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The Fall of the House of Fairfax

Some on the left will be bemused or even entertained by the spectacle of the Fall of the House of Fairfax, with the closure and sale of its newspapers, journalists' strikes and internecine rivalry.

Yet paradoxically, the end of the publishing company which, for most of its 140 years, has been stuffy and deeply reactionary will create a far worse situation in Australia's media. It will be more concentrated, less diverse and more prone to direct intervention in the political and business interests of its proprietors.

But all this will take time to work itself through. More immediately, an almost unprecedented strike by journalists on the Sydney Morning Herald has sharply spotlighted an issue usually muffled within media circles, let alone in public debate: editorial independence. The strike resulted in the sacking of general manager, editorial, Martin Dougherty, and the elevation of former Herald editor in chief, Chris Anderson, to the board; but most of all it resulted in journalists taking a rare stand on an issue of principle and professionalism.

What was this principle? Essentially, editorial independence meant that an editor and journalists produced a newspaper largely free from pressures from proprietors and their mouthpieces. The phrase first arose in this context when it seemed that the Financial Review, Times on Sunday and the Macquarie Radio network would be sold to Holmes a'Court. Journalists feared that a newspaper largely devoted to business was uniquely vulnerable to pressure if it was owned by a businessman whose interests ranged far beyond the media industry.

The possibilities and also the limits of editorial independence were shown most sharply during the editorship of the National Times by Brian Toohey. With a board that included a clutch of knights of the realm, almost certainly all of whom were supporters of the Liberal Party, Toohey's paper produced a stream of disclosures on corruption in politics and business and on intelligence and defence secrets which discomfited and, at times, enraged Australia's establishment.

Toohey's disclosures also upset the Labor side of politics, and one of the hidden worries about the privatisation bid by Warwick Fairfax was that he, his mother, Lady Fairfax, and their advisers Martin Dougherty and Laurie Connell had close links with rightwing Labor.

A corporation which gives its editors and journalists a degree of editorial independence is a little hard for dogmatists on the left to swallow, too. It means that if there is bias, sexism, invasion of privacy or plain errors of fact, this stems not from "journalists being told what to write" by interfering proprietors. Rather, it arises largely from the journalists themselves, their own professional culture and the prejudices and values of the wider society.

But in any media organisation, whether independent or not, the positive side of this professional culture is the only obstruction to an interfering proprietor or a biased editor. Some of this culture has been
in institutionalised in the AJA Code of Ethics: the rest of it is largely undefined, contradictory and largely dependent on the whim of an editor.

The Herald journalists’ strike was important, then, because it started to define (or defend) some of this territory. But it also went further, arguing that the owner's right to appoint an editor should be tempered by the sharing of that responsibility with journalists.

This tension between journalists and owners lies at the root of the privatisation bid by Warwick Fairfax. The more modern (and profitable) Fairfax group which emerged in the early 1980s depended crucially on a 1977 boardroom coup in which the old Sir Warwick was deposed as chairman and replaced by his son James, who controlled the company until takeover/privatisation by the young Warwick.

It was under James that many of the independent and less hidebound practices of “Fairfax journalism” developed. But Sir Warwick’s wife, Lady Mary Fairfax, never forgave the indignity of her husband’s overthrow, and she was among those who propelled the twenty-seven year old Warwick, fresh from Harvard, to make the disastrous bid. Aimed at securing the auction block, and led to the takeover/privatisation by the young Warwick.

If the larger tragedy will be that occurs, commentators will try to roll back the small gains of independent and investigative journalism.

David McKnight

**Taxing Questions in NZ**

February 6 was Waitangi Day in New Zealand/Aotearoa. This might appear to be a day for genuine celebration, since it commemorates a treaty signed by British colonisers and representatives of the original inhabitants. But it is also a day which marked the end of the Waitangi Tribunal and which has never been respected anyway.

The Lange Labor government has moved to strengthen Maori rights under the Waitangi Tribunal by enabling land grievances and claims to be heard by a sympathetic, powerful court. Paradoxically, however, it has been Maoris who have suffered more than most from the free market, deregulatory policies of the government, dubbed “Rogernomics” after Finance Minister Roger Douglas.

This contradiction stems from the government’s economic analysis to the effect that the only answer to the country’s grave indebtedness is tough restrictions on wages and the selling of public assets, combined with tax cuts and incentives for investors, financiers and business. Sound familiar?

Not surprisingly, it has been working people, especially women, Maoris and small farmers, who have carried the weight of “restructuring”. Once famed as the “social laboratory of the world”, NZ has become a laboratory of a different kind, a paradise for the yuppie, but a hard, uncertain environment for most people.

This basic contradiction of a Labour government undoing Thatcher in the name of unavoidable economic imperatives underpins the extraordinary goings on across the Tasman over the past six weeks. Until now, the Labor caucus, which is not formally factionalised, has preserved an image of unity.

At the end of January, with Douglas in Europe touting his successes, Lange announced that the Finance Minister's plan of a flat rate income tax of 23 cents in the dollar would not go ahead, arguing that the plan might undermine measures being formulated by a royal commission into social policy.

On Douglas' hasty return, the two former close allies gave a bizarre display of public wrangling.

The hope that Lange had triumphed over Douglas and his “dry” cronies was short-lived. A fortnight later, the government slashed company tax rates by 20 cents to 28 cents in the dollar, and the top income tax rate from 48 cents to 33 cents (someone on $30,000 will now pay $100 less a week in tax). Finally, Lange's announcement that a capital gains tax would be introduced was flatly repudiated by Douglas.

While at first glance the battle seems to be between left and right within the Labour caucus, it is more of a personal power struggle than that. Lange has become increasingly isolated in caucus because of his authoritarian, arrogant personal style. A senior minister has admitted privately that there is a real likelihood of a mover to dump him as prime minister. Lange's apparent appeal to the angry rank and file of the party, who are dispirited by the government’s abandonment of social democratic objectives, is as much to do with a personal struggle with Douglas as with a real desire to change direction.

From an Australian perspective, the battle over “Rogernomics” is extremely important. Douglas' success in pushing through his policies, best described as “the free fox in the free henhouse”, has been welcomed by those sectors in Australia which are also campaigning for lower company income tax rates and a switch to indirect taxation along the lines of the 10% goods and services tax now in operation in NZ.

A leading Sydney tax accountant has predicted that Keating’s May mini-budget will
unveil such a VAT here, despite its defeat at the 1985 tax summit. Leaders of the Confederation of Australian Industry and the Business Council of Australia have called for company tax to be reduced from 49 cents to 39 cents or lower, and Hawke has declared his support for some reduction.

The threat that Australian industry will relocate in NZ is being used to whip up pressure on Hawke and Keating. *The Australian* applauded the Lange government's tax cuts as "leadership rarely shown in politics", and insisted that "NZ has set the pace and Australia will have to follow".

What these viewpoints don't acknowledge is not only the social costs of "Rogernomics", but also that it is simply not working.

In a country with fewer people than Victoria, there are now 100,000 unemployed, up from 66,000 just two years ago; overseas indebtedness is still three times the per capita level of Australia. The insistence that state instrumentalities should pay their way has resulted in, among other things, 430 post offices being listed for closure in small communities.

The fragility of the hot-house financial atmosphere of Wellington and Auckland was demonstrated when the NZ stock exchange tumbled more sharply than any other last October. Very high interest rates which have lured speculative capital from overseas have propped up the exchange rate, causing crisis for rural exporters (there are few manufacturers left to worry about their exports).

And how are the tax cuts to be paid for? Douglas has made it plain that the logical next step is to deregulate the labour market and further introduce "user pays" practices into state housing, education and health. This, it seems, is the inescapable conclusion to the brave new world of "Rogernomics".

**Peter McPhee**

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**Psychokillers?**

There is a growing trend to see violent, destructive acts as the work of a psychically disturbed person. This is often blown up by the media. The Russell Street bombing in Melbourne in 1986 is an example.

A bomb exploded after being placed in a car outside a police station, injuring twenty-two people. On the basis of no evidence at all about who the culprits were, the Chief Commissioner suggested that the bombing could have been the work of a psychopath. There was no forewarning that a bomb might be detonated. Even self-respecting terrorist groups overseas usually provide that concession. This wasn't done, which leads us to assume that this is more likely the work, therefore, of a psychopath. Given that this was a mere conjecture on the part of the Police Commissioner, it is instructive to see how the media handled it.

*The Age* did nothing. In fact, it highlighted an alternative theory: "Local gang is prime suspect." *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported the Commissioner's comments but suggested an open mind: "Car Bomb: Who Did It — And Why?" *The Geelong Advertiser* chose to highlight the Commissioner's view: "Police Hunt 'Mad' Bomber" and presented a slightly strengthened version: "Police believed it was probably the work of a psychopath." (my emphasis). *The Sydney Daily Telegraph* followed this trend with an even more definite banner headline: "Psychopath Car Bomber" and the *Border Morning Mail* summed up the situation in one huge word "Psycho".

In claiming that the criminal is a psychopath, one invalidates the criminal act. It doesn't emanate from a rational mind. There is a sense in which it was not even intended. This perspective on the action is a way of denying rational motivation. Curiously, a year after the Russell Street bombing it was discovered that the bomb was placed there by five men who had a grudge against the police for putting one of their mothers in a mental asylum — a seemingly rational protest.

While, on the one hand, there are those who want to deny the rationality of any violent, destructive act, there are others, perhaps perpetrators of such acts, who attempt to use irrationality as an excuse. Psychiatric disturbance is sometimes used by accused killers to support a plea of "not guilty by reason of mental illness" (previously called the insanity plea), or to try to get a murder sentence reduced to manslaughter, on the basis of diminished responsibility. If the first plea is successful, then the person is normally detained in strict custody until "the Governor's pleasure is known". In the latter case the jail term may be reduced from life. (The shortest sentence imposed thus far in NSW is twelve years' imprisonment.)

The term "psychopath" although widely used in the media when psychiatric disturbance is implied, has fallen into disuse in psychiatry. The term "anti-social personality disorder" has replaced it. This is defined in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-111) as follows: "The essential feature is a Personality Disorder in which there is a history of continuous and chronic anti-social behaviour in which the rights of others are violated, persistence into adult life of a pattern of anti-social behaviour that began before the age of 15, and failure to sustain good job performance over a period of several years."

If it were the case that a killer suffered from an anti-social personality disorder, would that be grounds for arguing diminished responsibility? It is hard to see why, as this disorder is defined behaviourally. It is because the person behaves in a deviant manner,
violating social norms that he or she is said to be suffering from an antisocial personality disorder; but it is not behaviour that is thought to diminish responsibility but rather some mental incapacity. Killing someone could perhaps indicate an anti-social personality disorder but it would then be circular to claim that the disorder to some extent excused the killing.

Perhaps it could be argued that the criminal whom we want to excuse on psychiatric grounds not only fits into one of these psychiatric categories where psychiatry and criminality merge, but that he or she also suffers from psychiatric disturbance and it is this that excuses the crime. Taking a brief look at some recent murder trials, it appears that a wide range of psychiatric grounds may be used. Jeffrey Upfold, a former medical student, was accused of murdering his girlfriend on a Wollongong beach in 1980, during a fight. At the court hearing, the psychiatric experts were divided as to whether he was suffering from a severe neurotic personality disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety and personality decomposition or a vulnerable personality. The jury, presumably convinced that he was suffering from something, reduced the conviction from murder to manslaughter.

When Stuart Lowe was on trial for murdering his girlfriend who was about to leave him, in 1986, he put in a plea of guilty to murder, but the judge accepted the evidence of a psychologist that Lowe strangled his girlfriend “in a dissociated state of consciousness produced by the prior weeks of psychological torment and ambiguity, the dissociation being facilitated by the effects of alcohol wearing off”, and reduced his sentence from life to twelve years’ non-parole on a prison farm.

More recently, Michael Dumas was sentenced to life imprisonment with a non-parole period of eighteen years after murdering his girlfriend.
with a crossbow. The judge said that the trial had a sense of unreality about it because Dumas repeatedly refused to allow evidence of his insanity even though that evidence was overwhelming. Apparently he had been dropped as a baby and suffered brain damage to which doctors attributed his mental illness.

It is apparent that psychiatric experts use a range of descriptions in criminal cases, but the question as to why the descriptions constitute relevant information is rarely, if ever, faced.

This leads us to the notion of “mental illness” and how mental illness acts to impair responsibility. The law does not help us at all there. Neither the Crimes Act nor the Mental Health Act defines mental illness. The psychiatric diagnostic scheme now in use is not enlightening either, as it shies away from using the term “mental illness” — presumably as a result of the deep conceptual problems with this notion. It uses a notion of mental disorder, but this is is broad as to include, for example, problems with reading and arithmetic, with giving up smoking, and mild mood swings — hardly excusing conditions for killing. Perhaps, then, it is certain sorts of mental disorder that are relevant, but which they are and why they are relevant is an open question at the moment.

As I pointed out above, the psychiatric categories that incorporate criminality are behaviourally defined and hence cannot provide a ground for reducing culpability. You can’t excuse some behaviour on the basis of other behaviour. And why would it be relevant to point out that an accused person is suffering from a neurotic disorder or even schizophrenia? An easy answer might be to say that their judgment is impaired, but even granting that is so, does that distinguish such people from other killers? It is fairly safe to assume that most of us do not condone killing, so there is a sense in which anyone who kills has impaired judgment. If it was not mental disorder that impaired their judgment then perhaps it was an unhappy childhood, a life of discrimination, or poverty or something else. Consider, for example, this report from the Sydney Morning Herald relating to John Travers, one of the convicted murderers of Anita Cobby:

The story of the Travers family and their eldest son, John, is a suburban nightmare. It is a depressing tale of a broken family living mostly on social security. Of an obese mother who was often unable to control her seven children. Of a father, a drinking man, who left his wife and children.

(Travers’) uncle introduced him to marijuana when he was ten and, later, to heroin.

Any child from such a family is likely to have their judgment impaired to some degree. People don’t, by an act of will, impair their judgment but rather become molded into certain sorts of human beings by their social context. If you dig deep enough with any killer you will find why their judgment is impaired, so this line of reasoning does not lead us into a rationale for the separate treatment of some killers over others.

Is it something else about mental disorders which gives them an excusing quality? Perhaps it could be argued that with certain disorders one loses control; it is as if some other agency is working through you; and hence you are excused. This isn’t satisfactory. It is you who performed the act even though you may not have thought so. You were mistaken, i.e. suffered from impaired judgment. Hence this “lack of control” approach collapses into a variant of impaired judgment.

Nor does there seem to be anything else that could account for the excusing quality of a mental disorder. This conclusion does not rest very easily with the apparently widespread intuition that psychiatric conditions should be allowed to reduce culpability. This suggests that we either need to rethink this intuition or do a lot more hard thinking about diminished responsibility.

Denise Russell

Party Games

Sydney supporters of the “charter” for a new left party aimed to become a “third force” in Australian politics received something of a surprise in the mail in February: two letters posted on successive days inviting participants to two separate charter groups.

The first, containing the signatures of three-quarters of the charter’s Sydney co-ordinating committee, stated that those individuals felt unable to continue working in the project alongside the ex-Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The second, signed by a member of the SWP’s leadership, stated that the signatories to the earlier letter had “abrogated their responsibilities” to the group by failing to call a full Sydney meeting, and proceeded to announce one of its own. Not so coincidentally, the latter meeting was scheduled for Parramatta, in Sydney’s outer-west, where the SWP’s side of the process appears to have its only outside base of support. (The success or otherwise of this meeting has gone unreported in the SWP’s weekly Direct Action in the weeks since.)

The origins of the Sydney split lay in a national conference of the project’s supporters, held in Melbourne last November. The conference, which had been intended to lay the foundations for the formation of a party in 1988, instead turned into a disaster area. SWP delegates, voting as a bloc, denied rival motions the two-thirds majority required for ratification, with the result that very little other than a general statement of aims was actually produced. The conference cemented the growing hostility between many of the “non-aligned” delegates (those not in existing parties) and the SWP, with the third element in the project, members of the Communist Party (CPA),
Following the conference, the non-SWP delegates from Sydney met to discuss the situation, and responded with a plan for separate processes in the Sydney area—thus avoiding the spectres of “witch hunts” and expulsions, so beloved of the political culture of parts of the left. Hence the rival letters, and the beginnings of a rather confusing episode for many not so well versed in the intricacies of the Australian left. Hence the rival letters, and the beginnings of a rather confusing episode for many not so well versed in the intricacies of the Australian left.

So far the split has been largely confined to Sydney, where the bulk of the SWP's membership is concentrated. A national telephone hook-up of the various centres in March suggested, though, that similar conclusions have been drawn elsewhere. And since Sydney has so far been the hub of the project, the indirect effects of the split there are sure to spread.

One effect may be to bring philosophical differences over methods of work, hitherto submerged under a rather artificial bonhomie, to the light of day. Another may be a rethinking of the direction of the SWP, whose major allies now are on the ultra-left and among the hard-line minority of the CPA—neither of whom are favourably disposed to the current new party project.

Finally, the tendency of the new party project to become "stuck" on political fundamentals may be exchanged for a more outward-looking approach. One excursus in this direction was charter supporter Jack Mundey's campaign for the state upper house in the recent NSW elections—although this was buried under the right-wing landslide in that poll.

The NSW elections may prove ominous for the project in other respects, too. Given that its viability may depend on the relatively calm political waters of Labor governments, the unmistakable signs from the NSW poll suggest that the projected party nationally may have, at best, only another two years in which to strike its roots.

David Burchell

Raymond Williams
1921-1988

The pre-eminent British socialist intellectual Raymond Williams, who died in February, deserves a full retrospective which, unfortunately, time and space will not allow here. As the editors of Politics and Letters (1979) (a series of interviews with him conducted in 1977-8 by New Left Review) noted, he occupied "a unique position among socialist writers in the English speaking world today.

Books, Williams also had the distinction of being a best seller. In the UK alone, 750,000 copies of his books had been sold by 1978. Among these, many of them now set texts in universities and extra-mural courses, are Culture and Society 1780-1950 (1958), The Long Revolution (1961), Communications (1962), Drama From Ibsen To Brecht (1968), The Country And The City (1973), Keywords (1976), and Marxism And Literature (1977). He also found time to write novels, television, film and play scripts and to play an active role in socialist politics.

Born into the Welsh working class, Williams became a 'scholarship boy' and went on to Cambridge where he was active in the Socialist club and, briefly, in the Communist Party. After a commission in the anti-tank regiment during the war he became active in adult education and the Workers Education Association as a staff tutor at Oxford University and then on to become lecturer and, in 1974, Professor of Drama at Cambridge University.

His influence on a generation of socialists, especially those who were trained in the 1960s battlegrounds of 'old' and 'new' left, is enormous. This is especially, though not uniquely, so in the area of cultural politics. In recasting the relationship between culture and society, in resisting some of the old dogmatisms of left and right, in drawing attention to both the complexity and importance of the forms of popular culture and their relationship to what he called in a simple but memorable phrase 'a whole way of life', Williams ranks, in the twentieth century, as the foremost cultural thinker of the British, and possibly Anglo Saxon, socialist tradition.

