
Tim Rowse argues that liberalism, in Australia, is a many-sided doctrine with a wide influence. He attempts to prove that it is an hegemonic ideology, and he places liberals in the role of organic intellectuals, that is, intellectuals who express the interests of Australian industrial capital.

These liberals, the argument continues, have in various ways sought to promote a consensus within a liberal framework. 'For the question of consensus is inescapable, in one form or another, and endemic to intellectual life in a society based on the exploitation of labor and the domination of society by the needs of one class'.(p.8)

Rowse’s method is basically chronological and narrative. But before he presents his case studies, he offers, in Chapter 1, a definition of liberalism. The two important elements in this definition are the individual and the community. For there to be a viable community, the individual’s values need to correspond to some general community outlook. Liberalism says that society is an ensemble of individuals and the state is neutral.

Liberalism places great stress on individual freedom, especially the freedom to do business in the market place. Most liberals believe in the equality of the individuals who make up the ensemble.

It is the author’s purpose to state all this in ideological terms, in the sense that he adopts. An individual’s ideology expresses a relationship with the world, a system of representation of the world, and the truth or falsity of the representation is not really relevant. The ideology is authentic if it is based on a lived relationship. A theoretical ideology, in the author’s opinion, is an attempt to develop a systematic world-view from this relationship. Ideologies, both spontaneous and theoretical, make people into subjects — self-conscious individuals who act out their ideologies.

Rowse presents four case studies spread over a span of fifty years. Case Study 1 deals with intellectuals who were active in or associated with the Workers’ Educational Association in Sydney before and during World War I — people such as Francis Anderson, G. V. Portus, R. F. Irvine, Meridith Atkinson and C. H. Northcott.

Case Study 2 discusses the prominent historian Keith Hancock (author of the seminal book, Australia (and such economists as R.C Mills, D. B. Copland, Leslie Melville, E. O. G. Shann and L. B. Giblin. Case Study 3 examines such post-World War II reconstructionists as H. C. Coombs, Lloyd Ross and J. G. Crawford, and Australian Institute of Political Science figures such as W. McMahon Ball and W. G. K. Duncan. Case Study 4 looks at so-called new critics such as Donald Horne, Craig McGregor, James McAuley, Leonie Kramer and Vincent Buckley; and there is an afterthought on Ian Turner.

In a short review it is impossible to do justice to the detailed discussion that Rowse offers. But the reader may incline to the verdict of ‘unproven’. Some of the points don’t really fit the thesis all that well. At times, the author seems to be forcing things a little. Hares are started and not really run to ground. And the book doesn’t really flow; it is more a collection of loosely linked, fairly disparate essays and comments than a carefully constructed, comprehensive study.

A major problem is the use of the liberal label and the flexibility of the author’s usage. Admittedly, Rowse argues that within a general liberal discourse there are many views but he doesn’t sufficiently develop this point. There are ‘progressive’ liberals and ‘conservative’ liberals such as Peter Coleman, who is now leader of the Liberal Party in New South Wales.

There are liberals who are radical and liberals may be socialists. The problem is made concrete if one considers such people as Donald Horne and Ian Turner, two who come under consideration in Rowse’s book. Horne, who once described himself as a radical conservative, could quite properly now be described as a not-so-conservative radical. Turner has many of the hallmarks of a liberal but he is a genuinely libertarian socialist. In fact, many socialists are liberals. One important case, Brian Fitzpatrick, is hardly mentioned. And the omission of John Anderson is very surprising.

There are two other significant points which the author overlooks. There is no concerted discussion of conservatism as such. Rowse doesn’t really argue why liberalism should be ranked ahead of conservatism as the ruling class ideology of primary importance. Instead, the wide range of liberalism is used to embrace quite diverse ideologues, some of whom — McAuley, Kramer...
and Coleman, for example — would be better considered within a conservative framework.

