Many attempts have been made to define the radical and revolutionary student movement both nationally and as a world wide phenomenon. All aspects of the student revolt are subject to differing assessments, even amongst student leaders there is no agreement on its extent, motivation and potential. Australian Left Review asked student leaders from Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane a number of questions, which we had been asking ourselves, in an effort to understand this important new contribution to the movement for social change. Here student leaders speak for themselves.

DOUGLAS KIRSNER, aged 21, 4th year honours Arts student at Melbourne University, member of MU Labor Club, member of the Liberal-Country Party Club (a club which disclaims any connection with the party of that name) member of the Australian Labor Party, member of the University Union Council.

GRANT HANNAN, aged 30, post graduate student in History at Monash, member of Monash New Left Club, Monash Labor Club and the Australian Labor Party, past editor of National "U".

ROWAN CAHILL, aged 22, 4th year history student at Sydney University, Director of Student Publications, member of the Australian Labor Party.

BRIAN AARONS, aged 23, tutor and post graduate student in Physics at New South Wales University, active in ALF (Action for Love and Freedom), member of the Communist Party of Australia.

MITCH THOMPSON, aged 23, Arts student at Queensland University, Society for Democratic Action leader.

PETER DUNCAN, aged 23, 4th year Law at Adelaide University, Editor of "On Dit", member of the Students Representative Council, member of the Socialist Club, ALP Club and Students for Democratic Action.

PETER O'BRIEN, aged 21, 4th year Law-Arts at Adelaide University, member of Students for Democratic Action, former member of the S.R.C. and editor of "On Dit".
How extensive is the radical student movement in your city and in Australia today?

KIRSNER: It depends what you mean by 'radical'. Those to the left of somebody like Jim Cairns comprise a relatively small percentage of students. There is a greater proportion of students who support the present Government than there is among the general population. However the radicals have a far greater influence than their numbers would indicate. There is a greater proportion of radicals than there was, say in the 'thirties.

HANNAN: The radical student movement is not extensive but in most places has the capability of growing quickly given appropriate conditions. For example in the University of Queensland in 1964/65 there were no more than 10 active radicals in a university with a day population of approximately 5000. Today the numbers would certainly be over 500 fairly committed and a following on some issues which would raise the number to about 1200. In Melbourne there is a small hard core, bigger than the hard core in Brisbane even now—but lacking the ability to lead larger numbers of students on specific issues.

CAHILL: It's not very extensive at Sydney and even less at Macquarie. At New South Wales there is really only ALF (Action for Love and Freedom) which has had a measure of success in bringing the administration before the students, but most students are indifferent. If you take Clark Kerr's formula from Berkeley that you need 1 per cent of the student body to be truly radical to develop a wider movement then we haven't got that at Sydney. We have about one-third of 1 per cent. There are higher levels of radicalism in both Brisbane and Melbourne but you can't "export revolution" as Queensland student leaders have tried to do. In Queensland till recently there has been no tradition of a student-left. In Sydney there has been some student-left since 1925 which engages in in-fighting and lacks solidarity. This does not help.

AARONS: It depends on how you look at it. Radical students are a small minority of the whole student body yet the size of Sydney's three universities means that absolutely they form a substantial grouping — about 300 I'd say. When compared with the membership of other radical youth organisations this is quite a reasonable number. I would imagine that the position in Sydney would pretty well reflect the situation in the rest of Australia.
THOMPSON: The radical student movement is more intensive than extensive. It represents sporadic student action on certain issues (Vietnam the main one) relevant to a particular campus and to specific conditions. It has been clearly shown that the movement occurs on all campuses but it lacks co-ordination, long term planning and permanency of structure. I would say that it is only now that other groups are following the lead of Brisbane S.D.A. (Society for Democratic Action) in setting up their own independent infra-structure, and long term planning. I think one may be optimistic of the future.

DUNCAN: The radical student movement in Adelaide is small at present — probably no more than 50 students, but it is growing. Overall in Australia there seems to be a rapid awakening to what the left has to offer and that the only way to get this is by radical action.

O'BRIEN: There are between 40 and 50 students at Adelaide University who would describe themselves as radical in the sense that they want a fundamental change in the structure of Australian society. These students are mainly centred around Students for Democratic Action. The Socialist Students' Alliance, formed last June, represents eleven or twelve radical student groups in all States except Western Australia and Tasmania.