Williams' relationship to Marxism demands a history in itself. In spite of his disclaimer as "one who has never been a Marxist" in Culture and Society (1958), it is clear that his engagement with marxism became more and more productive through his later works to his cautious, later self-definition as a 'cultural materialist'. This led him to engage, less suspiciously, with the work of some of the continental European marxists—Lucien Goldmann, Gramsci, Althusser and, more recently, Rudolph Bahro. The latter interest signalled a shift, more or less contemporary with his retirement, back to the more general and global dilemmas of socialist politics; to the insistence that, in real terms, the 'alternative', as Bahro put it, does not have much of a shape or texture in socialist thought.

If it does come to have such a shape, texture and plausibility, then it is certainly worth registering Williams' immense contribution to it.

Colin Mercer
Profile

Wendy Bacon

Wendy Bacon jokes that it will probably take an investigative journalist to uncover the real reasons behind her departure from ABC television before she ever really got there. But she believes there is no doubt that political interference came from the "very top of the ABC" to stop her joining "The World Tonight," the ABC's new TV current affairs show. "David Hill was overheard saying he did not want me at the ABC at any price, so whatever my qualifications as a journalist I would not have been appropriate for David Hill."

Bacon is philosophical about the failure of her attempts to have the Arbitration Commission confirm a verbal job offer for her to join the ABC. "It's always better to have a victory," she said, "but it's important for me not to be politically driven out of the media by those who don't want me there." And she adds that "it's interesting that the three journalists who've been under attack lately, John Pilger, Brian Toohey and myself, all relate issues like corruption to issues like the distribution of wealth and powerful people. I don't think it's any accident that of the investigative reporters, we are the ones who are perceived to be the most threatening."

But concern that Bacon's reporting on Labor corruption might have had something to do with her being dropped from the ABC was "manifestly looney" according to Senator Gareth Evans, the Federal Minister for Communications and Transport.

For someone who believes journalists should not become features of their own stories, Wendy Bacon has generated a fair amount of column space over the years. In 1974 one Liberal MP said she was a "foul mouthed pornographer" in reference to her days as a student activist and member of the Sydney anarchist and libertarian movements. In the early '70s she was instrumental in putting out Thorunka, a newspaper mainly devoted to exposing the archaic censorship laws by publishing pornography. As a libertarian she said she was interested in giving exposure to the view that sexuality, censorship and political power are intimately bound together.

In 1981 Wendy Bacon, the prize winning law student, finished her degree and applied for admission to the NSW Bar, but was refused on the grounds that with ten previous convictions ranging from obscene behaviour to writing slogans on walls, she was not a "fit and proper person." She went on to work as a researcher for the Nine Network's 60 Minutes and later joined The National Times, where as a journalist she was to have her most spectacular impact. In 1984 Bacon won a Walkely Award for an article on former NSW premier, Neville Wran, and the growing crisis over the Briese affair.

In 1986 after a series of articles by Bacon on the NSW Government and the judiciary, Judge Williams quit the NSW District Court with a string of well publicised parting shots at her. "She's the queen of trial by media and part of the front row of the Fairfax scrum," said the judge.

Bacon's stories in the now defunct National Times more often than not explored the relationship between big business, the ALP, the NSW Government and corruption in the judiciary and the police. Stories under headings like "Detective Roger Rogerson and the Police Barbeque Set" earned her a contempt of court charge from the NSW Government in 1985. In this instance Bacon became the first print journalist ever charged for contempt of court over an article published by her employer (who would normally have expected to have been charged).

Another story in 1985 which reported in-camera evidence given before a secret Senate committee by the former Chief Magistrate Clarrie Briese, incurred the wrath of the Senate Privileges Committee, and she was charged with contempt of parliament. "In this case," said Bacon, "leading members of the ALP wanted me to bury the truth about Murphy." The contempt of court charge was dismissed and the contempt of parliament was eventually left in limbo.

Given this background it's not surprising she is annoyed at the Australian Journalists' Association for running a story in the union's newspaper, The Journalist which accused the Age and the National Times of "slipshod journalism" for reporting a "string of whoppers" about the late Lionel Murphy. It stung Bacon particularly because it failed to give any examples of the reporters' alleged inaccuracies.

And the future for Wendy Bacon? She's now teaching journalism at the University of Technology in Sydney, and recently spent a week training Aboriginal journalists with the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association in Alice Springs. She is also pursuing a job offer with the Sun Herald, and is talking about writing a book on property corruption and the police force.

Wendy Carlisle
Night Massacre

The Saturday Night Massacre

Diana Simmonds

Politics by television — the omnipotence of the medium over the message — has become, in recent years, something we take for granted. It’s a truth that’s become, in recent years, something beyond the point where they are craggily interesting, whereas the coming Colossus of the Liberal Party, John Elliott, will always look as if his mother was thinking of a Proboscis Monkey while giving birth, and the wind changed.

In recent years, the man on whom television was supposed to look most kindly was Bob Hawke. His silver coif, healthy tan and lean looks were virtually mateine idol material. Unfortunately, like Cecilia Sissons, whose sibilant “s” signed her screen death warrant when talkies became all the go, RJ should also have long ago learnt to keep his mouth shut. Or at least have someone ruthlessly edit the contents before he opened it.

The power of television will undoubtedly come back to haunt Bob Hawke, however: long after the rest of John Pilger’s recent three-part look at Bicentennial Australia is forgotten, there is a sequence from it that is indelibly fixed in a million minds. It shows the glinting Bob with the unctuous Packer and glossy Bond, all stuffing their gleaming faces into their ample pockets. The word “mate” was once revered in Australia, but Hawke has made it virtually a dirty word. Certainly, the damage done to the ALP by his penchant for the company of new-rich businessmen (illustrated so grossly by Pilger’s footage) is only just beginning to be felt. Barrie Unsworth was, unfairly and certainly, the first casualty. From his own comments since, there is no doubt whatsoever that he, too, is one of those who will never forget those few minutes of television film.

For his own part, Barrie Unsworth is someone who could never look at ease on television. Curiously, he, Hawke and Greiner share the physical characteristic of mouths as tight and mean-looking as a crab’s bum underwater. When Unsworth smiles spontaneously — a rare occurrence when the press is around — he looks like a reasonably decent fellow. When he speaks in order to answer a question or make a statement, his face resembles nothing so much as a well-boiled potato with a terrible hangover.

Nick Greiner, on the other hand, has suffered little prolonged teleexposure thus far, which is how he has managed to retain his bad habits. It will be interesting to see if he tries to change his television image, because he faces an uphill battle with his inner self if he does.

Unlike Unsworth, who is simply an individual with an exterior about as welcoming as granite, but who is actually a discernible human being underneath, Greiner is a lot more complex. For a start, he is clearly very uncomfortable with strangers. This is a grave fault in a politician, especially when his unease and desire to get away are made as clear as his wildly signalling body language tells us.

In a sequence of clips put together to make a quick portrait of the new premier, he was seen time and again to shake the hand of whomever he was supposed to be meeting and then, in a split second, before either he had finished asking the standard polite question, or the person had responded, he turned away — body and face — and removed himself from the hapless stranger’s ambit.

The effect on the person could be to make him or her feel unwanted, boring, uninteresting, or smelly; either way, it’s not good for business; particularly on television, where every twitch and sidelong glance becomes a neurosis of Nixonian proportions.

Nevertheless, as Bob Hawke has so graphically shown, leaders don’t necessarily have to bother very much about impressing the flesh of Mr. and Mrs. Ordinary. Nick Greiner, and his minders, will be able to orchestrate his television image to edit out his inability to look you or me in the eye for more than seven seconds, while refining his living room appearances to the easy atmosphere of the one-to-one with those familiar, if not friendly, faces.

It is also unlikely that he will ever have to suffer the excruciating embarrassment and certain vote loss of watching himself “being a politician” while a gormless jingle about being “good value, telling it true, seeing it through, toodle oodle oo” (interstate readers will have to take my word for it) causes a statewide rush for the dusty.

All in all, with the mixed metaphors and messages racketing around his office from the Canberra heavy “advisers” and his own luckless staff, it’s a tribute to Unsworth’s (back to) basic qualities that he survived the Saturday Night Massacre as well as he did. Trial by television is ever an overheated and unkind experience.

Aside from the obvious winners of March 19, there were two others. Predictably, given the sugary sentimentality that lies behind the media’s cruelty, Kathryn Greiner and

Cont. p. 40
FLYING THE FLAG?
Nationalism and 1988

The left has been slow to understand that patriotism doesn’t have to be the preserve of the right. In defending the Aboriginal cause, argues David Burchell, the left’s best hope may well lie in taking on definitions of ‘Australianness’ on their own home turf.

January 26 in Sydney was a proud day for the Aboriginal people, and also, incidentally, for the left. Twenty or thirty thousand people, black and white, provided a potent display of peaceful opposition to a version of Australia’s history which had become the fig-leaf of governments incapable of coping with a less convenient reality. In Australia, it merited more than a footnote to the reportage of the Great Day: around the world, however, it stood as a particularly potent symbol of Australia’s guilty conscience.

This should not lead us to forget, however, that for at least a million other residents of Sydney (not to mention the millions of passive viewers there and around the country), January 26 represented a quite different set of political and cultural images. Precisely what it symbolised for most is not automatically clear — and I shall discuss that question further in a moment. But what does bear saying is that, in its own terms, the strictly “celebratory” version of the Bicentenary which came to be seen as the only “safe” official response to the dilemmas of 1988, was also a considerable success. A success not, incidentally, because it necessarily brought the denizens of national jingoism out of their holes — for, as far as national celebrations go, it was, by all accounts, an astonishingly apolitical affair. Rather, a success because most people, somehow, found some way in which this apparently ideologically empty depiction of nationhood satisfied or stimulated the vague, inchoate feelings of national price which lurk in the breasts of most of us. It raised no difficult questions but, equally, it brooked no clearly reactionary response. And, much as the unexpected “Australia Live” TV extravaganza on New Year’s night had done, it carefully eschewed official or ceremonial rituals of nationhood for a studiously popular hedonism. This was clearly a big factor in its success.

The left in this country has been a bit slow to realise in recent years that popular patriotism — or nationalism, to use the more complex form — does not necessarily have to be the preserve of the political right. In part, this has probably been because most of the surviving symbols from our era of radical nationalism are, at best, not particularly relevant to Australian society and the political agenda of the 1990s, and at worst deeply underlaid by racism and sexism (a point to which I shall also return shortly). In particular, we have been slow to understand more recently that 1988 is not at all about choosing between being a defender of the Aboriginal cause and being Australian. Indeed, to a large extent it seems reasonable to argue that for the predominantly white left (as well as for the Aboriginal people and their leaders), the most effective way to struggle against the foes of the Aboriginal people in 1988 is precisely by taking on nationalism, and definitions of “Australianness”, on their own home turf.

As Aboriginal leaders pointed out prior to January 26, there is little need to convince the thousands or tens of thousands of people who have already indicated their support for the Aboriginal cause by word or deed. Rather, the task is to get the message out there into the communities within which “Australianness” and the Aboriginal cause are defined as two different, perhaps even contradictory, things. 1988 is all about winning the hearts and minds of white Australia. And while it may be fair to assume that broad swathes of the country — the rural rednecks, those dependent on the pastoralists or property developers for a living, the concerted racist lobby, and so on — are never really going to be convinced, it remains true that we have to build alliances not just among the already-converted subcultures of the social movements (important though that is), but also among broad strategic slices of the population as a whole. And this is, of course, a horrendously intimidating task.

This is why, in the first instance, it is important to understand what patriotism and nationalism are, and
what roles they play in a country of such spectacular social, cultural and religious diversity as ours. This entails understanding, in turn, what the political significance of that diversity is — given that it has become a tenet of a certain sort of official multiculturalism that diversity means simply lots of happily jostling “cultures”; represented as artefacts, plus “ethnic” restaurants, and multilingual government booklets. These are the two central questions underlying the arguments which follow.

The first and most obvious thing about nationalism is its ubiquity, and thus its inherent ambiguity. From national liberation struggles in Africa in the Fifties, South-east Asia in the Sixties, or Central America today, to the calculated jingoism of National Socialism or fascism, nationalism has, in terms of twentieth century political development, made the world go round. One could argue with considerable justification that more popular struggles have been waged around national questions this century than explicitly “class-based” ones (which is not to say, of course, that class was entirely absent from them). The Bolsheviks campaigned in 1917 around a specific definition of Russian patriotism; the Chinese communists did so explicitly in the Forties; and indeed most of the great progressive figures of Australian history have been nationalists of one sort or another.

The key to nationalism as a political organising force in this regard is its very “emptiness” as a concept. Unlike “class” or “gender” or “race” which, while not being fixed throughout history, do tend to take on fixed meanings in specific historical situations, nationalism is a terrain for struggle, not one of the participants. Like the other “isms” which move political mountains, it is an aspiration, something which the political existence of nation-states in itself never really satisfactorily embodies — any more than “actually existing socialism” has embodied socialist values to any satisfactory extent.

We have been slow to realise that 1988 is not at all about choosing between being a defender of the Aboriginal cause and being Australian
This was precisely why Antonio Gramsci, the fiftieth anniversary of whose death was commemorated last year, took his concept of the "national-popular" to be such a pivotal point in his political thought. For Gramsci, the political force which dominates the ideological battleground for the nation does so precisely because of its ability to articulate a program, a way of thinking, and a political language which is capable of "speaking for the nation" — which is to say, speaking for a particular conception of what "the nation" represents — rather than limited class or sectional interests. "Hegemony" is all about defining "the nation" and "nationalism" in ways which articulate political programs with the social forces necessary for their implementation.

This is not to say that nationalism as a concrete political force at any particular place or time is a kind of ideological vacuum just waiting for us to fill it up with whatever content might take our fancy. Clearly, the dominant forces in societies exercise considerable sway, in the media and elsewhere, in defining the content of nationalisms: and this often serves to give even the most apparently innocent national icons a subtly reactionary tilt. Likewise, of course, patriotism does not operate in isolation from all of the other motivating forces in human affairs. And, in Australian history, racism and xenophobia have been evident allies of even the most apparently radical forms of nationalism both in society as a whole, and in the culture and heritage of the labour movement in particular.

Again, as Tony Bennett notes elsewhere in this issue of ALR, "national identity" is a notoriously tricky and delicate thing to negotiate in the terms of political slogans and political culture. Nothing strikes people as more crudely manipulative than the kind of political appeal which attempts to assimilate a complex web of national and local traditions into a standardised political slogan or formula — as, for instance, certain traditions in the communist movement, or maoism, have tended to do. Georgi Dimitrov told the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in 1935 that, in the defence against fascism, socialism had to "so to speak, 'acclimatise' itself in each country in order to sink deep roots in its native land". All too often, however, the possible implication lurking in this statement, that socialism was really an "international" message which had merely to be toggled up in national fancy dress, has been mirrored by crude attempts to simply take slogans from another time and place and add the local touch of, say, a few Eureka flags.

On neither of these counts is it realistic to believe that nationalism is a kind of blank tablet in the ideological terrain of society, where we can inscribe our message at will. But it would be too easy to leave it at that. Not even the most conspiratorial thesis of ruling class, media and state is going to deflect satisfactorily the recognition that popular patriotism, for all the mass-market jingoism of Messrs. Mojo and Murdoch, operates with a crucial crucial degree of autonomy in people's daily lives. Nationalism, in other words, isn't just what people are "led" to believe: it's also a kind of emotional shorthand for their understanding of their relationship to the wider society. To some extent, as has often been noted, it's also a kind of psychic index of belongingness: the personal expression of the myth of the "imagined community" of the nation.

It is in this regard that it's sometimes commented that patriotism acts as a sort of personal compensation for the breakdown of actual organic communities in industrial society: the "imagined community" stands in for the real community of neighbourhood, pub and club, and so on. Of course, there are more than a few problems with this sort of argument, quite aside from the question of whether local communities really have "broken down". After all, the motif of the loss or absence of an original organic whole is a highly repetitive myth of crucially, it's about the need to imagine a totality of the communities, neighbourhoods, subcultures and so on which represent people's lived experiences of a social environment — the totality being called the nation.

This is where the second part of my argument comes in. For what is most obvious about the nature of popular patriotism in a country like ours is the discrepancy between the implied homogeneity of the "imagined community" of nationalism and the spectacular heterogeneity of the society itself. Indeed, one of the key riddles to the meaning of patriotism in Australia today is to be found in the meanings of what the theorists call "the social": what exactly, in other words, we take the idea of "society" to mean.

One of the most constant features of almost any form of nationalism — be it the nationalism of profound historical projects or simple popular assumptions about our "national character", the ethic of a "fair go", and so on — is their tendency to define their object in terms of a national essence. Even the very idea that there is an "Australian identity", which is in itself a unique type of identity, but also a singular one, is part and parcel of the mythology of an Australian essence. Yet, of course, if there is a single...
defining characteristic of Australian society nowadays it is precisely the absence of this supposed unifying essence. Rather, there is a growing diversity of communities, subcultures and what the theorists would call “subject positions” (meaning those “subjective” personal senses of identity which so often fail to square with the raw data of sociological pigeonholes, or which go beyond them). Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe speak similarly of the “growing complexity and fragmentation of advanced industrial societies” as creating a “fundamental asymmetry” — an asymmetry between the growing proliferation of these senses of identity and the difficulty of “fixing” them into an imagined ordered entity known as society.

The most obvious example of this absence of an Australian “essence” is the vast growth and development in “ethnic” communities in this country since World War II, and the complexity of those communities themselves. It is in this sense that “multiculturalism” as a concept appears least adequate as a description of Australian society today: for the emphasis on “culture” as a series of artefacts to be observed from “outside” — a range of cuisines, “lifestyles”, and languages — fatally abstracts that culture from its material basis in the communities of which it forms a part.

Nor is the question of the various “ethnic” communities in Australia — Greek, Italian, Turkish, Armenian, Spanish, Latin American, Lebanese, Yugoslav, Vietnamese, Kampuchean, and so on and so on — simply a matter of quantitatively expanding entities, but also of their change over time, as the content of the cultural and linguistic cement holding them together becomes more and more of an anachronism from the time of mass emigration, as the second and third generations distance themselves from many of the original orthodoxies of their communities, and as customs and language become modified or displaced. It is in this jagged and uneven lived experience of the several generations of these changing communities, rather than in the deceptively common experience of “ethnicity” implied by some of the official forms of multiculturalism, that the roots of our growing social heterogeneity are to be found.

Moreover, and as this implies, the profound diversity of our society also cuts across communities as such — even when cemented by ties of blood, language and ancestry. This is the realm of the growth of these “subject positions” mentioned earlier — a terrain deeply ingrained with the contours of gender and class. But it is also a means of getting “under the skin”, as it were, of some of the more simplistic sociological commonsense about the “necessary” relationship between people’s sociological position and their political behaviour and outlook. The subcultures of the social movements, for instance, while comprising but a tiny percentage of Australian society as a whole, are a graphic illustration of the crossover between these rapidly splintering “subject positions” and lifestyles, customs and habits, both across and within certain sociological slices of society.

