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BRIEFINGS

Cain’s Curse
Victoria’s economic strategy comes unstuck

1975 and All That?
Old friends fall out, and Vanuatu pays the price

Indonesia’s Political Shadowplay
Are cracks developing in Suharto’s facade?

Perestroika’s Perils
Market socialism is still on hold in USSR

Inside Left: Poor Relations
Diana Simmons: London Calling
Thatcher’s miracle may be winding its way south

Profile: Viv Richards

FEATURES

NIGHTMARE ON RECOVERY ST
With horror movies for relaxation, refugee women prepare to return to the outside world. Lyndell Fairleigh recalls

FUTURE SHOCK
The Liberals’ retro politics deserves to be taken seriously, argues David McKnight

I’M ALRIGHT, MATE
So how have ordinary people done under Labor? Frank Stilwell reports

THOROUGHLY MODERN LABOR
The left’s obsession with Labor’s ‘traditional values’ misses the point, feels David Burchell

GORBACHEV’S PACIFIC GAMBIT
The Soviet leader offered to scrap the USSR’s Pacific base, but no-one was interested. Kelvin Rowley explains why

TIME OUT
Camera, Lights, Glasnost
Soviet filmmaking starts to thaw

A Croc of Gold
Whatever happened to quality Oz films?

REVIEW

Distant Fields
Petrov’s Victims
The Revolution Mislaid

SERVICES

Letters
From turds at Bondi to the humourless left

Disinformation

Subscriptions: ALR subs, PO Box A247 Sydney South PO, Sydney 2000 Australia. Phone: (02) 281.2899 Fax: (02) 281.2897.

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Cain's Curse

Shortly after its historic third term re-election late last year, the Victorian Labor government now finds itself embroiled in a major political crisis following revelations of mismanagement and incompetence in the publicly-owned financial institution, the Victorian Economic Development Corporation.

The scandal has rocked the government which, up till now, has prided itself on its capacity to combine a reformist economic and social program with efficient and honest financial management.

Now, in a move designed to minimise the political fall-out, the government has announced the abolition of the VEDC (its functions are to be incorporated into the Rural Finance Corporation), and Premier John Cain has announced a review of the role of government in direct stimulation of industry, mooting the handing over of responsibilities to the private sector.

The spectacular failure of a public sector agency to assess private sector risks has given the Victorian conservative parties something to cheer about, after most of the decade spent in the political wilderness. The state opposition mounted pressure for the resignation of Deputy Premier Robert Fordham, the minister responsible for the VEDC, and achieved their objective, Fordham resigning at the end of January. It has also threatened the use of its numbers in the upper house to frustrate the government, and will not rule out the possibility of blocking supply. These tactics may well destabilise the government if decisions are not made to end the crisis.

At a more general level, the demise of an organisation like the VEDC holds important lessons for the left. In capitalist economies, the control of financial institutions is an important plank in a left economic strategy, with the ability to channel community savings into productive investment, particularly in manufacturing industry.
At first glance, the failure of a publicly-owned financial institution like the VEDC, echoed by the WA government’s disastrous intervention into Rothwell’s, would seem to be a vindication of the position that governments shouldn’t meddle in the affairs of the marketplace. Prior to looking at this in a bit more detail, it’s worth looking at just what happened to the VEDC.

In his report to the government, the chartered accountant Fergus Ryan stated that, by November 1988, the VEDC had become commercially insolvent, with potential losses amounting to $111 million. Even the staunchest defender of the VEDC would have been waverering by the end of Ryan’s report. Senior management appears to have had little or no banking experience; finance was poured into pet projects of senior management without thorough economic analysis of their prospects; managers sat on the boards of companies which had borrowed heavily from the VEDC and became advocates for those companies; and there appeared to be little understanding of the 1987 stockmarket crash.

In the positive side, the Report of Inquiry found no evidence of corruption (although it wasn’t specifically in the terms of reference), and Ryan did draw attention to the positive achievements of the VEDC. On the sensitive issue of the minister’s role, the report drew attention to the poor advice provided to Fordham by his department, but criticised him for signing letters committing the VEDC to sub-underwriting (or picking up the tab if things went bad) for one of the VEDC’s largest and most risky ventures, in support of Wallace International Ltd.

The VEDC had come to play a key role in the Victorian government’s economic strategy. The thrust of the strategy is to identify key strengths and opportunities in the economy and employ the resources of the public sector to expand activity in areas that are rapidly growing and have export potential. This includes encouraging the expansion of a number of high technology activities in advanced manufacturing, information technology, biotechnology and communications. Due to the large amount of research required and their longstanding domination by multinational capital, support for the growth of these sectors is, by definition, risky. Yet, whatever one thinks of the merit of supporting high technology growth strategies, the fact of the matter is that active government support is a prerequisite worldwide for transforming mature industrial economies into economies with a big proportion of high technology activities. Countries as diverse as Sweden and Japan have developed industry policies to modernise their industrial structures, with emphasis on high technology.

In Australia, the Victorian government has gone further than any other government, state or federal, in intervening in the development of new export-oriented activities. This is not a socialist strategy; rather, it is a strategy to modernise capitalism. To the purists, this in itself may be a reason for attacking the government and its financial follies. There is certainly much to criticise in the mismanagement of the VEDC. On the other hand, the Victorian economic strategy has clearly improved the position of working people compared with the position in the non-interventionist Labor and non-Labor states. Since 1982 Victoria has consistently had the lowest unemployment rate of all the states and while NSW has attracted the lion’s share of foreign banks, and a range of property development, Victoria has been able to expand opportunities in the important knowledge-intensive and manufacturing sectors of the economy.

It is not yet clear to what extent the abolition of the VEDC will affect the government’s ability to implement its economic strategy. It certainly won’t help. The Premier now appears to be saying that the government has been the catalyst for a number of new activities, and has taken a number of risks in the past, and now it’s up to the private sector to take its share.

The problem is that it is difficult to have an activist industry policy without the support of the financial system. Unlike the West German and Japanese economies, for instance, where the financial system is directed towards long-term industrial objectives, Australia is characterised by deregulated financing of new industries, there term investments and discriminate against long-term industrial investments.

The VEDC was poorly run and backed a number of ill-conceived projects. Yet Labor or, indeed, socialist governments, are always going to face serious dilemmas in setting up financial institutions to implement progressive economic programs. Firstly, there are few, if any, left-leaning bankers available to implement such strategies. Secondly, such institutions will still be dependent on private sector entrepreneurs to identify projects.

This is where the notion of planning becomes important. If the public sector is to be involved in the financing of new industries, there should also be a commitment to investigating how these industries are set up. Issues such as educational and training requirements, the role of workers, management and marketing all need to be addressed. Until the left is able to develop practical programs to confront issues relating to the setting up and running of productive enterprises, it will have little relevance to major economic debates.

In the meantime, the problems identified by the Victorian government remain. There is no immediate prospect at a national level of a financial policy aimed at promoting industry development. Until such a policy emerges, there will be no alternative to modest attempts by progressive state governments to supply finance in support of new industries — albeit hopefully with a more efficient and committed management than that revealed in the VEDC fiasco.

Julia Andrews
1975 and All That?

In the 1970s, Walter Lini, Barak Sope and Vanuatu's former president Ati George Sork-mantu were comrades in arms. Together they built up the South Pacific's most successful and democratic political party — the Vanua'aku Pati (VP). With a truly grassroots organisation behind them they led their country to independence from joint British-French rule.

After independence, Barak Sope became a roving ambassador supporting regional liberation struggles. He also built up personal business interests which have made him one of Vanuatu's wealthiest businessmen and, as Vanua'aku Pati general secretary, played a crucial role in maintaining the VP's organisational support and its electoral strength.

As Prime Minister, Father Lini had to deal with the secessionist rebellion on Santo and to build a nation out of 80 disparate islands speaking over forty languages, all suffering from the divided administration left by Vanuatu's dual colonial heritage.

In early 1987, however, after six years in office, tensions became evident within the Vanua'aku Pati government. Sope was critical of Father Lini's links with Vietnamese businessmen, of government-sanctioned monopolies on import of basic foodstuffs and of complacency among MPs which, he said, showed they had lost touch with the poverty suffered by many of their people. Fr Lini on the other hand was increasingly concerned about Sope's tendency to mis his work for the Vanua'aku Pati with his own private business interests.

After Fr Lini suffered a serious stroke early in 1987 a leadership battle of unprecedented proportions began. The conduct of that struggle showed a relentless ambition on the part of Sope and a willingness by Fr Lini to jettison basic democratic principles in an attempt to stay in power.

After Sope had made two unsuccessful leadership challenges at consecutive party congresses, Fr Lini began to move against his opponent's power bases. Charging Sope with mismanagement and raising the possibility of corruption, Fr Lini closed the Vila Urban Land Corporation (VULCAN) — a body set up to collect rent from land in the capital on behalf of the traditional owners. While an independent report on VULCAN's financial affairs confirmed Fr Lini's suspicions, it was not published in time to stop immediate fallout.

In Vanuatu there is no more emotive issue than land and Sope, who was on the board of VULCAN, responded by organising a massive demonstration in Port Vila. An afternoon of drinking and the intervention of the paramilitary police led to a riot which left one man dead and over a million dollars worth of damage.

For his part in the riot Sope was sacked from his cabinet post and from his position as secretary-general of the VP. Along with four other Vanua'aku Pati MPs, he turned to the French-speaking and virulently anti-communist opposition. Together they controlled 23 out of the 46 parliamentary seats and could deny Fr Lini the ability to govern.

In June last year an unsuccessful attempt by Sope and his new coalition to move a no confidence motion in the Prime Minister led to a series of manoeuvres which ended in the expulsion of all 23 of Sope's supporters from parliament. The opposition coalition responded with loud demands for a general election. They argued that having lost his majority on the floor of the house, Fr Lini was morally obliged to take his government to the people.

When Fr Lini called by-elections for the vacant seats, Sope and the French-speaking Union of Moderate Parties (UMP) were outraged. Vanuatu's electoral system, in which a number of MPs are returned from each electorate, guaranteed that Fr Lini's government would decimate the opposition's numbers.

Sope and the UMP stepped up their campaign for a general election and announced an intention to boycott the poll. The aim of the boycott, he said, was to prove that Fr Lini had lost the confidence of the people. Although the president had no powers to sack the government, the opposition began to press him to intervene and dismiss Fr Lini.

With elections looming, both sides turned back to the villages, lobbying for support. Fr Lini, however, had what he regarded as his ultimate weapon — control of Vanuatu's only radio station and newspaper. He unashamedly instituted unprecedented media censorship, instructing journalists not to report anything said by the political parties promoting the boycott.

Two weeks before the by-elections, Fr Lini went even further and banned a presidential address to the nation in which the head of state had intended to call for compromise and for general elections. The Prime Minister justified his actions by
The leadership battle heightened regional and island chauvinism, as the Vanua'aku Pati divided between Line and Sope supporters. In Port Vila, people from Fr Lini’s northern island of Pentecost, along with other Lini-supporting communities, bore the brunt of threats from breakaway group of Sope supporters. In the lead-up to the by-elections some Lini supporters were seriously beaten and government ministers and business leaders received death threats from an anonymous “Mr Black Dog”.

However, the threat of violence did not just come from the opposition. After the riot in May, the government turned to Australia to equip it with riot gear. Gas masks, tear gas and tear gas grenade launchers were flown in. With the assistance of Australian advisers, the paramilitary Vanuatu Mobile Force underwent an intensive training program.

When the opposition called a peaceful demonstration shortly after the December by-elections, that training was put to use. Armed with automatic weapons and Australian riot gear, the VMF sealed off Port Vila. Edgy and inexperienced, they succeeded in thwarting the protest but, in the process, accidentally shot a carload of tourists who failed to see an unlit roadblock in the dark.

When ALR went to press at the beginning of February, President Sokumanu had been sacked. With Sope behind bars, Fr Lini saw his way clear to announce that he intended to retire as soon as possible.

While the election of a new Prime Minister opens the possibility of a new period of reconciliation, it will also bring more uncertainty. Fr Lini has no obvious successor and, over the next few months, there will be some intense lobbying. On top of that, as a result of last year’s turmoil, the government has serious economic problems on its hands, and must steer the country through the trial of Sope and the former president without allowing the underlying tensions to turn into violence.

Diane White
but set the Indonesian economy firmly back into the western-dominated international economy. Massive foreign aid from the Intergovernmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI) followed the restoration of “economic order” and an environment conducive to foreign investment.

More important still, the OPEC-forced jump in oil prices in the early ’70s boosted Indonesian national and state revenues to unheard-of levels. In concert with large Chinese and foreign capitalist partners, an entire class of military officers grew rich renting the benefits of office. A booming rentier-culture changed the skylines of Jakarta and Surabaya, and fostered the growth of a middle class dependent on state spending. While a measure of the oil boom money reached the villages through government health and education programs, and petty traders benefited from the general expansion in trade, capitalist transformation had its normal effects of increased rural inequality, forced urbanisation and the repression of labour.

Opposition flared occasionally in student challenges in 1974 and 1978, but was for the most part easily contained. The memory of the killings of 1965-66 combined with a massive intelligence and security apparatus dominated by Kopkamtib pre-empted all but the most explosive challenges.

In the late 1970s, the Petition of 50 group of former generals and senior political leaders announced their dissatisfaction with the New Order, and called for the restoration of constitutional rule, and the rule of law. With only moral authority on their side, they nevertheless embarrassed the government to such an extent that it imprisoned a number of its members (including a Secretary-General of ASEAN).

However, the most potent political force in Indonesia today is Islam, particularly in its militant, socially critical form. While the left is, for all practical purposes, non-existent, Islam is becoming more important than ever. Over ninety percent of the country is nominally Muslim, though most regard their faith the way most Australians regard Christianity — a matter of births, deaths, marriages and the equivalent of Christmas.

While the devout minority were among the army’s strongest supporters in the overthrow of Sukarno (and many young Muslims in Java killed communists with army consent), many now feel betrayed and outraged at the level of corruption and manifest injustice of the New Order. What the army fears most is the combination of this theological critique with urban unemployment and rural poverty.

The threat exploded first in 1984, when the largely devout Muslim population of the depressed port district of Jakarta, Tanjung Priok, demonstrated against apparently intentional desecration of a local mosque by the army. More than four hundred people were killed when soldiers opened fire, and many more were wounded. Since then the regime has worked hard with both carrots and sticks — trying to assuage the fears of moderate Muslim leaders, donating to Islamic charities on the one hand and, on the other, setting the intelligence agencies on to real and imaginary Islamic plots, forcing all organisations to accept the state ideology as their own, and sentencing prominent Muslim figures to long prison terms in show trials.

The collapse in oil revenues has led to real restrictions in all government budgets, even the military (though this did not stop a $400m. arms deal with the US for F-16 fighters). This in turn has weakened the government-funded patronage machine. As the terms of trade have turned against the oil producers, national income has declined, and foreign debt risen alarmingly. This in turn has made the Indonesian government more vulnerable to both foreign and domestic pressures for economic reform — particularly from the IMF.

The critics’ key target is the dense network of import licences, official monopolies, tariff and other trade barriers erected in the past two decades by the Suharto government in the name of economic nationalism. In reality, the direct beneficiaries of this regulation have almost always been the military elite and, in recent years, particularly the fabulously rich Suharto family itself and their large Chinese capitalist partners.

In economic terms, Indonesia is in the Japanese, not the United States, sphere of influence, both in terms of investment and trade. The huge $2.6 billion loan this year was followed by larger than ever direct grants. Even the Japanese, however, were taken aback by the subsequent request for still further aid, even to...
the point of wiping out the debt. The foreign and domestic pressure for economic reform has resulted in some important changes towards a less arbitrary framework for corporate activities, and some pulling down of the maze of regulation. Even some military officers have signalled their distress at the apparently unending greed of the Suharto children, expecting their father to call a halt to the rot.

The army leadership itself appears unsure of the direction it wishes to take politically. Throughout most of 1988, senior army officers led by General Moerdani campaigned vigorously against the election of former State Secretary Sudharmono as Vice-president. Ostensibly, they were concerned that Sudharmono had alleged communist connections in Sukarno's time, and they wished to save the president from this embarrassment. In reality, the army sees Sudharmono, a military lawyer and administrator, as someone who does not have the army's interests at heart, who is "not a real army man", and as a dangerous civilianiser.