What main causes, issues, events, contribute to the movement's development?

KIRSNER: the most important issue has been the Vietnam war which has provided a tangible rallying point for radicals. It constitutes a symbol of all that is bad in our society — deceit, violence, coercion, interference with other people's lives. Moreover, the Vietnam war is basically a moral issue for radicals. It has swung the tone of politics a little away from sheer pragmatism in a direction where concern for fellow human beings and principles can be counted as factors influencing decisions. The rise of Dr. Cairns is an example of this. The war has exposed the government on a large number of issues by providing a yawning "credibility gap". Students are questioning government action more than ever.

Australian universities have many of the conditions for which students overseas are fighting. Thus many of the springboards for action, such as lack of freedom of organisation on and off campus,
are missing from most Australian universities. However the gov-
ernment and university administrations can provide important
catalysts for action by being openly repressive. Discipline and
police brutality are examples. Students engaged in action can see
the issues that underlie the particular demonstrations more easily.
Thus a matter of discipline may make students more aware of the
nature of the university, its role in society and what it ought to be.
Police brutality may lead students to re-think their attitude towards
state power.

HANNAN: Generally the Vietnam conflict has acted as a catalyst
in student radical movements. However as experience in Queens-
land has shown, the way to larger numbers, to growth of strength
is to be found in pursuing democratic rights by means of direct
action.

CAHILL: I emphasise that I speak of a minority movement but the
Vietnam war is the great issue. Most oppose the war on moral
grounds or they oppose conscription and only a few say that the
war is caused by US imperialism sticking its nose in where it doesn’t
belong. The political opponents are seen by many, even some
opponents of the war, as too extreme. Motives are suspected and
they are called “communist”, a label which still has power to frighten
people, even though some of the politically involved are critical
of communists.

Another important issue is the treatment of Aborigines but this
protest is quite respectable. In this sense it is different from Viet-
am. As you consider the government policies which led to Vietnam
you have to consider the need to destroy the government. In the
case of the Aborigine struggle you can see it as one bad spot to be
remedied.

Other factors facilitate the movement, the threats of violence
from the authorities, restrictions from an authoritarian government,
as in Queensland; intellectual ferment on the right as well as on
the left, as in Melbourne; government intervention into universities,
as at Monash. If Dunstan’s Labor Party, with its electoral majority
and parliamentary minority is frustrated I would predict a new
wave of student radicalism in Adelaide.

In Sydney the Humphries case crystallised some student action and
the Free University has had a liberalising effect.

AARONS: These vary, but generally they can be classified under two
headings, (a) social issues where students see something wrong in
society at large and attempt to do something about it. Usually
these involve moral and civil rights questions, e.g. Aboriginal rights
and civil liberties in Queensland. In particular, the last four years
has seen the ever increasing importance of the war in Vietnam. The protest movement against the war has grown from small beginnings to the most significant Australian movement of recent times and students have played a big role in the development of this movement; (b) issues which affect students directly, perhaps exclusively e.g. student rights within the university, or the recent amendments to the National Service Act designed to make the universities serve as a pimping agency on students.

Traditionally, Australian students have always done more about the first than the second, but lately there has been a change in emphasis, this year has seen radicals at several universities increase their interest in specifically student issues mainly around the student power question. I think this is a good thing. One way for the radical student movement to grow is for it to take up issues which other students can closely identify with.

THOMPSON: Students are very unhappy about the present situation, their alienation from decision making in the university at all levels of administration to staff-student communication. But it goes beyond this to the factor that students are being motivated on value issues, such as Vietnam which goes beyond their immediate environmental effects which directly influences the alienation in a student. The students are realising the 'big lies' of the government and the instituted political parties. There is no need to elaborate on an analysis of the big lies, these are known to us, but we may see why the vanguard of the radical movement in Australia lies with the students. With the Vietnam war a reservation characteristic of the academic conflicted with the horrors of a genocidal war, and we were the ones conducting such bestiality. This contradiction of all our moral values was the point at which students began questioning the whole of society.

It is because we have access to sources on the structure of governmental systems, because some of us specifically study in this area, and because of greater mobility (due to lack of family responsibilities, etc.). We realise the full contradictions of capitalist society in the lack of decision making individuals have in saying how society should develop.

DUNCAN: I believe that Vietnam and civil liberties are the flux contributing to this development. I feel that the real motivating force is a deeper and more subtle dissatisfaction with life in our society as a whole.

