EDITORIAL COMMENT

In September 1971, ALR published an interview with the famous Hungarian marxist, George Lukacs, by Editorial Committee member Bernie Taft. This interview aroused interest internationally and was republished in various journals.

According to information we obtained recently, the interview also received attention in Hungary. At least one co-worker of Lukacs was interrogated as to its authenticity.

More recently, a number of the colleagues and followers of Lukacs, including Agnes Heller, Ferenc Feher, Mihaly Vajda and Gyrgy and Mary Markus lost their jobs and are currently blacklisted for future employment in their profession, apparently on the grounds that they shared the views expressed in the interview.

ALR opposes the repression of people for their political and ideological beliefs. We have consistently opposed repression in capitalist society. In particular, we opposed the genocidal war in Indo-China where both natural science and social science were grossly abused by the United States against a whole people.

But we are also concerned with such misuse against individuals whether in the West in the name of anti-communism, or in Hungary or any other country in the name of communism.

It is not necessary to agree with views expressed by "dissidents" to defend their right to express views. It is a matter of principle that expression of views should not be the subject of punishment, particularly not denial of work, imprisonment or psychiatric treatment for "abnormality". Wherever such violations of human rights occur, they should be the subject of protest.

Attempts to place expression of opinion and development of theoretical endeavour in a strait-jacket harm marxism particularly, since marxism is a critical and developing theory.
The lessons of the Chilean revolution, crushed for the time being by the military junta, will long be discussed. Any final conclusions must be reached with caution, for the full facts of the situation and the assessments of surviving participants are only gradually coming to light. The views raised here are provisional, and are offered as a contribution to an ongoing analysis. They rely on the author's study and impressions of Chile on a brief visit in 1965, on presently available material, and on the analysis made in his book by the young French revolutionary intellectual Regis Debray who had the opportunity just after the 1970 election victory to study the situation and talk at length with Allende. (1) (He had shortly before been released from a Bolivian jail where he had spent some years as a result of his association with the unsuccessful guerrilla war launched by Che Guevara in 1966.)

I propose to take four main dimensions of any revolution, and try to see them in their inter-connections in Chile. These are the social processes, the state of consciousness of the participants, tactics, and organisation.

1. The social process, viewed as such — that is, as far as one can do, objectively, independent of the state of consciousness of parties, classes or masses. It should be realised that this is an abstraction, not a statement of what actually exists - a major aspect, but still only one aspect of the situation is taken. Three well-known (and no less important for that) features stand out in Chile:

   a) The economic basis of power in ownership of the means of production. In Chile this power of the local bourgeoisie merged with that of imperialism, and was ruthlessly exercised. The machinations of giant US corporation ITT and others; the withholding of credits and spare parts; the flight of capital; agrarian, industrial and commercial sabotage; the strikes of the truckers (many of them expropriated landowners) show once again that unless this economic base is changed, power, including the power to make the position of any government eventually untenable, remains in capitalist hands, and socialism is impossible.

   Allende and the participants in the Popular Unity, as well as others such as the MIR outside it, were all conscious of this, and much was done by nationalising the copper industry, the banks, and government intervention of different kinds in various industries, in distributing landlords' land to the peasants, and in encouraging and assisting the Pobladores (fringe-dwellers -- a very large section of the population of towns in Latin America) to squat on land and build dwellings, etc. However, active classes are needed to carry such measures through and overcome the opposing class power at the very grassroots in the processes
of production. There was such action, fairly widespread and spontaneous, though the extent and degree of socialist consciousness of it is not clear as yet, and there was encouragement, though not unequivocal at all times, by the Popular Unity. In the end, however, the reaction was able to bring about a state of economic chaos.

The Communist Party concentrated on increasing production in the nationalised and "controlled" industries to combat this, but in doing so they failed to place sufficient emphasis on the ultimately decisive political mobilisation.

b) Political power -- army, police, courts, parliament, the bureaucracy (civil service) are not neutral, and still less are they an instrument of revolution. They must be smashed and replaced by new ones. This does not necessarily mean that they must (or can always be) smashed all at once and in a particular way, but that must be the firmly held-to perspective and orientation.

The only organ of political power that was in fact "smashed" was the executive government, and this was done by the mobilisation of the masses in the Presidential election (as in the US, the President appoints the government). But it is the army that is the ultimate repository of political power, and possession of the executive government represented only a small, and a very insecure, section of the total power, as was evident from the beginning, when even confirmation of Allende as President by the Congress (still controlled by reaction) came only after a sharp struggle, including an attempted Rightwing putsch, and considerable mass mobilisation.

So far as one can judge, the strategy of the Popular Unity was correct enough in the respect that they planned to use (and did use) various laws -- most passed by an earlier popular government and forgotten -- to erode the economic power of capital, and to assist mass mobilisation, so as to create new ground to win the majority they did not yet have for the further development of revolution. They also spoke of not ultimately counting on the neutrality of the army or adherence to "the law" by the opposing classes, and it is therefore a great over-simplification to speak of them as espousing a "parliamentary road" to socialism.

They were also counting on the fact that conscripts, called up for only one year, were likely to be influenced more by their previous, than their army environment. During the coup there were instances of rank and file soldiers fighting against the Junta, though these were not widespread.

Nevertheless, there is a lot of evidence indicating in practice, even if not in theory, that they did count too heavily on the enemy observing the law at all times, and the degree of likely neutrality of the army, and that these illusions as well as other factors mentioned later hampered their reliance on mass mobilisation, and colored their judgment of the tactical situation. This also heavily influenced what was ultimately a failure in strategic thinking. There was great division within the Popular Unity about the way forward, and the view which seems to have prevailed was that the main thing to do was to win a majority in a plebiscite to change the constitution, or at Presidential elections in 1976. (The unresolved idea of Allende's resignation mentioned later was involved in this.) It seems to have been the view that even if they failed here, irreversible structural changes had already been made which would advance the socialist cause at a later date. Unfortunately, greater strategical clarity and unity was developed in the camp of the enemy, who acted, realising that there are circumstances in which voting majorities do not count, whatever the depth of bourgeois democratic traditions -- though orientation on winning majority support in some form must always lie at the base of revolutionary strategy.

c) Self-action of the masses on a great scale is required to provide the necessary degree of force to overcome the power of the opposing classes in the economy, and politically, and also to develop the dynamics of self-transformation and self-liberation which is in a sense the ultimate objective of socialist revolution.

There is little doubt that there was a considerable degree of mass mobilisation, and that much of this was actively sought and welcomed by the Popular Unity. For example, already in 1965 I saw some of the first "Poblaciones" in Santiago and Valparaiso, which were directly stimulated by the Communist Party of Chile. There was also realisation of the need for a new stage in this mobilisation after the abortive coup of June this year.

However there was as well some "bestowal of liberation from above" (e.g. of land on the peasants), hesitation in relying sufficiently on the workers, and an apparent failure of work in the armed forces. It is unjustified to say there was none, and this would be hard to believe, and contrary to indications given,
and what flowed from them, and that this was also the source of the mistaken reaction to the sailors’ mutiny earlier this year, and of hope for a split in the armed forces instead of persistent and determined work to bring one about. The crucial importance of a split in the armed forces at a time of revolution is attested by experience in all revolutions, and the point is forcefully made by many analysts. (2)

2. The state of consciousness, and the complex interaction of organised revolutionaries and the masses.

The task of revolutionaries cannot be regarded as confined to the propagation of truths, however important, about transforming the relations of production, smashing the state, the self-emancipation of the workers, or other marxist principles. Lenin, who was not given to rhetoric or flamboyant statements spoke of another vital principle: "... in order that actually the whole class, that actually the broad masses of toilers and those oppressed by capital may take up such a position (either of direct support of the vanguard, or at least of benevolent neutrality towards it), propaganda and agitation alone are not enough. For this the masses must have their own political experience. Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions.” (3)

"Fundamental law of revolution" - these are strong words. They mean that revolutionaries cannot ignore or change at will the historically moulded and now existing mass outlook, and must somehow relate mass action on their ability to transform a discrete, static, defensive position into a line of offensive aiming at the conquest and consolidation of political power as a nationally answerable class. And, a second dislocation -- the duplication of the first at a higher stage - the gap between class organisation (in quantity and quality) and the class consciousness itself. This is discernible at the union level (one quarter of the working class is unionised -- and, as is to be expected, unionism is still steeped in the wage-claim mentality and ‘economism’ of the bad old days); and at the political level, the level of the parties, especially the Socialist Party whose qualities in the organisation and mobilisation of the masses and consistent discipline have not hitherto seemed commensurate with the political consciousness of its militants, nor with the objective responsibilities of its leaders in the conduct of the revolution. This phenomenon is still further underlined by the absorption of the available political cadres into the administrative and governmental apparatus at the local and national level, thus depleting the strictly political formations of leadership and cadres, leaving them anaemic and in no condition to perform their own tasks as vanguard organisations.” (4)

Some might be tempted to conclude from such considerations that the campaigns culminating in the elections were all a mistake. The MIR, however, in general no supporter of this activity, spoke in these terms of its role in developing mass consciousness:

"The Left’s electoral triumph constitutes an adherence to correct principles is not enough to change widely held attitudes here?

Many observers speak of the strong belief of large numbers of Chileans in bourgeois-democratic processes, and lack of developed socialist consciousness. For example, Debray in 1970 described the key problem of the revolution in these terms:

"First, a marked gap between class instinct and class consciousness, i.e., the fact that the political consciousness of the workers, or their consciousness of the long-term strategic interests of the proletariat and its allies in the struggle for hegemony, does not seem commensurate with their spontaneous will to defend their immediate vital interests. This dislocation is hardly surprising, since political consciousness is by definition the attribute of a vanguard; but in the long run, in a revolutionary period, the protection of the immediate interests of the workers, and the improvement of their conditions of existence, depend on their ability to transform a discrete, static, defensive position into a line of offensive aiming at the conquest and consolidation of political power as a nationally answerable class. And, a second dislocation -- the duplication of the first at a higher stage - the gap between class organisation (in quantity and quality) and the class consciousness itself. This is discernible at the union level (one quarter of the working class is unionised -- and, as is to be expected, unionism is still steeped in the wage-claim mentality and ‘economism’ of the bad old days); and at the political level, the level of the parties, especially the Socialist Party whose qualities in the organisation and mobilisation of the masses and consistent discipline have not hitherto seemed commensurate with the political consciousness of its militants, nor with the objective responsibilities of its leaders in the conduct of the revolution. This phenomenon is still further underlined by the absorption of the available political cadres into the administrative and governmental apparatus at the local and national level, thus depleting the strictly political formations of leadership and cadres, leaving them anaemic and in no condition to perform their own tasks as vanguard organisations.” (4)
enormous advance for the workers' struggles, draws new sectors of the masses into the struggle for socialism, and assures the legitimacy and mass character of the future social confrontation. It therefore favors the development of the revolution and for that reason is also beneficial for the revolutionary Left." (5)

MIR also recognised the truth of Lenin's "fundamental law" when they realised that calls to armed struggle would not be heeded, and that they (MIR) had to find the way to have their propaganda listened to: "We consider most urgent, as a way of establishing our legitimacy among the Allendista masses, for us, as an organisation and in the mass fronts, to recognise Allende as president." (6)

And: "We must try to take the initiative in the struggle against the diehards, through mobilisations of the mass fronts or in the streets, or even through actions, which will necessarily have to be 'sympathetic' and 'clear,' in that they must not contribute to creating 'chaos' and 'provocation' in the eyes of the workers." (7)

At the same time, and reflecting the other side of the complex dialectics of interaction between organised revolutionaries and the masses, they had a more clear-sighted and healthier regard for the coming armed confrontation.

Naturally, pointing to these two sides does not of itself resolve the problem of the truth in the concrete circumstances. This requires more facts than are yet available to establish not whether there were mistakes in leadership - clearly there were, and serious ones - but whether these were the overwhelming cause of the success of the coup. (8)

There was widespread mass action, including establishment of workers' control in factories, formation of "industrial cordons" (local coordinating groups), and organisation of armed workers' militias. But there is also evidence of disintegration, concentration on solving individual or sectional economic problems (copper workers' strikes), and for the time being immovable belief in bourgeois legality, while later reports indicate that earlier accounts greatly exaggerated the extent of armed resistance to the coup. (9)

Also, it should never be forgotten that the government never achieved majority support, and it is facile to proclaim, as some critics do, that if the Popular Unity had only done the, to them obvious, (a) (b) or (c), they would have done so. This lacks the concrete knowledge and analysis that is essential to arrive at the truth. (9)

Many on-the-spot observers have a view similar to that expressed by Debray: "I know of no way in which (the defeat) could have been prevented. Of course there were mistakes made. Looking back one can always see how some things could have been done better. But Chile had to go through this attempt at social change. There was no real alternative. But it is different now: as a result of the fascist coup, there is no other way open but armed struggle." (10)

3. Tactics. Lack of space and information make it impossible to attempt a general review of tactics adopted at various stages of the struggle in the last three years, but a few general points seem to stand out.

It has already been mentioned that even Left critics such as the MIR recognised the fact that the tactics of aiming for an electoral victory for the presidency advanced mass consciousness and the revolution. Also that it was correct and useful to use existing laws where available to serve the interests of workers and peasants, and that the mass outlook had to be taken into account by all in determining their actions. Having this in mind, the importance of manoeuvring to put the other side in the wrong in battles over the "legality" of various measures cannot be lightly dismissed. Two years ago, an article in ALR (11), spoke of the coming crunch, which was, however, delayed for another two years as each side manoeuvred for position and sought to overcome differences within its ranks.

There was also a battle of tactics over political work in the army, and the arming of workers after June, with the reactionary Congress passing a special law under which the army searched for and confiscated weapons. Of course all tactics also have a certain "logic" of their own, making subsequent changes more difficult, and that those of the Popular Unity (leaving aside the - unnecessary - degree of self-delusion accompanying them) posed difficulties in this respect in switching emphasis to new tactics as the situation required. But this does not speak against their admissibility, but rather for a far greater flexibility in changing from one form to another. All successful revolutionaries have stressed this.

There is also a great deal of debate about tactics towards the middle strata - small shopkeepers, middle peasants (some had their land confiscated, with the MIR pressing for still smaller plots to be taken over), professionals
and others, who seem to have ended up largely in the camp of the bourgeoisie. It is said that both too much, in some respects, and too little in others, was done, unnecessarily alienating sections of these strata.

Further facts may help to clarify the truth of these contentions. But in the long run, experience seems to show, resoluteness in carrying the class struggle forward provides the only possibility (not the certainty - nothing does that) of victory at crucial times. The possible relation of this problem to current theories of the "two-stage" revolution is referred to below.

Another tactical problem is involved in reports of unjustified attacks by Leftists on Catholicism in general, at a time when considerable forces within the hierarchy as well as the rank and file were supporting the Popular Unity.

Similarly, some in the UP regarded all Christian Democrats as fascists, not differentiating between workers who followed them, and the leaders, while Allende in particular seems to have assumed that all Christian Democrat leaders would respect the constitution to the end.

4. Organisation, and the solidarity of the revolutionary forces. It is clear that there was considerable disunity between the forces on the Left, both within the Popular Unity and outside it, and that within the many parties and groups there were also divisions and sometimes splits. The general picture now emerging is of widespread disintegration. In the event no party or group was able to establish its ideological and political ascendancy, and there was no consensus as to how the coming "crunch" clearly in evidence this year was to be resolved. It appears Allende had advanced his resignation as a possibility, but even such a drastic step was not decisively resolved one way or the other.

From one point of view, this problem of cohesion lends support to the yearning for "one party of the working class," and it is not denied that in certain circumstances this may be desirable, and that in still rarer circumstances it may become possible. But in most countries this seems quite unrealisable in the foreseeable future. The issue is rather whether the continuing fragmentation can be halted and some centripetal movement commenced. Nor should the later consequences of such a political evolution to a single party as revealed in the Soviet Union in particular be forgotten. And even in the Communist Party of Chile, which adhered to the traditional Stalin era "monolithism" (as I observed in the discussions of its 15th Congress in 1965), differences emerged in orientation, manifested particularly in actions by CUT (the trade union organisation largely under CP leadership) in supporting and furthering the take-over of factories, some arming of the workers, and other activities after June this year, in contrast to the "dragging of the feet" in these respects by other CP leaders. Luis Corvalan, secretary of the party in a speech in March indicated a certain loss of orientation and drive when he said: "Ever since organisation and every leading committee of the Party should be present both mentally and physically where the decisive battles are fought..." (12). (Emphasis added.) However reports indicate that the CP suffered less disintegration than any other organisation.

There is also a tradition in most parties developing in the Stalin period, of looking with uneasiness, or even suspicion, on spontaneous actions not organised under their aegis.

Further, there were the traditions of restricted internal democracy in the name of centralism, decades long propagation of the Soviet model of socialism, and, despite some bold and independent thinking (e.g. on cultural matters), a general inhibition of theoretical enquiry beyond "acceptable" limits.

Put more particularly perhaps, I feel that there is, in the traditional CP movement, an under-estimation of the importance and scope of the struggle for hegemony, and especially in more developed capitalist countries, a narrowing, in "economist" tradition, of the issues and areas of ideological contention that are considered revolutionary. The consequences of economism are not overcome just by a combination of these concerns with ultimate political issues, vital though they are. The "ideological" area between them, and its ramification have been greatly underestimated and neglected. This is no less the case with the Socialist Party, and Allende himself, who it seems avoided much use of the available opportunities on the mass media on the strange grounds that the people were "sick of politics." Nor were adequate mass media developed by the Popular Unity, or sufficient efforts made to restrict those of the reaction, in which ITT had a hand.

The disintegration also affected what mass media were in the hands of the UP, and there was the situation of some socialist and other papers attacking decisions of the UP, and people in it, more vociferously than did the right.

Also more particularly, the idea of the "two-
stage” revolution, which has almost unnotic-
ed filtered into thinking within the internat-
ional communist movement (see for example
the 1969 document), may have had harmful
effects on strategic thinking.
This certainly applies to developed coun-
tries like Australia. Here, the two-stage idea is that
first there will (must) be an anti-monopoly,
democratic revolution which will later be fol-
lowed by a socialist revolution. I am not argu-
ning against possible stages in any revolution,
for one must be open-minded to concrete cir-
cumstances. What is at stake here, however, is
a strategy based on two stages. Without going
into details, this concept is related to watering
down demands and perspectives (which always
leads in the direction of economism and an
emphasis on “unity” which buries principles),
whereas in my view the conception of socialist
revolution today must be deepened, and per-
spectives made more, not less, radical.
In countries like Chile, the issue is less clear-
cut. National independence, completion of
anti-feudal tasks especially in the countryside,
democracy, economic development and raising
of living standards, abolition of illiteracy, etc.,
can be conceived of as preceding socialism.
The Cuban revolution took place in two stages,
the second, socialist stage occurring only about
a year after the first.
But this very fact created a new situation.
American imperialism and the ruling classes of
the Latin American countries drew the con-
clusion that no such “democratic” revolution
could be permitted, precisely because it con-
tained the inherent danger of proceeding to-
towards socialism, and thus the breadth and
“latitude” usually thought to be associated with the “first stage” could not be counted on;
rather the reverse.
Returning to the problem of the centrifugal
forces still operating powerfully within the
Left in most countries, the problem is ultimate-
ly one of theory. That is to say, the desired uni-
ty, as in Chile, was not attained because of the
lack of a consensus on how even to approach
the problem of analysing the revolution, and
not because of a failure of “organisation.”
“Marxism” is surely the obvious answer? Yet
it is precisely because there are deep divisions
about the meaning and interpretation of marx-
ist fundamentals that it can be said that a “theo-
etical” fragmentation lies at the base of the
organisational fragmentation. This despite the
fact that the differences are often, regrettably,
buried within well-known propositions which
apparently say the same things, but are so in-
terpreted in practice as to make them as differ-
ent as chalk and cheese, while the theoretical
and philosophical assumptions involved are
not even regarded as requiring examination.
As raised in an earlier article, more open and
definite theoretical contention is essential to
emergence from the present stage, not the mut-
ing of views in the name of a non-existent and
at present unattainable “unity.”