The government's decision to abolish the de facto martial law command, Kopkamtib, was partly related to the need to negate international criticism of ongoing political repression — which had even surfaced in the staid councils of IGGI itself. Kopkamtib was replaced by Bakorstanas — the Co-ordinating Agency for the Maintenance of National Stability — headed by Moerdani's successor as army commander, General Try Sutrisno. Since all of the repressive Kopkamtib legislation and apparatus remain in place, in addition to the large and powerful military Strategic Intelligence Agency (Gais) and "civilian State Intelligence Co-ordinating Agency (Bakin), there is good reason for regarding the Kopkamtib/Bakorstanas change as cosmetic, at least for the present.

However, in a country where military power is almost absolute as far as most of the country's citizens are concerned, even the smallest signs of liberalisation are important.

Unfortunately, scepticism was confirmed when, a month after the abolition of Kopkamtib, news surfaced of the execution of two army sergeants, arrested in 1965 and sentenced to death for their role in the internal army coup of 1 October 1965 (which was followed by the Suharto counter-coup). The two old men had been imprisoned in Jakarta's Cipinang prison for almost a quarter of a century, along with at least another thirty communist, army and Muslim political prisoners under sentence of death. Their killing was a way of reminding Indonesians that, despite all the surface liberalisation, the military still intends to rule. National stability and development, military-style, demand sacrifices.

Lucy Rae

Perestroika's Perils

The reforms aimed at eliminating the Soviet economy's over-centralised command system have run up against stumbling blocks. The attempts to remove the obstacles will be at the very heart of matters this year, when there is every reason to expect an intensification of the conflicts inherent in the struggle for change.

The main thrust of the reforms is to provide wide autonomy to the state-owned enterprises which dominate industry, transport, construction and trade, and which account for a significant part of farm output. Legislation which came into force in January 1988 has given plants more freedom to plan their output and use their income, but it has also preserved the authority of the ministries, enabling them to continue to pass orders down the line as if nothing much had changed.

There has been an outcry from many plant managers and workers, voiced in the press and at the 19th party conference in June. They are saying that the ministries should be given an advisory and consultative role at most. However, this demand has not as yet been met.

The big question is whether this will occur in 1989. Certainly, the elimination of the ministries in their old form is necessary for the success of the reforms, but it is unlikely that this will happen very soon.

The principal reason is that the leadership of the party and the government are pursuing two goals at the same time: reforming the system and maintaining an economic growth rate consistent with the current five-year plan, which ends in 1990. The worry is that it will prove impossible to reach the overall quantitative targets of the plan unless a high degree of centralised economic control is maintained. Therefore the ministries continue to exist, and the only way they know how to operate is by commanding the enterprises which are struggling to free themselves from controls.

A drastic change in policy is highly unlikely. The bureaucracy entrenched in the ministries is not ready to give way to the new economic order, and is sabotaging it in any way it can. Equally importantly, the economy is, in many respects, deteriorating — under the transitional, mixed order. Many plants, instigated and supported by ministries, are maximising their money incomes — not only by increasing physical output, but also by quietly raising prices and concentrating on high-priced fashion and luxury goods. Production of low-priced goods, including many essentials, is being minimised.

In this way, new shortages are created and the near-term goal of supply-demand equilibrium becomes less realistic.

The government will be using its central authority to promote the supply of products of mass consumption, and may use some of its new foreign credits to improve the
internal market. I do not believe that this will substantially improve things. The behaviour of the ministries is rooted in their dominant position in the economy. The ministries, virtually branch monopolies, have to be broken up into smaller units which should be compelled to compete among themselves in the market.

Why should we have the Aeroflot monopoly rather than several competing organisations in the tourist trade? The need to promote competition and break up the ministries is widely recognised, but there are no signs that radical changes will come about soon.

One way to promote competition is to stimulate private and co-operative activity, particularly in the production and marketing of consumer goods. There has been some progress in this area. However, if such enterprises are to become an important factor in achieving market equilibrium, they have to be much more numerous. At present they face too many administrative and other barriers to secure the supplies and other resources they need to enter into business. Indeed, the existing mini-co-operatives and private businesses are, in many cases, enjoying a virtual monopoly, and are thus adding to the inflationary pressures created by the inadequacies of the state-owned supply sector.

Some co-operatives have been infiltrated by members of the shadow economy seeking to legalise their own activities. The shadow economy has thrived in the past on the back of shortages created with the help of corrupt bureaucrats. It is far from ready to promote free competition in the areas where it prospers; there have been instances of force used against unwelcome newcomers to the field.

While this remains unchanged, co-operatives will add to inflation. They will be widely resented by the people and so will not be permitted to expand freely. This is a vicious circle which is likely to be broken in 1989 only if the government makes special efforts to give more material and financial support to co-operatives.

Until the forces of competition are institutionalised, there is no way that the envisaged price reform can work: it will create runaway inflation. Popular opposition led to the shelving of planned food price increases last year; for the reforms to retain popular support, it is essential that the price of food and other essentials remains under strict government control. Where necessary, subsidies should be used as a temporary measure.

It is important to realise that price increases alone will not help to boost supply unless producers are willing and able to use their additional money incomes to invest in output.

**Acid Summer**

Sydney's *Sun-Herald* spotted it first: an 'Acid House' dance party in an inner-Sydney location, boldly titled after the dancefloor drug Ecstasy. What was this phenomenon, the paper asked, which had brought drug culture back to the music scene and back (sic) into the lifestyles of Australia's young?

Like most contemporary media panics over what used to be called 'youth culture', the scare was secondhand. The Acid House panic first hit the London tabloids with a splash in the last Northern summer - the season that with conscious or unconscious irony was labelled by the style arbiters 'The Summer of Love'. Calls came from British Tory MPs to close down Acid House dance clubs; as a subversive influence on Britain's young, Acid House had definitively replaced rap for the duration of the summer.

As a musical genre (if such it is), Acid House originated in the faddish British dance music scene. It's an eighties dance-floor pot-pourri with a psychedelic feel and it fits snugly into the tongue-in-cheek 'Seventies Revival' which resurrected such disparate icons as platform shoes and flares, psychedelia and the music of James Brown.

Yet Acid House isn't music so much as 'lifestyle', in the late-eighties sense. The uniform is baggy T-shirts with Smiley faces, oversized board shorts or cut-down jeans, and bandanas. The 'mood' is the euphoria of Ecstasy, the philosophy the slogan 'Don't worry, be happy'.

It first arrived in Australia through the upmarket 'alternative' music scene, with its hitherto black style ethos. An irony this; while black was still a uniform on some Australian dance floors in the summer, in London and Manchester's bitter winters the 'look' was Australian '100% Mambo' beach gear, beach balls - even inflatable pools in the smartest venues. Yet the craze here soon crossed over from the chic clubs to the more democratic beach scene (where, one presumes, it always belonged): so that street-smart skateboarding beach kids in Sydney now wear bandanas and Smiley badges with their '100% Mambo' shirts and flat-top haircuts.

'1968 without the politics', as one wit put it, it may well be. Certainly the rebelliousness of 1968 is as far from this 'summer of love' as the political mood of the late-sixties is from the conservative tenor of the late-eighties. However, youth hedonism, now as then, is more than a marketing fad: clearly, the 'consumerism' of the late-eighties doesn't always take the forms the new free market gurus might wish.

David Burchell
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Poor Relations

The Industrial Relations Act (IRA) proclaimed at the end of last year is a good measure of the decline in Labor’s reformist role.

The conciliation and arbitration system had always been seen as the Australian way of regulating class conflict; and by the labour movement as at least having the advantage of institutionalising the role of unions and the protection of workers by the creation of awards linking like occupations across an industry.

The new Act invites the striking of special agreements between employers and their employees in a new Section 115 which provides for certification by the new Industrial Relations Commission (IRC). Certification is possible providing the agreement is deemed to be in the public interest, and this is not disapproved by being contrary to the national wage principles (normally sacred cows in wage settlements).

This provision to certify agreements is the ALP’s response to the pressure of the New Right and Opposition against the arbitration system. Agreements can vary standards either upwards or downwards. Indeed, on this point the Act is less restrictive even than the Opposition’s policy which at least provides for a “floor” below which wage rates should not fall.

While the IRA contains provisions which the ALP sees as advantageous in wooing business support, why were the unions so quiet about it? The answer lies in the promise it holds for rationalising the union movement into large manageable blocs under federal jurisdiction.

Unionism today is less than ever before to do with membership involvement in campaigning, at least in the eyes of the ascendant leadership of the ACTU. The issue is how to manage most effectively the expectations of members consistent with the national economic interest as expressed by Treasury. Thus the irrationality of consultation with the rank and file about high-level economic issues is apparent; far better to manoeuvre large units to placate interests, in deals from which the membership is largely or entirely excluded.

Section 118 of the IRA gives the teeth to the commission to restructure the trade union movement in a way that the old Act could not. In a new sub-section, IRA enables a union to represent and, by other provisions, enrol employees who would not otherwise be eligible for membership and to do so after taking account of any agreements dealing with coverage. This is the prize for which the ACTU was prepared to see the passage of the IRA despite the fact that it contravenes a raft of ACTU and International Labour Organisation (ILO) policy.

The IRA contains provisions which mean that fines, injunctions, imprisonment, award cancellation and deregistration are all possible against unions and officials seeking to represent their members, need it be said, peacefully. In other words, all the baggage of Menzies, Barwick and Fraser in the Cold War against the unions. Not that sanctions are the purpose of the IRA, but they are seen as a price to be paid for getting an otherwise desirable reform through the Senate with Democrat support in particular.

The persistence of these sanctions contradicts the ACTU submission to the Hancock Inquiry; the origin of the new IRA: legal sanctions that are directed towards limiting the power of unions to represent effectively the working men and women of Australia will never be accepted by the union movement.

They also contradict the Hancock recommendations and Hawke government promises, and a raft of ACTU policy and International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions such as Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining (98).

The role of political interests is widened in the form of the Minister’s right to intervene in any Full Bench matter, and in any matter at all involving (federal) public sector employment. The likely effects of any decision on the level of inflation and unemployment must be taken into account. And, unless they are against the public interest, the commission must certify agreements which prevail over awards and operate outside the mainstream, although the commission may still be called upon to enforce these agreements. This avenue will be used for deals in areas of labour and skill shortages to be insulated from the bulk of the workforce.

It will also be a likely means of undercutting award conditions despite the inhibitions which prevent flow-ons from certified agreements. In Queensland, “voluntary employment agreements” are designed for this.

Simon Crean told the August Special Unions Conference that “no other union movement in the world has the status of the ACTU”, and that “the game” was all about “positioning for relevance”. When the Industrial Relations Act slips into the history of the Hawke government, it could prove to be an ACTU/ALP achievement better forgotten.

Rob Durbridge
Viv Richards

When comparisons are made about which is the greatest Test cricket side of all time the shortlist invariably comes down to Warwick Armstrong's 1931 Australians, Don Bradman's 1948 Australians and Clive Lloyd's 1980s West Indies. Among the crucial characteristics of this troika is the inclusion of one super batsman — and for Clive Lloyd that player was Vivian Richards.

Isaac Vivian Alexander Roberts made his Test debut in 1974-75 and has remained a permanent fixture in the West Indies eleven since. In those fourteen years he has amassed more than 7,500 Test runs at an average of over 50. Richards is in the most exalted of company.

Perhaps Richards' most astonishing feat was his Test century hit from 56 balls against England on his home ground of St. John's, Antigua, in April 1986. It is hard to imagine that any player will ever score a quicker Test hundred. Not surprisingly, Vivian Richards has been deified in Antigua.

Antigua is an island in the Leewards with a population of around 70,000. It was not until the 1970s, when Richards and Andy Roberts emerged, that an Antiguan represented the West Indies at cricket. Roberts proved to be a great fast bowler, but it was Richards' success that galvanised the small island population. Lester Bird, at the time Deputy Prime Minister of Antigua, commented:

The common cause, that single purpose, became Viv Richards' success on the international cricket stage ... he personified what we perceived ourselves to be: young, dynamic and talented but yet unrecognised in the world.

In his wake other young Test stars from Antigua, such as Richie Richardson and Curtley Ambrose, have followed.

Peter Roebuck, who played with Richards for Somerset during the English summer, remarked that Richards "is not a man to compromise nor a man who easily suppresses rage at insults". Richards' biographer, Trevor McDonald, has added that he combines "humility and seriousness with a burning pride". In 1976 Tony Greig, the white South African-born captain of England, taunted the West Indian tourists with the comment that "We will make the West Indies grovel". Richards responded with 232 in the First Test, 291 in the Fifth, and a series aggregate of 829 at an average of 118.42. Wisden considered the performance "phenomenal".

As Roebuck also wrote, Richards has a "towering hatred of dishonesty, disloyalty and racial slurs". No doubt Greig had cause to regret his ill-considered remark.

Vivian Richards has been guarded about his own political opinions, although his friendship and admiration for the late Maurice Bishop of Grenada is on the public record. However, it is on the South African issue that Richards has maintained strong opinions. In 1982 when a group of English professionals toured South Africa he stated:

If I went to South Africa my people would think of me as nothing. I'd be told I'd sold my birthright, I'd be haunted and hassled by my own people — and by my own mind. Man, I'd be a goner.

Richards refuses to talk to the agents of white South African cricket who imagine they can buy any international cricketer. As Richards says, it would be "immoral" to go to South Africa; he will not accept "blood money".

Professional cricketers, like many of their administrators, have wanted to bury their heads in the sand and separate sport and politics. This makes them easy prey for South African "blood money". In fact the recent debates within the international cricket communities have been devoid of any principled and moral stand on apartheid.

To his credit, Vivian Richards is one of the handful of professional cricketers who have openly stated their moral and political objections to the South African regime. Sadly it is only a handful of the 300 English professionals, there might be six who would be prepared to make similar statements.

Vivian Richards is a player motivated by great challenges. One of his aims on the recent tour of Australia was to become the first West Indian to achieve the milestone of a century of centuries — this he attained in Sydney in the match against New South Wales.

The captaining of the West Indies side was another important goal and since that appointment Richards has been keen to inflict series defeats on England and Australia. Now those milestones have also been achieved.

It is hard to imagine what remains for Vivian Richards in Test cricket. He is the captain of the best side in the world; perhaps he intends to make his eleven as formidable as the sides in which he played under Clive Lloyd.

Michael Manley, the recently elected socialist Prime Minister of Jamaica, in his History of West Indies Cricket, argued that Clive Lloyd honed the ever-present talents of Caribbean cricketers into an all-conquering force through a new and determined professionalism. Vivian Richards inherited that side from Lloyd, but now has a pivotal part to play as captain in a new period for West Indian cricket.

It is not likely that we will have the pleasure of seeing "the great man" bat again in Test cricket in Australia. Sadly, the age of Vivian Richards is drawing to a close.

Ric Sissons
London Calling
Diana Simmonds

You may have heard about Thatcherism. It's a political ideology that turns strong men into knock-kneed sycophants, reduces uncompromising TV current affairs interviewers to forelock-tugging knights of the realm and has, if we are to believe what our newspapers politely print, wrought an economic miracle in Britain.

That's one way of looking at it and it's all true, especially the bit about the TV tigers. (Sir) Robin Day and (Sir) Alastair Burnett, who've become (and this may be hard to believe but is so) even more unctuous than our own breed of brown-nosed Pollie Toadies (Crappus lickus minori). On the face of it, London and its satellite nation of "the South-East" is certainly prosperous. It hums with dynamism and the sound of free-marketeers counting their profits. Its traffic is an almost permanent thrombosis of frightful density and expensive machinery. Many people in this region are visibly better off than they were in 1979 when something like 43 percent voted for anything rather than what was then passing for government.

What they've now got is a curious new world which is of some interest to Australia.

Home ownership, in relatively low income groups, is at an all-time high, largely because of the Tories' original cornerstone policy of selling off publicly-owned local council housing to tenants. Low interest rates (in single figures six months ago) also lured millions into ever larger mortgages and second home purchases. Consumption of luxury white goods is now regarded as a basic human right along with multiple overseas holidays (preferably the Caribbean or Mauritius) each year — which do not, of course, include the now customary ten days skiing and two cars which are also essential to a reasonable lifestyle.

