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The young Mitterand on the court

Paris: Game, Set and Match

The ease with which Francois Mitterrand was re-elected as president of the 5th Republic, and the consequent formation of the Rocard government, signal a major realignment in French politics.

During his first seven-year term as president, Mitterrand and the Socialist Party have been able to redefine a substantial section of the traditional left electorate into a more centrist position. Although the new centre-left government of Rocard is the end result of this redefinition, it is, in fact, only the conclusion of a strategy which has its origins in the early '70s.

Shortly after the signing, in June 1972, of the Common Programme — a tactical but brittle electoral alliance between the Communist and Socialist Parties — both Communist leader Marchais and Mitterrand privately expressed to their respective constituents their own strategic view of the document.

While acknowledging that it represented the first tentative step back towards government for the Communist Party [PCF] (resulting some nine years later in four minor ministries in the first Socialist government), Marchais urged his party "to safeguard its true position and warned against the reformist social democratic nature of the Socialist Party". Mitterrand, somewhat less ideological but more prophetic, as the recent elections have borne out, assured a meeting of the Socialist International Executive Committee that with the Programme "our basic objective is to build a great Socialist party on the terrain occupied by the Communist Party itself and thus to show that of five million communist voters, three million can be brought to vote socialist".

The success of Mitterrand's strategy and the decline of communist electoral support has been evident in most local and national elections over the past seven years. The first round of the recent presidential elections confirmed this. Against a combined communist vote of 8.9 percent (6.9 percent for the PCF and two percent for the breakaway Renovateurs), Mitterrand received 34.1 percent.

The significance of this electoral shift lies beyond the simple loss of communist support to the socialists. Rather, it marks a subtle but fundamental change in the landscape of French politics, where political positions have traditionally been defined clearly in terms of a strict right/left dichotomy. Any past variation in this scheme has been to diverge further either to the right or left. Mitterrand, however, campaigning on a platform devoid of any reference to socialist aims and stressing the virtues of a "Unified France", has been able to finally break this right/left division and secure under the Prime Ministership of Michel Rocard a left-centre government.

The presence of this new centrist formation seems assured following discussions with moderates in the centre-right which resulted in the guarantee of a number of centrist ministers in the next Rocard government should the socialists be successful in the forthcoming general elections.

Ironically, the move towards the centre has been facilitated by the very nature of the 5th Republic's constitution, originally drawn up specifically to satisfy the demands of de Gaulle. Cohabitation is theoretically possible within the framework of the constitution, but a possibility which was never expected to eventuate. That it has eventuated and been a relatively stable form of government during the past two years, has also helped fracture the traditional left/right opposition.

Not all the centrist moves, however, have come from the left. As far back as his defeat in the presidential elections by Mitterrand in 1981, Giscard d'Estaing has urged the UDF to try to occupy the centre. But, in the event, it has been the Socialists trumping the UDF, and the failure of any communist response which has provided the framework for French politics for at least the next decade.

This is not to ignore the presence and continued support for Le Pen and his National Front on the extreme right. For, while the NF has only emerged electorally since the early '80s, it does represent a consistent rightwing tradition in French society — a tradition which had its clearest expression in the collaborationist Vichy government during World War II, but which can
be traced back as far as the Dreyfus affair late last century.

While the long-term existence of this racist element needs to be recognised, its influence overall will stay small providing it remains isolated and is not permitted to enter into electoral deals with other sections of the right, namely Chirac and his rightwing RPR. At present it appears that, although Le Pen's politics is able to appeal to a fair proportion of the electorate (14.4 percent in the first round of the presidential elections), its very strength also acts as a sufficient deterrent to any alliance with the more moderate rightwing forces and thereby ensures its own isolation.

Furthermore, the developments proposed for 1992 by the European Commission (under which Western Europe will become more integrated economically with a common financial market and one European domestic market instead of 12 national markets) should reduce some of the economic conditions which provide Le Pen with his present political base. Moreover, there is something contradictory between the racist nationalism of the National Front and the gradual emergence of a sort of European supra-state, of which the 1992 reforms are but a part.

Although still in an embryonic form, a trans-European state will add to the predicament facing what remains of the politics to the left of the Socialist Party. With the PCF and other sections of the left — the Ecologists, for example — there is at least the rhetoric of internationalism. However, the likelihood of any effective substance being given to this internationalism in a way that would make it combative with the development of an integrated capitalist Europe appears quite remote — though this would seem to be the direction left and progressive movements in France and Europe should go.

At a national level, the PCF faces, along with the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the dilemma of being a mass party in a developed capitalist democracy. It does have the distinction of having twice been in government, though both these experiences have done little but underline the difficulties of being the minor partner in a coalition with the Socialists (as in 1981-84), or highlight (as in 1947) the external opposition which can be mounted on the left when part of the conditions for receiving Marshall Plan aid was the expulsion of the communists from the government.

The task facing the French left, and particularly the PCF, is more pressing than at any time since World War II. It has effectively lost the strategic struggle with Mitterrand and the PS now faces a new level of supra-state capitalist development.

The only possible hint of optimism comes from the political space opened up on the left by Mitterrand's successful centrist move — though it seems doubtful that the PCF, Renovateurs, or the Ecologists, can reoccupy this traditional left space in any convincing manner. Their failure to do so will only magnify the strategic success Mitterrand has achieved since the days of the Common Programme.

Peter McNiece
End of the Rainbow

It's highly unlikely that Jesse Jackson will be chosen as US vice-presidential running mate for Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis by the Democratic Party Convention in mid-June. To pick Jackson would be, as Sir Humphrey Appleby would say, “courageous”. And the party leadership, like Sir Humphrey, is certainly not that.

However, the party leadership would be well advised to take more seriously the power behind Jackson’s impressive campaign than in 1984, when they ignored Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition, thus probably contributing to Reagan’s second term.

Back in 1984, they made no effort to accommodate Jackson’s and the Coalition’s minority platform positions — including a no first strike nuclear policy, affirmative action programs without strict quotas, and a reduction in Pentagon spending. This angered many delegates and alienated much party support. And during the 1984 election campaign they rejected — or at best failed to build upon — the grass roots support established through voter registration drives and Jackson’s extensive campaigning.

In the present campaign Jackson has built upon that support. Until very recently in the primary race he had leaders and pundits truly wondering if he would out-poll Dukakis in the tally of delegates committed to vote for him at the Democratic Convention. He will still go to the convention with a large block of delegates. And Senator Albert Gore, who dropped out of the race after losing badly in New York, has neither given up his delegates, nor stated (at least publicly) to which contestant they will be pledged.

Nevertheless, Dukakis has emerged from the final round of primaries with more than the 2,082 delegates he needs to win the party nomination for presidential candidate. Perhaps it’s an indication of increasing conservatism in the Democratic Party that he could do so well in California — when up against a candidate like Jackson — which, traditionally, takes a more progressive stance in primaries.

At least the potentially divisive delegate horse-trading on the conference floor has been averted, but Jackson is still in a powerful position to influence the party platform. The party can ill-afford to ignore his constituency.

In 1984, shortly after announcing his candidacy, Jackson had near unanimous endorsement from Black church leaders representing over 12 million Blacks. The Rainbow Coalition included activists and supporters in the environment, anti-nuclear, peace, gay, women’s, Latin American movements and unions. However, progressive, liberal leaderships in these groups, and prominent Democrats, thought otherwise as did many in the left generally. The white liberal women’s organisation NOW, individual Black leaders like Andrew Young, Julian Bond and Coretta Scott King, notable union leaders and others preferred Mondale to Jackson.

White feminists were sceptical. Off Our Backs, a radical feminist publication, acknowledged that Jackson was committed to Blacks, but asked whether or not he was “really committed to being a candidate for feminists”. A fair enough question: no doubt they remembered Jackson’s sexist comments about women in the late ‘seventies, comments reminiscent of men in the earlier Black Power movement.

Nevertheless, Jackson’s politics had, by 1984, matured considerably and his positions on anti-
discrimination, affirmative action and gay rights, for example, were far better than Mondale's.

It's a dilemma the American left consistently finds difficulty with: work within, and with, the Democratic Party to defeat the forces of reaction —Reaganism — and attempt to redirect the Democratic Party to a more progressive stance over time. Or, challenge the status quo by running a Black candidate in the Democratic primary race and try to push the party to a more progressive stance that way (and risk the election, some would warn)?

The former is what political movement and party leaders were arguing for in 1984, and still are today. The second was the path actually taken, but without any move to a more progressive program by the party. And it lost.

The Democratic Party is suffering a similar ailment to the ALP — with the difference that it has failed to secure political power nationally. It attempted in 1984 to win by taking on Reagan's agenda — splitting hairs on fiscal fine tuning rather than by presenting a critique and a viable alternative. George Bush and the Republicans really shouldn't win this election. The Democrats will have to throw it away.

Bush will carry on Reagan's mantle. He had declared that he will stick to Reagan's agenda which includes an ill-defined foreign policy; an economy in trouble; and a depleted welfare state. The Reagan administration is one of the most corrupt in US history and Bush himself is deeply implicated in the Iran-Contra scandal.

The hardest hit by eight years of Reaganism is the Democratic Party's traditional base. Jackson has mobilised support from that base with a program which is, in essence, a classic Democrat New Deal one — but one which looks increasingly radical as the party moves further to the right of centre.

Jane Inglis

A New Deal?

The impact on French colonial policy of Mitterand's re-election and the formation of the Rocard government is as yet unclear, but it could mark a return to a more moderate position in New Caledonia. Through Olivier Stirn, the Minister for Overseas Territories and Departments, whose appointment was welcomed by FLNKS president Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the new government could, as a starting point in negotiations, restore the gains made by the Kanaks under the Pisani/Fabius Statute of 1985.

The strength of that statute was that the Kanaks were able to exercise a degree of administrative and political autonomy in three of the four regions into which New Caledonia had been divided; and, perhaps even more importantly, were able to reassert their own culture through such projects as the setting up of a national centre for Kanak culture and the teaching of Kanak languages in schools. These gains were subsequently overturned by the recent Chirac government, which tried either to deny or dismantle Kanak culture, attempting to undercut the base of support for the FLNKS and independence.

Yet, while the statute provided the framework for certain gains it nonetheless failed to address the real question of independence in anything other than an oblique and unsatisfactory manner. In its proposal for New Caledonian independence "in association with France" it clearly indicated that whereas the Kanaks could win a certain cultural and indeed a limited political independence they were to remain ultimately under the economic and political influence of France.

New Caledonia, with its two hundred nautical mile territorial zone around its coasts, represents a long term economic interest for France. It is also a strategically important site for military bases and communication stations. The dilemma thus facing Stirn and Rocard is that while they need to concede cultural and ultimately some political independence to the FLNKS, they must do so in a manner that doesn't disrupt the economic and strategic interests of France. To the extent that they are able to grant a form of independence which still maintains a determining influence over New Caledonia, the differences between the New Caledonian policies of the Chirac and Rocard governments may become increasingly blurred.

Peter McNiece
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Radio 2BL’s City Extra (she’d left Brisbane due to the difficulties mentioned), Singleton cut short an interview with PM Hawke because she felt nothing would be gained by continuing. (If only it happened more often!) Eventually she was sacked. She was also unceremoniously dumped from her next job as Sydney presenter for the ABC nightly current affairs program The 7.30 Report late last year. The 7.30 Report still has a female compere but has left current affairs behind, transmogrifying into thirty minutes of soft-centred human interest.

Singleton’s credentials are solid. She started her career as a cadet at The Age. At 22 she went to China during the Cultural Revolution, then worked in Hong Kong as sub-editor of the South China Morning Post.

She moved to Latin America and worked variously on the English-language daily The Brazil Herald (becoming editor when the former editor was picked up by Interpol), continually battling government censorship; and as correspondent for the UK Financial Times and Economist and the US network ABC. She escaped Brazil, after the government withdrew her visa, in the boot of a car—arriving in Chile two days before Allende was killed.

Back in Australia, she initially worked part-time on ABC radio in Albury, NSW, while labouring on the farm with husband David Singleton. A full-time job with the ABC in Longreach, Queensland, focussing on rural politics followed; then she moved to Brisbane eventually to become Queensland compere for Nationwide. She compered City Extra (from 1984) in Sydney until sacked after the Hawke “incident”. In January 1986 she returned to TV to compere The 7.30 Report which she left late last year.

She now has a morning talk-back/current affairs program on commercial radio 2GB, replacing radio “personality” John Laws.

An ABC staff member who attended protest meetings after her sacking from The 7.30 Report sums up attitudes to Singleton: “The fact is she wasn’t liked by male management. Because she is uncompromising, because she doesn’t have that cutsey, coy approach to the men she interviews, she put a lot of people offside.”

On every occasion ABC listeners and viewers made their support for Singleton known to management—something management chose to conceal. The media lapped up the controversy. But very few articles looked at her as a journalist. Rather, they focussed on her image for womanhood.

In 1984 when she started on City Extra, a headline declared her a “shapely Miss Clark Kent”. In the Sydney Telegraph she was described as “brittle-voiced”, a “dark and alluring, tough-minded interviewer”. She is also, apparently, “less tough, more womanly, more wifely” than her TV persona, according to another journalist. “Her personality has a charge in it that is certainly sexual, but not seductive, her conversation intimate, but not impertinent or cheap”.

Radio 2GB’s promo for Singleton’s new program doesn’t disappoint either. The camera starts at floor level, following a shapely pair of stockinged legs and feet (presumably Singleton’s) in a shapely pair of shoes, down a corridor. The voice-over assures us that Singleton will be as hard-hitting and uncompromising as ever. The imagery assures us that none of this will be at the expense of the “feminine” qualities.

Jane Inglis
Now that the privatisation issue has been (perhaps temporarily) withdrawn from the market, the chief item of controversy at the Federal ALP Conference in early June is clearly going to be the government's latest whizz-bang product — the so-called "graduate tax" on tertiary education graduates. And while it's not an issue likely to have the labour movement rank-and-file in the same happy state of cross-sectional unity as privatisation, it may yet prove to be a serious liability for both party and government.

The Wran committee report in early May did not, or at least should not have, come as a bolt from the blue. It was, after all, set up to "develop opinions and make recommendations for possible schemes of funding which could involve contributions from higher education students, graduates, their parents and employers". What was interesting, however, was how quickly the second of these options became emphasised to the exclusion of the others — and most significantly, the last.

In fact, the Wran committee report did not exclusively focus on the "graduate tax" as a revenue-raising device for the higher education system. The report does make supportive noises about the proposal in Australia Reconstructed for a National Employment and Training Fund to provide finance for skill formation, training and general education of the workforce. Under this scheme, 80% of industry contributions would be available for firms to provide in-house training (after suitable consultation with the unions involved); the remaining 20% going to a fund for "additional" schemes, of which, as the Wran committee notes, higher education could be one. And the report notes in this regard that "the current review of corporate taxation represents an opportunity for the government to set out a corporate tax rate which includes a notional one percent or two percent contribution towards growth in the education and training systems".

This is, of course, more or less the same as the alternative to the "graduate tax" proposed by the ACTU executive and endorsed by the ALP left. The difference is that in the Wran committee report the "graduate tax" is a firm recommendation, the Training Fund levy merely an object of study for a new tripartite body. Cynics might say that a tripartite body pledged to raise additional taxes from industry is not going to get very far. Cynics would probably be right.

The beauty of the Australia Reconstructed proposal is that it places an estimable scheme for the funding of the higher education system in the context of an overarching social and economic strategy which, whatever other problems we may have with it (and other contributors in this and the next issue will make those pretty clear), can make a better claim to addressing Australia's pressing social and economic issues than any of the splenetic outpourings of the employer groups or the right.

In other words, it takes up the terrain of the "national interest" and forces the right and employer groups to explain in public once again just how it is that their unwillingness to pay one penny more in taxes is commensurate with the national good at a time of dire economic peril. (As opposed, that is, to the kind of left position on such matters which consists purely of chanting impossibilist demands about squeezing business until the pips squeak.)

The problem here for the left, however, is that placing the defence of the tertiary education system in the basket of Australia Reconstructed implies a commitment to grappling with all the thorny problems implicit in a strategy which seeks to break down the distinction between higher education and vocational training in the interests of economic restructuring.

Yet the left hardly seems in a position to do this. On the one hand, the architects of Australia Reconstructed in the ACTU have not exactly demonstrated a very deep interest in the integration of thinking around training and post-secondary education in general. (Something which gave the ACTU's otherwise admirable stand on the "graduate tax" issue a decided air of unreality). Rather, they seem to have put the concept of "general education" into the too-hard basket, thus incidentally leaving the conventional definitions of training and skilling more or less untouched.

Meanwhile, the quite sizeable portion of the left connected by interests or sympathy to the academy has failed to shift much beyond the simple defence of the status quo on education funding. It has acted, in other words, as a vocal and highly effective interest group in much the same narrow way as trade unions were always thought properly to act. But it has not really taken the idea of a broader educational/training/skilling strategy seriously; nor has it moved to build the kind of wider alliances which might ensure such a strategy broad community support. And, perhaps most crucially, it has left the initiative on the question of participation levels almost solely to the right.

On both of these counts, the situation has now become urgent. The graduate tax will undoubtedly become (if it has not already become) a massive influx of public funds is patently not going to be one of the options. The task ahead is to shift the terms of the debate so that a bad option — the graduate tax plan — is not replaced by a worse one — a form of, to borrow Senator Walsh's phrase, "privatisation by default". And the key to this is to take a deep breath and leap into the Australia Reconstructed age, an age in which the gentle breezes of the traditional liberal conception of the academy, like much else, are swept into the maelstrom.
The Blue Nile

Diana Simmonds

From the day Pope Kevin XII drew a line across the known globe and awarded one bit to Spain and the other to Portugal, aren't the only smelly beasts who types have been proving that camels think they can force their way into heaven through the eye of a needle— if only they shove hard enough.

