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Denis Freney writes on the developing liberation struggle in the South Pacific.

We publish an interview with Vietnamese intellectual Nguyen Khac Vien in which he discusses some problems facing Viet Nam in its reconstruction.

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In our regular Economic Notes, Terry O'Shaughnessy discusses the rise and fall of real wages.


Dave Davies discusses issues arising from John Sendy's book Comrades Come Rally!, and tributes to Dick Makinson and Helen Palmer who died earlier this year, complete the issue.

Front cover photograph:
The openness of French oppression in the South Pacific: an old Kanak being attacked by police during a meeting in Noumea, October 1977.
I wanted to put questions about the campaign which is now developing about “human rights” in Viet Nam. It is important that the Vietnamese revolutionaries should give an answer on this point. Every possibility of mobilisation and of solidarity with Viet Nam is affected, objectively speaking, if the means do not exist with which to refute this campaign in an effective, sincere and explicit way. We are speaking of the rights of the people and of citizens rather than “human rights” in the abstract. French newspapers have spoken of 800,000 political prisoners in Viet Nam. Is that true?

Note that the French journalist took care to qualify what he said: “There are said to be 800,000 political prisoners”. He is protecting himself in advance. They always do that when they want to report a rumour which hasn’t been checked. The reader remembers the figure given and doesn’t remember the form of words used. The qualified form of words is forgotten and the figure remains.

Are there political prisoners in Viet Nam? I realise that the problem isn’t an easy one from the theoretical point of view. I should be glad if you would clarify the problem. It is important.

The real problem is this: the Americans had created in Viet Nam an army of over a million men and a police force of 150,000. At the time of the liberation all the ordinary soldiers and all the rank and file of the police force were able to rejoin their families at once, although among them there might to men who had killed, tortured, and burned down villages. We did this because we did not regard them as being directly responsible for what had been done. But there were some tens of thousands of officers who had given orders, for instance, that persons in detention were to be massacred or tortured. We could not set those men free immediately, partly because they had been given special training by the secret services and would have been capable of organising a counter-revolutionary network, of causing a civil war to break out, of organising a new army with the disbanded soldiers and policemen, in order to launch them against us. That was why Gerald Ford, who was American...
President at that time, had said that there would certainly be a blood-bath in Viet Nam. It was expected that the secret services' network, through those specially-trained officers, would unleash a civil war, which is always the danger which hangs over revolutionary forces, over any revolutionary force. Ford was counting on that clockwork device.

Furthermore, we knew that among those officers of the Saigon army there was a section which, as distinct from the private soldiers, had not been forcibly conscripted but had joined the army as a result of circumstances: the South Vietnamese regime lived on the flow of American economic and military aid and lived well above the level which the effective income of our country permitted. In order to live in privileged conditions, many people agreed to enrol as officers even though they were not really in agreement with the regime. Moreover, you yourself know that in the fascist period not all Italians were fascists, even in the relatively privileged classes: but certain orders have to be obeyed. The revolutionary forces must be able to distinguish between persons who have been ensnared by the social and psychological conditioning of the regime and can be restored to normal life, and the real counter-revolutionaries, the trained criminals. We have held the latter in re-education camps so as to make a thorough investigation of their past, so as to study their behaviour. To the extent that the investigations have proved that they can be restored to ordinary life they have been set free. Some thousands of persons now remain who are real counter-revolutionaries, die-in-the-wool criminals or persons whose position has not been clarified up to now.

Are these persons now being held in camps? Do you think that there can be a further phase of re-education for them? Or are they in prison?

This is a question which, on the one hand, concerns ideology and, on the other, concerns the general situation. There still exist counter-revolutionary networks organised by the American secret services, set up by the Americans in the past 20 years and still receiving foreign aid. They organise conspiracies, from time to time they murder a comrade, a cadre, they hoard goods, or blow up an office or a bridge. As long as this situation lasts, we can't set these individuals free, but we do consider that to the extent that tension lessens it will be possible to restore them, too, to ordinary life. But do bear in mind that there have not been, and there are not, executions.

Side by side with this, there is the entire population which has been driven out of the villages as a result of the American bombing: ten million peasants were driven from the villages and deprived of a living. In Saigon, which had 500,000 inhabitants in 1954, the population had grown to 3,500,000 in 1975 and all of them living on American aid: 2,000 million dollars a year. After 1975 there was no more American aid. The parasitic economy had no possibility of continuing to exist and work had to be found. Only productive work can provide the wherewithal with which to live and for anyone who has become accustomed to living a parasitic life, work comes hard.

In Italy we can very well understand the problem of crime in an environment like Saigon-Ho Chi Minh City with such a vast population reduced to living in slums, driven out of a traditional rural society, dumped into a parasitic society and subjected for 20 years to calls for anti-communist violence. We are only too well aware of what the problem of outcasts is like in our own big cities, in a country where there has not been a war, where villages have not been destroyed and where there does moreover exist an industrial apparatus and broad scope for political and democratic participation. We can imagine the comparison with the cities of South Viet Nam. We are well aware that crime always has a social origin in the lack of work, the lack of moral and political motivation, and the lack of education. In Viet Nam, and especially in Saigon-Ho Chi Minh City, is it a case of "ordinary", sporadic crime? Are there, by the side of this ordinary, individual crime, real and specific criminal organisations, of a Mafia type for example? We know that the secret societies which used to be typical of the old Viet Nam and the old China may at one time have had a revolutionary character, but that now, almost everywhere, they have assumed the character of criminal organisations, operating in an organised way over a wide area.

You know that in a city like Saigon-Ho Chi Minh City there isn't any industrial activity,
or there is scarcely any. It is a city of officials, office workers, people employed in the services sector, small dealers, or gangs of criminals, outcasts. Already before the liberation there was a vast series of criminal organisations, black-marketeers and delinquents of every kind. After the liberation, with the disbanding of Thieu’s army and the cutting off of American aid, many members of the police and many soldiers, who were left in freedom but who remained unemployed, became bandits, criminals, gangsters, and naturally had no difficulty in finding weapons in a country where, at the time, when Thieu’s forces broke up, arms were abandoned in huge quantities, everywhere, on the bridges, on the streets. There were weapons and explosives everywhere. This resulted in widespread and unchecked criminal activities which we are endeavouring to put down, with some success.

In addition, there is the counter-revolutionary network which existed and which continues to exist, and there is also the network of illegal traffic: a triple network, so to speak. The criminals in each network function, sometimes in isolation, sometimes in a co-ordinated way. Our task in combating them consists in isolating them. In fact, we have fought them and isolated them and sent them to work camps. That much is certain. But it is also natural. There are some thousands of these criminals in the work camps.

There is also a great mass of drug addicts—roughly about a hundred thousand. They are young people, often of “good family”, who have gone off the rails, who were desperate because they were forced to join Thieu’s army. They saw the massacres and didn’t understand. In that crisis they took to drugs, and there were in fact many drug addicts at the time of liberation. To the extent that we have been able, we have had to send a section of them to re-education centres, and in them it has been necessary, first of all, to cure them of their addiction, that is to say, to find means to alleviate the withdrawal symptoms.

Then there is the problem of prostitution. In a society like that which existed in the towns of the South during the war, very many women were forced to become prostitutes. As regards the re-education and rehabilitation of prostitutes, the problem consists in the fact that the forced transfer of peasants to the towns created a society that was anomalous from every point of view: towns with millions of people, but without industry, without the production of real wealth. An enormous services sector, but a services sector which no longer had the sector of agricultural production and had never had an industrial sector. Because of this, women had to become prostitutes and it is difficult to find productive activity for them now, difficult to involve them in work which will effectively take them away from prostitution.

And this brings us back once again to the problem of those who used to be peasants and were compelled by the bombing to move to unproductive towns where they had no possibility of being absorbed into the labour force. Now the peasants can do nothing else but go back to the land. In present conditions only by agricultural work can they make a living that is adequate or good. The land in the South is fertile and suited to a diversity of crops and there isn’t the over-population which exists in the Delta in the North. But a whole series of problems arises in this connection. Where the villages, with their water systems and the condition of the soil, have remained more or less intact, it isn’t hard for the peasants to go back to them. It isn’t even necessary to tell them to go back; they go back of their own accord. But if, on the other hand, the villages have been destroyed, then it is necessary, as a minimum, to prepare the soil and in many cases to clear the mines, level the ground, rehabilitate the area. When new villages have to be created in rehabilitating an area, then the problem is a terrible one. It is a question of a poor, tropical country, with a high incidence of disease, with many problems. These are what we call the “new economic zones”. Hundreds of thousands of people have set out to create these new villages, with government help. But the life is always extremely hard. We have taken western journalists to see those new villages. In them the situation is difficult; there are few huts, few trees and those only just replanted, few services, no water supply or light and it is easy to present them as concentration camps, even if the peasants have gone there voluntarily and can find their only hope of survival in a return to the
In conclusion, if we are to lump all of them together — the officers who are being help in camps, the drug addicts in the process of being re-educated, the prostitutes who are being restored to a normal life and the peasants who have gone back to the zones which were devastated or have left for the "new economic zones" — then it can be said that there are "800,000 political prisoners". But that is the wrong way to go about it. Why on earth should the peasants who have returned to the land rather than live like fugitives and outcasts, be regarded as political prisoners?

In this connection, I have a question to put. We can understand perfectly well the difficulties involved in the rehabilitation of a society destroyed after 30 years of war, guerrilla war and class struggle, by civil war, and after 20 years of massacres on a mass scale, genocide and "ecocide", that is to say, destruction of the ecological environment. But undoubtedly the problem of coercion does exist. Is it possible to build socialism without a certain margin of coercion? No one willingly accepts a hard life, distasteful work. Have there been discussions in the Vietnamese Communist Party about this? Have there been "two lines" on this problem: one more flexible and slow and the other more rigid and intended to get speedy results? Especially with regard to the return of the peasants to the countryside and the control of Saigon.

There is the problem of the redistribution of the population over the whole of the country's territory. Viet Nam's population is distributed in a very uneven way and is concentrated in the lowlands that are suited to the cultivation of rice. Here there is a twofold problem; there is the problem of the towns in the South with millions of peasants who were driven into the towns by the bombing and should go back to the villages or create new ones. That is the case in the South. But the North, too, has this problem: two-thirds of the region is made up of mountainous and hilly zones which up to now have not been put to use, but which are not unproductive. In the zones of the Northern Delta a population density of 1,000-1,200 inhabitants per square kilometre is reached, in a purely agricultural zone. In the last 30 years of war we were not in a position to tackle that problem. The solution was delayed and there has been an enormous
increase in population, concentrated in the lowlands. It is necessary to move at least half a million people a year from the lowland zones to the mountain zones, whether in the North or in the South. If we want our country to be developed, then this movement of population will have to take place and use will have to be made of the higher zones. In the North we have the advantage that we have succeeded in conquering or, to be more exact, in eliminating malaria, breaking the cycle between malaria and its vector, that is to say, the mosquito. At one time, it was not possible to go and live in the mountains because of the presence of malaria, but now, in the North, the problem has been solved. In the South it is still necessary to work to solve it: the devastation of territory which was carried out by the Americans encouraged the spread of malaria and other diseases, and this is a problem which we should solve in order to bring about the settlement of masses of the population in the mountain zones of the South. Very fertile lands exist there, especially in the centre of the country, on the big plateaux in the interior. There are areas suitable for growing crops for export: coffee, tea and rubber. The South is suitable for the cultivation of many kinds of valuable crops which are characteristic of Viet Nam. This can provide a living for individuals and wealth for the collectivity, but sacrifices are needed in order to put these lands to use. It is also necessary to ensure for ourselves an international market which will provide a sure outlet for our products at steady prices. These are stern sacrifices. They demand a commitment to manual work in difficult conditions.

I am completely in agreement that the struggle against backwardness and poverty in poor countries, which have been impoverished by imperialist domination and war, exacts a very heavy price from the human standpoint and also a certain degree of coercion (which is another form of cost in human terms): a restriction of objective, material liberties. For instance, restriction of the freedom to move from one place to another and of the freedom to choose one's occupation. This is a price that has had to be paid, whether in the USSR or in China, and obviously also in Vietnam, which has had to pay a huge price in blood for its own liberation. Indeed, the backward countries which have not paid that price have remained stationary and dependent. Could you give us some indication of this kind of price in human terms, of the specific restrictions on the liberty of individuals which have been imposed by the struggle against backwardness?

Above all, it is a question of objective necessity. Man must work in order to meet his needs: if no industrial activity is possible at the moment, then he must obtain his living from the land, even if it is a question of arduous work. It is not possible to abandon the living which the land can provide. Perhaps that is a luxury which no country can afford. This does not mean giving up the cultural level. Our biggest and most successful effort has been that directed towards giving all children and young people seven years' schooling. In Viet Nam, 15 million people are studying out of 50 million inhabitants. Do you realise what this means in terms of freedom, of struggle against poverty and disease? But it is fair that every man should work, should produce.

One specific question. In China every person has a precise class status and a definite place of residence from which he cannot move without permission. He is a member of a commune and his place is within that collective structure, or else he works in a factory and has his place of residence on the spot, whether in town or countryside. Does freedom of residence, freedom of movement of the labour force exist in Viet Nam?

A distinction has to be made. As regards the place of work, that is where it is: it depends on availability and need and cannot be changed without the agreement of the authorities responsible for the service. As for residence, that is another problem, but you have to have something to live on where you live, a post to occupy. However, in the North people can move from one place to another without permission in order to visit relatives and to attend to private business. For security reasons, it is necessary to have a permit in order to go from the South to the North. There are too many people in the South who have been trained only for the purpose of hunting communists and destroying property belonging to socialist society. It is right to defend what we have built. But the problem is not one of "coercion"; it is a problem of actual
availability. After the liberation, my wife had to wait 40 days for a seat on a plane in order to go to Saigon so as to see her mother again after 30 years of guerrilla warfare. In order to take a train to the South, it is necessary to queue at the station for four days, and then the train travels at a speed of only 15 kilometres an hour, owing to the tracks of the secondary French railways which were laid in Indochina at the beginning of the century. It was a great success to get the railway going again, but its capacity is what it is. This is not coercion; it is a case of objective limitations. This has to be understood, but not everyone finds it easy to understand this. It isn’t easy for someone who has been living with the income of the ruling classes of capitalist countries, as happened in the case of privileged individuals under Thieu’s regime.

There is another question — more political and very explicit. During the whole period of the revolutionary struggle against the Americans, it was well known that the main burden — military and political, in terms of blood, effort and political imagination — of the struggle waged under the banner of the National Liberation Front was born by the communists, but the communists of Viet Nam: “communists of the North” and “communists of the South” did not in fact exist. This was the essential nucleus of the struggle and all the time the Americans were trying to destroy it, killing communist cadres and militants. On the other hand, the origins of the armed struggle in the South were actually determined by the fact that Diem’s regime and then that of Thieu, because of a specific choice on the part of the Americans, always refused to allow the slightest room for any political force, mass organisation or autonomous institution. We well remember that round about 1962 the Vietnamese communists proposed a “political solution” for the South, a solution based on compromise between the various forces which would eliminate the regimes imposed by the Americans — regimes which were actually fascist. It was certainly not the fault of the Vietnamese communists that the struggle in the South assumed the character of an armed struggle and that the communists were the leading force in that struggle.

Nevertheless, in weakening and unmasking Thieu’s regime and in mobilising public opinion throughout the world on behalf of Viet Nam, the voice of other political forces which in Diem’s or Thieu’s Viet Nam didn’t find a place and were subjected to repression had a certain weight. I am referring to the Third Force and the Buddhists. Can you give us information about these forces and about their present fate? In the campaign against Viet Nam today, there is talk of persecution of the Third Force and also of the Buddhists, of arrests and persecution of monks. Can you tell us something definite about this? I believe it would be of great interest to those who worked for peace in Viet Nam.

It is necessary to make a general distinction. First of all, let us speak about the Third Force: this Third Force was very mixed. In it there were true patriots, but there were also agents of the CIA. It was a question of a very vague assemblage of groups and forces of a political, religious and cultural character. The CIA had an extremely extensive network in Saigon. It infiltrated in the most varied ways and in the most unexpected forms. Scarcely did some intellectual make a proposal, whether for an art exhibition or a chess circle, than the CIA offered to finance it directly or indirectly and then controlled people by that means. In the Third Force there were many dubious personages who were tied up in various ways with the CIA. In this connection, it must be added that the CIA had even succeeded in infiltrating into the Resistance. There were cadres and militants who might seem to have a past that was above all suspicion and who thought they could exploit that past after the liberation, whereas it turned out later that they were in the clutches of the CIA to such an extent that they committed counter-revolutionary acts.

Some Vietnamese people in Paris who are not particularly reactionary have said to me that in the circles in which they move, it is regarded as certain that Mme Nguyen Thi Binh has been removed from power and has probably been shot, like other members of the National Liberation Front of the South. Is that true?