What of the future of the Chilean revolution?
The past does not return, and new problems
and possibilities now arise. Whatever the
causes, whatever the blame, failure can advan-
ce revolution, as witness the failure of the
1905 revolution in Russia, and the defeats
suffered by the Chinese revolution prior to
the Long March. It should be remembered
that Che Guevara’s guerrilla warfare failed,
and that the urban guerrillas and others have
not shown that their strategy is adequate for
success. The most one can say is that a com-
bination of all available means, with flexible
shifting from one to another as occasion de-
mands, will probably emerge.
It is now reported that the core of the cadres
of most revolutionary groups avoided annihila-
tion by putting into effect previously prepared
contingency plans (the existence of which
incidentally also speaks against the complete
dominance of parliamentarist illusions). It has
been said that defeated armies learn their les-
on well, and one must extend best wishes to
them in the revolutionary soul-searching
which will be going on, and organise the ut-
most solidarity in the continuing struggle.
One other problem is that of the concept of a
“hemispheric revolution” for the whole of
Latin America. This was Che’s strategy, and
Bolivia was chosen at least in part because, if
a base could be built there, more or less in the
centre of the South American continent, guer-
rillas could be dispatched into other countries.
This was just a schema, besides the other
failings the venture had, but perhaps the de-
feat of the Chilean revolution, and the strug-
gles in Argentina and elsewhere may, in this
unexpected way, lend the idea of a hemispher-
ic revolution more reality in the future. US
imperialism and reaction in each country are
certainly helping to make it so, and it is clear
from other places as well as Chile that an isol-
ated revolution will find itself in extreme dif-
culties for that reason alone.
For example, the Chilean revolution now
more than ever needs the border with Argen-
tina to remain open, which means that political developments there which may affect this become of more than purely Argentine concern.

FOOTNOTES

2. e.g., Denis Freney, Tribune, Oct. 9-16.
3. ‘Left-wing’ Communism, Conclusions.
See also footnote 9.
5. Quoted by Debray, p. 183.
8. Tribune, Oct. 30-Nov. 5.
9. One is reminded again of Lenin in his polemics with Bukharin in 1921: “I know nothing about the insurgents and revolutionaries of South China (except two or three articles by Sun Yat-sen and several books and newspaper articles which I read many years ago). Since insurrections are taking place there, there are probably controversies between Chinese No. 1 who says that insurrection is the product of the most acute class struggle which embraces the whole nation, and Chinese No. 2, who say that insurrection is an art. I could write theses like Bukharin’s without knowing any more... This will be lifeless and vapid eclecticism, because it lacks the concrete study of the given controversy, of the given question, of the given approach to it, etc.’” Selected Works, Vol. 9, p. 67.
10. Stated to Australian delegates at Helsinki conference. Tribune, October 16-22.
11. Chile: A Difficult Revolutionary Model, by Jorge Witker, ALR No. 33.
NSW power workers in their struggle for a shorter working week adopted worker-control tactics last June. Their struggle became a focal point in the general critical political situation that has arisen. All political and social groupings are more clearly defining their attitude towards the proposition that the 35-hour week is an entirely realisable social reform NOW. As well, the fact that power workers exercised workers' control over availability of plant and generation of electrical power for four months has raised to new levels understanding by friend and foe alike, of the potentiality of worker-control tactics and relevance to the movement for revolutionary change.

The CPA power branch discussed the experiences of the campaign. This article has been written by the branch itself. We believe what they have to say can help the Left in assessing the lessons to date of this significant and unresolved continuing struggle.


HOW SHOULD THE PRESENT STAGE OF THE STRUGGLE BE ASSESSED?

Power workers, while continuing to campaign for the 35-hour week have, following majority decisions at regional mass meetings, discontinued their control over plant and power output, at least for the present. Some reasons for this can be found in other decisions taken by the 35-hour week committee. It decided to support the ACTU application for shorter hours for power workers under Federal awards in other States, and called on the Australian Government to intervene positively in the case. If successful there could be a “flow-on” to the State award under which they work.

But deeper reasons must be sought in the increasing political character the struggle assumed. It began as an apparently purely industrial one. The Askin State Liberal Government, irrespective of the Electricity Commission and the Industrial Commission, had the power to grant or reject the 35-hour week. If the government had granted it, this would have opened the way for its general introduction. But even this was not the main stumbling block. The self-action nature of the power workers’ struggle was a rock around which Askin couldn’t navigate. He failed to isolate and break their struggle, though he grew more skilled in manipulating black-outs in efforts to turn the public against them. His attitude hardened in keeping with that of monopoly and establishment opposition to any concession. In NSW Askin was actually assisted by Labor Opposition Leader Hills.
call to power workers to give up active struggle in return for the dubious prospect that he would grant the 35 hour week when Premier. For this and other reasons, Askin announced a snap election adding to the pressure bearing on power workers.

Askin and Co. felt they simply couldn’t concede the 35-hour week because this would have been a victory for workers’ control tactics, and would have spread these tactics to other industries. The rightwing and some others in the union movement, also didn’t like the tactic. These forces “went along” with workers’ control because they couldn’t do anything about it. As soon as they could, they steered the struggle into another arbitration inquiry, then used the election and the ACTU as a way out for them.

There was plenty that was positive in the situation power workers were in. The unity between wages and salaried division workers was never higher; in self-action they found a power to challenge the Electricity Commission and the government; their fighting strength and organisation were intact; their struggle had involved the Australian Government and the ACTU; their case was better and more widely known, with higher appreciation of the 35-hour week as an essential reform in our technological society. Their example of self-action had won them wide attention and support. All these gains remain, but in our opinion, in deciding against a proposal to themselves implement the 35-hour week, power workers failed at this stage (they could still do so later) to adopt an alternative or additional tactic that would have been an advance in self-action, strengthening their struggle, with favourable nation-wide repercussions.

In Northern NSW, where the main power stations are sited, both wage and salary workers are determined to carry on the fight, to again use the tactics they worked out -- and to develop them further. And not only for the 35-hour week, but for other issues.

THE NSW ELECTRICITY COMMISSION WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN -- BOTH WORKERS AND MANAGEMENT RECOGNISE THIS.

There’s an even more general result from the struggle -- the employers and the Liberal Party are forced to put forward “workers’ participation” as an alternative to workers’ control. The NSW Liberal Party has just put out a pamphlet supporting “workers’ participation”, quoting what it means -- appointment of union officials like Ducker, Egerton and Hawke to positions on boards of semi-government enterprises! This is contrasted to workers’ control. The struggle between these two ideas -- participation or control -- will grow and workers are unlikely to accept this sort of phoney “participation”, still less since it is endorsed by Askin and the Liberals.

WHAT’S BEHIND THE DETERMINATION POWER WORKERS PUT INTO THEIR FIGHT FOR SHORTER HOURS -- HOW DID THEY COME TO ADOPT WORKER-CONTROL TACTICS?

We think most significant was the determined resistance of workers to the effects of decentralisation and of ever-increasing technological development of the industry upon themselves as workers and human beings. These effects are compounded by the authoritarianism of the Electricity Commission which reduces all considerations to one: what will contribute best to its continuing to provide cheap power mainly for industrial growth and corporate profits.

The insecurity and limitations of small communities of short life, lonely jobs, jobs carrying increasing strain and responsibility, jobs with increasing purposelessness, and jobs for which workers acquired skills which have disappeared, the narrowing opportunity for promotion, and even jobs at all (e.g. it took 600 men at Bunnerong Power Station to produce 160 megawatts; at Lidell, 200 produce ten times as much). Over all is the feeling of alienation in a huge and gravelling complex. Add to this the erosion of wage through inflation; the changing nature of job and advances made in outside industry of some marginally better wages and conditions that supposedly once compensated power workers. From all this the 35-hour week offered a tangible gain and became a deeply felt need.

And power workers felt it was entirely reasonable that they should have it. Productivity for them was not only expressed in figures
of a five-fold increase with costs cut by two-thirds, it was all around them, they worked among its manifestations. They also worked among Management and Administrative division of whom 40 per cent already had a 35-hour week. Within the salaried division, the percentage is seventy-five! Is it any wonder that it was the 35-hour week demand that brought salaried and wages division workers into active unity for the first time?“STRIKEBREAKERS” is a key word to describe the barrier to making their now united action industrially effective. The Commission had cultivated antagonism between the two divisions, but its main counter to either, and now both, was the practice of using Professional Engineers, under its direction, to repair “black” plant and operate “black” controls. There was even a special “flying force” to rush to any crisis point. There was, too, among the workers, a strong trend towards the use of some new tactics and away from the traditional strike which would leave the engineers inside, and effective, and themselves outside, and ineffective. In this impasse, a worker from the floor of a mass meeting at Vales Point Power Station proposed they apply to their industry some of the tactics they had read or heard about from Haroo, the Opera House and the Clyde. And this they did, in a new and creative way! It is important to note that they applied worker control tactics to win a specific issue. But it is also important to note that the democratic control over their campaign, established after February, enabled them to discuss, decide and quickly and creatively apply those tactics. Workers’ control tactics were not imposed from outside; they were developed almost spontaneously by the workers themselves.

WHAT WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS AND THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FEATURES OF WORKER-CONTROL EXPERIENCES ... HOW EFFECTIVE WERE THE TACTICS?

Taking them in order: “work-ins” at the vital generating stations and associated activities that routed the strikebreakers, with Munmorah the focal point. The Commission itself speaks of “up to 200 day-work maintenance men on the premises during the evening .... engaged in a ‘sit-in’”. etc. Also here took place the invasion of the “flying force” escorted by 70 police to repair a “black” coal conveyor-belt. To avoid violence they were allowed in and they repaired the belt to the accompaniment of verbal comments from maintenance men, only to have the repaired belt declared “black” by the operators!

This cemented the new unity in action. Munmorah was literally in the hands of the workers for a period. Similar police-escorted invasions were made at Bunnerong and Pyrmont stations in a desperate bid to extract the maximum megawatts from what are normally stand-by stations. Their reception led to management in each case requesting their withdrawal. The engineers eventually refused to do anything but their own duties.

Then came the actual determination by the workers of what power was to be generated within the system, an action as much out of control of the Labor Council officials as it was of the Electricity Commission. Then confrontation with Askin’s deliberate blackouts, and forced lay-offs of hundreds of thousands of workers, resolved when metal workers in a few Sydney factories themselves switched on power in defiance of phoney restrictions.

Following another “No” from a second Inquiry, the confrontation resumed with a principled decision by power workers to control output so that employers were denied the chance of a mass stand-down of workers, but with Askin more skilled in manipulating blackouts. Large press advertisements blamed the workers but were met by similar advertisements exposing Askin, first by some unions together with the Workers’ Control Movement, later and belatedly by the Labor Council. Supporting leaflets and other material began to take effect.

The most significant feature was workers’ self-action. No one could tell them what to do at the critical stages. More significantly, they didn’t need anyone to tell them. They found and applied the answer themselves. There was an instance at one power station of workers restoring plant over a week-end, without pay, so that operators could maintain the level of power the 35-hour week committee had pledged to provide. In workers’ control they found tactics giving unprecedented power to challenge the Electricity Commission and the government.

The organisations which promoted and ex
pressed the workers' self-action: rank and file job committees, worked out the forms of action which were organised by rank and file elected co-ordinators (one for each division). Overall decisions were made by job-elected delegates on the 35-hour week committee. The latter body was originally set up by the Labor Council in 1971, assuming its militant role last February after a passive 18 months waiting for the first Inquiry to say "No".

The rightwing Labor Council officials, sponsors of the futile Inquiry, simply had to "go along" with the advanced tactics. But they always sought to divert the struggle into "responsible" channels, even publicly of offering compromises without consulting power workers. The Labor Council inhibited the freest development of self-action. But there was valuable co-operation from some unions inside and outside the industry, notably the AMWU's initiation of metal workers' switch-on in June (but also others not on the Left).

WHAT GROWTH OF CONSCIOUSNESS WAS EVIDENT AMONG THE WORKERS ARISING FROM WORKER-CONTROL TACTICS?

Of the 5,000 men in struggle, those in the vital generating stations were involved directly and continuously, others at different degrees and times, and still others were relatively remote from the action. So participation ranged from 'working-in'; controlling plant and output (a highlight was that of the operator ordered by the Minister for Power, Fife, standing beside him, to maintain output, replying that he was instructed by the co-ordinator to cut output .... and did so!). Some others only provided financial support. So the impact of the experiences on workers' thinking was varied. Even so, we felt that the concept of workers' control had been raised in a real way even for power workers far from the point of action. All agree that there is a new sense of solidarity and strength and that future claims will be made from a position of strength.

Clearly, the very vote to apply the new tactics represented a leap in thinking as did each following step up to and including the conscious confrontation with Askin.

A most significant instance was the call from the "work- and sit-ins" at Munnorah and Vales Point Power Stations for volunteers from the metropolitan area to help picketing. All who responded were welcomed regardless of who they were, what they were, or where they came from. Other examples are the firmly disciplined and non-violent action by workers to counter and break the invasion of police-escorted strikebreakers at Munnorah, Pyrmont and Bunnerong. At the latter station some workers were put on special watch over a few of their mates, not so much for their militancy as their hot-headedness, that they might not be provoked.

The "switch-on" by metal workers in June which exposed Askin's phoney restrictions was a tremendous morale booster for power workers. A view was expressed that its lessons were reflected in the majority decision to provide enough power to keep industry going and so defeat Askin's planned provocation to shut down the industry.

WHY, DESPITE DISCUSSION AND PUBLICITY ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY, HAVE POWER WORKERS NOT TAKEN OR IMPLEMENTED THE 35-HOUR WEEK THEMSELVES?

This tactic has been discussed on and off since it was first raised in 1971. Its first appeal came from the fact that this was the way breakthroughs to shorter hours had been made in the past. After February, it was the one proposal among those that launched a democratic action campaign that was not carried out. The idea was discussed of working the shorter week in different stations to demonstrate its feasibility.

Differences in attitudes appeared between the two divisions on the proposal. Many wage men, seeing the key role played by operators thought that only they could make the tactic effective, as they thought that taking it themselves would only give five hours' pay to the Commission. Many salaried men only saw the problem that, with continuous shift work, reduced hours needed more operators to fill the rosters if the previous strikebreakers were to be kept away from the controls.

Views expressed in the discussion were that of necessity and for a time, workers' control over plant and output absorbed the workers
attention and initiative.

Not enough preparation had been given to working out the how, when, where and why the 35 hours should be implemented: that implementation had never been lifted out of its traditional concept and sufficiently related to the actuality of their struggle. This view saw it as the next step in developing workers' self-action and control and a fresh initiative in their challenge to Askin. At only one of the regional mass meetings was implementation seriously debated. Wages men who had participated in the sit-in and what followed discussed taking the 35-hour week for an hour and a half before deciding narrowly against it (by 302 votes to 250).

**HOW DID THE LEFT CONTRIBUTE TO THE STRUGGLE ...... HOW SHOULD THE BRANCH ASSESS ITS OWN CONTRIBUTION?**

The greatest contribution was the popularisation of the concepts of workers' control and the publication of experiences which showed its immediate relevance. It was ideas taken from what they had read or heard of Haroo, the Clyde, the Opera House and the Newcastle Easter conference which sparked off their own tactic. These were seen as revealing both the capacity of workers and the kind of leadership they wanted.

The lessons from this struggle, all agreed, confirm the relevance of the CPA's policies. Several some-time members and friends of the party in the industry who doubted these policies spoke about how workers' action had shown we were right. Because of these policies, Tribune's coverage alone reflected the initiative and enthusiasm of the struggle.

The branch itself, in 1970, published a pamphlet "What is the Future for Power Workers?". This related the concepts of workers' control to the industry, and its job bulletins since then have continued to do so. They, too, have had a considerable effect.

The Power branch is mainly Sydney-based; that was a weakness. In the North, a CPA member, Ron Ross, was elected wages division co-ordinator, and he played an important part in the campaign.

We think that the CPA branch, and later the Workers' Control Movement, played quite an important part by raising new ideas, from as early as 1967 in raising the new direction the industry had taken. Then came the spreading of the workers' control idea, which was taken up and so creatively developed. We see this as the Party's main contribution, not just in this struggle, but in the whole movement.
COULD YOU MAKE SOME GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNION SINCE THE ’70 AND ’71 INTERVIEWS?

I think the most important single advance has been our intervention in the non-traditional areas, particularly on the environment. Having in mind that we are the most urbanised country on earth, the destruction of the urban environments particularly in Sydney but also now in Melbourne and, to a growing extent in Brisbane, means that we’ve been in a fairly advantageous position. We are the first building workers on a project, and no building can be demolished without builders’ labourers.

I think the biggest thing was that we responded to the frustration of people who felt they were powerless to act, such as the people of Kelly’s Bush, which triggered it all off. The extent of the frustration was such that we were inundated with requests from residents and from other community groups who felt that the collusion between State governments, the Federal government’s failure to act, and most particularly, the poor quality of government at municipal level, meant that they came to us and requested us to impose bans. I don’t think there was any great foresight on the part of the Builders’ Labourers Union, but the important thing was that we responded to other sections of the community and in this way commenced the astonishing involvement which has had international repercussions.

YOU MENTIONED IN THE PREVIOUS INTERVIEWS THAT THERE WERE ALL SORTS OF CROSS-CURRENTS OF OPINION GOING THROUGH THE PARTY ABOUT THAT TIME WHICH INFLUENCED YOU. WAS THERE A GENERAL STRATEGIC LINE, AND COULD YOU ELABORATE ON THAT?

Once having commenced on the track, we found the tremendous response I spoke about, and among the thinking segment of the population we now enjoy tremendous support, something I didn’t envisage as secretary of the union when we started. I think it bears out the contention that quality of life issues are increasingly more important in a relative sense to purely economic ones.

WHAT’S YOUR ANSWER TO PEOPLE WHO SAY THAT THESE ARE MIDDLE CLASS ISSUES AND THAT IT’S REALLY A DIVERSION FROM THE CLASS STRUGGLE WHICH IS NECESSARY TO OVERTHROW CAPITALISM?

If capitalism is to be overthrown it is essential that a great section of the middle class have to be involved. We’ve also had growing support among the workers too, and it’s interesting to note the number of rank and file members of other unions who have come to us. Many of our bans have
been in working class areas where the working class themselves have acted in great numbers to impose the ban. There has been a deliberate attempt by the Labour Press group, and others, to say that we are the darling of the trendies, selling out the workers, etc. but that hasn't been borne out. It would be true to say that the majority of our members now strongly support the union's position. At the same time, we didn't neglect the economic issues and in particular the question of permanency, changing the nature of the industry. I believe that if we hadn't had the big strikes of '70 and '71 based on, first of all, civilising the building industry to some extent, lifting up the second class status of the builders' labourers, bringing forward a formula that the wage variation should be no wider than 100-90, this support would be far less. Incidentally, our stand on the gap between “skilled” and “unskilled” was partly responsible for the ACTU, at the following Congress, putting forward that the ratio should be no wider than 100 - 82. The gap was the thing in the five week strike in 1970, and then in '71 it was a social issue of accident pay in an accident-prone industry, because of the lack of safety, etc.

But the support arose most importantly of all over permanency in the building industry. Our concept here goes beyond just having permanent employment for the full year, because to effect permanency in an industry like ours, where, with each fluctuation in the economy, the building industry is hit, and the imbalance between the commercial and residential sections glaring (by the middle of next year, there will be ten million square feet of unlet office space in Sydney, compared with four million now), to win permanency in the building industry would be vastly different to winning permanency on the waterfront.

In the building industry, if you're going to have 200,000 building workers employed throughout the year, then you've got to stabilise it, and stabilise it in such a way that the three tiers of government have to work out their rate, their preferences, their ratios, and the expenditure on each. Insurance companies and hot money flowing into the country have put up superfluous office buildings. To win permanency goes way beyond anything else that's been achieved, and I think we're going to have a tremendous struggle.

IN OTHER WORDS, YOU SEE THAT THE BUILDING BOOM IN THE SENSE OF CITY OFFICE BUILDINGS COULD DECLINE SHORTLY AND THEN THE PROBLEM OF WORK FOR BUILDING WORKERS WILL ARISE AND THE ISSUE WILL BE -- WE'VE GOT ALL THESE NEEDS, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH THIS AVAILABLE LABOUR?

Yes, because I don't believe those who say that because of the capital appreciation they can sit out the green bans. If we win the fight that the inner city area should be mainly residential, with provision for low and middle income earners, then the tremendous appreciation of capital on the buildings will not go on. So I think we're going to have a real crisis within the building industry in this area, and it's wrapped up in permanency too, because there are real elements of workers' control in it. It will mean, as we've put forward for a long time now, that there should be a Building Investigations Committee to determine which buildings should be built, and in fact had the BWIU and other tradesmen's unions come along with us in the fight over the last award, we could have made this a real fighting point. The Master Builders nearly croaked when we put it forward -- you remember their silly stuff, "this is workers' control, it's anarchy they're taking over". On the monetary side, they coughed up six or ten dollars without any real struggle, whereas before they were always hard to fight on dough. Now the money was there, but no invading of our sanctity, they said, by the setting up of any committees to determine which buildings should be built.

I think this opens up the other side of it, the social responsibility of workers, the examination of the end result of their labour is now on, and I think it's tied right up with the ecological crisis which exists in our society. Once workers, industrial workers, start to have a say in the end result of their work -- if, for example, unemployment built up, and they demanded that money be diverted to hospitals, to the public sector, instead of to office buildings -- I think that would be partly workers' control and also an expression of social responsibility by the workers themselves.
And take the motor vehicle -- I think that motor vehicles have got to go in the way in which they're being produced now; they've got to be restricted and greater emphasis placed on public transport. For that to happen, I think there's got to be shock tactics by the workers themselves, the workers have got to take it up, and a section of the workers have to be involved.