O'BRIEN: The Vietnam war has been the main catalyst for the radicalisation of to-day's students. If a society can go along with a war like that there is something wrong with the society.
How much does the movement derive from Australian conditions and how much from student actions in other countries?

KIRSNER: Not only the student revolts but the general upsurge in revolutionary activity throughout the world has provided a great deal of inspiration to Australian student radicals. But we must be wary of using overseas models for Australian conditions. The point is that we can learn a lot from rebellions overseas but we mustn’t blindly emulate them. It is a matter, as it is in every other country, of assessing the environment and the possibilities for action and change within it.

HANNAN: The overseas student actions have an obvious effect on the hard core but a negligible effect on the body of students as a whole. The more successful movements are those which concentrate on problems which are close to the everyday life of the student and only gradually introduce bigger political questions.

CAHILL: Student radicalism in Australia is not just the transplanting of overseas experiences. There is a long tradition of a dissenting and revolutionary spirit in the labor movement. Dissenting students carry on that tradition, even if they don’t acknowledge it. Some of the style, rhetoric and even ideas have been taken from abroad but this is not a bad thing. As ideas are transposed they undergo change and are modified to become valid. If attempts are made to copy without adaptation then the ideas don’t work. Most overseas influences have been good, for example, the British New Left Review has infused new life into marxist studies here. The fact that overseas experiences are considered leads to new international attitudes as opposed to isolation. There is a feeling of solidarity with students in other countries and in particular, with the revolutionary people of Vietnam.

AARONS: Although there is an element of “importing revolution”—that is copying some ideas from overseas, particularly America—in the student movement, by and large it has developed from Australian conditions with its own ideas and forms of organisation.

Of course, events overseas do have an impact, sometimes quite a large one, on what happens here. The prime example is Vietnam. The heroism, sacrifice and effectiveness of the Vietnamese people in their fight against U.S. imperialist intervention have evoked admiration in many students, as with others in the community. I would say that this has been an important factor in the
radicalisation which has taken place in the student movement over the last two years. An interesting phenomenon here is that radical students, many of them critical of the official communist movement and "Marxism-Leninism" can take as one of their heroes Ho Chi Minh, a leading communist and "Marxist-Leninist". "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh" has become a common cry at student demonstrations. In fact it is significant that the Vietnam struggle, led by communists, has been a focal point for student radicals the world over.

THOMPSON: I can only speak of our movement in Queensland, which began on a local level. Many of us felt a need to protest against the Vietnam war and conscription. It is without a doubt that these were the issues which provided the necessary catalyst for a student movement which began questioning the whole structure of society. The movement originates according to the specific issue and the conditions existent in Australian society. Although there are internationally held demonstrations and co-ordinated movements, this is only due to the fact that student action is a world-wide phenomenon, just as Marx's ideology is.

DUNCAN: In the short run obviously the incidents overseas have caused a greater interest in radicalism and a realisation of the power that students can exercise.

O'BRIEN: One of the overseas influences has been C. Wright Mills and his comments about students and intellectuals being an "agency for social change" seem to me to be fairly sound.

Do you agree with the concept of student power (a) within the universities, (b) in society?

How could student power be achieved and if it is achieved what would it do?

KIRSNER: 'Student power' is a much abused expression. One gets the impression of professors being appointed and dismissed by general meetings of 17-year-old students or of society being directed and run by a small band of inexperienced, rat-bag students. I don't think the students want this at all. 'Student power' is a term coined by non-students.

What the students want is a completely different society from that existing anywhere in the world today. Most don't think this can be achieved through the conventional methods of parliamentary
democracy involving political parties. Thus they engage in different sorts of action. The students do not want to control society.

On the contrary, they want people to control their own lives. But 'student power' is a reality to the extent to which students are an influential group. People speak of 'student power' mainly because student action on a large scale is a relatively recent phenomenon. The concept of students acting as a group does not fit the traditional framework. Students cannot be accommodated to a 'class' unless, perhaps, the 'lumpen proletariat' class in which Marx placed them together with lay-abouts and criminals of the worst sort. But this is hardly helpful today.

