the analytical works of the father of the Yippies, Jerry Rubin, which are now being so widely read by most sections of the Left? When one attempts such a comparison, one is left feeling very despondent about the future of the Western Left if Rubin and his cohorts are to continue to dominate. At least the Marxists had an idea of what they were fighting, although it tended to be a crude and vulgar understanding of contemporary capitalism. Rubin obviously has no real idea of his enemy's structure and hence his strategies remain Yippie yells and TV appearances.

Baran, unlike many of the heroes of the New Left was able to rise above the crassness and anti-intellectualism of his society, and thus his example remains an important one. Reading these essays one is also reminded of the absence of persons of the intellectual calibre of Baran within the Australian Left. The current obsession with the younger and the circumventing of Marx's more important contributions in the field of political economy, has reduced interest in the type of work Baran did. These essays, despite their limitations, are at least in the broad Marxian tradition of directing attention to the importance of economic factors. The study of the so-called "counter-culture" and other sometimes vague aspects of contemporary capitalism, whilst of undeniable value, must not misdirect attention away from the areas in which Baran spent so much of his life-time and which remain so crucial if one is to comprehend the dynamics of monopoly capitalism.

Dave Clark

A NEW BRITANNIA, by Humphrey McQueen. Penguin, 261pp., $1.50.


"THE PAST BELONGS TO THE ENEMY" according to Humphrey McQueen, and if the intellectual and emotional maturity of the two books under review were in any way representative of the Australian Left, so would the future. But, of course they are not representative. The book on the New Left should have been sub-titled "Studies from a Dying Sub-Culture". One is not exactly surprised to find that most of the contributors have changed their views a good deal since they composed their pieces. McQueen has not — he reproduces his peroration in the New Left collection almost word for word in the Penguin. He must have thought it was pretty good. And so it was, if you did not already know what the real temper and value systems of the average Australian were last century. There were several ways of knowing this. One was by being reasonably au fait with the Australian working class, which has changed very little in the last seventy years. Another was by possessing a passing acquaintance with research done as long ago as ten years before the appearance of this miscellany of other people's labours.

The author in a way prepared us for all of this by saying (p. 11) "There is hardly any original research here". However, he goes on to add: "there are a host of new facts". There is nothing of the kind. There are very few new facts indeed. Most of the new interpretations which McQueen defines as a species of fact — and on which he bases the coherent parts of his anti-lower class diatribe
— can be found in the B.A. Honours thesis of a colleague of mine, Dr. John Dalton. This thesis, produced when the two were studying at the University of Queensland, provoked considerable discussion at the time (1961). Although certainly well-known to the author, for some inscrutable reason no acknowledgement of this important source appears in the quite extensive bibliography.

Anyone who wishes to examine the kernel of McQueen's creation should either read the B.A. Honours thesis itself, or else Chapter I of Prelude to Power, edited by Murphy, Joyce and Hughes, and published by Jacaranda Press. Chapter I is a brief summary of the 1961 Dalton thesis. But Dalton's work is analytic and descriptive, quite free of the absurd posturings and ingrained illiberality of the New Britannia, elements which we have come to recognise as the trademarks of the bulk of recent New Left performances. For serious students the Dalton thesis is infinitely preferable to this tribute to Nikolai Ivanovitch Lobachevsky.

When I picked up the New Britannia I suppose I expected some sort of socio-political history of the Australian people, and of the growth of the infant society until the First War. This didn't happen. The story is one-dimensionally political; for the rest there are numerous attacks on labour historians, mostly missing their mark, complaints that there wasn't a proletariat before it was historically possible for one to exist, a repetition of the Fear of the North stories (which most readers had got straight before this), a dearth of supporting statistics and secondary sources, and a misuse or misunderstanding of some of the sources quoted. And pomposities such as "Australia was a frontier of White Capitalism" (p. 17). This to replace other theories supposedly advanced previously.

Of course Australia was white! And though it did not start capitalist — for obvious reasons — it became so. But most countries do, and last century's all did, if they were allowed. A frontier? Looking which way? Antarctica? Or the Dutch East Indies and all the other colonial countries with which the Continent had such fragmentary relations? The only country we were influenced by during this period was Britain — but McQueen frequently ignores this. The "frontier of white capitalism" thesis is announced as the alternative to the domestic frontier thesis favoured by previous Australian historians. We can thereby re-locate "Australia in the mainstream of world development", and "only in this way would it be possible to understand the nature of our radicalism or of our nationalism". In fact, there is nothing shown about us being in the mainstream of world development, probably because we weren't. And once the Kanakas, the Aborigines and the Chinese are related, in very predictable ways to the racist components of antipodean national-radicalism, there is naught to do but to revert to the domestic frontier thesis. Which is perhaps why McQueen describes his chronicle as remaining "encapsuled within the tradition it so violently denounces".