Presiding over all this, Mrs Thatcher has become more and more the perfectly coiffed steamroller, flattening opposition in her own party and demoralising it in the official Opposition. This decade's freshly-formed centrist parties — once so cocksure of electoral success — have crashed, reformed, reshuffled, realigned, regrouped, crashed again. At the same time, in several recent by-elections, they have taken second place to the Tories, pushing the Labour Party into a hair-raising and previously unthinkable third place. Nevertheless, they can be seen as a cross between comic opera and the various post-war Italian governments and, except in the minor contests, are not worldbeaters.

Not comic and almost qualifying as tragedy is the predicament of the British Labour Party. Privately, its leader, Neil Kinnock, has let on that he doesn't expect to be prime minister. This means that, from the very top, the Labour Party gives itself no hope of winning the next election.

Kinnock is the Allan Border of British politics: an able man who could have expected the highest honours if his career hadn't coincided with the least talented and most luckless period in his side's history. As it is, Labour flounders and Kinnock is reduced to snapping at Mrs Thatcher's heels with the effectiveness of a prematurely aged Welsh corgi. However, she who has survived the Belgrano, Westland and Sarah Keays, to name a few major scandals, is unlikely to be hummed to death by a toothless pooch at this stage.

The relevance of all this to Australia is the apparent penchant of Liberal politicians (and others for all we know) to jet off to Westminster the minute they're let out at the end of term, to learn at the feet of the mistress. What they bring home with them is a dangerous mixture of baggage which ought to send the average airport X-ray berserk.

For starters, they've realised the value of saleable ideas, especially if they can be presented as new. They need not necessarily be good ideas, or even workable ideas, but if they appear to promise a hike or two up the financial and social ladders for those who've got their feet on the rungs already, or can dream that they are about to make those steps, then they'll probably find favour with significant numbers of voters.

Possibly even more dangerous than these false images however, is the rose-tinted view the privileged visitor to Britain brings back. Lately we have heard mention of pleasant evenings at West End theatres, Glyndebourne and the (southern) countryside with its sparkling profitable sunrise industries. All absolutely delightful of course, and bound to fill the tourist with wellbeing and determination to create something similar back home.

For Glyndebourne's lawns and picnic hampers from Fortnum's, however, substitute Liverpool, whose poorer areas are still crushed by 60 percent unemployment; for the night at the theatre try sleeping wrapped in cardboard in the rat-infested back alleys that serve the glittering mile of Shaftesbury Avenue; instead of the enchanted Opera and the various post-war Italian governments and, except in the minor contests, are not worldbeaters.

Avenue; instead of the enchanted opera and the various post-war Italian governments and, except in the minor contests, are not worldbeaters.

Unlike Mother Theresa — also a recent caller on Mrs Thatcher — it's doubtful that any of our pollies would have observed to the PM that her achievement in turning Britain into a Third World country was quite remarkable; but then it's unlikely that our fact-finding pollies saw that.
Third World. To do so they would have had to travel a couple of hundred kilometres north of the capital or, while in London, to travel by bus or tube to their destinations. If they did they would have seen that the infrastructure of the city is in ruins, starved of investment in equipment, staff and public safety requirements by ten years of marketplace imperatives. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, buses which parted company from timetables years ago — were also forced to abandon their normal routes because private car traffic made their progress impossible. Two tourists were stabbed to death on populous central underground stations which have become the haunt of gangs of unemployed and unemployable youths. Dozens of commuters were killed and injured when a train crashed at Clapham in south London. The cause: cost-cutting over the years by a railway management starved of funds and courage by central government whose single imperative was profitability — at all costs.

In Australia, the apparently stylish “new” ideas being touted ever more confidently, come from the shiny side of this grubby reality. Disillusioned, bored voters are notoriously susceptible to glittery gew-gaws: the electoral success of Nick Greiner in NSW is evidence of that. The problem with market imperatives and the freedom of that market to dictate policy and outcome is that the health, safety and general well-being of the public often come between a capitalist and his or her profit. When this happens, unless the market and its operators are firmly held in check by the strongest legal means and political will, it is always people who'll come off worst.

If the ‘70s were characterised as “the Me generation”, it’s hard to see how the ‘80s could be seen as anything else — to the power of ten. Me, mine, greed, personal gain, creature comforts, sod the rest of you. I’m okay, and if you’re going to lie down and die, please do it somewhere else is, in essence, really what Thatcherism is about. Even the elders of her own party know that and have said so — that she shames them and the historic ethos of the Tory party which, at its best, was about benevolent paternalism rather than despotic materialism.

Unfortunately, the personal crassness and general professional ineptitude of the majority of Australian politicians gives no room for confidence that, if the worst comes to the worst, benevolent paternalism will prevail here. Fitzgerald revealed (to what real effect?) what the rest of us already knew: that despotic materialism is what motivates most of them. If the Thatcher ethos gets a grip here, it would result in devastation akin to that wrought on the continent by rabbits and superphosphates. However, unlike these scourges, we can't shoot or ban them: a great deal of imagination and energy is required instead. Now.

(Diana Simmonds recently returned to Britain for the first time in three years.)
NIGHTMARE on RECOVERY

With horror movies for relaxation, the residents of a women's refuge prepare for the outside world. For the staff, language and cultural barriers make life on the collective an ideological minefield. Lyndell Fairleigh recalls.

The suspense is killing me. As always, it's the anticipation of violence that keeps me on edge, as though mesmerised: it'll be a relief when the blows finally come.

I can't sit here waiting, though, so I retreat to the solitary comfort of the office and leave the others to their TV watching. They don't need or want to talk; for the time being the television is enough.

Why wouldn't they see a connection between their own experiences of violence in the home and the extraordinary violence of the horror and thriller films this group of women watched at any opportunity? Didn't they see how odd it was that they should be hooked into watching endlessly repeated images of women as screaming victims? I asked myself. Especially when some of them couldn't sleep at night.

In retrospect, I wonder whether those films didn't offer more than just a masochistic identification with the supreme (and importantly, innocent) victim. Wasn't I overlooking that, for the heroine of these dramas at least, the violence against them was continually being deferred, that while living in a state of terror they were at least saved at the last moment. It didn't matter that they were, or felt, inept or that their high heels got in the way, because someone would consider them worth rescuing. For women whose self-esteem has literally been bashed out of them and for whom the dash to the refuge was a profoundly courageous if ultimately frightening act — because they were now on new ground — this could have been comforting. Even if the "monster" could return (in the film sequel at least) and even if they weren't quite as white, slender or clear-skinned as the woman on the screen.

Not everyone was glued to the TV screen, zonked out in a longer than usual respite from the attacks that would surely begin if they went back defeated. Some struggled to put together a new life, having left behind nearly everything they'd ever had, or worked for. Others seemed blessed in their determination never to return. Like Anne, as I will call her; even though leaving her husband isolated her from her Fijian Christian community. Anne had two much-loved boys, but longed for a daughter. Already pregnant when she arrived at the refuge, she grew big while waiting to be allocated public housing, yet refused to be anything but optimistic. After three or four months she had a house in Sydney's western suburbs and her daughter was born.

Living way out west was a relief to Anne because it meant she was far less likely to run into her husband or any of their community (they would pressure her to return). At the same time, of course, it isolated her from the support the refuge offered her as...
well as the most centrally located community and government services.

"Ex-res" (ex-resident) work was one of those hopeful items on the weekly collective meeting agenda, so often neglected in reality because we didn't have the time or resources. It involved visiting women who had (recently) left the refuge. Usually living in the western suburbs, because that was where most of the public housing suitable for women with children was located, they struggled alone. Few had the skills or confidence to find work in a tight market, so they depended on the supporting parent's benefit. Living in a house bare of everything but a few necessities, and probably no affordable child care, was enough to test any woman's resolve. If they didn't give in to their former partner's pressure to return, they often did to their own loneliness and doubts at being able to cope alone. Another man, just like the last, moved in.

Most had been only too happy to move into their own homes, however. For at least three months they had been waiting on tenterhooks for housing. For many, too, the refuge had been their first experience of communal living and, combined with the high levels of stress, it had proved unsettling.

I first met my fellow collective members when all thirteen of them interviewed me in the refuge lounge room. The light oozed through the dark green shutters on the front window and it felt for all the world as if we were at the bottom of a dirty fish tank. My mind was just as clear. Everyone had their own question ready: two have stuck in my memory. When I was asked how I felt about accompanying a woman back to her house to pick up her things, even if her obviously violent partner was there, I sidestepped any honest mention of my fears by answering that it was undoubtedly better that she not go alone.

I was also asked to describe my understanding of racism. Race and cultural difference were burning issues within the women's movement at the time. It permeated our discussions on employment procedures and collective structures as well as our dealings with the women of various cultures who used the refuge. While it was easy to agree
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INDEPENDENT PUBLIC RADIO
that we needed to employ more Black (particularly Aboriginal) women and women from non-English speaking backgrounds, when it came to the specific criteria by which we chose those workers, differences often escalated.

Leila’s four children ranged in age from ten to under one: three were girls. Moussa, the only boy and third eldest, was already a tyrant at three. All were, however, a handful.

Used to living their parents’ hours (a custom which horrified trenchantly Anglo-Celtic mothers), they could be heard from morning to night. (Differences over how to handle children were often the bitterest between women staying at the refuge.) A refugee from Lebanon, Leila was first of all and most painfully isolated by language. No one else at the refuge, workers included, could speak either Arabic or French, so we had to rely on infrequent sessions with interpreters for our closest communication with her. Given that the personal and political beliefs of the interpreters we had to employ varied enormously, no doubt much of what was said was screened, excised or unconsciously, if not maliciously, altered. Day to day we struggled on in English.

As is often the case, her children were picking up English far more quickly than she could. Masibe, the eldest and mummy’s little helper, began to take over much of her mother’s role. Souraya, the second, was not so biddable: at best she was cheeky, at her worst, uncontrollable and thoroughly unlikeable. Yet she sparked with an intelligence I found remarkably attractive. In taking so long to recognise her as an incest survivor, we unwittingly contributed to her ongoing trauma: she didn’t rouse the most sympathetic of reactions, even among the workers. Not long after that we took part in a series of workshops run by Dymphna House, a centre and refuge for incest survivors. Of course, by then that particular horse had bolted.

That summer we took the kids to Kangaroo Valley, staying in a large barnlike cabin owned by the Quaker Society. Leila came too, but the mythical character of the bush had her watching her children even more anxiously than usual. The tuneless din of the cicadas unnerved her. Nonetheless, she was away from the refuge and the more room there was for talking, the more she set aside her self-protective arrogance. Hasibe, Souraya and Moussa thankfully slowed down.

**Often another man, just like the last, moved in**

Leila had always talked about returning to Lebanon but I was only faintly surprised to run into her years later on a Sydney suburban train. Was she living, if not settled, in Australia? She looked as if she wanted to talk, but it was my stop and I didn’t know what else to say.

I hadn’t drunk instant coffee since the long panic-stricken nights of essay-writing in my university days, but it again became a comfort during long hours spent with women for whom even the refuge could become a kind of prison. Often too scared to go out in case they were seen, they were also typically housebound in their ways. Whatever time of day, the TV was always on and a pall of cigarette smoke hung over a crazy litter of half-empty coffee cups. Lighting up a cigarette immediately eased tensions and, with cup in hand, talk flowed. At other times, however, it was a way of asking for a moment’s peace.

Alcohol and the so-called hard drugs were, on the other hand, banned: if residents wanted a drink they were asked to drop down to the local, perhaps with another woman from the refuge, or with friends. This got them out but, primarily, it protected the other residents from drug-affected, if not aggressive, behaviour. It was not unusual for the women to have drug dependencies (prescribed drugs included) so it meant we took on drug and alcohol counselling, even if we only had a workshop or two under our belts. Our responsibilities as refuge workers could take on Sisyphean proportions it seemed, with some danger of being flattened by a runaway rock if we took too much on - both individually and collectively.

Perhaps it was as early as my first day that a longtime worker at the refuge suggested I keep myself relaxed and healthy with a weekly massage, for instance. Some probably followed such good advice; I did sporadically, but it was much easier for most of us to rely on the quick hit that a cigarette or a cup of coffee could provide — even if lethargy later set in. Protecting ourselves from burnout wasn’t seen as just an individual’s responsibility, however. Over the years too many workers had come and gone, putting unnecessary stresses on those who stayed, on newcomers, and on the refuge itself — an unsettled environment at the best of times. Every ten weeks, workers were expected to take two weeks’ leave, making a total of eight weeks’ paid leave per annum.

Sometimes, nonetheless, we had to battle against an unholy urge to give all (for that reason holidays weren’t flexible: you had to take them when they were due). It was also tempting, even among ourselves, to devalue “women’s work” and give in to the history of voluntary labour to devalue “women’s work” and give in to the history of voluntary labour by not paying ourselves a liveable wage even if we had the funds. Should we be a closed shop and actually work towards award wages?

I’ve heard it’s not uncommon for refugee workers to move as far away as possible from the refuge they’ve worked at when they finish up. Some even go overseas. I left for Japan, but I still don’t know that I’ll ever really distance myself.

LYNDELL FAIRLEIGH is a Sydney freelance journalist.
The Liberals' Future Directions document came in for some stick from the press. But David McKnight argues that Labor and the left need to start taking it seriously. Nostalgia and conservative values could have a potent appeal, come election-time.
funny thing happened two days after the launch of the Liberal Party's *Future Directions* policy statement. Bob Hawke, after initially ridiculing it, suddenly began to take it seriously. And so he should.

The statement featured as its main themes family values, law and order, falling education standards, patriotism and individual incentive versus reliance on government. The document appeals to "plain thinking", attempting to set the political agenda by fashioning a conservative "common sense" — heavily backed by skilful advertising images. However, behind the image of the solid family home with its bullnose iron and picket fence, Liberal Party strategy aims to appeal to "blue collar conservatives" who voted for Hawke the last three times.

Blue collar conservatism is something which the left and Labor Party don't like to acknowledge publicly, but Liberal Party insiders believe it holds the key to the Lodge. The values of blue collar conservatives are not limited to blue collar workers — small business, country people and women have more than their share.

And we are not talking about a group of rednecks who have a consistently reactionary world view (chances are they already vote conservative). Rather, *Future Directions* may win because it identifies and gives shape to a conservatism, particularly on social and personal issues, which exists alongside other non-conservative beliefs and values in a section of Labor's traditional support — blue collar workers.

The key ingredient is that it plays on actual fears about the pace and direction of social change. These cover new teaching methods in schools, the increase in property crime and drug abuse, increased divorce rates, and the dissolution of the World War Two "Australian identity". It is allied to a "natural" dislike of government power and a deep and vicious racism.

It may be rational to argue, as Hawke government ministers do, that the family is best protected by lowering unemployment and by tight control of spending rather than savage cuts. And it may be rational to talk of the economic benefits of immigration. But this will be of no avail in the vicissitudes of politics if it is not backed by a more emotional and philosophical vision than the current talk of restructuring, wage fixing principles, and sound economic management.

It is wrong to think that all this can be debated on a rational level — politics has always been partly about "vibes" and feelings, about images and symbols which echo inner thoughts formed partly on a conscious and "rational" basis, partly on an emotional and psychological basis.

The early years of the Hawke government were marked by a conscious attack on the politics of the "warm inner glow". Yet it is precisely on such things as the "warm inner glow" that many people make up their minds, as the architects of *Future Directions* know. Rekindling a warm inner glow will be one of the key tasks of the Hawke government before the next election.

What of the document itself?

In terms of conservative politics it marks a crystallisation of the New Right philosophy which has been developing in the backwaters of politics and is now riding the mainstream. It restates Liberal themes such as opening unions to civil charges, widespread privatisation, effectively abolishing Medicare, a two-tier tax scheme and deep cuts to social programs.

But the new element is that this is all linked to a generalised fear of change and personal insecurity. This latter is not so amenable to law making. How does a federal government legislate to teach the 3Rs? To stop street crime? To improve personal relationships and stop the breakdown of marriages?

