinese collars. Their faces are stereotypically “slavic”, stonily recommending ruthless, heartless, power-mad, order-obsessed actions (such as the instant destruction of an entire planet) without a blink.
The white, clanking armor of the Imperial stormtroopers symbolises the chilling, impassive, clinical sterility of the vivisectionist, and the Empire's starships are menacing, whirling, death machines in Nazi silver and grey.

The Republic: As befits pluralist ideology, the Republic is portrayed as a broad front of individually motivated right-thinkers. The rebel military leaders and troops are short-back-and-sides, clean-cut American types, wearing the khaki or orange loose overalls distinctively reminiscent of US Air Force scramble suits. They are presented as the valiant underdogs, whose commitment to freedom cannot be quenched. Outgunned and outmanned by the Empire, their weapons are multiplied by a cornucopia of Boy Scout virtues: kindness, courage, humor, ingenuity, determination and skill. It is no surprise that their starships are slim and streamlined, like souped-up versions of present day military jets.

The space dog-fights obviously trade on WWII films, and we identify with the Republican pilots and gunners, regarding the Empire's planes as depersonalised killers or “kills”. Although the action is often spectacular, augmented by a sophisticated sound track which aurally situates you in the middle of the battle, you are never really moved because the film relies so heavily on hackneyed filmic conventions of good and bad, friend and foe, and the activities appropriate to each. The common-sense understanding that the world is “somehow” divided into those who want power and those who want freedom is massively reinforced; Star Wars is a profoundly ideological film. As organised, it is impossible to even consider the inappropriateness of the power-freedom dichotomy to our world where structures and processes generated out of capitalist contradictions and crisis management render pious good intentions meaningless as categories of social analysis.

Given the film's Cold War mentality, and the range of characters assembled as Good Guys - the individualist (Solo); the wise knight (Ben) whose commitment to Justice brings him out of retirement for one final, terrible encounter; the brave novice (Luke), motivated by love for the beautiful princess and loathing for his father's murderer; the resourceful woman (Princess Leia), whose tongue is appropriately tart for modern audiences; the loyal robots, and Hans Solo's animal mutant co-pilot, Chewbacca, devoted to their humans' cause - it is important to recognise how the film structures the Bad Guys.

Interestingly, the enemy is not monolithic. One might have expected that Our Heroes would combat some dread, inexorable historical process - like the Technology Run Amok, or Mother Nature's Revenge films of the '50s and '60s. Instead, they are involved in two battles: one against the cold, technologised political power of the Empire; the other against the Dark Force of the human spirit which, through Darth Vader, the last of the Force's dark knights, has allied itself with order and Empire.

The Force, in a previous time, waged through its Knights the battle for good in the Universe. At some point, some of the knights defected, using their powers to link personal psychic resources to a kind of cosmic change, for evil purposes. (Well, I know it sounds silly, but that's what you get when you multiply the Round Table by the Fall of Angels, and divide by heavy doses of Freud and Svengali). The source of the Force's power means that the alliance between it and technology is an uneasy one: Darth Vader puts the double-whammy on an oafish Imperial strategist who dismisses The Force as mystical humbuggery. Such tension is a far cry from the usual Star Trek formula, which portrays a useful collaboration between science (represented by Dr. Spock) and human judgment, however emotional (as represented by the insufferable commander of the, yuk, starship, Enterprise, Jim).

As Star Wars develops, two modes of opposition emerge. The first, against the Empire, is conducted like a conventional war, with appropriate tactics, manoeuvres, and set-piece battles. The second, against the Dark Force, is conducted both by single-handed, laser-sword combat (e.g. between Ben and Darth Vader) and by a curious kind of Crusade. At bottom, the film is concerned with a quest - not for mere victory over the Empire, but towards the grasping again of those powers that the Force can unleash, positively, within one. Hence the pseudo-religious symbolism - Ben (Alec Guinness), is robed like a monk, his face registering the resigned, weary passion of an El Greco saint; the pilgrims, as in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings are led inexorably to the Enemy's heart. As in Frodo's journey to Mordor, the Good seek out and challenge the Evil. The film is rife with mediaeval crusade images, where doughty champions sally forth to do battle with infidels and dragons.

It is important to separate these two strands of villainy because the tendency is to dismiss Star Wars as just another space western, padded out with a grab bag of other genres and/or a send-up of everything. To the extent that the film recognises widespread feelings of impotence and frustration engendered by contemporary technocracy, and dissolves it by operationalising a triumphant quasi-religiosity, Star Wars validates the re-emergence of de-institutionalised Christianity. The film marks its crucial transformation - gone are the Jesus Freaks, gone is flower power, but here is The Force, a new wave of mystification.

-Kathe Boehringer.