The first serious criticism McQueen makes of labour historians concerns their absorption in the game of "hunt the proletariat" in 19th century Australia. There wasn't one, as he says. He then substitutes "hunt the socialist". The book is studded with complaints that there weren't any, or that X wasn't really one, or that Y was a racist socialist. (Like Jack London?) But where did a good marxist expect all the socialists to come from, until the development of industry? There were some; disputatious little sects, far removed from social reality. We still have their successors.
But this judging Australian people by impossible criteria — they weren't proles, they weren't socialists, so what use were they?; leads to a patronising and at times inhuman approach. The new settlers are accused of materialism and petit bourgeois aspirations, or else of being professional criminals. The story of Wood, and Russel Ward, that the convicts were *victims* of social, legal and political oppression and that they contribute much to the traditions of lower class solidarity — is angrily dismissed. No, they were lumpen proletariat or petit bourgeois. It was "the desire for self-improvement which had led to most of the convicts being transported in the first place." (p. 127). Evidence? The great majority were professional criminals. Definition of professional criminal? None, unless it is having committed a number of offences and living by what the late 18th and early 19th century legislators defined as criminal means. Is this a description of a criminal, a bourgeois, a lumpen proletariat, or a victim?

When one remembers that there were nearly 200 offences punishable by death in the late 18th century; that St. Thomas says that a man has a right to steal if he can't find bread for his family, that most of these crimes would now be punishable by a fine or a short sentence, that once a man had committed one crime he was normally drawn inexorably into others, one can only marvel at the inhumanity of all this. If stealing to live was a desire for self-improvement, then I suppose the London poor were petit bourgeois, as hosts of people in Asia, Africa and Latin America are petit bourgeois.

This re-writing of British social history *not* Australian reads like the opinions of a Regency judge, or else an ex-prole kicking the ladder away in his quest for self-improvement. McQueen is equally insensitive on early attitudes to authority possessed by the new settlers. Their outlook was lumpen prole or petit bourgeois — "both classes can be described as independent people... who hate officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen". "Such an attitude is essentially bourgeois in origin and content and... well suited to the declassé small proprietors, dispossessed labourers and professional criminals who made up the bulk of the convicts and had shown their active acceptance of the ideology of capitalism — *individual acquisitiveness*." (pp. 126-7, italics added).

I have only quoted this tedious drivel at such length because it is so revealing. So dislike of officiousness and authority as embodied by the police and army is essentially bourgeois in origin, is it? Let all the revolutionaries and social rebels of America — North and South — of Asia and Africa, of Italy and France, heed the words of this revolutionary writer. And of course, the English and Irish poor should have appreciated their police and military, instead of seeing them as instruments of the ruling classes. And I've never heard the hunted wretches of the London stews described as independent people before. It's as though all the criminologists, penal reformers and social analysts from Beccaria and Henry Fielding onwards, had never written, and Simon Legree were still King. At least our social casualties know what to expect when the self-appointed vanguard of the proletariat takes over.

And if one has read Solzhenitzyn's accounts of all these petit bourgeois acquisitors in the Stalinist camps, busily improving themselves by stealing things, hiding things, dreaming of a little place where they could at last be alone, and *free*, one will recognise in a flash what bourgeois they were. For
one thing, they hated the Stalinist police and the army. Demonstrators take note.

From a marxist standpoint, or from the point of view of a Fifth Former doing a Clear Thinking course, a great deal of McQueen's writing is of the purest of pure gibberish. So the "ideology of capitalism" is "individual acquisitiveness"? Probably. But so it is part of the ideology of farmers and cultivators right down from Sumerian times. Are they capitalists, too? Individual acquisitiveness was a pretty strong motive for slave owners, feudal lords, members of guilds, whether they be masters or journeymen. The Church dignitaries didn't get a very good press for the same reason. So were they all capitalists? This makes nonsense of just about all of Marx's distinctions between different stages in social evolution, the differing class structures and the changing ideologies which stemmed from them. Being personally acquisitive is neither a necessary nor a sufficient criterion of being an active acceptor of the ideology of capitalism.