No matter also that boosting law and order spending and increasing penalties for drug-related crimes is criticised even by conservative lawyers as a failed strategy to combat drug use. No matter that cuts to housing and social security benefits will increase pressure on a lot of families.

No matter the contradiction pointed out by *The Australian*'s Paul Kelly: "The dries, ... were in revolt against the 50s and 60s. These were the squandered decades. Yet the anti-model now becomes the model". The era of terrible economic regulation is the same era of idealised social stability; but consistency doesn't matter when it is the vision that counts.

Richard Farmer, a key Labor strategist, said the document was "good politics" but added that it plays on "the myths, the prejudices and downright ignorance of the Australian people. That truth and
CONTROVERSIAL!

Media interpretation of Laurie Carmichael's definitive interview in ALR was varied, to say the least... After all, Carmichael is a controversial figure.

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Ten years ago, the ACTU assistant secretary, Laurie Carmichael, was the communist leader of the metal workers' wages and hours campaign in defiance of the then ACTU president, Bob Hawke. Today he nominates keeping the Hawke Government in office as the "first component" of the union movement's strategy.

A wage freeze for all would mean even higher interest rates, a recession and the end of the Hawke Government. And while a Howard government's bite would be less savage on the unions than its bark might suggest, a change of government in these circumstances would greatly threaten the ACTU plan for labour market reform.

"The agenda for micro-economic reform is set," Carmichael says in a strong defence of the Hawke Government and the Accord carried in the latest Australian Left Review. "It wasn't set by the unions. It's set by the market, the technology, what is needed in order to meet modern requirements. It will be done either in a Thatcherite deregulated, Western European-style interventionist manner, or it will be done in a rational, Thirroul manner.

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decency are potential victims doesn't matter when it comes to attracting votes.

Significantly, given his access to a wealth of public opinion data, he warned that *Future Directions* may carry Howard into the Lodge. He noted “It’s hard to win a vote telling people that they are most likely to be killed, raped or beaten by a member of their own family.”

Yet it is impossible to win votes by telling people that they are most likely to be hurt or killed by a member of their own family? Expressed that baldly, certainly not; but Labor’s response must address the underlying themes of the document (while not allowing it to set the agenda) if it is to win the next election.

That will be hard since Labor is almost bereft of a coherent philosophy, it is fearful of arguing “philosophically” in election campaigns, and has already done much to encourage the drift of political debate to the right. A campaign against the drift of *Future Directions*, would involve actually arguing things like the fundamentals of Medicare, taking on racism, and combating the idea that savage cuts to the public sector will somehow solve economic problems.

It would mean fashioning some kind of vision which addresses the fears which *Future Directions* relies on. This means facing up to many people’s desires for stability and security on questions of the family and personal relationships, national identity and personal safety and not writing these desires off as irredeemably conservative.

It means the labour movement taking a closer look at permanent part-time work. It is easy to decide the motives behind this call and do nothing — harder to acknowledge that flexibility and choice in patterns of work is an attractive concept which needs serious attention.

Above all, it means tackling the deep-rooted racism among all Australians — native born or overseas born.

It would involve staking out and capturing the moral high ground and undoing much of Labor’s own work in trumpeting “pragmatism”.

There are some grounds for thinking that it could do this — the two most significant events being its backing of Tax Commissioner Trevor Boucher’s tax raids on big business avoiders and Labor’s principled opposition to Howard’s play for the racist vote.

A more likely course, however, would see the ALP steal a few Liberal policies and start talking more in the language of “crackdowns” on drugs education, throw in a few bribes on top of the promised tax cuts, like more assistance to home buyers — and then stand on its record. This would not only be monumental hypocrisy, it would also probably lose them the next election and usher in full-blown Thatcherism for years to come.

This is the logic of the course Hawke and Keating have chosen since 1983, pushing the framework of political debate further and further to the right.

Documents like *Future Directions* don’t win elections on their own. They are part of a process which sees bad mistakes (or hard decisions) by the government send its softest supporters looking for an alternative. In any event, it may be that the effect of the *Future Directions* manifesto will be overwhelmed by the conservative electorate’s lack of confidence in the document’s originator — John Howard himself. We may have to hope so.

DAVID McKNIGHT is a journalist on the *Sydney Morning Herald*. 

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Its left critics say the Hawke government has sold out working people to its business 'mates'. The government responds that its been pursuing equity through growth. So what's the story? Frank Stilwell weighs up the evidence.
It is now commonplace to note that the leaders of the federal Labor government seems more concerned with their big business "mates" than with the party's traditional constituency among low and middle income earners. This is a source of disillusionment for some of the party faithful, a trigger for gleeful "I told you so's" among others on the far left and a general symbol of the subordination of equity considerations in recent public policy.

Of course, Hawke and Keating tell the story differently, stressing that a healthy economy is the prerequisite for social reform and that employment-generation is the most effective welfare policy. It is, however, the private economy which must be made healthy and it is the private sector which must be encouraged to generate jobs. Hence Mr Keating's recurrent boast — typically uttered without any hint of irony or embarrassment — that the Labor government has curtailed growth in the public sector. It is a story with the familiar ring of "trickle-down" economics. It is timely to ask how much has actually trickled down.

The focus of this article is the tension between the government's economic policies and the objectives of social reform. For the sake of developing a sympathetic critique, I've acknowledged the government's partial commitment to the latter objectives. The "social justice" strategy heralded by the publication in early 1988 of the glossy brochure, Towards A Fairer Australia: Social Justice Under Labor, is the most obvious expression of this commitment. The more recent booklet Towards a Fairer Australia: Social Justice Budget Statement 1988-89 is the latest written expression of this dimension of policy. It lists, among other things, additional expenditure on the family allowance supplement, housing assistance, child care, Aboriginal advancement and new schemes to help the unemployed (JET, NEW START). These are important developments.

However, the problem is that those reformist objectives have been recurrently subordinated to the (misleadingly labelled) policies of "economic rationalism". Moreover — a related matter — the government's policies have been developed in a national and international context which makes the achievement of a more equitable society in Australia increasingly difficult. So the sympathetic character of my critique is tempered by the implicit judgment that it could have been otherwise — that there is no "inexorable logic" in the reliance on an economic strategy which makes the welfare of ordinary Australians increasingly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of international capitalism. As such, the Labor government carries a major responsibility for the record of social inequality.

The dimensions of inequality

The facts of distributional inequality are not in major dispute. In terms of the functional distribution of income — the relative shares of capital and labour in the national income — there has been a significant shift in the five years since Labor took office. The share of labour (received principally as wages and salaries) has fallen by six percent, while the share of capital (received as interest, dividends, rents, etc.) has risen by six percent. In terms of personal distribution of income the evidence suggests a further degree of polarisation — with growth in the number of high income earners and low income earners, at the expense of a decline in the intermediate ranges.

The number of millionaires has been estimated at over 32,000 although to be a mere millionaire is somewhat passe in circumstances where Sydney harbourside mansions now regularly retail in the $5-520 million range. To get into the Business Review Weekly's "Top 200" now takes assets of $35 million, up $5 million on 1987's listings. Meanwhile, over 20 percent of households are dependent on social security as their principal means of support; below that there is a clearly discernible sub-welfare class characterised by major problems of homelessness — most refuges and hostels are overcrowded to bursting point and an estimated 3,000 people are homeless each night in inner-Sydney alone.

One interesting indication of the effects of the unequalising forces operating in Australian society is the spatial pattern of upper and lower income groups within the major cities. Of course, a degree of territorial segregation is a long-established feature of Australian cities, as in most cities around the world. What is more significant is that this tendency appears to be becoming more pronounced in the 1980s. My own research shows this to be the case in Sydney. Taking information from the 1981 and 1986 Censuses of population, we can identify the proportion of high and low income groups in each government area. (For this purpose, high incomes are defined as those in the upper quartile — i.e. the top 25 percent of income earners. The low incomes are those in the lower quartile — i.e. the bottom 25 percent, roughly equivalent to the overall incidence of poverty in the society).

The results of this research are shown in the two maps. For the high income families, the most rapid growth areas were the gentrifying inner-city areas, particularly those around Sydney harbour, with increases also evident throughout the north shore suburbs, the inner west and the southern shire of Sutherland. All the western suburbs, which entered the 1980s with relatively low proportions of upper income groups, faced a decline in that proportion between the two censuses. The situation is still more striking when we look at the information on low income groups. The proportion of low income families in the population fell throughout most of the north shore areas and in the gentrifying inner-city areas. On the other hand, it increased dramatically across the whole of the western suburbs. The contrast between the fortunes of the advantaged and disadvantaged areas is obvious.
These patterns need to be interpreted with some caution. They relate to local government areas which often include diverse component parts. They relate only to the period 1981-1986 because of the limited availability of census data. They relate only to Sydney, and further research is needed on other urban areas before generalisations can be made. Also, of course, they do not isolate the effects of federal government policies from other forces generating economic equalities. Nevertheless, they do provide significant prima facie evidence of a tendency towards economic polarisation that has a spatial as well as a social dimension. This is significant in that spatial inequalities, once established, tend to have a reinforcing effect, compounding the tendencies towards a widening gap between the “winners” and “losers” in the income redistribution stakes.

Other inter-related dimensions of economic inequality also need to be acknowledged. The gender dimension is a case in point. Despite significant emphasis on equal opportunity and affirmative action programs and, despite a significant growth in female participation in the waged workforce, the relative economic position of women remains markedly inferior on average to males. Indeed, one author contends that the relative position has actually worsened under the Hawke government, although my evaluation of the evidence is that the situation can be better characterised as one of painfully slow redress. The relationship between average wages of female and male full-time workers crept up from 80.6 percent to 82.8 percent between November 1983 and February 1988. On the other hand the “feminisation of poverty” has been increasingly evident among welfare recipients: the dramatic over-representation of single mothers in the official poverty classification is its most obvious expression.

The ethnic dimension of inequality is also important. Jock Collins’ recent book provides background evidence on some of the long-standing inequalities associated with immigrant groups, but systematic evidence on how their fortunes have changed under the Hawke government is harder to find. The incidence of unemployment has been particularly high among the more recently arrived immigrant groups, but the “filtering-up” process is apparently continuing among the more established groups. Likewise, while the disadvantaged position of the Aboriginal people is evident — one survey has revealed an unemployment rate over ten times the national average — it is difficult to assess how their relative position has changed in the last five years.

Generating inequality

Socio-economic inequalities are the products of various causal factors. Four constellations of these factors stand out as being particularly significant in the context of the 1980s and the policies of the Hawke government: (1) the labour market, real wages and unemployment; (2) housing costs; (3) the social
wage, and (4) taxation policies. A thorough analysis would need to treat each in depth and evaluate their interconnections: the following comments merely pick out some of the most obvious aspects.

The situation in the labour market is obviously important, particularly the persistence of substantial involuntary unemployment and the falling level of real wages. The Hawke government's original emphasis on tackling the unemployment problem was a significant change from its predecessor's monetarist-inspired focus on "fighting inflation first" (although it is significant to note that Keating's 1988 budget speech again referred to inflation as our number one economic problem).

However, the actual record has been disappointing—a cut of only three percent in the official unemployment rate despite the generation of a million jobs. This bodes ill for any return to full employment in the foreseeable future. And those actually in employment have seen, on average, a 7-8 percent fall in the value of real wages. This has been heralded by the government as a major achievement in terms of reducing the wage costs of Australian business—and indeed it is—but it has simultaneously been a major factor intensifying the economic inequality between wage and salary earners and the recipients of income from capital.

The situation in the housing market has been equally important. Marxists in particular have traditionally regarded this as secondary to production relationships in the determination of differential class positions. However, in the 1980s, housing has obviously been a major factor fuelling inequalities, as house prices have escalated and persistently high interest rates have made home ownership increasingly inaccessible to low and middle income groups. Partly as a consequence, the demand/supply imbalance in the rental housing sector has changed, leading to massive rental hikes. The public sector has been unable to cope with the overflow, and 86,000 people are on the waiting list in NSW alone. The resulting pressures on temporary and emergency ("permanent emergency") sources of shelter have already been noted.

In effect, the situation in the housing market has interacted with the situation in the labour market to create a "scissors effect" on low to middle income groups. Falling real incomes and rising housing costs are an obvious recipe for growing economic inequalities. To what extent the policies of the federal government are to blame obviously remains a matter of contention. Certainly, the first-home owners...
scheme and the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement have proved inadequate for the task, as noted in a recent study. Most fundamentally, there is a continuing reluctance to acknowledge that the public housing sector needs to expand massively in order to augment the total housing stock. At present it is limited to providing a residual "welfare" role. To overcome this problem would require the cooperation of the state governments, which is unlikely in a number of cases, and particularly unlikely in NSW given Premier Greiner's emerging penchant for the Thatcherist policy of selling off the public housing stock.

The issues of social wage expenditures and tax revenues are most directly the responsibility of the federal government. Here the experience is mixed. The treatment of the social wage in the first two budgets of the Hawke government was relatively impressive. The bulk of the cuts imposed by the Fraser government in the period 1976-1982 were restored. Medicare was established (or re-established), and there were impressive allocations for the provision of child care. However, the last four budgets have been austere. In each case there have been significant exceptions — as in the case of expenditure on Aboriginal affairs and the family income supplement in the 1988-89 budget. Moreover, social wage expenditures as a proportion of total government expenditure have risen from 43 percent to 49 percent over the last six years. Over half the increase has been in expenditure on health policy.

However, the general reformist commitment to an expanded social wage has mostly been subordinated to the macro-economic priorities of pre-Keynesian economics. Reining in the deficit and then generating a budget surplus of sufficient magnitude to eliminate the public sector borrowing requirement have been the dominant concerns. Whatever the general merits or demerits of this strategy, it has had the effect of curtailing the social wage at the very time that developments in the labour and housing markets have increased the need for the social wage.

On the taxation side, the record has also been uneven. The introduction of capital gains taxation and the fringe benefits tax has clearly added to the equity of the system. However, the quantitative effect of these measures has been swamped by the reduction of the rate of company taxation from 48 percent to 39 percent, the ending of "double taxation" of income from dividends, and the reduced progressivity of the income tax scale. The top marginal rate of income tax has been cut from 60 percent to 49 percent. Moreover, it is no secret that Mr. Keating wants it to be cut to 39 percent in the next budget to bring it into line with the company tax rate. This would certainly help to reduce the tax avoidance which results from wealthy individuals disguising personal income as company income, but it would do so only by lowering the overall share of the tax burden borne by the upper-income groups. It is known that some members of the Cabinet, such as Senators Walsh and Button, are apparently anxious about the provision of further tax cuts of this magnitude to the upper-income groups — even economic "rationalism", it appears, has its limits.

The price of "Economic Rationalism"

Of course, Labor and social democratic parties always face a basic contradiction in seeking to reconcile the management of a capitalist economy with the objectives of reform, including the reduction of economic and social inequalities. The hallmark of this government has been its overwhelming obsession with the former, despite the earnest endeavours of Brian Howe as
Minister for Social Security and the recurrent warnings from sources close to the traditional electoral base of the party. Moreover, the government has pursued economic policies which have increased the obstacles which a future reforming government would face. It is in this context that the policies of “economic rationalism” have their most significant effect.

These policies have their theoretical basis in neo-classical economics theory and their spiritual home in the think-tanks of the “new right”. Their basis is a faith in the effectiveness of the market in generating efficiency. Hence the emphasis on financial deregulation, the removal of controls on international capital movements, cuts in tariffs on imported goods (despite our continuing balance of payments difficulties) and the dedication to generating an ever-larger budgetary surplus. These are the classic prescriptions of conservative economics — not of a traditional pragmatic conservatism but of a purist free-market ideology.

Only the labour market policies have substantially withstood the onslaught of this ideological package, despite the urgings of the “new right” and the continued tensions arising because of the coexistence of regulated labour markets and deregulated capital markets. Even so, the latest national wage case may be seen as a step towards achieving the “wage flexibility” advocated by the deregulationists. Of course, the continued existence of the remnants of the Accord — and the official compliance of the trade union movement to government policies — requires that some degree of regulation be maintained in this respect. Yet it remains a residual element. It is a political prop effectively supporting a radical experiment in economic restructuring, albeit surpassed in its audacity by Rogernomics across the Tasman Sea.