Look, for instance, at the subculture of contemporary feminism in the late 1980s, with its fully-formed and largely autonomous fashion ethic of op-shop mismatch, post-hippie scarves and hats, and rainbows of colour schemes (unified by the significant mauve). Crossing over with this is the vaguely “green” inner-city regime of vegetarianism and alternative, cottage industry products, inquisitive dips into mysticism and tarot, and herbal remedies. And add a vaguely left ethic of anti-uranium, pro-Aboriginal, anti-“the system” causes — none of which necessarily follows from the others. These, in microcosm, and at an admittedly “vanguard” fringe of society, are the kinds of social, cultural and lifestyle linkages which serve to make political sense of the dramatic diversity of these “subject positions” in Australia today.

And, if we pursue the example a little further, we can see other processes at work. Look, for instance, at the remarkable “ripple-effect” of much of the cultural symbolism of contemporary feminism — the significant minority of suburban girls, for instance, often straight out of school, who now wear severely short haircuts and colourfully baggy clothes, often without a strict awareness of their origins. This kind of ripple-effect is a major dynamic of cultural change in Australia today — from the explosion of the idea of men’s fashion today from its varied origins in Italian male flamboyance and gay male subculture, to the exponential growth in the health food market or the concern for conservatism. It is also part and parcel of this break-up of the cultural and social correspondences of the past.

Of course, it is the conceit of much political debate, both on the right and left, that the focus of the political quest is still the search for the “average Australian”, with the implication that Australia has a “mainstream” core — be it “middle Australia” or “the working class”. Witness also the ritual invocation of, for instance, Sydney’s west as an allegedly homogeneous hinterland of perfectly-preserved “average Australians” from the indefinite past — the frontier beyond which, it is said, the cosmopolitan invasions of feminism and environmentalism will never reach.

These kinds of conceptions are convenient because they reinforce the myth, common to the most
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BRING IT ON HOME...

Joyce Stevens’ new book, Taking The Revolution Home, is both a landmark document in the history of women in the Australian left, and an inspiring read.

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Verity Burgmann wrote of it that it ‘breathes fresh, feminist air’ into issues such as contraception and abortion. Daphne Gollan calls it a work of ‘meticulous retrieval’ of women on the left as ‘living, struggling, hoping human beings’.

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otherwise diverse political frameworks, that “society” has some magical inner core — “real Australians” — which holds it together. Likewise, much of official multiculturalism seems premised on the assumption that a multicultural society “works” because all those happily jostling cultures are bouncing around within, as it were, the balloon of an already-constituted entity called “Australian society” — an entity which somehow predates and exists independently of the human beings who comprise it. Both of these conceptions are not only manifestly wrong in the real world but, if pursued rigorously enough as guides for political thought, tend towards inescapably anachronistic and reactionary political conclusions.

It remains true that you can always define a majority of Australians who are not part of some relatively distinct social grouping or subculture — be it the political and social elites on the one hand, or the subcultures of the social movements on the other. But it doesn’t follow that this act of definition somehow confers a mystical “sameness” on the majority so defined — as if simply in defining differences from others one could create an “identity” within. This is precisely, of course, how some of the more reactionary myths of nationalism work — and the result generally has been intolerance and xenophobia.

The political implications of a position which refuses to see Australian society as some kind of imagined tidy, bundled-up, seamless whole, are too numerous and complex to go into here. As Stuart Hall noted recently (Marxism Today, March), it means, among other things, that political majorities “have to be ‘made’ and ‘won’ — not passively reflected”; and that “they will be composed of heterogeneous social interests, represented through conflicting social identities”, which have to be united by “a large political project which overrides, without obliterating, their real differences”.

For our purposes here, however, the chief implication of such a position is this. Western nationalism, as it has been experienced through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has almost universally been predicated on the assumption that modern society — the “nation state” — was heading in the direction of an increasingly unified, increasingly homogeneous, whole. (Nor was this a conception limited to a liberal ideology of social consensus — look at the Communist Manifesto and its picture of the onward rush of capitalism, swallowing up class, cultural and regional differences in its standardising mission).

In fact, however, the progress of advanced capitalist countries was never quite like this and, in recent years, this has become increasingly obvious. In the first instance, capitalism’s imperialist thrust created massive bouts of emigration which meant that very few Western societies survive today as racially united entities (if, in fact, they ever did). In the second, this same imperialism created vast “national” problems among the subjected peoples of yoked together nation states, and vast “internal” problems in the repression and often extermination of indigenous peoples in the conquered territories — problems which resolutely refuse to go away several hundred years later. The era of nationalism has accentuated, rather than “bundled up”, all of these problems. Finally, and particularly in the last twenty or thirty years. Western societies have seen a tremendous splintering of the fault lines of the social forces in those societies, and an unhinging of those social forces from relatively unified cultural senses of identity of the pre-war years, with the effects I have described above.

Yet the substratum of assumptions around popular conceptions of “the nation” and nationhood has remained remarkably impervious to these changes except in xenophobic, nostalgic terms (say, in Britain or France) or within the boundaries of the already defined nation (the “melting pot” idea, some forms of multiculturalism). This is not to say that we may “hereby declare patriotism obsolete, as is sometimes argued in even the more sophisticated interventions from the left — an idea rather akin, I would have thought, to that of abolishing the weather. What it does mean is that definitions of “the nation”, and all the political implications that carries with it, are one area in which the new politics of the left over the last twenty years has an excellent opportunity to intervene in a serious way on the national stage.

Specifically, we have the task ahead of us of formulating a new radical vocabulary and imagery of “Australianness” starting from the premise I outlined earlier of the dissolution of the myth of the “real Australians”, or an Australian “essence”. More particularly, 1988 presents us with the opportunity of shaking up the common sense of Australian patriotism with the unanswerable fact that the myth of the “real Australian” (as well as that of Australian society in all its colour-postcard diversity, as a seamless whole) sits uneasily on top of a previous nation of some 40,000 years’ standing, which can claim with absolute justice to be more “Australian” than any Johnny-come-lately colonist or migrant.

It’s not merely a matter, in other words, of recovering the radical traditions of the Australian past, valuable though they are in specific contexts. Rather, the task is to construct a radical imagery of Australianness which doesn’t just recognise the cultural, ethnic, racial or religious diversity of today, but argues from the start that such diversity is, in fact, the founding principle of any genuinely democratic vision of Australian society. And that entails replacing the picture of the Australian nation as a neat, ordered whole, with one of it as an uneven, jagged collection of different communities, subcultures and senses of identity, whose co-existence is based not just on a citizenhood passively felt, but on the play of uneven social alliances and linkages, as well as on people (those “subject positions” again) defining themselves, making sense of their surroundings and, indisputably, struggling.
THE UNFORGETTABLE YEAR 1968

From Prague to the paving-stone of Paris, from Nixon to the Tet offensive, 1968 was a memorable year. ALR looks back in words and photographs.

The Greening of Dany the Red

Daniel Cohn-Bendit was the doyen of the French far left in the 'May Events'. Now he's a 'realist' in the German Greens. David Caute asked him for his views on 1968 today.

We were more than self-confident. We thought we could do more than we could. We thought everything was possible. We had a utopian view of the world — selfgovernment, workers' control — but all this was important to our ability to criticise society.

— Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

Dany Cohn-Bendit bounces into the imposing dining room of Frankfurt's Hessischer Hof Hotel with the urchin smile familiar to the generation of '68 and an uncomfortable dressing covering his nose. The black-coated waiters don't flinch: celebrity now surpasses respectability in the Zeitgeist.

Cohn-Bendit has been playing football, not rioting — though the city is riotous enough, with militarised ranks of uniformly masked ecologists firing standardised steel catapults at young policemen who, in turn, are capable of earnestly explaining their indignation by demonstration and televised interview.

Clearly, the political culture of Frankfurt has changed during the two decades since Karl Dietrich Wolff deployed his SDS guerrilla units against city, university and state — the decades of Rudi Dutschke's "long march through the institutions" of democratic capitalism. But the capitalist system has survived the challenge. Checking into the hotel — I wasn't paying — I was greeted by a bowl of free fruit in my room, an exorbitant mini-bar, and a range of miniature toiletries beckoning to be stolen. Klau' Mich — "Steal Me": that had been the title of the "Leftporn" book marketed in 1968 by Berlin's half-Yippie, half-situationist, always scandalous Kommune I, in an effort to raise legal fees for the many state trials its leading spirits flamboyantly enjoyed.

Cohn-Bendit was never a citizen of that Bohemia, but his active sympathy extended to any young radical engaged in confrontation with the state. Today his position is rather more discriminating. He's past 40.

Now he is an advocate of parliamentary democracy. Dany-the-Red has been greened. The Greens have tasted the bargaining power which proportional representation offers to small parties growing larger; after gaining 30 percent of Frankfurt's votes they
entered a short-lived coalition government in the local state Landtag of Hesse. They are now back on the streets, but the beguiling aroma of power lingers.

If Cohn-Bendit's anarchist political philosophy has gone, his temperament retains its anarchic edge; like Norman Mailer he remains a high-profile publicist rather than a politician at ease with the machine. He is busy, in a hurry, constantly besieged for interviews and sometimes stubborn about fees—he taxes the rich and gives freely to the poor. Recently he completed a fourpart television documentary series of his own, Revolution Revisited, and an accompanying book whose somewhat sardonic title can be roughly translated, The Revolution, We all Loved Her.

Trailed by a camera crew, he made good contact with the ageing American Yippie Abbie Hoffman—still kindred spirits—and rather uncomfortable contact with the other Yippie media star of the '60s, Jerry Rubin, now a spiritual engineer for Yippie culture, separated from outright Reaganism only by a lingering sense of what is kosher. Jerry took Dany up to his New York penthouse, in between biogenic jogs, showed him rows of pill bottles, and talked about the urgent duty to make money, “But you used to burn money in the '60s!” Cohn-Bendit protested. Rubin was not thrown: burning money was the cutting edge of human endeavour in the '60s and making it has been the cutting edge ever since. It's all in the head—somehow.

Cohn-Bendit, whose head retains the clarity of an inspired street orator (he talks at half-shout, megaphonic and compelling) was not convinced. Yet Dany himself is a convert, with his own historic reversal in the head: to be a Green today (he insists) is to place oneself at the same point of advanced political consciousness as Reds had in '68.

“International solidarity was the first rule of the generation of '68 and “Ho-Ho-Ho Chi Minh” their universal war cry, their verbal Tet Offensive. At SDS's international Viet Nam Congress, held in West Berlin in February 1968, Rudi Dutschke, despite his loathing of stalinism, led the chanting, an inspirational figure for the young French radicals who would soon bring Gaullist France to the point of paralysis. Dutschke was shot, almost fatally, on 11 April 1968—a week after the assassination of Martin Luther King—while riding his bicycle away from SDS headquarters in Berlin. The rioting that followed spread from Berlin to Bonn, Munich, London and Paris. The protest demonstrations in Paris brought the French ultra-left groupuscules their first real experience of unity: from Easter until the police invasion of the
Sorbonne on 3 May was only three weeks and those weeks belonged to Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a founding member of the libertarian 22 March Movement at the Paris University campus of Nanterre.

A red-haired rouquin, Cohn-Bendit had been prominent in several escapades at Nanterre, including a protest occupation of the entrance hall of the segregated women's dormitory. In January 1968 the Gaullist Minister of Youth, Francois Missoffe, arrived to open a new swimming pool. Cohn-Bendit broke through the protective cordon of dignitaries and inquired why the Minister's massive manual on French youth made no mention of sexual problems. Missoffe replied that a dip in the new swimming pool was the best remedy; Cohn-Bendit

To be a Green today, insists Cohn-Bendit, is to be at the same point of advanced political consciousness as the Reds in '68

likened this doctrine to that of the Hitler Youth, the Minister walked away, and a zealous official instigated proceedings to deport the 22-year-old student who, though born in France of German-Jewish refugee parents, had chosen German nationality mainly to avoid French military service.

The swimming pool incident reinforced Cohn-Bendit's reputation. As one Nanterre wall slogan put it, "tout le monde est Cohn-Bendit". Despite friction about the cult of Dany's personality, which grew within the action committees and surfaced after he crossed the French frontier in defiance of a banning order and cheekily held a press conference in the Sorbonne, the ancien combattants still speak of him warmly. Jean-Marcel Bougereau was international secretary of the French National Union of Students in 1968:

He had a gift for speaking to the mass of students in a direct, provocative but comprehensible language, very important; he was spontaneous, natural, not sectarian, he was happy, he was laughing, he could crystallise a movement, not like the boring radical... He was not raising different issues, he was raising the same issues differently...

Less enthusiastic, yet grudgingly respectful about the tribune of the baby-boom generation (the French use the English expression), is Monsieur Pierre Grappin, whose increasingly unhappy duty was to administer the Nanterre campus throughout that riotous spring. A former Resistance hero known for his progressive views and liberal policies, Dean Grappin was unable to cope with this conflict of generations instigated by intellectual hooligans who distributed leaflets describing him as an "SS Fascist":

They had among them real provocateurs... I was angry — a deep disillusion... I was very upset to see young girls who had been very co-operative two weeks later sending me to the revolutionary tribunal. It really made me very sad... Their methods, apparently democratic, were deeply undemocratic... Cohn-Bendit? A very popular man for meetings. Much better than the others. He was a real demagogue — real — with a talent for people.

Compelled (as he believed) to close the campus in March, in April and again on 2 May, Grappin brought disciplinary charges against eight Nanterre students (Cohn-Bendit among them), precipitating a protest meeting in the Sorbonne, a panic call to the police, and the violation of a tradition of sanctuary seven centuries old when the police entered the main courtyard and arrested 300 militants (including, of course, Cohn-Bendit). About this, Dean Grappin has no regret: "I had a lot of people calling my home to raise my pity for these poor guys. At worst they risked six months' suspension".

The majority of the faculty at Nanterre were behind the Dean, but an exception was Cohn-Bendit's sociology professor, Alain Touraine. Their mutual respect developed into friendship; Touraine was one of four Nanterre professors who rallied to the defence of the eight inculpés. Yet

Touraine's sociology course had come under attack from Cohn-Bendit and a small group of students who announced that they would not be examined in a subject imported from America and designed to reinforce capitalist-technocratic values. Cohn-Bendit explains: "The students wanted to know: why are we learning this? To do what? What sort of manager will I be in ten years' time?"

In his book Le Mouvement de Mai, Touraine observed that Cohn-Bendit constantly clashed with the "Masons" of the sectarian groupuscules (trotskyists, communists,
### THE YEAR

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>May 30</td>
<td>10 million French workers on strike: occupation of factories across France</td>
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<td>May 24</td>
<td>President De Gaulle calls French elections.</td>
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<td>June 6</td>
<td>Robert Kennedy assassinated.</td>
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<td>Late June</td>
<td>Dubcek publishes &quot;2,000 words&quot;, interpreted by Soviets as &quot;counter-revolution&quot;.</td>
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<td>June 23</td>
<td>French elections: big victory for the Right.</td>
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<td>Aug 3</td>
<td>Warsaw Pact powers sign &quot;friendship statement&quot;.</td>
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<td>Aug 20/21</td>
<td>600,000 Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops invade Czechoslovakia. Dubcek and senior ministers arrested.</td>
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<td>Oct 27</td>
<td>100,000 march in London against Viet Nam War.</td>
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<td>Nov 5</td>
<td>Richard Nixon elected US President.</td>
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...and still believes that the rebels were employing an antiquated language — the myth of revolution — to express genuinely modern concerns and demands. Touraine’s recent summation, “Mai 1968 entre les souvenirs et l’Histoire” is echoed by Cohn-Bendit himself: We were prisoners of mythology. Revolutionary theory was moribund but we didn’t know it. That realisation took time. What we gained from May was the historical experience of collective action which is the basis of the social imagination. The “individualism” of May was healthy, rooted in the group. Today we live off nostalgia for that spirit of conviviality and generosity.

The non-sectarian 22 March Movement offered an existentialist kind of politics — to think is to act, here and now — and it should not astonish us that at the height of the may insurrection it was Cohn-Bendit whom Jean-Paul Sartre chose — without bogus humility — to interview:
Your movement is interesting because it puts imagination in power ... You have been able to create something which astonishes, something which jolts, something which repudiates all that has made our society what it is today. This is what I'd call the extension of one's potential ... Don't give it up.

What followed May '68 for Cohn-Bendit was not terrorism on the Baader-Meinhoff model, but a renewed long march to the factories. As Joshka Fischer recalls, the colonisation of certain targeted enterprises (like the Opel works near Frankfurt) didn't work out: "We had a full defeat. There was no chance. We were thinking in categories and concepts of yesterday not of tomorrow". In short, the great working class, the hope of Marx, Engels, Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, remained stubbornly loyal to social democracy and the German economic miracle.

The working class has now faded from the horizon of the ancients combattants of 1968. Alain Krivine, the leading figure in the trotskyst Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionaire, is one of the few who have not "sold out". Alain Geismar, the young general secretary of the SNESup, the university teachers' union, who called his members out on strike in solidarity with the students, has also given up on the working class — even though he went through a maoist phase after 1968 and suffered imprisonment.

One day the working class will open the cupboard, take the flag and liberate humanity. A lot of people were thinking that in the '50s and '60s ... You had to be with the working class or you were nothing. I think this has changed.

Geismar, who had quickly adopted the libertarian ideal of autogestion or self-management in '68, and who disparaged Mitterrand, Mendes-France and the parliamentary Left, nevertheless worked in a technical advisory capacity for the Socialist government of 1981-86 — under President Mitterrand. Cohn-Bendit even repudiates the antiparliamentary rhetoric of 1968, his disparagement of Mendes-France as "the leftwing de Gaulle".

This was an error. We said election is bullshit. We should have had another attitude ... If a new left government had been elected after a general strike, if the movement had proposed an election, they could have had a chance to win it.

Joshka Fischer, who now describes progress in terms of electioneering, power sharing and patronage, admits that the involvement of the broad masses in controlling their own destiny — the central proposition of the New Left in the '60s — has not been solved:

I think the dream of a political system ruled by the underdogs, ruled by the oppressed, it will be a dream ... If you try to throw out or maybe kill the middle class then you will kill democracy, then you produce a new ruling class.

In essence, the Greens have painted the great revisionist tradition, which extends back to Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky, in a new colour. It is the freewheeling demonstrational culture of the Greens which is the heir to 1968, the "modern" element. But Cohn-Bendit insists on a broader heritage:

For me politics is the fight for more autonomy and decision-making in the hands of society. On this I remain at the same point as in '68. But today we have to work within the state, parliament — this is a big change.

I think people decide in certain circumstances they want to have a big influence on certain issues — ecology, nuclear power. At another time they want to delegate a policy to a government. And this is what we didn't see. We thought people will always want to decide everything — this is not true.

Alain Touraine argues that 20 years later a history of France could be written showing how all curves changed direction in '68 — justice, medicine, economics, politics, the women's movement, the arrival of ethnic minorities in politics, the first strikes of immigrant workers, the politicisation of private life. True enough. These were real gains, yet also consolation prizes for that remarkable generation of agitators and revelateurs whose clarity of vision, however "utopian" or romantic, however misguided about Ho or Mao, remains the most precious "moment" in our defeated lives. Talking to Dany, one feels both the power of the moment and the power of the defeat.


This is an edited version of an article originally published in the New Statesman.
Was 1968 a new beginning, or the end of an era?
Eric Aarons recalls the impact of Prague and Paris on the Australian left.

