IT'S NOT ENOUGH in left-wing politics today to rely on an analysis of the situation; our age is one of the transformation of all values, and the central need is to free our imagination so that we're attuned to the new possibilities which are abroad.

One aspect of this situation is that many of the things we used to consider clear opposites to one another are no longer so clearly contrary. One example is the concept of revolution and evolution as contrasting modes of social change — we can no longer speak of them as precisely opposed phases of social action. Similarly it doesn't make much sense to say that one person is a radical and another a reformist because certain, apparently reformist, demands escalate change until it becomes clear that they carry within them like time-bombs demands for fundamental re-orientation, for "revolution"; while on the other hand, there are seemingly revolutionary acts like the formation of an explicitly revolutionary party that might, if premature, amount to little more than a reform in existing political alignments.

I think also that political world views now have much more in common with certain religious or metaphysical views. This occurs in the field of alienation for instance. It seems to me that sophisticated and developed marxism is converging closer and closer to a view which will allow that there are certain features of alienation which aren't caused by man's basic nature as a producer, but by man being someone whose experience of himself as a suffering being, and his experience of other people as suffering beings, is alienated from him. Our form of society not only jiggers up our relationship with one another as producers and reduces human community in that way, but it also reduces human community by making it impossible for us to have a whole range of other feelings and attitudes towards one another (such as compassion) which are required for full human community and development.
We're all trapped into seeing things as contraries because we're all living in our own different traditions. Often enough we go through the process of thinking the way dogs go through tricks they've learned. But it's possible now for us to stop being tricked by our own conceptual systems and to stop talking in mutually exclusive jargon. One of the worst causes of left-wing sectarianism can go if we concentrate on what we mean rather than on what we say or the way we say it.

This transformation in tradition leads to changes in other areas, like the traditional distinction between the public and private spheres, so that it becomes less apparent what is public and what is private. I suggest that we've got private property notions in respect to personal relations — marriage for example. As we currently conceive it in our society, marriage is actually a kind of fortress in which two people repair together to take refuge as it were from the stresses and pressures inherent in the whole kind of dehumanised society around them. Now I think that an increasing minority, especially in socially experimental groups like students, is beginning to out-date this distinction between public and private and not any longer to need to use the so-called private institutions for the traditional habitual kind of defensive purposes they have been used for because of public social pressures in the past. This is giving rise to completely new conceptions of morality. Hence any advance in political thinking in our age leads also to advances in moral thinking — that is, political radicalism leads to cultural radicalism and moral radicalism.

There are new insights too into the inadequacies of many kinds of psychological explanation. Much of psychoanalytic explanation of people's behavior is being revealed as culturally bound to a fairly bourgeois capitalist view of society and it is becoming more and more conceded that any form of neurosis and madness is a socially produced thing, and the solution is largely a profound change in society. But social change is an immensely complicated business; it occurs in a whole interlocking system of laws and institutions and people's own personal lives which are largely determined by the laws and institutions. To bring about change means that you're working simultaneously on all these fronts, and as the change accelerates, the distinction between working in these areas becomes less and less apparent, though I think it's important for us to preserve strategic priorities.

On a world view, it seems to me there's a vast kind of world status quo, the beneficiaries of which are the advanced capitalist countries of America and Western Europe, and also the establishment socialist bureaucracies. The victims of the status quo are the whole third world and the institutionalised expression of this is the world trade and aid arrangements which are increasingly in
favor of the rich and against the poor nations. These are not rising up as many people mistakenly believe, but are actually going back.

I think this is why there's been such an immense rise of student action — you can see the whole world in terms of a simple kind of justice struggle because there are 'have' nations and 'have not' nations, and capitalism is being revealed as an increasingly wasteful and unjust system that to continue actually has to suppress human needs and hold back the productive capacity of its citizens, distorting them psychologically and morally while doing so.

There are four characteristics of contemporary capitalism of which we have to take account if we're going to bring about social change. The first is that the Government seems to be no longer simply the instrument of straight-out class warfare. We now have a pluralist system in which more and more people have been admitted to the functions of controlling and influencing the status quo so that power is largely a set of reciprocal relations between various groups. There is still repression and still exploitation, but it has been sophisticated to the point where more and more people who have had concessions made to them find it to their advantage to go on in the present system. Chronically underprivileged sections of the community are structurally excluded from the benefits of this interlocking status quo — Aborigines, pensioners, workers as far as they are affected by the penal clauses and the whole Arbitration System, minority groups like the Civil Liberties Co-ordinating Committee, the Peace Movement, the anti Vietnam war movement, any movement that challenges the status quo.

The second characteristic is that capitalism now has vastly extended powers of co-opting its opposition. The trade union movement is the best example of this. In principle it contains an irreducible element of contradiction to the capitalist system, but virtually it has conceded to capitalism the right to exist.