It is most certainly not true! Nguyen Thi Binh lives in a house which is close to my own home and when I was about to leave Hanoi six weeks ago she was in her garden.
She is preparing the reform of the secondary schools in her capacity as Minister of Education — it is a difficult job. It is perhaps the case that you in Italy entrust reforms of the secondary school system to people who have been removed from power. As for Nguyen Huu Tho, the president of the National Liberation Front, he is now in Algeria on an official visit to a country with which we have the very best of relations.

But to what extent do they count today — the people of the “Third Force”?

In Viet Nam there is the Patriotic Front, which has embraced various political and social forces, communist and non-communist, and continues to do so. For example, you no doubt know about the case of the jurist, Mme Ngo Ba Thanh. Under Thieu’s regime she created a movement in defence of the dignity of women — a movement which was, in fact, confined to the city of Saigon. Now she has dissolved that small movement but she has become a member of the leading committee of the Vietnamese Women’s Union and so has a far wider field for her political and social activity. Much the same could be said about many other patriotic intellectuals who were active in the “Third Force”.

But there have been, haven’t there, sentences on, or trials of Buddhists — even if they are counter-revolutionary Buddhists?

There have been trials and sentences, not on the plane of religion, worship or ideology, but solely on the political plane. The pagodas are functioning and welcome the religious people who visit them. Preaching is carried out. But there have been Buddhist priests who have been sentenced — priests who have carried out counter-revolutionary political activity. There has only been one important Buddhist priest who has been sentenced, because Buddhism does not have a tightly-knit institutional organisation. It is a question of individual cases at the unit level, whereas the number of Catholic priests who have engaged in organised counter-revolutionary activities and who have been tried and sentenced has been larger. You should bear in mind the fact that Diem’s regime and then that of Thieu based themselves on the minority Catholic community in order to exercise full power, and in particular in order to recruit officers and members of the police force. All round Saigon, in the belt of slums on the outskirts, in 1954 the fugitives from the North who were organised on military lines, were settled. You should have seen the priests who controlled that community, with revolvers stuck in their belts. I was taken on one occasion to the Saigon seminary and in the room in which the seminarists, used to be instructed in the “arts of war” — karate, kung fu, etc. — they had not yet removed the inscription: “Faith without force is nothing”. Under Diem, inscriptions of that kind could be seen everywhere. Do you know what that means? The Church in the colonial world, and above all in Viet Nam, has not had the same character as in Christian countries.

One last question, and a very delicate one. Have there been trials of members of the Resistance or of communist cadres and leaders and have they been sentenced? Have there been cases in which persons who have not followed the party line or who sought to organise a political line opposed to that of the Party have been sentenced? I believe it would be very opportune if you gave us some precise information about this.

One can speak about old members of the Communist Party or about non-communist members of the National Liberation Front. A few were sentenced after the liberation and this happened for two reasons: there were people who profited from the part they had played in the Resistance and obtained posts which they subsequently used for personal ends, to obtain privileges for themselves, or else they received vast sums as bribes. There were people who, although they had taken part in the Resistance, then sought to provide themselves with a base in order to enrich themselves: they were corrupted by the atmosphere of Saigon. On the other hand, there were other individuals who were unmasked as counter-revolutionary agents only at the end of the resistance struggle and who had infiltrated into our ranks. Some comrades who had returned from imprisonment revealed that they had been denounced, even tortured, or recognised by other people whom they had taken for comrades. However, none of these persons has organised a faction on the basis of an alternative political line. There have certainly been many discussions on the
political line which should be followed, but in the end we have reached unanimity. For instance, as regards the speed at which unification and the building of socialism should proceed, in the beginning there were comrades who maintained that there was a South Vietnamese bourgeoisie and that it was in our interests to let it develop and enrich itself, to make it work, to profit from its "expertise" before changing society. The fact was that in Saigon there was not a real bourgeoisie able to act in an autonomous way but only a parasitic bourgeoisie, an appendage of the economic system of American hand-outs. It was not a question of anything comparable with, I won't even say the British or French bourgeoisie, but even the Italian or Indian. The Indian bourgeoisie does have its foundations, whatever may be the system of exploitation which it controls, but the South Vietnamese bourgeoisie had no economic foundations, nor even ideological ones. Scarcely had American aid been cut off than that parasitic bourgeoisie was no longer able to exist.

As a result, the foundations have not existed for the formation within the revolutionary ranks of opposing factions and groups. That at least has been the case up to now. As for the future, I don't know. In a few years, who can tell?

We do know, and this has been one of the factors making for the strength, the power of attraction of the Vietnamese revolution, that even in the midst of big political discussions, not to mention major political clashes such as cannot fail to occur in any communist party that is truly alive — all the contradictions have been resolved within the framework of a fundamental unity of line, without internal wounds. Tell us something in this connection, since it is of interest to our comrades and to Italian democrats.

Like all communist parties, the Vietnamese Communist Party found itself confronted by very complex problems right from the time of its birth. It is enough to think of the problem of uniting class struggle and national struggle. How was the contradiction to be resolved? There were comrades who went in one direction and comrades who went in the opposite one, but then, when the problem had been gone into more thoroughly, unity was restored. It was like that in 1945 and 1946 at the time when the compromise with France was being arrived at. Then, in 1954, after the Geneva Conference, when we had to discuss whether to accept the division of the country, whether to accept the compromise with French and American imperialism. In 1956, at the time of the agrarian reform: as you know, there were serious happenings, very serious differences, but afterwards the mistakes were rectified and unity was restored. So it was in 1960 at the time of the conflict between various communist parties, we had to define our position, make our own analysis. We certainly couldn't take a little of the Soviet analysis and a little of the Chinese analysis; it wasn't a question of "keeping oneself in a state of equilibrium". The problem was that of establishing our own strategy, our international line, seeing what were the differences with one side and the other and discussing them, whether with the Soviet comrades or with the Chinese comrades. Naturally there were comrades of ours who leaned more to one side or more to the other. But, as we had worked out our line, unity was arrived at on those positions. Above all, at that time the most important problem for us was that of the attitude to be adopted towards United States imperialism; on the nature of United States' imperialism and imperialism in general. At that time we had differences, now with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, now with the Communist Party of China. After 1975, discussions opened on how to unify the country. At every stage we had discussions in the Party and in the midst of the Vietnamese people. Up to now, we have always succeeded in bringing about unity in such a way that following every discussion, while there have been comrades who were not able to hold responsible posts, because they had made mistakes, they have continued to engage in political activity and to have responsibilities in other posts. With us there have not been "purges", as they say. This is the important thing: we have kept our forces intact, so as to concentrate them on national liberation, on reunification, on reconstruction. Despite the fact that there have occurred very complex situations, which have often been difficult and tense, and in face of which it has been necessary immediately to adopt a very firm attitude, we have not had irreparable breaches, purges. This I can tell you.
I. Technology and Liberation — Introduction.

Technology, it is often said, has made the liberation of women possible. Labour-saving devices in the home, modern birth-control methods, the higher standards of living made possible by industrialization, have freed women from the more onerous household duties and given them a chance to take part in public life. Technological developments in the workplace — the introduction of office machinery is often cited as an example — have opened up more opportunities for female employment.

There is, of course, some truth in this popular belief. Beverly Kingston in *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann* describes washday in a middle-class Australian household of the last century:

From a cauldron of boiling water the clothes were lifted, heavy with water and burning with steam, to drain before they could be subjected to the appropriate rinsing, wringing, blueing, starching, or mangle processes. All of these involved heavy lifting... These operations would regularly occupy one day in every week and were so time-consuming and wearing that early rising was necessary.

For most women in Western societies, this particular household sweatshop no longer exists. Washing machines do make washing easier.

Nevertheless, the popular view provides a distorted, misleading picture of the relation of technological change to traditional household work. One thing wrong with this thesis is that it suggests that women are biologically shackled to childbearing and
home duties, and require a technological crutch — provided generously by scientists and engineers — to free them. Those who hold this view are unaware of, or ignore, the important economic roles women have played in many pre-industrial societies. (2)

A more serious problem with the conventional thesis is that it takes a narrow view of technology. What it counts as technological are the machinery and processes that are the results of scientific research and industrial production (like the micro-wave oven or the pill). But women had, and still have, methods of birth control that were used long before ‘scientific’ devices were developed and marketed by drug companies. Women had, and still have, methods of food preparation and skills in using materials which are properly regarded as technological skills. But skills which aren’t products of the industrial-scientific system tend to be overlooked or discounted.

Thus we tend to think of technology as something that comes from outside: something developed by scientists or engineers and offered for sale as commodities. The modern conveniences which are supposed to have freed the housewife are products of this sort.

Housewives are consumers of this technology, not the creators or developers of it. They buy it, use it, but they don’t make the decisions about how and whether it should be developed. The role of women, in general, in the development of industrial and scientific technology has been marginal. Women work in factories and offices, as lab workers, less often as low level managers, rarely as top level managers, technicians and scientists. (3)

In their discussion of the technology of fertility control, Hilary Rose and Jalna Hanmer warn us that it is a mistake to think of technology as neutral, as a law unto itself. Technological and scientific developments are socially conditioned; they are affected by, and often reinforce, certain social relationships. When examining a particular development, it is wise to ask: What people make the decisions about how it is developed? What priorities do they have? What are the effects on the status, wellbeing, health of those who use it? What kind of work is provided by it? Is it work that increases or decreases the workers’ autonomy and sense of worth? Does it tend to challenge or reinforce existing social arrangements? When the answers to these questions are examined, a technology which, at first, appears to be liberating, may turn out to have hidden implications which are far from beneficial. It may provide an easier and more efficient way of doing a particular piece of work at the cost of boredom, mental strain, dissatisfaction and a greater feeling of powerlessness and loss of confidence.

In the workplace, modern industrial technology and methods of organising work have tended to decrease workers’ autonomy and decision-making power, devalue and destroy their skills, making work less satisfying. (4) In a paper produced for the Melbourne Working Women’s Centre, Linda Rubenstein shows how computers and modern office machinery have this effect on women office workers.

How has technology affected women’s work in the home? Beverly Kingston argues that housework has been similarly deskilled by industrial technology and labour-saving devices. She suggests that the devaluation of work typically done by women has led to the devaluation of women in general, and to the sexist view of women as having chiefly ornamental value.

An ability to sew, cook, raise poultry, preserve and make jam, or grow fruit and vegetables, no longer constituted an economic advantage or make a desirable wife. The plain girl with skills as a dairymaid or seamstress had been thought a ‘good catch’, now plain girls had no skills and only their plainness was relevant to their marriage prospects. Even after marriage, whereas once there had been a long, very busy and creative set of opportunities, now shopping was about the most creative and absorbing activity available. (5)

I believe that Kingston exaggerates the extent to which housework has become unskilled labour. But since the industrial revolution began, housework has been changing, and this has affected the way in which this work is valued and the attitudes that those who do this work have toward their job. These affects are not always so liberating or favourable to women as many people have assumed.
The question of how technological changes have affected women's work is a big and largely unexplored topic. In what follows I am concentrating mainly on the effect of changes in technology on housework — changes in the way technological development happens as well as changes in the products of technology. Even this is too much for one paper, and I am aware that much of it is speculation backed up by inconclusive arguments and inadequate empirical evidence. I regard it as the beginning of a discussion.

II. Housewifery — Old Technology and New.

Once upon a time, a farmer complained to his wife that her work in the house was much easier than his work in the fields. To settle the matter, they agreed to swap jobs for one day. Left with the housework, the farmer promptly made a mess of everything he touched. He slopped the contents of the churn over the floor; he let the fire under the stew go out; the washing fell into the dirt; the cow kicked over the milk bucket; and when his wife came home from the fields (there is no record that she had any problems), she found her child screaming, and her husband engaged in a desperate struggle with the goat on the thatched roof of the cottage.

Traditional story.

Properly understood, the moral is not that men shouldn’t do women’s work, but that housewifery is a skill, and no one can expect to do it satisfactorily without training. But the story is about ‘olden times’. Today, it might be argued, that housework has been simplified by modern conveniences to the point that any idiot can do it. You don’t have to churn butter or milk the cow, because the milk and butter can be bought at the milk bar. You don’t stoke the wood-burning stove; you turn the switch on the gas or electric oven. Clothes and dishes can be washed in the automatic washer, and convenience foods (according to the adverts) make cooking a matter of heating and stirring.

Some of the things women used to do at home have been taken out of the home into the production lines of the factory. The rest has been automated by modern conveniences. No wonder being “just a housewife” doesn’t rate very high as an occupation.

What has modern household technology done for housewives? It has made particular tasks less physically demanding and less time-consuming. No more Victorian washdays. But oddly (and contrary to popular belief) it hasn’t reduced the amount of time housewives spend doing housework. A number of studies have pointed this out.

The reason for this is not clear. Some researchers believe that housewives obey Parkinson’s Law — that women fill in the available time by doing their work more slowly and inefficiently, or by doing unnecessary chores. My own experience suggests that the amount of housework has not decreased because housework standards have risen; and that household technology has been largely responsible for this rise in standards.
When new technology is introduced into the workplace, the factory worker's job may, in one sense, become simpler. The new technology is likely to require less skill to operate. On the other hand, she/he will now be expected to increase her production rate. The time and effort saved by the machine will not benefit her.

Something similar seems to happen with housework. Washing machines makes it possible to wash clothes more quickly. The more you wash your family's clothes, the cleaner they will be. The higher standard of cleanliness you can achieve becomes a necessity, something you must achieve if you are to count as an adequate housewife.

There are, of course, important differences between the way in which technology raises the standards of household production and the way in which it raises the standards of production in a factory. In the household, women are working for their families, and the standards have to do with the quality of work, not the quantity of goods that can be turned out. For the factory worker, the standards are set by the employer and the sanctions for not fulfilling them are clear. In the case of the housewife, it is not clear who sets the standards or imposes the sanctions. Husbands may do so, but they also may care less than their wives about how the house is kept. But this doesn't mean that housewives set their own standards (as people who say that housewives make work for themselves are implying). Community standards exist, though they differ somewhat for different classes and localities. Children are aware of them; so are neighbours. They're publicised by the media, exhibited in advertising. (10) Some women ignore these standards, but few are unaware of them and many feel that their worth depends upon measuring up. Labour which seems to an outsider to be dispensable, may, in the social context, be necessary.

In the same way, household appliances change from luxuries to necessities as they become embedded into a way of life. Mixers, blenders, mincers, juicers, etc., make more elaborate cooking feasible; the new standards which such cooking brings into existence in turn creates a demand for such utensils. The woman who doesn't own them soon finds herself at a disadvantage. Even people who adopt simpler styles of life don't
escape this problem. A popular book promoting a low energy life-style and vegetarianism, *Diet for a Small Planet*, contains large numbers of recipes which call for the use of a blender. Some cooking books assume that the cook has an electric mixer, just as the directions of many products assume the existence of a household refrigerator.

If modern appliances do save the housewife time on some tasks, she is likely to spend whatever time she gains attending to the needs of her children. Again my impression is that the standards for childcare have also risen, at least in middle-class households. Since the war, there has been an extraordinary amount of popular literature on the needs of young children, on the crucial importance of the child’s early years. A mother who doesn’t spend a considerable amount of time concentrating on the children is likely to be regarded, and regard herself, as a poor mother.

What else has household technology done for women? Kingston and others suggest that it enabled middle-class women to do without servants and married women to enter the workforce. But the relationship between improvements in household technology and the ability of women to work outside the home is not a clear one. Whether or not married women work outside the home probably has more to do with the type of labour available and the needs of industry, and the financial requirements of the family than the introduction of household technology — or even modern methods of birth control. During the times when women are being discouraged from working outside the home, household technology is presented as something which can make a women into a better housewife. The standards can always be raised. In Britain in 1924, an organisation called Electrical Association for Women was founded to promote the liberatory implications of the new ‘electric household’. This was at a time when occupations outside the home were opening up to women. The organisation still exists, but now pronounces that its aim is ‘to educate women so that they can become useful and efficient in the home’. Technology, by itself, won’t make us free.

### III. Deskilling of the Houseworker.

Kitchens, pantries, wash houses and dairies were workshops for colonial housewives. There were few things they could not do and make. They kept the kitchen range and stove black and shining with their own mixture of black lead, blue stone, turpentine and methylated spirit. They made butter in elegant cherry wood churns and their families enjoyed that lost delicacy, fresh buttermilk. They made their own soap with saltfree fat, caustic soda and resin, setting it in flat boxes lined with wet cloth.... They made their own cleaning pastes, their own sand soap, their polish for harness, using turpentine, beeswax, white of egg and black or brown colouring. They took on the hard work of tanning and dyeing sheepskin mats for floors and sheepskin coats for their menfolk.