Looking back to 1968 I recall the words of Isaac Deutscher on the different approaches of partisan and historian:

“The partisan deals with fluid circumstances: on all sides (people) still exercise conflicting wills, marshal forces, use weapons, and achieve or reverse decisions. The historian deals with fixed and irreversible patterns of events; all weapons have already been fired; all wills have been spent; all decisions have been achieved; and what is irreversible has assumed the aspect of the inevitable.”

One should add that the partisan, having turned historian, then becomes partisan again, using among other things the “lessons” of history as support for his or her advocacy of chosen courses.

I shall try to recall what it was like, how I felt as 1968 unfolded, to offer a few opinions as to why things turned out as they did, and to consider what bearing the lessons which may be drawn have for radical aspirations today.

The Tet (New Year) offensive of the Vietnamese forces of national liberation, which opened the year, was the turning point of Vietnam war, presaging America’s ultimate withdrawal and the establishment of an independent and unified Vietnam. Militarily, the offensive temporarily smashed many US positions and saw the US embassy in Saigon and big cities such as Hue occupied for a while. But the political victories were far greater. President Johnson announced that he would not recontest the presidency, and eventual US withdrawal became inevitable. The anti-war movement developed in leaps and bounds everywhere, and in Australia became one of the elements which combined to end twenty-three years of Liberal rule in 1972.

This first proof that the US was not invincible (Korea may be called a draw) gave greater stimulus and scope to third world struggles everywhere. It became impossible for US troops to be committed on the ground against liberation forces anywhere; and that remains basically the situation today, despite Reagan’s blustering efforts to re-assert America’s imperial role and leadership.

The Vietnamese struggle was home-grown and home-directed. Indeed, even though the assistance in the war from the Soviet Union and China was great, the leaders of those countries at various times tried to pressure the Vietnamese to act differently, to have Vietnam fit in with their separate global calculations, including their relations with the US.

The greatness of the achievements of the Vietnamese people in their struggle, of which Tet 1968 was an outstanding expression, is in my view undimmed by the fact that less admirable aspects have been evident postwar; that they have made a mess of their economy; and that, while basically justified concerning Kampuchea, they are not without their own calculation of self-interest in the matter.

Four months later, May in France saw a sudden outburst of student activity which gave rise to a general strike involving ten million workers, and a movement which came close to forcing the resignation of President de Gaulle and opened up the possibility of the formation of a new, quite radical government.

That the actions of a relatively small section of society can act as the trigger for the outbreak of far wider struggle is not in itself exceptional. But it can only do so if it has a base of accumulated mass sentiment to work on, sentiment which may be unarticulated and even undetected by contemporary leaders.

Prominent among the students’ complaints were the lack of personal contact between students and teachers; lack of job opportunities for graduates especially in the social sciences, the irrelevance of much course content, the bureaucratic way in which the universities were run — indeed the general orientation of the system of higher education. On May 14 students occupied the Sorbonne without resistance from university and political authorities, who were by then in a state of disarray and retreat. Occupations spread like wildfire, embracing universities, factories, mines, railway stations, schools and offices.

At the core of the ‘events’ was the desire, felt by millions, for a say in what one does, how one does it and for what purpose. These are demands which, in their essence, strike at the heart of the values of our societies and are not embraced by traditional liberal democracy. They are also incompatible with the kind of “socialism” which places everything in the hands of the state and party and their bureaucracies, and with the tightly-knit, top-down type of organisation practiced by most communist and other political parties, trade unions and traditional bodies. The stimulus the May events gave to those of us in the Australian left who had already reached towards similar conclusions from our re-thinking of the problems and
prospects of socialism was consequently profound.

Though the struggles of workers and students for a time flowed together, the relations between their respective leaderships were abysmal, with mistakes on both sides, some of which are now acknowledged by Dany Cohn-Bendit, for example, in the interview above. But the French Communist Party, though claiming to have marxist presence and "rights" to leadership, understood less than others on the left what was potentially involved.

The turning point of the struggle came when the unions under their leadership in the trade union body the CGT agreed to a government proposal for negotiations, with wages to the fore. I do not know precisely what the motivations of the French CP were in this. But I do know that there are many on the left who, having learned that Marx held that history is the history of class struggle, by a perhaps unconscious theoretical sleight of hand then conclude that the class struggle which will transform society is the struggle, usually for higher wages, which the working class conducts, while struggles that others may conduct on other issues are "trendy" or "middle class". There is little marxism in this, as the writings of Marx himself and Lenin amply show. Neither does such a view gain any credence from the complex history of the struggles which led to the overthrow of previous social orders.

Malcolm Salmon, an Australian who observed the May events firsthand, commented in ALR a year later:

"... it is my belief that at the peak of the crisis, with nine million wage earners on strike during the fourth week of May, if the CGT had told the Gaullist authorities that it would not negotiate with them for a settlement ... but only with a new government formed for the purpose, the government would have been forced to resign and a new one formed in which democratic forces could well have made substantial advances. The agreement to negotiate ... tended to legitimise the Gaullist power at a moment when the maximum political and social pressure was being exerted upon it, at the moment of its maximum weakness."

In the subsequent election, called after President de Gaulle had ringed Paris with tanks, the left in general and the PCF in particular was unable to advance a program which struck chords sufficiently in tune with the new aspirations, and the Gaullists were returned with a majority of about 10 1/2 to 9 million votes. It may well be that this marked the turning point in the fortunes of the PCF, which have declined drastically since then.

Reverberations from the new demands and methods of struggle continued, especially in Europe, for another year or more. In Australia they no doubt added fuel to the movement already developing against the penal powers of the Arbitration Act, which erupted and achieved success early in 1969.

The crisis in Czechoslovakia, which had been evident to an Australian delegation which visited the country in 1967, was wide and deep. At that stage conditions did not exist for an alternative leadership to emerge and work out a policy to meet it, though important theoretical work was being done by a research team headed by Radovan Richta. (A draft of the work came into the possession of ALR and was published as an ALR booklet in 1969).

Its ideas were the basis for an Action Program, hastily put together in April 1968 by a new leadership, rather reluctantly headed by Alexander Dubcek, which came to power following the resignation of First Secretary Antonin Novotny in January. It soon became clear that this new leadership commanded wide support. Then Program summed up the situation by saying that Czech society ... 

"... was making headway with great difficulty, with fateful delay and with moral-political defects in human relations ... Apprehensions had arisen about socialism, about its human mission, its human features."

It pinpointed the fatal defects of Czech society:

"The different interests and needs of people not foreseen by the system of directive decision making were taken as an undesirable obstacle and not as new needs of the life of people which have to be respected by politics. That was why the often well meant words of 'an increase in the people's participation in management' could not help, as in time this 'participation of the people' came to mean chiefly help in carrying out orders and not in settling the correctness of the decisions." (Emphasis added.)

The Program showed recognition of the wide variety of human needs, including a number of newly emerging ones, which had to be satisfied before one could be said to have reached a new stage in human development. And it argued that the fulfillment of these needs required the implementation both of more traditional and newer forms of democracy.

In Australia the younger leadership then emerging in the Australian Communist Party wholeheartedly welcomed the new outlook of the Czech Party, which happened to accord with the conclusions we were also arriving at concerning the misuse of 'actively existing socialism'.

We became alarmed, however when letters began arriving from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) with thinly veiled hints at military intervention. Our fears eased when the Czech CP and the CPSU met at Cierna-and-Tisou near the Czechoslovakian-USSR border, and seemed to arrive at an agreement in early August. But this was a mistake. In
reality the Soviet side had increased its pressure, demanding that people of their choosing should fill certain State and Party posts, and when those demands were refused, used the "agreement" to further its preparations.

Seventeen days later, on the night of August 20/21, the military invasion took place.

The events of 1968, especially in France and Czechoslovakia, brought to the fore fundamental issues concerning the strategies and the social forces necessary to contemporary social change. And in their own ways, the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam and post-capitalist countries are now at long last grappling with not dissimilar problems.

At the time, no doubt along with others, I was conscious that all this, the earlier Sino-Soviet split and our own experiences, meant that the ideological and theoretical framework associated with the days of the 'world communist movement' neither deserved to be, nor could be, restored. But what was to replace that wider framework, which shared many common positions with it and which was dominant within the left in general at that time?

Facing that question was stimulating, but (perhaps relatedly) also dangerous, like teetering on the slippery edge of a chasm where no expected hand- or footholds were to be seen.

But we were optimistic. We believed that by taking a principled and creative stand on the issues, no matter what, by changing our methods of work and our attitude to others, a new consensus, a new hegemonic view would emerge with ourselves playing a major role. Reviewing the '60s at the end of the decade in ALR, I wrote:

"Which are the most basic and lasting currents in world processes and politics is not something to dogmatise about, but I have the feeling that the next ten years, and certainly the '70s are likely to crystallise things again after the present period of 'solution' and 'fluidity'. All sorts of new movements, political formations and theoretical developments are possible, probably very different from the past."

In some respects those predictions, or hopes, have been partly realised. But in major respects they were not realised in the '70s. Nor have they been in the '80s. The left is not yet firmly on the road to getting its act together, and this has led to loss of morale and a continuing inability to reverse the drift to the right. It has formed a sort of compost nourishing those who, in the words of Joshka Fisher in the interview above, "think in categories and concepts of yesterday and not of tomorrow."

It is an unkind cut of a mischievous justice that, having spent over half a lifetime expounding and trying to consolidate theoretically those categories of yesterday, one can now find that a major obstacle to successfully countering the hegemony of capitalist ideas in society as a whole is the weight of obsolete thinking within one's own constituency, or former constituency. It may be cold, but perhaps there is a modicum of comfort in the fact that Mr Gorbachev, for example, is having a not dissimilar experience on a monumental scale. On the other hand, in the newer left, where those older conceptions generally do not even rate, lack of an overall social vision constitutes and equally difficult obstacle to overcome.

As Craig McGregor put it recently in the Sydney Morning Herald, the Master Narratives which sustained several earlier generations no longer inspire today. (And he quotes Gramsci to the effect that "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born. In the interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear." )

Less theoretically but more earthly, Joan Baez was quoted recently as recalling: "In the sixties we had a movement, a momentum — we had music, we had compassion and we had each other. We had glue, and we don't have any glue these days."

But it's not all bad. A number of basic and lasting currents in world processes and politics are to be seen which can nurture hope. Glue is there, in the form of the existing movements for change of the last twenty years and longer, even if we have not yet found the catalyst which makes it set.

ERIC AARONS was, in 1968, and is in 1988, a member of the Sydney ALR collective.
Unions have taken on a more interventionist role in recent years. Australia Reconstructed seems to have taken that process a step further. But this more 'strategic' approach has problems and pitfalls of its own...

Bob Jessop teaches in Politics at the University of Essex in England.
Gill Palmer teaches in Industrial Relations at QIT.
Geoff Dow teaches in Humanities at Griffith University.
Jason Reynolds is an economist on Bill Hayden's staff.
The discussion was chaired by Colin Mercer and Michael Dutton.

Colin: In the light of the Accord and, more recently, the ACTU's report *Australia Reconstructed*, there's been a lot of talk about new forms and new styles of unionism. One point of particular contention on the left has been the involvement of the union movement in political and economic processes involving the state and, often, the employer groups also. Geoff, you're something of a militant for this new unionism. How do you respond to some of the scepticism on the left and elsewhere to these trends? And what do you mean by 'corporatism' in this context?

Geoff: Well, the critics of these trends, I think, tend to argue that tripartite arrangements of government, unions and business, if they become institutions, are essentially undemocratic. They bypass parliamentary processes, they bypass whole lots of pluralist prerogatives. The members of these groups are often self-selected. Often they're not there so much to represent their constituents as to impose order upon their constituents. The critics of corporatism tend to see it also as a form of crisis management, a fairly arbitrary or overtly undemocratic way of solving particular political and economic problems.

The advocates of corporatism, on the other hand, see it as part of a long-term transition from the reliance on market mechanisms to a reliance on more administered, or political or institutional, mechanisms for solving economic problems. And they also tend to see it as part of a process of the expansion of democracy beyond the confines of liberal democracy (which demarcate fairly strongly the realm of parliamentary politics and exclude all economic decision making from the public arena) — and that's a critique of political democracy or liberal democracy that's been around for a couple of centuries now.

So advocates of a social democracy of this kind would argue that there is a public entitlement for people to have a say in what their health standards, or education standards, or income standards, or transport standards, or housing standards are. It takes a certain range
of aspects of living standards out of the market area.

The third stage of democracy, the corporatists would argue, is implied by the term "industrial democracy" which is to say that people have the right not only to choose governments, not only to decide publicly or politically a certain range of living standards, but also to decide the conditions under which they work, the conditions under which labour and capital come together in particular enterprises in the production process and, ultimately, to decide the whole projectory of the economy — to control macro-economic decisions in a public or political realm rather than rely simply on market mechanisms.

And, of course, if that was successful it would be very doubtful whether or not it would still be a capitalist economy. Whether corporatism is the best word to describe this process is another matter, but certainly it's an assertion that private capitalists or corporations simply do not have the right to determine the full range of economic decisions and range of products that are produced, living standards and income distribution.

Bob: Well, Geoff has not really described a particular national example but has made a general case for corporatism as a means of extending democracy from the parliamentary sphere into other spheres. This involves changing and broadening the meaning of "people" as the locus of sovereignty. In parliamentary democracy, the "people" are the individual citizens; and, in a social democracy, they would comprise households and the organisations of civil society.

But economic democracy is ambiguous: the people could refer to a broad national-popular control over the economy or to workers' and managers' control over specific firms or sectors. In the latter case there is a danger that corporatism could lead to narrow productivist cartels which operate at the expense of consumers, other economic interests, or a democratically accountable state. This is where national experience could be useful: if we're to think of corporatism as a potential form of economic democracy, then we have to look at how broadly the "people" should be understood in relation to economic democracy. I think that judgments about whether corporatism is a good or bad thing will depend very much on the particular forms assumed by this extension of democracy into the economic field.

Here, a lot will depend on the levels at which corporatism operates. It could be micro-corporatism at the level of the firm: Japanese style corporatism is relevant here — a corporatism without direct involvement of the state or the labour movement. But it could also be at the industrial or the regional level. An instance here would be corporatism as a means of restructurings the steel or coal industries in certain regions of West Germany: this involved all the local firms in an industry, the relevant trade union, and the local state.

Finally, we could have macro-corporatism at national level: this would go beyond the involvement of management and workers acting in their immediate "economic-corporate" interests to include other forms of popular involvement through political parties, unions, consumer bodies, interest groups and so forth. If we accept Geoff's argument that corporatism is one way to extend economic democracy, then the interesting question is when does economic democracy come into conflict with the political and social sides of democratic involvement. This would have to be studied from country to country and period to period.

Geoff: Are you saying that in particular national contexts, that the micro level corporatism can simply be a reactionary and undemocratic way of securing solutions to other problems?

Bob: Depending on how trade unions are organised, micro-level corporatism could become selective. The restructuring of steel in West Germany involved mainly a skilled, male, German core of workers cooperating with employers to reorganise the industry, and unskilled workers, women workers, and immigrant workers suffered. You have to consider who's being represented by the unions: if it's only part of the workforce, then, whether "reactionary" is an appropriate term or not, significant groups will be ignored.

Colin: Bob, how does that characterisation fit your experience of other national corporatist models?

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Colin: One of the accusations that was levelled against the Accord was that, for all its virtues, it never managed effectively to sell itself to the majority of the population. It sold itself within, as it were, the corporatist structures, within the various representative bodies, but never effectively became a popular Accord with the majority of the Australian population. Is that a fair characterisation, Jason?

Jason: Even up until the last federal election, I'm pretty sure that the majority of Australian people would not have had a clear idea of what the implications of the Accord were in total. The government has still attempted to explain to people exactly what the benefits of the Accord have been, usually it has talked in terms of how many jobs have been created, what's the situation with the growth in
1968: paving stones in Paris, tanks in Prague, and the NLF in Saigon. It all seems so long ago ... Which is why some more recent history wouldn't go amiss, either. Once you've finished brushing up on 1968 in this issue, ALR gives you a chance to catch up on 1987, too, at no extra cost. Just subscribe on this form before the end of May and we'll send you the last four issues of ALR from 1987. Absolutely free.

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Australia, inflation and that sort of thing. But since the industry policy obviously only affects certain groups (there's something like eleven industry councils), you can't get that concept across to all the Australian people because it just doesn't affect them. So there's a whole range of issues on which the general public does not understand the overall implications of what's been going on.

Gill: I've been amazed at the survival of the Accord. Coming from Britain, I've seen Accord-type policies repeatedly become discredited and fail to gain popular support. There it's been the anti-corporatist appeals to market flexibility that have won elections. In Australia, the Accord was apparently not an electoral liability in the 1987 elections. No doubt the Joh factor — dividing the opposition — partly explained Hawke's victory, but it does seem there was some basis of support for Accord-type policies. I would argue that this could be because Australia has a long tradition of a form of corporatism in the Conciliation and Arbitration system.

Colin: You're arguing that the industrial tribunals are a form of corporatism and therefore corporatist structures are not new to Australia?

Gill: Yes, most discussion of Australian corporatism has been associated with the Hawke government. But it seems to me that in the Conciliation and Arbitration system. Australia has over 80 years of experience of a form of corporatism. Picking up Bob's point about different types and levels of corporatism, the tribunals have provided a form of tripartite administration over pay and hours of work that is far more corporatist than any collective bargaining system of industrial relations.

In the early stages, the Conciliation and Arbitration system was also associated with tariff policies to provide the administered regulation of product markets. The degree of centralisation of the decision making has varied, but the system has given Australia a uniquely long tradition of using notions of the "public interest" in the administration of economic issues. Also, the social networks of the "Industrial Relations Club" have provided unions' and employers' representatives with experience of operating this type of system. Hawke's policies are not such a radical break with the past as similar policies were in the UK. The tribunals have provided a form of tripartite or pressure group administration, even if only over a limited range of economic issues.

Geoff: I must say that I'm reasonably unimpressed by the argument that says the Accord wasn't sold and wasn't a popular document. Because following the demise of the Whitlam government, the Metal Workers and a few other unions took on the most expansive campaign of public involvement in economic policy seen since the 1940s in Australia and they produced document after document, asserting the right of the trade unions to have some say in macroeconomic policy. The Accord was the product of seven or eight years of fairly democratic and widespread and sustained involvement by a whole lot of groups, especially trade unions, but not only them. So that when the Accord document was finally put together by 1983, the right of unions to be involved in these things had been asserted for quite a few years.

With respect to exactly how it is operated, one must say that it has meant different things for different people. And that's important, for to many people in the government it was always primarily an incomes policy, and Keating still refers to the term Prices and Incomes Accord. Yet the document is actually called "An Accord between the ACTU and the ALP concerning Economic Policy" — and when you look through it it doesn't refer only to the demand for indexation, it refers to industry policy and a full range of supporting policies; and in fact, the reason why the unions were so happy with it is that, precisely, it did depart quite dramatically from the British experience of incomes policies during the Wilson and Callaghan eras. Incomes policies had been consistently foisted upon unions and then reneged upon by the government so that real wages had dropped.