How did McQueen come to perpetrate this Double Dutch? At one level, straight intellectual incompetence. If A possesses quality X, and B possesses quality X, then A and B are the same. Thus a dog is really an elephant. Another gem-like mode of reasoning — if A possesses a resemblance to B, and B possesses a resemblance to C, then A resembles C. Better still, A is C — really. (That word "really" has to do a lot of work for the lumpen marxist philosopher). And thus, if A has a withered arm, and B has a withered arm, and B and C each has a cauliflower ear, A resembles C. In fact, is the same — really.

And, by using illogical convolutions of this kind, you can call the same person a bourgeois, a petit bourgeois or a lumpen proletariat, as your fancy takes you. You can even call someone a lumpen proletarian before there is a proletariat. And this enables you to abuse him without either describing or explaining him. For description and explanation rest upon the making of distinctions. There are few viable distinctions in this book, any more than there are in its companion volume.

And this brings me to another piece of McQueen misanthropy towards the lower orders. This revolves around the land question and the people who wanted to take up land. The author doesn't like big landowners, small landowners, or co-ops of people working their own farms. Presumably, there should have been kolkhozes. And the desire of new settlers to get out of the only kinds of city jobs then available, viz. working on the roads, as members of the servant class, or toiling in the early backyard factories; out, into the bush, to stand on their own feet, without a bloody boss — this is evidence of materialism, apparently.

Such judgments come straight from the "rural idiocy" attitudes of Marx towards agriculture, which doesn't make them any the less fallacious. Communists have wasted decades trying to beat love of the soil out of their farmers, especially the idea that "land is a good thing in itself". But so it is; not at all like a machine, or a car. Land is part of nature, a living thing — and the love which men have always lavished on it is basically a creative matter. To grow something where nothing was before, and protect it while it grows; to turn a desert into a garden; to plant trees and put up fences; to beat the elements by putting in dams — are all forms of very primary creativity, as psychologists have always known. The Israelis and Yugoslavs know this, too — as they recognise the importance of people owning some part of this great organism which is so totally dissimilar to a mine, a shop or an assembly line.
Farmers who want the best price they can get for their work are no different from workers or academics, who want the same. Partly for material reasons — of course — but partly because this puts a value (not a price) on their work. A mark of status, if you like. And just as marxists complain about workers being robbed of part of the fruits of their labour, so are farmers.

The further question, how to organise farming (and industry) for the common good of all, is a separate one. It is a political and an economic question — but also a psychological one. Thus, the present tragedy unfolding in our farming — where, apparently, great numbers of people are to be forced off the land, from places where they’ve always lived and want always to live, from the only jobs they’ve ever known, into some rotten little suburb, due to market factors which they don’t understand — this social tragedy is no different from the driving of miners, shipbuilders and craftsmen from areas and working communities where they’ve grown and derived their social meaning. Economically necessary, perhaps, but tragic. But the left philistines still don’t see this — “serves them right for being materialist” they say. The sooner we all pile into great swollen cities, spend our days at endless assembly lines, and our nights in one of the million of little boxes we call homes, the better. This is progress.

I can understand 19th century capitalists and 20th century real estate speculators reasoning thus, but it has been a great misfortune that theorists on the left have talked this way, too. We didn’t get our Revolution this way, only Megopolis, and a new, alienated Right — and waving the magic wand of workers’ control — for it is not a worked-out analysis or program yet, only a magic wand — doesn’t really help.

It was a far, far better thing to get out into the bush last century; digging roads, serving in shops and waiting on tables, toiling in sweat shops, didn’t make socialists, nor was it a mark of disinterest in money. Usually, it was a preference for town life, a disinclination to take on a lifetime of back-breaking work in a harsh climate, with every chance of finishing up as broke as when you started.

One persistent feature of both books under review is the constant employment of terms like “liberal”, “democratic”, “bourgeois”, “nationalist”, “fascist”, without any serious attempt to provide proper, i.e. workable definitions. McQueen does set out a set of criteria for fascism (p. 116). Taken, as usual, from somebody else, and applied to Lawson, they are —

1. an organic concept of the nation;
2. idealisation of manly virtues;
3. hostility to finance capitalism;
4. elitist notion of leadership;
5. racism, including anti-semitism;
6. militarism.