They smoked hams in deep pits; they preserved eggs in a mixture of water, slaked lime and salt. They made their own vinegar, their ginger beer and hop beer. They made cider, and perry, a pleasant pear drink, raspberry vinegar and home-made cordials; their pantry shelves were stacked with jams, pickles, sauces and they very early began bottling fruit in mason jars without the benefit of a professional outfit and thermometer.

Joan Gillison: *A Colonial Doctor and His Town.*

Gillison presents the 19th century country housewife as a craftswoman — a mistress of the technology of household production. The work she describes, it is true, was done by women in an isolated country town (Mansfield, Victoria). City housewives of that period would probably not have made their own soap or tanned sheepskins. Nevertheless, as Kingston also suggests, Australian housewives of the last century practiced a wide variety of technical skills which have since altered or become unnecessary. These skills were passed on from mother to daughter, were not written down except in a cursory fashion. Kingston notes that earlier recipes were little more than a list of reminders:

A light biscuit: half a pound of flour, three ounces of butter or fresh lard; two ounces of sugar, one egg, half a teaspoonful of volatile salt. (11)

One important feature of the household technology that Gillison describes, is that it was controlled and developed by the
housewives themselves. Women were in the same positions, in respect to the technology they used as pre-industrial craftsmen and women. The glassblowers and iron smelters, etc., of the pre-industrial society had a practical knowledge of the materials they handled. They developed their skills and knowledge long before anyone had a scientific understanding of the materials and processes involved (just as housewives knew that scalding milk prevents disease long before Pasteur explained why this is so). The development and application of the technology was in their hands.

What changed this situation was the industrial revolution and the growing bond between science and technology, which both stimulated and was stimulated by the industrial revolution. Iron and glass production is now done in large, highly mechanised factories, in which work is organised in a hierarchy of skills and responsibilities. Technological innovations are generally the responsibility of the scientists, often working closely with the managers of the industry. Most of the workers have little knowledge and no control over the development and application of the technology.

Something like this has happened with household technology, though the change has been much more gradual and complex. It has not eliminated housewifery in the way it has eliminated most of the traditional crafts. But it has, to a large extent, taken the control of the technology away from women who do the work. The goods are produced in the factory where women participate mainly as factory hands. Or they are produced in the home using machines, chemicals and equipment which are the result of technical and industrial processes which housewives themselves do not control and generally do not understand. Thus, in an important sense, housewives have been deskilled by modern technology. They have lost control of much of the technology that has traditionally belonged to their sphere of work.

This does not mean that housework has become unskilled labour. As well as the technical skills that I mentioned earlier, women in the home are expected to have other abilities — not properly called technical — such as the ability to care for children and to manage family relationships. On these matters, women are the experts. There are, it is true, outsiders who speak on childcare and human relations with the authority that their status as academics or psychologists give them. But there is an important difference between the relation of the homeworker to these experts and her relation to the technological experts. First of all, their area of expertise is a shaky one (compared to the entrenched position of the scientist or engineer). There are differences of opinion among them, and much has to be left to the woman's own judgement. No matter how carefully a mother (or father) reads Dr. Spock, there are still many situations in which they have to exercise 'common sense' based on their experience and practical knowledge. In any case, the outside experts can only advise; they can't control the way the housewife does these things. Women aren't licensed to become housewives or mothers.

People have contradictory views of women's work in the home. On one hand this work is pictured as a matter of pushing buttons and turning dials — a mindless procedure which has necessity as its only virtue. On the other hand, work women do at home is also regarded as a heavy responsibility — so awesomely difficult that many people worry that the average housewife is not up to performing it. That is, it is admitted that important skills are still largely in women's hands. It has not been institutionalized: no formal apprenticeship is required, no particular degree or diploma. And it is not adequately captured by any scientific or technical discipline. And therefore it is counted as unskilled, and doing it gives a woman no qualifications for doing anything else. (12)

IV. Technological rationality

As a retired philosophy professor with nearly 40 years of teaching college students, I am firmly convinced that biologically males are superior in reasoning to females. I can recall fewer than a dozen girls who showed real ability or interest in logic and related
fields, but there were scores of boys who were extraordinarily gifted in this area.


The observations on which the professor rests his fallacious conclusion are probably correct. Few women choose to specialise in logic or mathematics. They also tend to avoid the related areas of science and engineering. They are rarely found in the technical professions, except those like nursing which are labelled as 'women's work'.

For most women, the technology of the motor, the electrical circuit, the transistor, the computer, the jet, the nuclear power station belong to an alien world. Boys are early initiated into the mysteries of this realm. They are encouraged to play with mechanical toys, take things apart; become interested in tinkering with pushbikes, then with motor cycles and cars. Some boys follow up these interests in their education by becoming mechanics, electricians, etc., or go to university and become engineers or scientists. Girls do not usually go through the initiation process; it's a man's world, and the occupations are male occupations.

So women, by and large, grow up surrounded by machines, chemicals, processes which they don't understand. In the home, a woman is surrounded by appliances which she had no part in designing, the workings of which she doesn't know anything about. If a machine goes wrong, she is helpless.

Men are in a different position. It is true that many men don't know how to fix their cars, can't deal with the vacuum cleaner when it stops working. It's also true that a lot of new technology is too complicated for anyone but the experts to understand in detail. (13) But nevertheless, these mechanisms belong to a man's world. In the simple cases, men generally have some idea how they function; if they can't deal with more complex problems or technologies, this is only because they've never bothered to get the relevant training or experience.

Women do not only not understand mechanical things, but in many cases feel that they aren't capable of understanding them. The mysteries of these matters are at the same time beneath and beyond us. A man explains, perhaps in a rather patronizing way, why your car won't start, but you won't listen. You know you won't understand; you don't want to try to understand. Robert Pirsig in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* describes the combination of helplessness and disgust with which two friends (in this case both a woman and a man) regard mechanical matters. Pirsig believes that this kind of alienation limits personal development; for this reason he learned to fix his own motorbike.

Women too have skills which they are thought to have a natural aptitude for. And many men have corresponding feelings of unease and disgust when confronted with 'women's work'. But the way in which our society regards those abilities that are assigned to women is very different from the way in which it regards competence which belongs to the male sphere. The traditional skills of men and women are separate but not equal.

It is common to try to explain why technology, science, most mechanical arts are largely matters for men, by reference to male/female biological differences. For instance, Hutt and Gray, in an influential study noted that men on average do better than women at tests having to do with spatial skills, and argue that this is the result of innate biological programming which gives men an advantage in fields such as maths, science, mechanics, and engineering. Women, according to this view, are unsuited to participate in what our society regards as the mainstream of technological development.

There are many criticisms that can be made of this hypothesis and the research which is supposed to have established it. (14) At most, Hutt and Gray's hypothesis says that on average men will do better than women at subjects and fields requiring spatial skills. It does not explain why nearly all women are excluded from these areas. So even if the hypothesis were true, further explanation would be needed for women's marginal participation in mainstream technological development.

In *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels speculated that the "world historical defeat of the female sex" occurred when the tasks connected with man's sphere — care of flocks and fields —
came to overshadow in economic importance women's household work (something that happened when private property came into being). This hypothesis ignores the role that women in traditional societies play in agricultural production. But something like Engel's hypothesis may help explain women's relation to technology: one of the most important features of modern technology is its dependence on science. Scientific research has always been a male affair.

The women and men who practiced traditional crafts had neither the leisure nor the education to work toward a scientific comprehension of their operations. When a scientific understanding of these technical skills was achieved, it was the work of people of another class. The scientists of the 17th, 18th and even the 19th centuries were gentlemen of means (or were patronized by the wealthy) whose university education made them familiar with the scientific and philosophical tradition and who had the leisure and the resources to conduct experiments and carry on correspondence.

A few women had the leisure for such activities, but almost none had the education. Universities, until the latter part of the 19th century, were closed to women, and even afterwards science was regarded as an unsuitable course of study for a woman. Women didn't do science. And soon it became common to believe that women couldn't do science. The abilities to reason dispassionately, to analyse, to use logic (it was said) belong to men, and it is just these abilities that are required for science. So a woman who wanted to study a science not only had to overcome the usual prejudices against educated women, but also had to fight against the prevailing idea that women were constitutionally unfit to be scientists.

It is remarkable that the men particularly noted for their depth of thought and their scientific or philosophical achievements — e.g., Newton, Kant, Descartes, Darwin, Marx — either had no families to worry them, or managed to retire into the study or the library for large amounts of time. Virginia Woolf argues that to be a creative woman you need some money and a room of your own. To be a scientist you also need large amounts of peace and quiet and a long and intensive education, and contacts with the scientific community. It is possible for a woman to write good novels at home without a training in literature, in intervals between taking care of family needs. It is not possible for anyone to do science in this way. The institutionalization of knowledge and skills nearly always works to the disadvantage of women.

When scientists were able to explain theoretically the processes involved in traditional technology, then the possibility opened up of making alterations and innovations in this technology through scientific understanding. Becoming an expert in a craft began to mean obtaining a scientific or technical training at an institution. In some cases the skills and their theoretical background were incorporated into the university curriculum: medicine was first; engineering became a university discipline in parts of Europe in the 19th century. In other cases, special technical institutes provided the training and certification.

Women find it much more difficult than men to satisfy formal requirements for an occupation. The more sophisticated — and longer — the training the more at a disadvantage a woman will be. It is well known that women have a more difficult time getting to tertiary institutions and a still more difficult time staying there for any length of time. In any case, becoming a top person in a scientific field, becoming one of the elite who designs, innovates, and manages, requires a total commitment of time and energy which most women are unable to give. In a hierarchical system of work where position depends on formal qualification and uninterrupted service, women tend to sink to the bottom.

Another feature of modern technology is that its most awe-inspiring visible achievements have been in areas which are usually considered male domains. Large-scale industry, mining, metal working, the military, transportation — this is where the money for research goes; this is where the results are achieved.

The development of modern science has always gone hand in hand with the development of technology associated with activities which are almost exclusively male. The mechanics, of the 17th century, which is
now regarded as the beginning of modern science, was stimulated, and in turn stimulated, the technology of mining, construction, navigation, military operation. The new science, applied with so much success in these areas, gave rise to a metaphysical world picture. The heavens, living things, even human beings, came to be seen as objects operating according to the laws of motion. The kind of technological and scientific development characteristic of Western society has been mainly an attempt to develop and apply this picture of how things work. Skills, practices and world views which didn’t fit this picture were taken over, denigrated or dismissed as superstitions. This probably happened to a number of skills and technical practices traditionally carried on by women.

Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English in *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* recount how work that belonged to women, even into the 19th century, namely healing, was wrested away from them by professional medical associations, which is one way or another excluded women. The authors stress that the doctors got control of medical practice not because they were better healers — in the early days, at least, this was not so — but because they had the universities, the scientific establishment, and eventually the law on their side. Women were largely relegated to subordinate service roles in medicine.

It is important to see this, not just as a male takeover, but as the replacement of one kind of technology and outlook with another. (16) One reason the doctors had the universities and the scientific establishment on their side is because they were working in the framework of the accepted scientific world picture. They were the scientists, and the midwives and herbalists were practising superstition.

Women’s traditional work is still being colonized by industrial and scientific technology. The position of the housewife in relation to technology is something like that of the peasant of a pre-industrial society. In the name of progress, products of modern industry are thrust upon her, sometimes by well meaning experts, more often by people in search of a profit. The benefits of this new technology are lauded; the costs are seldom recognized. On the other hand, experts will sometimes admit that many skills women practice have not been adequately comprehended by modern science or reduced to a technological process (just agronomists sometimes have to admit that peasants may make better judgements about their land than the experts do). Nevertheless, there is an arrogant assumption that in the end modern science and technology will take over these remaining outposts of traditional knowledge. Houseworkers and peasants will be incorporated more completely into the industrial-technological machinery of modern society.
The behavioural psychologist B. F. Skinner, for example, looks forward to the day when children can be scientifically conditioned using the latest behavioural technology, rather than the 'unscientific', 'inefficient' methods of teaching now employed by parents. His idea of progress is to take from the parents — which means, primarily, the mother — the decision-making and judgement now associated with childrearing. This will pass into the hands of the scientifically trained expert; the mother's or father's job will be to follow the instructions.

Skinner's ideas about how humans learn have been strongly criticised. There are philosophical as well as practical difficulties in applying the scientific world picture — so successful in explaining the motions of water — to the behaviour of human beings. Nevertheless, it seldom occurs to experts that ordinary people who have had practical experience and insights derived from this experience could contribute to the store of human knowledge — especially if these people are housewives. The practice of the housewife is dismissed as a low-level skill or a matter of instinct; her insights are derided as 'woman's intuition'. What she does or thinks has nothing to do with what is grandly labelled 'human knowledge'.

V. Conclusion

The inability of women to have some control over or participate in mainstream technological development tends to get worse rather than better. There is a tendency for technology to become more complex, to require for its maintenance and development highly specialized training in science, mathematics, or engineering.

What we must do, say many people who are concerned about the small number of women who participate in the development of technology, is to encourage more girls to obtain a scientific and technological education. Such a programme would not help the women who do not have, and are not likely to get, a tertiary education of any kind; it won't do much to enhance the status or increase the confidence of the houseworker. Further, it is unlikely that, given the disadvantages that women suffer, women will ever be proportionately represented in scientific and technological elites — unless the position of women in society changes drastically.

But apart from these problems, the proposed remedy is inadequate in a more basic way. It fails to question the division of labour between the scientific-technological elite and the ordinary person, the cult of the expert, the centralization, vulnerability, and sometimes threatening nature of the technology developed by bureaucrats and capitalists, the way science is practised and the directions research has taken. More radical criticisms of the present state of science and technology are beginning to be made, but the alternative is far from clear.

What I think women should do, whether they have had a scientific education or not, is to bring a feminist perspective to the critique of science and technology and to the search for alternative technology. The danger is that the discussion and design of these alternatives may be left entirely to men, particularly those who are already scientists or engineers, with the result that the 'new' technology will be as elitist, male-dominated and male-oriented as the old.

I am not suggesting that the present sexual division of technical labour is a good thing. Human potential is limited by the sex-typing of skills and characteristics. One thing that is wrong with many present-day attempts to find new life-styles is that they don't question this division. Women are supposed to return to the household skills and crafts of the past: breadmaking, spinning, etc.; the men plan and design the important technology. What is needed is an alternative which enables women to play a creative role in the development of all aspects of social life — not a return to the Victorian kitchen, and not our present position as passengers on a ride to a technologically created nightmare.

* This paper was given at the Women and Labour Conference, May 1978, and was originally published in Part 2 of the Conference Papers.
References

(1) Kingston: pp. 36-37.

(2) Ann Oakley in *Housewife* claims that both single and married women in pre-industrial England commonly belonged to guilds, ran businesses, carried on trades. She argues that the modern housewife is a creation of the industrial revolution.

(3) There have been many recent studies which document the scarcity of women in scientific and technical fields, particularly in the top level of these fields. A recent Australian study is found in *Refractory Girl*, September, 1977.

(4) Harry Braverman develops and argues for this thesis in *Labor and Monopoly Capital*.


(6) The idea of being able to keep an ornamental woman, which has spawned the myth of the idle housewife, is not only a middle class phenomenon, although this is where it originated. Anne Summers in *Damned Whores and God's Police* says that working class men in Australia were able to adopt this ideal much earlier than working class men elsewhere, because wages in the new colony were generally good enough for a man to support his wife and children.

(7) By modern household technology, I mean devices like washing machines, dish washers, vacuum cleaners, etc. — the products of modern industrial-scientific development — and the energy sources which make use of these devices possible — i.e., gas and electricity in the home.

(8) See Oakley, Ch. 1; also Blackburn and Jackson.

(9) Cowan makes this point in “A Case Study of Technological and Social Change: The Washing Machine and the Working Wife”. My paper owes a lot to hers.

(10) However, I don't believe that housewives are brainwashed by advertisers, or anyone else, into accepting these standards. This explanation is too simple.


(12) However, one of the recommendations of The Royal Commission into Human Relationships is that people who wish to enter the public service be given credit for experience gained in working at home or for voluntary organizations.

(13) This is probably becoming more and more true. Braverman argues that repairing skills are becoming rarer because modern machinery and equipment often are not designed to be repaired. When something goes wrong the machine itself, or a unit of it, is simply replaced.

(14) *Science for the People*, No. 29, p. 6, suggests that this research, which was funded by the U.K. Department of Education and Science and the Department of Employment and Productivity, may be used as a justification for cuts in spending in science education for girls.

(15) Genevieve Lloyd traces the growth of this ideology in “Man of Reason”.

(16) However, the authors emphasize that women healers were attacked by the religious establishment before the advent of scientific ideas about medicine.