Another point related to liberal/radical/socialist interaction concerns the roles of the formed intellectually trained ideologues dealt with by Rowse and the largely self-taught politically trained ideologues of the working class. How far do they interact? How far are they opposed or complementary? Or are they on quite separate courses?

This is a major issue of ideology in Australia, and it is not really unfair to regard this as something to which some attention should have been given.

Another weakness which impairs the book’s force is the shallowness of some of the history. Writing of an intellectual group which founded the Victorian Labour College, he includes, without explanation, the self-taught artisan, W. P. Earsman, a founder of the Communist Party, among their number. While it is true that trade union membership grew in the 1920s, this is no indication of intensified class struggle from 1919, as appears to be suggested. Using different criteria, the opposite would probably be a sounder conclusion and the previous decade would be a period of sharper class struggle.

Similarly, while the discussion of Lloyd Ross is one of the book’s virtues, the omission of any real attention to the years 1935-40 when Ross was a member of the Communist Party, leaves the reader wondering.

Finally, the general reader will worry about the appropriateness of the book’s title. It suggests much more than the actual subject matter of the book. And while there are passages of good exposition, at times the book’s construction and prose become an obstacle to a clear understanding of the author’s meaning.

— Roger Coates

Now available ..... 

PAPER TIGERS
an introduction to the Critique of Social Theory

A critique of the problematic of orthodox social theory and its sources and manifestations in the various social sciences.

Articles on Ideology and Epistomology, the Social Sciences (Social Work, Psychology, History, Economics, Politics) and the Humanities and Professions (Law, Medicine, English, Visual Arts, Philosophy).

Available for $6.00 plus postage from: Paper Tigers, Dept of General Philosophy, University of Sydney, N.S.W. 2006. and all good left bookshops.

COMMENT ON BLACK ARMADA BY RUPERT LOCKWOOD ..... by Doug Olive.

Rupert Lockwood’s book Black Armada, is a significant and excellent work. It deals with the contribution made by the left political and trade union movements in the struggle of the Indonesian people for national liberation from Dutch imperialism.

This struggle and its history has important lessons for the left and progressive movements today. As one of the most important contributions made by the left in our country to international solidarity, it deserved a work as well documented and presented as Black Armada.

The author has researched his material very thoroughly. He interviewed dozens of people closely associated with the leadership of the struggle to boycott Dutch ships and to liberate Indonesian patriots from Dutch domination on Australian soil. He assembled a wealth of factual information and has put it together in a skilful way, making its reading an exciting experience.

One of the outstanding lessons of this struggle which comes through clearly in the book is how, in the right political conditions, the left-motivated sections of the labor movement can inspire the forms of mass action to influence foreign policy and the course of history.

The mass of factual information presented by the author leaves the reader in no doubt about the decisive role played by the Communist Party of Australia and the left trade unions, and just as clearly exposes the attempt of right-wing leaders of the ACTU and the Sydney Labor Council to torpedo the struggle.

While I highly commend the book and suggest it as a “must” for students of the history of the Australian labor movement and those who like historical events presented in a stimulating form, I want to correct a few minor inaccuracies. I also feel that some of my own personal experiences, mainly associated with the struggle

to close the Dutch horror camp at Casino, may be of interest.

As to my role, until now an almost completely undercover one: in late 1944, in company with Jack Henry, I attended a meeting of the secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPA at George St, Sydney. The then National President Lance Sharkey and Vice-president R. Dixon were the secretariat members present. Dixon outlined the purpose of the meeting and of my presence at it.

He pointed out that the inevitable defeat of the Japanese in the Pacific and their forced evacuation of Indonesian territory would open up the way for imperialism, led by the British, to attempt to reimpose Dutch colonial domination on Indonesia.

The presence of the Dutch administration together with leading representatives of the Indonesian Communist Party in Australia imposed a heavy responsibility on the CPA as the main anti-imperialist force in the country.