As for 'student power' in the universities, it would be an entire violation of the concept of a university as a community of scholars to give one section of this community power to make decisions for the whole. In many overseas universities students have no say in university matters, and it is there that 'student power' becomes relevant. Students are putting forward demands that they should have a significant say in decisions of the university, 'Administration' or 'Government power' is a reality in many universities and it is in reaction against this that students are rebelling. Of course staff should be able to pick their own courses and should not be dictated to by students but, by the same token, they must not be dictated to by the Government, the Defence Department or 'the wider needs of society'. Lecturers should be autonomous.

HANNAN: Yes I agree with the concept of 'student power' in the universities but I am not quite clear what is means by 'student power' in society. If it means that students concern themselves with taking a political role in society — outside the university — Yes. Student power in the university would be best approached by setting up dual centres of power — run by students and staff — which would rival the existing structures of power. If, for example, a students' discipline committee was set up as a rival to an Administration one it would attempt to sit in judgment of a student charged by the Administration before the Administration discipline committee.

Imagine the situation where a student discipline committee found a student not guilty, before he went before the Administration. If student-staff power were achieved, and I would take this to mean non-academic staff as well — in other words — workers' control — it would be a better centre of struggle against the bourgeois capitalist society than it is now. I would bitterly contest the view that universities as training places for a capitalist order should be destroyed. By and large universities are centres of struggle.

CAHILL: I certainly favour student power in the universities. Students should help to run the universities, change the curricula,
for example to ensure that there are courses on all the issues which will face students later in society. I have been aware, even in first year, that the university now is a training ground for middle class society. The problem is that student power isn’t well understood and it may be fobbed off with a few crumbs or by tricks of the liberal establishment. Since the French crisis most Vice Chancellors have given lip service to the importance of student radicalism, making apparent self criticisms. The problem is that it is hard to see where power resides now but student power should mean, above all, the removal of outside pressures and real student representation.

Externally the concept of student power in society sounds elitist. Students should have no more say than anyone else but students do have a tradition of influencing society and I would argue for radical student participation in general society issues. Students should use their education and training to help break through false rhetoric, for example, to help break the ideological case for support of the Vietnam war. If students get out in public with well conceived demonstrations they help disclose the nature of society. Ordinary citizens don’t usually understand that police violence is part of the power of the establishment.

AARONS: So far there hasn’t been any adequate definition of the term ‘student power’ but I think that most people would agree that it means basically a greater participation by students in the running of universities. On this definition student power in society is definitely out if it implies that students should run society; if it means they should participate more in society I would agree. Students, along with other young people, should be given more rights to participate in society and affect the direction in which it goes. Immediate and minimal demands here are obvious — lowering of the voting age to 18 and granting of full rights for youth to take part in social decision making — e.g. the right to stand for elections to all public bodies.

Above and beyond these formal aspects, intervention by students in the social process should be encouraged as part of the student power concept. It is obvious that students have played an important, often leading role, in many social movements of our time, and can exert influence beyond their numerical strength. An instance of this was the student ‘freedom ride’ for Aborigines in February 1965, which aroused a dulled public conscience and helped the existing Aborigine movement in a dramatic way. This role of students as a critical and active social force will, I hope, become ever more important.

Rivera, *Mother and Child*, (detail) tempera and oil
Getting back to universities, I would say that the whole crux of the student power concept is involvement and participation by people in making the decisions which affect their lives. This doesn’t necessarily mean that students should, for instance, set their own exams (although I know of at least one university department which comes close to this) but it does mean that students, along with academic staff, should have adequate representation on university bodies at all levels. Student power can only be achieved if the majority of students want it and if they can find the way to persuade society that they should have it. That is a very general statement but the whole issue is so new and complex that it is hard to be more explicit. If it is achieved, student power could play a part in revitalising the universities—a process which would benefit the community in general as well as students.

THOMPSON: Yes, in both cases (a) and (b). Student action can be achieved at the university in the beginning by forming an identifiable organisation with headquarters or a meeting place where students can congregate.

Before we can talk about achieving student power we must analyse what it means to us, and then work out a systematic means of tactics and strategy to achieve it. I define student power as direct student participation and control in the management of the university and student participation in the decision making apparatus of society. It means the rights of students to self-management of their university and that students will play a role in deciding the development of society.

What is needed in a program of student power is to establish the nature of the movement and a series of concrete demands. This may be achieved by a wide student campaign of leafleting, forums, etc., on campus followed by action. Two points must be remembered: 1, a constant education campaign, extensively through campus leafleting and intensively through the media of discussion at headquarters or by means of a Free University (anti-University) non-institutional organisation; 2, an independent financial organisation, with full-time organisers.