Bibliography


If there is one single theme that continues to run through the Fraser government’s approach to economic policy, it is that real wages in Australia are too high and profits are too low. Economic recovery and a reduction in unemployment can only come about when the share of output going to wage and salary earners has been sufficiently reduced, the government argues.

As well as consistently pursuing this policy before the Arbitration Commission, the government is also applying it to its own workers and attempting to discipline individual firms which, for the sake of industrial peace, feel it is in their interests to grant more to their own workers than the so-called wage indexation “guidelines” allow. The crusade is to get the profit share back to the value it had in some (ill-defined) golden age.

Is there anything in this position?

Real Wages: Level or Share?

Before looking at the evidence it is necessary to sort out some confusion in the debate about real wages. For a start, there are two ways of looking at wages in real terms. The first is the level of real wages; that is, the purchasing power of the wage — or, what is the same thing, the money wage divided by some consumer price index.

Now there is argument about how this measurement should be carried out, but most of it is of a technical nature. Which of the available measures of wages should be used? Which price index most accurately reflects what is really happening to the prices wage earners pay? These are important questions, particularly if there is a redistribution of income going on within the group of wage and salary earners at the same time as there is a shift of resources away from this group as a whole towards profit-receivers. However, the main controversy at the moment is about this latter shift.

The share of national income going to profits can increase even if the level of real wages remains constant — so long as national income itself increases. In an economy expanding at, say five per cent a

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year, real wages and real profits must both increase by this five per cent gain in productivity if the existing shares of national income are to be maintained. If the level of real wages is held constant, all this increase in productivity accrues to profits, and so the profit share increases rapidly. Naturally, if the level of real wages also falls, the profit share can increase even more rapidly.

A more or less painless way exists, then, for governments to increase the profit share in an expanding economy. Real wages have to be held constant (or at least increase less rapidly than productivity) so that the benefits of greater production go to profit-recipients. This is the effect of an equitably administered system of full wage (and tax) indexation.

If, however, the economy is not expanding very rapidly this shift to profits will be slow. A system of full indexation, as envisaged by the Labor government in 1975, would have increased the profit share but too slowly for those who stood to benefit, since the economy was, and has remained, stagnant — as Table 1 illustrates.

In the period covered by Table 1, Gross non-farm product grew at an average annual rate of only about three per cent per year, compared to an average of 5.7 per cent in the previous eight years. To quickly increase the profit share in such circumstances required an actual reduction in real wages. Has this been achieved?

The most commonly used measure of wages in Australia is the quarterly Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) series, which is derived by the Australian Bureau of Statistics from payroll tax returns. Despite its limitations (it includes, for example, the earnings of managerial and executive staff, and even directors' fees) it is our best regular and more or less complete report of wage and salary incomes, and is the measure I have used here.

If, for each quarter, we discount the increase in Average Weekly Earnings by the Consumer Price Index we obtain a series of quarterly changes in the level of real wages, as in Table 2.

We see that in the four years from December 1974 to December 1978 real wages fell about as often as they rose, with the falls, on average, being larger. In December 1974 Average Weekly Earnings stood at $148.00. In the next four years prices went up 53.6 per cent, so to keep up, Average Weekly Earnings would have had to reach $227.37 in December 1978. Instead, Average Weekly Earnings in December 1978 were only $221.00. Real wages then have fallen, on average, $6.37.

In the same period, output per worker has gone up 23.4 per cent, from $453.36 to $559.48 a week. (1) This increase in productivity plus the cut in real wages has meant a substantial increase in the profit share and a reduction in the wage share over the period, as Table 3 shows.

In Figure 1 these two measures of the attack on real wages are compared. In the upper part of the diagram, quarter on quarter changes in real wages are shown, while the graph shows labor’s resultant share. It is clear that the wage share of national income has been steadily falling over the period depicted, even in those quarters when there was a slight increase in real wages. Of course, big reductions in the level of real wages accelerate this process, as for example

| Table 2. Percentage changes in Average Weekly Earnings, the Consumer Price Index and real wages, December 1974 to December 1978. |
|---|---|---|
| Quarter | AWE | CPI | 'Real wages' |
| December 1974 | 5.3 | 3.7 | 1.6 |
| March 1975 | 2.0 | 3.6 | -1.6 |
| June 1975 | 2.8 | 3.5 | -0.7 |
| September 1975 | 2.4 | 0.8 | 1.6 |
| December 1975 | 5.3 | 5.6 | -0.3 |
| March 1976 | 1.9 | 3.0 | -1.1 |
| June 1976 | 4.9 | 2.5 | 2.4 |
| September 1976 | 3.2 | 2.2 | 1.0 |
| December 1976 | 1.5 | 6.0 | -4.5 |
| March 1977 | 2.5 | 2.3 | 0.2 |
| June 1977 | 3.1 | 2.4 | 0.7 |
| September 1977 | 3.3 | 2.0 | 1.3 |
| December 1977 | 0.3 | 2.3 | -2.0 |
| March 1978 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 2.5 |
| June 1978 | 1.2 | 2.1 | -0.9 |
| September 1978 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 0.4 |
| December 1978 | 0.2 | 2.3 | -2.1 |
Table 3: Wages, salaries and supplements as a percentage of gross domestic product at factor cost.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Labor's share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1975</td>
<td>65.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1975</td>
<td>65.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1975</td>
<td>64.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1976</td>
<td>63.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1976</td>
<td>64.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1976</td>
<td>63.15</td>
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<td>62.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 1977</td>
<td>62.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1977</td>
<td>63.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1977</td>
<td>63.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1977</td>
<td>62.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1978</td>
<td>62.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1978</td>
<td>62.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1978</td>
<td>61.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1978</td>
<td>58.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

occurred in the December quarter of 1976, and again in the December quarter of last year.

The Historical Record

So far we have established that real wages have been falling for the last four years — in a period in which there has been, as yet, no sustained economic recovery. But this may be because wages have not fallen far enough — or at least this is what the “real wage overhang” school argue. (2)

There are two ways of dealing with this argument. The first involves re-examining the evidence to see whether there has been a long-term trend for labor’s share of the national income to increase past some historical “natural average”. The second consists of assessing possible other causes for the dramatic fall in investment Australia has experienced in the recent past.

To start with the evidence, it seems at first sight that there has been an increase in labor’s share over the post-war period in Australia. Table 4 uses the same measure of the wage share as Table 3, but this time is based on annual, rather than quarterly, data.

Table 4: Wages, salaries and supplements as a percentage of gross domestic product at factor cost, 1948/9 to 1977/78.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wage share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48/9</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49/50</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50/51</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51/2</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52/3</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53/4</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54/5</td>
<td>57.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>55/6</td>
<td>58.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>56/7</td>
<td>57.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>57/8</td>
<td>58.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>58/9</td>
<td>56.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>59/60</td>
<td>57.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>60/1</td>
<td>57.8</td>
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<td>61/2</td>
<td>58.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>62/3</td>
<td>56.6</td>
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<td>63/4</td>
<td>55.4</td>
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<td>64/5</td>
<td>56.4</td>
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<td>65/6</td>
<td>58.3</td>
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<td>66/7</td>
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<td>67/8</td>
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<tr>
<td>68/9</td>
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<td>69/70</td>
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<td>70/71</td>
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<td>74/5</td>
<td>65.5</td>
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<td>75/6</td>
<td>64.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>76/7</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77/8</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, this historical series is misleading for two reasons, and should be modified. The first, more or less uncontroversial inadequacy of Table 4 is the fact that it overlooks significant changes in the class structure of Australia. While these changes can be overlooked in a short-run analysis, as we did above, if we want to look at a trend over a thirty year period we must take into account the shift that has occurred in Australia from self-employment to wage labor.

To see how such a shift can distort the evidence on labor's share, consider the case of a shopkeeper who is forced to sell his or her business and gets a job, say, in the local supermarket. Even though, we suppose, no other changes occur in the economy, there will be an apparent increase in the wage share of national income and a drop in the profit share. This is because all the income of self-employed people is allocated to profits in the national account statistics we have been using.
In the 1947 Census, self-employed people made up 12.5 per cent of the workforce; in 1971 this percentage had fallen to 7.3. There had also been a drop in the percentage of employers (most of whom are, in fact, small employers, employing only a few workers) from 9.3 to 5.3 per cent of the workforce.

How can we correct our data to take this effect into account? One way is to adjust the whole series in Table 4 by selecting one particular distribution of the workforce into employers, self-employed and employees (I chose the 1971 Census figures) and re-calculating labor's share in other years.

For example, in 1954, 17.9 per cent of the workforce were employers or self-employed, compared to 12.6 in 1971, a drop of 5.3 per cent. To calculate what would have been labor's share in 1954 if the class structure in that year had been the same as it was in 1971, we have to adjust the wage share in 1954 by adding part of the income of that 5.3 per cent of the workforce to wages. There is room for argument over what fraction of the income of small employers and the self-employed should be allocated in this way. I have chosen to regard the wage portion of this income as simply equal to the ruling average wage, with all additional income allocated to profits.

This seems reasonable and is equivalent to assuming that our shopkeeper, having been forced out of business, receives the average wage in his or her new job.

Table 5 shows the result of re-calculating labor's share for each year from 1948/9 to 1977/8. Since census data is only available for 1947, 1954, 1966 and 1971, additional assumptions had to be made about trends in the structure of the workforce for other years; I simply assumed a constant trend between censuses and extrapolated the trend between 1966 and 1971 up to the present.

The clear upward trend visible in Table 4 has now all but disappeared, suggesting that it was mainly the effect of changes in the composition of the workforce rather than a consequence of a shift in income from profit receivers to wage earners. Of course, Table 5 does show fluctuations in labor's share. These are a consequence of class struggle within Australia and of external shocks to the Australian economy. While not wishing to ignore these fluctuations and the factors which caused them, it seems that the evidence is that there has been no marked change in the underlying division of national income between workers and capitalists over the post-war period.

### Table 5. Wages, salaries and supplements as a percentage of gross domestic product at factor cost, adjusted for changes in workforce composition (Base: 1971), 1948/9 to 1977/8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wage share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48/9</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49/50</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50/1</td>
<td>54.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>65.7</td>
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<td>52/3</td>
<td>61.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>53/4</td>
<td>59.8</td>
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<td>61.5</td>
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<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57/8</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58/9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>59/60</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39/70</td>
<td>59.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>70/1</td>
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<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77/8</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Tax Man Cometh

So far, we have been examining Labor's share of the national income without taking into account the redistributive effects of taxation. This is only realistic if wage earners and profit receivers have paid, over the period we are interested in, roughly the same proportion of their incomes in taxes and received roughly the same proportion back in benefits. However, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that wage earners are paying a much greater share of the tax burden and that governments are intervening more and more in the interests of the corporate sector.
To quantify all these effects — even for a single year — is very complex and to do so over the whole post-war period would be well beyond the scope of these Notes. However, it is worthwhile looking at the most important aggregates and seeing how they have changed to shift resources back to profit receivers.

The main tax paid by wage and salary earners is Pay As You Earn (PAYE) income tax, and it is providing an increasing portion of government income. We should therefore subtract PAYE deductions in order to arrive at a real, after tax figure for labor’s share of the national income. At the same time, we should add back those cash benefits workers receive from government, such as pensions, unemployment benefits and the like. This gives a rough measure of the redistributive effects of government taxes and benefits, though I should emphasise it leaves out many other aspects of state intervention in the distribution of income. It is only justified by the fact that the two quantities we are considering — net PAYE contributions of wage and salary earners and cash benefits to persons — tend to dominate the government income and expenditure.

Table 6 shows net PAYE payments, cash benefits to persons and the difference between the two, expressed as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product at factor cost. From 1958/59 (3) to 1964/65 benefits exceeded PAYE deductions but from 1965/6 the working class has received less back in cash benefits than it has paid in income tax.

If this redistributive effect is taken into account, as in Table 7, a picture emerges of the long term evolution of labor’s real share of national income. From the evidence there

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Net PAYE ($m)</th>
<th>Cash benefits ($m)</th>
<th>Difference as % of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58/9</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>1.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59/60</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>1.579</td>
</tr>
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<td>643</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>1.348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61/2</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1.823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62/3</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>1.743</td>
</tr>
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<td>63/4</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>1029</td>
<td>1.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>991</td>
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<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
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<td>1156</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1324</td>
<td>1246</td>
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<tr>
<td>67/8</td>
<td>1507</td>
<td>1294</td>
<td>— 0.976</td>
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<td>1397</td>
<td>— 1.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2084</td>
<td>1590</td>
<td>— 1.828</td>
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<td>1764</td>
<td>— 2.246</td>
</tr>
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<td>71/2</td>
<td>2888</td>
<td>2048</td>
<td>— 2.529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72/3</td>
<td>3161</td>
<td>2543</td>
<td>— 1.640</td>
</tr>
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<td>4238</td>
<td>3076</td>
<td>— 2.564</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>77/8</td>
<td>9639</td>
<td>8279</td>
<td>— 1.703</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Labour’s share (From Table 5)</th>
<th>Tax/benefit effect (From Table 6)</th>
<th>Resulting share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58/9</td>
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<td>1.936</td>
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<tr>
<td>77/8</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>— 1.703</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
seems little justification for the claim that the wage share has exceeded some historic benchmark. True, real wages in Australia are higher than in many other countries, but they have always been so.

The wage share has increased in particular periods, particularly in recessions when, typically, output falls faster than employment. The answer in this case is to increase the level of economic activity, not cut real wages — and anyway, the wage share will fall, other things being equal, when economic recovery picks up again.

This seems to leave the "real wage overhang" case hanging — though no doubt it will still be trotted out by employers, government ministers, academics and journalists to justify why other people's incomes should be cut.

1. Calculated, in December 1978 prices, from seasonally adjusted gross non-farm product per civilian employee. Gross non-farm product (in December 1978 prices) went up from $20,925.4 million in the December quarter of 1974 to $23,567.0 million in the December quarter of last year, a 12.6 per cent increase. At the same time, the number of civilian employees in private employment fell from 3,550,500 to 2,240,000, a drop of 8.7 per cent. This means productivity increased 23.4 per cent.


3. Before 1958/9 income tax receipts are not given separately for wage and salary earners.

T. O'S.,
7.5.79.
1. Labour's share of the national income, 1948/9 to 1977/8. (See Table 4.)

2. Labour's share of the national income, 1948/9 to 1977/8, adjusted for changes in the composition of the workforce. (See Table 5.)

3. Labour's share of the national income, 1958/9 to 1977/8, adjusted for changes in the composition of the workforce and redistributive effects of PAYE deductions and cash benefits. (See Table 7.)
The Struggle for Liberation in the South Pacific

Denis Freney
The South Pacific — an imperialist lake?

In terms of international politics, the South Pacific is one of the most isolated and unknown areas in the world. It has been and remains an imperialist lake, almost untouched by the winds of the colonial revolution which brought Africa, Asia and Latin America into centre stage in world politics. For the imperialists it is the last colonial paradise: the fabulous South Seas of Gauguin, of Bali Hai, and coconut palms. More recently, it has been the scene of a new tourist invasion from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the USA and even from western Europe. American and Australian millionaires still continue to sail from island to island in their yachts, the Japanese fishing fleets plunder the natural marine resources of the islands, and the multinationals increasingly move in to exploit mineral and other wealth.

The islanders remain exploited, no matter the neo-colonial independence they have in large part been given. Workers receive minimal salaries; villagers are alienated from their traditional land by the colonial planters and by new multinational ventures; their former cultural values are being eroded by the massive tourist invasion and the take-away culture of American imperialism; their politicians are corrupted by capitalist ethics and begin capitalist accumulation, by fair means or foul.

The island nations of the South Pacific are uniformly small in population: Fiji is the largest with 600,000; Vanuaaku (New Hebrides) has 100,000; New Caledonia 150,000, while other mini-states such as Nauru and Nuie have populations of only a few thousand. The level of capitalist penetration in the economy varies greatly. In Fiji, sugar plantations cover great areas of the islands and are owned by multinational companies, particularly CSR, while tourism is a booming industry, again controlled by multinationals. In Vanuaaku, 36 per cent of all land is owned by Europeans, adding up to something like 50 per cent of arable land. In New Caledonia, the proportion of land alienated is even greater — the situation of the Kanaks is closer to that of the Australian Blacks than anything else.

Yet in the Gilbert Islands, for example, land alienation is minimal. Exploitation takes the form of grabbing the islanders for work on overseas shipping lines, often those registered in Panama or Liberia. Throughout the South Pacific, there is a rapidly increasing presence of Japanese fishing companies and woodchipping concerns. American agrobusiness is also moving in, while the British and French maintain traditional interests in copra and oil palm plantations. Nevertheless, it is Australian and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand capital which is dominant, though under challenge, in the islands. Trade is generally with Australia and New Zealand, providing a valuable outlet for their food products.