**DO YOU THINK THEY HAVE HONESTLY TAKEN IT UP IN THEIR OWN HEARTS?**

When we embarked on the green bans, the leadership was a long way ahead of the membership - I think that's the real position. I see that a most essential ingredient is leadership. The very fact that we're defending workers' homes, defending the right of people to live in the city, means that workers could identify. Even though many of them might be forced out to live at Mount Druitt and beyond, they could identify with those people who were fighting to keep the Rocks residential, for example, to keep the 'Loo, Darlinghurst and so on.

I think, secondly, they then saw the success of the union and felt that the union was contributing something of a social nature and there was an uplifting in the confidence of the union members.

**WHY DO YOU THINK THE BIG DEVELOPERS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT FRIENDS HAVE BEEN SO POWERLESS TO DEAL WITH THE GREEN BANS?**

I think that institutions, governments and the courts, traditionally deal with wages and conditions matters. Australian unions have been politicalised to a certain extent more than many other unions in other countries, especially on international issues. But on social issues we haven't been involved that much, and certainly not to the extent that we have become involved here. I think the phenomenon of having unionists come together with people, with residents, in concerted action formed a new alliance which was so powerful and is potentially still more powerful, that governments haven't found the way to handle it.

It is true that there are diverse groupings, classes and social groupings of people in these struggles. You find the militancy of the Kelly's Bush women, nearly all upper middle class, who went down in front of the bulldozer. But then the same militancy was shown at Eastlakes, which is certainly the other end of the social ladder from Hunter's Hill. It's this that the government hasn't been able to handle, and I think it shows the potentially revolutionary character of ecological action, people in action. And I consider that what the builders' labourers have done has only been a tiny step along the road as to how unions have to involve themselves in the future. In the motor vehicle industry, for example, I think the time will come when the thinking workers will have to tackle the whole question of saying, well, we shouldn't be making these cars, we should divert our energies elsewhere. It will mean that some industries will have to curtail the number of people involved, and by raising their consciousness, with the rest transferring over to other industries performing work that is socially beneficial to the community at large. I think this is essential, in fact, and more important than any Club of Rome or anyone else making great predictions from the top: the workers themselves must become involved in this social way.

**IN THE EARLIER INTERVIEWS YOU PROJECTED SOME IDEAS ABOUT THE WAY A UNION SHOULD BE. A LOT OF PEOPLE, INCLUDING MANY ON THE LEFT, FEEL THAT THIS SORT OF THING IS NOT POSSIBLE -- IT'S GOING TOO FAR, TOO FAST. THE REAL TEST LIES IN HOW THE WORKERS REACT. WHAT DO YOUR MEMBERS THINK OF THE UNION NOW, AFTER THE LAST FOUR YEARS OR SO?**

With all organisations it's always the conscious element which drives the union forward. But I think, if I can generalise, that the builders' labourers in NSW proudly identify themselves with the union leadership, and particularly with green bans which probably are the most used two words in the Australian press of recent times.

And I'll pose the question, if I can, is the union going too far. There are some critics of Mundey who say he's going to far and he'll lose his economic position. Well, I think that the recent struggle in the builders' labourers ranks in the last couple of weeks -- the sharpness of it, the fact that we've been so isolated because of bastardry -- on the one
hand, Clancy and Ducker, on the other hand, Gallagher - despite that, and despite the em­ployers knowing that, the members stuck with the leadership when it was a non-economic issue - it was a green ban issue, green bans or no was on the agenda. I think that shows better than any words that the workers were prepared to come and fight around that. Because if there had been a backlash, well, there'd be people getting up and saying it's crazy, we're going too far. But that didn't come through at any of the meetings. A couple -- there'd be some certainly in the union with backward thinking who would go, would think, this way. But to get a real picture, the overwhelming majority of the members identify themselves with this, with the current movement.

THE IMPORTANT POINT WOULD BE THAT THE UNION REALLY HAS EMERGED FROM ALL THIS STRUGGLE A STRONGER UNION?

That's right. Definitely. But if we can get back to permanency, if we hadn't projected permanency, and if we'd just sort of fought on the green bans, I think we would have been in trouble. But projecting advanced notions of workers' rights together with the green bans has allowed us to go a long way.

THERE'S BEEN SOME CRITICISM ABOUT INSUFFICIENT DEMOCRACY IN APPLYING GREEN BANS.

I don't think it's valid. I think all told we have 38 green bans; we had the action taken over a young homosexual at Macquarie University and then there was the women's strike at Sydney University which we supported, and now most likely a ban - black as distinct from green -- on the new maximum security block at Long Bay. But we've always imposed these bans at the request of Prisoners' Reform, for example, and the students at both universities coming to us. Those two things were endorsed at monthly branch meetings, which are the governing body of the union between elections. In others -- cultural bans around theatres, and the green bans -- all of these were preceded by public meetings. We always insisted that there be a public meeting and a public expression. If it be in a community such as the Rocks, well, they meet, and then that public meeting requests the builders' labourers to impose the ban, and the builders' labourers at branch level have imposed the ban. In the case of historical buildings, or buildings worthy of preservation, we base ourselves on the National Trust, but not on it alone.

SO REALLY THERE'S DEMOCRATIC INVOLVEMENT BOTH IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY SENSE AND WITHIN THE UNION?

That's right. And probably one thing that should be said, the best thing of all that is developing now, is that the community is drawing up their own plans. For example, the people's plan for the Rocks, where before you had State Planning Authorities, or Askin's people making all the decisions about what will happen to this or that community.

The Royal Australian Planning Institute came out and questioned the wisdom of building there and about 700 people attending a public meeting. It was decided that the people themselves would draw up a plan for how they want the Rocks to be regenerated. I think this is extremely important, because now it has gone further. The people who drew that up were mainly professional people, who did so at the request of the residents of the Rocks. But in Woolloomooloo, Darlinghurst and Victoria Street they're going further than that. They're going for the people themselves to have more say, not just professional people, as to the type of community they want.

A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY THE BUILDERS' LABOURERS ARE A SPECIAL TYPE OF WORK FORCE, THE BLF IS A SPECIAL TYPE OF UNION -- DO YOU ACCEPT THIS SORT OF ARGUMENT?

No, I don't. I think it's in the question of leadership. The organised trade union movement, working the way it is now, will continue to exist, but I question very much whether it will have as much influence in ten years' time as it has now unless it changes. I also think if it doesn't change sufficiently, other militant forms of workers' organisations will arise which will take over these more crucial areas. I think that leadership -- including people of the left -- is still a problem because of its conservatism. Officialdom has held back the workers' movement in a general sense. Take the amount of controversy arising out of such a thing as tenure of off−
I think I've spoken in about every capital city in Australia and most of the main provincial cities to meetings of communists or worker control meetings, meetings of the left. And invariably, though I try to play it down as not being an important thing, saying that the Communist Party has far more important ongoing ideas, and to try and raise the social issues -- it comes right back to that, particularly union officials themselves, posing such questions as "you're so valuable, how can we replace you" and most of them aren't thinking of me at all, they're thinking of themselves.

IT MUST BE SAID THAT YOU HAVE, PERSONALLY, PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE UNION.

I don't denigrate the role of leadership, but I think that, actually, we have always gone the other way, and exaggerated the position of leadership. I think that's one of the lessons we must draw from our own history, internationally, and also from trade union history in this country. There's been exaggeration, there's been over-concentration on getting people in and then keeping them there at any price, even though some are playing no role at all, not even carrying out Communist Party policy or trying to bring the workers forward. You've only got to see the two spectacles of the communists, so-called, who went with the Hill group, and their performance, and the communists who went into the SPA. And their performance didn't start when they went with the SPA. They were performing badly and the wrong way before. So I think the question of leadership is a very big thing, and I think the tenure of office and the relation of leadership to membership is one of our strengths.

In our union, workers identify with leaders and don't just look upon leaders as getting a cushy job or working towards a seat in parliament, because it's impossible to occupy a leadership position with us and move away from the workers, move in the circles of arbitration courts and employers as far too many do. It would be interesting to go through them and see, even in the Communist Party, the number of officials occupying positions for some 20 or 30 years. So I do think that limited tenure of office is essential, and I think it should be put forward by the Party in all positions. I think future society must limit tenure of office of all people in public positions where they've got decision-making powers. I think it should apply to bureaucrats in government, as well. They've got to be rotated and moved out of those positions so that they don't build themselves in. I've seen the most pedestrian trade union officials who are hopeless in their fights for the workers, become very skilled and cunning indeed at remaining in that position of office.

HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE HOSTILE ATTITUDES TO THE BUILDERS' LABOURERS AMONG OTHER LEFTWING UNION OFFICIALS?

I think that, first of all, if we take the Maoists so-called, and the Soviet liners -- I think that their really conservative position wouldn't allow them to do the sort of things that we're doing. There are also ingrained habits and the old ways of doing things. Also involved is the old economism -- the idea that the economic struggle of the workers is what we've really got to be involved in. I think that it is the old-fashioned thinking of these people which has held them back. I think there are a lot of people who I think support the policy to a fair extent, but they do think it's a bit way out, and they can't really grapple with how to apply it creatively.

The line that the builders' labourers are in a unique position is tripe, because if you take theAMWU, for instance, they're in a better position on the question of pollution. I was once asked on a radio program -- Can you see it going further? And I raised two points: if in the recent oil refining strike, instead of just putting forward the wages question, and they had a good question here because of technological change, etc., they also put forward that the petrol be such that it doesn't pollute the atmosphere; or if the car workers demanded that there be emission control units on all motor vehicles. These are the sort of social issues which will grip the public at large. And the same thing with pollution up in Newcastle-- there wouldn't be one Novocastrian who wouldn't support it if all the workers said: Right, BHP, we'll give you six months to introduce the latest Swedish proposals for anti-pollution, which are way ahead of what BHP are using. I think that sort of action would
lift the unions a long way forward. So I think that ALL unions can find ways to take such actions in their own industry.

WHAT ABOUT ATTITUDES OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO WHAT YOU’RE DOING?

We’ve got more support in the Labourers from young people for the green bans than from older members. That’s very evident. So I think that the young have responded to it. I think that some of the young Trotskyist elements are completely missing the boat on this question of ecology. They’re taking what I could only call a very dogmatic and, I might add, un-marxist view of reality today.

Concerning students, recently I spent a couple of weeks going to other cities, and I spoke at universities and at the August council meeting of AUS in Melbourne. The thing that strikes me about the student movement is that whilst they all say “things are quiet”, there seems to be a real mass interest in radical issues. I spoke to a meeting of 1200 students at the Adelaide University, and the reception at AUS was tremendous. I find that there are not so many ego-trippers in the student movement as in the sixties -- the Lavers and the Mike Joneses, and some of the others -- I suppose they did play a valuable role, but let’s face it, many of them were bloody opportunistic when you look back. I reckon there’s a new quality coming through in the universities; I think many among them have a more modest approach, a more thinking approach. I think the same thing goes with workers, when workers are given a chance to do things. And, as I have said, they have supported the labourers, who are probably the best example of carrying forward Communist Party policy in this area. I know a revolutionary situation isn’t just around the corner, but I do feel we should get on with building the potential, especially of bringing workers and students together to fight around these issues. I think we can really lift the understanding of workers if we do it.

In ‘71 you spoke about the need to win the battle for politicalisation of the union movement against the reactionaries and the left conservatives. How do you see the position now? Perhaps we could pose it against the experience of the United States movement.

I think the need for politicalisation is the most important issue. I think the Communist Party of Australia and our industrial policy is the main instrument to do it, because I can’t see anybody else doing it. I doubt very much whether the builders’ labourers in NSW would have gone anywhere near the extent they did if its leaders weren’t communists. There are tremendous barriers because bottom there’s a bureaucracy in the existing union movement, and I think it’s got to be broken. Bureaucracy is a real hindrance and it plays into the hands of the right wing and assists backward elements of reformism to continue to dominate, even though their position is brittle. They’ve got the power, but, by Jesus, it’s not very strong, and I think we’ve got to give workers more confidence to break through. And that’s why I think workers’ control has to be seized upon. Some look on workers’ control as something of the future; I think that workers’ control has to be on now, including within workers’ organisations.

WHAT ABOUT THE CPA? WHERE DO YOU THINK IT’S GOING, AND WHAT DO YOU THINK ITS ROLE IS?

I really doubt if I would have been still in the Party if those divisions of the last decade hadn’t occurred. I’m very happy that they occurred, and I think that if they hadn’t occurred, the Communist Party of Australia wouldn’t have any future at all. I do think that I find, talking to anarchists and others, that there’s more respect among the left, the genuine left revolutionaries, for the Communist Party of Australia than ever before. And more and more people are thinking of joining the Communist Party now than before. I think the Communist Party has a real future, but I think it resides more in those who are coming in and will come in than those who are in.
of the entrenched bureaucracy which exists within unions, and acts as a barrier against their politicalisation. But down below, you find workers talk politics more today than they did, certainly ten or five years ago.

I think the builders' labourers have acted as a bit of a catalyst. Everywhere I go, I find members of all unions, particularly active rank and file workers, condemning their leadership, and then go on and talk about politics. And they say that workers are more politically conscious about the events of the day. I think that television has done something here, especially the news.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES AND ACTIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES?

I raised this point at the Labor Council the other week, when an attack was being made on the Builders' Labourers Federation by Ducker. We have Pat Hills coming down to the workers' movement and not mentioning the word environment once in the whole thing, not defending the people who want to live in these areas, even though it's right in his electorate, and when everybody is saying that Askin has destroyed Sydney.

Contrast this with the fact that both Whitlam and Uren undertook to tackle the crisis of our cities, and that received a lot of air, and a lot of space. And when you take the swinging seats, the swing occurred in two areas, Melbourne and Sydney, and they were often in seats affected by environmental issues, so it meant that people moved from a Tory position to Labor, to a fair extent on the basis of a government that was prepared to tackle the crisis in our cities.

I think they have been consistently good with their words, but their words have exceeded their deeds. I think it's pretty refreshing, on a comparable basis with the last government, and a lot of State governments; I think that at least their words, their spirit is good, and I think that can be taken advantage of.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MAIN STRATEGIC LESSONS OF THE BLF EXPERIENCES?

It seems to me the whole experience of the union shows that the old formula is not necessarily right: that the more advanced action is than necessarily, the less support it must have, and conversely, the more broad an issue, the lower level it is, the more support it must have. This seems to have been really shattered by the builders' labourers' experiences. They have shown that intelligent action around an issue does tap a real feeling among people, even though it might be dormant. A type of action which punches through mass apathy and captures people's imagination, as it were, brings in mass support and attracts all sorts of people - for example, Patrick White.

I think a realistic assessment of the situation allowed us to do this, and that the propositions of the last two CPA Congresses played a part. The conservatives in the Building Trades Group are saying that one-ou...
IN OTHER WORDS, THE PARTY AS YET HASN’T DONE ENOUGH TO BREAK THROUGH THE WALL AROUND IT WITH ITS NEW IDEAS?

No, definitely not. I tried to make this point at the last Congress -- that I don't think we use the media enough. In this shrinking world where communication is so tremendously important, I question whether we use it enough. Now of course it has been said: well, it's all right for you to talk because you're in a position where you can be used. This is true, but I still don't think we do it enough. We tend to be quite conservative about trying to break this communications position.

SINCE YOUR LAST INTERVIEW FOR ALR THERE HAVE BEEN TWO ACTU CONGRESSES. WHERE DO YOU THINK THE ACTU IS HEADIN G AND WHAT'S YOUR ESTIMATION OF THE ROLE THE CPA HAS PLAYED. THERE HAS BEEN MUCH CRITICISM OF OUR ROLE AT THE RECENT CONGRESS. ARE WE GETTING ISOLATED, ARE WE DOING THE RIGHT THING OR NOT?

I think that the Communist Party performance at the last Congress was sound; having in mind that the actual numerical strength of CPA delegates to the Congress was down on the previous time. I think the fact that we put forward more strongly our ideas and fought them out in an independent way was good, and I think we also questioned more than ever before the nature of the ACTU Congress itself. I don’t think that it’s got any great future. Workers don’t relate to the ACTU Congress very much -- they think it’s something “up there”. Most delegates think the same way. Most delegates to it are aged people, and they’re almost all mates. It's a bit of a jaunt: “where are we going tonight” sort of thing. The very fact that when Whitlam arrived to open it they had to empty them out of the pub across the road, turn the grog off to get them over there -- twice they couldn’t get a quorum -- all those things you know about. Probably in the past the Communist Party has been guilty because we’ve also had a numbers mentality -- I’m going back years now -- about the thing. I don’t think you can ignore the importance of winning positions either, but again, as with our general thinking and our wrong priorities, I think we’ve been too much on this and not enough on down below. I think the things we raised about the nature of the Congress -- whether it should change, whether it should be commissions, whether it should be a more action oriented Congress -- really livened it up and in that way it was one of the most controversial ACTU Congresses of recent times.

WHAT’S YOUR GENERAL ESTIMATION OF THE ACTU AND HAWKE’S ROLE AT THE MOMENT? HE SEEMS TO HAVE GONE FROM PLAYING A PROGRESSIVE ROLE TO ONE WHERE NOW HE’S MORE KEEPING THE MOVEMENT BACK, EVEN THOUGH HE’S STILL PREFERABLE TO THE RIGHT WING ALTERNATIVES.

As I said a year or so ago, Hawke has passed his zenith as regards his industrial contribution and his unseemly haste to get out of the industrial area into the better grounds of Canberra was terribly obvious, where he modestly puts himself forward as front bench material, at least. But Hawke definitely was a breath of fresh air after Monk; there’s no doubt he’s done a lot for the union movement in that way. I think I’d go along with John Edwards' estimate of Hawke that he has no real ideological position. Mick Young and Hawke, I think that’s about their position, they can go anywhere. Hawke fluctuates -- in fact since the Congress he has gone better on some things than before. He’s gone better than MacDonald of the SPA on the current builders’ strike and lock-out. On TV the other night, he got stuck into the employers and said he wasn’t going to get caught up in the building union differences. So I think that he has been valuable, but because he hasn’t got a really firm position, I don’t think that he can give the sort of leadership that the union movements wants now that it’s become more radicalised.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS ABOUT THE COMING CONGRESS OF THE CPA?

I firmly support the Party’s present position. I think that we’ve got to find a way to get Party members supporting the Party position a bit more. And the attraction I spoke about before, people coming towards the Party, can be expedited if the next Congress and pre-Congress discussion is given a lot more air. I think we should really strive to get across the line of the Party before the Congress. And I think things will be sharper then,
too, with the Labor Government there could be a bigger crisis by then. So I think it will be a time when there will be interest in the Party position. We still haven’t found the way to get out to the Australian people. We have definitely got to do that.

ONE WAY TO DO THAT IS MORE INVOLVEMENT OF PARTY MEMBERS IN ALL WAYS, YOU'RE STANDING FOR THE SENATE IN A CPA TEAM, WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE TO ELECTIONS? ARE THEY ONE WAY THAT WE CAN PERHAPS BREAK OUT WITH OUR POLICIES IN A GENUINELY REVOLUTIONARY SENSE?

I don’t think we should see elections as the most important thing. But I think they are an ideal opportunity of bringing forward new ideas, and if they’re associated with activity of the Party membership I think we can make an impact. And I do think that myself standing, because of the way in which the green bans etc. have been associated with the individual Mundey, that we should be able to get that part of our policy across to broad sections.

WHAT WOULD YOU NOMINATE AS THE THREE MAIN ISSUES WHICH OUGHT TO BE DISCUSSED AND PROJECTED FROM CONGRESS?

The question of ecology which is so important because mankind’s survival is wrapped up in it. The way in which ecology movements are developed in the next 50 years will determine, I think, whether man can survive. I put it as high as that.

The question of egalitarianism, the imbalance of wealth, the maldistribution of the income, because it’s wrapped up in the same thing of changing life style, and there should be a real campaign against consumerism. The third is workers’ control. To me, they all seem to come together. They all impinge upon each other, because you’re not going to have those changes with the nature of the existing work in the trade union movement or the workers’ movement now.

WHAT ABOUT WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY AND THE EXPERIENCE YOU’VE HAD?

In an all-male industry, I think it was a real breakthrough that we could get women working in this industry. We’ve even gone further than that now by encouraging them to get more skilled jobs. When they first came in, it was significant that they were mainly put on an extension of what I call the bedroom or the kitchen: they were being nippers, they were getting lunches and cleaning the sheds up. They have made a deliberate attempt now to get tickets, such as hoist drivers’ tickets. We haven’t made a breakthrough with great numbers, but we had some very fine struggles -- a work-in to get women on jobs, a rather humorous one at the brewery where, through an 18-year old girl, after 130 years, women now employed by Tooths get a drink of beer. And it has also been good for the industry. I think it’s humanised the industry a bit, women coming into it. I think that on the broader aspects, there’s a better appreciation by the workers of the problems of women. I don’t want to exaggerate this, but they are starting to come through. And the very fact anyway that, in a male-dominated industry, we were able to break through is itself extremely important.