We accepted the responsibility, he said, as our international obligation to assist in every way possible the struggle of the Indonesian independence movement.

He, Dixon, had been given the responsibility for the development of the struggle nationally, while Jack Henry had the responsibility in Queensland. He said that because of the residence in Queensland of a large number of Indonesians including many of their leaders, the leaders of the Queensland State Committee had an extra responsibility.

One of the major problems was to combat the narrow ideas of most of the Indonesian leaders who still failed to fully grasp the real nature of the struggle and harbored illusions about replacing the Dutch with a form of Soviet power. We had continually to emphasise that the struggle was an anti-colonial one for national liberation. The leadership given by the Indonesian party would largely determine how successfully the bourgeois national liberation movement could finally be transformed into a form of people’s power.

One of the real problems was continuity of personal day-to-day leadership. Political security demanded that this could not be undertaken by a member of the secretariat. Jack Henry had proposed that, in Queensland, I should be given the responsibility for working closely with the Indonesian party leadership; the conspiratorial character of this work was emphasised.

From then on, until the Indonesians were finally sent home, I worked with the Indonesians under Henry’s direction.

The language barrier was very real. While some of the Indonesians like Sardjono, Slamet and a few others had some knowledge of English, the conveying of ideological, strategic and tactical ideas was still very difficult. An attempt was made to rectify this by organising, in Queensland, a study of the Indonesian (Malay) language under a Chinese tutor known as comrade Albert.

Albert was recognised by the Indonesians as a leading marxist. He was a member of the resident (in Australia) Central Committee of the Indonesian party and attended all leadership meetings.

The class was unsuccessful and collapsed after only a few weeks. With due respects to Rupert Lockwood, who said in Black Armada that Jack Henry and Mick Healy both learned Indonesian, the fact is that none of us were able to communicate even one full sentence in that language.

Without Albert acting as interpreter the task of conveying our party’s ideas on policy and tactics would have been time-consuming and difficult — indeed almost impossible.

In April 1945 we received word that the Indonesian prisoners at the Casino camp had refused the inadequate food served up by the Dutch. When this happened the Dutch had sounded the alarm and men raced to their tents. One Indonesian named Tarzan was shot and killed by the Dutch while another named Lenkong was wounded.

On September 12 another Indonesian named Soendo was killed by a Dutch guard with an Austen gun.

About that time we received advice that over 200 Indonesians had been confined to barracks, living in the most terrible conditions. We proposed to the Indonesian party leaders that the political conditions in Australia were ripe for decisive action on this question. Prime Minister Chifley was showing signs that he wanted to be shot of the Dutch, and action from within the camp complemented by increased agitation outside could turn the scale, force the closure of the Casino camp and free the Indonesians for repatriation to their homeland.

It was agreed that I should go to Casino, meet with the available Indonesian leaders in the camp and put the proposals to them. I was also to attempt to get into the camp, posing as a Brisbane newspaper reporter.

We met at the home of a railway worker in Casino. Although the camp was surrounded by a fence, it was not hard for a few inmates to slip out at night — except those in the inner compound. Nine members of the Indonesian party were present. I explained our views and the forms of action we considered appropriate. They greeted our proposal with enthusiasm and suggested that the best way to initiate the action would be to refuse breakfast, which would bring a possibly violent reaction from the Dutch.
Although they had practical experience of the violent way in which the Dutch guards were likely to react, when it was asked who would be the first to refuse the food and initiate the action, every one of the nine immediately volunteered. It was decided also that the next day should be used to discuss the proposed action with all the men in the camp and win their support for it.

The next morning I went to the camp by taxi, being met at the gate by armed Dutch guards. I told them I was a newspaper reporter from Brisbane and wished to talk with the camp commandant. One of the guards came back and beckoned to us to enter. I asked the taxi driver to wait for me.