It has conceded that its opposition to capitalism will always be limited, it will be largely a kind of withdrawal opposition. Thus the strike amounts merely to a withdrawal of forces; but the money, the resources which make the withdrawal possible, still come from the capitalist system. So that the people in control are always the managers, the business men. The co-opting of the trade unions is far more apparent in America, but it will become more apparent in Australia too as young militant workers assert themselves in the trade unions and various kinds of confrontation develop between the trade union bureaucracies and militant workers. Probably the finest and most sophisticated form of capitalism's power to co-opt is the Arbitration System. Here, as in practically every area of conflict in capitalist society, repression goes on in a very bland way, by the use of sanctified liberal notions like freedom and social justice.
The third characteristic of contemporary capitalism is the coexistence of objective and subjective conditions that actually contradict one another. Thus many people conceive of themselves in a way that doesn't reflect the realities in which they live, so that they take for granted the way things are, almost as if there were a tacit agreement to evade not only questions of justice, but questions ultimately of their own welfare and the welfare of their children. The system has encouraged people not to want conflict. That's why it's not enough for radical groups to point out the inferiority of the life-styles available under capitalism. People are actually resolved, on many levels of their personality, to lie in the mud of it all.

The conflict between the objective and subjective factors comes down to this, that on one hand you have the actual living need for the release of productive capacities, the need for human liberation, spiritual and material, the need for breaking out of alienation, the need for escaping from a kind of completely privatised world: but on the other hand, no people or very few people, do actually feel this need as a need. In advanced capitalist societies, people are transformed to the extent that they are almost dehumanised, so that although the needs are there, they are frozen over except for the fringes of the population, but very big fringes in America for example, where up to 30 million people obviously do have the need. The negroes and poor whites in America actually symbolise this latent kind of dehumanisation in the majority of the people. As extreme examples there are reports that it is quite common in New York to see people being bashed up and other people simply walking by and avoiding the spectacle.

The fourth characteristic of contemporary capitalism is that the people who control the means of production, distribution and exchange, have now geared in the total means of education, and not only education in the formal sense, but also the vast education that goes on in terms of communications and the mass media. In this way even democracy has been subverted because the educational system and the mass media are now largely controlled by people who have no responsibility to anyone, except that they obviously have all sorts of links with the status quo. This has virtually become a means of defining reality for people in favor of the status quo, so that the average man's vision of society is completely linked up to the existing control of production, distribution and exchange. It means almost "why bother to repress people, when you can simply make people within limits?"

Thus it is no accident that there is very little reporting of what goes on in Africa or Latin America, which are practically unknown continents to the majority of the Australian people. I suggest the reason is that the events occurring in any part of the third world,
if they are reported with any degree of fairness or fullness, would immediately break up the cold war attitude of “Communism versus anti-Communism.” The emerging forms of socialism in Latin America and Africa would immediately rend apart this very simple view of the world; but there are powerful vested interests opposed to any destruction of this view.

The new developments of capitalism have made education one of the crucial areas of change, and educational institutions have become the main area in which the contradictions of capitalism occur. Evolution has become revolutionary in its potential; that is, there are certain areas in capitalist democracies where simply going on in the way that western society has been going on practically since the Renaissance can constitute a threat to the status quo. Western society has developed on the basis of the growing influence of reason as opposed to irrational authority; the growing reliance on experiment as opposed to custom and rule; the growing support for social and moral tolerance as opposed to superstition and prejudice. Until recently these attitudes have worked in favor of capitalism; but now the continuance of these very endemic trends in western history work against capitalism, because if students want reason to dominate in social relationships and actually try to put this into practice in the universities, there are people with vested interests who will seek to crush the students.

An over-simple view of this is that the university is simply the factory in bourgeois capitalism for turning out a certain kind of skilled manpower, and so there’s a need to challenge the power structure within the universities, and the significance of the universities is simply that they are areas in which the power structure is challenged, and student power is simply the countervailing force in that area to the power of the State. Now I don’t think this is a sufficient view because the university dialectic is far more complicated, far more fruitful and far more hopeful for radical change. For example, the status quo needs technical and management experts, but these experts need to be trained not simply in the job they have to do, but in the methods of abstract thinking that can only come from the intellectual culture the universities exist to perpetuate, and so they have to concede to these people some acquaintance with areas that have little to do with the status quo and already in this university many of the brightest engineering students are seeking radical reforms in their courses, say one or two years of liberal studies, and this is being resisted by the senior staff in Engineering and ultimately by technical and business interests. But here is a blatant contradiction, that the technologists the system needs want to be far more critical and far more creative personalities than the system requires.

Another contradiction in the universities arises from their author-
itarian and paternalistic structures which are quite incompatible with a community such as the student body, in which the whole range of the social spectrum interacts and where the knowledge the students are absorbing is developing at an unprecedented rate. This is a naturally explosive situation.