British, Australian and New Zealand imperialists, after the collapse of the British Empire in Asia and Africa, began a process of handing over formal independence to neo-colonial regimes in the islands, seen as a preventive measure against the growth of nationalist political parties and to build up a neo-colonial, compradore elite to ensure political stability for the multinationals. In Fiji, economically the most important of the former British colonies, the British made sure that communal differences between the Indian and Fijian population would remain a fall-back for imperialism in case of a general radicalisation. In this, they followed their divide-and-rule policy applied in Malaysia. Generally speaking, the Anglo-Saxon imperialists have been successful in their smooth transition to a neo-colonial independence in the South Pacific.

Lack of nationalist political parties opposed to neo-colonialism has led to the embryonic trade unions or, in some cases, the co-operative movement, directing the discontent of workers and villagers with the increased exploitation they suffer from multinationals and their local elites. In Fiji, the trade union movement has been the major force and there have been many strikes. But even here the trade union movement has been too often the vehicle for political promotion for its leaders although they are in opposition. In Papua New Guinea, similarly, the trade union movement in Port Moresby and Lae were vehicles for Pangu politicians such as Maori Kiki to win seats. Once in power, they set about...
containing the trade union movement to their government's policies.

While trade unions can and do express discontent and provide a class alternative, they cannot be the real alternative, or rather, the basis for building an anti-imperialist party unless they become truly independent, adopt a clear political program, and sponsor the formation of a real workers' and villagers' party which is not simply a vehicle for the political ambitions of some union leaders. Such a party cannot, of course, only be narrowly concerned with the interests of union members but must also develop an alternative political program for the country, linking closely with the aspirations of the rural population, tackling the role of the multinationals and planters, and generally opening up an anti-capitalist road of development.

Among the newly-emerging intellectuals in these countries, those who are radical as students too often lose their radicalism once they leave universities and win jobs in the bureaucracy, beginning also on the road of capital accumulation, by fair means or foul. There is often little between a job with the government or multinationals and surviving at the level of the villager working his or her garden. But the main difficulty is a clear-cut political analysis, and a lack of marxist consciousness among these intellectuals, who are generally trained in universities in Port Moresby, Suva, Australia or New Zealand, where a "marxist culture" is notably lacking. Moreover, their isolation from Africa and Asia prevents a real study of the liberation movements in these countries which have, by and large, adopted marxism as the only real way forward.

The claim of "exceptionalism" for the South Pacific is tailor-made for the multinationals and for imperialism in general. But the islands of the South Pacific are not paradises where the laws of historical development do not apply. The multinationals are the same in Fiji or Kenya. Imperialism is the same in Iran or New Caledonia. Corrupt politicians are the same in Jakarta or Port Moresby. French legionnaires are the same in Senegal or Tahiti ...

Imperialism is a world system of exploitation and only its means of exploitation differ from place to place — from direct colonialism as in New Caledonia to military-fascism as in Jakarta or Chile, to neo-colonial regimes in Fiji or Kenya.

Similarly, the response to imperialism in the Third World is, of necessity, uniform. The questions are the same: do the peoples of the Third World follow a neo-colonial road, with the local elites depending on the crumbs from the table of the multinationals while the masses get only super-exploitation; or do they begin on a "non-capitalist road" which stops further multinational penetration and begins to take over the existing multinationals? Do they alienate further land for tourist complexes or for multinational agrobusinesses and mining, or do they take over the land already expropriated by planters and multinationals and return it to the people? Do they encourage massive urbanisation with bloated shanty towns, or concentrate on rural development, as a means of capitalising well-considered industrial growth?

Of course, there are specific characteristics of the South Pacific nations which must be considered and of course there are specific features of the total situation in each island-
nation which must be considered. These specific features will determine the specific characteristics any transition to socialism in these countries will have; they will provide aids or obstacles to defeating imperialism, and therefore it is extremely important that they be studied and integrated in an overall strategy for socialism in these countries.

However, before looking specifically at the situation in Vanuaaku, as an example of trying to understand the process in at least one South Pacific nation, we need to examine the specific role of French imperialism in the South Pacific.

French imperialism in the South Pacific

French imperialism, unlike British imperialism, has not surrendered its direct colonial rule in the South Pacific. On the contrary, it has many times expressed its determination that it is in the South Pacific as a direct colonial power "to stay." The immediate reasons are obvious: in Tahiti it still maintains its nuclear testing sites, while in New Caledonia there is a large French population (some 45 per cent of the total) and some of the richest nickel mines in the world.

French determination to stay, by outright use of military force if necessary, as the direct colonial power in the South Pacific, adds an explosive element to the political scene.

French imperialism has never gracefully and as a "preventive measure" handed over to a neo-colonial regime, with the exception of its French African empire. The decision to give independence to its African colonies was dictated by specific circumstances following the defeat in Algeria and the upsurge of the colonial revolution throughout the continent. But since, including in the Comores islands off the coast of East Africa, the French have given way only under pressure, and sought to right the situation by use of force soon after.

Another feature of French colonies is that, among the students from these countries who study in French universities, there is generally a strong element who absorb the "marxist culture" which is prevalent not only in the universities but also in French political life as a whole. Of course, these marxist intellectuals are generally a minority and many are also absorbed into
the neo-colonial bureaucracy after graduating. But it is a feature of French imperialism’s specific difficulties which always makes a smooth and safe transition to neo-colonial rule a more difficult proposition than it has been for British imperialism.

**Vanuaaku — neo-colonialism or an anti-capitalist path?**

Vanuaaku will be the first country in the South Pacific to become independent. There has been a real struggle, over a period of eight years, for independence. In other countries, independence has been handed over without a struggle (if we except some elements of struggle in Papua New Guinea before Peacock took Somare under his wing).

Vanuaaku has many specific elements in its socio-economic situation: first, a relatively high degree of land alienation, but a small European population and the strong maintenance of traditional customs and land-ownership. Second, it is a joint colony—an Anglo-French Condominium or “Pandemonium”, as some wits accurately describe the bureaucratic chaos resulting from two sets of Colonel Blimps wrangling over who took precedence. But this has also had the effect of introducing a divisive element among Vanuaakuans which has given some possibility for the colonial powers to apply their time-honored policy of divide-and-rule. On the other hand, the contradictions between the colonial powers has offered the possibility of an intelligent policy of “divide-and-rule” by the nationalist movement!

The National Party which later became the Vanuaaku Pati began in 1971 and set 1977 as the deadline for independence. Very soon it understood that the land alienation by the planters and colonial companies was something linked integrally with independence: that independence could only have meaning if the land was returned to the people. As plantations are the main economic stake colonialism has in the country (along with the big Japanese fishing company and the tourist industry), the demand for the return of the land to the people added a radical, anti-capitalist aspect to the independence struggle.

It also led to the grassroots organisation which is such a strong aspect of the Vanuaaku Pati. The struggle for independence and land became not only a generalised slogan through which voters could be mobilised, but a source of organisation in which, increasingly, the demand for land and independence was something which was acted on in the villages, and the pressure on, and later occupation of, plantations became a key aspect of the struggle.

The Vanuaaku Pati is unique in that it is not an electoral party. It applies, above all, a policy of mass struggle. It is also an extremely democratic party. Few parties in the world hold two Congresses a year (or even more); hold meetings of political commissars from all islands and districts a couple of times a year. It is also closely governed by its membership in the villages and towns.

The extremely democratic organisation of the Vanuaaku Pati flows from a highly creative development of the strong traditional communal customs in the villages and a recognition of the
independence of the people, being further developed by the Pati. In fact, the villages have been in the majority “self-rulled” by the people through their traditional institutions. The divided colonial administration has left the villages largely alone, particularly in outlying islands. Traditionally, police only enter villages when called upon by the chiefs to solve a serious problem which they cannot. However, the vast majority of problems and disputes are solved within the traditional structures. National independence seemed a logical extension of the independence of the villages. Thus, in the crisis at the end of 1977, it was easy for the People’s Provisional Government to become a reality: the villages simply declared support and, in a sort of a way, their own “independence”. Thus “visas” or passes were needed to travel through Vanuaaku villages, and those colonial officials or their puppets who tried to enter villages were sent packing. The colonial authorities were then faced with having to risk an explosion by using police or French gendarmes to break the villages’ “independence” in a situation where this “independence” appeared to the people only a logical extension of a situation which had largely existed in practice for many decades.

Similarly, for many years the same principle of the de facto “independence” of the villages has radicalised the Presbyterian and Anglican Churches which together have the big majority of the population.

In the South Pacific, the churches have been colonial instruments of ideological oppression. In places like Tonga and Fiji they remain in that role. However, in Vanuaaku the two churches mentioned have been transformed and, in turn, have helped transform the political situation. The Presbyterian Church has a democratic tradition, but usually this has not meant it has become political, or necessarily identified with the earthly needs of the people. However, in Vanuaaku, the majority Presbyterian Church, through its pastors and lay persons from the villages, became “nationalised” and played a political role strongly supporting independence, land struggles, and the strengthening of “custom” and the democratic traditions of the villages. The President of the Vanuaaku Pati is an Anglican priest, Walter Lini, and its vice-president a leading pastor in the Presbyterian Church. But the VanuaakunPati is not a “church party”. It is a nationalist party in which the different strands of the “theology of liberation”, a secular nationalism, traditional “custom” and a radical anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism are uniquely mixed, arising from the society in which it exists and, above all, from the highly democratic methods under which the party operates.

This can be seen in the villages themselves where decisions are taken by the interplay of all these factors: the pastor, the chief, the Vanuaaku Pati secretary, the co-operative chairperson and, lately, the Youth Association and Vanuaaku Women secretaries, together with democratic consultation with all sectors of the population. Problem-solving, decisions on action, are made not by any one of these forces within the village, but by consultation among all of them (and in any case, the different “strands” are often combined among them in one or more individuals). Thus a tremendous unity of will and action is built up and because there is a constant series of conferences, of visits from leaders and to headquarters in Vila, there emerges a nationwide unity, even down to a thorough understanding of tactics developed in a rapidly changing situation. Of course, this process is helped by the smallness of the total population as well as by traditional decision-making processes which the Vanuaaku Pati has adopted and developed in an extraordinarily creative way. The result is an enormously powerful political “machine”, and very creative tactics combined with principled strategy and goals.

This was best illustrated in the period of the People’s Provisional Government. In November 1977, the Vanuaaku Pati boycotted the elections because of the undemocratic electoral system and the powerlessness of the Assembly. As a result there were no elections — the many small puppet parties arranged it so there was only a single candidate for each seat and they were then declared elected. So the Vanuaaku Pati decided to form a “People’s Provisional Government”. This government issues visas or passes, and villages decided that no one without a pass could enter their traditional areas. At the same time, PPG supporters refused to pay taxes or vehicle licences to the puppet Assembly, paying them to the PPG instead. Villagers were given the green light
to occupy plantations situated on their traditional land. The decision to set up the PPG was taken only after exhaustive discussion at a Vanuaaku Pati Congress.

I will give an example of the occupation of a big French-owned plantation in Malekula island. The plantation, with over 1,000 head of cattle and thousands of coconut trees, was on traditional land and had been claimed by the villagers for many years. After the PPG was formed, the villagers served notice on the manager to get out. He refused, and so a "guerrilla campaign" began: roads on the plantation were dug up or barricaded one by one until he could not drive out. Then some household pets mysteriously died. Eventually, the manager decided to get out, so French police came in, arrested six of the "ringleaders" and took out the manager. But the arrests did not stop the action because there were no "ringleaders" — every step of the action had been decided after collective and exhaustive debate. When those arrested were jailed, the villagers served notice on the big French trading company, CFNH, to come by a certain date and remove all its property (worth $150,000) from its big store on the plantation. When the company did not meet the deadline, the villagers marched to the store and sat down outside it. A pastor said a prayer and then the doors were forced open. In a very serious atmosphere, the name of each head of household was called out in order — the first thing to be distributed was the rice — a bag of rice each, until it was all distributed. Then came the sugar, other food and finally several small boats. By the end of the day the entire property of the CFNH had been "redistributed". Another prayer, and then an orderly march back to their villages.

The result has been that French plantation and store owners have had to accept the reality: the only alternative would be massive repression and the arrest of all involved. The CFNH has accepted the reality — it has asked if it could, please, still act as the shipping company, bringing their ships to buy the copra from their ex-plantation for sale.

Vanuaaku Pati headquarters were only informed after the event (following the green light given by the Congress for such occupations). The villagers saw nothing ironic or amusing in this orderly expropriation of a big French company. Rather it was a very serious, historic moment for them: it marked the return of their land, and the repayment, by the redistribution of the company's stores, for their stolen land and labor over decades.

Today, the plantation is run under a system which can only be described as "self-management". First, the workers on the plantation, who mainly came from other islands, have been integrated and "adopted" by the different villages. An elected committee manages the plantation. Any villager or ex-worker can go and prepare copra from the trees on the plantation. They then "sell it" to the collective management for the price paid for it at the plantation dock by the trading company, less $1 a bag which goes into the collective's bank account. As a result, workers and villagers receive more than double the wages they received before — if my memory is correct, it is, in fact, four times the previous amount per bag.

Second, productivity has, not surprisingly, risen greatly. Concerning cattle, they are sold to individual villagers at a much cheaper price than previously, but a limit is placed on the number to be killed. Maintenance work on the plantation is done by villagers and ex-workers and salaries are paid by the collective. The standard of living of all concerned has risen dramatically, while the surplus available has meant that the local clinic has now been taken over by the villagers and is paid for by them.

Arising from this experience there are some very important lessons for the future. In Papua New Guinea and other places, when plantations have been bought and handed over to local traditional owners, the aim of the colonial-sponsored land law has been to develop a rich peasantry, with individual lots, or to turn the traditional owners into a company — the workers remaining workers, with the same wages and conditions as before, the profit returning in small part only to the villagers, also being available for loans, etc. to allow the setting up of a small bourgeoisie. The aim of this neo-colonial strategy is to satisfy the planters who sell at favorable rates, to give the semblance of ownership by traditional owners but, in fact, to favor the development of capitalism in the countryside as a social base for the neo-colonial regime and the serious exploitation of other resources by the multinationals.
Vanuaaku Pati strategy is radically different. So far, plantations taken over have been run collectively. They have not been divided into individual holdings, which also has the advantage of maintaining the more economically viable large units. The profits must be won by labor if they are to go to individuals or families, and the total profits of the plantation are invested collectively, on democratically decided projects, allowing substantial economic development of the villages concerned, and the take-over and self-management of formerly centralised functions such as clinics, etc. When Vanuaaku becomes independent, no doubt through democratic decision, there would have to be a tax on the self-managed plantations to help those villages who have no such enterprises on their land.

This system has not been developed through an “ideological” choice of the Vanuaaku Pati or the villagers. I doubt if anyone has heard of the concept of self-management. It developed from the very real traditions of the villagers themselves, of collective labor, of the democratic processes evolved by the Vanuaaku Pati, and the desire to maintain and develop these traditions. Certainly, some VP leaders know what it means to have capitalism consciously introduced into the countryside, but their concern only supplements the deep feeling of the villagers on these questions. Through a largely spontaneous movement, we have self-management existing as the mode of social relations in these occupied plantations. It is a fact which can provide the basis for a genuinely non-capitalist road in Vanuaaku, going towards the construction of a genuine democratic and socialist society, rooted in the deeply-held traditional customs of the people.

Of course, a plantation here or there is not the country as a whole. There are many, many obstacles and dangers to overcome and, of course, imperialism is not inactive in seeking a way to try to tame the Vanuaaku Pati and implant a neo-colonial solution on the country. If they fail, they will use their final weapon — outright military intervention, or use of mercenaries as occurred last year in the Comores. For the moment, however, they are seeking to tame the Vanuaaku Pati which has now entered into a “caretaker government” with 50 per cent of the posts, until elections this year as a lead up to independence.

After the experience of the People’s Provisional Government, the colonial authorities were forced to make concessions. They agreed to almost all the demands of the VP for truly democratic elections, and finally agreed to the “caretaker government” with the VP having half the posts. The period since last April, when the PPG was suspended, has seen the VP win many of the supporters of the former puppet parties, the increasing division among these puppet parties, and the clear sign that the overwhelming majority of the people — I would estimate 75 per cent — now support the VP or splits from other parties which back it.

The colonial powers now realise that the Vanuaaku Pati would win any election and that only three or four electorates would return puppets. Thus they must speed up the introduction of the VP into the Cabinet, give them responsibilities, attempt to surround them with colonial advisers who will show them the “realism” of a neo-colonial solution and thus try to split the VP, or tame it to a neo-colonial outfit, a la PANGU. The next two years will see heavy pressure in an attempt to reach such a result.