This is nothing new of course: after all, who can have forgotten the Commandments (one of them at least) he'd been caught with his Commandments (one of them at least) around his knees.

It wouldn't have taken a Sale of the Century contestant to know that Jimmy's Lord would of course forgive him. For one thing, being unshriven was awfully bad for business; for another, it was probably not the sin but being publicly found out that had caused the outraged elders of his Blessed Church of the Holy Squillions such heartburn. In the event, Jimmy was the first to know that the Lord would rather have him back in the pulpit, saving sinners, than scraping a living as a used car salesman. And so it came to pass.

In just the same crackbrained way, the Reverend Fred Nile knows he is right, that God knows he is right and moreover, that God is on his side. Naturally the Rev. Fred, in common with the other more excitable God-peddlers, wants it both ways.

So it is that Fred can say, with all sincerity and considerable conviction (in a recent interview in the Sydney Morning Herald) that although he hasn't read any of the books he's recently insisted be banned from NSW schools, he knows that the sex and violence reported to be in those books (by worried parents, most of whom haven't read them either, it turns out) will undoubtedly corrupt and deprave the tender sensibilities of Australian youth.

At the very same time he fessed up happily to loving Rambo and the rest of the Sly Stallone oeuvre. Apparently he thinks on-screen ultra-violence is sufficiently removed from reality, presumably because it's presented theatrically on celluloid, to present no proven danger of corruption and depravity to those same tender sensibilities mentioned above.

Aside from the dazzling and fundamental contradictions on display in this blithe doublethink, there is more to it than meets the eye. (And at this point, readers are warned of scenes and language to follow that might offend.)

It is quite likely that the Rev. Fred could put one hand on his heart and the other on his crotch and swear truthfully that he is unaware of any underlying symbolism or threat in Rambo’s weaponry.

Presumably there are men who enjoy great big guns and knives for their technological possibilities and not as penis substitutes or extensions. But show me a man with a gun in his pocket and I'll show you someone who ought to wash his hands afterwards and wipe the smile off his face at the same time.

Hypocrisy and thoughtless sexism aren't confined to the God squad of course, and never have been. These qualities are alive and well and living vigorously to the Left, Right and up the central fundament of society. It's just that, with the increasingly urgent debate on issues of censorship, pornography and violence (in entertainment and society at large) swirling all around, women are once again in the firing line and almost certain to be losers.

The difficulty many women now have in uttering the words “sexism” or (gulp) “feminism” is witness to that. They have become dirty words — indicating, more often than not, that the woman in question merely displays some independence of thought and action and simply isn't willing to have any old camel think he can shove his way to heaven through the eye of her needle.

It follows then, that the “humourless feminist” is still with us. She is someone who has never been able to muster a titter at cunt jokes, and at the same time the scalpel-wielding man-hater who has a giggle at something like “Mummy, mummy, what’s an orgasm?”

Answer: “I don't know dear, ask your father.”

This kind of dick-shrivelling viciousness has to be punished, of course. And daily, throughout the world, it is. Sometimes it’s out and out murder, rape and other forms of social termination. Otherwise, the effects can be almost as limiting, if not as instantly obvious. For instance, the NSW State Rail Authority, with not a hint of irony or self doubt, suggested only two weeks ago that the way for women to overcome the growing problems of violence on urban trains is to avoid travelling on their own or late at night. It's not so much déjà vu, more a way of life.

The church (just about any church) has always been at the forefront of this kind of reductive thinking. The Rev. Fred isn't unusual in seeing nothing wrong with depictions of glorious technicolour violence which, if not overtly sexual to this deliberately un-educated man, is at the very least a perfect example of why the liberal education he is so fearful of is essential. However, let he who is without sin (of ommission, commission or smutty joke) cast the first stone.
Men seem to have cornered the market in Australia Reconstructed. And the stakes for women are high. Here, in the first of a two-part series, Caroline King and Pat Ranald look at what's been left out.

Public Concern

The new strategy’s concerns could backfire on women, feels Pat Ranald.

*Australia Reconstructed* is not, and does not claim to be, a socialist or a feminist document. By this I mean that it does not argue for social or collective ownership of capital and other resources, nor does it argue for an end to the sexual division of labour or for society to be organised around feminist priorities.

What the document does is address current problems in the present Australian economy and argue for certain economic policies and directions.

The document focuses on Australia’s balance of payments problem; which is to say the fact that, as a nation, we import and borrow more from overseas than we export or is invested in Australia. This situation is worsened by the import of massive loans by the private sector for speculation and takeovers, rather than for investment in export or import replacing industries.

*Australia Reconstructed* argues for measures to increase investment in export- and import-replacing industries, to increase the productivity and competitiveness of those industries on the world market. Its attention is focussed mainly on manufacturing industries, and those aspects of the service sector which directly support them.

In the context of an economic debate dominated by the New Right with its emphasis on the free play of market forces, *Australia Reconstructed* is asserting an interventionist model of economic policy. It argues that economic policy should have clear social goals; full employment and greater social control over investment and industry policy.

Specifically, it argues for an enquiry into the effects of the deregulation of the financial sector; the creation of an investment fund specifically for investment in Australian industry; the creation of an employment and training fund; a more active role for government in industry policy (and particularly in encouraging appropriate research in development programs for industry); and long-term planning and adequate resources for the infrastructure necessary for economic development.

This economic strategy assumes that growth in world trade will continue, and that some degree of consensus about achieving economic growth and social goals is possible between trade unions, the government and at least a section of employers.

There are many aspects of the *Australia Reconstructed* strategy which provide important levers for socialists and feminists in the current economic debate. With the federal Labor government adopting an increasingly free market framework in economic policy, arguments for comprehensive industry planning, employment programs and social expenditure are valuable.

The strategy assumes, but does not make explicit, an important role for the public and private service sectors. Because this is not spelled out, the strategy appears to overwhelmingly concentrate on manufacturing industry at the expense of other areas of the economy. While it uses Scandinavian countries as a model, and notes their very comprehensive health and social welfare programs, the recommendations at the end of the report do not reflect this.

As can be seen from the Scandinavian countries, any reorganisation and rationalisation of manufacturing industry involves more sophisticated technology and methods of production which actually employ less labour at the production level. The areas where employment has increased are new technology industries, the finance sector, communications, health, education and welfare. The development and modernisation of manufacturing industry actually...
The Wollongong women: a famous victory, but what of women outside manufacturing?

requires the expansion of all these areas, to develop both the technology and the training and skills they require.

From a feminist perspective, Australia Reconstructed fails to adequately analyse these service areas of the economy, which are precisely those where women mostly find paid employment. It does however recognise the specific needs of those women who are employed in manufacturing industry, in areas such as clothing, textiles and footwear, and light metal. It acknowledges that these women have access to a very narrow range of jobs and skills, and that they require both increased access to English classes and to affordable childcare.

What also emerges from the Scandinavian examples is that these countries have far more comprehensive social wage provisions than Australia. These include education and employment training and training programs, age benefits, sickness benefits, public health systems and so on. These are, however, funded differently than their Australian counterparts — primarily through insurance type schemes rather than from general revenue.

Women are major beneficiaries of these publicly-provided programs. Health, education, welfare and childcare programs all provide services which are crucial to women in their own right and as those who still bear the primary responsibility for child rearing. They also represent social provision of services previously often provided through women’s unpaid labour in the family.

Reductions in these services not only reduce women’s employment and training opportunities, but also increase the burden of unpaid labour they perform in the home. These services are, then, preconditions for women’s entry into the paid workforce.

Because Australia Reconstructed does not deal explicitly with these issues, its recommendations are skewed towards manufacturing industry at the expense of the essential expansion of the service sector as I’ve outlined above. The absence of a thorough analysis of the sexual division of labour in the document also means that its references to equal opportunity and childcare are not followed through in, for instance, the discussion on wages.

The recommendations on wages, which have been one of the most controversial parts of the document, essentially argue that wages should be set in the internationally traded goods sector and based on comparisons with major trading competitors, rather than based on cost of living or other criteria. For women, this would mean entrenching the existing gap between men and women’s wages, with no means of addressing it.

This and the following article are based on talks given to a Socialist Feminist Coalition seminar on Australia Reconstructed earlier this year.

PAT RANALD is women’s industrial officer for ACOA’s federal office.
The publication of Australia Reconstructed marked the beginning of a wide discussion among unionists, educationalists and government bureaucrats about what has been dubbed "skill development" or "skill formation".

Since its publication there has been a deluge of government reports, semi-government reports, speeches, seminars, inquiries, submissions, counter-submissions and research papers about the relationship between education, training and the needs of the economy. The overwhelming majority of participants in this discussion have been men. A feminist perspective has been almost entirely absent. It's as though the years of "soft" equity policies are now over, and it's time for the boys to get back to their real job of serving narrow economic interests. I hope the discussion here will help to redress this imbalance.

The education and training argument in Australian Reconstructed, and evident also in the government's Green Paper on Higher Education, and in the 1987-88 budget document Skills for Australia, is based on the belief that "skill development" is central to reversing the economic downturn. The first and most striking feature of the "skills push" is the fact that it is coming from the union movement. Not only that, it is coming from the traditionally protectionist "craft" unions in the metal industry. These unions, with their support of the apprenticeship system and the male trade culture accompanying it, have played a pivotal role in defining what "skill" actually means in industrial and social terms.

The major practical initiative which the metal unions are trying to implement is the restructuring of the Metal Industry Award. This proposal will create "career paths" between now distinct occupations — from process work to the so-called "journeymen" level, from there to technical fields and finally on to professional engineering.

Apart from creating links vertically, the Metal Workers would also like to introduce the concept of "multiskilling". This means that the traditional and much embattled lines of demarcation between, for example, metal and electrical workers, would be broken down.

Also of great importance to women are suggestions that the Clothing, Textile and Footwear Award will also be restructured along the same lines as the Metals award. I am not familiar with the proposals in the CTF industry, so I will concentrate here on issues in the metal industry which are applicable broadly.

In general, the multiskilling/career progression approach could be fruitful for the workers involved — not least because it may head off what could be bloody and unsuccessful struggles with employers over demarcation issues.

If career progression schemes work, it could offer some workers a way out of dead-end jobs into those formerly closed to them due to age restrictions and lack of educational opportunity. This is especially true if more learning can take place at the factory floor, and if such learning can be recognised not only by management for the purposes of salary increases but by educational institutions for the purposes of entry and credit in formal courses of more advanced study. This could give a value and recognition to workers' experience long overdue in the musty halls of academia.

But there remain a number of significant problems for women within the multiskilling/career progression package. The first of these is that the majority of women workers in manufacturing occupy the jobs at the bottom of the ladder. Many of these women are also of non-English speaking background. They are more likely to have experienced educational disadvantage, such as early school exit, lack of social support to achieve academically, and a disjuncture between the culture of the school and of the home. Their ability to speak languages other than English, rather than being rewarded, will have been treated as a handicap both at school and at work. Clearly, the "training" required by women in process jobs will need to be sensitive to these issues. It will need to be broad-based and not narrowly machine-focussed, if employer rhetoric concerning "flexibility" and "worker participation" is to have any grounding in reality. Apart from communication and numeracy skills, a specific educational need for women is pre-trade skills, such as the use of tools and hand skills and confidence building in trade and technical areas.

Evidence from the Swedish government training authority (the AMU) suggests that most people in process jobs would require basic and general education before they could take advantage of company training schemes or off-the-job training. Training programs set up in Sweden...
entorced this lesson repeatedly: they were too ambitious, mainly because employers wanted to keep costs to a minimum.

Private companies are unlikely to pay for training to meet the general and preparatory educational needs of workers at the operator level. The training of employed workers is very expensive — people have to be replaced so they can “go off the line”, and while people are undertaking training in practical tasks they are likely to use and “waste” more material.

Apart from the expense, there is the political fallout created by workers gaining basic education. There have been instances where such education provided on the factory floor, particularly English skills for migrant workers, has been stopped prematurely by the firm because the workers were “learning too much”.

Clearly, workers themselves should have a right to say how much they should learn, and not be completely tied to learning the skills required to run a specific machine in one company, or restricted to learning only mechanised skills. Basic industrial rights can best be exercised if basic skills are acquired. Employers are well aware of the connection.

Therefore, in any skill development push supported by the union movement, the educational needs of the most powerless and vulnerable workers — that is, women, and women of migrant background — should be at the forefront, and they will need to be supported vigorously with the industrial muscle of the union as a whole.

The second problem for women is in the area of selection for company training schemes. The proposals put forward so far suggest that decisions about training will take place at the level of the individual firm. This means that, unless unions set up a joint committee with management, employers will decide who undertakes training and who does not. Even where unions are involved in making these decisions there is no guarantee that equal opportunity practices will be implemented so that women not only are selected to take part in training schemes, but also have access to special programs and opportunities to progress to the level of other workers.

The federal government’s Affirmative Action legislation does not force private companies to implement strategies on behalf of disadvantaged workers. Unions also cannot be trusted to act along these lines without strong intervention from women.

A third issue is that proposed career progression schemes will tie employment and training much more closely together than they are now.

The implications of this change are easy to see if we look at the current apprenticeship system. Here, women are largely excluded: only a tiny proportion of apprenticeships are taken up by women each year. There are many causes for this — not least that we are brought up to think
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of the trades as a masculine domain. But above the ideological problems remains the fact that it is private employers, in the main, who select entrants to apprenticeships. It is employers who think they won't get their "value for money" if they indenture young women instead of men, especially in the "heavier" trades such as metal fabrication and machining, but also in electrical and other trades.

Young women have found some ways around employers' hesitation — often by undertaking full-time pre-apprentice training within the public education system. An alternative has also been to enrol in a technical course which is not tied to apprenticeship. Once women have gained their qualifications — say, in metallurgy or drafting — they have more chance of gaining employment. In areas of scarce labour supply, such qualifications can guarantee employment.

However, in a situation where training can only be undertaken if you are already employed — and if on-the-job training is integral to study at TAFE — we may find that women will face the same level of difficulty entering technical work as trade work. I'm not suggesting that women's participation in technical work is at the same level as men's, but merely that the introduction of apprenticeship-like structures in these fields could increase the problems we already face here.

Generally, the more employment and training are tied together, the more restrictive the situation for women would become, simply because the private employer, and not public educational institutions (which are at least open to community scrutiny) has to be relied upon to make the right decisions.

And here the obvious point has to be made — career progression schemes and skill development strategies only work if the skills workers have are recognised and if there is a job to advance towards. In many areas of women's work — in manufacturing and outside of it — the skill structure is "flat", and the factory small, allowing little variation in the work.

This means that the work involved, while it may require great skill, is seen to be "unskilled", and the structure is a narrow pyramid which nobody ever climbs.

This is not, of course, to say that where the skill development proposals can work, they should not be implemented (with the provisos already mentioned). But it is important to restate the point that the public recognition of skill and the rewards which such recognition accrues is still very much defined by the male-dominated trade union movement and by management. It is the lowest paid workers about whom we are most concerned, for it is they whose skills are not recognised because of their lack of social and economic power. For feminists, the most important task must be to argue for a redefinition of "skilled work" and for the recognition of women's work as skilled.

One of the most interesting facets of the debate on skill development for women could turn out to be the opening of a discussion about the links between schooling, TAFE training and higher education. One of the problems for advocates of Swedish-style training is that Australia has inherited British training systems and values. The lower value given to manual skills, indeed the distinction made between intellectual and practical work, is a major obstacle to the growth of a highly skilled workforce.

The apprenticeship and higher education systems together are powerful symbols of this distinction. Young working class people go into trades, clerical work or low-paid jobs in the service and retail industries, while the middle class people go into the professions. The schooling system, with its ultimate rewards reserved for academic achievement, rather than for excellence in vocational education, perpetuates this streaming.

Swedish systems differ markedly from those found in Australia. In Sweden, vocational preparation begins at school, and those who choose trade and technical work enter those jobs upon leaving school. There is no apprenticeship system. While streaming into intellectual and manual occupations on the basis of class still occurs in Sweden, it can be argued that there is more room for intervention on behalf of young women. This takes us back to the role of public education, and the strategies available in that area to overcome some of the restrictions placed on employer selection in technical and trade training.

Feminists may wish to reconsider the potential benefits of more realistic vocational training in the Australian school system. The danger is that, if proper equity safeguards are not in place, young women will make their vocational choice too early. Nonetheless, if the current skills training push advances beyond the level of discussion and into the area of actual change, it is clear that the academically-oriented schooling system that we know today will also be fundamentally reshaped. The federal government's pressures for "relevance" point in this direction. Reforms which the government enacts are thus not likely to have women's best interests as a guiding focus.

Rather than retreat into a defence of present structures, it may well be time to suggest changes which could give young women real vocational choice and a practical knowledge of their future in the workplace. This could only be achieved if young women's choices were not restricted to either academic study or study which leads only to low-paid and dead-end jobs.

An imaginative combination of vocational and broad education could revitalise concern for the quality and nature of working class schooling, particularly in terms of undermining the class-based gap between intellectual and manual labour. If young women were given adequate information and support, a widened school-TAFE curriculum could spark their interest in the otherwise closed world of their fathers' and brothers' workshops and laboratories.

CAROLINE KING is a policy officer with TAFE in Sydney.
LABORING UNDER ILLUSIONS

'Traditional Labor voters' and 'traditional Labor values' have become panaceas on the left and in the media, particularly after the NSW election debacle. David McKnight argues that their significance may in fact be more conservative than radical.

When the Unsworth government crashed to defeat in the March 19 New South Wales state elections, the culprit nominated by all and sundry was "the traditional Labor voter", who defected, it was said, because the government had deserted "traditional Labor values".