An example must be set at University where courses and decision making dealing with any issue affecting students and staff must come from them. It is important that the movement of student power be not isolated, otherwise it loses its meaning. Student power is not just an on-campus factor, it must be directed to changing society. To
this end, university students must challenge the very basis of power in capitalist society by linking with workers, teachers, technical students and high school students. It is only a combination of the meaningful power of all these groups that can bring about change. Once this is achieved we will have passed through the transitional stage to socialism, for student power is part of the means towards which socialism may be achieved.

DUNCAN: I agree with the concept of student power in both the universities and in society generally. We, as students, are part of an aware minority and have an obligation to the rest of society to try and improve it and to show others how to improve it and this means student power.

My concept of student power is that it is not something "to be achieved". It is more a means of gaining the sort of things we desire to see. Student power is not students in control but the ability of students to act as a pressure group to exert the force of change onto people exercising power, whether this be a government, trade unions or other organisations exercising power.

O'BRIEN: I agree with student power in so much as it means a participatory democracy for students which is essential in a university. In society if students create a "counter-milieu" the overall society can perhaps be improved.

What is your attitude to traditional organisations of the radical movement — the trade unions, the Australian Labor Party, the Communist Party of Australia, etc.?

KIRSNER: I regard these as part of a general movement to change society in the direction I want, and thus view them in a friendly way. Naturally I have disagreements with many of their policies, and I realise they don't have all the answers. But neither has anyone. The point is to co-operate. The traditional radical organisations have many supporters, and a policy of spurning these would ensure that no new society could be reached, for students alone cannot achieve the fundamental changes they desire. The Left is a movement not an organisation. Within the movement there are and ought to be many strains of thought and action. In a society where the Left is a minority, an attitude of divisiveness can only lead to the continuation of minority support.

HANNAN: All organisations of the left are worthwhile and should co-operate as much as possible. This however would not include the
Whitlamite wing of the ALP and trade unions with similar leadership.

CAHILL: For too long the left has chopped itself up in battles which are both ideological and personal. Everyone on the left needs to cooperate but since the whole of the ALP is sometimes called the left I would qualify this and say that everyone but the right in the ALP should cooperate. This is the way to become an effective force. We need cooperation between all the forces that are for socialism and between all those who believe that Australia should get out of Vietnam. In general terms I support the trade unions and I see nothing wrong in cooperation with communists, in the peace movement or directly.

AARONS: It's hard to express an attitude briefly but in general I support the concept of trade unionism and many of the activities which Australian trade unions engage in. I would like to see less bureaucracy and conservatism and more involvement in social issues but these, of course, are matters for the union members themselves. The ALP I regard as important, in that it is the party which the Australian workers at present support. Its weaknesses as a vehicle for radical social change are well known, but it seems to me that there is a fundamental point here which is often overlooked. The ALP is a system of checks and balances which acts more like a mirror than a light source in that it tends to reflect political issues and ideas rather than create them. Whatever your perspectives for the ALP — and these vary from extreme right to extreme left — if you are a radical you must see the need for a political organisation which will serve as a light source and help to change people's attitudes and ideas. This brings me to the CPA. Whatever else it is or isn't (opinions here also vary widely between the extreme right and left point of view!) the CPA is the only political party in Australia today which offers a radical alternative to the status quo. Assuming that a political party is needed in order to achieve radical social change, the CP becomes an important organisation for radicals.

If a revolutionary party is needed and you don't think the CP is it, then another will have to be formed. Personally, I think the CPA is on the right track and therefore I am a member. The problem is for the CP to become the sort of party which most socialists and radicals can join, and conversely, for radicals to help this process by joining or in some way making their views known to the party.

THOMPSON: The traditional organisations are unfortunately, at the moment, very much a part of the established institution in the very best tradition of left conservatism. Of course this is not applicable to every group but it is applicable over all to the opposi-
tion institutions in Australia. What is desperately missing in these bodies is the need to organise the workers on the basis of self-management of industry. This is a potentially very powerful weapon (witness the French insurrection) which is not used because of the total concentration on simple economic issues — more wages, fewer hours. These groups have lost the foresight to continue the struggle on all levels, and this is not more evident than in the trade union weakness in accepting the harbinger of capitalism — the Arbitration system.