Of course, there is no certainty that the Vanuaaku Pati will be able to resist this pressure for a neo-colonial solution. The main guarantee is that the VP is not an electoral outfit, nor is it simply there as a means of promoting leaders to Cabinet posts. It is a mass party in which the masses have real control. It is therefore essential that the Vanuaaku Pati exists independently, with a strong leadership, separate from the government, even when the government becomes a fully Vanuaaku Pati one.

Perspectives

The separation of the party from the state is an extremely important one for those who want a democratic, self-managed socialist society. If the two are the same, then the way is open for a neo-colonial solution or a stalinist-type dictatorship.

Concretely, in Vanuaaku, the danger is that, after winning power and then independence, the Vanuaaku Pati will become simply a support for the government, that the real decisions will be taken in the Cabinet with the public service bureaucracy,
and that the democratic decision-making structure of the Pati, developed over the past eight years, will be forgotten. This would make it very easy for a neo-colonial solution to develop, particularly if all the main leaders of the Pati were to become ministers, and the Pati leadership second rank figures, carrying out orders from the government, with the Pati mobilised only at election time.

Dangers also remain strong if, for the period after independence, all legislative power rests with the National Assembly, elected only every few years, and with full-time parliamentarians drawing big salaries and leading a comfortable life in Vila where they would be tempted to begin capital accumulation and, inevitably, fall into the trap of corruption.

Rather, the logical extension of the democratic decision-making of the VP is to transform the legislative bodies into true organs of popular democracy. That does not mean the "popular democracy" which elsewhere assumes that name, but a pattern based on the regular VP congresses and Political Commissars' meetings where decisions are made by regular meetings of representatives from the villages; after thorough pre-discussion; with post-Congress discussion; with thoroughly democratic debate carried out in a way accessible to the delegates and, above all, with the right to change delegates from one meeting to another should a delegate not vote in a way suitable to the opinions of the village(s) represented. Vanuaaku is fortunate in having a small population in which such a form of direct democracy can be applied. Similarly, village, district and island government could and should follow the same pattern. The bad example of "Provincial Government" in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere "decentralisation" has meant the establishment of many mini-parliaments, complete with their quotas of paid parliamentarians, bureaucracies and corruption should be avoided.

The policy of direct democracy is also economic, as it implies that, at best, delegates should only receive travelling expenses and any other out-of-pocket costs incurred in their cuties — no high salaries, no privileges, no attendant bureaucrats and no corruption. To maintain the institutions of western parliamentary democracy in such a small country is to automatically favor the development of an elite whose aim in life becomes capital accumulation and the Good Life in the Bright Lights. In countries such as Vanuaaku, the state and parliamentary forms become the prime means of developing a local capitalist class. There are many, many examples of that.

Of course, the system of direct democracy for legislative decisions has problems, particularly if laws are drafted in incomprehensible legal terminology. But this can be overcome. Such direct democracy does not exclude the need for the Vanuaaku Pati continuing to operate in a parallel pattern. Village or district representatives to the legislative congresses will also come from non-Vanuaaku Pati areas and to isolate colonial manoeuvres it is important not to impose bans on other parties unless they physically take up arms against the democratically elected government. Such bans against opposition parties, even those which back the planters, would negate the grassroots democracy that the Vanuaaku Pati has practised in the past. Therefore, the Vanuaaku Pati must act as a Pati, continue its democratic decision-making and be in a position where it can debate broader issues of strategy and long-term goals outside the narrower confines of passing laws.

So, immediately, we see a danger in the contradiction between the direct democracy in the Vanuaaku Pati, and the parliamentary forms they will have to live with at least until some time after independence.

But there are others which will determine whether Vanuaaku follows a neo-colonial path. Foremost is the attitude to proposals by multinationals for new developments in the fields of tourism, fishing, wood-chipping and so on, and of guarantees which the colonial powers will undoubtedly seek for the future, of multinational or overseas investment at present in the country.

In the transition period to independence, we can expect multinationals to try to stake their claims as soon as possible, while the colonial powers are able to exercise the maximum pressure. How the VP responds will be an important pointer. Similarly, the question of plantations claimed by villagers will also be a question for negotiation: for example, the way in which planters will be
Compensated — by the colonial governments or by the Vanuaaku government? Also relevant is the speed with which the hand-over — or take-over — of the plantations will proceed. The colonial authorities will seek to have decisions made on these questions before independence, whereas it is realistic to say that such decisions can only justly be taken by an independent nation, not one still under colonial tutelage. However, it cannot be excluded that compromises of one sort or another may be made to ease the way to independence. The scope and nature of such compromises will, however, be crucial, as will the way in which they are decided upon.

Of longer term, certainly after independence, is the question of the future of major multinational and big business investment in the country: the plantations as a whole, of course, but also the big Japanese fishing company, the tourist hotels, the small BHP manganese mines, the BP and French trading companies and so on.

Of course, these are difficult political and economic questions, and possibly different approaches will be taken to them at different speeds and with different solutions. The plantations are, of course, the burning question.

For the future, the real question is how can an independent Vanuaaku develop economically without becoming a playground for the multinationals, without the destruction of its culture, without a massive influx into the towns and without the expropriation of much of the nation's wealth by a new elite emerging from those in power after independence?

Problems of development

The first question is: what kind of development? For example, there is currently a proposal for a large casino in Vila. There is a proposal by a Japanese company to begin woodchipping on Malekula. There are proposals for a rash of new hotels to accommodate a major tourist boom. This is the "development" being proposed by the multinationals who argue that it will provide jobs for Vanuaakuans. No doubt there will be a few jobs — as servants in the tourist expansion and casinos, and as laborers in the woodchipping industry. No doubt also there will be some foreign exchange won. But at what cost?

In large countries, with strong political systems and a stable society already industrialised (I think here of Yugoslavia or Romania, for example) a massive tourist industry can be absorbed without destroying the culture and, generally, can be a reasonable economic development. However, in small countries struggling to overcome the legacy of colonialism and the threat of neo-colonialism, to strongly establish their own culture and stable independent political life, massive tourism can be a disaster — as can be seen in Fiji. So far, in Vanuaaku, with two large international hotels and a dozen smaller ones, tourism has been contained and does not yet pose a critical problem. But the last thing one would wish on Vanuaakuans is that they become a nation of servants, pandering to the whims of Australian and Japanese tourists. Moreover, the nature of tourism in countries such as Vanuaaku is that it is controlled by multinationals, the costs are paid in the home countries, even much of the food is imported directly, and very little really remains in the country. A massive new tourist explosion would have very bad consequences for Vanuaaku.

Similarly, wood-chipping would destroy the heritage of the people — the inland forests in which their forefathers lived, a natural wealth in its own right that no one has the right to destroy now for the goal of a bit more foreign exchange and a few jobs.

There is no mad rush to endorse, or embark on, schemes proposed by the multinationals and others. That applies to "development" in general. The same democratic procedures that apply within the Vanuaaku Pati should also apply to all development — it is necessary to clearly fix priorities, to discuss all sides (and not only the "advice" of the colonial "experts" or those brought out by the multinationals). In general, it is necessary to develop a plan for development, stretching over a long period, aimed at coordinated and clear-cut goals.

How can such a plan be developed? Traditionally, under neo-colonialism when such plans are even considered, they are drawn up by "expert" bureaucrats at the top and then announced with a flourish to the people. There is another alternative:
planning should begin from the villages and then proceed up, for consolidation and elaboration, to be then transmitted to the base again.

That could mean, for example, that villages, singly, or in groups, draw up "Cahiers" or lists of projects and needs for their villages which they would like included within a national plan. Before and during such discussions on village plans, a nationwide discussion should begin on priorities, goals and different major national projects. The villages could also be encouraged to try to find their own resources — financial, material and human — the solutions and the means to build their own projects, limiting the need to call in central government finances and aid. At the same time, they should have available technical advice from the centre to help them plan.

Thus, village by village, island by island, a clear picture of the hopes, needs and priorities of the people will be built up, where they will decide what they want to do for "development" in their areas in the following five or so years. Of course, new ideas will come when they examine the draft plans of other villages and islands — an intensive interchange of ideas can take place, leading to modifications and changes.

These plans would not, of course, only cover strictly economic projects but also health, education, culture and so on. Discussion would then have to take place on a national level, considering particularly the requests from different villages and islands for central government aid in fulfilling their own plans, as well as major national projects, priorities and funding.

One major advantage of such planning is that everyone down to the simplest villager is drawn into the planning process and has an awareness and commitment to carrying out the plan. Moreover, the stress should be on the villagers doing as much as possible with their own resources, and not relying passively on centralised funding. This in turn encourages collective saving and use of capital, rather than its diversion into individual capitalist enterprises. It will help end the divorce between the central government and the villagers. And it is something that fits perfectly with the traditional pattern of village life and decision-making.

"Development" and "planning" have been mystified by the "experts", and by colonialism, into things divorced from ordinary mortals, whose allotted task is to pay for them and carry them out, but not to understand them. In fact, it is mystification for the explicit purpose of allowing the multinationals and colonial "experts" to make the decisions for their own profit. When there is a process of democratic planning, from the villages up, the mystification disappears.

It is within such a finally democratically decided national plan that a role for foreign aid and investment can be worked out and, as we said before, there is no rush to agree to their plans.

Guidance and technical advice will be needed, of course, at all levels of the democratic planning process. For example, there would be danger of village plans being essentially for social welfare projects — it must be pointed out that it is necessary to also expand economic production, to in part fund these projects. It then requires technical advice on suitable crops, the situation in international markets and so on. This would also apply even more on major national projects.

I hope this outlines conceptions I have of how it will be possible for Vanuaaku to develop: by the very nature of such planning, the emphasis would be overwhelmingly on the development of the rural areas where the vast majority of the people live. In any case, I believe this is the only real basis for development and eventual industrialisation. Vanuaaku's wealth is its rich soil and natural resources and, above all, its people. It is upon these natural and human resources and not upon foreign aid and investment that the national essentially will develop. Any outside aid can only have a role if carefully slotted into the mobilisation of the people.

Finally, I want to highlight the very real threat that imperialism, and particularly French imperialism, will use military force to try to stop any such non-capitalist road of development. But it is the mobilisation of the people that is the main guarantee that such force will fail. Already the Vanuaaku Pati has supported the formation of self-defence units in the villages.
New Caledonia — Armed Struggle?

In New Caledonia the struggle is much more difficult. Not only are the French imperialists unwilling to leave this nickel-rich colony, but they have also introduced a relatively large settler population.

It is ironic that among the first French colonists there were convicts deported after the Paris Commune. Unfortunately, they and their descendants quickly became as racist as any settlers in South Africa or Australia. The Kanak people were robbed of their land and the colonists settled the west coast particularly, turning it into a little bit of France, so well advertised on tourist brochures today. Of course, included in the 50,000-odd French nationals in New Caledonia today is a good percentage of expatriate civil servants, teachers and — military. They nevertheless have full voting rights in the powerless Territorial Assembly.

This heavy colonisation has resulted in a much greater loss of culture among the Kanaks than has taken place in Vanuaaku. Deculturisation among the Kanaks has led to many of the problems, particularly in the urban areas, which exist among Australian Blacks. Moreover, there has arisen an Uncle Tom “reformist” elite who politically, and in other ways, mislead the Kanaks into accepting the colonial situation. The French administration and the big nickel company follow a policy of “carrot and stick” to hinder the rise of the newly-emerging Kanak independence movement.

Nevertheless, the Kanak independence movements of PALIKA and FULK have made steady progress, particularly in the Kanak reserves of the East Coast of the “Grand Terre” (main island) and in particular in the Loyalty Islands where land alienation is minimal. The PALIKA is also having an increasing impact among the dispossessed Kanak youth in Noumea and other urban centres. The beginnings of a grassroots based movement, centred in the reserves, is also emerging, although unfortunately there is still a long way to go to match the grassroots strength and organisation of the Vanuaaku Pati.

There can be no doubt that the struggle for independence in New Caledonia is going to be the most difficult in the South Pacific. The Kanaks can therefore rightly ask, and expect, the total solidarity of the independent nations of the region. In one sense, New Caledonia is the South Africa of the South Pacific — and it is correct to demand that all governments — even the most servilely neo-colonial ones in the region — unite to support the Kanaks and kick the French imperialists out of their country.

Largely through the initiative of the Vanuaaku Pati, a Kanak leader spoke at the United Nations and made an extended visit through Africa, winning the first international support for Kanak independence. Of course, the first priority must be to win bigger Kanak support for independence, but that can also be greatly helped if there is a mobilisation of the already independent nations of the South Pacific for their support. Papua New Guinea and Fiji have recently made strong statements for New Caledonian independence, while the Vanuaaku Pati has assured the Kanaks that it will never desert their just struggle no matter how much pressure they face from France. The VP has, in a very principled way, said that Vanuaaku can never be truly independent until New Caledonia is also truly independent. That is a very real statement as New Caledonia will be the launching pad for any imperialist intervention in Vanuaaku.

As for armed struggle, it is very difficult to see how this could be successfully launched, given the small population, the small land area and the strength of the French military presence. But it cannot, of course, be excluded, at a later stage.

The intransigence of French imperialism in the South Pacific adds an explosive element to the total situation. It could be the basis for the radicalisation of the present South Pacific institutions which are still dominated by the old colonial powers (including Australia and New Zealand) and lead to the formation of a new organisation on the style of the Organisation of African Unity, with a very special focus on forcing French imperialism out of New Caledonia and Tahiti, and excluding the French, British, American, Australian and New Zealand governments. Indeed the formation of such an organisation is a very necessary step towards the collective and individual independence of the South Pacific nations.
The present institutions are dominated by imperialist powers, despite some straining for a bigger role by PNG and Fiji, and also Western Samoa.

From this arises another question: is it viable to have so many mini-states, each existing alone, rather than try to build a South Pacific Federation in which each state would maintain its independence, but in which unity could be gradually built, first from a common political struggle to rid the Pacific of direct colonialism, then to fight for economic co-operation, co-ordinate pressure and demands on the dominant neo-colonial powers, and so on?

An OAU-style organisation, pledged to fight colonialism in the region, and to build unity, would enable the South Pacific nations as a whole to take a much more active role in world affairs, to seek genuine independence at least at a diplomatic level, and to seek to establish links with the African nations in particular, whose struggles and situation have some important similarities (for example, the OAU struggle against racism in southern Africa has its parallels with the struggle against French colonialism in New Caledonia and Tahiti).

Such an OAU-style organisation is not the end-all of the struggle. Imperialism and neo-colonialism remain and will remain implanted, as they are in the majority of the African members of the OAU. The anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist forces will also have to seek their own form of unity in the region.

But an OAU-style organisation would also provide protection for nations such as Vanuaaku which will undoubtedly be in the vanguard of the struggle against French imperialism in the South Pacific. That is not a minor consideration.

Film Review — Continued from page 49.

official forces the reluctant and bewildered bailiff to take the more-or-less unresisting doctor to an unstaffed jail and court. No one, except the bailiff, finds these proceedings peculiar. After the doctor is taken away, Harker orders that the room where the Count was killed and Lucy's body lies, be closed up, never to be opened. For the first time since his return from the Carpathians, he smiles; we see his fangs; the Count is dead, long live the Count! In the final scene, Harker whips his horse across the shoreline where he previously walked with his loving wife, galloping into the middle distance, the vampire abroad again.

Herzog's political message would appear to be that sacrifices to stave off external threats are useless. The threat does not come from outside, but is nurtured and nursed within our domestic walls.

The bureaucracy, relying on authoritarianism and bluff, is content to incarcerate the righteous avengers (shades of Baader-Meinhof?) and to ignore the desperate and despairing nature of social reality. In circumstances of bourgeois complacency, and in the absence of any sense of community or of the danger about to overtake society, is it any wonder that the menace, aided by a foolish, officious bureaucracy, can re-establish itself?

Herzog's political vision is bleak. His film, opening with mumified cadavers silently screaming their pain and closing with the new Dracula losing himself anew upon the world is more manifestly horrific than any horror movie.

— Kathe Boehringer.
TWO TRIBUTES .....  

Dick Makinson who died in January, and Helen Palmer who died in May, both in their different ways contributed to the intellectual and cultural life of Australia and of the Australian socialist movement. Dick was a Communist Party member from the '30s until his death, while Helen was a member for nearly 20 years until her expulsion in 1956 for seeking open discussion of the crimes of the Stalin period. We publish, as tributes, orations at their funerals by Peter Mason and Jack Blake.

HELEN PALMER  

We have come here to say our last farewell to our dear colleague and friend, Helen Palmer and to convey a sad farewell from her dear sister, Aileen.

The parents of Helen and Aileen, Vance and Nettie Palmer were great civilising influences in the Australian society of their day. So also in her own chosen fields of life activity, Helen Palmer had a civilising influence on people with whom she came in contact.

As a writer, Helen is known for her work in Australian history, in education, and in a wide variety of political and social subjects.