The big boss was not present. His deputy was a young, very arrogant product of Dutch colonialism. I told him my paper was very concerned about stories circulating in Brisbane that the Casino camp was indeed a concentration camp that ranked with Belsen and other German horror camps. The stories said that Indonesians had been shot and that at present over 200 of them were in solitary confinement, living in inhuman conditions. My paper wished to be able to refute these stories, but in order to do so it would be necessary for me to examine the camp and the conditions of the inmates.

He assured me that the stories were lies. I insisted that unless he allowed me to examine conditions I would not be able to write a story favorable to the Dutch. He then agreed and called for a car, saying “I will take you”. I asked the taxi to follow, but the deputy said no, it must wait there.

We drove to the compound (the huts where the Indonesians had originally been housed, and was now used for “troublesome” elements) a few kilometres away. It covered about two acres of ground surrounded by a barbed wire fence 12 to 14 feet high. Hundreds of Indonesians were inside the compound, with armed Dutch guards all around. At the four corners machine gun posts were mounted, with the guns trained on the inmates. I asked were those the guns that had been used to shoot the Indonesians. Not at all, he said. We have never shot anyone at this camp. They are there for the protection of the majority of the Indonesians against a criminal and trouble-making element.

The big boss then appeared on the scene. After the understrapper told him my story, he said yes, they were aware of these lies and were anxious for the people to know the truth. I assured him that the truth would at last be told.

It was not until I was stepping into my taxi that the big boss beckoned to us to enter. I asked the taxi driver to wait for me.

The story I wrote on that occasion was published in the Guardian under the heading “Casino’s Queensland Guardian”. It was republished later in the local Casino newspaper.

Thoughts on “Comrades Come Rally”
by Eric Aarons

John Sendy writes well. He captures the flavour of time, place and situation. What it was like to be young, eager, ready for self-sacrifice for an ideal in the ‘forties; the high hopes and spirits of the communists in the early postwar period; the “feel” of Tribune selling; of sometimes hostile meetings or ones without an audience; the atmosphere of our stay in China.

Most of his pen portraits are good, some superb. Especially the one of Ernie Thornton — admittedly a person with a character as suited to interesting description as his physiognomy was to the cartoonist. A few sketches, where one’s expectations were high because of the subject’s closeness to the author (Alec Robertson for instance) are a bit flat by comparison.

John writes with humanity and compassion for people, qualities sadly lacking in not a few writers these days. He has not set out deliberately to score points or ride too hard in the “get square” stakes, though it is clear that he feels deeply a number of things and encounters during his life in the party.

He is generous, if not over-generous, in his treatment of me personally, and of some others with whom his relationships have at times been rather stormy.

I don’t know what cuts his publishers made in the manuscript, but wonder how, in speaking of Eddie Robertson, he doesn’t mention Gloria Garton. Gloria is an identity in her own right, but the happiness of these two in their all too brief association warmed many others as well as themselves.

On at least one point of fact he is wrong. Rather surprisingly, because we discussed our childhoods a lot while limbering up for our Chinese introspections. When Laurie’s and my father Sam separated from our mother, Laurie came with him to Sydney, while I stayed with mother in Melbourne.

My memory of one minor adventure of the “innocents abroad” is also different from his — though generally I wouldn’t back my powers of recollection these days. When Keith McEwan was done down in Port Said he had been enticed down the gangplank by the seductive cries of the sellers. He had money in his hand which an enterprising

Comrades Come Rally! Recollections of an Australian Communist by John Sendy. Nelson. $9.95.
hawker seized, thrusting a large box of "turistic delight" into his victim's hands. He turned the bemused Keith around, pushed him back up the gangplank, and scarpered off into the crowd. The box, when opened contained a fused, sticky layer of revolting jelly. The second layer into which Keith dug in forlorn hope was an inch-thick piece of wood.

(These dealers were rogues, as they are anywhere; but in 1951 they also fused their deceptions with the burgeoning nationalism that became Nasserism, and carried them out with great relish and panache.)