These phrases were repeated endlessly in the mainstream media. Not surprisingly the left took some comfort from this analysis. After all, hadn’t we been saying similar things since the 1984 election when a large protest vote had moved from Labor to the Nuclear Disarmament Party? But just who ‘traditional Labor voters’ are, and which ‘traditional Labor values’ are being referred to is not clear.

The scale of the NSW defeat was devastating, with Labor’s statewide vote dropping to less than 40 per cent. But so were the kind of seats lost, including Penrith, in Sydney’s outer west, and several traditional (that word again!) Labor strongholds near Wollongong and Newcastle.

The left can fairly claim that the image and substance of Labor as the party which projects economic justice has been severely damaged, particularly by the Hawke-Keating federal leadership.

An uncomfortable ex-Premier Barrie Unsworth said: "If they see their leadership dressed in black tie, smoking cigars, hobnobbing with the representatives of capitalism, they might question where the party’s going." While such statements may gladden the hearts of the left, the discontent with Labor is far more complex than this kind of "class analysis" allows.

Apart from shifting blame to the federal Labor Party, this kind of thinking perpetuates the idea that a pristine “working class” exists which is inherently anti-capitalist.

The NSW election began with a veritable symbol of all that is wrong with the Labor machine, tainted as it is with corruption: the Harris-Daishowa affair. Electoral laws designed by Labor to expose the big business backers of the Liberal party were evaded by their own drafters in order to hide Labor’s own business backers. The same backers, incidentally, were logging forests which Labor had pledged to save from the chainsaw.

Then there was the matter of gun controls which should have been a winner but which Labor fumbled. Likewise hospitals and health services, where the great Labor reform of the 1970s — free health care for all, removing health care from the hands of doctors — became an albatross. Few of these explanations for Labor’s defeat, however, depend on the assumption of class conscious workers feeling betrayed by Labor. Rather, they depend on seeing people in terms of categories such as consumers, environmentalists, commuters, women and so on, rather than in their abstract role as ‘the working class’. The gun control issue, for instance, saw rural workers acting in defence of a rural lifestyle (along with graziers and small business people) rather than in their alleged “class interests”. Urban workers voted at least partly as “health consumers”, while a sizeable proportion of union members voted Liberal or National.

In some ways it’s not surprising that the Labor Right employs a form of class analysis since increasingly the blue collar workers they are actually talking about are more often conservative than radical.

In the recriminations which followed NSW Labor’s defeat, Dick Klugman MP openly blamed Labor’s attachment to “greenies” as a reason why traditional Labor voters such as, in this case, timberworkers deserted the ALP. Many others hinted at the same thing less openly. Senator Graham Richardson, leader of the Right, responded that conservationists were themselves part of the category “traditional Labor supporters”.

At stake here is a very important issue. Does Labor continue on its conservative course adjusting to the increasingly conservative (and shrinking) blue collar working class? Or does it work for an alliance of constituencies (including blue collar workers) around a progressive program? On Dick Klugman’s
interpretation, the theory that Labor must get back to its blue collar base may in fact result in increasing conservatism.

So who are “traditional Labor voters”? And what are “traditional Labor values”? One telling clue to the riddle involves one of Labor’s new found allies: John Singleton, the advertising guru. In the late seventies a battle arose in the NSW Labor Council over the future of 2KY, the Council-owned radio station, which was losing money. The TLC leadership appointed one of its mates, Singleton, to pull the station back from the brink.

With the memory of Singleton’s propaganda campaign against the Whitlam government (the so-called ‘Workers Party’) fresh in their mind, the left loudly protested at the appointment.

Then TLC Secretary Unsworth was convinced ‘Singo’ could turn the station around — and he was right. Using 2KY’s base among a traditional blue collar audience who followed its comprehensive race calling, Singleton added country and western music and a gutsy talkback program where the accents were all Anglo “working class”.

The left, to my knowledge, drew no wider lessons from this success and what it revealed about the state of working class culture and politics. Nor is anyone on the left asking now about talkback radio star Ron Casey’s audience on 2KY — while rightly denouncing Casey’s racism (as exhibited in several slurs on Australia’s Asian communities).

Other changes in Labor’s blue collar base are evident if you examine the key notion of “mateship” as part of this ethos. Today we hear about Hawke’s ‘mates’ in big business; Mick Young is a ‘mate’ who must be ‘looked after’ with a cushy job in the public sector; and favours for “mates” of all kinds which, when greased with money, are known as corruption.

The use of the term mateship is a nice throwaway line by Canberra commentators but it also inadvertently identifies the historical fate of a style of Labor politics which is coming to an end. In the 1890s mateship was seen as the human basis for socialism. It meant sticking together against ruthless employers; it meant helping those in need; it meant egalitarianism. A whole Labor tradition was built up on a style of mateship seen as an essentially Australian quality. Labor represented the “real Australians”.

Always a male quality ‘mateship’ is now becoming more of a basis for conformism and distrust of the outsider. And often the outsider is a woman, a ‘greenie’, an Asian or some similar ‘outside’ social category.

Culturally, the mateship ethos has been represented in a long line of male characters typifying the battler — from Chips Rafferty to Paul Hogan. And a large part of Australian cultural revival in films is based on reworking the characters and lives of “the working class”. But increasingly such activity creates a myth of blue collar working class Australia which is picturesque but unreal.

Some on the left and right of the labour movement similarly invoke mythological representations of Labor’s supposed inherently radical blue collar base. The political consequences of this are rather more dangerous.

Today radicalism in the Labor Party, as in the wider left, originates less often among blue collar workers than among women, white collar workers, students and environmentalists. The classic institutions of a radical working class culture are either long gone or dying.

To a large extent the effects of this decline have been muffled in the last few years because the top levels of the left-wing blue collar unions and the ACTU have restrained the worst excesses of Hawke-Keating conservatism.

But at election times, as in NSW on March 19, this grassroots conservatism among Labor’s ‘traditional’ base, is beginning to make itself felt.

DAVID McKNIGHT is a journalist on the Sydney Morning Herald.
AGENDA FOR RENEWAL

The old left verities are finished, argues John Mathews, and it's time to come up with a new grand picture.

For the past two years, Australia has been treated to a novel and unnerving spectacle — the rise of an ideologically radical Right that has come close to capturing political power. It has now become entrenched within the Liberal Party, and within business organisations like the National Farmers Federation, in a way which will ensure its continued influence over the political agenda. The New Right is a radical political movement, constituting a threat to the labour and social movements' project, and in this it is quite different from the threat posed by orthodox conservatism.

Like all radical movements, the New Right has had to overcome the hurdles of inertia and tradition within its own political constituency. Its attempts to do so have led to some spectacular clashes on the Right of Australian politics — from the leadership battles within the Liberal Party and the wider struggle between "wets" and "dries", through the "Joh for PM" campaign and its destabilisation of the National Party, to the 1987 collapse of the Liberal/National coalition — which kept the rest of the country mesmerised. The Hawke Labor government has played up these divisions, and has kept the opposition forces at bay through a tactic of selective ridicule and constant reference to John Howard's poor popularity rating.

This tactic, while proving to be electorally successful in bringing Labor victory in July last year, hardly constitutes the grounds for meeting the long-term challenge posed by the forces of the New Right.

The New Right poses the challenge: vote for us and we will give you freedom. Freedom from big government, freedom from unions, freedom of choice in the market. This is a none-too-subtle message that is clearly striking a chord in the body politic, even if the outcome in reality is very different from these ideals. This political phenomenon can be traced to the breakdown of the postwar "consensus" around Keynesianism which, in its time, delivered mild counter-cyclical corrections and economic growth, but only at the cost of inflation. The necessity to provide a political setting for the operation of Keynesian and welfare policies, to determine incomes, prices and investment, was either not recognised or seen as too drastic a step. Now the New Right has signalled its intention of permanently postponing such a development.

It is not enough simply to react to the New Right's case by ridiculing it or by arguing in defence of the status quo. It is not enough to argue for unions, for nationalised industries, for the welfare state, without stopping to ask what it is about these institutions which is generating so much resistance, and whether there might not be some advantage to be gained from listening to the criticism and formulating constructive proposals designed to respond to them.

For it has to be understood that the New Right, in making its populist appeals, is responding to the same popular issues that should frame the agenda of the labour movement. There is a case to be made against some of the bureaucratic rigidities that labour movement influence has built into both the public and private sectors. The New Right responds with its own version of "economic democracy", namely a market guided free-for-all. The labour movement has to take seriously the task of showing how an alternative version of economic democracy, one couched in terms of the direct, collective influence of workers and citizens, can avoid the perceived rigidities and defects of the system we have now.

There are others in the labour movement who are pragmatists and who argue that electoral success will always depend on carefully tailoring policies to the public opinion polls; they make the response of the conservative centre of public opinion the touchstone for all programmatic initiatives. Now, while this approach might have some success as an electoneering device, it is not an adequate way to generate a program of government. Quite apart from the fact that such a response is bereft of any strategic element, and is innocent of any attempt to build a popular coalition or constituency which might in the medium to long-term marginalise the New Right — quite apart from this, such an approach has learnt nothing from the Thatcher experience, where issues which commanded only minority support were brought to dominate the political agenda.

There is no longer, if there ever has been, a "natural" program or constituency for the labour movement to appeal to. The political agenda is being shaped by a variety of new forces and pressures, from the New Right to the new social movements organising around issues...
The sacred texts no longer seem to inspire...

of conservation, peace, and social justice. If it is not to lapse into opportunism, or to become just another social pressure group, the labour movement needs an integrating vision which is based on the traditional values of the movement — fairness, equality, rights — but which translates those values into relevant, imaginative and popular programmatic initiatives.

The ideology that has traditionally guided the labour movement's project is, of course, socialism. It is time to take a hard look at this ideology; when faced with a challenge as severe as that posed by the New Right, there can be no room for sentiment in formulating our counter-strategy. How relevant is the vision of socialism to the labour movement's project in the closing years of the twentieth century?

It can be argued that the term "socialism" today conjures up a mass of contradictory images, none of which are terribly helpful in meeting the challenge of the New Right. There are the "image" problems associated with the term — that it is linked with economically depressed rather than buoyant conditions; that it is claimed as their achievement by despots and murderers like Pol Pot in Cambodia or the Iraqi Baathist Party; that it is generally interpreted to mean greater state power in the economy, with enlarged public sectors, higher levels of government spending, higher taxation, and greater interference in people's lives. All of these are certainly undesirable images, or policies which the labour movement does not want to be tied to necessarily.

It is not enough to argue for unions, for nationalised industries, for the welfare state.

At a deeper level there are problems to do with just how a socialist order ought to be defined. Is it a moral and ethical construct, or is there an economics of socialism? If so, how is this to be expressed, in terms of ownership of resources, economic decision-making, allocation of goods and services, and all the other problems presented by a modern, complex economy? When the creed developed, there was a degree of unanimity based on the simplicity of the notion of social ownership as a counterpoint to the individual ownership of capital, with all its attendant and manifest injustices. Today, there is no such certainty. Much of the recent work on "feasible socialism", for example, turns out to be, on closer inspection, the formulation of a democratised capitalism. If democratisation of the economy is the goal, then it would be better stated as such, and not confused with early, romantic notions of "socialism".

I do not want to be misunderstood on this point. The term "socialism" is one which is accepted within the labour movement as standing for a certain set of values. It conjures up an anti-
Mikhail Gorbachev said '...there must be no blank spots in our history.' Readers of Moscow News have responded by flooding the Moscow News mailbox with thousands of letters every week — most designed to fill in the blank spots of seven decades and to take issue with the lack of glasnost and slow arrival of perestroika in their area or workplace.

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pragmatic approach to history and to politics, and this will long continue to be the case. My point is that the term “socialism” and the conceptual array associated with it, are not helpful any more in formulating the near and medium-term goals of the labour and social movements. In other words, it does not generate a program. In the practical political and industrial arena, the term “socialist” today is used more as a sanctifier for any current aim rather than as a means of discriminating between different policy options. Our ideology, our paradigm, should not just present us with a set of goals or vision of the future, but should provide us with a means of choosing between different strategic and tactical options for reaching quite specific goals.

For example, in the debate between proponents and opponents of the Accord, the only thing both sides can agree on is that their approach is an advance towards socialism; in other words, the notion of “socialism” is so elastic that it easily accommodates opposing points of view. We have seen the same thing happen when socialists line up on both sides of the debate over nuclear power, equal pay, or many other current issues.

The fact is that no one knows any more what precisely is meant by the term “socialism”, and no one group has the “papal” authority to clarify the issue. Its invocation tends to muddy the waters of otherwise rational debate.

So far my points agree with many of those made by labour movement activists who advocate dropping the term “socialism”. The problem is: what to put in its place. I disagree emphatically with those who argue that when we drop the term socialism, we should also drop any pretensions to ideology or coherent goal. Proponents of this point of view, like Bob Carr, argue that ideologies have had their day. Carr argues that the pluralist democracies of the west are not wretchedly unjust societies; that active politics touches most people only in a marginal way; that real change is difficult to achieve. Against this setting, he lists a few things that Labor governments can hope to achieve, such as: delivering non-inflationary growth; developing an equitable tax system; turning the tide of environmental degradation; trimming waste from government; redistributing welfare from the middle class to the poor; and providing better services to working class suburbs.

In the light of this discussion, what, then, are the criteria that ought to characterise any paradigm for the labour and social movements that offers a genuine vision of a future this side of socialism? Let us call this a “post-socialist” paradigm.

Such a paradigm is emerging from many of the current initiatives being undertaken by the labour and social movements. We need to systematise these disparate initiatives into a coherent vision of economic democracy, to establish clear goals and guidelines for action in the 1990s. Our paradigm must provide a clear alternative to the vision promoted by the New Right — yet be feasible and practicable. The formulation of such a challenge shows how far the labour and social movements have come in making the transition from a culture of protest to a culture grounded in the responsible exercise of power.

Labor ministers are on record as identifying the “micro” issues of industrial restructuring, work organisation, training and skills formation, labour market restructuring and reform of industrial relations, as the major economic issues to be addressed by a third term government. This is a welcome direction for federal Labor policy to move in, for it addresses issues of national concern, and allows the movement to engage directly with the nostrums of the New Right. A framework of economic democracy then becomes of immediate relevance, for it offers a means of solving some problems which would otherwise appear to be intractable. Let us look at three such problems: investment, industry policy, and social policy.

**Investment**

Keynesian growth strategies, even coupled with an incomes policy to restrain inflation (i.e. the Accord) have not generated the investment that they are supposed to, and are unlikely to do so in the future. Continuing lack of investment, and the steady drain of capital overseas, is a problem for the Australian
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economy that defies exhortation and threatens to block the success of all other economic initiatives.

The New Right holds out for investment on its own terms (no unions, free markets, state-funded priming through, for example, military contracts). However, democratisation of capital and of investment offers an alternative approach to solving this most fundamental of Australia’s economic problems — not via nationalisation of the banks or some other ponderous mechanism, but via the creation of collective investment funds financed by profit-sharing schemes. The mobilisation of capital in this form, under democratic control, is a feasible means of reviving Australian industry. In the absence of such collective investment funds, one can expect investment to remain weak until the terms imposed by the New Right will be deemed acceptable.

**Industry Restructuring**

It is widely agreed that extensive restructuring of industry, in particular the take-up of new technologies and new management techniques (concentrating on value added and quality control) forms the precondition for survival in the competitive world market in the 1990s. It is arguable whether traditional external stimuli, such as tax incentives, bounties and grants, can bring about the drastic changes needed. The New Right ridicules these efforts and holds out the prospect of genuine restructuring through the free play of market forces. But this would doubtless be a brutal experience for the Australian people.

A different model of restructuring takes democratisation as its starting point. Some parts of Australian industry have already accepted this, and are seeking to upgrade their operations in consultation with their workforce through their unions, and on the basis of the recognition of the centrality of skill and development and training. Restructuring based on co-determination between industry and unions, with government orchestrating and resourcing this interventionist approach, provides an attractive alternative to the procedures held out by the New Right. This is precisely the path adopted by the ACTU in *Australia Reconstructed*.

**Social Policy**

It is the structure of social wage goods and services that has come most directly under attack by the New Right, as being inefficient and generating fiscal crisis. These attacks go to the heart of the welfare state, which was conceived in the post-war period as being additional to economic and industry policy, smoothing out the creases in the process of economic growth which financed it. But now we find economic growth faltering, while the demands on the system, from the unemployed and those hit hard by industry restructuring, are growing. There would seem to be little point in arguing for further expansion of the welfare system on the same model, against the counter-claims of the New Right who argue for the priority of labour market mechanisms. An alternative approach, which is consistent with a paradigm of democratisation, is to reconceptualise social policy as providing the framework for accommodating social and economic change. This would lead to the search for new means of financing these necessary services, such as profits taxes and new means of delivering them, such as through a guaranteed minimum income scheme.

An alternative, democratic approach to investment, industry policy and social policy exists. Its outlines are sketched in my recent book *A Culture of Power*. But it is worth underlining the point here that these are practicable alternatives to the simplistic nostrums formulated by the New Right; they do not necessarily call for “big” government in the way that socialist measures are normally portrayed. External regulation of the economy has never been an adequate substitute for transforming the economy from within, and this is what is now on the agenda. Getting inside the economy does not have to mean “state ownership” through the time-honoured route of nationalisation, or even high levels of state control. Instead, what is called for is a reconceptualisation of the political economy involving, for example, comprehensive social contracts limiting wage and income levels, price levels and investment, with a range of linked democratisation initiatives, such as new collective investment funds. Such initiatives do not mean “bigger government” or higher taxes, long associated with the socialist tradition, but a different approach to the internal transformation of the economy based on better understanding of the real and complex dynamics of the capitalist process.

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No-one knows any more precisely what ‘socialism’ means.