Although, so far as I am concerned, no completely satisfactory account of anti-semitism has yet appeared, it seems a mistake to lump it with racism per se. For one thing, it lets many fascists who are not anti-semites — overtly — off the hook. When you subtract anti-semitism, you find yourself with a whole collection of movements who satisfy these criteria. Thus, many Black Power people answer these criteria. And so do many people who are going around saying they are leftists. For them idealisation of manly virtues is expressed in
the form of the exhortation of violence for its own sake, and indulgence in
never-ending fantasies of violence. These fantasies gradually take over more
and more parts of their mental and verbal life. I stress verbal — for most of
the violence remains in the realm of fantasy. The ones who will have to do
the fighting, as usual, are the workers, under the guidance of "men from other
classes" (A New Britannia, p. 236). As McQueen says (p. 235-6) "Whenever the
marshal's (sic) baton has rested in the workers' horny hand, the army of
workers has had a leadership less sure and less satisfactory for its purposes
than when the leadership has been in the hands of men from other classes
of society." The workers are cast for the same role as Boxer in Animal Farm.

Nevertheless, their manly virtues are idealised. Just as the defective Whites
idealised the male Negro, the German petit bourgeois the young, athletic Ger-
man male, so do our chair-borne commandos idealise the Australian male
worker. Same explanation in each case. The same ambivalence. The same
patronage — and fear.

In other words, our nomenclature is at the crossroads. Just as the psychologists
who produced the extremely important notion of the authoritarian personality
found that their original criteria pulled in the right authoritarians but left
out the left equivalents — so are we floundering around with a vague notion
like Stalinist to explain the elitist organicists whose endless preoccupation with
putches, conspiracies, character assassination as a reluctant substitute for
literal murder, marks them off tactically, ideologically and psychologically,
from the genuine left. Their desistance from militarism is simply a matter
of context — they must perforce operate within a domestic political society —
so the temptation can't arise. Militarism can be attacked as an aspect of the
State — this State. But there are domestic versions of militarism which they
do embrace.

So, using McQueen's borrowed definition, with the amendment mentioned
before, we have the solution as to how to define the left authoritarian mis-
thropes who devote 90 per cent of their energies and fantasies to attacking
the left. The definition to be applied to this segment is — Left Fascist.

The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy, is a different kettle
of fish. There are some good pieces in it, though mainly from the older and
better qualified contributors. Dan O'Neill has a sensitive and extremely modest
essay, which repays re-reading, despite its mistakes; Bruce McFarlane's essay on
"challenging the control of the Australian economy" is thorough, and gets
down to tin-tacks very quickly. Denis Altman's impressionistic study on the
Electric Age is well done, although, as with all impressionistic efforts, there are
things with which one would want to disagree. He obviously irritated some
other New Left pundits, and two short and thoroughly unconvincing chapters
are devoted to refuting some of his points. These chapters could have been
better devoted to criticising some of the other huge, shapeless areas of political
free association appearing under names like Osmond, Summy and so on.

The point is, Altman can write careful non-impressionistic pieces and has
done so. If non-impressionism was not favoured, then it should not have
been included. But having included it, there should have been no further
complaint on that score. In any case, impressionism is preferable to free
association and tedious name dropping. Some of these interminable essays
are riddled with O.K. left names — Perry Anderson, Blackburn, Mailer, Gramsci,
Fanon, Marcuse, etc. etc. etc. — partly as evidence of wide reading and radical respectability on the writers' parts — but just as often as bromides to sedate the critical reader in the presence of a fragmentary or especially shoddy piece of argumentation. Yet most of the people whose names are cast around like Holy Water have usually reasoned in a systematic and multi-dimensional manner, and their writings have been largely free of the ridiculous presumptions and intellectual buffoonery which dominate the approach of so many of these Australian symposiasts. There are too many examples of scamped work and waste of good materials in this collection.

Promises to refute liberalism and demonstrate its failures are made, but not kept. The same applies to parliamentary democracy and the ALP. Similarly with announcements that new workable strategies and compendia of tactics are to be provided. Dan O'Neill, with his essay, "Abstract and Real Worlds: Intellectuals and Radical Social Change," actually comes to grips with these matters, and finishes with conclusions of agnosticism and empiricism.