It's probably being self-indulgent to pursue the matter, but stimulated by John's re-creation of atmosphere I have to confess that I was one of the un-named two who lusted after Jan and Mimi and were so unfeelingly circumvented — doubtless on instruction — by the stolid Ching. Take it as square-off or envy as you like, but the other one (victim of a most untimely fatal heart attack early this year, I am sad to say) was the leading light. He really had good looks, and a way with him; I just hopefully tagged along.

We were sexist and sex-hungry (at least most of us, who had no partners) and, by the third year of our stay in China, could only "admire it from afar" as we crudely put it.

In that rather trying situation I, as leader, had the task of approaching the Chinese for a renewal of the originally large supply of contraceptives which the married couples in the group had thoughtfully been advised to bring with them.

My mission eventually led to an in-depth discussion with the ideological chief of the institution together with a female interpreter whose physical attributes were particularly admired. I don't know who was most disturbed by the encounter (sexual matters being hardly common subjects of discourse in that country); but anything for the revolution!

In a rather remarkable parallel with official Roman Catholic attitudes the chief said that to think of sexual relations without the aim of procreation was "bourgeois ideology" — an assertion which even I, despite my then weakened state of resistance to Chinese ideological blandishments, couldn't cop. No doubt ready to commit his country to any sacrifice to save us from that dreaded capitalist infection, he said they would keep any children born because of lack of contraceptives. Or perhaps he hadn't caught up with a new phase in the often-changed official policy on birth control, because we finally got the goods.

John's book is not analytical, but descriptive and evocative of a life in the Communist Party of Australia from the war on. I don't say this as a criticism, for the latter approach can be as valuable in writing history* as the former (and often more interesting, as many will find in this case).

Nevertheless, while not asking the book to be something it is not designed to be, it would be vacuous to ignore some political conclusions John has evidently drawn from the whole experience.

As well as having quite strong differences, John lost heart at the lack of progress of the party, as he feelingly describes when he says:

"Yet it would be quite wrong for me to give the impression that the differences are the major factor for my position. I firmly believe that they constitute only one factor. My decline is a general political and ideological one..."

(Letter to National Executive, foreshadowing resignation from the Presidency, page 227. The date given is June 1972; I think it should be 1973.)

Such honesty should be respected, certainly not used as the basis for jibes. I, too, have peered into more than one abyss.

But still, one must tackle the political issues raised. And in doing so I will try to take a leaf from John's book and do so objectively, despite the added difficulty that he puts his case discursively as befits the aim and style of his book, rather than tightly arguing it.

It is, of course, an undeniable fact that the party has declined greatly in numbers, influence in trade unions and other organisations, in revenue, Tribune sales, etc. The issues to be examined however are: the main reasons for this and the prospects over the next few years of reversing the trend.

Behind these again is the deeper question of whether the "rethink" of the last dozen or so years laid the basis for revival, or would we have done better by hanging onto more of the past. (I agree with John that we should not just rubbish our past, but that is not the point here.) There is also the related question of whether a legacy of four decades can be overcome in one.

This is not the time or place to attempt an exhaustive analysis of these difficult questions, and the answers to some of them may be more definitively revealed by events now unfolding as the previous period of expanding capitalism has been replaced by one of deepening crisis, with the former state, I would suggest, unlikely ever to recur.

I will take just three points John makes about the party's decline since the sixties, and make an impressionistic appraisal of the prospects as we approach the eighties. If, in the process, I reinforce John's view (page 219) that I "rarely admit mistakes", so be it.

First, it is clear that John believes the splits with Hill and those who formed the Socialist Party could have been avoided, and that if they had the
party would have been much the stronger as a result.

I believe, on the contrary, that there was no way to avoid the splits, except by accepting a situation which would have debilitated the party still more and prevented the development of a program, policies and methods of work more in accord with our fundamental beliefs and which at least give prospects of progress.