But with indexation in Australia, real incomes actually dropped less than in almost every other OECD country, and the unions, quite rightly, it seems to me, saw the value of having that sort of protection to wages, to enable them to divert their energies to other strategies — for example, the industry policy issues, taxation reform, budgetary reform. Now, the fact that all those things have been less than brilliantly successful isn't the point: the point is that the persistence of indexation during the Fraser and the first stages of the Hawke government gave the unions a quite valuable breathing space, and since they've certainly asserted their right to be involved in macroeconomic policy and especially in industry policy.

Now, alongside the successes of the Accord, there is a whole list of downside items — the floating of the dollar, deregulation of the financial markets, the continuing deficit paranoia, the continuing powers of the Treasury, the continuing power of the industries annihilation commission, the complete failure of the government to take industry policy seriously, the commitment of Hawke to the trilogy, reducing the size of the public sector, reducing taxation, the privatisation bandwagon that's developing at the moment — and at some point I think all those things tip the balance, and the bottom line might well be a negative one. But let's remember that all those things are things that the government are doing outside the Accord: the Accord itself doesn't invite any of those things.

Michael: Can I come in and defend Colin here? It seems to me that, in a sense, what you have said, Geoff, about how the Accord has been sold is right, but it's nevertheless been sold in a very particular way — and I think that what Colin's trying to get at is the fact that the Accord has only been accepted in a very passive way. So that when employers did do that at the tax summit, it didn't lead to a mass popular backlash. And I think
that that was what Colin was trying to get at — that there wasn’t popular mobilisation around the Accord. Now I think that this raises a wider question about the relationships between the Accord and popular movements outside the trade union movement.

Colin: Perhaps I could add something to that. It seems to me that one of the major weaknesses of corporate structures is their vulnerability to populist movements of the New Right. That’s certainly, I think, the case in Britain. All the major institutions of corporate tripartite bargaining have disappeared into the background. It’s been one of the great successes of a form of New Right populism under Margaret Thatcher. And one of the problems that follows on from that is if, say, the Australian government is not effectively able to mobilise people around key issues like the social wage, taxation policy and so on, then it is leaving its flank open to the New Right.

I think we saw that in the election campaign last year. Certain weaknesses were revealed in the corporatist structure which Joh and the Australian Small Business Association and Andrew Hay’s organisation and so on were able to attack, and present corporate as essentially a deal between government and the unions. That, I think, is the most glaring weakness of corporatism which needs to be addressed.

Bob, would you like to say something about Thatcherism in that context?

Bob: Yes. But before talking about Thatcherism, we should clear up the meaning of “popular”. There are three different definitions floating around in our discussion of the Accord: was it generally understood by the people, was it popular with them, and was there a popular mobilisation around it? I’m not an expert on Australia, nor the Accord but I’m reasonably convinced that the Accord’s purpose was widely understood (at least at the general macro-level, even if its specific implications for particular industries might not have been). It also seems to have been popular for some time. But I don’t know of any corporatist system anywhere which has enjoyed massive popular mobilisation either to introduce it or to defend it when under attack. This is very relevant to defending corporatism when it’s under attack from the right.

This is where British experience is relevant. Corporatist experiments in Britain have generally been ad hoc, introduced without prior preparation, typically for purposes of short-term crisis management. This is in clear contrast to what Jason and Geoff have said about the introduction of the Accord here in Australia. In Britain, corporatist strategies are adopted when there is a crisis requiring urgent remedial action; they quickly become means of incomes restraint, mobilising union leaders to police their members’ pay demands; and, because they are usually crisis-measures, governments have little room for economic and political manoeuvre and find it hard to deliver their side of any corporatist bargain.

In turn, this provokes rank-and-file discontent and, where it seems that corporatist arrangements are working against the interests of capital, widespread agitation in the press as well. This reinforces the negative, restrictive aspects of corporatism and makes it vulnerable to charges of statism, directionism, lack of democracy, overweening union power, etc. That’s why corporatism in Britain is hard to defend against rightwing agitation and populist Thatcherist attacks.

This can be contrasted with the heyday of corporatism in Britain: the Second World War. Corporatism was introduced when the labour movement was strong; labour, rather than finance, was the crucial resource in short supply; there was widespread popular mobilisation in a “People’s War”; and corporatist institutions played a key role in organising the war effort. In this period, corporatism was effective and provided part of the background to the successful implementation of the postwar settlement. It was then dismantled during the boom years of the Fifties and became hard to reinvigorate during crises.

But where corporatism has a long history, is widely supported, has a range of functions it can play, and a range of forces with vested interests in its survival, then corporatism can be used in crisis management with some effect. Even if specific forces fear that their interests are being damaged, they can hope to reorganise and turn corporatist institutions to their advantage at a later date.

Geoff: I’ve a feeling that the popular and democratic elements which are or are not in corporatist institutions aren’t the whole story. For example, take the common case — full employment. It seems to me that this benefits everyone in society, whether they are waged, unwaged, male or female, young or old, in or out of the workforce — full employment is a sign of healthy society. And full employment doesn’t mean a whole lot of labour market segmentation, and a whole pile of really ratshit jobs. So, if unions can fight for full employment — and unions are the only organisations in modern capitalist societies that do consistently fight for full employment — then it is a leap forward. And the extent of its popular support or democratic sanctioning is not really the issue.

Gill: The experience of the arbitration system puts a cloud on being too romantic about the
potential democracy that we see ahead of us in the long march to corporatism. I mean, the development of these sorts of strategies might have a lot of advantages, but it isn't necessarily going to be the rosy populist democracy that I think Geoff painted at the start. Certain changes might occur, slightly different priorities might prefer these structures, but basic power structures in society are still obviously important in the allocation of resources.

Colin: What about the current strategy of the Labor government in relation to the tradition of corporatism? How do strategies like the deregulation of the financial sector and the possibility of privatisation of other major public utilities fit into the structure of corporatism in Australia?

Geoff: If those things go ahead, then the whole thing would be sunk, I imagine.

Colin: Is that your feeling Jason?

Jason: Financial deregulation has already occurred in Australia, to a large extent, and it hasn't been sunk at all. Privatisation is a different issue altogether. My personal position is that, generally, the people of Australia won't go for the massive selling off of assets that have been in public hands for a long period of time. There probably is some sort of case by case approach you could take — there might be no real necessity for government to have control mainly because monopoly power may not exist in a particular industry any more. I think, because things change over a long period of time, you can't have an absolute "no go" position on it, but I think in general there would be very little change at all as far as privatisation is concerned.

Michael: Geoff, why do you think major privatisation would sink any corporatist strategy?

Geoff: First of all, because privatisation per se reduces the democratic sphere of the economy, however imperfect that has been, and increases private control of the economy. In that sense, it is undemocratic. Secondly, the privatisation of certain public sector activities — let's take Telecom, for instance — simply takes away from the public sector, or from the public realm, the possibility of quite fruitful and useful cross-subsidisation of other activities.

Bob: Can I come back on two issues? Firstly, I doubt whether privatisation actually spells disaster for corporatism: Sweden is meant to have a successful corporatism, but it also has one of the smallest public, industrial sectors in Europe. It's not a question of private or public ownership but of involvement in a concerted economic strategy that's important. Secondly, it's not whether firms are generating enough profits in some areas to be able to cross-subsidise other activities that is important. The crucial question is how far activities deemed through democratic debate to be in the public interest can be subsidised: a government could give grants-in-aid to private firms to secure goods and services deemed in the public interest. Conversely, a state firm which cross-subsidised without public debate might not be acting in the public interest.

Neither of these points means that I think privatisation is a good thing. I think it has clear dangers. But analyses of corporatism show that it's not the legal ownership of industry which matters for successful corporatism: Sweden has limited state industry, but Austria (another successful case) has extensive state ownership.

What's important is the existence of a coherent industrial core with strong intra- and inter-industry linkages which are seen as such by government, unions, and business and can be exploited to pursue a coherent national industrial strategy. For linkages of this kind reinforce interdependencies and make it important for different interests to work out a common strategy. In this context, private owners can become trustees of the public interest (as in the Swedish model); and state industry managers can take account of private sector interests (as in the Austrian model).

It's here that I see the dangers from privatisation: it could encourage neglect of the public interest. This is more likely in today's context of financial deregulation and transnational firms — which reinforces the narrow, short-term outlook as regards financial returns and encourages transnational companies to look at international linkages rather than the national core.

Colin: Can I bring us round then to the pursuit of the ACTU's report, Australia Reconstructed? Perhaps I can ask for general comments on the report's significance and potential.

Gill: I think, in terms of demonstrating the initiatives that the union movement is making in Australia, it's quite remarkable and very interesting. You have here an extraordinarily well-organised ACTU officialdom which is taking initiatives on the political and economic fronts — which is very unusual if you think about union movements in many more liberal countries.

Now, to the extent to which this can be fed through to policy directions by government depends entirely upon the power structures and the opposition of anti-corporatist forces. We haven't talked a great deal about the anti-corporatist forces, but I think we shouldn't forget the importance of
international financial capital as a major anti-corporatist pressure on all societies, including Australia. I think it's evident in Australia that some of these attempts to widen the unions' influence in economic regulation are going to be very fiercely resisted — successfully too no doubt in many ways.

Bob: Yes, I found the document very interesting — especially as such a document could never have been produced in Britain. But I think that we should take the chance to discuss its broader political significance in the way that Colin and Mike attempted earlier. Because it seems to me that, however you read *Australia Reconstructed*, it's primarily about an alternative economic strategy: it is less concerned with political and social reconstruction, political and social democracy. This means that it has neglected the role of various forces which might have an interest in democratising Australian society and/or in supporting an alternative economic strategy (AES). The document focuses on strategic unionism as the driving force behind reconstruction and it addresses largely government, the unions, and the ALP. But it doesn't consider what other forces should be addressed, what forms of political mobilisation there should be outside the trade unions, how anti-corporatist forces could be neutralised. The British experience is relevant here. For Mrs Thatcher's ability to roll back the gains of the social democratic postwar settlement depends crucially on the isolation of the trade union movement.

Geoff: Bob, what are the forces you think are important, and what do you mean by broader support for these interventionist strategies?

Bob: Well, strategic unionism involves tripartite restructuring of the Australian economy. Let's look at some aspects of restructuring. The Green movement could have a major interest in the forms of restructuring and it's worth addressing this interest. In West Germany, for instance, Green mobilisation has been undercut because some Christian Democrats have advocated "ecological modernisation" as part of German industrial strategy: in Australia, Greens could be mobilised behind the AES of local green concerns were addressed and, with a worldwide interest in green issues, developing ecologically sound products might even advance the international competitiveness of the Australian economy.

Take another example: the peace movement. Is industrial restructuring to be neutral about the military-industrial complex or should it be concerned with promoting civilian R & D and civilian industries? This also has implications for jobs. Should one defend full employment by supporting military and/or ecologically unsound industries? A third area is feminism. Industrial restructuring has clear implications for the restructuring of the labour market, the welfare state, the nature of household work. Whether or not women are directly involved in the labour market and are or are not union members, it is clear that they have an interest in reconstruction. *Australia Reconstructed* addresses the issues of education and reskilling the labour force but it doesn't look at its implications for the welfare state — something of special concern to women's movements.

So there are three examples — corporatism will bring full employment: full employment in ecologically unsound industries, in the military-industrial complex, in low-paid, part-time, hire-and-fire jobs for women? Surely not. This is where it would pay political dividends to broaden the debate beyond strategic unionism: to mobilise support and to help defend the alternative economic strategy when it comes under attack — as it surely will.

Geoff: I agree with you that the form of restructuring is absolutely important. But what I feel a bit worried about is that these are not new issues. A concern for particular types of restructuring, particular types of economic or industrial activity is a concern that has been in the post-Keynesian lexicon for forty years, from Joan Robinson onwards.

What I'm a little bit worried about, as well, is the tendency to take on board the Greens' argument as an anti-growth argument. Environmentalists sometimes say that economic growth is the problem and that trying to return to it is not the solution. And I think that is fundamentally misguided. Because, quite clearly, you can have high levels of economic growth and employment creation in areas which don't produce any environmental devastation at all (the service industries are good examples of that). Similarly, since 1974, we've had pretty well the demise of economic growth in the west, yet environmental devastation and production of harmful products goes on unabated. With the issue of feminism, and the feminist critique of...
these sorts of models, we've a slightly different set of questions. Once again, full employment advocates would certainly only advocate high quality jobs, jobs with career prospects, and decent pay, without segmentation, without the option of women being brought in and out of the workforce, as it suits the cycles of the economy — no advocate of full employment wants flexible workers in that sense.

Once again, I resist the idea that discussions of the social wage and the welfare state are explicitly feminist issues. The rights of welfare clients, the demands for decommodified production, for high pensions, for unemployment benefits, for housing to be subsidised and so forth, are not feminist issues: they've been labour movement issues for a hundred years. All those issues, it seems to me, don't necessarily require a specific constituency to advocate them. You don't need environmentalists to say that we've got to be careful about what sorts of products we make. You don't need feminists to say that we've got to have a decent welfare state and no segmented labour forces — any sensible person would argue these things.

Bob: I think this argument is terribly confused. It's not just a question of who is competent to speak on these topics — even if any sensible person might argue along these lines. It's a question of the balance of forces. And the balance of forces will be more sound ecologically, sounder in feminist terms, sounder on peace issues, if the AES gets support not only from the unions but from the green movement, feminists, and peace campaigners. If there is broad popular mobilisation and wide alliances, then the alternative strategy will be easier to defend.

Not only that, the record of the union movement on these issues is not as wonderful as Geoff has painted it. It may be true that some members of the union movement have spoken up — "sensibly" — on these issues; but the union movement's record is far from unambiguous as a whole. Mobilising other forces around these issues will help to change attitudes and policies within the union movement itself. It's not at all a question of who is competent to talk on such issues: I'm not trying to say that only women can talk on women's issues any more than Geoff is saying that only unions are competent to talk about economic issues. It's a question of mobilisation. The Nationals, for instance, probably don't care about what the unions say about the AES and its implications for women: the unions aren't part of their natural constituency. But if women start raising these issues within the Liberal and National parties, then it becomes relevant. What's crucial is changing the balance of forces.

Gill: We're talking about who has the power to affect these things and represent certain interests. I think what we're getting to is the limits of trade unions as representatives of class interests. I think trade unions are very important: they are usually by far the best mobilised of progressive movements and they can attack and address economic issues. But it's a mistake to assume that, without extra mobilisation and support, they can address issues like the green issues, the peace issues and feminist issues. Unions are institutions which are shaped, to some degree, by the economic structures in which they exist and they are formed around the economic interests which employers generate. So it is naive I think to assume that the unions can represent all social and class interests. They can't represent broader interests on questions of, for example, whether jobs should be saved in the rainforests, when they are representing forest workers. You do need to have these other mobilisations to make sure that these wider issues are "fed through" — the union movement can do a fair bit but there are limits to the extent to which unions, formed as they are around our economic structures in society, can represent these wider issues that Bob is talking about.

Michael: I'm not sure just how far Geoff's history goes back when he says that "we've always been concerned with women's issues and the environmental issues". He seems to be saying that there has never been a problem for economism in the left — it just seems to me rather that these issues have sometimes been addressed, but they have been addressed in partial and limited ways.

Colin: On that one I've got a comment which I'll put in — which is this: the question, it seems to me, is really to do with strategic alliances: that is, strategic alliances in order for

Geoff: You don't need feminists to say that we've got to have a decent welfare state... any sensible person would argue that

corporatist structures to maintain themselves against a populist movement, such as the Job for Canberra push early last year.

Geoff: I'm less convinced of the need to form alliances as an important issue — that's an electoral issue, but Bob Hawke can do that quite well.

Gill: It seems to me that, on the contrary, the formation of alliances is the essence of corporatism. We're looking at the strategic alliances that
are formed within power groups within society — that’s what it is, isn’t it?

Geoff: No, not at all. To me corporatism is nothing to do with building alliances between different groups, but expanding a range of issues which come up for democratic decision.

Bob: Who is making these democratic decisions?

Geoff: Trade unions, employers and governments is one way.

Bob: So, if I’m not involved in a trade union, I can’t be represented: that doesn’t sound very democratic. How can it be democratic when there are constituencies which don’t get represented? Or are you arguing that, as long as unions are calling for “jobs for all”, everyone is virtually represented because everyone has an interest in full employment? That might be an argument for changing the decision-makers; it doesn’t lead to an expansion of democracy. Democracy operates because there are clear institutional channels for groups to feed into the decision-making process.

Geoff: That’s not how you’d define economic democracy. I do think what you said facetiously about full employment is true, I do think people are represented and benefited whether they know it or not. It’s not a matter of having every employer represented — just as it’s not a matter of having every worker, non-worker, unemployed worker, spouse of a worker, represented — it’s having a new basis for making the decisions about income distribution and investment that’s important.

Colin: But there is a problem there in recognising what used to be called the specificity of the political. In other words, there is at least a relative autonomy to the political domain which means that, no matter what economic decisions are taken, no matter what corporate bargaining structures are used, the outcome is not necessarily guaranteed by those processes of decision making alone. That’s one of the things the New Right is most skilled at understanding, and Margaret Thatcher clearly recognises.

Popular capitalism, as it’s called in England now, is not just the outcome of certain economic changes, it’s also mobilised by a wider political and ideological battle as well. An example is the recent campaign around selling British Gas shares — tell Sid you can go and buy shares at the local branch of the bank — went the ads, to which the reply was “Tell Sid he already owns it!” That sort of concerted, partly political-cultural campaign is also quite important and can, in turn, decisively affect the nature of those economic decisions which are taken in the first place. The idea that there are automatic political outcomes in a representative domain, after corporate decisions are made, doesn’t seem to square with the contemporary reconstruction of corporate structures in countries like Britain.

Bob: How can it be democratic when there are constituencies which don’t get represented?

Geoff: I don’t think there are automatic outcomes. The singular fact about most public policy discussion these days is that no state controls the outcomes of its public policy decisions, completely. If that were the case, there would be no unemployment or inflation anywhere. But what I do say is that if you try to control a capitalist economy, you do it much better if you have it made according to these corporatist, administered, explicitly negotiated criteria, than you do if you have it made according to market criteria, criteria of profitability.

Gill: But you can’t be that absolute, can you? I mean, we have enough experience of fascist regimes to realise that the corporatist institutions or mock forms of corporatist institutions can be used for objectives which, presumably, you would not accept. It all depends on the extent to which you see the representative organs as being genuinely representative; it’s a question of what power they mobilise against the countervailing power of capital — and that varies in each context. I don’t think you can make blanket assumptions that corporatism is good or bad — it depends really on the power forces that are flowing through it to affect the eventual decisions.

Geoff: Yes, of course. Clearly, you can have fascist corporatism which is not at all committed. Actually, it’s technically efficient in getting full employment ... but not what we would advocate.

Bob: When we’re discussing corporatism, we’ve got to be very careful that we don’t just look at the lessons of the 1960s and 1970s. We have to look at how corporatism might function in the coming decades. The shift away from mass production to more flexible production also implies a shift of the key sites for economic decision-making towards the enterprise level. This is already evident in Europe with the trend towards micro-corporatism (plant level bargaining, works councils, etc.); the danger here is that, the lower the level at which corporatism operates, the more likely is it that significant interests are ignored.

This is even more dangerous for democracy when the trend is towards greater segmentation in the labour market: a division between a skill-flexible, well-paid core in an internal labour market and a periphery of low-paid, less skilled workers in an external labour market. Such trends could undermine unions’ claims to be democratic, since the interests of the core are not those of the workforce as a whole — let alone the people as a whole.