DUNCAN: I give general support to the Labor Party as the most acceptable of two evils within the present system so I am inclined to favour a policy of “don’t rock the boat” near election times. Under the present system the Communist Party is in a political wilderness and so I think it is following the wrong course. It is likely to find itself in the rear of any radical movements in Australia — even side show revolutions over particular issues.

O’BRIEN: As far as the existing parties are concerned I think that the Communist Party is the most acceptable.

What changes, if any, would you like to see in the traditional radical organisations?

KIRSNER: This is a very general question indeed but I suppose, to answer in generalities, these organisations should adopt a more principled stand on a number of issues. The ALP would be far better under a left-wing Parliamentary leadership. There should be more participation from the membership and a rethinking of party policy along principles, as opposed to pragmatic lines. It should not become a shadow Liberal Party. The Communist Party, I think, should be in the forefront of the struggle for socialism and individual rights. It may well be doing a good deal in the trade union movement but outside this it often lags behind much of the radical movement. I don’t think it should worry about being ‘respectable’ — a part of the established political system.

HANNAN: There are so many changes I would want to see that it would take me too long to attempt to make a list here.

CAHILL: I think the Labor Party should stop being a liberal democratic party and become a real socialist party. Too many members of the ALP have an aversion towards socialism, they tone down policy; for example Whitlam has made Vietnam policy
very vague, in an attempt to gain power. This is wrong. Given a
decent use of the mass media it would be possible to create respect
for socialism and to win a majority to support a policy of ending
Vietnam involvement. I would support Cairns rather than Whitlam.
I believe changes will come to the ALP because the intellectuals and
students who join the ALP tend to be on the left and they should
be able to work with the left trade unionists to win the rank and file.
The groundswell is of the left and what has to be defeated is
really an administrative machine.

I don't know much about the trade unions but I recognise that
they too reflect the left and the right. I see them as organisations
reflecting the whole of the working class and I urge, as Laver does,
a break down in barriers between workers and students. The work­
ers should be assisted to realise that factories and universities have
much in common. We should support each other. There are
problems of course. In Paris the government sought to, and in
some measure succeeded, in buying off the workers with a wage
rise. It seems that most workers are just concerned with wages
and conditions. They see this as one bad spot in the system and
they don't realise that to gain better conditions they really need
to replace the system. This explains why there has not been enough
strong union action on Vietnam, except in a few instances. The
unions give Vietnam only sporadic treatment because much of the
working class isn't concerned. I think unions need to do more to
develop the consciousness of workers for them to have a more
conscious role. Amongst the politically conscious students some
say that the Communist Party is too bourgeois. In France too there
seemed to be some hesitancy by the communists. I don't know
what is wrong but I think the issue in dispute is how to conduct
revolutionary struggle. For my part I don't see anything particu­
larly wrong with the way the communists work here. Of course the
idea that the communists are part of a world wide conspiracy and
manipulate movements of dissent continues. It is part of the cold
war hysteria which should have died but it continues and is a
factor in keeping people away from the CP.

My starting point with all the traditional organisations is that if
you are a socialist you must be prepared to work with other socialists.
AARONS: I outlined some changes I should like to see in trade
unions in the previous question. The ALP I would like to see more
left wing; more committed to a socialist platform and less prone
to divisive faction fights, but somehow I don't see this happening.
I would like to see the CPA become larger, more dynamic, especially
at rank and file level and more influential.

THOMPSON: This requires too long an answer to give here but
part of the answer follows from what I said before about left conser-
vatism. There has to be a greater intellectual commitment. There is a need for militancy and an understanding of socialism. The present bureaucratic structures have to be changed and re-orientated to a more functional participatory method. What we are struggling for must be reflected in our own organisational structures.

DUNCAN: The list of changes I would like to see in the ALP would be too long to consider here. Suffice to say that it should follow Cairns rather than Whitlam. The CPA should become more outspoken — its policy of appeasement, followed at present, will, I believe, be shown to be futile.

O'BRIEN: I will confine my remarks to the changes needed in the Communist Party. It would be more acceptable to the student left if it got over its paranoia about being persecuted and returned to being a militant revolutionary party.

If a Federal election were held this year, whom would you advise student radicals to work and vote for?

KIRSNER: I am a member of the ALP.