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These measures explicitly call upon the resources and energy of people themselves, organised in their association as citizens and workers. The implementation of these measures will require an act of political will, and will take at least a decade to accomplish — but the first steps will clarify and define a new political direction for the labour and social movements that is clearly distinguished from the direction advocated by the New Right.

This is an edited extract from John Mathews’ *A Culture of Power: Rethinking Labour Movement Goals for the 1990s*, published in May by Pluto Press in association with the Australian Fabian Society and Socialist Forum. It is reproduced with permission. © Pluto Press 1988.

JOHN MATHEWS works in the Victorian Department of Education.
GOOD TIMES, BAD TIMES

Rethinking the Peace Movement

A Roundtable

The INF treaty is a hopeful sign. But disarmament, and the removal of the bases, is still going to be a long haul. Is it time for a rethink?

Denis Doherty is co-ordinator of the Sydney Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition.

Peter Jones works in Jo Vallentine's office in Canberra.

Mavis Robertson is convenor of the Australian Coalition for Disarmament and Peace, and a member of NSW PND's management committee.

Beverley Symons is a longtime peace activist, particularly in the movement for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, and currently works at the University of Wollongong.

The discussion was chaired by David Burchell, ALR's co-ordinator.

I want to start by asking everyone what effect they feel the recent INF Treaty and the talk of a 50 percent strategic nuclear weapons cut have had on the peace movement in this country; on its morale; on its view of strategy; and on what it thinks should be done over the next few years.

Denis: Well, I'm recently back from a peace conference in Europe, and the feeling there was one of euphoria. The words "new thinking" kept coming up a lot. In fact, I had to remind people that what the INF has meant for Australia is the continuation of the old. The South Pacific nuclear free zone treaty, for instance, has not been ratified by any of the three major powers. The French are moving their testing site so they're obviously planning more tests. And the Australian government is using the INF to validate the bases in Australia. So I think it's had very little effect on Australia in real terms. I think there is a slight possibility that some of the peace movement people have relaxed. I'm afraid that, if they have, they're on the wrong track. It really should be a signal to increase the push for this 50 percent reduction in strategic weapons.

Mavis: I think there's a degree of optimism around, and I think it's quite well placed. A few short years ago both the Americans and the Russians were telling the most barefaced lies, and were treating each other in a very hostile way; especially the Americans under Reagan — while the Russians were trying to pretend that the SS-20s were defensive weapons, and things of that kind. And then it didn't look as though there could be any real negotiations.

The fact is that now there have been real negotiations, and there are ongoing negotiations, and there are some agreements. But I agree with Denis that the problem is that very many people who, after all, don't spend all their lives worrying about disarmament have come to a conclusion that now it's all right. It's a bit like the partial test ban treaty and the non-proliferation treaty in the 'sixties — people were saying, well, it's all going to be OK, it's not really as dangerous as we thought. And you had to go through a new bout of the arms race before the peace movement got back to being more than a very minority movement, as it was for quite some time. And I'm a bit concerned that it might become a very minority movement again.

I also think people have got enormous illusions. You see, I don't believe one nuclear weapon's going to disappear because of the INF Treaty. What's going to disappear are weapons delivery systems. That's very important, and I don't want to
say that it's not — I'm not trying to undersell what's happened — but they can take all the weapons and they can put them somewhere else. It's my suspicion that many are going onto submarines, and they're all going to be in the Pacific and Indian Ocean region — and that's going to be the new area of the arms race. So I think that helps to set the agenda for the next few years — namely, that there has to be a much greater development of consciousness — especially by Europeans and North Americans — that the arms race is taking on a particularly insidious form in this part of the world, and that means that there's got to be much better communication and solidarity with people in the Asian-Pacific area.

But I think it's going to be a long, hard haul, and I don't think it's going to be terribly easy, because I do believe that lots of people feel that it's all going to go on and be all right now. Maybe after the next summit people won't be quite so euphoric, because I think the really hard questions are going to start coming up now, and it's not going to be so easy to get agreement on them. But what many people's reaction to the INF agreement has underlined once again is that peace movements have all kinds of abilities to influence things, but that none of us are going to achieve anything unless and until there are pressures on the superpowers to come to some agreements. And that leads to strategies in my view — to once again asserting the role of the non-aligned nations.

Peter: I see a dual reaction to the situation as well. I think, on the one hand, you've got a drop in the numbers in the peace movement anyway in the last couple of years — for different reasons, I think: mostly political cynicism, and inability to be up to the long haul. It's hard to measure how much the continued drop in support, in terms of turnout for rallies and so on, is due to the feeling that the INF agreement means that the superpowers are at least talking to each other, that we've moved away from the era when Reagan was talking about limited nuclear war, and from the Cold War posturing of the Brezhnev years and the early 'eighties. It's certainly now a much more optimistic era.

On the other hand, I've also detected a bit of cynicism about the agreement — a recognition that, though the missiles might be removed from Europe, it only affects about four percent of the nuclear warheads in the world; they're all being recycled; the Soviets are simply putting the actual warheads on new land-based systems; and the Americans will simply put theirs out to sea, particularly the cruise missiles. It's very easy to recycle warheads because they do it every day, anyway, with the old ones. Within a year or so — probably by the time they've got rid of the warheads from the systems in Europe — the number will already be up to beyond what it was when they signed the agreement. And I think there's a certain amount of cynicism about that.

In terms of how it affects us here in Australia, I've already seen within the period since last December a lot more interest in the whole concept of disarming the seas. There's a recognition that the weapons systems are being moved out to sea, and that the Americans in particular — who always kept a much higher proportion of their weapons systems at sea — are switching more and more to the oceans because it's so easy to operate on the sea. There's no protests because they're the wide open spaces. What the peace movement has to do is to pick up the issue of security and arms control proposals in the Pacific. The peace
The way forward for the peace movement is to push the hard truths.

Denis: The way forward for the peace movement is to push the hard truths.

Beverley: I think that there probably is a lot of guarded optimism: I know that a lot of people I talk to feel that way about the INF Treaty. And a certain degree of cynicism, too. I think the point is that this period of relaxation of international tensions is very fragile. The tensions and the hostilities can easily build up again. And they are in fact still there.

I also want to take up the point about the significance of the changed situation for the Australian movement. I think the Australian peace movement has got an even more important role to play internationally. I've always thought that we were in the box seat to try to explain to the European movement what was happening in this part of the world, particularly because of our long-term connections with sections of the European movement, the non-aligned movement, the Japanese movement and so on. And the role that France is playing is another big responsibility for the peace movement. We have to keep people alert and aware about that situation.

I agree with Mavis that it's sad, and it's a great pity, if there's going to be a falling off in the movement. But, on the other hand, as we all know, the movement goes in troughs and it's probably inevitable that there will be some falling off in numbers in the big rallies and so on. This means it's more complex and much harder for the peace movement, and we'll have to really think out strategies a lot more and not just rely on getting several hundred thousand people along to big rallies.

But, on the other hand, I feel that we've done an enormous amount of groundwork, too, in the movement — over the last ten years particularly — in building up consciousness about what's happening in the Pacific. The disarm the seas movement, the whole spread of the NFIP consciousness — that's been a significant development in Australia. And a lot of that is now starting to be felt in the countries of Europe and elsewhere. I haven't got any easy answers on strategy, but certainly the situation's more complex, and it will be more difficult for us to sustain the movement at the level we've been used to in the last few years. But the need is there — there's no doubt.

If we agree that the peace movement is entering a downswing, how do we think the peace movement best protects itself in that sort of situation — in periods when there's a loss of activism, and perhaps, in a certain sense, loss of morale, if it's felt that the peace movement isn't actually achieving anything and it's all happening at top levels? Should it, for instance, focus on activist campaigns; should it be going for "achievable goals", as I've heard it described; should it try to "institutionalise" itself in the way that, for instance, SANA has done? Are there ways of organising and working which, as it were, tide you
over the down periods, so that you're fortified for the up periods?

Denis: I think the way for the peace movement to protect itself is to continue to push the hard truths. I think the death knell of the peace movement will be where people water down the message. The message is a fairly shocking message, and it has to be repeated again and again. And the message is that if we're going to have disarmament, we've got to make some sacrifices. And the sacrifices are going to be in our living standards, in the way that we view the rest of the world. We've got to be prepared to dialogue with the rest of the world instead of arming ourselves to the teeth so we can blow them apart.

So we've got to be able to take risks, we've got to be highly principled. We mustn't, whatever we do, take the soft options. This is a temptation which I can see around. Take the example of Keith Suter's recent argument for "Opening the Gap". He argues that the US government would change an Australian government if the Gap were closed: therefore we musn't do anything. We must try to get the United Nations in there. But, instead, we've got to push the hard truths. The hard truth is that these bases are war-fighting bases. The porting of ships helps the war machine. And we must push that and push that, and we mustn't retreat. We've got to show some leadership.

Mavis: I think it's wrong for the peace movement to see itself as a monolith, and to say we must do this or we must do that. People are going to do different things whether we want them to or not. And while I haven't actually read Keith Suter's recent stuff, I'm familiar with other people's arguments about internationalising Pine Gap or opening it. I don't agree with them, but I think it's important to dialogue with such people and to utilise this to raise consciousness about the nature of the foreign bases in Australia. And, for my money, I'm much more interested in pinning down the responsibility to those who say, as

the official Labor Party position says, or as the Labor Party's Peace and Disarmament Bureau says, "We are hosts to joint facilities" and "we will never allow these joint facilities to be used to undermine the Labor Party's program". That's absolute nonsense. In the bases debate, people like Keith are responding to what I think is the real point, that the official ALP position tries to delude the average Australian into believing that these are joint facilities.

I'd like to come back to some other aspects of our work because I've been really startled, I guess, by the strength of the gun lobby. I think the problem with the peace movement and people on the left is that they don't really analyse what all that means. If people feel so strongly about their right to have a gun, it's very hard to talk to them about what the nature of the bases is, or about nuclear weapons, because they see it all in the sense of defending themselves — and power.

Lots of people in the peace movement find analyses that women make a bit bizarre, but I think we have to think these sorts of questions through. Why is it that people who are themselves relatively powerless suddenly feel powerful when they have a gun in their hand? Isn't that, writ large, what's wrong with all the people who run national wars? Isn't this what the French in New Caledonia are saying? Arm ourselves, and get out there and kill all the Kanaks, and somehow the problem will be solved?

Of course, the peace movement has got to spend the quiet times developing dialogue within itself. But I rather like the notion of the upcoming PND disarmament doorknock entitled "It's good to be asked". I think the only way the peace movement will avoid falling into a very serious decline and become a kind of movement where we all argue among ourselves is if we go and talk to the people — perhaps people we should have talked to before — who've never been on a march, and even think it's a bit weird to go to marches, but who, by and large, have got common sense and who don't want to be killed in a war or even shot by somebody's gun from the gun lobby. I think it can be a very useful time for the peace movement if we commit ourselves to going out and talking with people who haven't been talked to before, and even listening to some of them.

I suspect, without prejudicing the results of that doorknock, that lots of people in our society feel very strongly that Australia is very poorly defended. Now there are lots of reasons why they feel this way — and a lot of the things they think I believe are wrong. But we have to address those questions. We can't say to people "You're stupid" because they'll never take any interest in movements where people think they're stupid. We've got to try to discuss rationally those questions and to meet some of the problems, and even, I think, to face up to the fact that there can conceivably be threats to Australia and Australians. I think that makes a case for a much better concept of a non-nuclear self-defence.

Now, just using those words presupposes that the bases which are controlled by the United States can't be any part of that defence. And the
visits of nuclear-armed ships and planes from other countries can't be any part of it, either. That doesn't mean that, having got rid of those things, or having tried to find a solution that doesn't encompass those things, we will have no defence. Yet I think the peace movement has tended to give the impression that that's what it's on about. And that's our weakness. But perhaps if, in this period, we're not going to be so much in the demonstrative mode, we'll get down to finding ways to conduct dialogue with people on such questions.

Beverley: I'd like to come back to the point that it's wrong to see the peace movement as a monolith. The diversity of the movement should allow for a range of different activities from the more "advanced", if you like, to the more "respectable". And there's a big gap in between them — although it's amazing how often that can be narrowed, too. People will engage in so-called more "advanced" actions when they feel very strongly about an issue. Certainly, on the bases, my strong view, which I've had for years, is that the peace movement cannot runaway from continuing to say that the bases should go. That's always been our policy. There's no question about that.

At the same time, I think it is quite valid for Keith Suter to raise his viewpoint on the bases because I think it's a real view among a section of the peace movement. But it certainly won't be supported by all — I mean, I don't support it by any means.

Likewise, there is a place, and there always has been and always will be, for direct actions — exciting, imaginative, creative actions — and I think that many of the things that happened at the last Pine Gap action were splendid, and raised people's consciousness about that issue. At the same time, there's going to be many other people who believe in different approaches. I don't know exactly what the answer is to that, except that I think there's not much point in the various sections of the movement saying "You're wrong and I'm right", let alone attacking each other.

Peter: My understanding of what's happening in the peace movement in Australia at the moment is that the coalition groups, state PNDs and so on, are falling apart in terms of money coming in, offices, staffing and so on. But the smaller groups seem to be holding their own — like the doctors' groups, the scientists' groups, the women's groups and the church groups. And that's why I think the point about the peace movement not being a monolith is important. Because these smaller groups are very diverse, and they do hold a wide range of positions. The fact is that change takes place at a lot of different points. We've got to work with people who are trying to work, for example — because I'm in Parliament House, I have to work with people who have chosen to work within the Labor Party. I respect them though I can't do it myself.

It's the same thing with the debate over the bases. I see a role for people — the Andy Macks and Des Balls of this world — who say close North West Cape and Narrungar, but not Pine Gap. I would close the whole damned lot of them for different reasons. But I think we have to work with them. The other thing I want to stress is that in Jo Vallentine's office we've deliberately chosen, since late 1986, to take up the issue of an alternative defence for Australia. We've tried to develop that debate. I feel the peace movement is beginning to tackle it. But it's still a very slow growth.

Denis: That's another temptation — to become military experts and defence analysts. I think the peace movement is a group for disarmament. And it is a hard truth, it's something that people have to grapple with. We do not have to provide all the answers. I think we are dissipating ourselves if we go into all these defence planning situations.

Beverley: But Denis, surely that's a little exaggerated. I think the question's more that the peace movement has neglected to face up to the fact that the majority of Australian people have got these fears and insecurities in their heads — and that's one of the reasons the majority of the Australian people support the ANZUS Treaty, and support the bases. This question goes back a long, long time, to the 'fifties, with the yellow hordes from the north fear, and so on ....

Peter: It goes back to 1788 ...

Beverley: Yes, of course. And it's a real question in people's heads, and therefore it's a real question for the peace movement.

Denis: But the simple answer to that is that Australia is one of the most defensible countries. We don't have to go into providing alternative defence.

Beverley: We have to be able to explain what would replace the US bases and the ANZUS Treaty and the so-called security umbrella.

Can I just shift the question slightly and ask that, if we accept for the moment the proposition that perhaps the peace movement is going to have to get involved in more
areas of technical expertise than in the past, to what extent does that undermine some of the traditional wellsprings of motivation for people to get involved in the disarmament movement anyway — which are often direct, straightforward emotional responses to the insanity of the arms race and of war in general? In other words, if the peace movement becomes more in the nature of technicians, how does the peace movement also maintain that direct, emotional appeal that’s always been one of its strengths?

Peter: I think it’s a path only a few of us can walk, but I think it’s a path some of us have to walk. I think it will add to our credibility if we start talking in those terms. And my feeling, too, is that if we are going to reach out to the middle ground that Mavis talked about, we’ve also got to go and talk to those small groups of people in Australia who do go and talk about these issues, and perhaps begin to talk with some of them on their own terms. We don’t have to be experts — I’ll never be an expert with people who spend their whole lives in the military — but I think we can talk in terms of non-offensive defence, and try to explain what we mean by that, when we’re dealing with this area of threat perception.

I see the logic that if you’re going to challenge ANZUS and the dependency syndrome, you have got to respond to the question of the debate we’ve just raised: it comes up in people’s minds. If not ANZUS, what? A lot of people in middle Australia will accept ANZUS because they can’t see an alternative.

We’ve got to start talking in terms of those alternatives. That thinking is going on in other parts of the world; in the middle powers, outside the US and the Soviet Union. And I think that’s where the Australian perspective is unique. We’ve got some contribution to make. The trouble is that we’ve got to think it out for ourselves, because we’re not in Europe, not North America, not the Third World.

Mavis: I appreciate what Denis was saying earlier. It’s really important that the emotional commitment is there, and is nourished — the moral point of view if you like — and I don’t think that we can all become experts, or that we would all want to become experts. But I think that we ought to try more to do both of those things. You can’t give away the moral imperative. I don’t care what anybody seeks to prove to me. I know that nuclear weapons are wrong, and that’s the end of it as far as I’m concerned. And I think that kind of gut reaction ought to be maintained and strengthened. I think this is what lots of very young people feel — but then they come up against not knowing what to do, and that then leads to a certain degree of cynicism. The expertise comes in because of a recognition by the movement that you can’t just be opposed to things; you’ve got to then say what does come next. That’s really what is being said around this table.

I mean, the real problem for us is not that we are not heard about the bases — lots of people know that there are significant numbers of people in this country who think there shouldn’t be any bases. And we have moved the situation along to the point where the government is prepared to say that the bases make us, in certain circumstances, a nuclear target. Although they then go on to say, ah, yes, but there’s nothing else to put in its place, so we have to take that as a kind of acceptable risk. Now we’re saying there are things to be put in its place. So you do have to have a degree of expertise. And I believe that there is now sufficient experience of alternative ideas on non-nuclear defence to at least have the debate developed further.