HAS THERE BEEN A “MALE BACKLASH”?

No. Among some of the older workers, at the beginning, but again its significant, hardly any from younger workers.

IN ’71 YOU RAISED THE QUESTION ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF MIGRANTS, ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO RELATIVITY OF WAGES. WHAT ABOUT THIS AND OTHER PROBLEMS NOW, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE FORD STRIKE?

I think we’ve failed to appreciate the problems of the migrants and their problems have been doubly difficult for reasons that you know. I think that at last we are trying to do something as the two recent migrant conferences indicate, even though there were big weaknesses. They indicate a big movement forward, and at least a first tackling of the tremendously difficult problems they have. Take our industry, for example: the really big problem is the southern Italians. People say, Oh yes, the
Italians are good on concrete, they do it back home. But most of them have never handled concrete before. They come from the poor agrarian parts of Italy and because the unpopular side of 'builders' labouring is concreting and excavation, then it's in those hard areas that we find migrants working. In nearly all concrete yards they gather together, and they work under the most arduous circumstances. We've never really tackled this. In our union, we now have a Greek, a Yugoslav and a Portuguese who also speaks Italian and Spanish on as organisers. That's how we're tackling it from the top level. At job level (job ORGANISERS, we call them, not job delegates, so as to differentiate) we've got many migrants now coming forward, but the change is slow. I think the Ford outburst was a pent-up frustration and anger of the workers. Laurie Carmichael was very honest in saying that we underestimated the position. In fact it's true. The Communist Party wasn't the only force which made this mistake -- in fact, our record has been better than others.

IN ALL THE EXPERIENCE OF THE UNION, THERE'S BEEN THE QUESTION OF MUNDEY AS A FIGUREHEAD. YOU'VE SHOWN BY YOUR ATTITUDE TO TENURE OF OFFICE AND SO ON THAT YOU DO NOT GO ALONG WITH THIS, BUT HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND WHAT'S THE CORRECT WAY TO HANDLE IT AS FAR AS YOU ARE CONCERNED?

People close to me have said that I've been affected by it, but I think I've kept my feet on the ground pretty much. I don't think I've ego-tripped that much. But I think it's because of the bureaucratic nature of our society that a figurehead is brought out. Union officials generally don't talk to the media. They don't want to go on television or they answer the radio by saying, well, the executive will discuss it the week after next and give you a reply. Because I was always so available, I always made good news, and with things happening in the Labourers' union the way they did, one thing led to the other, all placing me in a different position.

NOW THAT YOUR TENURE OF OFFICE IS FINISHED, HOW DO YOU FEEL PERSONALLY ABOUT IT AND WOULD YOU TELL US SOMETHING OF WHAT YOU PLAN TO DO?

The last few years have been very exciting in the Builders' Labourers' Union and I'm particularly happy about the success we've had in the ecological area. I think we really started something there and my main interest will be in that area. I think it is potentially very revolutionary and that the Communist Party has a real responsibility to become involved there. I personally would like to link up with the Total Environment Centre and Ecology Action. I think if we can relate our experiences in a real way and not immodestly, to other workers, we'll get other workers also involved in ecology action. I think this is what I'd like to do. But I've got no regrets about stepping down; the loss of the power doesn't greatly affect me and I think it's also a test, because I'll still be on the executive of the union and I'll still be fighting for the maintenance of our line. The interesting thing to find out in the future is how my influence will still be in the union. That's unresolved. Things do change, people do have different emphasis on different areas, different thrusts, don't they? It would be unreal to think the next bloke's going to come in and carry on in the same way. But anybody can make a statement in the builders' labourers. All our meetings no matter how controversial are regarded as open to the media at all times. Anybody in the leadership of the union can make a statement. It hasn't got to come through just the august secretary. This has created problems, I think there's a bit of competing at times. Now that I'm going, there are signs of it there. But nevertheless, I think that's better than the other way.

But I feel my main future is trying to take Communist Party policy particularly in the ecology area, into other unions and getting action going amongst workers.
The aims of this paper are necessarily limited. The intention is to review bourgeois economists' interpretations of inflation and their prescriptions for controlling inflation, in an attempt to de-mystify the terms of current debates. Because the emphasis is on a review of bourgeois economic perspectives, there will be little discussion of the limits of bourgeois economic rationality as such -- which fall outside the subject matter of the paper. However it is to be hoped that these limits will become obvious within the scope of the discussion. It is also hoped that it will become obvious that governmental manipulations of the economic system will not overcome the contradictions of capitalism -- where in the real problems lie.

In advanced capitalist economies the main emphasis of government policy is on the objectives of maintaining a high level of employment, a reasonable growth rate, reasonably stable prices and a comfortable balance of external payments. Inflation, in terms of price increases, affects the stability of these objectives in various ways and thus the government initiates various programs to regulate and control these price increases. Large price increases in this century have been associated with war in that during these periods large increases in government expenditure, accompanied by large increases in the supply of money led to a general shortage of consumer goods and to a rise in their prices. From the market for consumption goods, the pressure spread to other markets. Unemployment diminished in the process as labor also became scarce. This was a situation call-
ed “galloping inflation.” However after 1953 most advanced capitalist economies became subject to “creeping inflation.” It was called “creeping” because price increases, although persistent, were much more modest than in previous periods of inflation and, for the first time, were not generated by abnormal forces of war or of post-war re-adjustments but were associated with normal forces of economic growth. Also after 1955 there was the unusual development (in terms of previous experience) of prices rising while unemployment was increasing and the supply of money was slowing down. For example it was noticed that after the onset of recession in mid-1957 in the U.K. prices continued to rise during 1957 and ’58, although employment fell. This situation which occurred in both the U.S. and Australia in the period 1970-72 came to be termed “stagflation” as the economy was stagnating but prices continued to rise.

Thus there arose a great deal of discussion amongst bourgeois economists about the causes of such inflation and the way to remedy it. A number of inflationary pressures were then identified which fell into two broad categories -- cost-push and demand-pull pressures.

(1) Those who believed that so long as prices were rising there were “excess demand pressures,” i.e., the demand for various goods is greater than the amount of goods available or the demand for labor is greater than that available, thus prices for goods and labor were forced up. Often those who identify this pressure deny that there can be any such thing as cost-push inflation on the ground that cost increases can be passed on to prices (the cost-push argument) only if aggregate demand (total demand for all goods and services) increases rapidly enough to absorb output at higher prices. Otherwise there will be downward pressure upon profit margins from excess supply and downward pressure on wages through growing unemployment.

(2) Increases in either export or import prices generate inflationary pressures in the domestic economy. Higher export prices are likely to cause increased demand as exporters seek to spend part of their higher incomes and this in turn may cause local prices to rise. Also local consumers may be forced to pay higher prices for “exportables,” i.e., goods which could be sold abroad at externally determined prices. Rising import prices enter directly into the costs of goods and services bought within the domestic economy and they also allow local producers to raise their prices without fearing a loss of sales to foreign suppliers. [1]

(3) Wage increases which occur at a greater rate than increases in productivity thus forcing up prices. This is the argument used by employers when opposing wage increases as will be stated in full. In situations of near full employment and with government committed to avoiding serious unemployment, unions would push fairly vigorously for higher wages. Wage increases would initially occur in high growth industries where labor productivity was increasing rapidly. Although this might not cause price increases, accumulative wage increases across a wide range of industries, in many of which growth of labor productivity was not high, would lead to price increases. Of course the price increases do not necessarily have to occur if the producer reduces his profit margin; however, for some reason this seems an untenable action.

(4) In opposition to the previous point there is the argument which says that prices are “administered,” i.e., fixed by sellers on a cost-plus basis. This is an important argument in a highly monopolistic and oligopolistic economy such as Australia. For example, price increases decided on by BHP generate increases in the prices of many other products as the users of steel and steel products find their costs increased. Thus the responsibility for price rises is placed wholly in the hands of oligopolists who increase their prices to maintain their profit margins.

It is also pointed out that there is a great deal of overlap and interaction between these four factors thus making it difficult to determine their relative importance in “explaining” inflation. However bourgeois economists have continued to argue and econometricians have continued to build and test models to determine whether inflation can in fact be attributed to cost-push or demand-pull effects -- without either of them coming to any definite conclusions.

Just as there is much disagreement about the causes of inflation, so there is a great deal of argument about the methods of controlling inflation and their effectiveness. The main way the government regulates the economy is by Keynesian measures. These operate by the government attempting to act on various components of aggregate economic activity to achieve the desired change. At this point it
would perhaps be useful to include a digression on the Keynesian model of the economy from which the policies employed by the government arise. In the Keynesian system aggregate economic activity (or national income) is made up of expenditures of consumption, investment, government and exports as well as a negative expenditure on imports (as the income derived from imports is not retained in the domestic economy but goes to the country from which the imports came). For these expenditures there are compensatory flows which counteract the income-creating effect of the expenditures. These flows are savings compensating for investment, taxation for government expenditure and imports for exports. To maintain a balance in the economy, under the Keynesian system, investment, government expenditure and exports must equal savings, taxation and imports. Increases in the former three are inflationary in that they add to total economic activity while increases in the latter three are deflationary in that they remove expenditure and thus income from the system. Thus in the Keynesian system the government will be concerned with bringing about the desired changes in these various expenditures to maintain a balance.

The two main policies employed by the government are fiscal policy and monetary policy. The main instruments of the government’s fiscal policy are:

1. Direct taxation which alters private disposable income (i.e., a consumer’s income after taxation) and so private spending.
2. Indirect taxation also affects real private income; to the extent that indirect taxes are “passed on” in higher prices, they reduce real private income as a whole and to the extent they are “absorbed,” reduce profits (more unrealistic).
3. Rates of transfer payments (i.e., pensions, unemployment benefits) can be regarded as negative direct taxes and thus have the opposite effects. If an increase of transfers is financed by higher direct taxes there are conflicting effects on private spending, but this is likely to show some increase if “those receiving the transfers have a higher propensity to spend than those paying the increased direct tax.” (Translated from the jargon this means that those who receive the transfer payments will tend to spend nearly all their incomes, as their incomes are small, while those who are paying the increased taxation belong to higher income groups and thus will tend to spend a smaller proportion of their income as part of their income is devoted to savings and capital accumulation.)
4. Rates of subsidy payments have opposite effects upon private spending as do rates of indirect tax.
5. Current government spending on goods and services is a component of aggregate demand and so affects this directly.
6. Government capital formation, i.e., investment by the government, is also a component of aggregate demand. However insofar as investment, by increasing the stock of productive capital, makes for greater production in the future, it may be considered separately and more directly in relation to economic growth (in that investment decisions by the government are related to long-term objectives and thus should not be used for short-term fiscal adjustments). Some economists stress (mainly those in opposition to increased government intervention into the private economy) that government capital formation may be at the expense of private capital formation and that neither may lead to a proportional increase of productive capital and so of productivity. This argument ignores the necessity for government investment in so-called “unproductive” spheres such as education and health.

These are six instruments through which the government carries out its discretionary fiscal action. The government may foresee, but more often is made aware of, some malfunctioning of the economy and sooner or later takes compensatory action of a type and scale which they consider practicable [2], to correct it. However there are difficulties associated with timing such action. As a result of lags in applying corrective measures they could make things worse instead of better. One obvious case occurs if action to correct an upswing is so delayed as not to bite until a recession has already begun and so aggravates the downswing. This is what happened in Australia in the 1961 recession and also in 1971-72. Obviously a policy based on proper forecasts of the economic situation is likely to do better on this account than one which follows behind events.

There are other, more specific, difficulties associated with effective use of fiscal instruments. Firstly, current government spending on goods and services is largely connected with the protective and administrative functions of the state and should not (and cannot easily) therefore be subject to large or sudden..
changes. Secondly public works (government capital formation) are more easily varied than current expenditures (although their flexibility should not be exaggerated). However in employing this instrument, a conflict arises between the objectives of stability and growth. When inflation develops, the rule employed is that public works should be cut down to offset it; however, this possibility is limited in terms of the problems which arise. These are mainly problems arising from public investment lagging behind private investment, through lags in provision of roads, housing, schools, etc. This is why recent stress on economic growth has tended to favor the idea that government capital formation should be geared to long-term needs for development, rather than being subject to sudden alterations in order to offset business cycles.

Thus emphasis has tended to shift to taxation as the most effective fiscal instrument for controlling aggregate demand. However, in practical terms, here again there are some difficulties, involved with political expediency. Whatever the political party in power, it is well aware that increases, especially in direct taxation, will prove unpopular. Thus it is likely they will be unwilling to increase taxation by the necessary amount for effective control of inflation. [3]

There are several other difficulties associated with fiscal action to control inflation which are related to the argument about whether the inflation is cost-push or demand-pull determined. These will be discussed more directly before turning to the question of an incomes policy. However, before doing this we will look at the operation of monetary policy and its weaknesses.

Monetary policy concerns the regulation of credit conditions by the government and the central bank (the Reserve Bank in Australia). The importance of monetary policy depends upon the extent to which credit conditions, in turn, influence private spending—an area of much debate. Before considering some of the issues of this debate it is necessary to look at the major types of monetary instruments.

(1) The discount rate. The central bank, by fixing the rate and terms for its own loans to commercial banks and other financial intermediaries, exerts an immediate influence on short-term rates of interest and also, perhaps, on business expectations. Discount rates remain of some importance in regulating international movements of short-term capital between financial centres, but its more direct influence upon domestic conditions has greatly decreased due to such things as the growth of self-finance by business. [4]

(2) Open market operations in government securities. This is a more important instrument in the US than in Australia because of the smallness and narrowness of the capital market. Despite recent attempts to widen the range of dealers in the capital market, the scope for open-market operations in Australia is still limited. Thus the main method has been:

(3) Variations of reserve requirements which fix the deposits which commercial banks are required to hold with the central bank. However, this tends to be used fairly infrequently and only to effect rather major changes in credit.

(4) Government control of the amount of money in circulation (liquidity) through the selling and buying of government bonds.

(5) A variety of direct controls such as controls over stock markets or real estate credit in order to check speculation, regulation of hire-purchase credit, etc. Such controls were important under war-time inflation and were retained by many countries for some years later, but they have such serious weaknesses (including those which concern political considerations for a capitalist government) that their use greatly declined as central banks were allowed (sic) to apply more general instruments.

The first of the difficulties faced by monetary instruments is that there is little evidence to show that interest changes have any influence on the majority of investment and consumption. This is especially so as far as investment is concerned, where it has been noted that, in relation to other costs and risks involved, interest changes are relatively unimportant.

The second major difficulty encountered is that of control over liquidity. The central bank has some control of the liquidity of the commercial banks, i.e., it is able to control the amount of money which the banks will have available for borrowing. However, in the post-war years there has been a remarkable growth of non-bank financial intermediaries (e.g., finance and insurance companies, building societies, merchant banks, etc.). The liquidity structure of these intermediaries is not subject to central bank control. This means that, for example, if in a period of inflation the central bank wishes to reduce liquidity, it will call up reserves from the commercial banks thus restricting the amount of money
available for borrowing. However, it is unable to do this with the non-bank financial intermediaries who will continue to extend credit in periods when the government wishes to restrict credit. Non-bank financial intermediaries are also not subject to interest rate control so can lend money at more favorable rates than commercial banks. This also reduces the effectiveness of monetary instruments, especially during inflationary periods.

However, the possibilities for the effectiveness of monetary policy are not totally pessimistic. As shown in 1971-72 in Australia, credit restrictions imposed by the government and central bank do have some effect on business confidence. However, as also shown, this tends to be a rather adverse effect as it tends to over-emphasize the deflationary effect and add to rather than improve the problem.

Thus monetary policy would seem to lack effectiveness especially in periods of inflation. Yet emphasis on fiscal policy also has its difficulties as we have already seen. There are, however, two conditions under which some economists claim fiscal action may achieve the double target of a high level of employment and stability of prices. One occurs if changes in prices depend on excess demand for goods; the other if prices depend on wages and money wages themselves on excess demand for labor. These are the postulates of the demand-pull argument as a cause of inflation. However, in the case of demand inflation, although fiscal policy could perhaps ensure stability of prices by preventing demand for goods from rising as high as to cause excess demand, there would necessarily be a fall in the level of employment to a level which would prove unacceptable.

Having seen the weaknesses of conventional Keynesian measures of control, attention was given to more direct controls through incomes and prices policies to supplement the traditional Keynesian measures. The problem was not that Keynesian measures were totally ineffective but, as has been pointed out, they had unacceptable by-products: increased unemployment, the interruption of economic growth and electoral reversals for the government concerned.

Incomes policy in the form of a pure wages policy assumes that inflation is cost-determined (a fact which makes it suspect from the beginning). There are two views as to how increases in incomes and productivity can maintain consonance. First of these views is that if negotiated or arbitrated wages can be geared to productivity, this will give sufficient control over total incomes to ensure close conformity with the productivity rule; for non-wage components of total incomes can be relied on to remain a stable proportion of the total (this, in reality, is not always true because a prices rise in the cost of various non-wage components will also increase them, e.g., industries using steel products).

The second view is that incomes policies should embrace both wage decisions and price decisions. Gearing wages to productivity ensures that labor costs are, on average, constant; but the maintenance of stable prices under these conditions cannot be left to chance. Even if non-wage incomes could be relied on to rise at no greater rate than wages, gaining acceptance of the policy by labor makes it necessary that these be no apparent "bias" against wage increases [sic].

To maintain some role for the price mechanism in allocating resources and regulating demand, advocates of incomes policies usually recommend the gearing of money wages to productivity and the maintenance of stable prices should be treated as average requirements and not as firm rules to be applied in every case. In particular the following modifications are often suggested:

(1) wages should rise by more than the average in industries needing to attract labor and by less in industries where labor is contracting.

(2) prices should be allowed to rise in industries with below-average rates of productivity growth and fall in industries with above-average increases in productivity. [5]

(3) movements of prices should be allowed to take account of changes in non-labor costs. However, even the bourgeois economists recognize weaknesses in an incomes policy. [6]

(1) It requires subordination of particular interests and goals to the public interest (of course, the interests of the workers). If a trade union representing a particular group of workers agrees to smaller wage increases than it could have obtained, it must expect its members' real wages to be less. This occurs because any check to inflation resulting from this restraint affects no more than a fraction of the goods and services which its members buy.

(2) The policy will cause significant redistributions of income. It is effective against wage increases but has little or no impact on increases in administered prices. Thus the
proportion of income going to wage-earners will decline.

(3) It is nearly impossible for those administering the policy to examine all wage and price behavior. Rather they must concentrate on "strategic" decisions in the hope that these will somehow influence the remainder.

(4) Attempts to interfere with wage increases may have adverse effects on industrial relations.

Thus it can be seen that the weaknesses of an incomes policy are such that it is the wage earner who would bear most of the adverse consequences of its application. This is amply shown by the British experience.

So, what about a prices policy? Bourgeois economists argue that selective price control (all that can be hoped for) will certainly have some moderating effect but only at the cost of causing dislocation in the particular industries to which it is applied. They say the uncertainly created in the private sector could well have adverse effects on the level of private investment which in turn would have longer-term effects on future output growth.

There are a number of points which can be made about this pessimistic prescription. Firstly, as noted earlier, it is difficult for those administering a prices policy to examine all price behavior. They will even have difficulty in concentrating on "strategic" decisions to increase prices as shown by the difficulties experienced by the Prices Justification Tribunal.

Secondly, the amount of dislocation caused by a prices policy is over-exaggerated. Overseas experience shows overwhelmingly that the very best which can be expected from combined controls on prices and incomes is a temporary respite during which more durable and more complex policies can be worked out. Thus the operation of a prices policy over a short period would not have the time to greatly change investment decisions and cause dislocation.

Thus it can be seen that, at best, prices and incomes policies are only short-term solutions in terms of purchasing some breathing space for other anti-inflationary action. However, it must be emphasised that, even in the short term, an incomes policy will lead to adverse effects on the wage-earner whereas a prices policy will lead to some moderation.

Inflation is something which seems endemic to advanced capitalist societies. Given that these economies are committed to the objective of economic growth (which can be seen in the pronouncements of the O.E.C.D.) inflation will continue. Bourgeois economists will agree that a moderate rate of inflation is necessary to achieve economic growth. However, it is obvious that both economic growth and inflation benefit only one section of the community -- the capitalists. Thus it is not surprising that the current methods of controlling inflation all exhibit weaknesses but have enough effectiveness to provide sufficient control to maintain the economic system as it exists.

NOTES

1. This is part of the recent argument that inflation is transmitted from outside the domestic economy. It is important to note in this argument the extent to which multinational corporations are responsible for the transmission of inflation through both their pricing policies and their international money transfers.