I concede some of John’s criticism of “excesses”, and for the sake of argument am prepared to concede them all. But I still do not believe there was any way a group like Hill’s would have accepted even half the minimum requirements for maintaining a party in reality and not just in name. John’s own account surely points to this conclusion. And in what country in the world have the Maoists been, or shown preparedness to be, so contained?

Nor would the majority of those who now form S.P.A., I believe, have been prepared to refrain from forming a party within a party, getting out their own paper and using every opportunity, and external backing, to frustrate the carrying out of decisions they did not agree with. If at any conjuncture they had ever mustered a majority they would have unceremoniously “cleaned out” their opponents.

I am not clear, either, whether John’s rather impatient and antagonistic attitude to those in the party he regards as “left” is the one he advocates we should have adopted towards the S.P.A. forces, or what he thinks would have resulted if we had.

John had the impression from his talk with chief of the C.P.S.U. International Department, Ponomaryev (page 203), that they wanted a compromise. But other C.P.S.U. representatives have made it clear in more ways than one that they regard support for those who support them as having, in general, first priority.

A number of parties and party leaders tried to compromise, or were forced to do so — for example, Dubcek and the Austrians. Where did it get them?

Some other parties have been more “patient” than we, for example the British and the Swedes. But this did not prevent eventual splitting while the French, who delayed confronting various issues, face a difficult internal situation.

A Swedish comrade I met recently, in discussing the course of their split, expressed the view that the C.P.S.U. attitude to their followers leaving or staying depends on whether they have prospects of effectively influencing in a way they want, the attitudes of a given party. If they cannot, it may be better to leave. Not much basis there for a principled compromise, it seems to me.

I don’t advance our course as a recipe for all. But neither is the reverse true. Nor can developments be understood in isolation from the Sino-Soviet split, which it was and is quite beyond our power to significantly influence. John seems to me to underestimate the depth of this split, the depth of the motivations of the Soviet Union’s invasion of Czechoslovakia to halt the process of democratisation, and the consequences of all this for the movement worldwide.

Second: we should take notice of John’s great stress on the importance of the Labor Party in Australian politics and the way this impinges on socialist prospects. But that is the easy part. The more difficult question is how should we react to that importance.

John seems to believe that the C.P.A. should have and could have saved the Labor government from itself, as it were. “There was not enough extra-parliamentary backing to give the government guts…” (page 181). Or go past it. That is true, but the reasons why are complex.

John implies that the C.P.A.’s attitude, and our weakening through the splits were the main reasons, together with our parallel failure to overcome the leftism that arose among the young radicals from the ‘sixties on. (Other parties, bigger and stronger than us also find it difficult to overcome this continually recurring leftist, but that is by the way.)

But even if one grants all that John says, and accepts for the sake of argument that the issue of Labor policy is just a question of “quantity of guts”, could we have saved that government? If John thinks so I believe he completely misreads the comparative strengths of the forces involved.

The central fact was that the Labor government, and the left wing of that party, and the trade union movement, were unable to cope with the onset of unexpected economic crisis. The more advanced elements in the trade unions and mass movements were also unable to fill the policy gap. Even had we been twice as big and three times more accommodating than we were, I do not believe we could have overcome that central obstacle.

We should have given and tried harder to rally greater support for Medibank and other policies in the areas of welfare, compensation, insurance and democratic rights which played a key part in Labor’s 1972 election victory, though we could not ignore, either, the “capitalist efficiency” rationale also contained in Labor policy, or readily overcome the strong “leave it to us” pressure.

But, in any case, how could these policies, even if fully implemented, have overcome the soaring inflation and unemployment which was the basic cause of the Labor government’s downfall?

The one chance of saving that government was a sufficiently strong extra-parliamentary mass movement following the November 11 coup. It might have been a slim chance, but it was real, in a way other mass movements or conceivable movements John conjures with were not, in the
political context we are discussing. We threw ourselves fully into that struggle and in the subsequent election campaign, with the unprecedented Daily Tribune as the centre-piece of our effort. Hawke and other “go quietly” exponents of reformism removed whatever chance of success there was.