HANNAN: The ALP (because it has some electoral chance). If there were any possibility of CPA electoral success then I would work for the CPA. The point about an ALP victory would be that it would help to open up the political spectrum to the left — with varying dogmas and depending on how much control Whitlam retains in the party — to help provide some sort of protection for the work of radical movement.

CAHILL: The ALP. This may sound like a climb down but the ALP is the only viable alternative. The CPA won't field candidates in all electorates so it would be foolhardy to pretend they are an alternative government. One would have to work with the knowledge that if Whitlam's policy took over, Vietnam involvement, in some form, would continue, some conscription would remain and Australia would still purchase those useless F111's, but one could create a better situation to bring the Vietnam war to an end and you certainly would ensure better treatment for conscientious objectors.

AARONS: From what I have said before it's fairly obvious that my answer is the CPA. I know the usual view is that it is hopeless to expect the CP to attract any sizeable vote and therefore worthless
to try. I think there are fairly good arguments against this view, but briefly I think I can back my case up by stating the problem in a negative way. There isn't going to be any radical social change in Australia until some revolutionary party has sizeable popular support. This does not exist now, hence we have to create it. Actually, I have for some time now wondered whether the CP couldn't obtain quite large votes if an enthusiastic and intensive campaign were waged by all the non-ALP left. Certainly the pessimism and do-nothing attitude of many, including party members, doesn't help.

THOMPSON: I would advise student radicals to vote for the ALP. It is there that we must get a mass basis for a radical movement. But I would advise them also to work towards an extra-parliamentary machine which, in the future, could build up to an alternative political party. At the same time radicals should work within the Labor Party to radicalise it in an attempt to present a real opposition in parliament and not a mock opposition as it is now.

DUNCAN: I would support and advise radical students to work and vote for ALP candidates in an election.

O'BRIEN: In the event of an election I would advise students to vote for the CPA.

What do you think will happen to present-day student radicals after they graduate?

KIRSNER: A greater proportion of present-day radical students will remain radical than was the case in the past.

HANNAN: In a large number of cases student radicals will rapidly forget what the word radical means. An organisation is needed for these people to help them maintain their militancy.

CAHILL: As a radical now I plan to remain a radical and I will try to influence my children but I have a horrible suspicion that what happened in the past will happen again, our generation will have its Koestlers but then there are people in the universities from previous generations who can be vaguely termed left, people like Rude and Turner, and there are some in the mass media too. There may be a further concentration of radicals in universities as university staffs expand and this could help to maintain and develop radicalism.
AARONS: As in previous times this will depend on events and circumstances. Undoubtedly some will follow the classical staircase from radical heaven to conservative hell, others will become apathetic or uninterested in doing things but I think that many will keep their radical views and continue to fight for radical causes. Much will depend on the possibilities they see for achieving some of their aims.

THOMPSON: Many radical students after graduation will continue in either post-graduate work or will become professionals, or may enter certain areas where radical politics will have real meaning. If a student radical has an intellectual commitment to the movement then he will not accept professional status. This would be anathema, unless he was still involved in the process of radical political participation.

If radical students accept a non-political professional status then I say it is time now to produce professional radical groups in which they can continue certain radical activities.

I think that on the whole many will not be able to reconcile the differences between their involvement in on-campus radicalism and the off-campus life of the mundane a-political public.

DUNCAN: I honestly don't know what is likely to happen to present-day radical students when they graduate. I guess some will become frustrated dissenters within the system while others will become more radical and still others will fit comfortably into a middle class niche.

O'BRIEN: I really don't know what is likely to happen.

What does a democratic society mean to you?

KIRSNER: A democratic society is one in which people have control over their own lives. On these terms there is not a democratic society in the world today. In one way or another people are more or less manipulated or manipulated by those in power. To me a democratic society is very close to the marxist concept of anarcho-communism. Whether or not this ideal can be achieved in our life-times is not the point. The closer we approach the ideal, the more democratic will our society become. We must recognise that the individual's control of his own life is an intrinsic good. Any paternalistic concept of democracy,
such as parliamentary democracy treats the individual as passive, it takes the initiative away from him. Democracy should not be seen within the very narrow limits of parliamentary democracy, of voting. Voting can, at best, be a means of achieving democracy or self-determination.

HANNAN: A place where each person has the greatest amount of control over his life, his work and his recreation. It means worker control, participatory democracy and it means a great reduction in the power of the state.