2. It should be noted that this practicality is, at times, not unrelated to political considerations rather than purely economic considerations.

3. A particularly good example of political considerations overriding economic considerations, although not related to taxation, occurred in Australia early this year. Following the government's move to reduce liquidity by increasing interest rates on borrowing, Caucus, fearing unfavorable reactions from their constituents, demanded preferential interest rates for some home-owners and home-buyers. This action, especially occurring in the most over-inflated sector of the economy has, as one commentator pointed out, "impaired the functioning of an important element of the Government's economic policy." (Alan Wood, "Hot Politics Threaten G. Whitlam's Cool Economics," National Times, Sept. 24-29, 1973.)

4. This growth of self-financing by companies can be associated with the growth of the multinational corporation and has led to the decline of the power of finance capital as opposed to industrial capital.

5. It never ceases to amaze me that bourgeois economists seriously include in their models and prescriptions, provision for decreases in prices. They are aware, surely, that prices are extremely "inflexible in a downward direction" (to use the jargon) and yet they never fail to pay a great deal of attention to the possibility of a price decrease.

6. In fact, one would almost begin to wonder why they bother to advocate it in the first place -- if the answer were not so obvious.
In the last two years, Ivan Illich has become one of the major gurus of radical movements in education. His book “Deschooling Society” is widely available and widely read. Since his visit to Australia in 1972, learning centres and webs (his alternatives to schools) have been set up in several capital cities. His theories have influenced the current educational policy of the Australian Union of Students, as well as many individual academics, teachers and school and university students. It is therefore important to critically examine his ideas and the political consequences of their practice.

Illich was born into a middle-class Catholic family in Vienna in 1926. After studies in science and psychology he entered the Catholic priesthood, specialising in philosophy, and later obtained a doctorate in history. His career in the Church, which began in the New York Puerto Rican parish of Spanish Harlem, was characterised by a series of clashes with the institution. Dismissed from his position as the vice-chancellor of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico, because of his criticism of the Puerto Rican authorities, he founded, in 1961, the Centre for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico. This began as a Church-sponsored centre for missionaries, but Illich’s criticism of Church policy in Latin America led to withdrawal of Church support, and to Illich’s obtaining a suspension from his priestly duties, in 1968. Since then Illich has run the centre as a secular institution for cultural and educational studies, and many of his published essays are the result of his work there. He has evolved a wide-ranging critique of advanced industrial society, which is mainly expounded in his educational writings. (1) He has also written fairly extensively on the Church and relations between the developed and under-developed world. (2)

Illich is an inspiring writer. His powerful and evocative criticisms of schools and industrial society touch a chord of response in the reader, especially the disillusioned student or teacher. Unfortunately, those of his writings so far published are in the form of short essays, rather than of a systematically developed work. This means his work appears repetitive and sometimes ambiguous, and this difficulty is increased by his style, which tends to be polemical and assertive rather than analytical.

Illich sees advanced industrial society as one entity, making no distinction between capitalist and socialist economies. Since most of his examples, however, are taken from the United States, I will deal with his theories as they apply to advanced capitalist countries. Illich sees these as characterised by an ever-expanding consumer economy, controlled by impersonal bureaucracies which manipulate public tastes and wants in order to sell the goods produced. Illich, however, does not concentrate on the sphere of material production, but on the bureaucracies and institutions which produce services and “facts” for consumption: health and welfare institutions, transport systems, and, above all, schools. All of these require individuals to discard their ability to think and act for themselves and to passively accept as valid only those facts and services which come from the appropriate institution. He calls the attitudes of passivity, acceptance and consumerism, “institutionalised values,” and the institutions which require and promote them, “manipulative.” The main concern of manipulative institutions is the creation of more clients who will become addicted to them,
and thus any claims they have of alleviating social inequality are completely false. They actually increase social inequality by creating more addicts. Schooling confuses "teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence and fluency with the ability to say something new." (3)

"Imagination is 'schooled' to accept service in place of value. Medical treatment is mistaken for health care, social work for the improvement of community life ... health, learning, dignity, independence and creative endeavor are defined as little more than the performance of the institutions which claim to serve these ends, and their improvement is made to depend on allocating more resources to the management of schools and other agencies." (4) Acceptance of these values "leads inevitably to physical pollution, social polarisation and psychological impotence: three dimensions in a process of global degradation and modernised misery." (5) This misery is global in that advanced industrial countries are in the process of selling their institutions and values to the under-developed world in the name of modernisation.

Schooling is the central social ritual which creates institutionalised values, and mass education systems are the largest of all the "manipulative" institutions:

"School initiates the Myth of Unending Consumption. This modern myth is grounded in the belief that production inevitably produces something of value, and, therefore, production necessarily produces demand. School teaches us that instruction produces learning." (6) Illich believes schools shape industrially advanced societies, contrary to Marxist claims that other institutions are more fundamental. (7) They have become "the world's fastest-growing labor-market" and society's major employer, if students are counted as employees. It is the very size and nature of schools which Illich sees as leading to a crisis in schooling, since the system has become too costly for economic rationality: it is a high investment designed to individual wants and needs, in contrast to the addictive nature of manipulative institutions. On a world scale, schools define success, and therefore failure and frustration, for a vast majority which never enters them, and whose governments would be (and are) crippled economically by the cost of school systems.

Illich uses examples from under-developed countries, mainly in Latin America, to illustrate his claim that schools are both unnecessary and damaging. In rural village communities, the concepts of "childhood," "school," and "teacher" may not exist, but people still learn. Young people learn from others who have particular skills, in the family or in the village. The only qualifications of a "teacher" are that he knows his skill and that people are satisfied with his ability to impart it to others. Illich is highly critical of school accreditation because it proves only that its holder has learned institutionalised values, but gives him or her wealth, status, and power over others, regardless of actual ability or usefulness. Illich tends to suggest that the family, the city, or the slum in advanced industrial society could form a learning environment like that of the village, if schools were abolished and neutral, or rather, "convivial" opportunities for learning were set up in their place. He sees schools as the worst single feature of industrial society and the first and essential area for social change:

"Neither ideological criticism nor social action can bring about a new society. Only disenchantment with, and detachment from, the central social ritual, and reform of that ritual, can bring about radical change." (8)

Illich's formula for how this disenchantment is to occur is difficult to draw out. At times he recommends agitation for legal reforms to make school certification illegal and cut off their public finance. (9) At other times he predicts that an ecological and social disaster (the result of the misuse of resources and physical pollution by manipulative institutions) will make schools, and other institutions, inoperable. He does not suggest how radicals could prepare for such a crisis, except by refraining from reforming schools. (10) In the meantime, Illich sees each individual as being responsible for his own demystification, and tends to talk in terms of individual voluntary poverty, asceticism and rejection of manipulative institutions, rather than any collective action. (11)

Convivial institutions are defined by their ability to be used and controlled according to individual wants and needs, in contrast to the addictive nature of manipulative institutions. The former at present include telephone link-ups, subway lines, mail routes and public markets or exchanges. These exist "to be us-
ed, rather than to produce something." (12) Illich would see schools replaced by learning webs -- arrangements of various resources, including books, tapes, access to skilled persons, and matching services for those interested in the same areas of learning -- which could be used voluntarily by anyone of any age. He sees a necessity for giving "disadvantaged" groups guaranteed access to such resources, and suggests a system of educational credits, which would accumulate interest if used late in life.

Illich performs a valuable task in castigating radicals for being over-preoccupied with the quantity of schooling available, and with the explicit curricula content. He compels us to examine the nature of the schooling process, and its part in the general socialisation process. Most schools do effectively prevent students from taking initiatives or making decisions of any importance, and encourage and reward obedience, conformity and lack of initiative, and these processes persist even if curricula are made more "relevant" or radical.

However, Illich's theory of society, and therefore of the education system, is fundamentally inadequate, and his political prescriptions are therefore misleading. In placing manipulative institutions at the centre of the determinant forces in advanced industrial society, Illich ignores other determinants and also the dynamics by which the various forces and institutions interrelate. That he regards such considerations as irrelevant is obvious from his insistence that, for the purposes of his thesis, there is no difference between socialist and capitalist societies. He assumes that if social outcomes (school systems) are similar, there is no need to look further. But if the dynamics of capitalist and socialist societies differ, there is need to specify these differences if a theory of social change is being propounded.

I would argue that a theory of society critical of the manipulative nature of education systems and other institutions in capitalist societies must take into account that the productive forces are privately owned, and operated for the benefit of a few, not for general welfare. An adequate theory would have to take into account not only the nature of the economy, but also that of the state and the family, and the influence of all of these on the education system. For state-financed mass education systems were set up at a certain conjuncture in the development of capitalist societies, to perform particular functions, and to maintain and reproduce the existing distribution of wealth and power. At the end of the nineteenth century, these systems were introduced to produce the appropriate numbers of differently skilled workers required by the increasing complexity of the production process, and to ensure that such workers were docile and accepting of their "proper" place in society. (13) That this still holds true today is sometimes made explicit by employers, educationists and economists. For example, last year the Victorian Employers' Federation issued a rebuke to the Education Department of that state warning that students who showed "no respect for intellectual discipline, scholarship, democracy and our national heritage" were considered "unemployable." (14) Similarly, a university vice-chancellor sees education as a "great investment" by the government, from which the full value must be obtained in terms of an expanding economy. And the authors of a book on education and the economy explain that the links between the two are stronger than ever before:

"In an advanced industrial society, it is inevitable that the education system should come into very close relationship with the economy. Modern industrial technology, based on the substitution of electrical and atomic power for other forms, and introducing new and more intricate forms of the division of labor, transforms the scale of production, the economic setting of enterprise, and the productive and social role of labor. It is dependent to an unprecedented extent on the results of scientific research, on the supply of skilled and responsible manpower, and consequently on the efficiency of the educational system..."

"Education contains an unprecedented economic importance as a source of technological innovation, and the educational system is bent increasingly to the service of the labor force, acting as a vast apparatus of occupational recruitment and training. Social selection is added to its traditional function of social differentiation: it must promote new as well as maintain old elites." (16)

Thus the large numbers of failures and dropouts Illich sees as ultimately making the education system "uneconomic" as an investment, and so dysfunctional, are not necessarily dysfunctional in themselves. Rather, they can be seen to be the large numbers of unskilled workers required by the system. And
these academically unskilled workers do not work only in the productive sphere. The education system helps to "select" girls for their specific place as wives and mothers doing unskilled and unpaid but socially necessary work in the family, and encourages them to think of other work as transient and unimportant compared with this. (17) Hence women form a permanent reserve labor army, as well as reproducing labor power in the family, and so their "failure" in schools is functional to the system, and will not necessarily lead, as Illich claims, to an exposure of its irrationality. Because he ignores the importance of the fundamental areas of the economy, the state and the family, Illich is issuing a moral condemnation of the effects of a schooled society, rather than an analysis of it. Hence his prescriptions for change are in apocalyptic or vague terms: a crisis, individual poverty, changes in values and attitudes.

This is not to imply that the maintenance of a values consensus is not important for a given society to function. But it is vital to examine exactly how such a consensus is maintained. Illich's concept of "institutionalised values" is vague, and actually refers to two distinct processes. The first is the adoption of attitudes of acceptance and docility towards the status quo even by those who are exploited by it. This I will call ideological hegemony. The second process is the replacement of human aspirations and relationships by material commodities -- "consumerism" -- which can be called, as Gintis suggests, commodity fetishism. (18) Both of these processes exploit the majority and benefit a small minority: the owners and controllers of the means of production, and the main proponents of the ideology which preserves the system: the administrators and theorists of Illich's "manipulative" institutions and of other institutionalised values. (19) Illich's thesis on ideological hegemony is that individuals become psychologically "addicted" to institutionalised values: their minds are manipulated and they become incapable of behaving in any but a docile and passive way. This is an extremely rigid and static view of the nature of consciousness. Sallach (20) cites empirical evidence which suggests that the ideologies and beliefs of the majority are not the coherent result of psychological manipulation. Rather, they are underdeveloped, fragmented, and internally inconsistent. Findings also indicate that only those actually sharing in societal power need develop consistent values, and that the exploited classes suffer from the lack of a coherent alternative to, rather than the wholesale adoption of, hegemonic values.

These findings support an alternative thesis about the nature of ideological hegemony, which sees it as the result of limits placed on critical or revolutionary ideas, rather than as the result of inculcation of a coherent value system. This means that ideological institutions do not operate through individual psychological addiction, but rather through the omission of a political framework which is meaningful to the exploited, and by the imposition of structures which limit choices and behavior. Contrary to Illich's thesis, then, ideological institutions are seen as articulators and reinforcers of hegemonic values, but not as their source. Rather, the whole social and economic framework sets out a range of concrete social experience in which individuals have little choice but to fall in with hegemonic values. The mere removal of ideological institutions would not change these choices. As Gintis says:

"Abolition of addictive propaganda cannot 'liberate' the individual to a 'free choice' of personal goals. Such a choice is still conditioned by the pattern of social processes which have historically rendered him or her amenable to 'institutionalised values.' In fact, the likely outcome of de-manipulation of values would be no significant alteration of values at all." (21)

In this context, what Illich calls "irrational" consumerism of commodities, which he claims could be abolished if the addictive propaganda were abolished, appears not so much irrational as one of the reasonable options for social behavior in the whole context of capitalist social relations. Commodity fetishism, then, does not, necessarily, indicate manipulated minds. Thus Illich's thesis that the schools are the source of the social evils of psychological manipulation and consumerism, and that their abolition will end these evils, has no real basis. Those evils could persist in a capitalist society without schools. Nor do Illich's alternatives to schools hold much hope of revolutionary change. For instance, he tends to refer to the family as a natural learning situation where casual learning can and does occur without the distorting teacher-student relationship. He does not examine the hierarchies and manipulation which do exist within the family, and in particular the sexual division of labor where girls
"casually learn," or socially experience, inferiority. Social change which allowed more learning to take place in the family would not necessarily be any change at all. Similarly Illich's "convivial" learning webs could coexist with capitalist social structures and social relations and so would not in themselves change either the values or the social experience of the individual in capitalist society. They might mean, however, that more questioning and critical discussion could take place than is presently allowed in schools. But this would only lead to the fundamental change Illich claims he wants, if such criticism were put into practice outside the learning situation, i.e., if other capitalist social and economic institutions were attacked, and Illich does not advocate this.

Given the inadequacies of his analysis, Illich's political prescriptions tend to be ineffective. His basic advice is: abandon the schools, liberate yourselves as far as you can, and wait for the crisis. Radical teachers and students should leave schools to set up oases "free" from institutionalised values for themselves and a few others, while the majority remains in schools. This smacks of both crude ecological determinism, and of utopianism, to say the least. A way of combating the effects of schools on a political level would be to provide teachers and students with the political framework to analyse both schools and society, which schools assiduously avoid doing at the moment. This would mean a rigorous analysis of the processes and attitudes in schools and other institutions which Illich tends to merely describe, and requires activity in schools, as well as outside them.

Critics of Illich's thesis are sometimes brushed aside with the claim that their real aim is to keep students and people in general manipulated and "schooled": that they are afraid to "set them free." I am in agreement with Illich that people should be freed from the manipulation of both schooling and "childhood," particularly since so much of the latter is foisted on to women as their natural duty. To end such manipulation, and other social evils, however, we must have an adequate analysis and an effective strategy, and these Illich does not provide.

FOOTNOTES

4. DS, op.cit.
5. DS, p.2.
6. DS, pp. 55-56.
7. DS, p. 67.
8. DS, p. 54.
10. This crisis theory was advanced at a conference in Melbourne in 1972. See "Cold Comfort," Melb., AUS, June 1972, p. 2 for a transcript of Illich's speech.
11. AS. This was also evident in his failure to answer questions about political action in Melbourne. See note 9.
12. DS, p. 79.
13. In Britain, the latter aim was extremely explicit. After years of parliamentary opposition to public education, the Education Act was passed just after the extension of the franchise. Parliamentarians stated as reasons for this the need to cultivate the proper attitudes in the voting masses. See Simon, B., "Education and the Labour Movement," London, 1960, and for the USA, Cremin, L., "The Transformation of the School," New York, 1964.
17. See Roper, T., "The Disadvantaged 50%" in "Cold Comfort," April 1972. Roper gives evidence that girls' marked failure as a group in schools is largely a result of the expectations school and society at large (especially their families) encourage them to have about their future.
19. e.g., the legal system. Illich shows some awareness of the power of the owners and controllers of the means of production over what is produced and how, and over the environment, which is shaped for the use of such commodities. He gives the example of motor car manufacture and advertising, and government-built super-highway systems (DS, pp. 84-86).
20. In general, however, Illich is not explicit about in whose interests institutionalised values operate, seeing them rather as an irrational addiction shared by all.
"We are but little children meek
On pick and shovel all the week
The more we do the more we may
It makes no difference to our pay.

Ah hell!" (1)

This "hymn" from one of the Relief Workers' journals of 1935 suggests the sense of futility and helplessness experienced by the relief workers in the depression. The relief worker was employed on unskilled laboring jobs -- roadmaking, afforestation and other "public improvement" schemes -- often in areas far from home, usually under degrading, unpleasant and insanitary conditions, with no security of employment. The pay was minimally better than the current dole rate (and in some cases worse), especially after fares and other expenses were deducted, and was far below the basic wage. Relief workers were isolated from the trade union movement, which throughout the '30s showed little real attempt to organise the unemployed; geographical isolation and the intermittent nature of the work made organisation difficult for relief workers.

Yet by 1936 there was a large degree of organisation among relief workers, who were able by their efforts to win recognition and support from trade unions and the community, and, more importantly, to establish some measure of control over their abominable working conditions. This is all the more extraordinary in view of their lack of any bargaining strength, for the work was unnecessary, in the sense that it had only been instituted to get them off the dole, there was a large reserve army of unemployed to take the place of strikers or dismissed workers, and dissidents could be struck off the dole, leaving their families completely helpless.

The relief workers' struggles have been largely ignored by historians; even those who wonder why resentment and dissatisfaction were not expressed more strongly in the depression (2) ignore one of the most significant protest movements of the decade.

It was significant because it was a rank and file organisation of workers who were outside the Arbitration system; once a job was declared "Relief Work," awards were suspend-
The unemployed and militant papers of the '30s portray unemployment as an inherent part of the capitalist system, and the thousands unemployed in the mid-'30s must have seen little escape from the alternation of the dole and relief work. In 1936, 66,702 males registered at the NSW Labor Exchange were asked their employment record over the last three years. The average experience was 29 months unemployment, 5¼ months with a private employer, and five weeks on government or council work (excluding relief work). In the 29 months of unemployment, the average worker spent 17¾ months on relief work, 6¾ months on food relief, and 4½ months without any relief. Most of those registered were unskilled. (6)

While my main concern here is with the relief workers' organisations and struggles which followed the widespread introduction of relief work in 1933, it is necessary briefly to outline the development both of government policy and of the unemployed movement. In 1930 the Nationalist government of NSW levied a special tax of 3d in the pound on workers' wages (raised by Lang to 1/- in the pound) to provide an Unemployment Relief Fund. An Unemployment Relief Council was formed to "formulate schemes for the absorption in any public works or private enterprises of persons out of employment."

The Prevention and Relief of Unemployment Act stated that when the Governor declared any work to be "a work provided for the relief of unemployment, all wages hours and mode, terms and conditions of employment of any person employed upon such work shall be such as the Minister may from time to time direct ... notwithstanding the conditions of employment, whether statutory or otherwise, or of any award or industrial agreement."

Thus traditional trade union principles of award rates and arbitration were abrogated.

When Lang succeeded Bavin in 1930, pressure from unions and the unemployed forced him to curtail special relief works, which were reintroduced by the Stevens government in 1932.

Businessmen, churchmen and community leaders continually berated the dole system: the moral fibre of the unemployed was being sapped by charity, and society was getting no recompense for its tax money. In an effort to cut down the number on the dole, Stevens reduced its value and introduced a widespread system of Emergency Relief Works in May 1933. Under this system, the Relief Fund paid the wages of men employed by local councils on public works, and councils paid the costs of the operation. Within a year, the number of "dolers" had been reduced from 83,151 to 28,759, and the number of relief workers had risen from 34,229 to 75,648. (7) In 1936 Emergency Relief Works were reduced in favor of rationed employment in government works departments, and more were forced back on to the dole.

To be eligible for relief, either the dole or relief work, the worker had to have been unemployed for two weeks prior to making an application for relief, and had to be registered at a Labor Exchange for seven days.