Thus, we run the risk of developing a selective corporatism rather than the universal, democratic corporatism Geoff would like to see. If we take this threat seriously, then we must look seriously at the question of alliances.

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OZMOSIS

Looking at Pop Culture

Is there a real Australian identity? Tony Bennett is not so sure.

At the end of Mythologies, Roland Barthes argues that the mythologist must place himself or herself outside the myths he studies if he or she is to unveil their political significance. "To decipher the Tour de France or the 'good French wine'," he writes, "is to cut oneself off from those who are entertained or warmed up by them." The mythologist's connection with the world, he concludes, must be "of the order of sarcasm".

In Myths of Oz, John Fiske, Bob Hodge and Graeme Turner* set out to do for Australian culture what Barthes did for French culture: to read its myths and strip them of their innocence. They thus distance themselves from works like Russell Ward's Australian Legend which chart an anxious course in search of a true Australian identity or character. Instead, their concern is with the ways in which meanings and images of Australianess are organised in what they call the "lived texts" of Australian popular culture — the pub, the beach, the video-games parlour, the shopping centre.

Approaching these as organised clusters of signs, they seek to reveal the meanings and political values that are invested in these spheres of everyday culture as well as to show how they are made use of and negotiated by their participants.

In this alone, Myths of Oz stands out from the bulk of reading matter destined to come our way in 1988. In calling attention to the heavy burden of ideological meaning which informs the seemingly trivial and incidental aspects of day-to-day life, the authors jolt the reader into an awareness of the cultural significance of aspects of behaviour which might otherwise pass unnoticed. The role of the pub (primarily for men) as a transition zone between the worlds of work and home, mediating the values of mateship and domesticity; the pleasures of looking and of being looked at associated with shopping malls; the ambiguous play with the structures of voyeurism at nudist beaches; the meanings invested in video games by unemployed youths — these are among the issues which Fiske, Hodge and Turner examine, probing them to unearth a rich and, at times, unexpected harvest of meanings.

They wear their theory lightly, too. While drawing on the disciplines of semiotics and cultural studies, they do so sparingly, avoiding lengthy theoretical expositions. For the most part, they make their points by way of details, non-technical discussions of particular examples with the result that while the analysis is often provoking, the reading is easy-going.

In brief, it's a book well worth buying and reading, and one likely, I would guess, to enjoy considerable influence — especially when its own cultural and political aspirations are taken into account. For, while Fiske et al seek, in emulating Barthes, to subject their chosen myths of Oz to a critical gaze, there is also a countervailing tendency to their discussion. Indeed, in introducing their concerns, they state their primary intention as that of refuting the condescension of those critics who have long "bewailed the lack of an Australian culture". The consequence is a degree of advocacy for things Australian, a commitment to show the forces of culture at work where they had previously been thought to be absent.

This does not, as I have already noted, result in a search for a single defining essence of Australianess. The pub and the beach, they write, are best seen as sites where Australians construct (and deconstruct) a plenitude of meanings, using a multitude of practices — not a single meaning with a single value" (p. ix). The stress, then, is on the plural — on Australianesses rather than Australianness.

Nonetheless, in their commitment to identify sources of cultural richness and creativity which might be regarded as distinctively Australian, the authors approach Australian popular culture with a view to constituting it as a part of the nation's inheritance, its distinctive cultural possession. This, in turn, means that, in lieu of the Barthesian stance of sarcasm, they tend rather to write as insiders — "as typical enough denizens of Australia" (p. viii) — with an evident warmth and enthusiasm for many of the forms of everyday culture they discuss. While careful to note the many differences and contradictions which the concept of an Australian culture subsumes, Fiske and his coauthors clearly feel it important to establish that some forms of cultural activity are distinctively Australian and worth marking as such.

This foregrounds an important difference between the European contexts from which Fiske, Hodge and Turner derive most of their theories and the Australian situation to and in which they are applied. Definitions of the distinctiveness of English culture, for example, are so massively mortgaged to bourgeois conceptions of the nation that the self-respecting leftwing critic would

* John Fiske, Bob Hodge and Graeme Turner, Myths of Oz (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1987).
rarely regard this ground as one worth struggling for — although the situation is different in Scotland and Wales. In these cases, as in Australia, the fact that definitions of the national culture are, in part, shaped through the process of their emergence in opposition to the dominance of imported cultures lends such questions a political pertinence which, in other contexts, would be lacking.

That said, even where it seems to have a radical potential, the cultural currency of nationalism is made of volatile stuff and is likely to run amok unless handled carefully. Despite its many virtues, Myths of Oz is not — for me, at any rate — circumspect enough in this respect.

Hawkespeak — an uneasy hybrid of political officialese and the language of mateship

or at least not consistently so. This is especially true of the final chapter which, in the end, forsakes the brief of analysing myths of Oz in favour of embodying them.

Yet it gets off to a splendid start. The chapter opens with a discussion of the Australian accent and finds, in the stress Australian speech places on vowels in contrast to the English stress on consonants, a source of unity despite regional variations in language-use. However, it is also recognised that powerful differentiating forces are at work within this unity, sometimes giving rise to highly distinctive speech forms in their attempts to straddle and reconcile contradictory patterns of verbal stress and intonation. The discussions of "Hawkespeak" — an uneasy hybrid of political officialese and the language of mateship — is especially interesting in this regard.

In arguing that Australian pronunciation is characterised by a strong, underlying unity despite apparent regional and social variations, Fiske, Hodge and Turner are on strong, well-documented ground. I think they err, however, when they go on to argue:

Just as there is an Australian way of producing the sounds of English, there is an Australian way of doing many other things, such as working and playing, eating and dressing. We call all these part of an Australian accent, in a broader sense of the word. They all work in the same way, through relative shifts against a common standard, not an absolute difference. They all have a common function, to define an Australian identity.

Although intended fairly loosely, the analogy is a misleading one. There is no reason, because ways of speaking are similar, that ways of doing other things should also exhibit shared national characteristics. There is an important shift of ground here from the determinations peculiar to a specific practice to the more general concept of a national culture which leads the authors astray. Moreover, in seeking to distil a distinctive and common Australian accent from a wide variety of activities — from the way sports are played to the way a garbo wears his boots and stubbies they end up not quite so far away from Russell Ward as they imagine. Dedicated to cricket, thongs and vegemite and other things that go Oz in the night, the concluding sections of the book Australianise just about everything in sight through a somewhat violent process of "ozmosis". Particular signs of Australianness become the genuine article.

The objection here, of course, is not that particular groups of Australians have not developed distinctive forms of culture and behaviour. They manifestly have and it is well worth saying so. But such distinctiveness is always double-edged, differentiating such pursuits characteristically to be conducted in other countries (whose cultures are rarely so even as they might appear from a distance) but also from the ways in which other Australians engage in them.

Fiske et al. would, I think, acknowledge this point. Yet the organisation of their discussion — seeking an Australian accent rather than a variety of such accents — tends to mute its implications. For they present the relations between different Australian accents, and the plurality of meanings and values embodied in them, such that one such accent, in being privileged above others, serves to represent a true and authentic Australianness, the real thing.

In taking Broad Australian to typify the working class as the sole source of authentic Australian linguistic creativity, "Even in Australia today," they write, "creativity still comes from below and is appropriated from above. Change that is recognised as both real and Australian, still, will have popular or working class markers attached." (p. 168) Nor is this limited to questions of language.

"In the accent of footwear as of voice," they contend, "raising the class decreases the Australianness." (p. 176) Garbos wear boots in an authentically Australian way; doctors playing garbo for the day don't.

To be clear: neither the linguistic nor the sartorial creativity of working people is in question here. The problem rather consists in the very different operation which transforms this creativity into a privileged marker of Australianness. For, at least in Barthes' book, it is in precisely this operation — making one set of signs (of working classness) stand for another (the nation) — that the essence of myth consists. Where their discussion takes on this aspect, Fiske and his coauthors cease to be mythologists and become myth-makers.

Or, more accurately perhaps: myth-tellers. For their arguments have a familiar ring about them. Drawing on British sub-cultural theory and grafting this onto the tradition of radical nationalism, they suggest that Australian culture is most authentically itself when it emerges from below and embodies, however embryonically, resistance to the status quo. When different forms of Australianness are compared, this always proves to be the decisive factor in discriminating between them, the means of calibrating their
degree of Australianness. There are many styles of domestic architecture in Australia but that which is distinctively Australian has a working-class inflection that is opposed to middle-class restraint. The surfer and the lifesaver are both Australian icons, but the former is preferred as the representative of a subculture which has been continuously and coherently oppositional to the dominant culture. Why is this?

In Australian patterns of representation of the two groups, if the lifesaver is culture the surfer is nature; if the lifesaver is responsible, law-abiding and community spirited, the surfer is irresponsible, feckless and "a bludger"; if the lifesaver is civilised, the surfer is primitive; the lifesaver is the land, the surfer the sea. (p. 66)

Elsewhere, in their discussion of the layout of homes and gardens, or that of Kings Park in Perth, the authors of Myths of Oz use the opposition between nature and culture to great effect in teasing out the organisation of particular cultural sites. Yet at others — and I think this is the central ambiguity of the book — their own analysis becomes complicit with a particular mythic ordering of the relations between nature and culture in which the former is associated with Australia, the people, the working classes, informality, resistance, sexuality; and the latter with Englishness, the middle classes, constraint, the law, sexual restraint. While, in part, it's argued that this is how some myths of Oz are structured, it's also maintained that these myths — but only these — have a ring of truth about them.

While I think this strand in the book's argument is a pity — for Australian populism shows every sign of getting along quite nicely without the added support of cultural studies — it is only one strand among many in what remains a richly argued and rewarding book. I think it would have been more so, however, for a touch more Barthesian sarcasm and a little less indulgent basking in the warmth of a familiar culture. A little more political nerve in tackling the working-class signifiers of Australianness with less sentimentality would also have been welcome.

Yet perhaps this is the prejudiced reaction of one to whom, as a "new chum", the more distanced, outsider position Barthes advocates comes more easily. And perhaps, therefore, I shouldn't press my case too hard. National peculiarities are tricky things to meddle in. Graeme Turner recounts the discomfort he felt in England while staying with a couple "who used to fill the bath every Friday night, pop a little weed in, and allow their goldfish to 'take a walk'." At least this tells us why the English have baths. What puzzles me is: what else does he think Friday nights are for?

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Theme parks are a relatively recent addition to the leisure industry in Australia. While most of us have heard of them, there have been few Australian equivalents to Disneyland until the last few years. Who cares? You may well ask. Who needs roller coasters, Yogi Bear lookalikes, and mock pirate fights? Well, several American corporations and local investors think that we do, and since the early 'eighties, a spate of theme parks has sprung up, supposedly offering us poor deprived Australians new forms of pleasure.

Australia's Wonderland is one of them. Opened in December 1985, it occupies an enormous site on the western outskirts of Sydney, near Mt Druitt. Taft Broadcasting, the American company which produces Hanna Barbera cartoons, set up Australia's Wonderland in a joint venture with the State Superannuation Board and Leighton Holdings, a construction company. Finance has come from Westpac, and there is an array of corporate sponsors sponsoring various rides.

These economic details are important. When Taft approached the NSW government with its proposal, then-Premier Neville Wran apparently fell over himself with enthusiasm and support for the project. This seems to have had a lot to do with Taft's choice of site. In targeting the Western Suburbs, after several other sites were rejected, Australia's Wonderland was able to represent itself as the saviour of what is popularly depicted as Sydney's most economically depressed and culturally deprived region. Feasibility studies indicated Mt. Druitt as suitable for several reasons: people appeared to have more disposable income there than in the heavily mortgaged belt; the population of Sydney was moving west; fifty acres were needed for carparks and expansion; and it was close to a freeway. It had the essential ingredients: population, money and highway access.

Taft's promotion of Wonderland as an economic saviour of the west played on familiar themes about leisure and tourism industries as the growth areas of the future. The negative impacts of these sorts of developments were ignored in a blaze of publicity promoting a vision of clean, family fun offering non-stop entertainment as well as lots of profits and jobs. However, a close analysis of what many of these jobs are really like tends to challenge claims about the leisure industry as the saviour of the economy.

The majority of staff at Australia's Wonderland are young and employed on a seasonal basis. They have to comply with an extraordinary set of dress and behaviour regulations. The corporate philosophy at Australia's Wonderland demands that each worker acquire the art of what is referred to in the business as "aggressive hospitality" — a technique for ensuring that each visitor leaves with a feeling of individual attention. This is achieved via workers' use of phrases like "we hope you enjoyed the ride" and "please come again", maintenance of eye contact and continual smiling. Accompanying these behaviour regulations is a series of dress rules which ensure a uniformity of appearance among workers who are all expected to appear as wholesome, clean, "kids next door". As one of the training videos used at Australia's Wonderland continually urges:
“Creating fun for others can be frustrating and difficult work. The business of fun is hard work.”

While selection of the western suburbs was sensible inasmuch as it provided an enormous pool of unemployed teenage labour, the site has produced a range of other unforeseen problems. The western suburbs population was seen as an essential market. But, for the place to make a profit, all of Sydney had to be targeted. This has proved difficult. In the first year of operation, 1.2 million people visited, significantly less than the 1.5 million market research predicted. Subsequent years have not seen a dramatic increase in attendance, and investors are getting pretty anxious. This failure to reach estimates has been explained by management in two ways. Firstly, Australians’ supposed lack of knowledge about theme parks — “they need to be educated about them” — and secondly, by the fact that market research has shown a reluctance from North Shore and Southern Suburbs dwellers to venture west.

Much as promotions may claim that Wonderland is for all Australians, its site has connotations which are difficult to shake. The rest of Sydney does not see the western suburbs as a place to visit. It’s a place you drive through, past and out of on the way to the mountains or beyond. The popular depiction of Sydney’s west in sociological terms, as a place full of joblessness, welfare housing, single mothers and any other “social problem” you care to name, does not make representations of it as a site of pleasure and non-stop family entertainment easy to assert.

Yet this is precisely what Australia’s Wonderland is trying to do. Theme parks, like a lot of other leisure activities, are a culture industry. They are organised around the production and consumption of experience, with spectacle, entertainment, pleasure and fun as the central commodities. Tourism, sport, museums, historic sites and the like all trade in the consumption of anything from authenticity to unforgettable memories. They offer specific cultural forms as their product. These cultural products are produced within specific economic and political relations.

Analysing the economic and cultural organisation of Australia’s Wonderland offers a way of seeing how so much of what we experience as fun or pleasure nowadays comes from consumption. Wonderland sells its customers pleasure. Its design is devoted to producing a “good time”, and a lot of thought and attention to detail has gone into shaping the park in ways that guarantee that the customer is getting pleasurable experiences. A close investigation of the organisation of Wonderland shows how this place is coded for pleasure.

The most striking thing about the site for Australia’s Wonderland is its isolation. It sits off the highway and seems to pop out of rolling paddocks dotted with gum trees. There is nothing else around it except for acres and acres of car parks. There are no competing attractions or temptations — it’s not a place you stumble onto while doing something else. You go there as if on a pilgrimage. The site claims a space for culture, pleasure, fun, almost in the middle of the country. The first thing you see is the enormous curve of the rollercoaster. This makes its declaration of space very striking.

The second point about the site is that it’s a closed environment: you enter the gates and you enter another world, “Wonderland”, which is highly predetermined and structured. Landscaping makes the demarcation between the inside and the outside, between the real world and Wonderland, very sharp. Similarly, a sense of separation from the outside world is established via the single entry fee which, once paid, offers unlimited access to the plenitude inside. (Secondary consumption, i.e. of food and souvenirs is, however, economically crucial, and there are all sorts of enticements for this.)

On the inside money doesn’t exist; everything is free (almost); market relations disappear; every wish is apparently to be easily gratified. A central element in the consumption of pleasure is the apparent absence of money: freedom and desire are unconstrained by economics. Despite this illusion, however, most people’s evaluations of Wonderland focus on whether it was “good value for money”.

Single entry fees eliminate the dilemma of having to ration one’s finances in order to consume as many rides as possible, but they create a different tension — will you be able to get on everything in the duration of your visit? A compulsion to try everything.

Within the park there are three separate themed areas: Mediaeval Fare, Hanna Barbera Land and Goldrush. Each has a selection of rides, appropriately costumed staff and performers, games, food and souvenir venues. Rather than discuss each theme separately and therefore perhaps reinforce their superficial differences, I’d note three recurring concepts which occur in each theme in different ways: history and the past; Australia and national identity; pleasure, fun and entertainment. These concepts seem to be central to the cultural and economic organisation of Wonderland.

Over the last twenty years there seems to have been a rash of new kinds of historical products and new audiences for history — historical mini-series on TV, local history projects and museums, family trees, and so on. History seems to be represented everywhere — including, of course, the recent emergence of historic theme parks.

Australia’s Wonderland is not an historic theme park in the same way that Old Sydney Town is. It does not seek to represent some sort of authentic reconstruction of the past, nor does it have any obvious pedagogic intent.

The use and representation of history at Australia’s Wonderland is quite different from theme parks where history is the primary commodity as at Old Sydney Town, for instance. Wonderland history is commodified but with different intents and effects. Historical appearances are everywhere; you enter the main gates and come into a mediaeval square. This is about
history as representation. It's also about an imaginary past.

But in among this detailed construction of historical appearances are genuine discarded objects, "ruins", which have a completely different meaning. For a start, discarded objects in this highly ordered environment seem awkwardly real or "authentic". They also seem to claim an effect of history which is quite different to history as appearance or history as a certain "look". These are historical remnants, not historical appearances.

Aside from the concept of history, there is a different but related concept of "the past". This relates to a series of shops and characters which invoke nostalgia more than history. They seem to draw on notions about memory, about things which are familiar but only recently lost or gone - "the good old days". There is a photo shop where you can dress up in old clothes and get an old-fashioned photo of the family.

Similarly, the characters in Hanna Barbera Land have a particular resonance to parents. They invoke their childhood and the role of the media in producing popular memory. These cartoon characters speak to parents and kids in quite different ways. The souvenir venue "Return to your past today" draws on ideas about memory, loss and recovery. But they are highly controlled and ordered. The past is not connected to the present. Rather, it is framed by fixed references to popular representations of times lost: old-fashioned clothes; the cartoons you used to watch as a kid.

"Australianness" is a construct, only evident or identifiable in terms of who tries to define it and how. At Australia's Wonderland, representations of Australia are fixed within an imaginary past. The Goldrush theme is the single area which makes a gesture towards "Australianness". It is packed with symbols of Australia, familiar place names, references to natural wonders ("Snowy River Rampage" — a white water boat ride) and insects ("the funnel web" — a ride in the shape of a spider).

The architecture is classic nineteenth century verandah and post, with a hint of the Wild West about it. The reasons for this seem to lie in the economic demands of standardised commodity forms. In the transition of the Wonderland formula from the US and Canada to Australia, the Wild West theme has been modified to the "Goldrush days".

In relying on an ethos of Australianness that invokes an imaginary past, the Goldrush theme is not simply rural, but also summons up a bizarre assortment of towns (Ballarat, Broken Hill), myths (Lassiter's Reef), rivers and spiders. The connections between all these items are never established: instead, one is assaulted with a seemingly random array of references, each signifying Australia as a frontier.