In addition there is the conflict between tradition and a constant need for criticism and change just to go on developing academic subjects, between irrational authority and reason as applied to discipline for example; between the conservative staff and some of the youngest adult critics of society. The universities are still in intimate contact with the whole intellectual tradition back to and beyond the Middle Ages, and this is in conflict with the very provincial norms of society in Queensland or Victoria or NSW.

So it quickly becomes apparent to a lively student that what holds back his intellectual and moral and cultural development is the way the universities are constituted and the compliance in this status quo of most of the academic staff. This is becoming the motive force for the whole student power movement. A student interested and excited at the complexity and urgency of the world doesn’t find these things adequately dealt with even in subjects like Politics and History. While students make the widest contact with other disciplines, and while the boundaries between disciplines are breaking down, the university staff by and large are committed to defending these discipline boundaries and contents. So here again there is an ultimate kind of contradiction.

There’s also a sterile kind of competitiveness running through our society which is extremely crucial in the universities and which many students find wasteful and boring. Students are finding other ways of creating their identities, and yet they are forced by the system to go through all these boring hoops. Then again moral and aesthetic development is not encouraged in universities and there’s a contradiction between the need for these things and the authoritarian ideas which hold back this development. It is also held back by the silly official student bodies where people are elected to positions as if the system is saying to them “Get in there and play at being leaders so that you can pick up the style you’ll need later when you go out and actually grow up”. The staff and administration make these kinds of distinction between the real world and the student world, although these distinctions no longer exist in the minds of students. In addition to everything else, there’s a need at the universities for communication, for dialectic, for inquiry into values. And this is in contradiction to the whole way the academic jog-trot is arranged.

All this amounts to the fact that the sort of intellectual, moral and social life the student wants can only be brought about by
securing conditions that are structurally different from present conditions and so it will become more and more apparent to students, whether they want to be radical or not, that if they want the things they are logically impelled to seek, they are going to have to transform the conditions and structures of the university and so you get the slogan of student power.

I suggest this has two uses, one defensive and one developmental. The defensive use is to counter-politicise the universities. As soon as there's any kind of student power trouble, students are accused of politicising the universities. But the universities are already extremely politicised and what students are doing is to counter-politicise them — that is, we're trying to change the private politics, the insidious forms of control where things are done hierarchically and in camera, into an open form of politics which will democratise the university.

Student power is also essential to save people from victimisation because there's no doubt that increasingly students are going to be victimised by the universities. In some ways this use of student power is very similar to the 19th century development of the strike weapon by unorganised workers, and I think the final form of student power today in America and Australia is this strike power, the withdrawal of their co-operation and consent.

If by a strike we could gain some institutional change, this would mean an irreversible change in the power relationships. In this way student power would have moved beyond the withdrawal phase, beyond the phase where it is simply a strike kind of action. It is important that we see power not simply as something to be captured or as the apparatus which controls, but as the institutional guts of civil society.

As well as this, student power must turn outwards, because it is the harbinger of greater popular participation in government by people in general. Jim Cairns says that Australia is a political democracy which contains inside itself a collection of social and economic autocracies. In the universities we have one of the most blatant social autocracies in Australia. It is in the universities that the first blow can be struck at transforming these social autocracies into democracies. It has already been shown in this university that social change can actually be motivated and the pace set by radicals, and this can be extended to other institutions. There are probably ten very intelligent working class youths or youths in the Public Service or other institutions for every one intelligent youth in the universities. Now if largely radical students can set the pace for intellectual discussion and social change within extremely middle class universities, how much more probable is it that radical workers should be able to set the pace in a largely working class trade
union movement? We should encourage this sort of institutional analysis of society rather than being hoodwinked into thinking perpetually in class terms.

We’re setting out to change the categories of moral, social and political discussion in Australia. We’ve already done this in the universities, and I think we can do it in other spheres in which youth congregate or work or study. We’re trying to liberate people from their existing conceptions of themselves and their possibilities, from their existing conceptions of social reality that they have defined for them by the total educational apparatus, so that we’re setting out to establish completely alternative systems of education within civil society. I now want to outline four or five categories that I think we have to work in.

The first one is living out the future we hope for, because unless we can continually integrate this into our own experience on the campus and other areas, then we haven’t the kind of power base we need to be a permanent and continual element in society rather than simply an oppositional element that’s defined by the thing we’re opposing. We need to provide counter institutions in which to consolidate the advances in the growth of new moral and social attitudes, and more immediately we need to provide anti-education and anti-communication to foster the continual outgrowing by people of the repressive definitions that they grow into because of the system.