The Permissible Incomes Regulations rendered many unemployed ineligible for the dole for the total weekly income of the applicant's family had to be below a very low point on an income scale (to May 1934, a man, wife and one child were allowed an income of one pound a week). Although the relief worker received more than the man on the dole, payment was still pitiful. In August 1933, the NSW basic wage for a man, wife and one child was 3pds.8/6, Stevens having reduced Lang's basic wage in 1932. The doley with a wife and child received 14/- a week, and the relief work 1pd.0/3 for 13 hours' work. The number of hours worked was increased according to the number of dependents, as was the scale of permissible extra income. Hours and wages were slightly increased in May 1934 and wages were increased again in 1935, but, when wages were highest, the single man made only 12/- a week and the married man with one child only 1pd.5/7. Out of this, the relief worker had to pay for fares, clothing and rent, as well as food.

By 1935, there were at least two large organisations of relief workers, as well as numerous unaffiliated local groups. One of the main difficulties in studying this movement is that groups were often ephemeral, for relief workers were continually moved from job to job, and records do not reveal the extent of the movement. The established press was determined to show that prosperity had returned, and after 1932 gave scant space to the workless, and even the communist press, after about 1933, tended to stress the importance of the struggles within the unions, to the neglect of the relief workers. Yet the records that do exist reveal militant and active locals throughout the inner industrial areas, on the northern and southern coalfields, in Broken Hill and in country areas such as Dubbo and...
Orange. Again, the records mainly note the activities of the successful groups. No exact estimate of the extent or success of relief work organisation can be made. Yet a fairly cursory examination of relief workers' journals, communist papers and daily newspapers reveals evidence of at least a couple of hundred protests ranging from strikes lasting more than a month and drawing in a large number of workers from an area, to small stoppages. In almost every case, at least some demands were met. One indication of their effectiveness is the introduction by municipal councils of committees at which relief workers could press their claims.

It is only too easy to generalise about the grievances and actions of unemployed and relief workers, and to regard them as a stable and homogeneous group. But experiences differed greatly, as did attitudes towards relief work itself. The unemployed in the inner Sydney suburbs spent much less time on relief work than those in country and outer metropolitan areas. Single men were often sent to relief camps. In some areas local men, or returned soldiers, or married men, might be given preference. In some areas, the relief workers' organisation might grow out of the old Unemployed Workers' Movement groups, in some it was initiated by visiting delegates from the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers, in some it was a non-political group with moderate demands. Most of the groups, however, seem to have been organised spontaneously by rank and file workers on the jobs, who, after hearing of the actions of other relief workers, would organise a local and then ask for affiliation with the main body.

From the introduction of the P.R.U. Act in 1930, the Communist Party consistently attacked the principle of "Work for the Dole," and warned that it would lead to the introduction of "Economic Conscription" for private enterprise, and that the government hoped to form an "Army of Scabs." Relief work, however, was not introduced on a large scale until 1933, and the demands of the communist U.W.M. and other unemployed groups in the period 1930-33 centred mainly around anomalies in the dole system. Trade union leaders in this early period, while preventing Lang from reducing the basic wage or suspending awards, seem to have been negligent of the threat posed by relief works. Concerned as they were almost solely with preventing the further undermining of the position of their employed members, they left the organisation of the unemployed to the C.P.

Labor ideology and the trade union structure was such that even in militant unions the officials were left with most of the decision-making, and officials were unused, unable and even unwilling to adopt new tactics to meet depression conditions, or new methods of organisation, to include the unemployed. Similarly the unemployed were so deeply imbued with the Australian traditions of arbitration and dependence on union officials that it was difficult to organise them, or to encourage them to action on their own behalf. In late 1931, discussing the drift away from the U.W.M., Kavanagh pointed out that "the mass psychology is one of pathetic dependence on some official or leader," that there was no tradition of struggle outside the legal framework, and that the unemployed were reluctant to take part in illegal demonstrations. (8)

A country worker in 1934 blamed the bad organisation of bush workers on "the criminal folly of arbitration, combined with the deliberate betrayal ... by the A.W.U. officials." (9)

Although a number of mass protests against the dole and evictions did occur in the early years of the depression, they usually relied on the initiative and organising skill of the militant leaders. In the Glebe Dole Struggle of 1932 mass support grew from 200 to 1000 in a few days, but quickly dwindled when the C.P. withdrew its leadership, and when other militants, exhausted by arrests and police bashings, failed to exert continual pressure. (10) The unemployed were extremely hard to organise; they had little in common except unemployment, and their only common meeting ground was the dole dump. Unemployment was for many a new and disorienting experience, and morale was low.

With the change to relief work, however, the situation for the unemployed was at least familiar, if still depressing. There was a focus for organisation, the work gang, despite the rapid turnover within the gangs, and the unemployed could use the traditional methods of protest. It seems that morale was higher among relief workers, and they were more confident of their rights and their ability to fight for them. By 1935-36 the trade union leaders had realised the dangers of economic conscription, especially after the introduction of relief work to railways and other industries, and gave recognition and support to the relief workers' demands, again raising their determination to fight. The struggle was
predominantly organised, however, by rank and file workers.

The introduction of Emergency Relief Work in May 1933 gave a new impetus to the dwindling Unemployed movement, which manifested in a sudden growth of relief workers' organisations.

The main relief workers' organisation was the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers. In 1932, the C.P., under instruction from the Red International of Labor Unions, had merged the local U.W. M. groups into a broader system of local united front councils, which were linked with a state council. This was an attempt to broaden the base of the unemployed movement, for the U.W. M. militants had alienated support in some areas.

It seems from the unemployed newspapers of late 1933 that many of these local councils affiliated to form District Councils of Unemployed and Relief Workers, which were in turn linked with the State Council. The few unemployed newspapers that remain suggest that by late '33 this system of organisation encompassed most of the Sydney metropolitan area, although of course the support for these councils may be overstated.

The weekly paper of N. 6 District, which covered the St. George area of Mortdale, Hurstville, Kogarah, Bexley and Rockdale claimed a weekly circulation of 5000. "The Vanguard," paper of No. 3 District Council (Camperdown, Newtown, Darlington, Erskineville, St. Peters and Marrickville) refers to the activities of councils in Manly-Warringah, Cumberland, Sutherland, Balmain-Rozelle, Canterbury-Bankstown, North Sydney and Newtown. Papers were produced by groups in Lidcombe, Randwick, and Five Dock-Drummoyne, the latter claiming a circulation of 3000. While the central group on the State Council were usually communists, the local and district councils seem to have been non-sectarian and fairly representative of the rank-and-file workers. The councils were linked by their common support of the State Council's demands. These ranged from the main demand of "full award rates and conditions at full-time rates of employment" to more immediate appeals for four weeks' work before Christmas, full relief sustenance during stand-off periods, a rent allowance and the prevention of evictions, and payment on the job at cessation of work. The State Conference held in August 1934 was attended by 204 delegates from throughout NSW, and claimed to be representative of 68,000 workers. This figure does seem overstated, for in June 1934 there were 28,759 on the dole and 75,648 on relief work.

However, the State Council did build a broad base of support, and the 1936 Conference was attended by 301 delegates, representing 81 local branches, 10 District Councils, 40 jobs and 11 women's organisations, as well as fraternal delegates from churches, municipal councils and the Sydney and Newcastle Labor Councils.

While the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers was the largest organisation, there were at least two others, and many unaffiliated groups. The Dole Workers' Union, formed by the Trades and Labor Council, seems to have been ineffectual, and by 1934 the Labor Council was supporting the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers. The Unemployed and Relief Workers' Union, which had branches in Balmain, Lane Cove, Marrickville, Leichhardt, Daceyville, Waterloo and North Sydney, claimed a membership of 600 in early 1935, and the Balmain branch alone had over 200 members in August 1935. This union was formed by a group of expelled or disaffected communists led by Jack Sylvester, and though its demands were essentially those of the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers, it was denied support by the Trades and Labor Council. This ban and the sectarian struggles severely hampered its progress, for communist speakers agitated against it.

The Employed and Unemployed Workers' Association of Cabra Vale is typical of the more moderate groups which were not affiliated with the State Council. Whilst it demanded award rates for relief workers and "the total abolition of work for the dole in its present form" (my italics) it did not oppose the principle of relief work and gladly reported that the scheme at Cabra Vale was to be continued.

One of the main organisational difficulties faced by militants in the early years of the depression was that the unemployed generally did see the work as relief in the full sense of the word. A campaign "Against-Work-for-Dole" was instituted by the C.P. but although committees were set up in such areas as Newcastle and Goulburn the campaign was negative in intent and had little success. The militants were forced to realise that "those opposed to relief work on principle ... cannot
take up an attitude of ‘splendid isolation’... All the militant minority can do under the circumstances is to try at all times to influence the majority against this particular form of exploitation. They must go on to the jobs with the others and unceasingly urge the necessity of fighting for better conditions. The whole task of the minority is to show their fellow workers how relief work can be turned into permanent work, by organised effort.”

(25) The State Council pointed out that the starting point for building organisation was around particular everyday demands, although “many of us at times feel that such matters are too frivolous... Many would suggest substituting some more solid demands, such as fulltime work at award rates.” (26)

If I have concentrated so far on the organisational aspects of the movement to the neglect of the struggle of the relief workers themselves, it is largely an attempt to correct the bias of earlier studies, and to suggest the widespread and diverse nature of the movement. Davidson makes no mention of the Relief Workers’ Council or the united front councils of the employed and unemployed, but claims a temporary resurgency of the U.W.M. in 1934-35, which then declined. He states “it survived until the war because the fear of unemployment lasted longer than unemployment.” (27) The point is that unemployment lasted much longer than is generally believed. Not only have the organisations and struggles of the relief workers been neglected, but the very existence of unemployed and relief workers after the supposed return to prosperity in 1933 or ‘34 has been ignored.

Perhaps the most significant strikes were those in which the relief workers expressed their class solidarity with the employed workers. The Broken Hill unemployed, in 1934 and 1935, successfully resisted attempts to force them to work at rates that undercut those of the municipal employees; because of their militancy and the support of the Barrier Industrial Council “the Government did not attempt to force them to accept, nor did it stand any off the dole for refusing... work.” (28) The West Wallsend relief workers’ strike began when 680 relief workers struck against the government’s attempts to speed up the work. The strike demands quickly broadened, and the strikers’ demands for the “non-application of the Returned Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Preference Act, inasmuch as it violates the principles of trade unionism” won them the support of the trade unions, mines and work-shops. This Act provided that employers should give preference to returned servicemen despite the regulations of any industrial agreement or award. (29)

Relief work struggles were most successful when backed by the support of the unions or the community. By 1935 unions were more conscious of the relief work threat, and rather belatedly responded to the unemployed workers’ call for unity. The Labor Council called a conference in April, to be attended by two delegates from every union, two from the Railway Shop Committees, and one from every relief workers’ council affiliated to the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers. (30) The unions realised the danger when Kirby, a member of the Water and Sewerage Employees’ Union employed at award rates, was informed suddenly that his work was now declared “relief work” and would be paid at relief work rates.

The Arbitration Court ruled that “once any work was declared ‘relief work’ then the award no longer applied.” The Labor Council directed that employed and unemployed should fight the introduction of relief work to railway and tramway services, and began a campaign against the undermining of awards and dismissals of workers. It also called for an extra day’s work per week for relief workers, a dole increase and rent allowance. (31)

Many strikes or protests were initiated over the issue of margins for skilled labor, which was seen as a basic union principle. A number of extra marginal rates were cut in early 1935, and the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers solicited the aid of the unions and Labor Council, and called for struggle in all districts. (32) A large and successful strike, lasting at least three weeks, erupted at Como when the penny-an-hour margin for spawling was discontinued. A rank and file committee of 40 men and women was established, under the leadership of the State Council, and the support of local residents, relief workers and the Shire Council was won. (33) Under the relief work system, local councils, as the employers, had to enforce the wage decisions of the government, although at times they were more in sympathy with the workers. As a result of the Como agitation five municipal councils requested the government to grant award margins and conditions to rockchoppers. (34) The relief workers’ protests often had a “snowballing” effect; militancy over an issue
of margins or conditions would lead to dismissals, the demands would be broadened to include reinstatement of the sacked workers, and a more viable and self-confident organisation would develop. Many strikes began over the victimisation of certain workers.

The relief workers at Banksia were put to work in a filthy, stagnant sewerage channel. All work stopped when two men were unable to continue because of the conditions. When the ganger was sacked for refusing to force the men into the channel 200 relief workers went on strike, receiving the support of the gang that was sent to replace them. A rank and file committee of 30 was formed to organise relief, propaganda and social committees, and the support of the local relief workers' council was won. The new demands included the payment of fares. (35)

Seventy Bellambi relief workers went on strike for three and a half days over unhealthy job conditions and the "speeding-up" tactics of the Public Works Department; when some minor concessions were made they returned to work. When they were not allowed to make up the time lost, and the ganger was sacked for refusing to speed up the work, all but one worker went on strike again. By this time the morale and determination of the men was high, and the strikers were well organised and militant. The rank and file job committee was enlarged to include relief, propaganda and entertainment committees, and public support was won at mass meetings. Strikers' representatives spoke at meetings throughout the South Coast area, and relief committees were established at Thirroul and Fairy Meadow. The women were brought into the struggle. After two weeks all but three of the men remained on strike, and after three weeks their demands were granted. (36)

Relief workers were sometimes able to enforce their demands just by the threat of a strike. When four men were sacked at Merrylands a representative of the Dole Workers' Council and four workers visited 10 gangs in the area. All gangs stopped work and marched to the Mayor's office, and a stopwork meeting and march were planned for next day. The men were reinstated. (37)

The importance of strikes such as these must be measured by more than just the concessions won. The secretary of the Bellambi Strike Committee noted that "quite a number of men have revealed organising and speaking ability of no mean order. The Bellambi men and their comrades throughout the district have learned much from this struggle, and face the future with a confidence greatly strengthened." (38) Significant also was the democratic organisation of the struggle.

Workers were often successful in enforcing better job facilities, for conditions were indescribably vile. There was often no sanitation or an inadequate water supply, and workers were not issued with boots for trench work. Accidents were common, as many workers were inexperienced. (39) One paper noted: "There are hundreds of men working for the dole who are not in a fit state of health to do manual work." (40) A doleworker died at Fivedock after being forced to work in drenching rain. He had been out of work for two years and his health was undermined. (41) Even the most minor matters of cleanliness and safety had to be fought for: first aid kits, shelter sheds, sanitary accommodation, boots, coverings for water tins, morning tea time, drinking mugs and water bags. (42)

Single men were often forced into country relief work camps, and were cut off the dole and relief work if they refused. Workers from Fivedock and Drummoyne who refused afforestation work because of the long distances involved were left destitute. (43) The State Council noted that this scheme "served the twofold purpose of railroading the unemployed out of settled districts, where there are facilities for organisation, and ... of placing a supply of surplus labor at the disposal of wealthy country employers, who advance their claim for cheap labor under the slogan - 'Shortage of workers in rural districts'." (44) Mass protests, such as the ones at Lithgow and Bathurst, were of no avail. (45) Conditions were, if possible, worse than usual. At a camp at Bowning (near Yass) young Sydney men were employed on the roads. One account noted: "The tents are too close to each other. The lavatory pit is situated at about eight or nine yards from the camp... In wet weather the vicinity of the camp is a bog-hole and the water runs through the tents. The men work 30 hours per week in five days of six hours. Wages are 2pds.8/6 per week! There are no marginal rates for skilled labor... Workers receive no compensation if they are injured." (46) No wonder they were referred to as "Slave Camps." The situation was particularly disorienting for city workers, who had to adapt to the country conditions as well as the loneliness of separation.

The camp workers were isolated, and it was hard to organise the necessary publicity and...
community support for a strike. However, attempts by the Pastoral Workers' Industrial Union (a breakaway group in opposition to the A.W.U.) to organise Bushworkers' Committees had some success, and even if their demands were largely neglected, their morale was lifted. Committees were established at Orange, Bourke, Armidale, Uralla, Moree, Walgett, Quambone, Coonamble and Cassilis, and were able to win some concessions.

It has only been within the scope of this article to deal with the movement up to 1936. After then, the movement seems to have dwindled, for relief works were curtailed and in 1937 and 1938 there were more on the dole than on relief work. Further study needs to be done, right to the end of the decade. In March 1940 a group called the Unemployed Workers' Union distributed a paper among the Glebe, Paddington and metropolitan unemployed.

By 1936 most local organisations seem to have been drawn into the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers' net. The Northern Provincial Council coordinated the work of 50 locals through five District Councils; the South Coast District Council linked a dozen locals; 20 locals were affiliated with the Western District Council; in the metropolitan area there were five District Councils and 50 locals.

The movement could point to half a dozen large successes in 1935-36. The Concord West Swamp Job strike, lasting five weeks, won a 20% increase in food relief and a 20% increase in relief work, costing the government 800,000 pounds. West Wallsend workers brought about the discontinuation of the preference for ex-servicemen in obtaining relief work. There were big strikes at Corrimal, Dubbo and Finley, a campaign for award wages at Maitland, and a successful fight against the introduction of "slave camps" in the Blaxland shire. Petersham workers held a successful campaign against the closing down of relief works and mass dismissals. Newcastle workers won full representation on the Labor Council, and organised 12 radio broadcasts to publicise their demands.

Just as important were the minor concessions won on the job. But the success of the movement should not be overstated, though it is tempting to do so if only to prove that this forgotten movement really existed. Relief workers were unable to enforce their demand for full-time work, conditions on many jobs remained bad, and pay was still miserably low. The victories must be measured against the injuries sustained: many militants were arrested, convicted, and bashed, and many were thrown off the dole for some time for refusing to work.

The most significant point about the movement is the organisation itself. The depression was an unfamiliar, disorienting and alienating experience; the unemployed were forced into dependence on government and private charity and in the early years seem largely to have accepted their fate. Although militant eviction fights and demonstrations occurred, they were instigated by communists and the rank and file unemployed showed little initiative or inclination to organise themselves. Although relief workers, by their exclusion from the arbitration system, had no official rights, by demanding concessions over margins and conditions they asserted their right as workers to some control over the job. The unemployed finally established themselves as part of the organised labor movement instead of powerless charity bums.

Equally important is the movement's manner of organisation, which was characterised by local autonomy and rank and file control. Although CP fractions and the communist organisers on the State Council played a leading role in some agitations (such as the West Wallsend strike), the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers was no communist puppet front but a genuine united front of relief workers, unions and some sections of the community. Most locals seem to have grown out of an ad hoc committee instituted to fight some grievance; self-confidence and determination to fight would grow, spurred on by reports from other areas, a permanent group would be formed and affiliation with other groups sought. The State Council produced a blueprint of how organisation should be built, stressing that the job committee should only suggest action: "The final decision must rest with the rank and file."

Although the State Council sometimes assisted a struggle, most seem to have been initiated and managed by the rank and file. Jobs were too numerous and too scattered for the State Council to maintain any tight control.

Finally, no matter what the success or lasting importance of the organisation was, the movement is significant as one of the few cases in 20th-century Australian history of workers organising a struggle outside the confines of the arbitration system.
FOOTNOTES

1. Redlight! Organ of the Unemployed and Relief Workers’ Union. Undated, 1935.
4. The Tocsin, journal of the Balmain Unemployed Workers’ Movement, 6/1/1933.
5. Sydney Morning Herald, 12/7/1934, p. 10.
11. Also called, at various times, the Central Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers.
12. The Torch, vol. 1 no. 11, 29/8/33; vol. 1 no. 15, 24/11/33.
14. The Mattock (Lidcombe Emergency Relief Workers) Vol.1, No.16, 23/11/33; The Beacon Light (Randwick District Council of Unemployed) 25/11/33; The Clarion (Employed and Unemployed of Fivedock and Drummoyne) 24/11/33.
15. Tom Payne seems the main organiser; also W. H. McKenzie and Matt Hade.
16. The Clarion; The Beacon Light.
17. How We Fight, n.d., pub. by T. Payne for the State Council of Unemployed and Relief Workers.
25. The Tocsin, 14/2/35, p. 3.
27. A. Davidson, The Communist Party of Australia, 1969, pp. 60-61, 84. By 1934 the U.W.M. as such was defunct in NSW, and the State Council of U&RW was not just a regrouping under another name.
28. WW, 1/5/34, p. 6; 15/6/34, p. 5; 24/7/34, p. 10; 8/2/35, p. 5.
30. WW, 15/3/35, p. 5.
33. WW, 25/1/35, p. 6; 1/2/35, p. 5.
34. WW, 1/2/35, p. 5.
35. WW, 21/9/34, p. 6.
36. WW, 22/6/34, p. 6; 29/6/34, p. 1; 20/7/34, p. 1.
37. WW, 1/9/33, p. 1. For other strikes on this issue see ibid. 13/7/34, p. 6 (Holroyd); 9/3/34 (Merrylands); 15/9/33, p. 4; 19/1/34, p. 4 (Granville -- 700 men); 15/2/35, p. 6 (Corrimal); 8/3/35, p. 5 (Botany); 24/11/33, p. 1 (Manly); 15/2/35, p. 4 (Orange).
38. WW, 20/7/34.
40. The Beacon Light, 25/11/33, p. 2.
41. ibid., 28/7/33, p. 4.
42. ibid., p. 4; WW, 29/9/33, p. 2; WW, 16/11/34, p. 5; Redlight!, WW, 15/2/35, p. 4.
43. The Tocsin, 22/11/34, p. 2.
45. WW, 8/5/34, p. 5, and 11/5/34, p. 5.
46. The United Bushworker, official organ of the PWIU, 20/8/34, p. 4.
48. ibid., 26/11/34, p. 2; 5/9/34, p. 3.
49. NSW Year Book, 1936-37, p. 167. (June 1937: Dole, 30,135; Relief work, 24,975. March 1938: Dole, 30,811; Relief work, 19,943.)
50. The Voice of the Jobless, 7/3/1940.
54. e.g., WW, 15/9/33, p. 4; 15/2/35, p. 6; 22/2/35, p. 5; 23/2/34, p. 6; 20/10/33, p. 3; 29/9/33, p. 4.
55. WW, 22/2/35, p. 6. Granville workers, following a successful campaign for the restoration of Special Food Orders, held a meeting to organise a group on State Council lines.
56. T. Payne, How We Fight, 1934, p. 5.
Psychiatry or anti-psychiatry?