We put alternatives too crudely and too tardily, it is true. But the main reason for this was that far too little had been done by any trend of opinion within the party to refine and develop them. Happily, that situation is now changing and all are making a contribution now.

The policy issues posed by the crisis, and the problem of methods of struggle posed so starkly by the coup, still have to be faced by Labor. But the mainstream of the A.L.P. has not advanced much beyond where they were at the time of the Haydon budget of 1975, while the Labor left has only just begun to face the problems. We should encourage and help. But an essential requirement for this, as well as for other contributions we need to make to massing support for radical social change, is to look to our own policies and build our own strength, especially in the labor movement.

My third point concerns the “social (or liberation) movements”, of which John remarks in passing “... incorrect assessments ... of the new liberation movements in western society ...” (page 222) without specifying what those assessments were, or in what way they were incorrect.

Assessment of these movements is often clouded by other questions, such as the existence in them of “extremes” or the difficulty of having them subordinated to the “higher needs” of the class struggle. But “extremes” have existed in the trade union movement, which has from time to time also exerted its autonomy against the “higher needs” as perceived by both right and left. Yet these aspects of the trade unions have not determined our attitude to the movement as such.

What is at issue is our assessment of the substance of the liberation movements. And I believe that they represent something deep and permanent in developed capitalist countries; something essential to social transformation and crucial to its character.

Concern with them is necessary not only from the point of view of recognising “mass movements” as decisive factors in politics. It is also a corrective to the endemic “economism” and reliance on action from the top by big state and big government, which has afflicted the whole Australian left and the trade union movement.

A more responsive attitude to them than John displays could also help overcome the narrow and dogmatic interpretations of capitalist contradictions, relations of production, class etc., on which we were brought up and which continually reappear in new forms.

A few remarks by way of overview and conclusion.

Calls for “realism” are healthy. But is it necessarily realistic, even in times of quiescence or retreat of the movement such as we have been experiencing, to reject future “upheavals” and the part they may play in developments?

Can we look today’s world in the eye without the accumulating material for vast upheavals and conflicts of various kinds? In the past most of these passed Australia by. It is true. But today, the dimensions and depth of the crisis, which we have continually stressed, are being recognised on all sides. Bob Hawke, Manning Clark and Brian Dixon, Victoria’s Minister for Social Welfare and Youth, each in their separate ways, see upheaval ahead. (The last-named predicts a possible 31 per cent unemployment by 1984 — Financial Review, August 7.)

To talk about the upheavals developing conditions are likely to create is not to revert to the “re-run of 1917” syndrome, which has little currency in our party these days. The policies we now have, and the program we are putting together I regard as developing fairly directly from what we (John included) started in the second half of the sixties and which certainly didn’t envisage an even path.

Holding to and developing this course holds the best prospects for us to ascend from the plateau we have been on for the last few years. And there are good signs about. There have been good signs before, it is true, and they have failed to “jell”. But, for what it is worth, I have growing confidence they will. The strength of reactions to the budget, I believe, are of more than passing significance. Support for, or acceptance of, the Fraser government and belief that it can deliver the goods it promised have turned a corner on a downward path.

The question is will we be sufficiently advanced in policy, cohesive enough in organisation and adequately energetic in action to meet the challenge?

* Lloyd Churchward is wrong when he says (review of Comrades Come Rally, Tribune, July 19, 1978) that nothing more was heard from discussions in 1967 about party history or the History Commission established by the 21st Congress.

The Commission concluded, and their view was accepted, that the party should not try to produce, or have produced, any “official” history. The reasons should be fairly evident. Instead, individual people or ad hoc groups should be encouraged to make their own contribution, with whatever assistance by way of records etc. the party could give. John’s book is one such contribution.