Not very long ago she was deeply moved when shown a poem by her father which was found in the pocket of a young worker after his death. The poem had been laboriously copied out in pencil on a sheet taken from an exercise book; its last line ran:

*But these are my people and I'm with them till the end.*

But in her own way Helen continued this democratic Australian tradition throughout her life. A famous last line of her own conveys this most strikingly:

*When they gaol a man for striking it's a rich man's country yet.*

Helen was not a shadow of her parents. She chose her own fields of endeavour and in all those fields the mark of her character and personality can be found.

As educationist and teacher she was devoted to Fort Street school with which she had a long-standing association. Her teacher colleagues became her friends. She had a warm capacity for friendship and an intuitive sense of the problems and needs of her students, especially so in cases of the under-privileged.

From her early years and during all her life, Helen was a socialist who engaged herself actively in all the causes she felt to be connected with her central socialist beliefs — the anti-fascist and anti-war movements of the thirties, the democratic movement in support of Republican Spain.

In the second world war Helen served in the airforce. After the war she continued her activities in democratic, civil liberties, peace and similar movements in the difficult years of the cold war. I remember some twenty-seven years ago, a difficult journey she made to China; in spite of all the efforts powerful political and military authorities made to prevent her, Helen reached Peking on her mission of peace. She was a person of much moral and physical courage.

At the turning point of 1956 when the malign influence that had been at work in the heart of world socialism was revealed, Helen Palmer was one of the most vigorous and steadfast exponents of the need for full, open, democratic discussion of the causes and nature of the sickness which had seriously damaged the socialist movement. She was convinced that this was the only way to eliminate the sickness and prepare the ground for creative renewal in a cause she held so dear.

She suffered because of these efforts, but undaunted, she set about the work of founding the journal *Outlook* which carried the subtitle *An Independent Socialist Journal* and declared itself to be a forum for fact, thought and opinion in the cause of socialism in Australia.

*Outlook* was launched in the middle of 1957 and continued publication for 13 years until December 1970. During that time, Helen Palmer was the editor who brought together an editorial board of distinguished people of varying viewpoints, but devoted to the cause of the journal. Contributors and supporters formed a very much wider circle.

As the late Ian Turner expressed it in the final number of *Outlook*:

*What did it achieve? First...*Outlook* provided a refuge, a place for many of us to examine, and to lick, our wounds of 1956, to regain our intellectual and emotional health and vigour, to come back fighting. Without Outlook, inspired as it was by Helen Palmer’s humanity, tolerance and equanimity, we could not have done that....

Secondly, we formulated and propagated significant socialist policies on many of the major problems confronting Australian society.... It is clear now that many of our initiatives have borne fruit.*

Apart from the work on Viet Nam done through *Outlook*, Helen Palmer was personally at the centre of the great popular Australian movement against the war in Viet Nam. She was active in all the public manifestations of that movement, but it was in the councils, conferences, and committees which gave guidance and inspiration to the whole movement where Helen gave her greatest service.
Those guiding bodies brought together diverse groups whose conflicts with each other at times threatened to break up the movement. Helen Palmer played a major part in preventing this, not by smooth conciliation, but in her crisp and businesslike style she would press the sources of conflict to the fringe and focus the attention of all on the common purpose. She was known to have no sectional axe to grind.

It was in that field that I came to know still better than I had before Helen's talent for discerning and nurturing the good in people. I know her to have passionately defended against attack persons who had treated her badly, or whose views on many matters she disliked, but whom she knew to be making a positive contribution to some part of the common cause.

Her friends know that with all the seriousness of her life, Helen had a keen sense of humour, she had a sharp response to the absurd or the ridiculous — a spontaneous, lively chuckle accompanied by that characteristic nasal snort. This response was just as spontaneous and marked when she told a story against herself.

Division of people into angels or devils was not Helen's way; she had the more human approach that each of us, at different times in our lives, or sometimes at one and the same, are part angel — part devil.

She avoided classifying people into unchangeable categories, and for that reason she succeeded in bringing together people who otherwise may have found themselves in conflict.

And so, in grieving at this, our last farewell to Helen, we at the same time celebrate her life. I think I express the thought of us all when I say it is that life, that unwavering line of work done in public duty, that particular person and friend, Helen Palmer, we will always remember.


DICK MAKINSON — SCIENTIFIC WORKER

Dick asked me to say a few things about him today. The only instruction I have is that there must be no religious mumbo-jumbo. That's just what those Greek philosophers said when they started science and, indeed, our whole Western way of thinking over 2,000 years ago.

Dick was one of the few Australian Corresponding Members of the World Federation of Scientific Workers.

The primary aim of that Federation is:

the increase of human welfare through the application and development of science.

That aim is also the key to the scientific career and life of Dick Makinson: the increase of human welfare through the application and development of science; and he really lived up to it. He became an outstanding teacher — not only in his lectures, but also in tutorials, in the lab, and in his availability for helping students with problems whether scientific or not.

His research was generally directed to practical ends. When he started his well-known work on calculators for the blind I had the job of asking him what research he was planning for the coming year, and how much money he would need for it. No, he said, he wasn't doing any 'real' research, just making a few electronic gadgets that might be useful. A little money would help, but save the funds for the young staff members who were starting on their research careers and really needed it.

Later it turned out that he had been buying some items and subsidizing his calculator project out of his own pocket.

Dick got off to a brilliant scientific start, winning the University of Sydney medal for physics and going on to study the physics of metals with A. H. Wilson at Cambridge. His research on the thermal conductivity of metals was published in the Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, and it finds its place in Wilson's classical book The Theory of Metals. A metal is a highly crystalline material, and Dick was just as interested in the opposite sort of material with no regular structure at all — viz. a glass.

Just last year he was thrilled to obtain a long, shiny ribbon of a new and unexpected material — a metallic glass, whose properties he intended to study.

He was lucky to be at Cambridge in a sort of Golden Age. There was a ferment of new ideas; science was again seen as a part of society but now in a dynamic society faced with the threat of fascism. Fascist technology had helped Franco to win the Spanish Civil War and science would clearly be increasingly important both in war and peace. It had political as well as purely intellectual dimensions.

As an unusually sensitive schoolboy, Dick had already developed a strong awareness of social
injustice. His scientific attitude brought him into contact with the radical scientists of Cambridge. He gravitated naturally into Marxism and brought his combination of ideas back with him when he and Rachel came to Sydney, just prior to the war.

Dick's satisfaction when it came to working on calculators for the blind wasn't simply the joy in designing an instrument and getting it to work (which he did extremely well, with the particular help of Ingram Paterson), but the whole social function of the project — choosing and buying the components; working with the blind students as if he was their brother (he had a strong, near religious, faith — allied to his Marxism — in the brotherhood of man, or of humanity); being completely available to the students; and beyond that, on the more tedious administrative side, working with The Royal Blind Society, sitting on committees, giving advice, and quietly, unobtrusively, getting on with the job of helping wherever he had abilities that were needed.

His personal qualities were direct, forthright, and in tune with that austere scientific world-view of his.

As so often with people who have a wide vision and a lot of dedication, it is those who are nearest to them, who love them, who have to pay much of the price. He's even been rough on me, as I'll tell you in a moment or two.

This uncomprising commitment to truth can be just too rational, too harsh, for normal human living.

But it still can require personal courage. I remember him, soon after he came to Macquarie, going out to a big and noisy Viet Nam meeting on the front lawn. When there came a turn at the microphone, he walked up and said "I don't suppose many of you have actually seen a communist before..." and proceeded to explain his position calmly and rationally, holding the whole audience silent.

Let me give you a glimpse of his character — his guts, his forthrightness and his dry humour — by telling you of a few things that have happened within this last week.

There has been a long-standing battle between Dick and me on the question of blackboards.

We both preferred them to the new-fangled alternatives, but Dick believed it imperative that they be cleaned by attendants between lectures, whilst I thought it no great sweat if we had to clean them ourselves. He became very cross with what seemed to him my sloppy attitude.

Last week, when he was being cared for at Neringah Hospital, more gently and beautifully that I would have thought possible, a chance reference was made to blackboards. Dick waved for a pen and paper, and scrawled (in his normal handwriting):

Chalk and blackboards are the writing instruments that come naturally
and then, in brackets —

(the hospital attendant cleans them).

The joke was certainly on me. On the same piece of paper he had already shown his tremendous spirit by suddenly sitting up and writing:

A pity there isn't an organisation to give Wakes to order.

It was an electrifying moment. We all assumed, of course, that this was what he was wanting. "Do you want a Wake?", Rachel asked him. Grabbing the paper he wrote a big, bold NO! Dick never left you in any doubt about his attitude.

On Friday night, last Friday night, WIBS Smith and I were sitting by Dick's bedside and we started talking about negative ions in the atmosphere; how they could be generated and what physiological effects they could have in making you feel brighter. Dick showed great interest and urged us to go on, even though he could only join in intermittently. His mind was crystal clear, he loved the discussion and he had no pain. He really enjoyed it. He even took some tea, a great love of his, and inseparable in his view from any good seminar. No tea and biscuits — not much of a seminar, he used to say.

Dick really was a scientist in the old Greek mould. He sought to interpret the world around him; but he also sought to change it.

With a chap like Dick, you don't easily talk to him of affection, of love, and many of us perhaps have wondered if he realized the deep affection in which he was held. We can be happy that someone had the thought to send him a letter — which he got towards the end of last week, and read twice with pleasure — telling him just how much and how widely he was loved.

He had a little trick, maybe his own invention, related to the importance he attached to tea and biscuits. I'll tell you about it, because it shows his gentleness, his humour and his brotherliness.

It was a large glass jar which he placed on the table in the tea-room. It was full of biscuits and the label, in his scrawly writing, said Magic Pudding.

It would, he said, never be empty. But, as a hint, the label also said

Work a little Magic yourself, sometimes.

Dick Makinson was a man who worked quite a lot of magic for quite a lot of people.

Peter Mason,
discussion

John Sendy's book Comrades Come Rally has created considerable interest in the Labor Movement in Melbourne. In general, it has made a contribution not only to the history of the Communist Party of Australia, but also to enhancing the reputation of the CPA in the minds of many members of the ALP. That, at any rate, has been my experience.

But I would like to comment on some of the matters raised by Eric Aarons in his review in ALR No. 66. In particular, I wish to contribute a point of view on the split which led to the formation of the SPA.

Was this split inevitable? My view, for what it is worth, is that some people in the CPA would not have been able to accept the growing independent and critical attitudes towards the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and would have left the Party. But it seems to me that this is not the main point.

The thing which concerns me (and John Sendy too, I think) was that a split was regarded as desirable by the majority on leading CPA bodies at the time.

Thus Eric Aarons, in my opinion, misses the point when he concedes "excesses". An excess is a departure from a main orientation. In the case of the split with the SPA, it was the orientation towards a split that was wrong.

It was believed that those holding an "opposition" viewpoint constituted a dead weight or worse on the Party, and that the sooner they got out and formed their own outfit the better.

I believe that these attitudes were mistaken for the following main reasons:

1. They took little or no account that people's attitudes can change — perhaps not 180 degrees, but to some extent. After all, nearly all members of the Party holding the majority viewpoint had changed their view on the USSR and pretty rapidly at that. Our Party was relatively late in responding to the 1956 events and many changes came with a rush.

I recall the issue of Tribune in November 1967 when Lloyd Churchward wrote an article critical of Soviet democracy. Most leading members of the Party were at least a little outraged. In fact, Laurie Carmichael — in Moscow at the time — was the joint author along with Pat Clancy of a stiff reply to Churchward. But, to his great credit, Laurie Carmichael changed his view. Was it unreasonable to expect others to do the same, especially after the dust settled a little on 1968?

2. That while some people may not change their view of the USSR very much (if at all), they may still retain a belief in a united party, able to act coherently in Australian conditions. Such people would see how disastrous a split could be in reducing the effectiveness and standing of the Party to which they had devoted a large part of their lives.

There are a number of such people who play a creditable part in the CPA today. There could have been more.

I attended several recent CPA branch meetings at the time of the trials of "dissidents" in the USSR and met a few people in this category. There were some sharp political exchanges on the above issue, but they did not dominate the meetings. All those who had a contrary view to mine were to one extent or another engaged in Party work.

If indeed a split was inevitable in the early 1970s, then the question was: Would there emerge another Party with the numbers and the cadre force with ability and mass connections to be an effective political force to rival and harass the CPA and be an effective funnel for overseas influence? The CPA's desire for a split ensured a positive answer to this question. We became the assistant recruiting agents for the SPA.

But worse was to come after the split with the SPA, that is, the prospect of a split between those with the "good riddance" attitude and those who opposed it. Some of the exponents of "good riddance" seemed quite calm and fatalistic about such a prospect.

3. A split develops a momentum of its own, accentuating attitudes rather than moderating them. Both sides of the split feel the need to justify themselves. The person with some doubts about Soviet policy but with reservations about the CPA tends to become under the conditions of a split a last-ditch defender of the indefensible aspects of the USSR.

As John Halfpenny has pointed out, many members of the SPA privately express criticisms of the USSR but take a different attitude in public.

In a different way, the CPA has not succeeded yet in coming to terms with the Soviet reality or in developing the ongoing debate necessary for such a process.

Both these phenomena are to be explained largely by the split and the bad atmosphere.

Apart from that, the sag in morale following a split (which we all underestimated, in my opinion) caused many people on both sides to drop out of political life.

In any case, I believe John Sendy's book and Eric Aaron's review will stimulate further consideration of this period of CPA history.

D. Davies,
(NEWPORT, VIC.)
Most writing on energy policy can, unfortunately, be allocated to one of two categories. On the one hand are the smug “leave it to us, the experts” pronouncements of spokesmen (never women) of the oil, coal, gas and electricity industries and associates in the public service and academia. We all know why this stuff is no good.

Much of the remaining writing, while sharply critical of these establishment views, falls into the trap of what might be termed energy fundamentalism. The arrangements society makes about energy are important, because energy is such an important determinant of the quality of individual life and of the way we relate to each other as individuals. But this does not make energy important, in political terms, in itself.

The basic political issues are how to build a new society in which everyone is entitled to a just share of the material wealth of the society and can participate fully and equally in making decisions about their society. Energy fundamentalism makes the mistake of forgetting that these are the basic issues, and instead, in advocating all sorts of political, social and economic changes, gives the reduction of energy use as the sole or principal reason.

Unfortunately, Seeds for change is permeated by energy fundamentalist thinking, which detracts and distracts from the really important things it has to say. Although the authors do not allow themselves to acknowledge it, the book is really about how to transform the quality of life in Australia’s major cities, focussing on Melbourne as a specific example. In their words, it is about how to create “convivial community”. They advocate a radical reorganisation of the spatial distribution of activities in the metropolitan area, focussing on Melbourne as a hierarchy of neighbourhood, local and district nodes, linked by a fast, frequent and comprehensive public transport system.

I found their account an exciting blueprint for liveable cities. But I was not a little surprised to find that the only reference to the hideous toll of death or injury which our present car based transport system exacts was in the context of the energy used by ambulance, hospital and legal services. Death and injury on the roads are alone reason enough to change the system. That they result in extra energy consumption is, to my mind, irrelevant. This is an example of what I mean by energy fundamentalism.

To be fair to the authors, they do explain why they place such great emphasis on energy use and how to reduce it. In essence, their argument is that Victoria, and specifically Victoria, is going to run out of all fossil fuels within, at most, a few decades. In other words, they foresee an energy crisis that is far more severe and far more imminent than is generally thought.

Let me explain. For oil, the argument is fairly obvious. Everyone agrees that the Bass Strait reserves are limited, that production has now reached a plateau level, and that domestic supplies (nearly all from Bass Strait) will form a decreasing proportion of total consumption in years to come unless growth in oil consumption ceases. All the natural gas used in Victoria comes from Bass Strait, which supplies no other market. If growth in consumption continues at the rates projected by such authorities as the Gas and Fuel Corporation, then supply problems may be expected before 1980. However, a look at the basis of those projections shows that they assume a continuance of rates of growth that have been experienced in the years since 1970, a period during which gas has become established in Victoria at the expense of oil, and has, moreover, been ridiculously cheap — so cheap that even the most modest conservation expenditure by consumers has been uneconomic.

The high growth rates also depend on the wasteful use of gas to generate electricity in the Newport and Jeeralang power stations. If, by contrast, gas consumption grows at more moderate rates, say 1 or 2% per annum, then the shortfall would not appear for at least 30 years.

The argument with respect to brown coal is somewhat similar. They say that at consumption growth rates of zero or 1% per annum, the reserves in the Latrobe Valley will last a very long time, certainly more than a century. But if one takes the very high growth projections (hopes?) for electricity consumption put forward by the SECV, and adds to it the extravagant demands for brown coal that vast liquefaction (to replace imported oil) and gasification (to replace exhausted Bass Strait gas) projects would impose, then the lifetime of Victorian brown coal is indeed drastically reduced. Now it is true that such proposals have been made by so-called energy planners in the Victorian bureaucracy. But the existence of the proposals does not prove that Victoria faces an imminent fuel crisis on all fronts. Rather it proves how idiotic official energy plans are.