While the remaking of the Wild West theme to suit some notion of Australian content was fairly straightforward, other elements of the Wonderland formula did not translate so well. In its first season of operation, Australia's Wonderland lost a lot of patronage due to a series of rules relating to consumer behaviour — specifically, a prohibition on taking food into the theme park, and definitions of appropriate dress (i.e. no Eskys and no bare chests). There was widespread resistance to both these rules, and after the first season they were dropped. The American formula was not as international as hoped: national cultures have to be negotiated.

The last word on Australian content should be left to tourists. They have not proved to be a big market for Wonderland. Market research has indicated that the main reason for this is the perception that this theme park, despite its name, does not offer anything distinctively Australian. The internationalisation of commodity forms in leisure (and other) industries means that tourists realise that theme park formulas tend to remain the same whatever country they are in.

Pleasure is produced at Wonderland in two forms: through the organisation of consumption, and through the rides.

At Wonderland there are different types of consumption. The consumption of those activities which are "free" (rides) which construct a pleasure in consumption based on immediate gratification and a sense of imaginary plenitude (although long queues tend to take the edge of this pleasure). There is also the secondary consumption of food, toys, mememtoes and so on. These forms of secondary consumption are central to Wonderland's economic viability, and there are strong enticements to indulge in them. This additional spending on frivolous items has been described as a form of working class conspicuous consumption — a form of consumption that is pleasurable precisely because it is removed from the usual economic constraints which structure the consumption of necessities.

Finally, there is the future consumption of a range of sponsors' products. The significant aspect of sponsorship at Wonderland is the ability to establish very strong links between sponsor and product. For example, Ampol funds the vintage car rides, Kodak the Old Fashioned Photo Shop, and Sitmar Cruises the Snowy River Rampage boat ride.

Apart from the pleasure of consumption, Wonderland offers a smorgasbord of rides which are central to the appeal of the park. They also represent a massive part of the initial and ongoing investment at Australia's Wonderland. There is pressure to add a new ride each year in order to attract return visits. This pressure is being tempered by a diversification into live entertainment. While there is some of this at Wonderland already, the plan is to develop a large live entertainment venue in order to combine big name performers with a visit to the park. Live entertainment is far cheaper than high technology rides.

While it may be tempting to dismiss Australia's Wonderland as yet another example of imported American culture, its economic and cultural organisation indicate a lot
about current changes in our leisure. More and more of our free time now involves consumption, and culture industries are the major providers in this area. Culture industries employ large numbers of people and their economic significance is growing. So, too, is their cultural impact: the manufacture of experience shows how difficult it is to assume that pleasure or fun are purely spontaneous or individually based. More and more, these sorts of experiences are produced by industries organised for pleasure.

This is not to say that the consumption of leisure makes us passive puppets, easily manipulated into laughing in all the right places. While the production of pleasure at Wonderland may be extremely disciplined, the consumption of it is much harder to control. Individual consumers at Wonderland use the place in different ways, and bring their own meanings to bear on the experiences and the pleasures it offers.

Gay Hawkins

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Sticky Wickets

What is the future of first-class and international cricket in Australia? It is now more than a decade since the World Series Cricket ‘revolution’ and it is worth asking whether more fundamental changes are likely.

My own opinion is that, other than the South African controversy the present period in Australian cricket history is one of stability and consolidation — both on and off the field. In his excellent latest book, Street Fighting Years — An Autobiography of the Sixties, Tariq Ali writes that post 1975 period in Europe can be described as one of “history’s enforced pauses, designed to make us think and reflect before the next wave”. If revolutionary change is slow, fundamental shifts within cricket are even more pedestrian.

The advent of World Series Cricket in 1977 shattered the international cricket establishment. It was a watershed with few comparisons. In England the ‘restraint of trade’ court action won by Tony Greig and other and World Series Cricket in the English High Court was one crucial factor in changing the working conditions of cricket professionals. After that landmark decision cricketers were free to sell their labour, like any other workers, to the highest bidder. The second decisive influence has been the growing strength of the Cricketers’ Association which organises all first-class professionals in England and functions, in effect, as a trade union.

In the post WSC year since Australia a Players’ Association was formed, but Ian Chappell recently commented that: “Apart from the fact that they are getting paid better I’d go so far as to say that (the players) are back to 1977. That really disappoints me. I think it is a pity the players didn’t grab hold of the game more than they have ... the Players’ Association (now the cricket committee) has been a paper tiger really.”

For first-class cricketers in Australia the non-existence of an effective players’ association could prove to be a major weakness. In England the professionals have achieved a greater voice and improved conditions only through self-organisation. The important point is that in Australia the game is becoming more professional and will continue to do so over the next few years. Leading state and test cricketers increasingly view cricket as their profession. Indeed, the demands of Sheffield Shield and
international cricket make that inevitable. Moreover, this also means that the players, in turn, have to find work during the winter, and in small but growing numbers they are travelling to England to play county and league cricket during the northern summer.

This raises the question of whether the playing abilities of Australia's leading cricketers will be adversely affected; will the demands of full-time professionalism be too great? Ironically Tony Greig, one of the architects of World Series Cricket, has recently argued against this growing professionalism and urged that Australia should encourage its players to remain part-time. With the continued commercialisation of the game such a call is likely to be ignored.

The season recently completed will undoubtedly be considered a success by the Australian Cricket Board and PBL marketing. At least Australia has produced a 'winning' side at the international level, albeit in the conventional test arena against opposition whose standard was not the highest. The acid test will come over the next year with tours to Pakistan and England and a visit from the West Indies.

For the continued commercial and television success of cricket a successful one-day side was vital. The team's achievements in this regard have been widely and loudly acclaimed, no doubt much to the chagrin of 'purists' such as former test player and journalist Bill O'Reilly and ex-NSW Labor minister Rodney Cavalier.

Provided the side keeps in winning (is it true that Australians only love winners and battlers?), crowds pack the grounds and the Channel 9 ratings remain strong, there will be no changes to the one-day formula. I have to confess that I enjoy international one-day cricket and feel that the lights, coloured clothing and fielding restrictions enhance the occasion. As C.L.R. James wrote in his classic Beyond A Boundary, "Cricket is first and foremost a dramatic spectacle. It belongs with the theatre, ballet, opera and dance."

It is also worth adding that one-day cricket as a form of spectacle and entertainment has a long and respectable tradition going back to the All-England Eleven, the first professional touring team who travelled throughout Britain, from 1846 onwards. Those professionals wore white shirts embellished with red sports or stripes, coloured sashes or snake-clasp belts and an assortment of hats.

The drab uniformity of the professional cricketers' dress was, in part, a consequence of the authorities desire to reassert their control over the professionals and delineate the professionals as second-class players in comparison to the exotically dressed amateurs of the so-called golden age prior to the First World War. Further, it can be noted that League cricket, popular for almost a century in the working-class Midlands and North of England, has always been centred on one-day matches. One-day cricket has a long and worthy tradition within the history of the game.

The real threat to the stability of international and Australian cricket remains South Africa. Strong rumours persist that another tour of South Africa will be announced in the near future, probably involving a party made up of assorted mercenaries from various countries. Unfortunately, very few players, in virtually any sport, are prepared to take a moral stance and reject apartheid. But if cricketers don't, the fate of international cricket, which provides their livelihood, will hang in the balance. The division of the cricket world into black and whit playing nations remains a possibility.

Ric Sissons

Ric Sissons is the author of The Players: A Social History of the Professional Cricketer (Pluto Press).

letter from ephebus

Pauline Unsworth both emerged from the election with images enhanced. While Mrs. Unsworth has gradually won hearts simply because she's a decent sort of woman, Mrs. Greiner has had a rather different road to media sanctity.

Not long ago, she mysteriously escaped the full weight of opprobrium and probing usually associated with a drink-driving charge and public profile. Whatever the merits or demerits of that incident, her trial by public opinion poll in the election itself was, arguably, a more disturbing experience. It was also one of those occasions when the shooter finds himself looking down the barrel of his own gun. If people had found Kathryn Greiner uppity and a liability to Young Nick before the poll, their sympathies had certainly swung in the opposite direction by the time she'd finished looking longsuffering but dignified and compassionate after TV reporters' gentle question sessions.

Not since Lyndon B. Johnson picked up his pooch by its long floppy ears has public perception of an image changed so swiftly. On the day, Pauline Unsworth and Kathryn Greiner could easily have picked up a respectable number of votes; it's not unlikely that Hazel Hawke could have handily stood for Governor General with a similar chance of success.

On reflection, then, what influence did television have on the NSW election? It's very doubtful that the Labor advertising campaign did anything but harm: if anyone is out of touch with the people it has to be John Singleton's agency whose risible octopus and gruesome jingle set the ALP and the ad industry back by at least a decade.

The Liberals were low-key to the point of ineffectuality, but then, with their rivals driving viewers from their sets in their droves, they didn't need to do much other than not patronise. The Pilger footage of Hawke-Bond-Packer at the trough, on the other hand, was possibly the single most devastating party political broadcast of the decade. But, all in all, what this election probably proves is that Australia is still decades behind the US when it comes to telly-politics. Neither Greiner nor Unsworth is a television performer and, unless Greiner undergoes intensive psychotherapy during the parliamentary recess, it is highly unlikely that he'll become one.

On the other hand, Margaret Thatcher was equally unpromising in 1979, and look what diligence did for her.
Home Truths


When Katharine Susannah Prichard contributed her best wishes to the first edition of the new paper Women's Cause in 1943 she cautioned against the continuation of "feminist chauvinism" in Australia. Women should think of themselves as citizens, she said, not as women.

Her advice sprang from recognition of, and reaction against, the strong women-centred, anti-party orientation of much Australian feminism between the wars, but it was also firmly in the communist tradition. This was a tradition, as Joyce Stevens explains in her new book, which demanded that women curb all separatist tendencies in the greater interests of the men's organisations. In Taking the Revolution Home Joyce Stevens has provided us with a much needed study of this communist tradition, in particular of "work among women" undertaken by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) between 1920 and 1945. It is a courageous and informative study which raises important theoretical questions about the relations between socialism and feminism.

The CPA emerges in this account as the most patriarchal of organisations, its leaders unashamed masculinists who, in their preoccupation with male work places, grievances, wage standards and strategies, dismissed women as "politically backward" and their concerns (with issues such as birth control) as trivial. As Joyce Stevens writes, class struggle bore a "male aspect" and communist politics bore "a decidedly male visage". Preoccupied with defending the male living wage, the CPA was ambivalent about married women entering the labour market. Women comrades were treated as recruiting agents whose task it was to convert other women to the cause, to win women's support for the male struggles. They were most successful in the timber and coal mining communities, wooing the wives of workers rather than women in paid work - and the union auxiliary emerged as the paradigm of women's relationship to the communist movement. It was also a form of activity which depended on the historically specific circumstances of mass housewifery.

The Communist Party encouraged activism among women but not autonomy. When Alice Holloway travelled to Spain and the Soviet Union in 1939, her trip funded by the Australian Railways Union (ARU) auxiliaries, the ARU State Council reprimanded the auxiliaries, resolving that "before they set out on any similar project" they first consult the union. The auxiliaries were not easily controlled however. Following a spirited defence of the actions of the auxiliaries by Holloway on her return, the request was unanimously expunged from the council's minutes. Women were also very active in the Unemployed Workers Movement and in all arenas their energetic political activity resulted in public abuse, arrests, jail, sentences of hard labour.

We meet many spirited women in the pages of this history. Taking the Revolution Home is thus important in rendering the socialist women of the past visible. Too often it is assumed that women were drawn into politics after World War I on the conservative side. Unfortunately, communist women's emphasis on the collective rather than the individual has inadvertently maintained their historical obscurity. "I always think that the person individually is nothing," said Grace Scanlon. "You get all the strength from the women you're working with, you don't get it on your own." The transcripts of interviews with the women included in the book personalise the history and remind us how public, political activity is inextricably linked to and conditioned by "private" life.

Women were always a minority of the CPA - of the 2,800 party members at the end of 1935, for example, only 200 were women. Male comrades explained this in terms of women's "political backwardness". Women's diagnoses were rather more incisive. In the first public statement about women in the party, in 1922, Christian Jollie-smith suggested that woman's resentment at male exploitation, "this latest resentment against all men who have lived on this toil of hers" made women reluctant to join the party, made it "twice as hard" for a woman to be a communist.

Jollie-Smith counselled nevertheless that women should forget their "personal" resentments,
The Good Fight


This is a book that should have been written earlier, and could not have been written much later. For the remaining veterans of the Spanish Civil War are passing on, and with them their memories. The volunteers who made up the English, Scottish, Welsh and numerous other national contingents have all been memorialised in book-length accounts, but the sixty-odd Australians (the fact that the exact number is not known testifies to their neglect) had not — until Amirah Inglis remedied the deficiency.

Her reasons for doing so go back to her childhood. As a girl she followed events in Spain through the letters of her uncle, who fought as a member of the Polish contingent. In 1938 she herself attended a meeting held in Melbourne to support the Spanish fight for democracy and freedom, and contributed her savings to the collection. In this book, written fifty years later, she sets out to tell the story and reserves judgment until she has done so; but her sympathies are never wholly absent.

Why does the Spanish Civil War remain such a poignant memory for Amirah and so many others of her generation? The answer lies partly in the nature of the events in Spain and partly in their signal importance for those on the left caught up in a global struggle against fascism. As she explains in a preliminary sketch of the "Spanish background", the protracted struggle of Spanish workers and peasants to throw off a repressive and exploitative alliance of landowners, the Church and the army drew attention to the country. When the right refused to accept the democratic process and attempted to overthrow the republican government by force in 1936, Spain became the cockpit of the anti-fascist struggle.

For in contrast to the earlier triumph of the right in Italy, Germany and Austria, in Spain there was concerted and effective resistance. The open assistance that Mussolini and Hitler gave the rebels was answered by leftwing volunteers. It seemed to them that if the insurgents could be defeated, the wider ambitions of the fascists could be defeated also. Moreover, Spain excited the sympathy of a new generation of intellectuals, writers, artists and middle-class progressives for whom it was the first and formative international cause.

The book is organised in three parts — arguments within Australia over Spain; the fortunes of the Australians who went there; and their return.

In company with Britain and the other major powers, the Australian government maintained a policy of strict neutrality towards the civil war. The proclaimed intent was to minimise the threat to international peace by seeking, as far as possible, to ensure that all countries remained neutral. This meant turning a blind eye to the considerable and direct support that Germany and Italy gave the rebels, so in practice "strict neutrality" served the conservative preference for appeasing the dictators. But neutrality also found support within the labour movement from those who feared that Australia might again become involved in a European war.

These attitudes were by no means peculiar to Australia, but Inglis suggests that the Australian response to Spain was noticeably lukewarm. The level of international awareness was low, the paucity of news services marked. Only a minority of Australians felt strongly about Spain, and many of those (noticeably the groups of Mediterranean immigrants and
were captured, some executed, some expelled. But the overwhelming impression is of their continuing attachment to the cause they served. Inglis then shows them returning to a country that cared little for their sacrifices, even though some were shortly to bear arms again in the Second World War.

The literature on Australian involvement in the Spanish Civil War is growing. Amirah Inglis' own edition of Letters from Spain, dealing with the particular experiences of Lloyd Edmonds, is soon to be complemented by Judith Keene's edition of the diary of one of the nurses. But this fine history is likely to remain the standard general account of this important chapter in the left's involvement in international events.

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**Lie of the Land**


Mining magnate Hugh Morgan recently grabbed the headlines of Darwin's *Northern Territory News* predicting Aboriginal urban terrorism. The Alice Springs *Centralian Advocate* reported him making some interesting statements concerning demands for recognition of Aboriginal Rights:

“A sovereign nation does not sign treaties with its own citizens ... The legal term terra nullius had been turned into a term of derogatory abuse of our forefathers” ... Mr. Morgan said that the doctrine meant that “those who did inhabit it were at such a primitive state of development that no treaty with them was possible.”

A read of Henry Reynolds' latest book *The Law of the Land* would quickly reveal the conflation of ideas in Mr. Morgan's reported opinions. Reynolds' book is the third in a series revealing the hidden history of Australia — the history of black-white relations. He rigorously examines the law surrounding the possession of Australia and finds it a mass of contradictory and inconsistent doctrines leaving Australians with a legacy of unresolved injustice within the confines of our own legal system. As usual the work is based on impressively extensive research, as shown in the lengthy bibliography. Fortunately, in this study references and quotations are individually endnoted so the curious or sceptical can pursue Reynolds' findings.

Reynolds explains the concept of sovereignty, and distinguishes it from possession:
The doctrine underlying the traditional view of settlement was that before 1788 Australia was *terra nullius*, a land belonging to no one. We need to ask what this obscure Latin concept actually means and if it was legitimately applied to Australia in the late eighteenth century. Confusion has abounded because *terra nullius* has two different meanings, usually conflated. It means both a country without a sovereign recognised by European authorities and a territory where nobody owns any land at all, where no tenure of any sort existed.

He then sets out to demonstrate that in legal writings of the day concerning international law, discovery and conquest, sovereignty over new territories did not automatically give unconditional ownership of the land. Rather it gave the sovereign power the sole right *vis a vis* the competing colonial powers to acquire that territory from the original occupants. This was recognised in other former colonies: America, Canada and New Zealand. However, in Australia there was not, and still has not been, any recognition of the former possession of the land by Aboriginal people or their right to just compensation for its loss.

Reynolds shows how initially Europeans conveniently believed the place to be scarcely inhabited, so literally fitting the *terra nullius* doctrine. As it became rapidly evident following settlement and expansion that there were many more Aborigines than previously thought, and that the interior was populated, the justifications for the doctrine changed. The notion of possession altered to the effect that people who lived ranging lives were considered to be only in possession for as long as they occupied a territory. After that, they were considered to have vacated it for whoever (for instance, colonists) might come along. Reynolds swiftly points out the vacuity of this argument by reference to the English common law of the day closely guarding rights to property whether the land be used for cultivation, hunting, fishing ... or nothing. The Privy Council determined in 1887 that "by possession is meant possession of that character of which the thing is capable". The great legal writer Pollock wrote that where the land was uncultivated and partly forested "shooting over it during some months of the shooting season" was considered "enough to constitute de facto possession". The notion that land not used for cultivation was not used at all was absurd in a country developed on the basis of extensive pastoralism.

In short, the English law under which Aborigines became British subjects did not offer them the ordinary protection of the property laws developed for numerous forms of property holding in Britain. Instead popular justifications filled the gap between law and reality.

Reynolds proceeds to a history of the land rights movement. He sees the current debates echoing those of the past and, indeed, suffering from a lack of historical perspective:

Neither supporters nor opponents of land rights have paid much attention to developments of the last century. They are often ignorant of the extent to which old arguments are repeated in the course of contemporary debates and old positions defended as if for the first time. Anti-land rights campaigners believe that history is on their side. They are fortified by Blackburn's judgment of 1971 that there had never been any recognition of native title in Australian history. There has been little incentive to dig any deeper, to turn over such old and comfortable certainties. It is more surprising that advocates of land rights have paid so little attention to their predecessors, have missed the opportunity to find powerful precedents and to root their cause deep in Australian historical experience.