But I come back to — and I hate to harp on it — the gun lobby. Because we want to tackle these really big questions, yet the peace movement didn’t make its presence felt at all when the gun lobby was strutting its stuff. And to me it’s all the same problem. Put in a nutshell, I couldn’t think of the peace movement having a meeting about anything that would get several thousand people out in a town like

Peter: The peace movement loves climbing over fences: it doesn’t lobby.

Albury. Now, you can just write that off and say, “Oh, well, that was National Party organising” or “It was all an election ploy”, but it was still real people, and mainly men. We’ve got to tackle the question of what it is that makes people, mainly men, feel stronger and more powerful when they have a gun in their hands? And why is violence so acceptable? It’s in these areas, I think, that lie the clues to the changing perceptions of Australians about defence. Australia, for all its pleasantness, is a fairly brutal society, it’s a very male-dominated society, and it’s a society that’s never hesitated to use violence in a variety of ways against Aborigines, women, the poor and so on ...

Peter: And fighting other people’s wars ...

Denis: But that’s par for the course, isn’t it? As I was saying before, the warmongering reaches into all our institutions, right down to early childhood. I think it was PND who campaigned against war toys. If we conceive an overall plan for society, the structures which encourage warmongering right from early
childhood are gradually going to be siphoned off. That's what I would see.

Denis, could I perhaps pose a question to you. A lot of our discussion here seems to have been implicitly around the question of the importance of public opinion as an object of activism. An issue which comes to mind here is the recent differences over the slogan "Take Back the Cape in '88". I don't want to get into the nitty-gritty of that particular debate, but one underlying controversy within it, it seems to me, was the importance of public opinion: how one addresses it, and how important it is vis-a-vis more activist-oriented activities. How do you respond to that assertion of the importance of public opinion, and how would you see it fitting in with your vision of the peace movement?

Denis: It's a big question. I think public opinion is very important and I'd love to see a lot of people support the position of closing the bases. But, while that may be a dream at the moment, I think it's important to maintain a principled stand. If we say that the bases are morally indefensible, and public opinion is against us, we just have to take it in the neck. And if that takes ten years, or however long, that's unfortunate, but at least in the end we can hold our heads up high and say that we took a highly principled stand, and the stand was right and remains right.

What we've seen with the Hawke Labor government's emphasis on pragmatism is this terrible mish-mash of policies coming out of a government which is not providing very much leadership, and he is losing a certain amount of electoral support because he is seen for people to think the solution is to come out of a government which is losing a certain amount of emphasis on pragmatism is this going to be unpopular to a certain extent because there's that tendency to respond by saying, well, that's all a bit of a cop-out anyway, because the hard questions still remain to be solved. Yet the hard questions would have been even harder if we hadn't had that. What tends to happen is that, given two options, people will be pushed to a more conservative one — a dilemma that we've always got to be looking at.

Mavis: I think we're talking past each other a little on this. I agree that you've got to continue to have a profile of opposition to the bases and nuclear weapons. But the dilemma for us is that, when a government appears to be doing considerably less than we would like it to do — although why we should have the expectation that it would do more I have not quite worked out — people don't then respond by saying, well, let us find ourselves representatives who will do these things we want. Actually, when people become disillusioned with the Labor Party, they go after something that's infinitely worse than the Labor Party. If we think it's going to be hard to maintain the peace movement's profile with the kind of Labor government we've got, then we've got short memories about what it was like under a conservative government.

Whatever else the Labor government has or has not done, its very high profile in the International Year of Peace led to a situation where peace ceased to be the nasty word that it had been through all the long years of my life. It became an acceptable and reasonable thing to be involved in deciding on your non-nuclear destiny. That went right throughout the Australian community, unlike most other countries in the world. You could say, well, that's all a bit of a cop-out anyway, because the hard questions still remain to be solved. Yet the hard questions would have been even harder if we hadn't had that. What tends to happen is that, given two options, people will be pushed to a more conservative one — a dilemma that we've always got to be looking at.

But you see, what we're really saying is that, while some people will have a moral position in opposition to the bases, and a general, well-thought-out strategic position in opposition to them, the majority opposition to the bases will not come from people just being told how bad the bases are, or what they lead us to, or that it makes us a nuclear target. Rather, it will come out of addressing the development of common security, and overcoming perceptions of enemies near and far.

My final point is that I believe that those of us who are opposed to the bases ought to be saying to the Australian government, as tensions decrease between the superpowers, what can we get the Russians to trade off for some of the things that we have as part of the American alliance. I actually think that would be an interesting debate. I'd really like to know what the Russians would give up if we gave up Pine Gap. Just as with the SS-20s and Pershing and Cruise, we might surprise ourselves as to what can be given up or traded off.
Denis: A famous peace activist once said that nothing concentrates the mind like a good court case. I'd recommend that you all get arrested, and defend yourselves in court, and see what you're up against. Get real live experience of it.

Beverley: You think that's a good lesson?

Denis: I think so.

Beverley: About what? About the power of the state against us?

Denis: And how far we've got to go in the struggle. We've got to be able to encourage ourselves in the struggle. I think, on Mavis' political point, that we've got to learn to dialogue with all sections of the movement, so that we're a little bit more united. And so when people become disenchanted with the ALP they don't tend towards a more conservative line: they head towards peace candidates or whatever. And I think a great way to do that would be if we could get a little bit more unity across a whole lot of areas.

I think the specialist groups, the solidarity groups and so on, have done great work and will continue to do great work, but occasionally we should gather together and focus on something — it doesn't necessarily have to be bases; it could be some other issue. I think if we gathered all our forces together we'd be something to be reckoned with, and we shouldn't be too apologetic about our existence.

Peter: There's two things there I'd like to take issue with you over. One is the call for unity, which goes back a long time, and of which I'm always highly suspicious. I think the strength of the peace movement is its diversity. I think there's a time for coalitions but, on the whole, the peace movement is stronger for having a lot of small groups of people who can work more effectively than some of these ghastly attempts — particularly in a country the size of Australia — to try to build unity, and which invariably mean the domination of Sydney and Melbourne as far as the rest of the country is concerned.

Secondly, I really want to take issue with you over the question of getting arrested. I say this as someone who's been arrested, so I'm not putting it down. I think there is a time and place to get arrested. But the fact is that, for the vast majority of Australians, it's an impractical option. And I think it's a very dangerous option to advocate for more than a handful of people who can afford to go out and do it, because one of the traps of going out and getting arrested is that it bogs you down in a process which can last for years, which is fiendishly expensive, and which often involves travelling great distances — particularly because the places where you get arrested in Australia tend to be miles from anywhere.

I also think there's a very great danger of the "I'm holier than thou because I've been arrested more times than you" syndrome. There are people in the peace movement who lay that trip on an awful lot of us. I think it's extremely arrogant and very dangerous. I've seen it happen particularly in the United States where I've spent a lot of time, because there is a much greater tradition of civil disobedience there.

But to return to the "unity" question. I think we can come together in coalitions, for Palm Sunday or whatever, or one-off things. The oldest and the most contentious issue in Australia on the question of the call for unity is alignment versus non-alignment, and that can be so divisive that I'd rather not put energy into it.

Beverley: I must say I share a lot of Peter's concern. It really has not been a positive experience in Australia. The Viet Nam Moratorium certainly built a national coalition movement, but not without enormous tensions and problems. I think the reality of the Australian movement over the last several years is that the small groups are mushrooming all the time. It's not a question of whether they should. They will, because people want them. Many people don't want to get involved in a big, somewhat bureaucratic — let's face it — organisation. In a way, more effective actions can be developed from the smaller, action-oriented groups. I'm not denying the need for the bigger organisations or for coalitions, but I'm inclined to think they're more effective when they're set up for particular, short-term, aims.

Mavis: I think we also ought not to get too much into the cultural cringe. A very important beginning of the NFIP movement can be traced to Australia. The concept of nuclear-free zones for municipal councils can be traced to Australia. There are all kinds of things that our movement has done to enrich the world-wide peace movement, and we've done this without being part of some big international structure.

While I think solidarity is enormously important, I think in Australia we've made that a bit of a substitute for our own activity. I think we ought to be calling in the chips a bit and asking for a bit more solidarity for Australia from the international arena. It's really important that we try to get the American movement to do something about their bases. In much the same way, I think common cause between the Australian movement and the Japanese movement, which has got a fairly long history anyway, is going to be more important as the military profile of Japan increases.

My final point is that I've often felt the Australian attitude towards the French and the French nuclear testing in the Pacific was a bit of a cop-out. We let the Americans and the Russians off the hook a bit. But, really, what is happening now in New Caledonia is going to affect the entire Pacific. I think we have to encourage the position that's so far been taken by our government, which has clearly annoyed the French. The necessity for so many facets of the movement to come together — maybe this is the thing that we can come together in unity on — in support of the rights of the Kanaks, but more particularly in opposition to French colonialism. Should be very high on all of our agendas over the next few months.
The last volume of the Hite Report is full of shocks, according to Rosalind Brunt.

The most shocking thing about the new Hite Report, released earlier this year, is likely to be, for women, anyway, the shock of recognition. For what is covered here is deeply familiar territory: the surprise is that it has not been explored so systematically before.

This is the last in Shere Hite's massive trilogy of reports on women's and men's sexuality. It is based on detailed questionnaires completed by a sample population of 4,500 American women and mixes statistical data with "qualitative" evidence — the women's own words — and Hite's commentary. But the book is buttressed by profuse expert testimonials to Hite's scientific integrity and a florid tribute to her own husband and these provide an edgy reminder of past accusations of doing "man-hating" research.

My own interpretation of the report is that it presents the most damning and comprehensive indictment of men's treatment of women who love them that I've ever read. At the same time, it is nothing new and immediately recalls all the stories that women tell. But what makes it so devastating is its scale and consistency: so many voices from such varied circumstances saying such similar things.

Over all the report's findings is a sense of the sex and gender times being completely out of joint: a massive emotional and attitudinal disparity between the women and men; with men still encased in character-armour — in every sense, stuck rigid — while women have been "on the move", reassessing personal experience in all sorts of ways that have life-changing implications.

Hite surmises that what prevents men "letting go", becoming, as she puts it, "emotionally equal with women", is their fear of losing control, and thereby power, over women. Most women in the report say that most men take little or no responsibility for the development of a love relationship: they won't "work at it", lack intimacy with women, are demeaning, rejecting and unaffectionate, preoccupied with "more important things". They tend to treat sex as a primary means of communication and equate sex with love; otherwise, they are emotionally withholding and distancing and offer no emotional support to women. At the same time, without acknowledging it, and while complaining that it is women who do the whingeing, clinging and demanding, it is the men women believe, who are the desperately "needy", emotionally dependent and passive sex: demanding all the attention, time and nurture from women that they are not providing in their turn. Plus 12% of women in the sample had been beaten by a loved man / men and 57% threatened with violence in a relationship.

In this state of affairs, Hite notes a significant factor in the current American divorce rate (50% of marriages): 90% of the actions are now initiated by women, whereas the men are still getting enough satisfaction from the relationship to want to continue marriage.
Furthermore, she observes a marked trend of 40-plus divorcees now embarking on their first lesbian relationship. The only chapters in the report that express any real contentment are those where women describe lesbian or celibate lifestyles. Hite notes the value women place on friendships with women and how it is often only sisterly support that makes life with men bearable.

So what is going on here? What remains the point of sticking with men? I think the Hite report undoubtedly downplays the role of continuing material and cultural inequality between men and women in promoting heterosexual choice. At the same time, it presents a challenge to those radical feminist analyses that say if women had equal access to the same means of existence as a man then it would indeed be a case of naked emperors. This might well be so if women were claiming only to be buying into the action and lifestyle of men and not, as Hite insistently demonstrates, offering, indeed demanding, to love and be loved by men as well. So doesn’t there have to be “something” about men, besides the real social props of patriarchy, that makes them objects of desire to women, however strange that seems?

The questions that resonate throughout the report remain the puzzles about men that women are always posing to each other: Is he really worth it? What did I see in him? Why ever do we bother with them? And if we reject, as Hite does, the currently fashionable notion that women are masochists who somehow “love too much”, then it is getting rather urgent that we come up with some good answers for why women go on making a heterosexual choice.

WOMEN AND LOVE, by Shere Hite, is published by Viking. This appraisal first published in MARXISM TODAY.

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Culinary Conquests

Alexander Cockburn digests the connections between exotic food and imperialism...

We drove south on the San Diego Freeway, past the neon sea of LA International Airport, through the purple twilight to Manhattan Beach and the restaurant they call the Saint Estephe.

I was well armed, for beside me at the wheel of the Nissan Sentra was a man I’ll call Mercator, a professor of political science at UCLA, undiluted in his radical convictions, awesome in appetite, his palate trained in Mexico, Paris, Budapest, Moscow, and the Upper West Side of Manhattan; in the back seat was his wife Augusta, a child of Portuguese colonialism, nourished on the caldo verde of Lisboa, the muamba of Angola, the feijoada of Brazil.

We’d heard of the Saint Estephe a few weeks earlier, with reports filtering in of a successful fusion of New Mexican with New French cuisine. As we rolled along the freeway I brought reports of the food fashions of New York, of gastrofads bursting like comets in the twilight, gone in an eye-blink: the mustard mania, the vinegar madness, the peppercorn frenzy; American tongues darting at the spinning globe, at Szechwan, Osaka, Bangkok, Hanoi, and now, most recently, at Mexico and the great American Southwest.

Mercator addressed the inside of the Sentra as though it were a lecture hall. ‘You ask, why this frenzied food faddism, this orgy of gastroglobal eclecticism? Consider. There is a
familiar pattern in which food in the imperial, mother countries is influenced by, even replaced by food from annexed, or colonial or even neo-colonial areas: Algerian or North African or Vietnamese food in France; Indonesian or Surinamese food in Holland; Indian food in Great Britain. In pre-revolutionary Russia, the best food came, still comes, from the Transcaucasia, from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and central Asia. Why?

Augusta answered: 'Food from imperial countries is inherently bland. Being in temperate areas the imperialists are less likely to be using interesting condiments and spices, and besides they're so busy imperializing the world that they have no time.'

'What about French food?'

'Stolen from Italy via the cooks of Marie de' Medici, when she crossed the Alps to marry Henry IV. The cuisine of France is oversold. English food? Bland beyond belief. Think of it, the least imperial countries in Europe have the best food: Italy and Hungary, which is the crossroads of eastern Europe.' Augusta fell silent, and Mercator, peering for the exit sign to Manhattan Beach, resumed:

'How else can we account for the mania here for Third World food? I could point to the ready availability of cheap raw materials as an essential component of colonialism. As a student of our political culture I have no time.'

Mercator suddenly swerved the car into the exit ramp and there was a startled blare from behind as a Buick wooshed past us into the red ribbon of taillights streaming south. I thought of the cult of Vietnamese food, of the success in lower Manhattan of two restaurants, dowdy Saigon and modish Indochine. 'Don't trust liberal guilt,' I said. 'It's always two-edged. What could not be conquered in the Mekong Delta is consumed at the table; in an anthropological paradox the defeated devour, symbolically, the victors.'

We drove down Sepulveda Boulevard. The Saint Estephe was in a shopping mall and at last, to our left, we saw the gray expanse of Manhattan Village Mall. Obedient as only California drivers are, Mercator obeyed the NO U-TURN, NO LEFT TURN signs. As we searched for a legal left turn Augusta brooded further on the appeal of Third World cuisine: 'It is the exoticism of the subordinate. You and I read qualities into a culture that conform to the stereotypes and reinforce our dominant position vis-a-vis that culture. The English, for example, eat Indian food. They tell each other that the true Indian eats fiery curries to make himself cool in a hot climate. What they are really saying is that the Indian is impervious to pain and hence can be treated abominably; because they think that the Indian must be silly to think he can get cool in this way. The Dutch say that the Indonesians eat such mountains of rijstteefel that they cannot work hard, proving they must be lazy. Take this craze for Mexican food...'

But at last Mercator had made his legal turn, gone back along the boulevard, and was parking in front of an undistinguished concrete structure labeled Saint Estephe.

The cooking was modern French in technique, nouvelle in presentation with some polite, though restrained, bows in the direction of the American Southwest, mostly in the higher hucksterism and bad faith of the menu's language. It spoke of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, the civilization of the first American Indians, the small villages of Hispanic settlers and the natural foods — corn, chile, beans, wild herbs, pumpkins, pinon nuts, squash — that had 'blended together to make America's first historic cuisine.' The Saint Estephe, the menu suggested, has concocted 'a modern Southwest cuisine' by taking these raw materials and adding 'new interest, inspiration and refinement.'

We ordered blue corn tortillas 'served with smoked salmon and two types of American caviar.' They were cocktail canapes, resting on white plates and set off against a trim of small red peppers. A snap of Mercator's jaws and they were gone. We had a tiny cassoulet of sweetbreads with pinto beans and wild rice. The only element here the Southwest could claim for its own would be the pinto beans, but the dish was good. As our third hors d'oeuvre we had 'New Mexican style raviolis stuffed with carne adobada, served with a cream garlic chevre sauce' — four pale squares, a mini-UN of ingredients: Southwestern filling, Italian envelope, sauce from a peasant product of the eastern Mediterranean.

Contended as we waited for the main dishes, perched in the western edge of one of the largest Spanish-speaking cities in the world, we debated the fashion for Mexican food and the meaning of the Saint Estephe.

'After all,' Mercator pointed out, 'though Mexico has some of the most sophisticated food in the world, in the United States we basically eat what the cowboys have round the campfire: beans, enchiladas, rice, and tacos. What's being enforced is the peasant stereotype, a version of pastoral. The classic Mexican leftover dish is ropa viega, literally "old clothes". You tell us it's on the menu of the Cafe Marimba in New York for $14.95. That's like selling a hot dog with sauerkraut for $10. Now the colonized are not only exotic but also threatening. Mexico conjures up an image of illegal immigrants flooding across the Rio Grande, of perilous external bank debt, of drug smuggling. It has these dual connotations — quaint but threatening. Hence you get attempts at domestication and cultural pacification via a pastoral version of Mexican cuisine and, even less threatening, the notion of New Mexican food. New Mexico isn't going to threaten America. It is America.'