What is particularly significant is that the policies of “economic rationalism” integrate the Australian economy even more closely into the international capitalist economy. Financial deregulation (including the floating of the value of the currency and the entry of foreign banks) together with the elimination of exchange controls and the reduction of tariffs, have all had this effect. In consequence, the Australian economy is increasingly susceptible to the volatile conditions prevailing in the international economy — a peripheral and vulnerable player in a rigged game. This is the long-run price of “economic rationalism” to be added to the short-run costs of a more equitable society.

I would not claim that all the policies of the federal government have consistently had this effect. Important steps have been taken to redress inequality by targeting social expenditures more directly at the needy (albeit at a considerable cost in terms of the departure from the principle of universal provision “as of right”). The increased Family Allowance Supplement, the Child Support Scheme and the JET Scheme should help partially to counter the “feminisation of poverty”. The Social Security Review under the direction of Bettina Cass has made important contributions. And the continued — albeit fragile — existence of the Accord has probably worked against a widening of wage differentials that would have otherwise occurred.

Yet these are qualifications to be set against the general evidence of persistent tendencies towards increased economic inequalities. Despite its economic problems Australia remains an affluent society, but one in which the fruits of affluence are increasingly unevenly distributed. To have presided over this period of economic polarisation is an uncomfortable “achievement” for the ALP.

NOTES

1. A fuller analysis of these trends was presented to the ANZAS Conference in May 1988 in a paper titled “The Impact of National Structural Economic Change on Spatial Equity in the Sydney Metropolitan Area”. Copies of the paper are obtainable by writing to the author at the Department of Economics, University of Sydney, NSW 2006.


6. For further details see F. Stilwell, The Accord and Beyond, Pluto Press, 1986, ch. 5.

FRANK STILWELL teaches political economy at Sydney University.
It's fashionable to describe Labor's policies as a betrayal of past values: end of argument. But how does the government measure up against other social democratic regimes in the West? And why is it that Labor's new face seems to have marginalised its left critics? David Burchell ruminates.

In everyday discussion, as well as in the world of declarations and resolutions, it seems no exaggeration to say that the prime topic for discussion on the left over the last five years has been the nature of the federal ALP government. This makes it particularly surprising that so little of consequence appears to have been said about what, in the light of the common air of dismay over the direction of the government, exactly defines the new face of Labor in the 'eighties.

For some on the left, the ritual invocation of the world "betrayal" still suffices to explain the whole contemporary history of the ALP in government: an ironic fact, given that in the worldview of the ultra-left, the ALP is hardly thought to have ever embraced the ideals it is now accused of betraying. Yet even on the mainstream left, both inside and outside the ALP, anger seems to have largely substituted for analysis. And the role of the left as at least self-perceived by popular critics of federal Labor has not been aided by a blanket critique of Labor's entire program which insists at one point on the priority of the maintenance of real wages, at another on the plight of society's underclass, and at another again on the structure of manufacturing.

Add other concerns like the taxation system, tax cuts and, indeed, the public sector, and one has a pretty total rejection of the politics of Labor, 1980s-style. What one does not have, however, is an alternative which recognises the importance of priorities and the necessity of limited gains, and which also recognises that certain undoubtedly progressive objectives — such as real wage rises and lowered unemployment levels — are often, in the everyday reality of the capitalist economy, divergent or even contradictory aims.

If we wish to take a more sober look at what precisely Labor is and has come to stand for over the 1980s, there are several features worth considering — and none of them requires a rhetoric of "betrayal". An obvious one is the comparison with Labor's past, both in myth and in reality. How has Labor changed from the party of Curtin and Chifley; or, indeed (a less frequent comparison), of Scullin and Lang? What, if anything, is meant by the invocation of Labor's "traditional values" and voters? Another is the comparison with other labour and social democratic parties. How does Labor's evolution square with the fate of the reforming project and welfare states worldwide?

Again, what is the actual pattern of Labor's changing social support over the last twenty years, and what does this have to say both about its political character and its electoral successes and failures? And again, what is the nature of its political and ideological changes over the seventies and 'eighties, and particularly over the last five years? Is the party of Hawke and Keating really a "labour" party at all? What are we to make of "WA Inc" and its amazing alliances? Has Labor actually hijacked part of the New Right agenda?
Obviously there is no space in a brief survey like this to address questions like these in any depth. Yet it is certainly here, rather than in a generalised sense of outrage, that some of the keys to the puzzle of contemporary Labor are to be found.

Perhaps the most tantalising suggestion concerning the new face of Labor in the 'eighties lies on the terrain of the international comparison. Surveying the state of the left worldwide a few years ago, the Swedish social scientist Goran Therborn contrasted the prevailing atmosphere of defeat and gloom with what he saw as the solid growth of labour movements and parties over the preceding decade. He asked by what paradox was it that the left seemed more on the defensive worldwide than in living memory when many of the trends in advanced capitalist democracies at least (entrenched welfare states, growing trade union movements, expanding bodies of waged public sector employees) seemed to be in the left's favour?¹

While Therborn's relative optimism may already seem an anachronism, the question is still a valid one. And it is worthwhile noting that the worldwide picture of advance and setback for social democratic and left parties has some interesting patterns in terms of the evolution of Australian Labor.

In some countries, of course, the 1980s has been an unqualified disaster area. In the UK there have been three elections since 1979: each has seen Labour record a lower percentage of votes cast than any since the catastrophic election of 1931, over half a century ago. In the 1983 elections fewer than forty percent of trade union members actually voted Labour, and less than half of the unemployed. Nor at present does there appear any serious signs of revival despite a more unified party and a (relatively) more popular leadership. In the US, of course, even mildly progressive politics now seems off-limits come presidential election time: the Democratic Party, under three successively more moderate presidential contenders has lost by record margins each time.

Michael Dukakis spent much of the 1988 election time denying his palpalable "liberal" credentials. Union membership in the USA will soon fall below 20 percent of the paid labour force; while consistently large pools of white blue-collar workers, once a backbone of the Democrats, have become enthusiastic Reaganites (and post-Reaganites).

As far as the more radical left parties are concerned, of course, the 'eighties have marked a nadir in post-war politics. The French Communist Party, once the country's largest party, has been reduced to little more than ten percent of the vote; the Spanish party has been almost annihilated; even the Italian party has suffered serious and possibly irrecoverable losses. The 'eighties has seen the virtual dissolution of what was once called the world communist movement.

In other places, however, the record of the 'eighties has been much more mixed. At the end of the decade the French Socialists seem to have fashioned a centre-left majority capable of withstanding, for the present, the swinging gales of French political life. The Spanish and Greek Socialists likewise have fashioned durable majorities around quite modest political objectives and highly volatile political bases often quite removed from their labour movements. And in Scandinavia a much more combative social democracy has held the line, even if the Swedish SAP, rather like the PCI, seems to have lost its momentum.

In between are important countries where the 'eighties have seen less change in the national political scheme than within the left itself. In West Germany a moderate conservatism nationally has masked a more aggressive Social Democratic Party spurred on by the Green threat (although the Greens themselves have more recently been on the wane). In Japan, as generally speaking in Italy, the post-war centrist compromise has continued relatively unaffected by the icy winds of the New Right elsewhere.

From the foregoing we can make one or two observations. Where the left, or at least social democracy, has held the line or even flourished in the 'eighties, at least two ingredients have been present. First, it has flourished in most cases by virtue of new additions to its electoral base, rather than by stabilising that base itself. In 1987, British Labour painstakingly recovered much of its ground in its traditional constituencies; skilled and unskilled blue collar workers, and the unemployed. Yet its overall advance was insignificant. In the words of one commentator: "Labour has emerged stronger and more consolidated in a base which is too small to win from".² Partly this was because of social trends in the electorate which are common worldwide, such as growth in the tertiary sector and white collar work generally. Partly it registered a geographical ghettoisation of British Labour within the declining regions of the country. Yet it also reflected new alignments within social classes more broadly: home owners versus tenants; those in growth industries versus those in declining ones; and a growing rift in social values between those nostalgic for an imagined secure past, and those on the fringes of society with less room for nostalgia.

The French Socialists, on the other hand, whatever their political shortcomings, have adopted a much more diverse electorate including prominently such disparate groups as professional workers, white collar workers, and those in the public sector; it is the PCF which has been reduced to a rump around the trade union movement. The same could be said of Spain and, to some extent, of Greece. This is not to say, of course, that social democratic parties can simply "exchange" one electorate for another; still less that the traditional base of social democratic parties in the ranks of organised labour has suddenly become irrelevant. Rather, success has tended to come where parties have yoked together very different social groups into political majorities around certain political projects or catcheries. (In Australia, this was the achievement of the Whitlam years in the ALP; obscured
though that may have been since by its unhappy dénouement.)

The second factor is that where social democracy has appealed with success in the ‘eighties, it has been less through an appeal to the old post-war welfare state compromise and more through carrying aloft the banner of modernity. Now, it may seem odd to raise an idea like modernity when much of the fashionable talk in the academy is of its demise. In using the words, I don’t mean it as a gloss on modernism — to be followed by “postmodernism”, or anything else. Rather, I mean to evoke the whole sense of “newness” of the era, from new forms of technology and new types and styles of industry, to new forms of culture and leisure: the kind of thing referred to by Stuart Hall in the last issue of ALR as “post-Fordism”. Most concretely, however, this sense of modernity, or modernisation, reveals itself in the political world as the vast contemporary economic changes worldwide which are shifting the weight of whole economies, and producing new alliances and new crises in the international field. From the decline in traditional manufacturing to the problem of international debt, to the internationalisation of national economies and the new world of international finance, the command of this sense of modernity has been the challenge of the social democratic parties.

For the most part they have responded by a technocratic appeal to the new sectors of the economy, at the expense of the old — as in France and Spain, and as with the Italian Socialists in their new centrist guise. Yet one thing is clear: where labour movements and parties have found themselves defending the old economic order alone, and being associated with the economy of the past, as in the UK, the result has been disaster.

It is not too much to say that this has been Paul Keating’s great achievement for the ALP — if achievement it is — in world terms: to win the mantle of modernisation for Labor. And indeed the antipodean labour parties have been in the forefront of this quest for a social democratic variant of modernity, in their usual nonideological style. This has been Australian Labor’s great vision in the ‘eighties: a solution to the economic problem of the day — the balance of payments — coupled with a vision for the modernisation of the economy proper. Of course, as we all know, the tools with which this vision has been carried out have often been those of orthodox conservatism. And the vision of a new, more competitive economy has not been accompanied by interventionist industry policies or financial policies. Yet the banner of “the new way” in 1989 certainly does have a Labor hue. When WA Premier Peter Dowding chose to define the recent election campaign as a choice between the future and the past, it was not merely the ghost of Brian Burke he was exorcising.

Where, on the other hand, Labor has willingly associated itself with the imagined past — with “traditional Labor values”, as the phrase goes — it has been a liability,
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Commit A Friend

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and it has signalled a conservative turn on social issues. Take, for instance, the construction placed upon the concept by then-premier Unsworth’s “back to basics” turn in the last desperate moments of the ill-fated NSW Labor government early last year. And here the present author’s analysis shortly after the event still holds some interest:

The ALP’s loss of “traditional Labor voters” during the election campaign has been the leitmotif of media interpretation of the election defeat. Like its sister concept, “traditional Labor values”, it tends to work best as a solution when it remains largely undefined. But former premier Barrie Unsworth had no doubt what it meant. His “back to basics” theme in the campaign was a concerted attempt to recover the social and moral conservatism of “traditional Labor” of the ‘fifties and earlier (or at least what it was felt to have been). Ironically, Labor’s “back to basics” rhetoric may reap a more conservative moral agenda than even Mr Unsworth was prepared to deal with.

Lest it be thought that this was a peculiarly antipodean (or even New South Welsh) political phenomenon, the following analysis by Stuart Hall of British Labour’s 1987 election campaign makes for an interesting comparison.

In the weeks before the election, the leadership cast its vote unflinchingly for the “traditional” image, in search of the “traditional Labour voter” ... Everyone understood that this was a code. It is a code for “back to the respectable, moderate, trade unionist, male-dominated working class”. Mr Kinnock appeared as a manly “likely lad” who owed everything to the welfare state. His “familial” image carried not a single echo of anything in the social sphere from this government. It came to power in the atmosphere of considerable political timidity: it very quickly retreated (as, for instance, the French socialists also retreated) from its early “Keynesian” phase to more orthodox conservative responses to Australia’s serious economic malaise; it has not challenged in any significant respect the dominant wisdoms in economic policy since. Yet within the limited options exhibited by other social-democratic parties around the world, it has played its cards pretty well. It has pursued the extension of its political base — and not simply by ignoring its “traditional” base, as the compact with the ACTU is intended to symbolise. And it has garnered the fruits of a rhetoric and practice of modernisation, in the process denying the Thatcherite “The Future is Conservative” option to the opposition.

The fact that it has achieved these aims without seriously challenging the conservative “set” of political and economic debate should not surprise us. Rather, it should suggest the direction in which the left both within and without the ALP needs to go if it is to play a more dynamic, combative role in Australian political life, and avoid total marginalisation in the field of political debate.

And a key element in that direction should be a rejection of the politics of nostalgia, whether in its right or leftwing versions. As David McKnight argues above, there is probably a good deal of mileage for the Liberals in a revivalist social conservatism rather than the parched terrain of economic liberalism where the opposition has hitherto pitched its tents. There is definitely no mileage in a political nostalgia of the left, whether it be disguised in the terms of the Keynesian social and economic compromise of the ‘fifties and ‘sixties, or in a rather spurious claim to the “traditional Labor values” Labor is now supposed to have betrayed.

Rather, the left has to resume its own bout of perestroika, too long delayed by the alibi of outrage over Labor’s new face. It needs to champion a sense of the future which can engage on the terrain of economic reconstruction and renewal, in the debates around Australia Reconstructed, over skills formation, multiskilling, industry restructuring and the like. And it also needs a vision of Australian society and its political concerns and values which can take into account some of the massive social changes of the last twenty years and more, and which doesn’t fall back on a misguided and nostalgic view of the concerns of “traditional Labor voters”. Perhaps then it may at last be possible to challenge with more confidence the conservative fashion in political debate which the federal government’s characteristic reactiveness and lack of campaigning has so far failed to contest.

NOTES

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GORBACHEV'S

Pacific

GAMBIT

Late last year Gorbachev made the West another offer: the closure of the USSR's only Pacific base in return for the US bases in the Philippines. It was received in silence. Kevin Rowley explains why.

In his speech at Krasnoyarsk in September last year, Mikhail Gorbachev offered to abandon Soviet facilities at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam if the United States agreed to eliminate its military bases in the Philippines. Over the last decade, American officials have again and again pointed to Cam Ranh as the cutting edge of Soviet expansion in the Asian-Pacific region. Yet the US dismissed Gorbachev's offer, as one press report put it, "at first glance".

In fact, this response should surprise no one. Gorbachev first floated the idea in his Vladivostok speech in July 1986, as part of a broader proposal to demilitarise great-power relations in Asia. That was not welcomed by the US. One of Reagan's advisers responded by warning that the Soviets were backing military initiatives with "subtle diplomatic tactics", and expressed confidence that the countries of the region would judge America's "solid record" more favourably than Gorbachev's "sweeping suggestions of 'confidence-building measures'".

Americans like to think of themselves as opponents of colonialism. Yet the US launched its career as a great power in Asia with a classical act of colonialism — the military occupation of the Philippines during the Spanish-American War (1898-1902). It was then that the US Navy moved into Subic Bay. And what is now Clark Air Base began as a colonial outpost of the US Cavalry in 1902.

However, these bases did not assume their present importance in US strategic thinking until World War II. In the wake of Pearl Harbour, the American government decided on permanent deployment of US naval and air forces to the western Pacific and East Asia after the war. This would provide "security in depth" for the US itself, and a shield for American trade and communication routes throughout the Asian-Pacific region. When World War II ended, the US had secured a network of bases from Hawaii across to the Philippines, north to Japan itself, then through the Aleutians to Alaska.