In my opinion, sensible energy planning for
Victoria would involve, with respect to natural gas, scrapping Newport and Jeeralang, and raising the price to industrial consumers so that it was just less than the price of competing petroleum fuels on an equivalent energy basis. For brown coal, any plans for conversion to liquid or gaseous fuels should be thrown in the waste paper basket. Having done that, crisis problems on the energy front would recede, and one could set about planning for progressively greater energy conservation and the gradual transfer to a renewable energy economy. Such energy policies would be one item on a whole slate of changes that would accompany the transformation to a socialist society. Changes in urban structure and transport systems of the type described in this book would, in all probability, be another item on the agenda. But one would want such changes in their own right, not because they reduced energy consumption, though that would be an additional benefit.

I may appear to have been labouring the arguments. If so, it is because I think the vision contained in Seeds for change is powerful and important and I fear that the energy fundamentalist context in which it is placed will discourage many readers. Two other aspects make this a difficult book to read. One is its length, much of which, unfortunately is the result of repetition and excessive detail. Reduced to about two thirds, the book would have lost none of its message and gained greatly in impact and readability.

Another characteristic, which I found somewhat irritating, was its parochialism. It is an excellent idea to take a particular city, Melbourne, as the basis for elaborating a blueprint. But to analyse the energy supply and demand pattern purely in terms of "Victoria's energy prospects" is another matter. One of the greatest obstacles to achieving sensible energy policies is the federal constitution which gives almost all powers over energy to the States. It is State powers which are responsible for the present absurdly low price of gas in Victoria, which constitutes perhaps the greatest single energy policy anomaly in Australia today. And it is state powers which enable Court and Bjelke-Petersen to flog off Australian resources at the lowest possible prices. In discussing the greater use of liquid petroleum gas, the authors appear to believe that it is the Victorian government which allows Esso-BHP to sell most of what they produce to Japan, whereas, of course, the export control power is one of the very few useful levers that the Australian government has on energy policy.

My complaints may seem carping, but I think such parochialism is poor political tactics. Speaking of Bass Strait oil, the authors concede that "it is only reasonable that Victoria should export oil to other States". But it is not impossible to envisage a reactionary, Canberra-hating State government in years to come having different views.

What else does the book contain? Apart from the chapters on urban form and transport which, as I have already indicated, are excellent, there are two very good chapters on energy efficient buildings and urban design. The chapter on urban water supply, drainage and sewerage is also good if you can ignore the energy context into which, in keeping with the book's whole approach, it is illogically forced. The final chapter, entitled "The seeds are there" describes a number of projects in Melbourne where people are "creating community". It shows the task of transforming our cities can and should start from the bottom. This is the closest the book gets to questions of political strategy. I am sure that the authors would be the first to acknowledge that the task of transformation must be carried out at all levels and that Esso-BHP and the SECV cannot, unfortunately, be simply by-passed and left to wither away.

Seeds for Change should not be criticised for avoiding these political problems. The authors see the book as "a first step towards widespread discussion of the technical, social, economic and political issues related to energy". As a contribution to the energy debate its good points are marred by some factual errors and misleading arguments. But as a contribution towards the task of transforming our cities and hence the lives of the majority of Australians it is a splendid start.


In his major study Late Capitalism, Ernest Mandel undertook the task begun by Marx in the Grundrisse and Capital of providing an integrated historical and theoretical analysis of the development of the capitalist mode of production. This work with its rigorous usage of marxian economic categories (which avoided both monocausal reductionist explanations and the abstract utilisation of Marx's reproduction schemas) constituted the first systematic marxist account of what may be termed the three fundamental conjunctures of 20th century capitalism: (1) the transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism (1890-1935); (2) the consolidation of monopoly capitalism (1936-1965); (3) the coming crisis of monopoly capitalism (1966-...).

With the publication of The Second Slump Mandel has attempted to deepen the analysis developed in his earlier work through a detailed account of the circumstances precipitating the
1974-75 recession and the subsequent period of limited and non-cumulative recovery. In doing this Mandel incorporates two levels of analysis into his work. On the one hand, the origins of the present crisis are traced to the forces responsible for eroding the underlying preconditions that generated the long wave of expansion during the 1948-1968 period. On the other hand, Mandel situates the historically specific conditions which transformed a cyclical crisis of overproduction into a structural crisis of generalised recession which spread throughout the international capitalist system.

Mandel argues that the end of the long wave of post-war expansion is a direct consequence of two inter-related tendencies. First, the “technological profits” (“surplus profits originating from advances in productivity based on technical improvements, discoveries and patents”) which were made possible by the third technological revolution (semi-automation, cybernetics, nuclear power) have begun to decline or, in certain instances, disappeared altogether. This generalised erosion of productivity gains (see table, column 3) has reversed the trend towards a cheapening of the elements of fixed constant capital. With ever greater levels of investment required to raise productivity a given amount, the organic composition of capital has tended to rise more rapidly initiating a tendency towards the formation of long-term average profit rates below the levels achieved in the 1950s and ’60s.

The second tendency that Mandel sees as contributing to the end of the long wave of expansion has been the strengthening and increasing militancy of the working class (see column 6) which has inhibited the successful implementation of various ruling class strategies for increasing the rate of surplus value in order to offset the fall in the rate of profit. Mandel attributes this primarily to the high levels of employment in the post-war period which diminished the disciplining effects of the industrial reserve army. He argues that the resurgence of mass unemployment (see column 1) has not yet checked the downward pressure exerted on the growth of relative surplus value (as partially reflected in increasing unit labor costs and diminishing productivity (see columns 3 and 4).

But for Mandel it is the “combination of the classical overproduction crisis with the reversal of the long wave” (p. 181) which accounts for the contradictions inherent within capitalism today. The pros and cons of the analysis offered in The Second Slump resides in his attempt to show how this “combination” has brought about the synchronisation of the international industrial cycle, the intensification of imperialist rivalry, the inflationary nature of the limited recovery, the emergence of new trends in the merging of banking and industrial capital, and the weakening of the processes affecting the restructuring of capital.

In very general terms, the main thrust of Mandel’s argument may be summarised in the following manner. The “fundamental cause of the recession” was the fall in the average rate of profit, accompanied by a cyclical crisis of overproduction which became generalised after being “detonated” by the slump in the auto and construction industries. The normal tendency for profitability to decline during the downswing of the business cycle was compounded by several additional pressures. First, the previously mentioned reversing of the tendency towards cheapening the elements of fixed constant capital. Secondly, an additional profit squeeze brought on by working class militancy. And thirdly, the movement of the terms of trade in favor of the primary producers (1972-74) which slowly then rapidly (oil price increases) brought about a rise in the costs of the circulating portion of constant capital.

With extensive empirical data showing that the falling rate of profit preceded the oil price increases, Mandel argues that the latter, while not causing or detonating the recession (owing to the manner in which the O.P.E.C. surplus was recirculated through investments and increased imports rather than being hoarded) accentuated its impact by augmenting costs and liquidity thus “advancing the moment at which inflation began to have negative effects”.

With mounting inflationary pressures (see column 2), a product of the rapid expansion of private and public debt, and the emergence of a Keynesian induced credit cycle “partially independent of the industrial cycle” to offset the tendency of overproduction, the capitalist system absorbed a further crisis tendency with the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. With the decline of the dollar and uncontrolled exchange rate fluctuations aimed at maintaining international competitiveness, and the diminishing effects of the third technological revolution placing additional pressure on the ability of the system to maintain the levels of productive capacity built up during the long boom, national governments began to simultaneously pursue anti-inflationary measures.

The combined effects of these developments accelerated the movement towards the synchronisation of the international industrial cycle, culminating in the generalised recession of the world system (the “so called socialist countries” excepted (pp. 147-56)). Where once the uneven periodisation of business cycles in different nation states facilitated various means for an export led recovery by countries in the midst of recession, the generalised and simultaneous downturn of the cycle has restricted this possibility and reinforced three basic
contradictions inhibiting the recovery. First, the possibilities of a generalised recovery have been offset by increasing protectionism and the relative decline of US hegemony in the face of an insurgent and increasingly indebted third world, and the challenge to American predominance in the field of capital and commodity exports by Europe and Japan. Secondly, the massive credit injections used to induce the recovery, have not sufficiently augmented the level of investment or the reabsorption of surplus capacity (see columns 7 and 8). To bring about a capital spending boom that is more than mere replacement demand will require a major restructuring of capital and the international division of labor. This process of rationalisation is underway today, and constitutes the third contradiction, the intensification of the class struggle with the determination of the rate of surplus value at stake.

The Second Slump is certainly more comprehensive than this brief overview suggests, but it also suffers from several major limitations. A general criticism of Mandel’s work (besides his tendency to subsume the class struggle within “the unfolding laws of motion of capital”) has been his failure to specify whether the falling rate of profit is the parent or offspring of an overproduction crisis and whether and how these elements combine differently during various periods of economic crisis. While not disputing the importance of this critique, it generally neglects Mandel’s method of focussing on different combinations of “long waves of capitalist development” with the “normal” yet historically specific 7-10 year cycle, thus subjecting the relationship between the falling rate of profit and overproduction to a dual determination. And it is this dual determination which becomes decisive in determining the extent to which the crisis provides the preconditions for a sustained recovery.

In the present context of a hesitant recovery, amidst high levels of inflation and unemployment, marked by a sharp increase in profitability without a sustained recovery in capital investment or capacity utilisation (and with the next recession in the US just around the corner), this approach of Mandel’s generates a fundamentally important hypothesis:

Precisely because the anti-crisis practices of governments once again succeeded in limiting the duration and depth of the recession, although less so than in the past; and precisely because the bourgeois state did refloat many banks, finance companies and major trusts that found themselves on the brink of bankruptcy, the recession did not play the traditional objective role of capitalist crises .... A profound process of ‘pruning’ the system, with a sharp new rise in the rate of profit through the devalorisation and massive destruction of capital simply did not take place.

That is why the recession of 1974-75 was not followed by a new boom. (pp. 78-82.)

Unfortunately, a major weakness of The Second Slump is its failure to deal with this phenomenon in detail. To do so would involve showing how the “Combination of the overproduction crisis with the reversal of the long wave” advanced the moment at which an increase in the proportion of small and medium sized firms going bankrupt in the crisis is no longer sufficient for the process of devalorisation and destruction of capital values given the increasing internationalisation and concentration of capital. That in order for the ‘pruning’ process to fulfil its function it becomes increasingly necessary (but politically problematical) for larger firms to go to the wall, or for branches of industry to experience a politically induced rationalisation of productive capacity.

The corollary of the crisis in the processes affecting the restructuring of capital is the crisis or coming crisis of the mechanisms designed to restructure the mobilisation capacity of labor. With increasing levels of investment required to augment the diminishing effects of the third technological revolution, and with the almost universal ruling class strategy of “profits first, investment later”, the state has increasingly attempted to implement a three-fold policy program for raising the rate of surplus value. This involves: (1) a transfer of income from wages to profits through intervention in the industrial relations system; (2) with the massive increase in state expenditures (particularly in the 1965-75 period [see column 5]) and despite increasing contradictions between the state’s accumulation and legitimisation functions, an acceleration of the tendency to transfer expenditure benefits to capital and revenue burdens to labor; (3) the possibility of achieving the first two goals has required the maintenance and further refinement of tripartite (capital-labor-state) formats of representation and organisational technologies which increasingly have resulted in the formation of a newly emergent network of interlocking party, state, and industrial relations apparatuses.

The hesitancy of the present recovery and the instability of this institutional framework as evidence by the collapse of incomes policies and the refusal of the working class to preside over its own demobilisation, has necessitated the reformulation of workable strategies for engaging in class struggle and frameworks of analysis for understanding its historical dimensions. In regard to these problems and developments The Second Slump has very little to say. While constituting an important contribution to our understanding of capitalism in the 1970s, the task of analysing the changing nature of class struggle after the long boom has yet to be undertaken.

— Nixon Apple.
<table>
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<th>Current Account Balance</th>
<th>Budget Balance</th>
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Note: The table shows the unemployment rate, inflation rate, current account balance, and budget balance for the years 1970 to 1975.
Nosferatu, showing at the Village Twin, Double Bay (Sydney).

Dracula is one of those names which give rise to thoughts of yawning graves, ruined castles, creaking coffins, middle-European accents and the terrified shrieks of your schoolfriends in the back row of the pictures. Horror movies seemingly operate on the principle that every now and again we find entertainment in being scared out of our wits, and are prepared to pay for the privilege.

The horror genre relies very heavily on classic frighteners like wolf men, vampires and Frankenstein monsters who prey on a vulnerable and hapless community and who are dispatched by brave and forthright defenders of law and order. Secure in the knowledge that anti-social deviants have been routed, we can presumably sleep peacefully in our beds, an activity much less likely if we pondered the real anti-social forces in our midst.

At any rate, it is one of the ironies of the genre that the originals of these dread figures were seen by their creators not as preying monsters but as victims of the complacency, intolerance and stupidity of bourgeois society. Arguably, both Frankenstein and Dracula, through circumstances not of their choosing, find themselves isolated, loveless and misunderstood. Their unavailing quest for understanding and solace leads them to revenge themselves on the “normal” society which has selfishly and heartlessly rejected them.

Murnau’s expressionist classic, Nosferatu (The Undead), also uses the vampire legend critically, an approach which is followed by contemporary German director, Werner Herzog in his version currently on release.

In Murnau’s Nosferatu, a 19th century Bremen estate agent (Jonathan Harker) leaves his lovely wife and happy domestic idyll to cross the wild Carpathian mountains. His task: to negotiate a house sale with the strange, remote and dreaded Count Dracula. When the Count catches sight of a locket cameo of Jonathan’s wife, he imprisons Harker and flees by coach and boat (accompanied by the coffins of unconsecrated soil which vampires need for daytime sleeping) across the Baltic to Bremen. Harker makes his escape and hurries toward his heart and home.

The Count arrives first, and makes good his presence in his city mansion while the rats who travelled in the coffins spread the plague in the town. In the face of this disaster, the city officials are competitive, carping and ineffectual, and the populace appears fearful but directionless. Only the doctor, who has knowledge of vampires, and the innocent, pure-of-heart Lucy — who is willing to sacrifice herself in order to entrap the vampire in the fatal rays of daylight — are capable of defeating the undead menace. Harker arrives home to find the city saved, the vampire and the plague conquered through the unity of knowledge and purity.

Some analysts have understood Murnau’s 1922 film as an extended argument for vigilance against the post-war emergence of a “strong man” like Hitler and the plague of national socialism. Others have seen in it the claim by the German “mandarin” class (of which Murnau was a part), composed of the propertyless educated, the professionals — represented in Nosferatu by the doctor — for primacy. In this interpretation only the mandarins can save Weimar Germany beset by the twin evils of a bumbling, squabbling, and outmoded aristocracy (the ineffectual Bremen officials) and the passive, heartless masses (the sheep-like Bremen populace). Whichever view you choose, Murnau’s film is seen as highly political.

It is against this background that we consider Herzog’s Nosferatu. Herzog is a prolific member of the group of politically conscious West German filmmakers who came to prominence in the late ’60s and ’70s. Although Herzog resists strongly the implication that his Nosferatu is a “re-make”, it borrows scenes, shots and even framing from Murnau’s film. The contemporary Nosferatu is, of course, in color, but the dialogue, although spoken, is almost as sparse and stilted as in the earlier, silent version. Much of the film’s tension and interest arises from our constant comparison between present and previous versions, and in deciphering the differences between Murnau’s and Herzog’s political commentary.

Herzog’s version is, if anything, bleaker. In this Nosferatu, in contrast to Murnau’s, Harker succumbs to the Count’s need for blood, and arrives home, ill and an amnesiac, to a Weimar (an obvious political comment here) beseiged by the plague. The Count, as in the Murnau film, has arrived with coffins and rats and the city fathers once more appear both foolish and helpless. Meanwhile, Lucy lovingly tends her distressed husband. When approached by Count Dracula, who tells her of his loveless life, she rejects the vampire. However, the situation in the plague-ridden town worsens — the profligate and promiscuous engage in joyless, despairing revels — and Lucy resolves to sacrifice herself in order to destroy the vampire. She proffers her neck to the Count, and in a much more overtly erotic scene than in the Murnau film, she keeps him at her bedside until the dawn’s rays kill him.

At this point the doctor rushes in, discovers the fatally wounded Count and, over Harker’s protests, drives a stake into the vampire’s heart. Harker then demands that the doctor be arrested for the murder of the Count, and in a Kafka-esque scene, a blustering, but somehow authoritative

— Continued on page 39.
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