[Talk delivered at a forum organised by Melbourne University Debating Union, on July 12, 1973.]

-- Douglas Kirsner.

Psychiatry is that branch of medicine which treats patients whose presenting symptoms are mental. Psychoanalysis is only one form of psychiatry. A great number of psychiatrists, regarding psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically oriented theory as "unscientific," prefer more physically based modes of treatment such as tranquillisers, anti-depressants and electro-convulsive therapy (E.C.T.). Only a small number of people attending psychiatrists receives psychoanalysis or psychoanalytically oriented therapy.

The anti-psychiatric critique focuses on the actual treatment of patients in institutions such as psychiatric and mental hospitals as well as the psychiatric wards of general hospitals. Particular attention is given to patients diagnosed schizophrenic. These patients occupy a high proportion of hospital beds and it is unusual for anything other than physical treatments to be used. Indeed, many psychiatrists, following Freud in this matter, believe that effective psychotherapeutic treatment of the psychoses is impossible.

When they refer to psychiatry, the anti-psychiatrists are primarily concerned with the treatment of those hospitalised as schizophrenic, although their critique extends over most of the area with which psychiatry is concerned, and outside traditional psychiatry into the more general social and political arena.

The most well-known anti-psychiatrists are two British psychiatrists R. D. Laing and David Cooper. One might say that the cornerstone of their critique of psychiatry is that most contemporary psychiatric practice is violent. Patients are not only violated through their being regimented inside institutions by staff more interested in efficiency than in people, nor only in their being subjected to E.C.T. or drugged out of their minds, but also in that their very experience is invalidated and disconfirmed. They are regarded as victims of a disease process called mental illness rather than as persons who are acting in particular ways which are potentially socially intelligible to both patients and psychiatrists.

But the shocked or tranquillised conformity of the inmates of mental institutions reflects outside society from the micro-social level of the family through to the macro-social level of society and its institutions. People are mystified into conformity with the group ideology. Individuals are expected to internalise and take as their own what mother, father, family, school teacher, government, boss, wife, husband, psychiatrist, church and country expect of them. What they as potentially autonomous individuals want to be or feel is invalidated and destroyed rather than fostered and confirmed. People are brought up to conform to the standards of others in a socially approved normality. Deviance is...
punished as “bad” or “mad,” and the punishers confirmed as good, sane and normal. Thus the deviant often acts as a scapegoat for the group.

Laing can point out: “Society highly values its normal man. It educates children to lose themselves and to become absurd, and thus to be normal. Normal men have killed perhaps 100,000,000 of their fellow normal men in the last 50 years.” Legally sane people have held the world on the brink of nuclear annihilation since Hiroshima. These people are far more dangerous both to themselves and to others than are the inhabitants of mental institutions who believe they have atom bombs inside them. The political leader or the general is patriotic and highly respected; the mental patient is labelled sick and denigrated. How can a society centred around waste and destructiveness in which people are treated as commodities and have often lost themselves in the process legitimately label deviants from its norms as ill in a denigrating way?

Laing and Cooper see schizophrenia as more socially intelligible than is normally assumed. It is often largely an attempt to live in an unlivable family situation in which the child is involved in constant double bind situations. He is enjoined to do something, and if he does it, he is punished for so doing. In particular, when a child is encouraged to express himself, and when he does so his feelings are not accepted, no move is acceptable. The child withdraws into himself when his experience is systematically invalidated early enough and often enough. Unless the child can achieve some degree of autonomy in his first year, later systematic invalidations by significant others may finally lead to a schizophrenic breakdown. This is not to say that genetic factors are not relevant, but they do not normally cause schizophrenia. They can however predispose people towards it.

Laing sees diagnosis as literally a seeing through of a situation. This involves understanding the context in which the schizophrenic has lived. The particular micro-history of the family can be considered not only as conjoined with the rest of society, but also as an autonomous world of relatively private meanings and symbols. By approaching the family context phenomenologically without presuppositions but with sympathy and an endeavor to bring out the concealed messages and meanings in that particular group, the actual social environment of the member designated schizophrenic may be somewhat illuminated. Laing and Cooper set up the anti-hospitals Villa 21 and Kingsley Hall in which individuals were treated as agents who could learn to trust others and make a “new beginning” in a free and accepting environment.

Conventional psychiatry on the other hand treats the presenting schizophrenic out of context. The patient is viewed as a victim to the disease of schizophrenia. So little account is taken of his environment that, if physical treatments are successful and the presenting symptoms controlled, the patient is actually sent back into the family for its loving care. The environment is unchanged and if the patient becomes “ill” again, the severity of his “illness” is confirmed and he is sent back to the hospital again. And so on. Thus for much of his life the schizophrenic is invalidated as a person. When denigrated and designated by his family as “sick,” he internalises their prescription and invalidates himself as a person. He may act in increasingly bizarre ways and when he reaches hospital the psychiatrists only see the results of a life-long process, and this without knowing the family situation in any detail. The doctors who are the authorities treat only the symptoms and make the patient still less aware of what is happening to him. This labelling process results in the patient regarding himself less and less as a person.

The sick role often becomes a collusion among patient, family and psychiatrist. To take a less extreme case: doctors, and particularly psychiatrists, are often regarded as god-like final authorities. People attending surgeries feel dissatisfied if they are told there is nothing wrong and that they do not need prescriptions. The general escape from freedom in our society involves people wanting others to take responsibility for their lives. Doctors who play God are in many cases colluding with their patients’ wishes. This is not to say that anybody has evil intentions. Psychiatrists in particular genuinely believe that they have many of the answers and correct assessments as much as patients believe that they themselves have not. In this situation cure is equated with healing.

However cure consists solely in the alleviation of presenting symptoms, where mental and physical illness are seen as having the same basic structure. Healing, on the other hand, involves a genuine encounter with the person of the patient. He may come squarely to confront and emotionally to understand problems, and grow towards a wholeness of his personality. This does not involve conforming to the ideals of others, but to his own. The schizophrenic person has been led to believe that his own inner self is so bad that he dare not bring it out into the open, both for his own protection and that of others. His natural self lies concealed behind a social facade which both he and others often take to be himself.

Laing and Cooper emphasise that there are often grave social risks in being one’s natural self, and that prudence is essential. People in
volved in alienating, meaningless work, who live in a diminished state of consciousness while working and in an alcoholic or TV induced daze at night, live in their shut-off "normal" lives. Often shrivelled and stunted, these are most of the people who consume 150,000,000 Valium tablets annually in Australia. There's a pill for every problem. When confronted with people who are genuinely trying to find themselves and may act in unconventional ways, they may be threatened and seek the aid of psychiatric institutions. Then with a modern array of psychiatric drugs in one hand and the latest psychiatric textbook in the other, a contemporary psychiatrist may delude himself and his patients that discharging the same patient into the same environment from which he came after a few days of shock treatment and sedation actually constitutes some form of help. Cure on the medical model it may well be. For there is a rather mechanistic process of symptom presentation, history, examination, diagnosis and aetiology, prognosis and treatment the net result of which makes the patient acceptable to others with the incidental disadvantage that he is less in touch with himself and his feelings. This is certainly not healing which may involve anguish and distress in a process of a person piecing himself together in a personal growth toward a self-realising wholeness.

The psychiatric hospital does not perform the function of a genuine asylum as a refuge or haven in which an individual may leave outside pressures behind in an atmosphere of acceptance by open and sympathetic trained staff. Working therapeutic communities within existing institutions are rare and anyway only cater for a small number of patients. For the rest, E.C.T. and drugs are no substitute for talking to the patient. Medication may well be used as an effective means at times, but in most psychiatric institutions it seems to be regarded as the total answer in itself -- after all, psychiatry is seen as a branch of medicine. The zonked-out patient may become worse and worse, thus standing in need of more and more treatment which makes him still more blotted out. All the while nobody has bothered to talk to him to find out how he is feeling.

Just as the term psychiatry covers a large number of different theories and practices, there is not only one kind of anti-psychiatry. There are those who believe that sympathetic humane psychotherapy with the aim of enlarging the person's choice through a meaningful and fruitful relationship which brings emotional insight with it would be a solution. Medication might be an adjunct to this form of therapy. They are against the socially repressive prevalent forms of psychiatry and believe that psychological liberation for the severely disturbed person lies not only with the demystification of the social situation of a truly disturbed family, but also in a psychotherapeutic relationship which may bring the natural self to fruition. This view recognises that disturbed relationships do not begin with psychiatric intervention. Nobody can help his own disturbed childhood nor the result of it in later life in the terror-stricken, barren and black inner world of the schizophrenic. Psychiatric intervention ought to be aimed at giving the schizophrenic another chance of a real life. The R. D. Laing of "The Divided Self" is a good example of this approach.

On the other hand there are those anti-psychiatry exponents who believe that the main trouble is psychiatry itself in its invalidating destructiveness to the individual. At another level society is held totally responsible for the plight of those deemed mentally ill. The mentally ill are not seen as suffering intense pain in their horrific inner worlds, but perhaps as prophets of a new era. The R. D. Laing of "The Politics of Experience" is an example of this line of thought.

But strangely enough, the problem here is one of under-estimation of the deforming brutality of this society which maintains its hegemony basically through its micro-systems and finally through domination of the individual's very self. People may go to pieces and are often not sufficiently strong or integrated to cope. Psychiatry did not invent individual emotional suffering. However, psychiatry ought to be critical of the inroads that have been made into the individual's self and ought to help suffering people towards a realisation of what they can be. Unhappily the practices of conventional psychiatry militate against healing in favor of cure on the medical model. Psychotherapy is the preserve of psychiatrists who have been trained in medicine, biology, physiology, histology and a comparatively small amount of psychology. They have not been trained in sociology, literature, anthropology, history, philosophy, politics or even in much psychology. While there is a place for medical psychiatry, if psychiatry is to be healing rather than curing, psychotherapy needs to be taken out of the near-exclusive hands of doctors. There is a precedent for this in that no less a person than Freud himself staunchly defended lay analysis. Psychologists and social workers for example ought to be encouraged to practise psychotherapy officially. Training institutions for psychotherapy should be set up.

This could be one step in a very long journey which would so transform the practices of psychiatry that anti-psychiatry would no longer be necessary. For psychiatry would be, finally, human.
"There were two 'Reigns of Terror,' if we would but remember and consider it; the one wrought murder in hot passions, the other in heartless cold blood; the one lasted mere months, the other had lasted a thousand years; the one inflicted death upon a thousand persons, the other upon a hundred million; but our shudders are all for the 'horrors' of the minor Terror, the momentary Terror, so to speak; whereas, what is the horror of swift death by the axe compared with life-long death from hunger, cold, insult, cruelty, and heartbreak? ... A city cemetery could contain the coffins filled by that brief Terror which we have all been so diligently taught to shiver at and mourn over; but all France could hardly contain the coffins filled by that older and real Terror - that unspeakably bitter and awful Terror which none of us has been taught to see in its vastness or pity as it deserves."

- Mark Twain, "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court"

Approximately 12 months ago the reputable business and affairs journal "The Economist" carried an editorial captioned: "He and his kind will be among us for the rest of our lives." This comment referred to their cover photo of a sinister, black-hooded IRA gunman slinking along a Belfast rooftop. This phantom in the shape of a man was the object of a ponderous and sermonising commentary by the magazine:

"We are going to have to live with the man in the hood for a long time - certainly until the present generation of terrorists, the Black September men and the Provos and the rest, has expended itself in death or defeat"

The logic of this short passage is indicative. One would have thought it will not be until the material conditions that so demoralise a community or an individual as to present terrorism as a serious alternative are overcome, that this "international community of the possessed" will pass into history. The cynical, anti-human logic of "The Economist" and other upstanding critics of terrorist movements, recognises in them nothing but the irrational fanaticism of the psychopath. It is a valuable mode of arguing since, having established the gunman as a mad fanatic, almost by definition, he has nothing substantive to say, no real grievance that rational democratic procedure couldn't solve.

This editorial, I suggest, is a valuable lesson in moral relativism. For ever since the beginning of the escalation of the Vietnam war, "The Economist" has been a staunch supporter of US policy in South-east Asia, underwriting what must be one of the most outrageous acts of lawlessness and barbarism in the recent history of imperialism. The obvious (and moral) question is, what is the difference between the sniper's bullet and billowing napalm? Between the grenade hurled into a city hotel and wave on wave of superfortresses striking at the enemy's vital population centres? The manner in which we conceptualise the difference again emphasises the mystification of language by politics. George Orwell pointed out some time ago; The former is "terrorism" and reprehensible, the latter "war" and unfortunate. Or, from a slightly different perspective, as Marx pointed out in his passionate tirade, "The Civil War in France," a gun in the hand of a plebeian is an outrage, in the hand of the bourgeois a right.

It is from such lofty heights that Marxists are often reproached for their moral relativism. Yet even on the basis of the above example it can be suggested that the "relativism" derives not so much from Marxist theory, as from the essential relativism of bourgeois reality. How can we make serious statements about the morality of methods used in the struggle to achieve a humane world, when man is everywhere morally and socially mutilated? How can we appeal to the moral criterion of human solidarity when in reality there is no unitary Mankind, only a class-ridden, fragmented humanity? In 1915 W. E. B. DuBois posed the problem this way: in a world suffering the horrors of an imperialist war what does the struggle for freedom and human dignity demand? His answer was, of
course, revolution:

"Are there other and less costly ways of achieving this? There may be in some better world. But for a world just emerging from the rough chains of almost universal poverty, and faced by the temptation of luxury and indulgence through the enslavement of defenceless men, there is but one adequate method of salvation - the giving of democratic weapons of self-defence to the defenceless." *

I will not venture here to summarise Marxian ethical theory. I will suggest however that Marxists must always reject terrorism, (though not necessarily violence), as a political weapon. And not just because terror is usually the resort of those who have not built, for whatever reason, a broad and conscious social base. It is rejected for two additional reasons:

Firstly, because terror is the ultimate reification of man. The human person becomes a mere object to be manipulated, used, expended. Whereas the reification inherent to bourgeois society is the alienated quality of man's social relations mediated by an abstract, ahuman market, the reification of terror is death, man's final and absolute objectivity. The irony of the politics of terrorism is that it leads to a complete de-politicisation of its immediate environment. People are no longer subjects to be won over to solidarity, but expendable objects. And secondly, since at one level any historical situation is the sum of its historical antecedents, socialism cannot come to fruition on the bodies of the innocent. If the end justifies the means it is only because there is a constant and intimate nexus between the two. The great end struggled for, socialism, is in fact a constant process of coming-to-be. It is present in every moment of the revolutionary struggle in terms of aims fought for and methods chosen. It was for this reason that Marx and Engels despised the conspiratorial ethics of the Anarchists. Engels complained to Theodor Cuno in a note written in 1872 that the ideas of truth and honesty in the labor movement were dismissed by the Anarchists as mere "bourgeois prejudices." They would employ, in the name of "freedom," any and every tactic. The parallel with Stalinism is clear.

For any philosophy that holds man as the ultimate source and measure of all moral values, inevitable difficulties arise when devising tactics in the struggle for a humane and rational world. It is that "tragic" element at the heart of Marxist philosophy. For only in "a better world" as DuBois phrased it can man be treated humanely, even by socialists. I can perhaps clarify what I mean here by reference to the philosophers and strategists of the Latin American revolution, particularly Debray and Guevara.

Both men reveal a high sensitivity to the value of human life. When the guerrilla strikes from a jungle ambush he is aware of the humanity of those he attacks in a way that the elite killers of the US airforce attacking from 20,000 feet aren't. At the same time he knows it is not merely a confrontation of individual men, but of class representatives engaged in a desperate struggle for mutually exclusive aims. He thus murders in the name of justice. It is this driving contradiction that opens Marxism to the various attacks on its moral basis, but a contradiction that ultimately establishes it as a humane philosophy of man.

Above all it seems important to me that Marxists don't abdicate in the realm of morality, that we don't dogmatically evade the contradictions inherent to the revolutionary and Romantic world-view, by invoking the "good of the cause." For that cause is nothing more than a revolutionary praxis here and now, and its raw material Marx's pre-historical man. We can thus only invoke the good through all its contradictions and vicissitudes.

Finally, to return to our starting point, we can at least agree on some of the remarks offered in "The Economist's" sermon:

"The world itself is no worse than usual; but the obsessed are prepared to do worse to have their way about it."

The terror of Greece, South Africa, Vietnam, Chile, to name but a few recent instances of the handiwork of the "obsessed few," bear out our pious editorialist admirably.

A sense of historic root, knowledge of the struggles of the past, successes and failures, is important for the revolutionary movement today. It was this belief that led Al Richmond to write “A Long View from the Left: Memoirs of an American Revolutionary,” for without that sense, “a movement cannot comprehend itself, cannot understand its development, cannot see itself in historical perspective. Its self-critical faculty is diminished, it is more prone to inertia, more easily buffeted and swayed by any wayward new wave or current.” (1) Richmond’s experience as a communist in the United States spans the period from the late 20s to the present day and it has been rich and varied.

He writes of his life as a revolutionary, in the youth movement, the trade unions and then as a journalist on the party press. For a couple of years he was on the “Daily Worker” staff, then he moved across to San Francisco to become founding editor and later editor-in-chief of the “People’s World.” For more than 30 years his life was bound up with the “People’s World” until in 1969 he resigned when the growing differences he had with the leadership of his party made it impossible for him to continue.

Richmond has not attempted to write a history of the CPUSA or of the general revolutionary movement, but his lively account of his personal experience provides the reader with a picture of the broader actions. He wrote his memoirs, as he says in the preface, “to make the American Communist experience comprehensible and credible to those not directly involved in it.” I think he has succeeded.

Born in London in 1913, of Russian parents, both of whom had spent some time in tsarist prisons and in exile in Siberia, at the age of five young Al was taken to Russia by his mother after the February revolution of 1917. His recollections of this time, particularly of his mother, a revolutionary returning from exile, provide some poignant sidelights on this period. In 1922, they returned to America; a little later his parents separated finally and his mother was left to fend for herself and her young son. The next years spent first in the slums of Chicago and then New York were dismal ones, but the courage and spirit of his mother are clear as she struggled to make a living as a semi-skilled worker in the garment industry.

Richmond was 16 when he joined the Young Communist League and he cut his revolutionary teeth in the struggles of the unemployed that were to come very soon. In 1928 the Communist Party was in the throes of a factional struggle about which he understood nothing. “I succumbed to a common failing: attributing profundity to something simply because you cannot understand it,” and “... I yielded to another common failing: when you don’t really know what an argument is about, side with the majority.” But he soon began to know what things were about, working as an organizer for the League in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington and then back to Philadelphia as port secretary of the Marine Workers’ Industrial Union. This was the background to his vocation as a journalist.

In 1951, Richmond, with 11 other communists on the west coast, was arrested on a “conspiracy” charge under the Smith Act, at the height of McCarthy’s witch-hunts. He was sentenced to five years imprisonment, and for the next six he was either in jail, in court or underground. On the west coast the leadership considered the “five to midnight” line was developed when most of the party leaders were in prison, awaiting trial, or underground. On the west coast, the leadership considered the “five to midnight” syndrome, but after discussion it unanimously decided to fight the legality of the charges rather than acquiesce. For those communists it was much earlier than five to midnight. This was a bold assessment given the political climate both in the US and abroad. Time proved that it was correct.