This, it should be noted, occurred before the onset of the Cold War. The massive US military presence in the Philippines is the legacy of the globalisation of US interests in the first half of the Twentieth Century and of the resulting commercial and military rivalry with European colonialism and Japanese imperialism. It was not a response to Soviet "expansionism".

The US ended its colonial rule in the Philippines after World War II. But in 1947 the new government signed an agreement giving the US a 99-year lease on Clark and Subic, amended to a 25-year lease in 1966. These are now huge facilities. The naval base at Subic Bay covers 55,000 acres of water and land. Clark Air Base once encompassed 130,000 acres (larger than Washington DC); since 1979 it has been reduced to a more modest 25,000 acres. There are 6,000 Americans stationed at Subic, and more than 9,000 at Clark. In addition, the American military directly employs about 45,000 Filipinos.

An important part of the Reagan administration's drive to
build up American military might has been a renewed emphasis on the importance of sea-power. As a naval commander explained:

... sea transport is the basis on which the United States conducts commerce and exerts military influence globally. Raw materials and finished goods must move to and from this continent to sustain the US economy. Military force and its support must be deliverable in all seas and to distant lands to protect vital national interests. Why do we need a navy? Because only a navy can protect sea transport and project national power world-wide. Loss of the ability to move safely on the seas is loss of global power.

In 1986 Gaston Sigur, Jr, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, explained that the Philippine bases were central to the US “strategy of forward deployment in Asia”. They “provide a secure foundation which makes possible the pursuit of our larger political and economic interests in this key part of the globe”. In addition to protecting the Philippines, he said, the bases “support our wide-ranging commitments all along the Asian littoral” from Korea to the Persian Gulf, and secure the “vital South China sea-lanes against the ever-increasing Soviet threat”.

For forty years, nationalists and leftists in the Philippines have viewed the bases as symbols of foreign domination. That view has recently begun to command wide support among the public, and within the Aquino government. The Americans were unpleasantly surprised by the tough stance taken by the Philippine Foreign Secretary, Raul Manglapus, in the review of the base-agreement that began in April last year.

The US presently pays the Philippines US$180 million a year for the use of the bases. Manila points out that Washington pays US$2 billion a year for its bases in Egypt and Israel, and complains that the Philippines is being short-changed. Manglapus began with demands of an annual payment of US$1.2 billion, declaring that the Americans should “pay up or move out”. He added: “If Filipinos want to grow they have to slay the American father image.”

US officials, struggling with yawning budget and trade deficits, and convinced that their allies (including the Philippines) have been enjoying a “free ride” on defence expenditures, responded angrily. “This isn’t a real estate deal,” complained Nicholas Platt, Ambassador to the Philippines. Then Secretary of State George Shultz declared: “There are those in the Philippines who think they have a great asset and should rent it out for a staggering sum. If that’s their view we’ll have to find some other place.”

By October the two sides had struck a bargain. The Americans agreed to increase their annual payments to US$481 million. They also agreed to consider “creative” debt restructuring to help the Philippines overcome the disastrous legacy of the Marcos years; but the existing base agreement expires in 1991. So bitter were the exchanges between US and Philippine officials during the latest review that the idea that it will not be renewed is now taken quite seriously. That would mean the phasing out of the American presence in the Philippines within five to ten years — regardless of what Gorbachev does about Cam Ranh Bay.

Cam Ranh rivals Subic as one of the great natural harbours of the Far East. It has long attracted the attention of naval commanders. The French first visited it in 1847 but, when they quit Indochina in the mid-1950s, they left only a handful of rotting barracks behind at Cam Ranh.

The development of major facilities there was the product of American intervention in Vietnam. Cam Ranh became the site of what US News and World Report described as “the largest overseas project undertaken since World War II”. The US constructed a deep-water seaport with five piers, and a 10,000-ft concrete airfield. 25,000 American and South Korean troops were stationed there. This was the American answer to the problems of “finding ways and means of feeding, clothing, housing, arming, supplying and resupplying the powerful military machine the US is installing in Southeast Asia, 11,000 miles from its home base”.

The Americans had no doubts that they would win the war in Vietnam. (Showing a reporter...
around Cam Ranh, an officer proudly declared: “This is the way we've won all our wars — being in the right place at the right time with the mostest.”) Thus they thought Cam Ranh might be “only the beginning”.

Looking into the future, some military planners foresee the possibility of Cam Ranh becoming another vital link in the US defence chain facing Red China. Clearly the US military complex on the Vietnamese coast is going to be bigger than anything the Americans have in Korea. It is impossible to say at this point how big the installation will be eventually. Plans change daily — always up.

But the Vietnamese communist victory in 1975 put paid to such ideas, and in 1976 the Americans also had to abandon the bases they had built in Thailand during the war. American forces were retrenched to the off-shore island chain, above all, the bases in the Philippines, while Vietnam’s Soviet allies pondered whether Cam Ranh might now be useful to them.

Leonid Brezhnev believed in security through strength. His generation of Soviet leaders had been seared by the Nazi invasion in 1941, and in 1962 he observed how John F. Kennedy had used US military superiority to force Nikita Khrushchev into a humiliating retreat during the Cuban missile crisis. After he replaced Khrushchev as general secretary of the CPSU in 1964, Brezhnev presided over a military build-up aimed at achieving military parity with the US. What Brezhnev wanted above all was to force the Americans to treat the Soviet Union as an equal. He saw no contradiction between this and negotiations aimed at detente and strategic arms limitation.

One of the great beneficiaries of security through strength was Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, commander of the Soviet navy. When the US navy developed the capability of launching nuclear attacks on the Soviet Union from submarines and aircraft carriers, he persuaded Brezhnev that the only way to counter this was for the Soviet navy to develop a blue-water capability. The reach of the Soviet navy, previously limited to coastal defence, would be greatly extended. Yet the aim was still basically defensive. As an Israeli writer on strategic issues noted recently in *The Australian*: “According to most Western analysts, the Soviet navy’s primary strategic wartime mission is to deny the US and NATO access to maritime regions close to the USSR that might be used for offensive operations against Soviet missile-launching submarine bastions of the Soviet homeland.”

As the Americans well know, a navy with the global reach to which Gorshkov aspired needs access to ports and supply-points far from its home bases. For the Soviet Pacific Fleet, based in Vladivostok, Cam Ranh Bay must have looked an interesting proposition. Soviet officials inspected it shortly before the Vietnamese communist victory in 1975. They reportedly asked for use of the facilities there, but were refused by Hanoi, keen to avoid a hostile response from Washington and Beijing.


Soviet use of the facilities at Cam Ranh grew slowly but steadily. In 1979 there were only two broken-down piers left at Cam Ranh. By 1985 the Soviets had added five floating piers and a floating dock, and a fuel-storage tank. Soviet submarines and warships were using these facilities regularly.

The US-built airfield was also brought back into operation. Eventually, fourteen TU-95Ds (“Bears” in NATO parlance) and the same number of MIG-23s (“Floggers”) and TU-16s (“Badgers”) were deployed at Cam Ranh. The “Bears” are long-range attack aircraft which can carry bombs or anti-ship missiles (with either conventional or nuclear warheads). The “Floggers” used to be the standard Warsaw Pact air-to-air fighters, but are currently being phased out in favour of MIG-25s. The “Badgers” are long-range attack aircraft which can carry bombs or anti-ship missiles (with either conventional or nuclear warheads). They are of early 1950s vintage.

In addition, the Soviets had established a radio-communications centre at Cam Ranh. This presumably not only enabled Soviet forces there to communicate with their home-base at Vladivostok, but also to listen to US communications with their bases in the Philippines. This may also have provided Hanoi with valuable signals — intelligence on Chinese operations on the Sino-Vietnamese border and in Kampuchea.

US officials insisted that this amounted to a permanent, fully-operational Soviet military base. In reporting Gorbachev’s Krasnoyarsk speech, the Australian press invariably followed suit, describing Cam Ranh as a “base” although Gorbachev referred only to a “supply-point”.

When I was in Hanoi last year I asked General Tran Cong Man, editor of the Vietnamese army newspaper, whether Cam Ranh was a “base”. He said it was not. It was simply a point of supply and replenishment for the Soviet Pacific Fleet:

Soviet ships come to get goods, such as fresh water, oil and petrol. But Cam Ranh Bay is the territory of Vietnam — we would never sell it to another country. This is completely different to the US bases in the Philippines, where weapons (including nuclear weapons) are stored.

In the most thorough western study of the question to date, Buszynski essentially concurred with General Man’s view:

The Soviet Union has not yet acquired a base in Cam Ranh Bay ... The Soviet reliance on floating docks and limited installations demonstrates a reluctance to make a permanent commitment and an avoidance of major investments which shows that the Soviet build-up at Cam Ranh Bay has been restricted and controlled ...
When the Soviets first moved into Cam Ranh, many American observers had no doubts about their purpose. A Business Week writer, for example, declared that the Soviets were aiming at "the most traditional kinds of naval power" and strove to acquire bases and facilities "all over the world". From the "crucially important installation" at Cam Ranh they were able to threaten "one of the most travelled shipping routes in the world", that between the Middle East and Japan.

This fitted the Cold War rhetoric of the time, but it was never a persuasive argument. In time of war, the Soviets would have their hands full seeking to protect the Soviet homeland from nuclear attack; in time of peace, they themselves wish to use these shipping routes without disruption. The most thorough assessment of this point by a US military analyst (as distinct from propagandist) concluded that the Soviet presence at Cam Ranh "is unlikely to have a specific, aggressive regional intent, since that would be quite out of character for a power that, at least until now, has revealed itself as ... cautious and non-confrontational".

The Soviets have not made the investments needed to defend Cam Ranh against a major attack by American forces, let alone to use it for offensive purposes. As we have seen, the planes they have sent there for offensive purposes. As we have seen, the planes they have sent there were an "American Lake".

Gorbachev's speech reflects an important shift in Soviet thinking. By the early 1980s, Brezhnev's policy of security through strength was in tatters. The drive for parity with the US had alarmed less powerful nations (of which China was the most important), and helped provoke a new US military build-up aimed at restoring American supremacy. Detente and arms-control talks collapsed. However, the best response Brezhnev could come up with was to assert that peace would not be defended by begging, and to promise to match the American effort. It was an approach which was proving hideously expensive, at a time when the performance of the Soviet economy was deteriorating.

Gorbachev is a member of the post-war generation in Soviet politics. He has been critical of the over-emphasis placed on the need for military strength by Brezhnev's generation, and is seeking to cut military spending. Among those who retired after Gorbachev took over was Admiral Gorshkov. His successor, Admiral Vladimir Chenavin, has reportedly come under strong pressure to cut ship-building programs initiated by Gorshkov.

Soviet military experts have recently been instructed to rethink received doctrines which engender insecurity among others by emphasising attack as the best form of defence. Gorbachev has been seeking to de-emphasise the whole military dimension of great power relations generally, and to emphasise diplomacy and mutuality of interest. But for this to succeed, he needs to provoke a similar re-evaluation in the US.

It is unlikely that Gorbachev expected the Americans to respond positively to his Krasnoyarsk speech. He was aiming to convince the Chinese and Southeast Asian nations that he is genuine in his commitment to demilitarising great-power relations in the Far East, and that the chief obstacle to further progress is the American side. For the fundamental challenge to America's strategic position in the Asia-Pacific region has not come from the "ever-expanding Soviet threat" of which Gaston Sigur speaks. It has come from the growth of indigenous nationalism and the development of the industrial and military power of countries such as China, India and Japan. It is the dynamism of the whole region which is fast bringing to a close the era when Far Eastern waters were an "American Lake".

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Is Australia's film policy producing trash? Toby Miller.

It isn’t always easy to know what people are talking about when they voice the words “the Australian film industry”. The term serves to bring together some very diverse filmmaking and funding practices that have very distinct sorts of politics. It is odd to unify under the one heading, for example, a polite pornographic western (Picnic at Hanging Rock), a fish-out-of-water Winfield farce (Crocodile Dundee) and a complex-feminist documentary drama (Serious Undertakings). They are funded differently, made for different purposes, and shown in very different types of venue.

But the topic of “the Australian film industry” has become a significant one in a variety of quarters. For Bob Hawke, apparently, it stands on a par with social inequality: just as he has guaranteed the eradication of child poverty by 1990, he has guaranteed the survival of the film industry. For Gary Punch, film is “Australia’s broadest-based element of culture”. The link between the tourism industry and film as an “international calling-card” makes a “magnificent contribution to the nation”.

Film industry workers and bureaucrats, confused and concerned by the way that taxation rebates (the 10BA scheme) have acted to encourage large numbers of unpopular, expensive and politically barren films, have sought other
options. Only the American and Indian industries survive without state support; that possibility was effectively ruled out from the beginning.

But the decision to wind back IOBA was announced months before anybody decided on a replacement. The material effects on the workforce were staggering. As at October 1988, an estimated four thousand members of Actors Equity had been out of work for a year; the finance had simply ceased to flow as investment advisers discouraged doctors and lawyers from choosing an outdated means of minimising their contributions to Consolidated Revenue. The policy-makers in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne were busily debating the merits of various proposals for government involvement. These included a film bank, a new television station along the lines of Channel Four in Britain (which has specialised in funding such films as My Beautiful Laundrette), new forms of tax incentive, revised investment guidelines, and many others besides.

An announcement was finally made in the middle of the year. A new body, the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) was established. It is an incorporated company with investment funds drawn from public revenue: $70 million in 1988-89, and with guaranteed continuity for four years. So far, so good; the corporation is set up to perform an important function in terms of jobs, local culture and active state participation in the economy. But no projects are proceeding as yet; the 4,000 remain unemployed; and very few FFC staff have been appointed. These might be seen as the teething problems, common to any ordinary business putting an infrastructure in place; but the decisions on budget and basic direction have effectively been taken. In the euphoria that followed an announcement of action, little attention has been focused on how that infrastructure is likely to operate.

Corporation staff may be thin on the ground, but the Financial Review's job columns are to the rescue, calling all investment executives. What are we to make of this? Coupled with membership details of the FFC Board of Directors (a banker, an academic, a lawyer, two bureaucrats, an actor and a director announced so far) and the small amount of other information available, it is emblematic of an approach which is euphemistically being referred to as "market-driven". In practical terms, this means that the corporation is primarily interested in putting up government money to support projects that can already demonstrate private sector commitment. It is not interested in the specifics of a desirable local cultural presence (other than as measured by origins of personnel, money and story). Questions of gender, ethnicity, class — questions of Australia — are outside the brief of the organisation.

How do we know? We know because the corporation's guidelines state that it will only look at scripts in the absence of "substantial market commitment". It will not, one suspects, be employing experts in issues of representation; nor will it be attending to the internal employment dynamics of the industry. Rather, its purpose will be to spend taxpayers' money on the basis of advice from financiers, thereby driving the definition of "film industry" further in the direction of deeply conventional narrative feature films.

Stand by for a lot more fish-out-of-water Winfield farces. Times may become increasingly hard for progressive Australian cinema.

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Lights, Camera, Glasnost

_The Iceberg of Soviet filmmaking is beginning to thaw, reports Karen Rosenberg._

The main character in the Soviet film _Repentance_ is a Georgian mayor who resembles Stalin in his external calm, inner paranoia and ruthlessness toward those who contradict him. His son symbolises the Brezhnev-era tendency to justify repression and silence dissenters: a woman who denounces the small-town dictator is found insane and hospitalised. “After showings in every city, people got up and applauded the blank screen,” the movie’s director, Tenghiz Abuladze, told me in Moscow not long ago. “It was the first swallow of perestroika.”

Lenin called cinema “the most important art”, and the administration of Mikhail Gorbachev has mobilised the power of the movies in its campaign to restructure Soviet society. The decision to release _Repentance_ in 1986, two years after its completion, was reportedly made at the Politburo level. And in May 1986, some say with the sanction of Alexander Yakovlev, then the Central Committee member responsible for culture, the Soviet Filmmakers Union became the first artistic association to vote out its old leadership and pump in more liberal blood. The filmmakers had been frustrated for a long time, as the 160 or so feature-length movies released each year by Soviet studios numbingly indicated. Made under the watchful eye of the Moscow office of Goskino, the country’s central film agency, they were too often formulaic and predictable.