CAHILL: It is easier to say what a democratic society is not and it is certainly not one where the mass media is centred on a few families or where industrial wealth is in a few hands. I would say that a democratic society would need to be socialist because I see that democracy only really becomes available under socialism but this does not mean that I see present socialist societies as democratic. I think the first essential is to remove the power of private property but from that base you have a long struggle to achieve a society that combines socialism and democracy.

AARONS: Much the same as to anyone else I suppose. If you want a definition I would say that a democracy is where the individual’s rights, happiness and involvement in decision-making are the greatest possible, compatible with the welfare of society as a whole. Definitions don’t help much, and obviously the contentious issues are your judgements of what is best at a given time. For myself, I would say that Australian society doesn’t need to conscript young men to go to Vietnam, therefore conscription for this purpose is undemocratic. Similarly much of Australian censorship is unnecessary, and imposed in an authoritarian way — hence it also is undemocratic.

THOMPSON: A democratic society means to me that where the individual is not subjugated to the irrelevancy of an automatum but has access to the means of decision making, where there isn’t the economic insecurity that plagues Western capitalist society, where pressure groups are represented in the decision making apparatus, where one-third of the world’s population is not starving.

It means an overall restructuring of society where workers’ control of industry, students’ control of their universities, in fact the people’s control of the institutions in which they function and the whole apparatus of society, is a reality.

A democratic society should be concerned with the individual’s full potential of creativity and productivity; where self-fulfilment is the motivating force, and not material incentives, where the
channels are open for the maximum participation of man in his environment in all media including culture, politics, arts.

A democratic society, in my view, is the antithesis of present-day Western capitalist society.

DUNCAN: I would not attempt in a few words to state what a democratic society means to me*.

O'BRIEN: I believe that a democratic society means participation at all levels of the decision making process by the broad mass together with the redistribution of the economic structure along socialist lines.

What is your attitude to socialism?

KIRSNER: I think that socialism is essential.

HANNAN: What I have said in respect to a democratic society is roughly what I hold to be socialism.

CAHILL: From what I have said it can be seen that I support socialism. I would say that socialism is necessary and to that extent inevitable but I would condition my statement by saying that I believe socialism could be put back a thousand years if the United States happened to win in Vietnam. If the US could force the Vietnamese to negotiate on American terms or if the US abandoned the present talks and undertook a large-scale invasion with nuclear weapons then this would be an open invitation to fascism. I don't think the Vietnamese will crumble and I see them as a bastion of the hopes of humanity.

AARONS: I support socialism, not so much as an end in itself but as a mean to an end — namely the progress of mankind. Socialism has not, does not and will not solve all man's problems, but it is the necessary condition for the solution of many of them. Socialism should be seen as the next framework within which man will progress until he decides he needs a new one. The present framework is definitely outmoded and constricting.

THOMPSON: The term socialism is intricately bound within the network of a democratic society. It necessarily must be a way of life

* On this question and the one that follows Peter Duncan said that the posing of the questions had led him to consider his own views more closely but that he would need to give both questions more thought.—Ed.
for man. It therefore requires the involvement of those points I have outlined as an integral necessity in the function of socialism. Socialism is the humanist principle and in terms of a flexible interpretation of Marx, is the necessary means to obtain man's liberation. But to me socialism means a lot more than what is practised in the formally structured dogmas such as Russia. A creative marxist approach is what we require, one that does not accept or compromise with the contradictions of capitalist societies and for that matter some of the present bureaucratic communist countries.

I consider that the logical extension of student power and workers' power is the socialist society. To me, socialism is the only means and way of life by which one can obtain the final state where organisations and institutions based on authority and force no longer exist.

O'BRIEN: I myself am a socialist. I believe that an ideology is necessary for a transition to socialism. Socialism would require some form of nationalisation and would include collective ownership. I tend to have a view in support of Bakunin, in his difference with Marx, that despotism is bound up with any form of government.

There is a lot of seeking amongst our people but we know more of what we are against than what we are for.

Australia needs a real alternative which the A.L.P. cannot provide. It would seem that we need some alliance of the various groups seeking an alternative. Each section of those who want a new society, the workers in industry and the students at university, have the responsibility of changing their own environment. Each is an agency for change.

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Editorial Note:

Because of pressure on available space in this issue of ALR the regular section, DISCUSSION, has not been included. Articles submitted by several contributors will now appear in the October-November issue.