# A Biographical Dictionary of Dissenting Economists

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## Bruce McFARLANE (born 1936)

Bruce McFarlane was born in Mudgee (New South Wales). At school he read Joseph Dietzgen's *Excursions...* and Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach*, both classic statements of the distinction between mechanical and dialectical materialism. At school and university he studied economic theory and the history of economic thought in order to understand the anatomy of civil society.

In the 1950s, the Faculty of Economics at the University of Sydney offered courses, taught by J.R. Wilson and E.L. Wheelwright, which included the study of Marx, Sraffa, Kaldor, Kalecki and Lange. Attracted to the deep analysis of these writers, McFarlane attempted in later years, not only to expound them to new generations of students (1982b, Parts I and II, and 1985), but also to apply the major insights to Australian conditions (1968a, Chapters 4-8, and 1982a). In company with Professor P.D. Groenewegen of the University of Sydney, he has also written the first comprehensive history of Australian economic thought since the offering of Crauford Goodwin, a visiting Canadian, almost 25 years ago (1990).

Graduating with first-class Honours in Economics, he failed to win the support of the Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Professor S.J. Butlin, in obtaining the normal scholarship to pursue the further study of economics in Cambridge. Instead he got the support of the Yugoslav Department of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, being appointed by its chief, Madame Regner, as 'Oceanic Scholar' for 1958.

As a result, McFarlane was able to study techniques and analysis of economic planning under conditions of market socialism. His mentor at this time was Dr Jakov Sirotkovic, a young and brilliant economic planner not long returned from post-graduate work in Manchester (later Premier of Yugoslavia). Following the completion of one-year's intensive instruction in the theory and practice of economic planning and the mysteries of the Yugoslav economy (1966, 1988), McFarlane joined the Perspective Planning Division of the Indian Planning Commission. He was for a time member of a small team headed by Michal Kalecki, who was visiting adviser to the Nehru administration on the Third Five-Year Plan (other members of the group included Vinod Prakhash, Jagdish Bhagwati, A.K. Sen and Ms I. Grace). Inevitably he came under the influence of the powerful personality of Michal Kalecki with whom he travelled to parts of India. Personal contact with Michal and Ada Kalecki left a deep impression that the study of political fetters on economic growth and of the institutional settings in particular countries must form an integral part of what later came to be called 'development economics'.

Consequently, after completing a five-year stint as a Research Fellow in Economics at the Australian National University under the good care of Professor Heinz Arndt, McFarlane devoted a number of years to the study of political institutions, to the ideas of Mao Tse Tung insofar as they related to development strategy (1968b), to the Soviet industrialization debates of the 1920s and to Maurice Dobb's corpus of writings on these and related subjects. In 1976 he was appointed to the Chair in Politics at the University of Adelaide, where he continued to specialize in political economy. There he collaborated with the Professor of economics. G.C. Harcourt, in exposing students to the ideas of the 'Anglo-Italian school' which included Piero Sraffa, Joan Robinson, N. Kaldor, L.L. Pasinetti and D.M. Nuti.

In 1971 McFarlane became associated with the *Journal of Contemporary Asia,* which had been established in Stockholm to counter CIA investigations on Vietnam and the South East Asian national liberation movements. In 1980 he succeeded Hamza Alavi as co-editor with Peter Limqueco. Since then, and with the stationing of the *Journal* in Manila, he has been involved in fieldwork concerning the issues of labour and industry in countries of South East Asia conducting, with P. Limqueco and J. Odhnoff, a survey of some thousands of workers on 16 industrial sites in Manila, Bangkok, Penang and Kuala Lumpur (1989).

McFarlane has also increasingly been concerned with encouraging Asian scholars to analyse the development situation in their own countries and has offered them publishing outlets. What has been sought is a body of economic analysis which throws light on such topics as social relations in agriculture, problems of economic planning and economic democracy (1983), the emergence and consciousness of the Asian working class and the enrichment of the Marxian analysis of development. For McFarlane has from the beginning accepted the view that ruling classes live off the labour of others, and as both Dietzgen and Engels had demonstrated, this is an historical datum, not something that has to be proved by a logical syllogism.

### McFarlane's Major Writings

(1966), 'Yugoslavia's Crossroads', in J. Saville and R. Miliband (eds), *The Socialist Register*, London: Merlin.

(1968a), *Economic Policy in Australia*, Melbourne: Cheshire.

(1968b), *The Chinese Road to Socialism: Economics of the Cultural Revolution* (with E. Wheelwright), Harmondsworth: Penguin. Also Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1975; Torino: Einaudi, 1973; Tokyo: Simul, 1973; Oslo: Gylenal Norsk Forlag, 1974.

(1982a), 'A Kaleckian Analysis of the Australian Economic Crisis' (with D. Beresford), in P. Boreham and G. Dow (eds), *Work and Inequality*, Melbourne: Macmillan.

(1982b), *Radical Economics*, London: Croom Helm; Peking: China Resource Holdings.

(1983), *Neo-Marxian Theories of Development* (with P. Limqueco), London: Croom Helm; Tokyo: Tsuge Shobo, 1988.

(1985), *A Manual of Political Economy* (with D. Beresford), Manila: Karrel Inc.

(1988), *Yugoslavia: Politics, Economics and Society*, London: Frances Pinter.

(1989), *Labour and Industry in ASEAN* (with P. Limqueco and J. Odhnoff), Manila: JCA Publishers.

(1990), *A History of Australian Economics* (with P. Groenewegen), London: Routledge.