As one result, film attendance fell drastically. In 1975 a Moscow Film Studio production drew some 18 million moviegoers; a decade later the total was down by half. In the same period, average attendance at films made by the Leningrad Film Studio dropped from 14 million to 6.3 million; by the Ukrainian Dovzhenko Film Studio, from 11.2 million to 5.3 million.

And yet, as Soviet cinema lost much of its appeal as mass entertainment, a few Soviet directors such as Andrei Tarkovsky captured the imagination of the intelligentsia. In the Russian tradition, artists are supposed to be martyrs who sacrifice themselves for truth, and those filmmakers who suffered at the hands of the Goskino censors enhanced their reputations accordingly. Now, in the Gorbachev era, many of these same _artists_ are expected to provide not merely entertainment but moral guidance about the meaning of _glasnost_.

_Repentance_ was only the most famous “unshelved” title that broke the taboos about the Stalin era. Alexei German’s _Trial on the Road_, finished in 1971 and released in 1986, accords sympathetic treatment to a former prisoner of war and Nazi collaborator who wants to return to his homeland. (Under Stalin, such men were considered traitors and often sent to the gulag, and only a few Soviet intellectuals had questioned that judgment publicly.) Another German film, _My Friend Ivan Lapshin_, finished in the early 1980s and released in 1985, is a portrait of a Stalin-era believer who is beginning to have doubts. “I wanted to understand why people like my parents were applauding Stalin,” German said. Although to many in the West this film may seem a timid picture of the cruelty of Stalin’s police, it nonetheless raised the hackles of Soviet conservatives because it challenged their idealised image of the building of socialism in the 1930s.

Other previously shelved films created a stir because they touch on Jewish life, a theme with a troubled history in the Soviet Union. According to some directors, Goskino would sometimes approve a scenario at a liberal moment and block the completed picture during a freeze in political life. Alexander Askoldov’s _Commissar_, finished in 1967, is a romantic tale of a Red Army heroine that offers a sympathetic portrait of a Jewish family in the Ukraine, but it was deemed unacceptable after the Six-Day War. Last March Askoldov recalled, “[Alexei] Romanov, the
former head of Goskino, invited me for a confidential chat and, patting my knee, said, 'I have two suggestions for how you can save your artistic career: one, cut the part where the Jews are chased into the gas chambers, and, two, let's figure out how to change the Jewish family into a family of some other nationality.' Askoldov refused, and the film wasn't screened in public until the 1987 Moscow Film Festival, when the Filmmakers Union agreed to the director's impassioned public demand that it be shown.

Askoldov refused, and the film wasn't screened in public until the 1987 Moscow Film Festival, when the Filmmakers Union agreed to the director's impassioned public demand that it be shown. When Gleb Panfilov's 1979 drama The Theme, about an ageing, blocked hack writer, was finally released in 1986, it attracted attention because of its discussion of Jewish emigration.

Although the writer/refusenik is only a minor figure in the final version, his strong desire to leave his 'homeland' was an unusual sentiment to see expressed in Soviet art. Of course, what is shown in these films is neither new nor original to the Soviet intelligentsia, which has dissected its society over the dinner table for years. Nevertheless, any narrowing of the tremendous gap between public and private discourse was greeted as significant in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev-era documentaries like More Light, which shows archival shots of Trotsky and calls for more and better research into early Soviet history, and Risk, which offers a view of Khrushchev more positive than the usual, still leave a lot unsaid. Yet, in a country long dominated by cliches and rituals, every deviation from orthodoxy carries value.

So readers also took note when long and laudatory obituaries of emigre film director Tarkovsky were published in the Soviet press after his death in 1986 and when retrospectives of his films were presented in 1987 at a meeting of the Filmmakers Union and at the Moscow Film Festival. On account of his poetic, associative, unusual style, as well as his celebration of religious faith, this filmmaker had been controversial in the Soviet Union since the mid-1960s. Tarkovsky wrangled with Goskino censors for years and was refused permission to shoot a film abroad. In 1984 he sought political asylum in the West. The posthumous acceptance of a defector as a Russian artist and the screening of his works made in the West caused a sensation in the Soviet Union.

Film professionals (kinoshniki in Russian slang) and urban intellectuals I talked to last winter follow the big changes in their cinema so closely that one might think all Russians share their excitement. Igor Lissakovsky, vice-president of the Filmmakers Union, told me, however, that while three million out of the eight million Muscovites saw Repentance, that proportion did not hold elsewhere in the country. Some young people may simply be uninterested in the theme of stalinism, but other moviegoers were probably scared away by Abuladze's demanding style, in which anachronisms are used to suggest that dictatorships are a recurring blight. Years of censorship hadn't allowed audiences much practice in deciphering visually complex works. When difficult films weren't shelved as "formalist" they were often printed in small quantities and shown in only a few urban theatres at inconvenient times or at small film clubs attended chiefly by movie buffs. Since most theatres offered films no better than what was on television, Soviet moviegoers tended to stay at home. Per capita attendance dropped from eighteen visits a year in 1976 to fifteen a year in 1982. When the Russians did go out, they preferred American adventures, Indian musicals and Arab melodramas to home-grown, politically correct fare.

According to a metaphor used by some Soviet directors, the easiest way to get this audience back into the theatres would be to turn filmmakers into waiters who give customers what they want. Indeed, the restructuring of the film industry is making consumer orientation a real possibility. Each Soviet studio, by next year, must try to support itself with revenues from pictures it produces, so making a few unprofitable movies could create financial crises. For that reason,
directors who lack a track record of popular movies may not get work — and that may mean those who make demanding artistic films as well as those who make dull ones. Goskino no longer holds veto power over scripts and films. The right to approve a scenario or a completed movie has shifted to the individual studios, but if they reject a project as too risky at the box office, that's too risky. Goskino's no longer holds veto power over those who make dull ones. Goskino and that may mean those who make popular movies may not get work.

Glasnost has widened the possibilities for screenplays, but the ethos of "what's hot and what's not" may narrow them down. "In the film archives, everybody is sitting and looking at clips about Stalin, Stalin, Stalin," Georgian director Irakli Kvirikadze told me. "They're no longer interested in anything else. Previously, the very same people were all praising Brezhnev, Brezhnev, Brezhnev." Other formerly forbidden themes seem to be in as well: Kvirikadze and director Georgi Daneliya are working on separate pictures about Georgian Jews who have emigrated, and two projects in the works at a Moscow Film Studio unit for young directors concern the Soviet urban netherworld, whose existence has been long ignored by the media.

One of those scenarios, written and directed by Alexei Rudakov, is set at the bottom of Moscow society, among people with only a temporary permit to work in the city. The other, scripted by Valery Barakin, concerns professional card players, an underground phenomenon in the Soviet Union. "If such a film had been allowed three years ago, then it would have had to include a statement pointing out that card playing is bad, and especially for money." Karen Shakhnazarov, who heads the young directors' unit, told me. If new Soviet films eschew "boy meets tractor" and other stereotypes of Socialist Realism, it may be because filmmakers and administrators like the 36-year-old Shakhnazarov have had access to Western movies at film school, through the Filmmakers Union and on videocassettes, which now circulate unofficially, as Western books and audio tapes have for years.

One reason that some recent Soviet documentaries are attracting attention at international festivals is that they look more Western than was expected. In Juris Podnieks' 1986 Is It Easy to Be Young? no heavy over-voice interprets the words of a Soviet Hare Krishna celebrant, a punk rocker and a burned-out veteran of Afghanistan, who are interviewed about their nonconformist stances. Herr Frank's 1987 The Highest Court also explores a neglected part of Soviet society, filming a man on death row guilty of black marketing, robbery and murder. There's even some investigative journalism now: The Bells of Chernobyl, made by Rolan Sergienko and Vladimir Sinelnikov in 1986, looks into who was responsible for the nuclear accident and for the delay in informing the surrounding populace.

Russians stood in line to see the punker in Is It Easy to Be Young? assert, "You made us the way we are — with your hypocrisy and lies". However, despite its frank exposure of a generation's alienation, the documentary ends with a young man's opinion that no one takes young people seriously, which implies that the problem is just a failure to listen. The audience is invited to re-examine psychology rather than the defects of specific political and social institutions. There's a simple moral message behind The Highest Court as well: the interviewer's leading questions elicit orthodox responses from the prisoner, condemning his past desire for money and power and preaching gratitude to parents and society. And the final lines in The Bells of Chernobyl sound an uncontroversial warning against slackness among those who work with nuclear technology, not about atomic power itself. In the Brezhnev era, concluding a mildly controversial film with a happy ending was quite common. Now the heart of the film is often more provocative and the final section less optimistic, but the pattern of leading audiences out of the theatre with hope in their hearts remains in some works. Due to such caution, films are rarely on the cutting edge of glasnost. Today, as in the thaw of the 1950s, periodicals are where the sharpest debates take place.

KAREN ROSENBERG writes on Soviet culture. This piece reproduced courtesy of The Nation.
Distant Fields


The debate about the way in which the left can renew its vitality and relevance in Australian politics is vigorous and continuing. In all of the various initiatives now begun — from the Charter Process to the Rainbow Alliance, to the various on-running debates within the leftwing parties — the phenomenon of the Green upsurge in Europe provides a challenge.

What are its implications for Australia? This is a burning question. However, before we can address it we need a clear-headed analysis of the phenomenon itself. It is in Werner Hulsberg's new book, *The German Greens: A Social and Political Profile*, that, at least for the case of West Germany, the first sober, politically sophisticated, and constructive response to this need appears.

Much of the book's strength lies in its examination of the specific character of the German Greens as a social movement. Hulsberg is rigorous in his insistence that this phenomenon can only be understood in its specific historical and political context. As he stresses: 

The development of the Greens in West Germany did not begin with the formation of the Green Party. This is why the attempt by various clever people to import the West German model into their own country has failed so miserably.

Certainly, the danger of assuming that one thing in Germany means the same elsewhere is very clear. For example, in Germany, the attempt to form the Green Party (*Die Grunen*) almost failed because the Rainbow group took exception to the inclusion of a clause proscribing members of existing political parties. In Australia, the Rainbow Alliance is, in fact, the only initiative to enforce such a clause.

But while the specific context of the German phenomenon does differ in some striking respects, the similarities with the Australian political situation also strike some haunting chords. The hopes of much of the labour movement in post-war Germany lay in a thoroughgoing economic reform based on co-determination, self-management, the socialisation of key industries, a much greater role for the trade unions, extensive democratisation and a halt to German rearmament. As Hulsberg stresses, these hopes were not realised because of the integration of West Germany into the global policy of the West. Rather, the left faced "the tragedy of the integration of the West German working class into the capitalist system and the loss of its political strength". Despite some specifically German emphases, this does not seem so far from a description of what has happened in Australia.

In Germany the official organs of the labour movement were perhaps particularly slow to modify their uncritical support for technological progress, economic growth, and jobs at any price. However, while the labour movement extolled the virtues of the technological and economic fix, public opinion was swinging rapidly against traditional German values of obedience, subordination, order and hard work. In particular, as Hulsberg notes, since the middle of the 1960s the percentage of West German citizens who believed that technology is "a blessing" for humanity sank from 72 (in the 1960s) to 30 percent (in 1981), with decisive rejection of technology as "a curse" growing from three to thirteen percent in the same period.

It was in this period, also, that the phenomenon of the Greens flowered. Of course, it did not begin with the formation of the Green Party, but developed out of a process beginning much earlier. In the 1960s, Germany saw the mushrooming of thousands of citizen initiatives arising partly in reaction to the perceived failures of the labour movement and the increasingly doctrinaire leftwing sects to face a whole range of emerging problems. These initiatives coalesced around a more structural analysis in the early 1970s and, in particular, around opposition to nuclear power in the mid and late 1970s. Out of this there developed a resurgent opposition to nuclear weapons. This consolidated into an extra-parliamentary opposition and, finally, into the opposition within the federal parliament represented by the Green Party, and with some 5-7,000 elected representatives in local government.

Now the party oscillates within the agonising limits of the dilemma of having to be seen to be prepared to compromise and, at times, work with the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) in order not to lose out to it in the attraction of wayward SPD
supporters, on the one hand, and having to avoid being compromised that all sense of identity and purpose is lost, on the other.

What, then, is the political character of this Green Party? First, while it has its factions (polarising, for example, between the eco-socialists, eco-libertarians, the fundamentalists, and the real-politiks) it does maintain a unifying ethos of radicalism. First, its party organisation remains unconventional. More importantly, all currents share elements of a utopian vision of the future which involves a radical reshaping of the economic, technological and social order. There is also a common understanding that industrialisation is in crisis and that the current level of physical and social exploitation cannot continue for very long. Combined with this is the rhetoric of a politics based on a "new" ecological rationality. However, Hulsberg argues that this reflects the "old German romantic dream of a harmonious totality, but ... ends up as a reactionary protest against disintegration, which swings back and forth between apocalyptic warnings and images of a mythological past". In any case, detailed analysis of what is actually a conglomerate of varied theoretical themes is perhaps diversionary. What matters is what these lead to in practice.

It is what is done now which, argues Hulsberg, is the most concrete test of the Greens' political character. Hulsberg uses this as a basis for intervening in the debate about "how red" are the Greens. In practice, he argues, the Greens take stands in the developing class struggle in Germany, a class struggle which is dominated principally by mass movements and directly political issues rather than by direct conflicts between capital and labour". Yet this conclusion may well be an overstatement. Yes, the Greens are producing a struggle which reacts against not only the effects, but also the social organisation of industrialised capitalism; but whether this is a "class struggle" is much less clear. The electoral base of the Greens remains generally middle and lower white collar, with a disproportionately high component of professionals. Recalling, in particular, the forcefully pro-nuclear policies of the German state.

The Greens confront private ownership and the dominance of the free market, demand shorter working hours and different types of work, support union demands for a 35-hour week, support self-determination struggles in South Africa, Central America, and the South Pacific; struggle for the rights of national minorities in Germany; and against sexual oppression and the heavy-handed social control policies of the German state.

Thus the Greens combine traditional socialist concerns with a contemporary focus on the ecological crisis. This is no accident. Hulsberg: It is only when the new issues are related to the old social questions that a political dynamic and potential is created. The actual development of the Greens is a concrete proof of this.

What does it all amount to? Hulsberg is clear in his assessment: "The Greens are an expression of the developing class struggle in Germany, a class struggle which is dominated principally by mass movements and directly political issues rather than by direct conflicts between capital and labour". Yet this conclusion may well be an overstatement. Yes, the Greens are producing a struggle which reacts against not only the effects, but also the social organisation of industrialised capitalism; but whether this is a "class struggle" is much less clear. The electoral base of the Greens remains generally middle and lower white collar, with a disproportionately high component of professionals. Recalling, in particular, the forcefully pro-nuclear policies and rallies of certain trade unions, the Greens remain keen to insulate themselves from the official organs of the labour movement and cut across the traditional class boundaries of German society.

Certainly, Hulsberg is right when he notes that the Green Party, as it exists now, is far from a purely ecological phenomenon. Indeed, he argues, those founders of the party who were not leftwing have now all left the party. And we can understand why Hulsberg chooses to conclude that:

The real contribution of the German Greens ... is that they understood and grasped the ecological question not just as another question and not as a politically neutral task but rather as the decisive question, the acid test of leftwing politics.

Some will certainly question whether Hulsberg's apparent desire to place the Greens in an existing political box is particularly useful. Whether the Greens are to be described as fundamentally left with a new additional ecological extension, or something new but with a concern about economic and social exploitation, may seem a somewhat sterile debate. Yet, for those who consider themselves on the left, Hulsberg's conclusion that the Greens are closer to discovering in political practice what being "leftwing" should now mean, than the tradition representatives of the left, is not without challenge. Despite the many differences of the German context, that conclusion has challenging relevance for those who consider themselves on the left in Australia too.

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**Petrov's Victims**


*Between the Lines* traces the lives of four people innocently caught up in events reminiscent of 1984. Here, however, the characters and the events recalled are only too real. All that distinguished Dave and Bernice Morris from thousands of other Australians was their strong political convictions which amounted to a commitment to peace, justice, equity and political freedom. And it is these convictions and the desire to live them freely which became their undoing at a time when any shade of pink in one's political views was a source of suspicion.