'Yes, it is the very image of repressive tolerance!' said Augusta, who had just been reading Marcuse. 'The proliferation of Third World food is a concession to immigrants,
allowing them a toe hold in the American dream. You integrate the Third World into American cuisine while at the same time segregating it from American society. As an immigrant you have the vicarious pleasure of seeing your food move out of the gastro-ghetto into middle-class receptability in a fancy restaurant where you might be lucky to work as busboy.

The main dishes came: the menu's ‘fresh prawns from Arizona served Southwest bouillabaisse style, flavored with nopalitos and chile pods'; though entirely unrelated to bouillabaisse in any style the prawns were great and the little bits of nopal cactus served as signifiers of the Southwest as surely as an ox skull on a whitewashed wall signifies Georgia O'Keeffe. Signifier of the Southwesternness of the supreme de volaille was jicama, Mexico's retort to the daikon radish, this year's crisp texture of choice though, in the Saint Estephe's presentation, pointlessly shredded. The saddle of lamb had its signifying posole, and the New Mexican carte d'identite of the veal chop was established by a sopaiilla—a square pouch of puff pastry from which one tears a corner to pour in honey.

We ate and we drank and as we did so parties of sober-looking men in suits and ties came in to eat, straight from the office evidently even though it was now well past nine, Hughes engineers, aerospace executives, traders and guardians of the Pacific rim. As the hefty bill arrived I told Mercator and Augusta of the feeding frenzies of the East Coast: bogus regionalism disguised as the 'new American cuisine'. In New York at Jams, for example, Norwegian salmon with jicama and green-pepper concasse; sauteed foi-gras salad with jicama, sherry vinaigrette, and deep-fried spinach; red-pepper pancake with salmon and Oestra caviar.

Mercator raised his hand. 'Stop, please! It's the same here in Los Angeles, as you well know. Probably worse.' But it was my privilege to give myself the final word. 'The last refuge for an elite frantic to define itself, yet with nothing creative to say, is conspicuous, relentless consumption of commodities of which the most basic is food. The British elite, at the height of their empire in the late nineteenth century, conspicuously consumed meals which were vast in size and, amid their belches, proclaimed, “We gorge, therefore we exist.” Today, the conspicuous consumer in the United States knows that to gorge is to die. He renders his orgies of consumption—hugely expensive to be sure—more theatrical. He nods to the humble New Mexican pueblos with a blue corn tortilla. He winks at the Orient with a cumin seed, at China with a water chestnut, at Japan with a dried bonito shred. He consumes the world by symbols and the more he eats down the more he pays up. Ideally our conspicuous consumers must ingest all these symbols at the same time, for then truly they can fold their napkins with a contented sigh and say, “We are the world”.'


ALEXANDER COCKBURN is a columnist with the US Nation and the Wall St Journal.

Up the Ho Chi Minh Trail

Twenty years after Tet, how is Vietnam now? From the old American embassy to the cellars of Saigon, all a leftie tourist would need to know.

I stand in the arrival hall at Tan Son Nhat Airport, watching nervously as suitcases and boxes mount in a zig-zag pile on the concrete floor. I tell myself to stay calm. On my firstever trip to Viet Nam, I have lost my luggage. The heat is rising and the sweat is running in rivulets down my legs and into my $34 black rubber-soled sandals. A feel ridiculous. I look out the doorway. The round concrete hangars that once housed US planes stand empty on the edge of the tarmac.

Twenty years ago Tan Son Nhat was the scene of a major attack by the National Liberation Front forces during the Tet offensive. In 1968 I wore beads, patchouli, jeans, Indian shirts and long cotton skirts. I had a Che Guevara poster in my bedroom and burned incense at parties. I went to demos with friends and a year later I screamed with 100,000 others outside Sydney Town Hall when Hall Greenland yelled into the microphone “Fuck Gorton, fuck Nixon and fuck the war”.

The Air France flight from Bangkok has just landed. I watch fascinated as customs officials in khaki uniforms and peaked caps with red hatbands poke self-consciously through the luggage of the Vietkieu, the local name for Vietnamese who live abroad. An immigration officers meticulously examines the passport of an elderly Vietnamese woman in an expensive grey silk dress.

Customs regulations allow each passenger to bring in tax-free 1,000 cigarettes, 50 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco; one litre of liqueur; and one litre of “eau de vie”. Forbidden are opium, arms, explosives and cultural articles incompatible with the social regime of Viet Nam.
The Saigon tourist brochure announces (in French) that the airport is seven kilometres from the centre of town. The town is Ho Chi Minh-ville, as it has been renamed since the liberation of Saigon in 1975. Today, the twin cities of Saigon and Cholon comprise the greater city of Ho Chi Minh.

Uncle Ho died in 1969, seven years before the reunification of his beloved Viet Nam. From where I sit on the rooftop garden of the Rex Hotel, if I close my eyes and take a sip ofgin and tonic, I can see the Quai de Nha Rong, or Port de Saigon, whence President Ho Chi Minh set off in 1911 as a young patriot in search of his country's salvation.

A nightclub belts out pop music across the rooftops of the commercial centre of old Saigon. The garden rooftop of the Rex Hotel was once a favourite haunt of US officers. Now the Ben Thanh, its open air terrace is gently Vietnamese with intricate bonsai trees, a battalion of large ceramic elephants, cane chairs and a barman who has been mixing cocktails around the bars of Saigon for twenty-five years.

A tinkling piano, stiff white tablecloths, black and white starch-suited waiters with formal manners, and fresh flowers on the tables every morning in the dining room. Breakfast is yellow or white noodles, served with a porcelain spoon and chopsticks. Fresh fruit and Laotian coffee that tastes of chocolate is definitely mind-blowing. The French should go back to Viet Nam to find out how to make fresh crunchy bread rolls like they used to when Saigon was the river port capital of French Cochin China.

If Ho Chi Minh took a walk around some parts of the city today he might be a touch puzzled. Shops stocked with Sanyo, Sony and Olympus cassette players, radios and cameras attract crowds of onlookers, while youths in blue jeans ride brand new motor bikes. He might think for a moment that America had won the war. And, in a way, it did.

On the street, a gentleman brushes up beside me. One thousand dong, he says. I ignore him. He runs after me. Fifteen hundred, he whispers. I hurry into a souvenir shop. Black and red shiny lacquered boxes, carved ivory jewellery and tiny antique watches and statues are too good to pass up. How much that one? For two US dollars I walk out with a carved ivory necklace and an exquisite lacquer jewellery box. That was about 800 dong to the dollar. At the hotel the rate was 450. The American greenback is the real currency of Viet Nam.

I am waiting in the lobby of the hotel. Earnest-looking businessmen with leather briefcases confer with their agents and interpreters under gilded ceilings and chandeliers. The panelled walls, inlaid ivory screens and Chinese-style carpets are straight out of a black and white movie.

My interpreter has arrived. She is probably in her late twenties but she looks younger. Her black, shiny hair falls to a straight bouncy bang just above her collar. She has large round eyes and thick glasses, and glorious French-accented English for which I am truly grateful. Breathlessly she explains that my luggage has been found in Bangkok and will arrive in two days.

At the Saigon tourist office, the deputy director serves strong tea in tiny cups and black coffee with biscuits. I learn that it is customary to take both. The walls of the office are newly painted and there are none of the usual glossy travel posters in sight. Tran Duong is pleasantly efficient in a beige linen suit. The government is well aware of the currency problems, she says. They have, in fact, four different official prices — one for western tourists and businessmen, one for Vietkieu, one for tourists from socialist countries and a much lower one for local Vietnamese. It's a kind of apolitical means test.

Madame Tran Duong doesn't make any political distinctions. She is quite proud of the small but growing number of sentimental Viet Nam veterans from the US and Australia who are returning to visit the battlefields of their youth. The Saigon tourist office is organizing trips to the 17th parallel which marks the beginnings of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the network of tortuous paths, jungle trails and underground tunnels that provided cover for guerrillas from bombing attacks by day and allowed the movement of troops and supplies by night.

The gates of the former Independence Palace, smashed by tank 843 in 1975, have been rebuilt. Now Unification Hall, the old palace is surrounded by parkland, which is not open to the public. It retains intact the room where President Thieu used to say his prayers. The white lattice-fronted American Embassy, which saw the dramatic last hours of the US withdrawal from Saigon, has become a government office.

Fourteen thousand tourists passed through Ho Chi Minh City last year. For the first time since the reunification of Viet Nam, two thousand tourists came from the West. The southern Vietnamese capital is a departure point for the ancient cities of Hue, Hanoi and Danang. There are two flights a week by Air France from Bangkok and one a week from Manila. An Australian tourist agency runs charter flights to the Kampuchean capital of Phnom Penh and the ancient temple of Angkor Wat.

A tourist-led recovery seems unlikely. But who knows? The hotels are still there. New ones are to be built under joint ventures with foreign governments and private companies. The Continental, the scene of Graham Green's novel The Quiet American, is under renovation. I wonder if he has been back since.

Tonight I have dinner at the Ben Hui or Friendship Hotel. The terrace is smaller but, from fifteen storeys up, there is a cool breeze and a view across the Saigon River. I order sole, cooked French style and served in mayonnaise, washed down with Russian wine from Georgia. I decide that warm Vietnamese beer served with large chunks of ice is an acquired taste.

Carlotta McIntosh

Carlotta McIntosh is a freelance radio journalist in Sydney.
SAIGONTOURIST

The government tourist office is located just across the square from the Benh Thanh Hotel. If you want to get out of town, Saigontourist has a wide choice of tours to the provinces. Vung Tao, the favourite resort of US servicemen, is a few hours' drive from Ho Chi Minh City. It boasts beaches and Buddhist pagodas. These days, the hotels of Vung Tao are patronised by Russians and East Europeans, who travel mostly in groups organised by their unions or as delegates to conferences.

CURRENCY

As in all socialist countries, currency cannot be taken out of Viet Nam. The Vietnamese dong is not exchangeable outside the country. You need US dollars not Australian dollars. Take more than you think you will need, but include at least fifty in small denominations. Rates vary from 450 dong to the US dollar at the hotel desk to 1,500 in the street.

HOTELS

Foreigners are expected to stay in hotels. The bill is always in US dollars. The most expensive hotel in Ho Chi Minh City costs no more than $US30 per person. Hotels in Hanoi are cheaper.

TRANSPORT

Saigontourist runs some coach tours to the provinces. Long distance travel in the country is mainly by Air Viet Nam. Return fare from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi is $US300. If you want to go to both cities the best way is to schedule your ticket to arrive in Hanoi and depart from Ho Chi Minh, or vice versa; that way you only pay $US150. Taxis can be hired for 50 cents a kilometre including the driver. In the city there's a choice between taxis which are hard to find, and cyclos which aren't. In fact, tourists are often besieged by pedicab drivers all wanting to be your exclusive driver. They have means tested prices and western tourists are at the top of the list. It's not uncommon for them to ask for a fare equal to the monthly salary of a government clerk. If you are brave you can buy a bicycle. At local prices you can afford to leave it behind when you go.

FOOD

Hotels and restaurants serve excellent food. Mostly it's traditional Vietnamese, or in Cholon, Chinese, and there are even a few that serve exclusively French menus. Hotels usually have a choice of Vietnamese or French. Fish is fresh and plentiful. Once you've tried tiny spring rolls wrapped in mint leaves and rice paper and dipped in hot sauce, you'll be hooked on the local fare.

WINE

The cellars of Saigon are full of surprises. Dusty bottles of ancient Bordeaux, romantic red and white Russian wines from Georgia, and Bulgarian rose are just a few of the treasures to be found.

MOVEMENT

There are no explicit instructions limiting free movement. However, without an interpreter it is more difficult. There are few telephones.

CLOTHES

Everybody wears pants. Black peasant pants like the Viet Cong used to wear are seldom seen in the city now. Women wear jeans, or the traditional Ao Dai. There is a vast range of fabrics at the market and tailors can make up the material of your choice in a day or two at low cost. The slit fitted shirt, slit at the waist, over black or white wide-bottomed pants is worn by young and old for formal occasions. The silk shops sell embroidered shirt lengths in exquisite colours and patterns.

WEATHER

Hot in the south and cooler in the north. Winter in Hanoi is like Melbourne, wet and cold. Mosquitoes can be a problem. Take the usual precautions against malaria.
The Mob of Women

Kate Grenville and Don Anderson interview author Finola Moorhead about her new novel.

Finola Moorhead wrote her latest novel, Remember the Tarantella, after a challenge from Christina Stead to write a book without male characters. In the event, the novel, structured around the musical forms and those of co-ordinate geometry, has twenty-six characters, each represented by a letter of the alphabet — and all women. It has variously been described as a feminist masterwork, and unreadable. Here Finola talks to Kate Grenville and Don Anderson.

Kate: What intrigued me reading the book was the way you started off in theory and then moved into the material. You say you began with draft - no sentences and this was to “ensure symphonic and historic depth”: I think I’m quoting from your introduction. And as someone who works in exactly the opposite way — I never know what I’m going to write next until I’ve actually written it — it fascinated me that you could actually work from such an abstract image and then work backwards, as it were, to life.

Finola: What I meant by “ensure historic and symphonic depth” was that you can’t get that when you just start with a sentence: I mean, “Zorro was handsome” — how is that going to give me reflective, inner chords, like you get in something like Patrick White’s Voss? I’ve always admired Voss as a novel because the fiction is used in the way poetic images are used. And I wanted to have that kind of inner song, or dance, or whatever, inside the book, and the only way I could see to do that was through co-ordinate geometry.

Plus, we feminists for ten years have been thinking theory. You might have known that a lot of feminist prose has been sort of realist, not very good literarily. So I was trying to marry the avant-garde literary scene that I was in with the feminist scene that I was in. I had to, for my job and myself. So that’s why I went from the theoretical to the prose.

Don: Can I raise a different sort of issue which may or may not be related to music. In your earlier collection called Quilt is a little section which is untitled. You’re talking about monologue, and you have this to say:

It is interesting that many women wish to write, perform and film monologues. Duna Barnes’ Nightwood takes off into an amazing monologue; Stevie Smith; others; the stream of consciousness has monologue rhythms. It is not that women wish to tell each other anything — they don’t claim to give intelligence — when the aesthetic drive is in gear the women wish to appreciate, handle with delicacy perhaps, a point, an observation, an insight which, if given second place to the relentless progress of the plot, would be rendered banal, mundane, unimportant. The shimmering jewels of appreciation of what is there would be lost in the flapping veils of what is invented.

Could I ask you, in a long and complex book, what happens to the monologue as a form apparently chosen by women?

Finola: It relies heavily on monologue in the five vowel characters’ cases. But then I was observing that women are interested in the monologue form... like Gill Leahy’s film Life Without Steve, for instance. I like monologue: I find it easy; and I threw that onto the central vowel characters who are all presented in deliberately set classic monologues — diaries and letters and so on.

I’m formally using that, but underneath what I’m saying is also that the structure of fiction for women does not necessarily rely on not knowing what’s coming next, whereas a lot of traditional fiction, written by men and women, relies very heavily on the fact that you’ve got to continue reading in order to find out what happens next. You can equally appreciate the next sentence if you know what’s coming; in fact, the ancient Greeks must have done that all the time. They all knew the whole plots of their plays off by heart. That’s fine writing: it’s like music.

So, in Tarantella, I’m actually not saying anything new to those people out of whose world the book comes. In fact, I hope I’m not because my gratification would be in their saying “yeah, that’s right”, rather than discovering something. That’s the only way they’re going to be given a place in the fiction world, rather than in the real world, because they’re in the real world but they’re not very often in the fiction world.

Don: Can I ask whether you have an audience in mind?

Finola: Paul, my publisher, called it my “constituency”.

Don: Could you describe your constituency?

Finola: Well, it’s just the mob, the mob of women. But it jumps around in your mind. Sometimes when I was writing that book I maybe thought, what would my mother think, but she died halfway through. And then I said, what does my sister, who is a nun, think? And you have to keep on doing it or really think through that, using the fiction mind to become a fictional reader, like my Ursula in the book. I was writing it as
much to Ursula in away. I don't
know if she exists, such a woman, but
somebody described her as a really
good reader. That's the person I was
writing for.

Kate: I think that aspect of trying to
subvert the patriarchal is also just
trying to subvert the old, it's just also
trying to subvert the stale, the dead ...

Finola: It's also cutting off your nose
to spite your face — in terms of
success. Women's writing has a fair
bit of a tradition already. It always
has, ever since the penny dreadfuls,
Jane Austen and so on. Ever since the
novel, the women have been around.

And so it's a book as much about
my generation of women as anything.
It might even be as much about the 'sixties as anything else. 1968 — what happened to
that revolution? It's not around now.
They say there was a baby boom, and
there was a whole bunch of
university-education women who
weren't going to be like their
mothers. So they turned to other
women. A lot of them, in the book
and in the middle 'seventies, were
lesbians for a day, or for a year. It
was a self-recognition at the time,
and it was as much related to
Australian post-war history as
anything else, in that sense of being
the first one educated in the family.
And I don't know whether it's going
to happen again. So the book's as
much of an historical document as
anything literary in that sense. I'm
just saying this bunch of people
existed.

Kate: Yes, I think one of the reviews
of the book mentioned that a useful
introduction would have been a
history of the recent women's
movement, rather than a history of
the tarantella. And I think that's
right, because that historical thing,
perhaps that's partly the sense of
being excluded that I also felt, and
that brings me back to what I
mentioned before about trying to
pick up threads of real history that
you recognise from your own general
knowledge. That historical thing,
which I think is one of the most
interesting things about it — it's
a document in a sense much more
than a novel — is one of its sources of
strength, I think, and also for me
frustrating because I wanted more.