What he is arguing is that there has long been recognition of the prior possession of the land by Aborigines but that our law as received in the Gove Land Rights Case is a denial of this. He documents colonists', missionaries' and officials' recognition of Aboriginal property in the soil. In 1840, James Stephen, then permanent head of the Colonial Office, wrote in a despatch from South Australia:

It is an important and unsuspected fact that these Tribes had Proprietary in the Soil — that is, in particular sections of it which were clearly defined and well understood before the occupation of their country.

Reynolds then presents the thwarted efforts of reformists in the 1830s to provide protection for Aborigines during the colonisation of South Australia by requiring purchase of their land by the settlers. He argues that legislation providing for reserves, directing that a percentage of land revenue be set aside for Aborigines' benefit, and guaranteeing hunting and gathering rights over pastoral properties, was not benevolence but recognition of a prior right to stolen land.

In his conclusion, Reynolds points out that Aboriginal activists are demanding both sovereignty and land rights. His argument throughout has been posited on the separateness of the concepts of sovereignty and possession. Although he does not say as much, he seems to be suggesting that demands for compensation and/or return of land as opposed to sovereignty can be logically justified in existing Australian law. Having admirably presented us with the purely fictional quality of our developed case law it seems sometimes he is tempted to believe a legal logic can somehow still be ultimately distilled from it which can be used to present a just alternative. Instead, we should recognise the injustice embodied in our illogical, inconsistent, but expedient law and demand legislative implementation of recognition of Aboriginal prior possession, rights to land and compensation.

The book's occasionally confusing quality only serves to emphasise the pedantry required to rationalise the law surrounding the conquest of Australia. Reynolds' work is indispensable to anyone wanting to know more about the legal doctrines used in Australia's colonisation, and the history of agitation for Aboriginal rights.

MADELEINE SMITH works in the office of the NT Land Commissioner in Darwin.
Dirty Dancing is not as salacious as its title suggests and is surprisingly free of moralising on sexuality for a movie targeted primarily at an adolescent audience. It's the story of a young woman's awakening: not simply to her own sexuality but also to the politics of class.

It's 1963 and "Baby" is on her way, with parents and older sister, to an exclusive Jewish summer camp resort. Daddy's a doctor and the family well-heeled. They are the particular friends of the camp's manager and, consequently, are accorded preferential treatment. Baby has convictions, nonetheless: she aspires to join the Peace Corps and change the world. Buttressed by her family's wealth, she is naively optimistic about achieving those changes.

Another "class" of people also inhabit the camp: They are the "dance people", employed to dance with the patrons, among whom are lonely middle-aged women. The "dance people" are domiciled separately in smoke-filled ghetto-like rooms where they can dance "dirtily" to suit themselves, to a gutsy, liberating '60s pop that underscores how twee and stale are the entertainments of the wealthy.

Almost by accident, Baby steps into their world and is immediately drawn to the palpably physical presence of Johnny, a smouldering and outlandish fiction. He is the kind of Rochester-like hero who populates many a schoolgirl fantasy. Somewhat devilish, seemingly arrogant but, underneath it all, lonely, sensitive, even needy of affection. A fiction usually all the better for being kept so.

Baby is tempted to keep Johnny as her own private fantasy — her father has already made it plain that he believes any association between the two would be unacceptable — but eventually faces the challenge of admitting to the liaison. She thereby allows Johnny an independence and humanity that the women he has played gigolo to have not. This is Baby's story, nonetheless, and Johnny stays true to her image of him.

Unlike the aristocratic Rochester, Johnny has stepped off the streets and is vulnerable. (He is more like his literary brother, Heathcliff, but without the violent contradictions of the latter's character.)

Johnny may be macho in body but he has a heart of gold: it's the rich boys you need to be wary of.

Dirty Dancing lacks the consummate filmmaker's skill that Carlos Saura brought to Carmen, for instance, a film in which flamenco and "realist" drama were woven together seamlessly. The borders between them become so blurred in that film that the audience can no longer be sure what's "real" and what's a performance. Perhaps Dirty Dancing is too exuberant and leaves a few seams in the plot. When Johnny leaps from the stage and invites the audience to join him, he is refusing to contain his subversive energy and to play the fiction they have devised for him: the no-good dancer. Like quite a few twists in this plot, this scene jumps Dirty Dancing from one stage of fantasy to another. By now, it is nothing less than fantastic.

Dirty Dancing itself is not incidental to the plot nor simply another form of storytelling (though it is that, too): it is an act of subversion and, following in Baby's footsteps (metaphorically), Johnny determines not to bow down to the management and their complacent routine. He and his friends eventually lead the rest of the resort a merry dance (literally) and disrupt the social fabric in the process. These two previously isolated groups mingle on the dance floor and, for as long as the music lasts, dance to the same drum.

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Baby's fantasy contains other pleasures. While Johnny may lead the dance, at first anyway, she takes the lead (her class has done her a favour and given her self-confidence) in other matters. Johnny is thoroughly responsive: he appreciates her for her commitment and humanity. He is also the only one ever to call her by her given name, Frances, which he refers to as "a nice grown-up name". Their romance, in the tradition of its literary precursors and within a society portrayed as exclusively heterosexual, is radically subversive.

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OUTSIDE LEFT

I don't know if it's more me or you, but I really look forward to getting ALR these days ... I think it'll be addressing those areas that are at the edge of my thinking — like consumerism or parenting — where I've sort of noticed that we on the left seem to have overlooked something. And not only do I read it more avidly but I tend to more often photocopy articles to hand out to others. Actually, as I am typing this I'm thinking that I'm tired of giving photocopies, I'll suggest they subscribe.

But there is one tiny, teeny irritation that I have with ALR, and I was wondering if you'd been thinking about this yourselves. It's that there still is a tendency in the articles to say that "the left should ...". This does two things to me. One is that I think that the author, and the journal, are somehow outside or on the fringes of the left. As if the left were these other people who won't listen, can't respond, are misguided or whatever. But somehow we are not in and of the left.

Secondly, I wonder why I can't get to read about more impressive, inspiring, innovative and positive things that are happening on the left. I don't mean necessarily on a grand scale. I'd be pleased to read about small programs or campaigns that have been successful. Some of what the metalworkers are doing, the Aborigines' TV station (not what a bastard the NT government is, but what great things are happening despite that), the local tenant victories, women's programs.

Anyway, keep up the excellent work you are already doing.

Richard Fletcher,
Hamilton, NSW.

CHINA AND THE COLONEL

I would like to make a few friendly criticisms about the way in which a large part of the left press, including yourselves, has covered political changes in the People's Republic of China.

The title of Colin Mackerras' article in ALR 103, "Kentucky Fried Socialism", might be an indication of the way in which we have come to regard the changes that are occurring in the PRC. I can well appreciate the humour and the irony. Unfortunately, I think it distracts us from the importance of what is occurring in that country. The arrival of consumerist symbols is nothing new to post-capitalist societies. They are certainly in great abundance in a country like the Soviet Union, yet there one gets the impression that some leftwing commentators regard it as symbolising a liberalisation of political life. When we see this occurring in the PRC, it seems to be simply a matter of ironic comment. Can we really continue to have it both ways?

Anyone who has had more than a passing interest in the continuing impact of the Chinese revolution (perhaps the most significant event in the twentieth century) will know that many of the democratic openings we have so much enthusiasm for in the Soviet Union were achieved in China many years ago.

On the ideological level, the Chinese Communist Party has gone much further in rehabilitating the leaders of the Russian revolution than the Gorbachev faction has dared to go. While Bukharin's works are only just being published in the USSR, the works of Bakunin, Bukharin, Kropotkin, Luxemburg and Kardelj have been appearing in government controlled printing presses in China since the start of the 1980s. Furthermore, the works of the greatest anarchists of them all, Leon Trotsky, have been published.

More important than the intellectual openness has been the rise of a democratic movement that is far larger and more deeply rooted than anything that has so far existed in the Soviet Union. Large mobilisations have always been a feature of politics in the People's Republic. The December 1986 demonstrations, which some reports from Shanghai say involved up to 150,000 people, are a mark of how intensely the issue of political democracy is regarded there.

I hope that we will grow to be as enthusiastic for the continuing Chinese revolution as we are for developments in the Soviet Union. We could well find that the historical and political significance of changes in that country will be more profound than what is happening in the USSR.

Jeff Richards,
Prospect, 5th Australia.

'Note: The title of Colin Mackerras' piece was ALR's, not the author's. — Ed.

LETTERS

- We welcome your letters for our next issue. As a general rule, letters should be no longer than 300 words and, preferably, should be typewritten. ALR reserves the right to edit letters down to this length.
- Authors' addresses and a contact phone number should be included, although, naturally, they will not be printed. The deadline for letters is four weeks prior to the month of publication.

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ALR is looking for an Advertising Manager to work part-time in our Sydney editorial office. The job includes soliciting advertising for ALR, coordinating promotional material and outside advertising, and involvement in organising ALR evenings and events. The suitable applicant should have experience in magazines or publishing, as well as enthusiasm and a commitment to ALR. Apply in writing to David Burchell, ALR, PO Box A247, Sydney South 2000, by Monday, May 2. For further information, ring David on (02) 281 2899 during working hours.
The Future For The Left

Jade Bull

Well, comrades, Jade's psychic powers have still not recovered from the horrors of the New Linear Projections (NLP) Conference in November last. At the conference, Jade witnessed a bitter power struggle between the SWP (Seers, Witches and Prophets Assoc.) on the one hand and the CPA (Combined Psychics Association) and a group of non-aligned gypsies on the other, over the basis for chart delineation. In a radical attempt to sever traditional ties with Greenwich Mean Time as the standard for calculations, the SWP attempted to replace it with EST. Consensus be damned! Jade sees this astro-political opportunism as antithetical to the cause of astrological unity.

However, I digress. In this edition the ultimate horoscope — big Karl himself! (Although Jade did have a hard time choosing him over other famous Taurans such as Lenin and Glen Campbell. In the end we drew straws.)

Also a few words of advice for the next few months.

Karl Marx 5/5/1818
Star Sign Taurus
Born Trier, Germany 1.00 am.

From an early age Jade has felt a deep affinity for this famous Tauran. I suppose it's just one bull to another.

Karl exhibited many of the typical Tauran qualities: perseverance, steadfastness, resilience and a dislike of shaving. (Other famous bearded Taurans include Salvador Dali, William Shakespeare, Orson Welles and Sigmund Freud.)

With his sun semi-square to his Pluto, Karl was to display a relentless and compulsive attitude to life. Who else could spend 12 years producing a work that no living Marxist can honestly claim to have read in totality?

As you are no doubt aware, Taurus is the sign that rules the throat (e.g. Ella Fitzgerald, Bing Crosby, Perry Como, Glen Campbell, Barbra Streisand and Kiri Te Kanawa) and, as David McLellan has noted in his authoritative biography, "Marx's compulsion to sing in the shower was to result in the family being evicted from their Chelsea flat in November 1850".

Born during a 26-year cycle of Pluto in Pisces, Karl was part of a generation who were all to seek to push back the frontiers of existing philosophy and have places named after them.

LOOKING AHEAD

Aries March 21 to April 20
With Mars ducking into your solar twelfth house, conflict looms. Watch your back at meetings.

Taurus April 21 to May 21
Jupiter's moving into your sign, and a little present is about to arrive. Jade won't spoil the surprise by telling you what it is.

Gemini May 22 to June 21
Venus puts you in the mood for love, even if it is only your other twin. Stay off those groovy touchy-feely drugs.

Cancer June 22 to July 22
A retrograde Mercury and Venus ensures that any movement in your career path will only be sideways.

Leo July 23 to August 23
Leadership opportunities abound. Forget friendships; destiny calls.

Virgo August 24 to September 23
Health is in your stars. Watch Uranus; it makes an untimely entry into your sign.

Libra September 24 to October 23
Your love of a balanced lifestyle could come unstuck this month because of your excessive talking. This could be a good time to wipe your "Jim Percy Motivational Tapes".

Scorpio October 24 to November 22
A lucky month for you! You know that peace badge you were looking for on Palm Sunday? It's under the fridge.

Sagittarius November 23 to December 21
You are wanting to combine health with an opportunity for new romance. Don't bother with the health club set, just give up smoking in meetings.

Capricorn December 22 to January 20
With Saturn making a heavy transit through your house, you may experience a feeling of depression and low self-esteem. Don't be concerned, it's only a statistical aberration. You don't really need those "Jim Percy Motivational Tapes".

Aquarius January 21 to February 19
Someone will try to persuade you that monorail travel is superior to astraltravel. Ignore them and they will probably go away.

Pisces February 20 to March 20
Don't be sucked in by the latest psychic fad, crystal swallowing. Like all such fads, it, too, shall pass.

Upcoming Birthdays

Arthur Murray 3/4
V.I. Lenin 22/5
Adolf Hitler 20/5
Glen Campbell 27/5
Florence Nightingale 12/5
The Queen 21/5
Buddha 31/4
Billy Graham 26/4

APOLOGIES: 1, 2, 3

1. In "Daisy Corunna's Story" (ALR 103), the graphic on page 26 and the photograph on page 30 should both have been credited to our cover artist, Marie McMahon (not Oliver Strewe, as suggested on p30). For readers' interest, the graphic was of a woman digging, Eva Valley, Arnhem Land; the photo was of Tiwi women hunting on Bathurst Island, 1981. Our apologies to Marie and readers.

2. The interview with Marilyn French in ALR 103 should have been credited as having been originally published in Marxism Today. Our apologies to Marxism Today and readers.

3. Finally, eagle-eyed readers would have noticed that the eight viewpoints on the Bicentenary purportedly presented in the same issue were in fact six in number (owing to a shortage of space). Our apologies for any distress caused to readers uncertain about their arithmetic.
There's still heaps of time to enjoy riding
bicycles before the Melbourne wind
and rain sets in. I dragged my treddy
out of my mother's garage yesterday
and took it straight to Jim Brun's Bicycle
Shop in Johnstone St, Fitzroy, east of
Nicholson St. Jim is a distant relative
(uncle actually) and I thought he
needed a bit of advertising. He'll fix or
sell, at a price that's hard to beat. And
he can put you on to hot videos, too. JG

"Don't miss it 'cause wogs do it better" runs
the arresting blurb for Wogs Out Of Work,
just starting its Sydney stint after a
spectacular Melbourne run. (See ALR
102). You'd better book soon, though,
because the show is rapidly selling out
to mid June. Billed as the
'ethnic laugh spectacular', it takes the
piss out of Anglo attitudes at a very
appropriate time. At the Enmore
Theatre, till who-knows-when. Tickets
550 3666. DB

The State Film Centre (1 Macarthur St, East
Melbourne) is hosting another exciting
'local history' type film, The Pursuit of
Happiness from March 24 for two weeks.
Directed by US-born Australian Martha
Ansara, it's set in Freemantle in the
leadup to the America's Cup finals. A
middle-aged woman re-enters the paid
workforce as a suburban journalist.
She becomes embroiled in various lazy
embroglios in a journey discovering the
extent of US military involvement in our
country. The film is a mix of realpolitik
footage and ordinary scene acting.
People play themselves. JG

Culture in Sydney's west? Parramatta's
Cultural Centre, corner of Church and
Market Streets, is set to prove that life
doesn't stop at Annandale. At present,
however, the diet is staple stuff:
Leonard Teale stars in The Men (sic) Who
Made Australia, and June Bronhill stars in
a musical comedy version of The
Sentimental Bloke. (Perhaps Wogs Out Of
Work could make a trip west?) There
are sizeable discounts for groups of ten
or more. DB

'Whistling in the theatre' is the guest
company at the Anthill Theatre, South
Melbourne, producing Ship of Fools from
March 23 to April 9. Written by
Australian Andrew Bovell and directed by
Robert Drafen, the play takes up the
medieval practice of locking the
'criminally insane' on ships and
casting them adrift without a
destination. The status of the
secondary labour force is the
temporary parallel. 'Whistling in
the Theatre' is fresh from the Adelaide
Fringe Festival and sports a highly
talented but largely unfeted crew. JG

The Hermitage Museum in Moscow is almost
empty, according to its curator. You
can see part of the reason why at the
Art Gallery of NSW, where the
exhibition Masterpieces From The
Hermitage is showing until May 1. Other
attractions include The Artist and the
Patron: Aspects of Colonial Art in NSW
(also till May 1) and the second annual
Moet et Chandon touring award for
bubbling young artists, until May 13.
Hours are Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 12-5.
There is no entry fee. DB

Sometimes a beer just can't quench a thirst.
When you're at the pub with friends
and you don't feel like alcohol, a good
one is bitters, lime and soda, which is
the same price as a beer and very
refreshing. JG

The Hip Hop Club, in Oxford St, Paddington,
is definitely one of the places for
Sydney's smart young things. If that
sounds like you, try sparking to the
Electro Groove Dance Club,
Wednesdays; relive 1968 at the Acid
Daze Dance Club, Thursdays; assault
your child (no, that can't be right) at
the Beat Baby Beat Dance Club,
Fridays; or turn cartwheels at the
Stephen Ferris Club, Saturdays. But
please, no flares.

In the tangled underground of wine
snobbery, much the most dangerous
creepy-crawly for the idle passersby is
the obsession with what is known as
"boutique" wines — wines from small,
serious minded wineries where
exclusivity, rather than consistency, is
the key. But for the wine drinker on a
budget it's the big company wines
which promise the best quality at an
affordable price. The ultimate
'bouquet' rhine riesling is Petaluma's at
$1.5 or so; Tollena's 1983 ($6) is a
very different but comparable quality wine.
Most boutique chardonnays sell for
between $15 and $18 (Leeuwin Estate's
for $25), but Wynne's 1985 Coonawarra
or Rothbury's 1987 Hunter or Cowra
Chardonnays are two different styles of
a high quality for around $10. Lindeman
(newish) and McWilliams (oldish) Hunter
semillons are decidedly more complex
wines at the right age (McWilliams now,
Lindemans after a few years) than the
currently vogueish Sauvignon Blancs
and Fume Blancs (the latter an increasingly slippery title). Yet the former sell for $6
or $8; the latter, $12 or more. Among
the more fashionable red styles,
Seppelt's Black Label 1985 Cabernet
Sauvignon ($8 or less on special) is at
least as interesting as Coldstream Hill's
(despite its dinky label) at $16 plus.
And while Pinot Noir grapes might make
marvellous red in Burgundy, in
Australia they tend to make fabulously
overpriced upmarket Beaujolais. A
lighter bodied shiraz (such as Lindemans
1983 Hunter River Burgundy at $7 or so) is
a much better deal. DB

FREEBIES: The Valhalla Cinema in Glebe Pt
Rd, Glebe, is Sydney's best known
venue for repertory films. And ALR has
five double tickets to give away to the
opening of the Valhalla's exclusive season of The Legend Of The Suram
Fortress, opening on April 30.
Compared by the NY Daily News to
Kurosawa's Ran, and described by the
Village Voice as a 'Soviet Caravaggio', The
Legend is a 'delicious mixture of gravity
and humour ... unique and inimitable'
(Time Out) and 'pure joy' (London
Guardian). All you have to do is be one
of the first five people to ring ALR on
281 2899 after 10 on Friday, April 15.
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