The book is written in chronological order: from Bernice's young days in the bush in Victoria's isolated East Gippsland we follow her through her first conscious political awareness, her decision to join the Communist Party of
Australia, and the years of struggle that followed the return of her husband from England where he spent some time during the war.

For many people the 1950s and 1960s were prosperous times, but for the Morris family it became a time of constant anxiety, years of struggle against a political life bent on ensuring the destruction of people with views opposed to those in power. The Morrises became the victims of years of conspiracy by ASIO which culminated in the Petrov affair in the mid-1950s. Although no charges were ever laid against Dave Morris or, for that matter, against anyone else facing the Royal Commission, the lives of the Morrises were shattered, their career prospects non-existent, their financial situation precarious.

In the late 1950s, desperate to find work, bitterly hurt by the injustice of what had happened, the whole family was on its way to China where they hoped to start their lives again in a better environment. Bernice vividly recalls her anguish at leaving her friends and family and disrupting her children's education, and the hopes she had when the final decision to leave was made.

The last chapter of the book deals with the ten or so years they spent in the USSR after, once again, their political views failed to coincide with the international political alliances of the day. No longer welcome in the country which had offered them refuge, the whole family once more started a "new life" in a totally foreign country. As the book unfolds its gazeing at its past from a very secure position, it was reassuring to pick up a book like this one which unashamedly speaks of a side of Australia which many people would conveniently like to tell us does not exist.

The Revolution Mislaid


Between October 1980 and March 1983, Raja Anwar found himself in Kabul's notorious Pulacharkhi prison. Before being released from this Afghani "lost luggage" facility, he was able to talk with the various factions of the Afghan revolution who populated the prison. The best place to write the inside story of the Afghan revolution was in its major prison, for that is where most of the revolution's sons and daughters ended up — if they were not executed.

Anwar is a Pakistani socialist, a former adviser on student affairs to Prime Minister Bhutto before the latter was overthrown and then executed by General Zia. He ended up a refugee in Kabul as an adviser to Bhutto's son. In time he fell out of favour with Karmal and his Soviet advisers and went to jail.

Anwar charts the basic outlines of the Afghan tragedy. The "revolution" in April 1978 was carried out by members of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) operating clandestinely inside the Afghan army and air force. The PDPA was composed of two bitterly warring factions — the Kalg and Parcham groups — which, within weeks, broke the fragile unity they had forged on Soviet insistence. The Parchamites, including Babak Karmal, were sent into exile as ambassadors.

Then the Kalg faction split: Tariki was overthrown and finally killed by Amin. Amin, in turn, ruled for a brief three months, before being assassinated, Anwar claims, by Soviet troops when they "intervened" around Christmas 1979. All this occurred in a little over eighteen months. In that period, and after, the counter-revolutionary Mujaheddin managed to kill only three of the PDPA leaders — the inter-factional massacres accounted for many more.

The destruction of the Afghan revolution was undoubtedly, in large part, the responsibility of the Afghani revolutionaries themselves. While the PDPA proclaimed itself the vanguard of the working class, precious few workers were in its ranks, and none in its leadership. The working class itself was so small that it could only hope to hold power if it won support among the peasant masses. Yet the PDPA at the time of the revolution had no cells among the tribalised peasantry, nor did it have any serious analysis of the countryside where the vast majority of the people lived.

Anwar explains all this in agonising detail. Yet he does not hold that the revolution was doomed from the start. Due to the tribalised nature of Afghan society, the PDPA, which was by far the largest political party in the country (with the allegiance of the radical educated elite) was the only force that could have modernised this poorest of nations.

Thousands of the urbanised elite had been educated in the Soviet Union before the 1978 revolution,
including a significant sector of the officer corps. Most had returned enamored of the Soviet way, imbued with the simplistic and elitist Marxism espoused by the pre-Gorbachev ideologists.

In a society where tribalised social relations dominate the quasi-feudal economic relations, the PDPA leaders, Anwar argues, ignored the tribal overlay, seeing only a "classical" feudalism. They themselves, however, fell victim to those very tribalised relations. Regional allegiances determined inner factional loyalties within the party. Pushtunis became advocates of traditional Pushtu hegemony. Those from minority groups such as the Tadjiks pushed their own people's interests.

Yet their enemies were no less divided. Prior to December 1979, the Mujaheddin groups over the border in Pakistan were small, the support from the CIA and other reactionary forces relatively modest, and the military attacks, while troubling the regime, were no real threat to it.

Amin was always under threat — the blood feuds he had sown were festering away in the army. It was primarily for that reason that Amin asked for more Soviet troops in late November 1979: not to fight the guerrillas, but to garrison Kabul so that the Afghan army could be sent to the countryside to remove any chance of their staging a coup.

It was a fatal move, both for Amin and the revolution. Ten thousand Soviet troops arrived on December 23. On December 27, Amin was assassinated. Raja Anwar, drawing on conversations with Amin's widow and family, provides first-hand accounts of what happened.

On December 27, Amin and his wife had some close friends around for lunch. Amin was so fearful of assassination that he had installed Soviet cooks in his kitchen. As soon as they had finished, all those who had eaten fell unconscious. Amin's wife called Afghan doctors who gave antidotes and a stomach wash.

A Soviet doctor was insistent that Amin should be taken to the Soviet Army Medical Corps hospital, but Afghan doctors opposed this, as Amin was showing good signs of recovery. Mrs Amin says the plan was to poison him, remove him to the Soviet hospital, give him treatment, then deliver him an ultimatum: resign in favor of Barbak Karmal — who had been flown in from exile by the Soviets — or face trial for Tariki's murder. Amin's recovery upset the plan.

At 6 pm the same day shells hit the building. Amin's military HQ told him that no Afghani troops had left their barracks. Amin did not believe them and rejected out of hand his HQ's explanation that he was under attack from "the friendly army" — Soviet troops.

Soviet Tajik troops appeared in the building calling "Amin, where are you? We have come to help". Amin's son, Abdul Rahman, welcomed them, thinking they had come to save Amin: "This way, come this way. This is where Amin is." Abdul Rahman was shot down by the Soviet troops who then hunted down Amin.

The Soviet leadership, even under glasnost, have never explained this series of events. As Anwar shows, the Soviet explanations given after the murder of Amin are mutually contradictory and have been replaced with silence over the past seven years. In any case, who actually pulled the trigger that killed Amin is, in a sense, irrelevant. He could not have not been murdered without Soviet support and connivance.

Amin was no angel. He had himself assassinated many. Under the puppet Karmal regime brutalities and traditional torture which had marked the Tariki and Amin regimes were lessened under Soviet influence. Karmal, however, filled the prisons even more than Amin. Whatever Amin's crimes, nothing excuses a Soviet operation", as Anwar claims. They would unite the remaining Kalq and Parcham forces in the PDPA, wipe out the guerrilla bands, supervise the economy and be able to withdraw their 10,000 troops in a few years. We now know how tragically they miscalculated.

Soviet intervention was a godsend to the reactionary rebels. A civil war had been transformed into a war of national liberation against a foreign invader. Moreover, the Afghan army began to crumble, as pro-Amin officers deserted to the guerrillas, abandoning their thin layer of marxism-leninism in the process.

Carter, and then Reagan, poured billions into the Mujaheddin and, as Anwar notes, Brezhnev saved the Pakistan dictator Zia, able for many years to benefit from Washington's largesse, as leader of a "frontline state" in the new Cold War.

Anwar shows no sympathy with the Mujaheddin nor their backers in Washington. One of the greatest tragedies perhaps for the future of this country is that the tribalised groupings have now been equipped with the most modern of weapons by the USA. It is easy to see the carnage that will result when these are used to settle the traditional blood feuds that are so much a part of the Afghan countryside. The paper-thin unity of the guerrilla groups, held together only by many millions of US dollars, will almost certainly collapse when the last Soviet soldier withdraws, while the Kabul regime is unlikely to survive.

Moreover, the guerrilla forces which are doing most of the fighting are small, tribal-village based units which owe allegiance to no one. The traditional chaos of the Afghan countryside, where the authority of Kabul was always at best tenuous, is likely to reach a qualitatively new level. Lebanon may well be small beer compared with Afghanistan in a few years' time.

SEE OUT THE SUMMER WITH ALR'S UNBEATABLE SUBSCRIPTION OFFER!
Victorian Greens ...

Jack Mundeys very good article in ALR 108 should, hopefully, stir things up in the cities. Jack justifiably criticises the failures and weaknesses of the left on the issues directly affecting the majority of the population.

However, I'm surprised he didn't draw attention to some significant, important and, in some cases, successful work done in this field over the years. For example, some well-known socialists in Victoria were battling on this front for many years. Ron Taylor was raising the issue in the Victorian Guardian and organising movements in the 40s. Later, the husband and wife team of Ruth and the late Maurie Crow really stirred thing up with their Plan for Melbourne.

The discussion and campaigns developed around their plan in the sixties and early seventies led to the Greater Melbourne City Council adopting it as the Strategic Plan for the city and proceeding to implement it. Moreover, this wasn't a "Labor" Council, nor was it Labor in state government at the time!

The work of the Crows was honored by the award of one of the first "Robin Boyd Awards" in 1972 by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and, in 1973, the Town and Country Planning Association presented them with the Barrett Medal for Town Planning.

On another note, if turds on Sydney beaches don't cause enough stink to create city "greenies", then perhaps concern for their health will make them take up the issue of pesticides. Choice, March 1987, revealed that householders as a group used more per hectare than farmers, and abuse of enzyme poisons can explain a lot of chronic allergies and poor immunity evident today.

Vic Bird, Forster, NSW.

Deepening Crisis ...

Congratulations on a great magazine. I've been enjoying recent issues and I've been struck not least of all by the letters. I agree with Jane Edwards (108) that ALR is not what it used to be, but then the times are not what they used to be either. ALR is, as Edwards says, now a popular left magazine. As the author, if I remember rightly, of the piece on Trotsky she recalls, I also remember the late '70s as a heyday; though as a reader, I also remember the decade prior as something special.

It seems reasonably clear that the late '80s is a period of decline for the organised left. Internationally, the collapse of Eurocommunism, the experiences in Kampuchea, Afghanistan and Poland, locally, the emasculation of labour by the Hawke government, the generalised crisis of marxism, the rise of the French post-this and post-that, all witness this historic condition. There can be no mistaking that we're in a mess, and that the marxisms inherited by the new left from the Third and Fourth Internationals are hopelessly moribund.

To say, in this context, however, that Marx and Gramsci are hopeless is altogether another thing. Hope, they offer us. The left may be decrpet, but Marx remains part of a critical tradition put to good use, for example, by Gail Reekie in her job on commodity fetishism in your pages, and Gramsci remains a source of insight shown abundantly by Stuart Hall in the article you reprint. It may be the circles I move in, but I haven't been lectured lately (as Sue Buckingham [108] has) on the deepening crisis and the inevitability of socialism. Nobody I know believes in the inevitability of socialism, people I know who work in welfare do, however, speak of the deepening crisis. Here it may simply be the case that they're reading another very good magazine, Australian Society.

For if the left seems thinned in organisational terms, its number may these days simply be elsewhere. Wherever socialists are, they need to be acutely aware of the cultural, political and economic transformations of our age, they need to know about social theories about modernity ... and they need to recognise their own traditions and the values which inform them.

In short, ALR seems to me to pursue an appropriate strategy in that it recognises the nature of our times but doesn't cut loose from the socialist values which lie at the heart of the traditions from which we've grown. Socialism has never been reducible to its organisational forms; this, in our context, remains one other, small source of hope. Socialists can't afford to live for the present; they need, as William Morris understood, to seek to bridge past and future.

Peter Beilharz, Northcote, Vic.

... and a bouquet

Thanks and congratulations to all associated with ALR. After a down period, it is improving with every issue. Despite a lot of reading, with weakening eyes, I look forward to every issue.

The last issue was particularly good reading. The Briefings "The Year in Review" were short, snappy and spot on. The "Letter from Ephesus" was, as always, good, and such a change from the years of dreary self-righteous preaching. Long may Diana Simmonds flourish, despite the narks who have forgotten how to laugh. Jack Mundey's article was timely and significant: the cities are a bigger and more difficult battle than caves, bats and rainforests.

Claude Jones, Bardon, Qld.
The big topic of outdoor conversation this summer in Sydney has been the turd factor—the sudden belated publicity of the sewage levels off Sydney's beaches. It's been a running story in the newspapers for months, eclipsing Soviet earthquakes and Boeing crashes. In response, so the papers tell us, people are staying away from Sydney's beaches in droves. Though it has to be said this isn't obvious to the naked (or sunglassed) eye.

Well, whether they are or whether they're not, what is there to do on a Sydney beach outing other than swim? Eat, of course. And the premier location for the sunned but not surfed gastronome is Bondi, with its pleasant beachfront walk and cosmopolitan eateries. Taking a quick stroll down from the hill at South Bondi (where the trams used to run) takes you past the seriously yuppified Lamrock Café, with its elegant glass front and quite exorbitant prices. Pass by the equally pricey (but not so pretty) Wet Bar and you come to Gabbie's, a café with a name for good healthy food. Have a coffee there, then drop by a few doors later at the Bondi Gelataria, where Sydney's best pucinos and fine wholemeal foccaccias can be followed down by some excellent gelato.

Then, if you can make it past the fresh seafood shops without stopping, there's the Hungarian Gelato Bar, with its dramatic cakes (and again, alas, prices), or, around the corner, The Kushi Bar. And when the sun sinks slowly over Bondi, you may wish to try some of the many restaurants within easy walk of the beach. For cheap eats the Bondi Trattoria, on Wairoa Ave, is inexpensive and pleasant. And, halfway up the hill back to the station, there's The Nosherie, serving inexpensive vegetarian dishes with an Italian influence.

But while you're there, a quick dip may still be in order.

David Burchell

One of the cruel jokes about living in Melbourne is the summer. December and January are notoriously fickle months. You're just as likely to spend Christmas day huddling around the fireplace as you are to swim. This summer has been pretty typical—lots of coolish days interspersed with the odd scorcher. And, of course, now that the summer holidays have officially ended, the weather is warming up nicely.

So what to do on those precious lovely days? Lots of Melburnians not fortunate enough to live in bayside St Kilda do the next best thing—visit for the day. The trams and light rail are jammed with holiday makers armed with beach bags and suntan lotion.

St Kilda beach is usually the first stop. While it doesn't rival Bondi, it sure beats being holed up in Brunswick on a hot day. The sand is very clean these days thanks to a marvellous machine purchased by the council and the water is clean enough for schools of baby fish to lurk in the shallows (though apparently that's not enough to indicate the absence of E-coli).

After a stretch at the beach, St Kilda offers scores of delights for both the tourist and locals—the old favourite Luna Park with its wonderful clown's mouth entrance and scenic railway, the best continental cake shops in Australia in Acland Street, the mixture of kitsch and art at the Sunday markets on the Upper Esplanade, bike rides along the foreshore; picnics in Catani Gardens and Blessington Street Botanical Gardens, Zydeco music at the Esplanade Hotel, and many, many eating places.

A great Sunday haunt is the Stoke House set on the St Kilda foreshore. As the sun goes down, you sit on the verandah munching on decadent cakes and strudels (including a sugarless variety favoured by hypoglaecemics) or a plate of hummus and pita bread. Some good news is that the Stoke House now opens on weekdays, not just Sundays.

Further along the foreshore is Jean Jacques, a very ritzy French restaurant situated in what used to be the Surf Life Saving Club. Most ordinary people could never afford to eat there but if you're prepared to swallow your politics you can partake of their excellent take-away fish in beer batter and french fries and join the hot polloi on the grass. Better still trot up Fitzroy Street and get some of Cleopatra's famous take-away Lebanese food or visit Eat, a newish sidewalk café which serves fabulous breakfasts (including flapjacks with maple syrup), and light meals of curries, hamburgers and salads plus fresh fruit and vegetable juices.

And don't forget to pay a visit to the very moving Living With AIDS Art Exhibition at Linden and take some kids to see Theatrework's latest play, Fabulous Tales from the Horses' Mouth, which is set in the Blessington Street Gardens. The only rub is—after a day in St Kilda you won't want to go back to the suburbs. Carmel Shute.
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