Finola: Well, that negatively proves
the point about women's history
generally. You've both got kids, but
kids now don't know that history.
They're still studying Tess of the
D'Urbervilles, aren't they? I can't
write that sort of stuff. But that
history is behind the experience of
these women in the book, at least ten
to twenty of whom inform each
character in the book. They know it.
And it continues, that secret, or
erased, history of women.

Christina Stead didn't like feminists ...

Don: She said it so often, one tends
to wonder ...

Finola: ... so I was very surprised
that she took me out to lunch after my
first novel. And then she said, it's
very difficult to write a book with
no men in it all. And now I'm
finding that, yes, it is difficult to
write a novel with no men in it all ... that
men like. When she was writing she
probably had mostly male editors
and things like that — but now the
publishing scene's gone all female.

Kate: I was very interested — in your
blurb it says rather tantalisingly
"Christina Stead once challenged
Finola Moorhead by saying that it is
ever difficult to make an interesting
novel with no men in it at all"; which
sounds as if she flung down the
gantlet. Was it like that?

Finola: I took it like that. She was
responding to Lots of Potential,
which has a man in it. It's not real
good — it's my first novel. But I was
a bit blown out that she wrote to me.
And I was a bit blown out that she
took me out to lunch and talked
maths with me. And the challenge
was worthwhile. That was when she
was writer in residence at Monash;
and then I was writer in residence at
Monash, and she was still alive. And
I wrote to her and I said, "I can't
believe this, but I'm sitting in the
same place as you—. And she wrote
back — that was not with that
challenge, but she said, oh, forget
that first novel, write something else.

So I drew the diagram and started
writing. The first two weeks I was at
Monash I wrote that autobiographi-
cal "I" stuff, and nearly threw myself
out of this seventh storey window,
except you can't open them. That
type of writing really bored me.

I think reading's become a
hobby anyway. No longer do you
have to read a damn thing. You don't
even have to read the news. You don't
have to read any novels. The
public has gone down to the
aficionados.

Don: Reading's also become
institutionalised — that's the famous
remark of Joyce again about Ulysses:
"I've put enough puzzles in there to
keep the professors busy for a
hundred years, and that's the only
way to ensure your immortality".
That's one of the things that has
happened to reading. A shrinking
reading public ...

Finola: But those who do never stop
reading. It's a real hobby. You have
to make time for it. You have to
have a place for it. I think we've got a
few old-fashioned ideas about fiction.
Narrative fiction is better told on the
screen now — because it's done
faster, it's done much more subtly ...
And you've got your Mills and Boon
culture. There's a romance
publishing industry that'll go on
forever. Those people will still read
it, probably because film's too
expensive to put it out that way.

Kate: And it's a very intimate
experience, I think, reading about his
eye片段
ironbark hair and his piercing blue
eyes and you want to be by yourself,
curled up in a corner somewhere, I
suspect.

Finola: But for the real novel, the
reading public has to be hobby
readers, readers who spend money
like fishermen do on bait, and read ...

This interview was originally broadcast on
ABC Radio's Radio Helicon. It is reproduced

DON ANDERSON teaches in English at
Sydney University, and has a regular books
column in the Sydney Morning Herald.

Kate GRENVILLE is the author of Joan
Makes History (QUP, 1988).

When a film has been praised for its “perfect verisimilitude”, “authentic” performances and qualities of satire as much as Broadcast News has, it seems reasonable to assume that it comes up with a pretty stinging critique of media institutions and news broadcasting.

Broadcast News certainly does toy with the ethics of news journalism, and gives a predictable swipe at the power house moguls who produce news as entertainment rather than as the “absolute pursuit of truth” director James Brooks knows it really should be. But the power of media networks and corporate system exists as a backdrop to the small “family” team struggling to maintain standards against the adversity of big biz. More in the vein of sitcom or soap opera (Brooks cut his teeth on TV’s Lou Grant, after all), it’s a community of individuals who care for each other that proves so seductive.

The film’s major preoccupation, though, is with three haphazardly connected characters, and while this allows a certain level of commentary on individual systems of morality and codes of behaviour, the invitation of the film lies in its delicate balancing of the moral with the instabilities of sexual identities and the contradictions of desire.

Jane Craig (Holly Hunter) is the dynamic and uncompromising news producer, embodying creative excellence and risking all for the “true” material from which she makes a kind of poetry. It’s a common journalistic stereotype demanding a nervous acting style and, in this case, because she’s a woman, teamed with neuroses over her ability to attract men without threatening them. This makes it both more interesting and funnier. Aaron Altman (Albert Brooks), the investigative journalist, writes first rate copy but has made one crack too many for the good of his career. They are “likes”; committed and clever, but irascible and socially inept. (He has a problem with women, too, and worse — he sweats.) The humour of the film turns their flaws into strengths, though, as they score the best lines, look the most like us and ruffle up the feathers of the media systems.

Tom Grunick (William Hurt) exists as a disruption to this complementarity. He is the presenter sent to news from the sports department — dumb but immaculate. While Aaron and Jane stand for journalistic rigour and depth, he stands for the facade; their knowledge is opposed to his style; their commitment his ambition; their substance his flash. All would be clear-cut except the film sets up its lesson by giving Jane the task of choosing between the two of them. For now Aaron and Tom are opposed over their desire of her. It is what sense each makes of her that indicates their diverse approaches to the medium of TV news. For Aaron, Jane stands for their shared belief in
the absolute possibility of transparently representing the "real" and the "truth". For Tom, she's enviable in her performance, one that he translates into an engulfing sexuality ("I've been wondering what it would be like to be inside all that energy.")

Put this way it sounds as if the film "places" the female character according to what the male characters want of her. On one level it does only it's redeemed by the diversity of these wants and her centrality to the narrative. Each occupies a different arena according to what they offer Jane — she desires Tom, while Aaron is a friend and partner at work. Jane's dilemma is therefore not simply a choice of men, but of self-definition. She is playing out a drama of feminine identity; how to reconcile the sexual and the social. On another level, because Tom is set up as a problematic object of Jane's desire (he stands for everything she despises), he becomes the mysterious "other" who must, somehow, be dealt with by the film. We do not only follow Aaron's yearning look at Jane: it is relayed through her to Tom. He becomes the centre of visual fascination and object of investigation.

Tom's success is offered as a token of television's superficiality and decadence and, charted against Aaron's demise, despite the latter's greater knowledge and skill. As a comment on news production values, though, it cannot escape this structure of desire or the production values of the film. Tom becomes the centre of desire not only for Jane, but for us, too. In a film where there's glaring absence of designer attics and warehouses, sci-fi streets and couture fashions, the presence of William Hurt as Tom fills the gap of spectacle, providing aquiline contours, squared shoulders and a smooth back to his jacket. We glimpse all the outfits and see him put it all together. He's a living doll — clothed meticulously, he's an identikit fantasy.

As Jane becomes enthralled, Aaron solidifies in his suspicion. And the power of his dislike of Tom is itself enjoyable enough to take us with him — almost. It is he who breaks the pattern of universal acclaim of Tom and eventually reveals to Jane his unethical work practices and emotional duplicity. Through Aaron, the message the film purveys, that stars are taking over the news to the detriment of "truth", is voiced. And Tom is the evil he identifies. But even this cannot dent the spellbinding effect of Hurt on screen. As soon as Tom gives his splay-footed waddle or tries to eat a boiled egg, he breaks that spell, but framed as a news anchor or dressed in a tuxedo, once more, and each time, he takes the film over.

The film relies for its effect as social commentary in the belief that knowledge on its own will change people. It's a kind of sub-text to what the characters say, but also of the way the narrative "shows up" the media and its values. Tell it like it is and we'll understand. But here the star is more enticing than the "truth" about him or her. And that knowledge cannot dispel the persistent memory of Jane's desire, however the object of it is devalued. Instead, we are left with a grief produced by the endurability of her desire and the impossibility of its finding an object.

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Rosa by Any Other Name


In 1898, Rosa Luxemburg entered into a marriage of convenience in order to obtain a German passport. Through a process of selection and omission, von Trotta completes this process of "naturalisation". In doing so, she sacrifices much of the cultural complexity of Luxemburg's development in favour of a too-beautiful cinematic equilibrium.

As in other of von Trotta's films, Rosa Luxemburg brings together the broadly socio-political with the intimately psychological. Connections and contradictions are made within and between Luxemburg's private and public characters. Believing in the "spontaneity of the masses", yet arguing that the dialectic "takes time", enduring long periods of imprisonment and yet dismissing her lover on the instant for infidelity, Rosa was an able and powerful theoretician and activist of international socialism who longed to have children and a committed relationship. She was a pacifist in every sense of the word, from her empathy with the natural world to her belief in bloodless revolution.

She cultivated a garden in the midst of her imprisonment and friendships in the midst of political differences.

The film pays ample tribute to Rosa's clarity, integrity and bravery, and imitates these qualities in its own form — which makes all the more jarring some of its significant absences. One is her twenty-year political comradeship and literary correspondence with Lenin, which survived their later disagreements over the relevance or otherwise of armed struggle. Another is her Jewish origins and their influence on her life.

Born Rosa Luksenberg into a profoundly and orthodox religious Jewish family, she modified her name to distance herself from family disapproval. Indeed, her death in 1919 at the hands of the far-right...
Boystown


*Shame* is a powerful and empowering film. Its subject is rape — rape committed by “normal” men with the connivance of authority and the sanction of conventional prejudice, and the backing of physical terror and economic coercion.

Its heroes are a woman, and women: women as victims but also women in resistance. It tells some painful home truths about our society and, for men, our selves. And it does its work without the faintest tinge of propagandism.

*Shame* unfolds in Ginborek, a Western Australian country town where rape and sexual harassment are the standard amusement of the local lads. This is excused as “boys doing what comes naturally”, and as something that women bring on themselves through a combination of bad morals and bad management. And mostly it goes unreported; the few women who seek redress meet with malign indifference from the local cop, ostracism in the local community, and (the bottom line in Ginborek) the threat of losing their jobs at the local meatworks.

Into this rides a self-contained, wryly humorous female barrister, Asta Cadell, who has been forced to make an unscheduled stopover in Ginborek for motorbike repairs. Asta is doing well for herself. Her impressive legal knowledge and even more impressive physical skills serve her well against the local hooligans (in and out of uniform). But while Asta’s defensive efforts don’t go unnoticed, this sister is doing it for herself. Once she’s fixed the bike, she can ride away from the town and its problems; for the women of Ginborek, there is no such individual solution and, seemingly, no hope.

But Asta’s compassion is aroused by Lizzie Curtis, daughter of Asta’s reluctant hosts at the garage. Pack-raped on the night of Asta’s arrival, Lizzie finds unlooked-for support and understanding from the older woman. Their friendship develops: Lizzie’s need, and their shared womanhood, draws a commitment from Asta. She engages with Ginborek’s women and their plight, and they appreciate it. Lizzie’s father, too, comes to terms with his complicity in his daughter’s situation. With Asta’s help, the wheels of justice, rusty from disuse, start turning again; and Ginborek’s women come to realise that they don’t deserve and needn’t put up with the sexual terror that is the town’s shame.

The silence, and the chains, are breaking, and the men don’t like it — “Something’s up with these women!” Ginborek explodes into violence (and counter-violence, led by Asta), but the town begins to be cleansed. There is no happy ending, no facile triumph: just a new, difficult beginning. But something has changed forever in the lives of the women on Ginborek. And Asta Cadell, too, is changed.

*Shame*’s message is all the more powerful because of its universality. Ginborek could be any town or suburb; its meatworks any workplace in Australia. Its characters are all familiar people — even the admirable Asta is a character of human dimensions and capabilities. And Ginborek’s men are all men I have known; men not so different, perhaps, from this reviewer.

Deborah-Lee Furness is in a class of her own as she brings to life a memorable character: the cynical and compassionate, threatening and endearing, gentle and powerful woman called Asta Cadell. She’ll change lives outside of Ginborek.

PAUL NORTON works in the Communist Party’s national office.

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Freikorps may have had as much to do with her Jewish origins as her internationalist politics. Her long-term lover, Leo Jogiches, was also a Polish Jew. While she moved from religious orthodoxy to historical materialism, and from Jewish nationalism to socialist internationalism, she was, nevertheless, surrounded by other secular Jews tor most of her political life.

Von Trotta wrote that she wanted to create a “portrait” rather than a “history” of Luxemburg — that “Rosa’s portrait was already on Jutta Lampe’s (*The German Sisters*) desk”. In one of the film’s rare but superb ironic moments, when Rosa is speaking on a podium before a painted nineteenth century landscape framed by a proscenium arch, the camera moves upwards to focus on an insipidly painted cloudy blue sky. It seems that the framing, both of ideological and artistic purity, is achieved at a high price.

Rosa, for one, thought the price worth paying, and had the German Social Democrats shared her courage and conviction, both in World War One and in the 1919 uprising, European history might have taken a different course.

Rosa believed in the “good mole, who burrowed and burrowed until it had undermined the edifice of reality”. Films construct their own edifice, which it is sometimes advisable for the reviewer to burrow beneath. This modest enterprise can only add to Luxemburg’s achievements — as one of a proud but often hidden tradition of Jewish socialism.

Many thanks to Renee Bittoun, herself a Jewish writer and activist, who substantially informed the ideas in this review.

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Welfare Wars


The most provocative charge you can level at the Labor Party today is that it has abandoned its traditional goals and values. A fair number of ALP members have left the party because they believe this to be true. In fact, everyone except Paul Keating seems to agree. It might be just a bit harder, however, to get a clear account of what those goals and values were.

If anything, you are likely to be told that they are embodied in Chifley’s “great objective — the light on the hill — which we aim to reach by working for the betterment of mankind” (sic). The great memorial to this is Australia’s welfare state, put in place by the Curtin and Chifley governments between 1941 and 1949. Since welfare states all over the world are under challenge; since the rightwing power brokers in the ALP government are eager participants in this challenge; and since on the left Social Security Minister Brian Howe has undertaken the first major review of the social security system in forty years, it is probably high time we re-examined those great Labor reforms.

That is what Rob Watts’ new book does. And he argues that those foundations were rather different to Chifley’s “great objective”. Watts makes two major claims. First, he insists that there is very much greater continuity between the policies of the previous conservative Lyons and Menzies governments and the Curtin/Chifley Labor governments than the cherished picture of a great outpouring of reform would ever suggest. And second, he argues that those reforms owe very much less to the claims of social justice than to the demands of the new Keynesian fiscal policies.

The serious charge here is that social security reforms were mainly the sweeteners for a much less palatable goal. This was to head off inflation by muzzling the increased consumption which would flow from full employment, a concern which was even more far-reaching than the parallel need to direct resources to financing the war. The main weapon was to be the dramatic extension of taxation to include all workers — even those on the lowest incomes.

The most interesting part of this story is the detailed attention to the crucial role played by the small group of Keynesians who formed the Financial and Economic Advisory Committee and later occupied key positions in government departments. The best known of these today is H.C. Coombs.

This is a much more complex story than the somewhat similar marxist critique of the welfare state which argues that the welfare state has not removed the destructive consequences of capitalism — poverty, homelessness, unemployment — but has provided an ideological justification for inequality by offering minimal financial support. It seems that Watts shares at least some of this view; but his book goes much further by trying to unravel the particular historical influences which made this post-war “settlement” with capital take shape, and most important, the details of its legitimation.

One of the keys to this was the acceptance of the need for social planning, which had gained momentum during the 'thirties; and in particular the acceptance that capitalism could not be left to its own devices — that “unemployment and insecurity [were] inherent in the system and not mere excrescences that can be pared off from it”, as G.V. Portus put it in 1935.

But, despite this, social planning was blind to the class nature of capitalism. Its guiding principle was social reconciliation and the interests of the whole community. But as Watts (like the marxist critics of the day) points out, the inequalities which are the basis of capitalist production ensure that the sacrifices demanded by Keynesian planning in the overall interest are borne unequally. Probably the best example was the imposition of a taxation system designed specifically to drain off the increased earnings of workers, and a social security system whose payments were set so low as to avoid threatening the prerogatives of

Beyond a Joke: An Anti-Bicentenary Cartoon Book, compiled by Kaz Cooke, brings the collective bite of Petty, Cook, Mary Leunig, Matthew Martin, Pryor and others to bear on the official version of 1988. Topics include white settlement (‘There Goes the Neighbourhood!’), the re-enactments, land rights and the PM’s legendary compact (‘Compact: a small thing containing a pale substance to hide blemishes’). Royalties will go to the Northern and Central Land Councils. It’s published by Penguin at $12.95. Just the thing for the fridge door...
the labour market and, in effect, to institutionalise poverty.

In this it was aided by two features of the labour movement. The first was our unique arbitration system, which encouraged the belief that social justice could be won by regulating the distribution of income within the labour market — a belief that was profoundly blind to those outside or marginal to the labour market. The second was the general belief of the period that the cause of poverty was mass unemployment, and that all energy was to be directed to restraining this disastrous propensity of capitalism.

What we were left with was a welfare safety net which was secondary to the work of Keynesian planners as they pursued this goal. And what they completely failed to do was to give any effect to redistribution. Worse, the taxation system, which may be their real legacy, was clearly regressive when it was introduced — a tendency which has dogged it ever since.

While Watts' critique is not new, his book is important for the insight it gives us into the unfolding of this logic in Australian political history. But what it doesn't give us is any sense of the other parts of the story. There is a startling lack of any sense of social struggle. Reading it you would think that the Australian welfare state — the post-war settlement with capital — was a good idea of a small group of Keynesians which happened to meet the fiscal and ideological needs of governments in the immediate pre- and post-war years.