Interspersed among the chapters of the book are three essays in which Richmond, drawing on his long experience, relates the experiences of the past to the struggles of the Left today. “Notes on the Revolution and the 1930s” contains much interesting historical material as well as some pertinent references to the Russian, Chinese and Cuban revolutionary struggles. Discussing the struggle for a united front
in the pre-war period he stresses that this was a revolutionary strategy in the conditions that existed at that time, and emphasises that the party’s call to bring together all who could be joined to fight against the rise of fascism in Spain, Italy and Germany drew to it the support of millions. He shows that it was not the strategy which was at fault, as some of the New Left claim today, but rather it was the failure to develop the full potential of the united front that led to the decline and virtual devastation of the Communist Party later. He acknowledges that mistakes and opportunistic compromises were made but describes as nonsense an “historical hallucination in which the working classes of the advanced capitalist countries (including the United States) were straining to make a socialist revolution but were inhibited and diverted by People’s Front projection of fascism, not capitalism, as the immediate target.” He continues: “Only two things are missing from this vision: 1) any serious conception of what makes revolution and 2) any serious comprehension of the relevant realities in the United States.” He concludes this chapter thus: “... As the contemporary Left attempts to engage in a politics of the millions, it will encounter opportunities and difficulties comparable to those of the 1930s. If this is true, what was and was not done then has relevance.”

In the chapter, “The Generations,” Richmond, in projecting his theory of the continuing ebb and flow of the revolutionary movement in America, relates the struggles of the New Left to those of the Old. He takes issue with those older revolutionaries who have been swift to unconditionally condemn the violence of some sections of the New Left. He underlines the links between groups like the Black Panthers and earlier Left leaders such as Debs, Hayward and Foster, claiming that what they have in common is that all, when violence erupts in response to the naked violence of the ruling class, affirm their class solidarity.

Evident throughout the book is Richmond’s concern for the “relevant realities.” For most of its history the “People’s World” had attempted to keep these realities in mind, and it is clear that even before the Khrushchov report in 1956, Richmond was welcoming the projected opportunity to get down to the nitty-gritty of why and how the influence and the membership of the United States Communist Party had declined since the ‘30s. In April, 1956, Eugene Dennis, the general secretary of the party, at the first full meeting of the national committee for five years — he himself was just out of jail — had made “a devastating critique of party estimates and policy.” Dennis referred to “basic, deep-seated and longstanding weaknesses” which, he said, included “the strong and persistent tendency in the party to apply the experiences of other parties and the science of Marxism in a mechanical and doctrinaire fashion...” Already Richmond had been questioning the “only one model” theory, but before there could be any real discussion and analysis, the world communist movement was confronted with Khrushchov’s devastating revelations in his report to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

When the Soviet invasion of Hungary took place a few months later, the Communist Party in the United States reeled. A sharp crisis occurred in the course of which a considerable number of experienced cadres left the party. Richmond remained to continue the struggle of ideas inside the party. He was motivated, he writes, to achieve three aims: “a sharp break with bureaucratic patterns, an effective exercise of autonomy in a fraternal relationship with the world movement and the Socialist camp, and an independent confrontation with American reality in the spirit of Marx and Lenin, without borrowed spectacles or dogmatic preconceptions.” Although elected a member of the national committee of the party in 1957 — and he remained one until February, 1972 — Richmond’s pursuit of these aims led to growing alienation from the party leadership and this culminated in 1968 when Czechoslovakia was invaded. His outspoken criticism of this invasion led to deeper conflict, and he resigned as editor of the “People’s World,” but still remained in the party. Richmond had spent some time in Czechoslovakia in 1966 and visited it again in late August, 1968. His observations then confirmed his criticisms of the intervention. For such a keen observer, Richmond does, however, show a rather strange blind spot on this issue. He writes that except for Communist parties in Western Europe, the rest of the world parties lined up with the Soviet Union. Are many of the Communist parties of Asia, including the parties of Vietnam, China and Japan or the Communist Party of Australia non-parties or non-countries to this American observer? Richmond’s memoirs are written with style, humanity and wit and it is easy to become absorbed in his account of the “communist experience.” For Australian readers, there is an added interest, because so much of what he writes about has had its parallel here.

POSTSCRIPT: Just before going to press news came of Richmond’s resignation from the US Communist Party after that party’s leadership dubbed “A Long View from the Left” “anti-party” and refused Richmond a right of reply.
[THE DEATH OF THE FAMILY, by David Cooper. Pelican. $1.20. Reviewed by Denis Freney.]

Having just re-read this book for the fifth time in the past six months, I am filled with enough enthusiasm to attempt the impossible and review it.

David Cooper, who, with R. D. Laing, is one of the leading anti-psychiatrists -- the school that has thrown the psychiatric world into a total re-examination of its premises and methods -- has in this book attempted to extend and deepen the conclusions of anti-psychiatry to the "normal" majority who have in one way or another "adapted" to a crazy world.

It is a book which is densely written, in almost a poetic prose, which tricks words to draw out deeper meanings. It is therefore a "difficult" book to read, but one which is well worth the effort.

It is essentially a study of the impact of the internalised family on personal relationships. The external family -- the impact of the nuclear family on its individual members and particularly on the mother and as a basic conservative force in society as a whole -- has been analysed at some depth by the theorists of women's liberation.

But the nuclear family is clearly not simply an external force on women, men and children. It is also internalised deeply into their whole being, until it becomes their being. This internalisation pervades all spheres of the internal and external life of human beings, including their personal relationships with those far removed from the immediate family.

It is within this framework that Cooper examines marriage, divorce, love, jealousy, greed, community living, death and madness, and the totality of human relationships.

These questions have been the subject of so many trite, romanticised books over the ages, that the reader might be excused for thinking that the real effort needed in understanding Cooper won't be worth the time.

Cooper however strips the romantic sentimentalism away and opens up the sores of non-comprehension and mysticism that fester beneath the surface in personal relationships. He opens the way to a real understanding of the dialectic of interpersonal communication, the politics of personal humanisation.

To try to summarise what he says is nearly impossible. But to attempt the impossible -- the first thing and the last thing is to find and form one's own self, freed from the self that has been formed in the family through childhood and adolescence, in marriage, and (I would add) in the total work and social environment. That is difficult, hard work in self-analysis, for it is destructive of the self-image that you have adopted from others' images of yourself.

Crucial, for Cooper, in establishing one's own new self-identity is the ability to love oneself: "One can never love another person until one can love oneself enough." (Page 38)*

From that emerges the possibility of a new type of human relationships in which one has no marriage, either formalised or informalised, but a series of relationships, including a well-worked out central two-person relationship, over time-spans, within a communal living arrangement.

Marriage is defined by Cooper in the following terms: "One of the worst fates of a two-person relationship -- and this is above all true of many marital relationships during most of their history -- is that the two people enter into a symbiotic relationship with each other so that each becomes the other's parasite, each becomes hidden inside the other's mind... In this way both... become invisible with the imperturbability and security of social invisibility. This is really happy marriage, the price being simply the disappearance of one's human being. So that persons A and B disappear into a composite personal entity A-B." (pp. 49-50).

Such marriages for Cooper also apply within the family, between parents and child, between each parent and each child, between the child and the parents' marriage and among all members of the family as an entity. The loss of one's human being, if one ever had it to lose, is the essence of the family and marriage relationships throughout one's life, well after the other members of the family may be dead, thousands of miles away or never seen. The family remains internalised, and is oneself.

If after ridding oneself of the family and all the others one has glued pieces together to make oneself, we find we are left with an internal desert in which one must wander "alone in the wasteland, finding sustenance in the stone he sucks and the ash ingested by the pores of his skin. Then if he wants an oasis, he will form one between the mounds of his sand and the tears he secretes. Then he might invite another to come to him for sustenance and to sustain him. But he will always remain in his desert because this is his freedom. If one day he no longer needs his freedom..."
then this is his freedom also. But in any case the desert remains.” (p. 41.) That may not seem a “happy” prospect, but it is Cooper’s poetic prose at its best, and as his argument develops we see beyond “happiness.”

Happiness is not joy, and it is joy (“the ‘most liberating thing’ is always the most joyful”) that Cooper is talking about: “Joy comprehends despair running through an end-point of pain into joy again ... joy at one end, despair in the middle, and then again joy at the other.” (pp. 54-55). Happiness “always devolves on to security in some form, that is to say a deceptively comfortable restriction of one’s possibilities.”

So much for the attempt to do the impossible: summarise in a few lines the central thesis of Cooper’s book.

For those who find Cooper obscure, let them rest assured that the obscurity is within themselves.

* *

The impression may arise from the above that Cooper is simply advocating a personal liberation, while ignoring the total revolution necessary if any person is to be really liberated.

His communes, based on such therapeutic work, would be Revolutionary Centres of Consciousness which “would take the form of anti-institutional spontaneous groupings of people who operate outside the formal bureaucratic structures of their factory, school, university ... and so on.” (p. 66).

“But things cannot rest at the level of rapidly spreading subversion from the micro-political base of personal liberation. The fulfilment of liberation comes only with effective macro-political action. So the Centres of Revolutionary Consciousness have also to become Red Bases... In other words, if bosses or university authorities make concessions, one demands and exacts more and more ‘concessions’ until they realise they have nothing to give in the first place. Then, having abolished that false family structure, all one has to do is to make sure it is not set up again... Or, again, one may show that bourgeois power structures are powerless, apart from the power we obediently invest them with, by arranging their disorganisation... Beyond this there are the more conventional tactics of strike and sit-in, but work on the micro-political level can rid these tactics of their economism, that is to say that in the first-world context it can never be simply a matter of more bread but more bread and much more reality.” (pp. 66-67).

That concept, although perhaps too schematised, fits into some living experience of the value of communal organisation as a base for political organisation.

Understanding the dialectical links between personal liberation and the more general and, on a mass level, more important, struggle for a total revolution, beginning with the overthrow of capitalism, has bedevilled marxist and revolutionary politics in recent times.

Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation have their two extremes: those who see the solution solely in terms of personal liberation -- defined often as their own individual liberation, and those who see these movements as simply having the potential of being mass movements around specified objectives such as abortion on request or homosexual law reform. For the latter, “personal liberation” is a petty-bourgeois luxury that “real” revolutionaries cannot afford.

More generally within the working class and Left movement, any suggestion of consciousness-raising in terms of personal liberation is almost an affront. “One’s personal life is one’s own business” -- which of course it is, but then personal liberation, to the extent it is possible, is also one’s own business, and involves a lot of hard work on yourself, with a little help from friends.

But in fact personal troubles do greatly, one way or another, affect more general revolutionary work. For one thing, intense political work makes a “normal,” “happy” family life almost impossible, and often imposes an extra oppression on women who find themselves willy-nilly in a support role of an even more extreme type than in a “normal” relationship.

The other extreme, of personal liberation as the be-all-and-end-all, is self-negating. Lacking a more general revolutionary and humanist framework in which to operate, it becomes circular, totally introverted, and solves nothing in terms of personal liberation.

Moreover, the pressures of external reality, of a capitalist and sexist society, on individuals is such that only by understanding the nature of that oppression in its totality and in its personalised form on oneself, and then fighting against it, can any form of personal liberation occur.

Communes have been quite a common phenomenon in recent years. But too often they have been an escape, a necessary escape from the nuclear family situation, into an attempt at “alternative life styles,” but have neglected the fact that it is not
much use simply dropping the trappings of the nuclear family, while each person carries it around in his or her head. It is not much use adopting the outward trappings of comradeship, of love for brothers and sisters in the commune, if there is no real contact of inner lives and if there is no knowledge of the other person, nor any help offered which is not in fact a demand for help.

Political communes, although much more effective as centres of revolutionary activity than the sum total of nuclear family units, fail unless the individuals in them love themselves enough to love others, unless the individuals in them open up and help each other to know each other, unless there is a lot of hard work on oneself and and helping others to work on themselves. They must otherwise collapse through the sheer dynamics of non-communication in personal relations.

Externalised political groups, without communal living, of course have a longer life, because the personality of each is sunk in an external aim. But they are far less effective, and the human wastage in terms of individuals dropping out and in disruption to “normal” life is heavy.

It is in these terms that Cooper’s book offers a real alternative, which, if translated into concrete situations, can both aid one to be full of joy and at the same time a far more effective revolutionary.

Personal liberation in this sense must first of all be one’s work on one’s self. Then it must be within a group, preferably of friends who have done some work on themselves and with one who has done a great deal of such work on himself or herself. There must be some elemental mutual trust, which can be built on as time goes by, into tenderness then even love.

This presupposes a real study of the literature of women’s liberation, gay liberation and anti-psychiatry. But it is not a question of depersonalised, “theoretical” knowledge, but of its very personalised, concrete application to oneself. Then, one might take the liberty of working it out in terms of someone else.

It means women’s consciousness-raising work, men’s consciousness-raising work, gays’ consciousness-raising work, in their exclusive groups, then once that is done, getting together in mixed groups to test the results and take it even further.

It also supposes some mutual general revolutionary and marxist understanding of the total oppression we all face.

It means above all recognising, if at first not understanding, that we are oppressing ourselves and that we are oppressed by external forces and capitalist and sexist institutions.

On another level, much theoretical work, after a lot of practical experience, remains to be done on developing a synthesis of the theoretical work of women’s liberationists, gay liberationists (sadly lacking), anti-psychiatrists such as Laing and Cooper, the early work of Reich, and the rich body of marxist doctrine and its development in theories of workers’ control and self-management.

But because we, in the first world at least, are living in a period of total revolution, which includes all the multi-facet struggles against oppression covered by the theorists above, that synthesis is not only an interesting intellectual exercise, but one of urgent practical importance.

The attempt to develop such a synthesis may appear, and in fact in its early stages, eclectic. But we should not be frightened of the word, but be conscious of it. For any real synthesis will modify, deepen and sometimes invalidate much of the body of theory already developed, and give it all a further dimension.

Finally, while Cooper’s central thesis, contained mainly in the first three chapters in his book, is extremely important, there are still concepts and statements which I must disagree with, although with the caution that Cooper deserves such respect that that disagreement must only be tentative.

Cooper goes in for some Freudian elaboration on pre-natal influences, which he sometimes promotes to the main or major factor. I can’t agree with that.

Cooper’s analysis of gayness is incomplete, sometimes even derogatory, and although he speaks of the need for men and women to explore their homosexuality and love another of the same sex “enough,” he does not look at the question through the prism of gay experience. That is a big gap.

Politically, too often he has Guevarist overtones, a too ready identification, even if in metaphor, of the methods of struggle in the third world with those in the first world. But to develop a critique of these aspects is a task that would have to be accomplished in another article. The point is to read Cooper critically (and that should be done with everyone) and to try to reach for the synthesis I’ve mentioned earlier.
The first thing is to read Cooper a few times however before rejecting anything. Then the job is to begin to apply what he writes.

* "To love oneself" does not mean for Cooper what it generally means in common parlance. The person who is generally described as "loving himself" hates himself. He loves what others think of him, or what he thinks they think of him. But perhaps it is really a question of him wanting others to think he is what he knows or thinks he is not, so that he can love what others think they know he is...

For Cooper, "to love oneself enough" means first to really love one's body for what it is, not what others see it as, and then to love oneself enough to love others, as described above.


This book, recommended by the financial press as a "Book for Businessmen," has little to offer workers.

It is an economic history of Australia of the most empirical sort, and when it does indulge in theory it is only in a hand-waving sort of way. Waterman is strong on statistics rather than theory, and the version of Keynesianism he gives in his second chapter is largely unrelated to the rest of the book. Waterman's method is to take a collection of 36 monthly time-series of data relating to the Australian economy and to investigate fluctuations in these indicators between 1948 and 1964. Eleven of these series relate to employment and unemployment, twelve to output and activity in the economy, and two other groups deal with banking and finance, and with international activity (imports, exports, emigration, etc.).

Not surprisingly, Waterman discovers that many of these indicators rise and fall together, and that their rates of change also exhibit regular fluctuations about different "trend-levels." Not content with simply talking about "peaks" and "troughs," he assigns eight different reference points to each cycle. The data shows four cycles or "episodes" for most of the indicators, and Waterman dates each of these episodes using these eight measures, carefully giving more weight to examples where the particular point (for example, a peak) is represented in a number of different series, and is definite when it does appear.

The first cycle, the "Korean War Episode," ran from November 1949 till December 1952, with a peak in June '51 and a trough in November '52. The second episode started in April 1954, went through a peak in June 1955, followed by a trough in June 1956 and ended in August of the same year. The third period, which is not as well defined as the other three, began in early 1957, reached a peak about October and fell away to a trough in July 1958. The last episode began in August 1959 and was associated with the land and stock market speculation of 1959 and 1960, reaching a peak in July of that year; the crash quickly followed as a "credit squeeze" accompanied by unemployment -- the trough was in July 1961.

Having dated these four cycles quite precisely, Waterman goes on to describe the sequence of events that occurred during each. From this, he makes the following conclusions:

1. Each episode is unique.
2. The behavior of the world economy was highly influential upon that of Australia throughout the whole of this period.
3. Government policy of a disinflationary nature was nearly always directed not to the internal situation but to the balance of payments; and was therefore put into effect at times when the forces of contraction had already begun their work.
4. Government policy directed to expansion was generally successful and well timed.
5. The average rate of growth would not have been faster, but possibly slower, had fluctuations not occurred." (p. 204.)

We can recognise, interestingly enough, in two of his most "unorthodox" conclusions (2 and 5) familiar consequences of capitalist accumulation. The conventional bourgeois view is that the Australian capitalist class, in becoming less dependent on a few primary commodities that it must sell on the world market for its economic well-being, has gained some independence from world-wide capitalist fluctuations. The Marxian view, and the evidence, stresses the integration of world capitalism, not only through the commodity market, but also through the incessant profit-hungry wanderings of industrial and finance capital. Australia is very much subject to this process.

It is Waterman's last conclusion, however, that is most provocative to bourgeois economists. In case it is thought that he is intentionally restating the Marxist thesis of recurrent crises of capitalism, we should note the reasons he gives for putting forward (tentatively) this "controversial" view; for example, in talking about the first episode, he says:

"Both boom and slump of the First Episode
were clearly to the advantage of the Australian economy. During the inflation, Australian costs finally returned to a pre-war relation with those of other major trading nations, and the upward pressure on prices from the cost ratio was at last relieved. Windfall profits in the farm sector were an important source of agricultural improvements in the 1950s. During the recession excess demand was banished, bottlenecks opened, redeployment of resources achieved, and labor discipline and industrial relations improved. From 1952/3 there was a noticeable acceleration in the rate of growth of productivity, much of which can be traced to the events of the previous two years.” (p. 212)

And if the anti-working class thrust of these remarks is not obvious, he finishes up by saying “The alternation of expansion and contraction has probably afforded more opportunity to enterprise than would a long period of steady growth.” (p. 213.)

Thus Waterman concludes that capitalism in Australia has been, and of necessity has been, in a state of constant crisis. His “inflation” and “deflation” or “excess” and “insufficient” demand do not explain this process, and in the end recourse must be had to “business confidence” or more or less “sobriety in the business community.” While workers may ponder with amusement the call being made for us all to work (and to spend) so that the capitalists have confidence in their own ability to capitalistically employ their capital, we can go much further than Waterman in comprehending this process. Capitalism is in a state of constant crisis; it oscillates between expansion, which drives investments to a point where the profits demanded of them are no longer forthcoming (overproduction of capital and decline in the rate of profit), and contraction, (overproduction of commodities and scarcity of liquid funds). The crisis of overproduction, which is of course a crisis of realisation of surplus value (since there is no “overproduction” in terms of society’s real needs), leads to the ruin of some capitalists, but the consolidation of others. Labor costs are cut by dismissing less productive workers (hence unemployment in the slump) and by investment in labor-saving technology; the first process consolidates the slump by denying these workers the means to buy Department II commodities, the second begins the recovery by making possible the realisation of surplus in Department I commodities. New investment builds up, but the average rate of productivity of labor declines as the less productive workers are brought back into the factories again; expansion continues for a short time in the face of declining profits but ultimately confronts this barrier to continued capital utilisation. Falling profits point to an overproduction of capital; the cycle starts again but at a higher level of investment and a lower rate of expected profit.

This cycle of boom and bust is not an aberration of capitalist development, but its very norm. Waterman recognises this, and calls for fewer government attempts to regulate or “smooth” the fluctuations. Other sections of the capitalist class feel, on the other hand, that the cost--both political and economic--of such non-intervention is too high. In the dispute over “capitalist planning” that is presently taking place, Waterman’s views fall on the “less planning” side, while for example the O.E.C.D. * report on Australia supports the other side. It seems clear that the Labor Government and the Liberal Opposition are both at the moment susceptible to this latter view, and so we expect to see attempts at maintaining a sort of continuous boom, and to hell with the inflation. How long this will be tolerated by the capitalist class depends on how much they fear the alternative, and on how successful integration of the working class into capitalist planning is. The first question will determine whether the capitalist will be satisfied with unspectacular but steady growth; the second question will determine whether this alternative is even open to them. The active participation of the working class and its organisations is necessary for capitalist planning; it is up to the working class then to question the very irrationality of having to make these sorts of decisions, and having to suffer the consequences of both boom and bust.

-- Terry O’Shaughnessy