I think direct action is crucial. There’s a lot of talk at the moment that now the time has come to work through influencing parliamentarians, through getting access to the mass media, etc. But this situation wouldn’t have come about unless groups like SDA, the Vietnam Action Committee and the Civil Liberties Coordinating Committee hadn’t been prepared to use direct action. The sort of society we want is one in which there will be no inhibitions on free communication, in which people can talk to one another in public, and all questions can be considered open questions. If we go into other methods of trying to achieve that kind of society instead of the direct, open, public Narodnik way, we will simply be trapped and co-opted again. Besides, all these conservatives and moderates only got into the game at the continual instigation of the radical groups, so that all these moderate and conservative methods of work only operate if there’s a powerful force to the left of them making it impossible for them not to act.

Secondly we should deliberately create new counter-institutional structures; that is we should deliberately work on the student-worker alliance. We should also work on contact between students and the under-privileged, because the workers are being badly done by only in certain phases of their activity, and it is the under-
privileged who are being structurally excluded. So if the radical movement is to continue to grow, we have to make contact with pensioner groups, deserted wives, Aborigines, bonded teacher trainees, school children, nurses, and all of the other relatively minor and powerless groups. We need other counter-institutions like a free university, and we also need something akin to a workers' educational association or a people's university.

Thirdly we need the deliberate linking up of issues. We need to continue leafleting on all issues. The civil liberties movement seems to me to be the kind of matrix which could bring together all of these other movements. For example on the recent tram and bus strike there was an obvious opportunity for interaction — we could have suggested to the tram and bus union that they use some of the methods we use for action on civil liberties. If we can only interchange methods of working, personnel and actual issues, I think we can accelerate this process of consolidating an active public, an anti-establishment kind of public which will be a permanent element not only in politics but also in civil society. Once you have done that, you have got something that will simply have at some point or other, to be expressed politically.

Fourthly, there should be some kind of theory developed of the notion of an extra-parliamentary opposition. It is propitious for us at this time to work in the moral and social area in the confident expectation that at some later point, and I don't think a very distant point, all of this will have to take form politically; but at the moment we're consolidating a new analysis of society and new groupings in society which are extra-parliamentary.

Fifthly we need to deepen the sort of community that we want to exist pervasively throughout society. We need societies in the university where different moral relationships obtain between people, where we're more open with one other, where there's less notion of private property. We need to create a democratic socialist type of community in the university that actually begins to live as a different type of community. As an ingredient of this change in our own community, I'd suggest the internal reform of SDA — far more internal education, the need to practise what we preach, more participatory democracy inside SDA, the inter-relationship of groups like Foco and the Young Socialist League with SDA.

There should be less crude emphasis on commitment. It's been thought that if you can get people out onto the road in demonstrations, then they're committed. This kind of thing will have to go, and forms of commitment will have to be more intellectual and conceived of as more gradual. One way of expressing the New Left Movement in Australia is to say that we simply want to live as human beings and we are prepared to go to considerable expense
and endure the repressive forces until it becomes apparent to them that we're not going to back down and they'd better back down. I think there will come a point in the universities where the administration will face a moral choice of either contradicting their whole rhetoric, contradicting even their own commitments by occupying the universities with police all the time, or conceding the demands made by students because they can't use power to the point where they are continually contradicting all their own moral norms. If I am wrong about that it means we then have to move into the phase of actual power confrontation, and this could mean violence, but we shouldn't anticipate that.

We need to analyse far more than we do who actually does control what in Australia; for example we don't know enough about the actual organisation of this university, which professors sit on what committee, what are the biographies of the men on the university Senate and so on. Moreover we need less emphasis on morality in a certain way. There's an old kind of self-righteousness in the left-wing movement which sees itself as the only reliable force for social change and expects all other elements to opt out when the serious business starts. This is a way of denying the revolution in the name of efficiently bringing the revolution on. But unless we try to live out the ideals of the revolution now, however hard it may be, as well as trying to bring about the structural and institutional changes, then we've already sold away the soul of the revolution. If a person spends 20 or 30 years of his life living in a repressive way, even if it is in the name of the future, how can he change from that sort of person when the revolution comes? If the structures of the revolution are run by men who have repressed themselves for so long, how can they be liberal structures in themselves?

Finally there needs to be a more determined attack on the whole leadership syndrome. The leadership cult is extremely pervasive in our society, and it is not enough for us to call for more initiative from the masses. We've actually got to live out the denial of leadership and the primacy of the rank and file. It's no use saying there shouldn't be this cult of the leader unless we're simultaneously working organisationally to ensure this position. This seems to be the crucial thing in the movement, that we have to work all the time organisationally against the present organisations of society. In that way our attitudes will no longer be able to be co-opted into the existing institutional arrangements of society; we have to sustain the subjectivity attitudes that we want by the institutions that we're simultaneously building because it is institutions ultimately that support human personalities, and unless we're creating those institutions, then we will only have free-floating idealism that will eventually just dissipate.