They were certainly crucial. But they rode on a current of social struggle which drew together a diverse range of social forces — forces whose demands formed the strands which comprised the fabric of this historic "settlement". The Communist Party, the business establishment, soldiers, women workers were all caught up in its turbulence. While it was not Watts' job to examine this, we do need to know how the work of the Canberra social planners meshed with this political practice.

And while Watts notes the genuine commitment to social justice of people like Coombs and, of course, Chifley himself, this appears as a veneer on the real architecture of the welfare state. This leaves unexamined the effect of such commitment. His concern to stress the continuity between the conservative and Labor governments hides as much as it illuminates.

Finally, some promissory notes are left uncashed. Watts promises an account which will explain the current crisis of legitimacy for the welfare state. If the answer is there it is not made explicit, unless it is the common point that a system which depended on full employment cannot survive mass unemployment or a change in participation in paid work. Watts gestures at more than this when he points out that our welfare state was never a redistributive system.

However, he doesn't follow through with what this means for the current crisis. That is just what we must look at; because today's system is not only tarred with the brush of its origins. It has been forced, over the years, to become much more redistributive — at least within life cycles. The collapse of its full employment prop certainly means that there is a struggle over how the system is to be legitimised; and as Watts points out about its birth, this is an argument as much about economic belief as about equity. But it may very well be that the upshot will be a more self-consciously redistributive system. That, we must remember, is partly up to us.

ADAM FARRAR is a policy officer for the NSW Council of Social Service.

**Rural Rides**


This book demands a wide audience. Just as the state provided the substantial book _Dairyfarming in Australia_ free to the 45,000 Australian dairyfarmers in 1949 to encourage their technical efficiency, so today's 140,000 farmers would equally benefit if this book were to be made available to them. All the more so as Lawrence argues that farmers, 40 years later, are being misled by wrong advice on boosting productivity and a host of other issues from farmer organisations, the National Party, Departments of Agriculture and academic economists.

The book does more than tackle the problems of farming in a narrow sense. By placing developments in the rural sector in the context of international capitalism it suggests the possible lines of Australian agricultural development. Its framework also embraces such issues as environmental degradation, the quality of food, the decline of rural towns, and the attacks on unions initiated by farmer organisations. One quotation is illustrative:

General trends in the agricultural economy will promote, over time, the concentration and centralisation of capital in agriculture, the removal of a large number of producers from agriculture, the decline of rural communities, the creation of a "reserve army" of the unemployed in rural regions and will exacerbate the problems of environmental pollution.

Each of these issues is tackled in depth. As the National Farmers Federation, with its $10 million fighting fund, has stated that its next targets include conservation and animal rights, the book has a particular relevance for activists in those movements. Lawrence is to be praised for using his analysis to take a stand on many topical issues including subsidies for farmers.
deregulation, regional unemployment, decentralisation, biotechnological research and so on. He also proposes steps "towards a socialist agriculture for Australia". Whether you agree or disagree with particular points, he offers a basis for progressive people to come to grips with rural Australia. This is particularly important in a year when many myths about our Australian heritage, which serve to colour our perceptions of our country cousins, will be regurgitated.

The book is a big achievement for one author, but presumably because of its wide scope, it unfortunately leaves aside some key issues. Aboriginal land rights, central to any socialist discussion of rural Australia, is a topic hardly covered, though employment opportunities for Aborigines is. The large corporations that control food for Aborigines is. The large inputs are discussed at length, but workers in these companies and their place in a socialist alternative are virtually ignored. Farming in Australia cannot be discussed independently of these issues; farmer organisations have been instrumental in opposing land rights and in seeking to intensify working conditions and weaken the unions of meat, rail and other workers who service farmers.

Lawrence is hopeful that the current crisis in agriculture may force family farmers to seek "their economic salvation through new alliances"; his book offers a terrific starting point for activists in progressive movements to make their own assessment of this, to consolidate openings already made to the rural community, and to help us move "towards a socialist agriculture for Australia". The book refers briefly to some successes in forming alliances; for further fascinating reading, Diane Menghetti's Red North shows how small sugar farm owners and cane workers formed a base for the election of communist FRed Patterson to the Queensland state parliament in 1945.

Lawrence warns that the progressive movements will not find family farmers to be "natural" allies because of their ambiguous position as both labourers and, unlike most of us, owners of their means of production. Whether significant groupings of them can be wrested away from the National Party and National Farmers Federation will depend on the issues at hand, how they perceive their interests and the general political context. At the very least, the book helps in assessing how best to neutralise the rightward thrust of farmer politics.

In the light of the practical value of the book, disagreements over theoretical issues seem like quibbles. The way to resolve them is not immediately to set up theoretical debates but to test each out in the course of ongoing debate about Australian agriculture as we search for socialist answers.

Lawrence is full of insights into the changing role of state intervention in agriculture, though he tends too simply to portray it as consciously in the interests of the capitalist system. We must also examine closely the representation of rural communities in the state through the National Party and through power-sharing in state-run marketing authorities and the internal structures of state, particularly federalism, affecting the rural sector.

The book often slips into portraying farmers as having "false consciousness", as though they only needed to become aware of their true interests to embrace progressive solutions. Other studies provide some guidance on how to analyse farm ideology. Theo Nichols and Huw Beynon's Living with Capitalism (1978) showed how the great range of attitudes held by factory workers relates to their varied experiences, while Stuart Hall's articles in Marxism Today have shown how Thatcherism in Britain capitalised on the negative experience of working class people with state-run services under Labour governments.

Lawrence at times portrays farmers as already totally subject to the power of capitalist firms; at others he powerfully shows current tendencies towards this. Elsewhere he argues that farmers are exploited by capital in general. The marked lack of protest by farmers directed at agribusiness suggests there is no simple relation of exploitation. In Australia, most farms are not inherited; turnover of farmers is high and most, if not hopelessly indebted, have a big nest egg when selling up. There is also great variation among family farms; many do extremely well while others, once farm or new equipment is paid off and children raised, look forward to many years of accumulating bank deposits.

The current crisis has increased the numbers in difficulty; many have been forced to leave farming, some will continue to struggle. We should watch carefully to see how many recover over the rest of 1988 — the "year of agriculture", according to the National Farmers Federation.

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BOYS STUFF...

Once upon a time ALR was a magazine full of boy's stuff, written by boys. In recent times it seems to have tried harder to present feminist points of view. The discussion on socialist feminism, for instance, was good — as were the features on women in unions, feminists and their daughters, and so on.

But over the last several issues ALR seems to have gone back to the bad old days. In ALR 104, for instance, not one of the feature articles was by a woman, and the roundtable on unions featured five male academics — and one woman. How about trying harder next time?

Carol Wilson, Carlton, Vic.

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.

PINKOS?

As early as the age of 10, I can remember embracing one of those more or less rules of life through which we tend to view the world. It came via my sister, who, during a dinner-time family argument, whispered earnestly, "don't trust anyone older than twelve". This seemed like good advice at the time, as most of the conflict around the place certainly came from those the other side of twelve.

However, as I passed into a boyish adolescence, this rule receded and was replaced, as much by a sort of sexual aesthetic as a vague support for the few feminists I knew: rule 2 — don't trust anyone who shaves under their arms! Adherence to this rule meant that I had to be wary of both my grandmother and mother and, indeed, my own sister, who was and remains a shaver.

While it was an advance on my first rule, it did tend to exclude a few too many people, so I was pleased when I could let it slip and take on my 3rd rule of life: "Treat warily those with no sense of humour". Unlike the earlier rules, this one was based on more experience than a general idea. Those people who weren't able at times to chuckle at the world or smile at their own follies seemed both a bit less human and a good deal more boring. Moreover, in their relentless seriousness, they were usually exceedingly egotistical.

And this brings me to ALR 104, and the choice of hot pink for the cover colour. Clearly, you're not a relentlessly serious magazine.

Perhaps you were simply being opportunistic, though the merit in associating your magazine with the parliamentary shorts of a former Labor Premier escapes me. I prefer to think the colour was a folly of your artistic department. I mean to say, a leftwing magazine clad in hot pink. Now that is worth a chuckle.

Warren Blum, Leichhardt, NSW.

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The Future For The Left

Jade Bull

You’ve heard of Watergate. You know of Contragate. Now set to explode on the international stage is Bullgate. (One we have tied up the question of royalties; film, newspaper serial and album soundtrack.) The well-kept secret of the cosmic relationship between the “First Lady” (sic) and your favourite ideologically-sound astrologer.

While Jade’s constrained in what can be revealed at this stage, suffice it to say that this story is going to be bigger than Nancy’s forthcoming autobiography, My Life with Bonzo.

Few recognise the degree to which astrology has been integrated into mainstream politics. Already, the disciplines of astropolitics and astronomy are well established in many areas. (See, for example, the final report of the Commission for the Future.)

It is a little known fact that Nancy’s introduction to the extraordinary powers of astropolitics was through the influence of her mother-in-law. (Yes, Ron’s mum!) Fears on the part of the CIA that Nancy’s revelations to her astrologers constituted a security leak are totally wide of the mark. For years now, Uri Geller, the Soviet’s chief psychic-abroad, has been monitoring Nancy’s ouija board parties.

This fact has been independently confirmed by Bull sources in the CIA (Cosmic Intelligence Agency) and ASIO (Astro-Surveillance and Intervention Organisation). Haven’t you ever wondered why the spooks always ask for your date of birth?

Watch future editions of the ALR for a national series of Bull-sponsored “Astro-Security Workshops”. In the interim you might be interested in our celebrity profile of Nancy Reagan.

NANCY REAGAN

BORN Sixth of July 19… (Professional confidences, you understand)

STARSIGN Cancer.

A boring, tenacious, power-brokering type. Likes staying at home and talking on the phone. I will say no more.

However, so as to avoid disappointment, Jade brings you a list of …

BORING CELEBRITIES FROM THE CANCER-GEMINI PERIOD

Leo Sayer 21/5
Mr. T 21/5
John Newcombe 23/5
Prince Rainier 31/5
Pat Boone 1/6
Tom Jones 7/6
Prince Phillip 10/6
Wade Boggs 15/6
Barry Manilow 17/6
Princess Di 1/7
Sylvester Stallone 6/7
Barbara Cartland 9/7
Tab Hunter 11/7

Aries: March 21 to May 20

Could be tricky at home. You might have to show that you really care. If you want to maintain domestic harmony, don’t leave the bath mat on the floor.

Taurus: April 21 to May 21

With Venus in your second solar sector along with the sun and Mercury, what can I say?

Gemini: May 22 to June 21

With a full moon on the 29th, now is the time to contemplate the various eternal mysteries of life and how they might apply to you in this part of your journey through the ever-lasting cosmos.

Cancer: June 22 - July 22

Cosmic “heavies” leading your way. Saturn is moving into your Uranus; avoid being seen in public with failures and accept any speaking engagements.

Leo: July 23 to August 23

Your Jupiter-Neptune angle looks good; so should you.

Virgo: August 24 to September 23

You’re not going to like this but it’s time to rewrite your life plan and change your career path. Epistemological ruptures.

Libra: September 24 to October 23

Watch out, Libra! The sun is hanging around your ninth house. This means travel or study (not better hot water). Maybe it’s time for that junket.

Scorpio: October 24 to November 22

The sun in your solar third house accentuates your relationship with neighbours and salespeople. Avoid attending the upcoming ALR/Tupperware fundraiser. Send donations now! It will be cheaper.

Sagittarius: November 23 to December 21

Mars lights up your life in the fifth house of love and romance. Looks like a great time for left unity.

Capricorn: December 22 to January 20

Saturn, your ruling planet, is transiting your first house of personality. Avoid spending on domestic items, especially large appliances.

Aquarius: January 21 to February 19

A big time for Uranus with its eleventh house aspect. An abundance of ambivalence can be circumvented with subtle suggestion.

Pisces: February 20 to March 20

Aren’t you the popular one? With dynamic Mars moving through your first house and enhancing your magnetism and sex appeal, you can’t go wrong. On the other hand, it might be someone else.

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June is film festival month in Sydney. And, as might be suspected, some of the most interesting offerings this year are from post-glasnost USSR and Hungary, where the artistic thaw is becoming something of a spring torrent. A highlight in the documentary section is Is It Easy To Be Young? (USSR), the film about alienated Latvian youth which had Soviet audiences queuing for hours. Another glasnost gem is The Commissar, an indictment of ‘chauvinism’ in the USSR banned for twenty years. A Hungarian Fairy tale is a comic comment on bureaucracy where a boy is assigned a non existent father through an absurd and archaic law.

Also on eastern Europe, but from Britain, is Tony Palmer’s Testimony, on Dimitri Shostakovich’s struggle for survival with Stalin. And other offerings from Britain include Glenda Jackson and Cathy Tyson in Business As Usual, and the opening night film, Wish You Were Here, from the director of Mona Lisa. In other highlights Juzo Atami (Tampopo) returns with A Taxiing Woman, and Zhang Yimou (Yellow Earth) directs Rusty Nail. The best value-for-money Japanese food in Melbourne is around the corner from the Australian Railways Union in King Street. The Tori Matsu is a large bustling restaurant which developed a devoted clientele in its earlier and much smaller incarnation in Bourke Street. The crowd at lunch time testifies to its first-rate food and quick service. Its sashimi (raw fish) and sushi (rice cakes topped with seafood) are in great demand, but be there early for lunch. It also makes the best gyoza (a sort of Japanese dim sum, but much superior) in town. Its pork and chicken dishes are excellent, too. Each meal is accompanied by pickles, rice, miso soup and invigorating grilled rice tea. Lunch will set you back $8 For dinner the menu is a bit wider, and includes a few dishes cooked at the table, such as sukiyaki. I particularly recommend the naban (a kind of pickled fish), the spinach and baby okra. Dinner usually costs $10-12, depending on the appetite. The Tori Matsu is run by a terrific Japanese woman, and the success of her restaurant has apparently not pleased the other (male) Japanese restaurant proprietors.

At the other end of town, the Italian Waiters’ Club is a great standby. In a dingy lane near Parliament House, it’s pretty hard to find unless you’re with someone in the know. There’s no sign, but if you try the door next to the hairdressers, and venture up the stairs, you’ll find it. (Honest.) Originally opened in the fifties as a place for Italian waiters to go after work, it still opens till the wee small hours — and it probably hasn’t changed its decor since, either. Don’t be put off by the laminex tables and daggy curtains: the food is terrific, and the atmosphere exciting. Labor polls from Spring St, journos, lefties and cultural workers love the place. Pastas are around $5-7; the main courses a little more. The salimbocce (veal with ham, herbs and a wine sauce), scallopini and tortellini alla creme are favourites of mine. With wine you’ll probably pay $12-13 for two courses. I’ve had some of my best nights out there. CS

Tori Matsu. 179 King St, Melbourne. Ph 670 1167. BYO. Cards: b/c m/c Visa.
Italian Waiters Club
20 Meyers Place (off Bourke St) City. Ph 650 1508. No cards.

For the best chocolate mousse in the world (or Sydney, at any rate), try L’Aubergade Restaurant Francais (I know, I know, I know, the dreaded French!) It’s at 353 Cleveland St, Surry Hills — right next to the ex-State Liberal MP Michael Yabsley’s old electoral office. But don’t let that turn your appetite: the chocolate mousse will overcome all misgivings.

If you’re sick of sneaking furtively in and out of MacDonald’s for your hamburger hit — snack no more. The Cafe Troppo, in Glebe Pt Rd, Glebe, in Sydney, offers one of the best, albeit the most unfortunately named. Their ‘preppie burger’ (ugh!) is a huge meal, and comes with the cafe’s own secret sauce (with dozens of secret ingredients).

It’s just about time for the winter woollies to be dusted off, the chimney’s swept and hip flasks secured in back pockets. So it’s also just about time to make a careful note of favourite winter drinks. The time when everyone runs around at work saying ‘Now, how does that rum toddy go again? Was it sugar or honey you throw in?’ The sort everyone likes when the wind is scooting along outside and the safest place is home. Here’s a quick list of populars that’ll make winter a bit more pleasurable:

Whiskey Toddle. Warm a glass under hot water. Add two shots of scotch. Dissolve one teaspoon of white or brown sugar. Top up with hot water and a squeeze of lemon if you wish. You’ll soon be sweating. (The same recipe can be used for rum or brandy — just substitute the appropriate spirit.)

Scotch Toddle. Warm a glass under hot water. Add a puddle of lemonade. Throw in two squares of chocolate, preferably plain dark. Pour in one teaspoon of warmed honey. Add scotch whisky to taste.

Rusty Nail. A drink used by trekkers in the south west of the south island of New Zealand. Drop three ice blocks into a tumbler. Add three shots of scotch whisky. Add three shots of Drambuie. Drink slowly. The name refers to the rugged nature of the brew.

Sydney now has its own City Limits/Time Out — well, sort of. City Life, a monthly starting from June, features listings, short reviews, and columns and features on films, music, nightlife, theatre, art and sport. The look is earnestly arty, the tone not-quite clever. And the politics (unlike City Limits) are plague on both your houses stuff. Still, it fills a hole. It sells in newsagents for $3.50.

This issue’s Disinfo contributors are: Carmel Shute, James Gray, Jane Inglis, David Burchell.
These are hard times for the left. Which is why it's nice to know that ALR's there, providing some overdue rethinking to help get the left off the ropes and back into the ring.

Over the next few months, we'll be taking readers Towards 2000, with a series of specially-commissioned pieces looking at how to drag the left into the twenty-first century.

We're also undertaking a promotional campaign to get ALR across to a much wider audience.

But, of course, all this costs money. And as recent events in the media have shown, even for the tycoons publishing is a dicey business.

So we need your help. Become a supporting subscriber to ALR today and you'll be playing a part in the rethink. (We'll also send you personal invitations to ALR events, and to ALR's Christmas parties.) You can take out a new sub or extend your old one as a supporting subscriber. Don't delay. Fill in the form today.

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