But for the rest, the living, working example of Berkeley is evoked — but whatever did happen to Berkeley? The French students are marched in and out, like a stage army, when half of the cast are on strike. Osmond calls for immediate action at all points at once, but especially around university administration buildings — storm the toilet blocks, comrades! Others speak of developing a new revolutionary life style which probably takes some time. Osmond says that "out of political practice, out of tactics, a socialist strategy will dialectically emerge". This licence for never-ending bulldust under the protective wing of the God-Dialectic, raises the question as to how many armies have won a campaign by making their tactics up as they went along, and finding the strategy at the end? Especially when most of the officers come straight out of the Cadet Corps? A confession of intellectual bankruptcy.

Most of the discussions about tactics are incompetent; one or two are quite seamy. There are virtually no coherent statements of ultimate goals, except of such generality as to secure widespread and confused assent. But one thing is certain "there is a need of iconoclastic and symbolic acts, and the need to inject the maximum amount of cultural and social tension into the society" (Peter O'Brien, p. 253). These, of course, were the Nazi tactics, before their revolution. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery: therefore, "the New Left must also accept all forms of revolutionary practice as prima facie authentic until proved otherwise". — O'Brien. (What counts as proof?). The old, old fallacy of mistaking militancy in tactics for basic radicalism is endlessly repeated in this book. When people, despite objections, keep equating the two, then we must conclude that that is all they do mean by radicalism or the revolution. Which explains the paucity of detail about the character of post-revolutionary society, and the short weight delivered on strategy.

One or two reproduce the Narodnik project of "going to the people", i.e. talking to the peasants (p. 259). Others speak of the New Left acting as social detonators. All right, I suppose, if you knew anything about explosives. Summy, after pouring cold water on coalition strategies (requires an ability to get on with people), speaks of the need to penetrate various organisations with a view to taking them over by stealth. This, one remembers, was the old-style CP scenario. Who are the cynics and manipulators now?

One thing the younger New Left contributors all agree upon is that the
students are the hope of the world, the vanguard of the revolution. As Osmond says “it is the vanguard or leading element of a class that does not yet exist” p.216. The Australian New Left would seem to match up to Freud’s definition of Life: a raft of pain in a sea of indifference.

The key role of student leaders probably accounts for the great hurry — hurry to revolt, to rush into print, to pronounce on matters clearly beyond their intellectual competence, as demonstrated in this collection. Because what happens when you cease to be a student? Do you go back into the rearguard? Someone once asked me what happened to old students when they died. The answer — they move and start yet another course at yet another university. Please, please, come the revolution!

To conclude: these two books are similar in some ways, different in others. In both, the good bits aren’t original and the original bits aren’t good. Stylistically, they are very different. McQueen writes well; fluently, sometimes wittily — with all the glib demagogy of a Richmond auctioneer or a racing columnist. No wonder the right wing press liked it — for underneath all this chatter is a turgid pool of profound antipathy towards the lower classes. This doesn’t magically cut out at 1914, but is a permanent aversion. And the same goes for the rest of the human race. You will search in vain for the human face of socialism; instead, you are shown its reverse — if you follow. The New Britannia is to be replaced by the New Siberia.

The second book is different. Atrociously written, for the most part, it nevertheless qualifies as a species of that respectable genre — Utopian Socialism. Not that the intellectual standard in any way compares with the original Utopian Socialists whom Marx castigated for lack of rigor, and for wishful thinking.

Nearly everybody, after spreading himself over fifty or more pages, insists that “some of the ideas have not been fully developed: the form is more like an outline than a substantiated argument”. Or “strategies are constructed from certain preconceptions about socio-political reality which, for reasons of space, cannot be defended — only briefly stated”. Like Anatole France’s painter who spent his whole life looking for a canvas large enough to contain his proposed masterpiece. Result, no painting, but a whole life spent in talking about the masterpiece to come. Nothing has changed since these essays were thrown together. Nor will it.

All that will change eventually will be the name of the dilettantes’ association. As a very early member of the British New Left (circa 1959), and with fond memories and a good deal of respect for what was attempted and done by a far more serious and mature group, might I suggest an early change of title, with of course, the customary continental flavour? What about the Anatole France Lemmings’ League; alternatively the Barber’s Cat Self-Improvement Society?

I imagine that the phenomenon of student radicalism expressed in this particular narcissistic form, will persist for some time. It constitutes a branch of social-climbing for some; a way of shortening the path to temporary intellectual eminence to others; a lonely hearts society and a substitute for serious wide-ranging analysis for everyone.

MAX TEICHMANN