

WHOSE

Left
Nationalism
& the
Resources
Boom

by
Rick
Kuhn



PLUS:
CARSWELL, HURLEY,
WILLETT ON
GAYS

PLUS:
O'LINCOLN ON
BEYOND THE
FRAGMENTS

PLUS:
FERRIER ON
JEAN
DEVANNY

PLUS:
REVIEWS

BOOM?

COVER PHOTO
Iron Ore mine in the
Hamersley Ranges, Western
Australia

Behind
International Socialist,
the journal,
there is an organisation



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CONTROVERSY

At recent homosexual conferences there has been substantial debate around a number of issues facing the gay movement. The most prominent one has been how to relate to the sub-culture based in the gay bars. Other questions include the ALP and the value of reform work, and the relationship of lesbians and male homosexuals.

For socialists, the question remains how to link our current activities with the building of a movement which can change society. This is even more critical given the decline in the women's and gay movements, and in the face of the economic crisis and increasing attacks from the right wing.

In this section, a member of the IS debates the question, "What is the way forward for Gay Liberation today?" with an independent socialist and a member of the CPA.

Controversy is a regular new section in *International Socialist*. We aim to debate topics of current interest on the left. If you would like to contribute to this section please contact Janey Stone c/o the journal.

WHICH WAY FORWARD FOR AUSTRALIAN GAYS?

Phil Carswell

Phil Carswell is a member of the Victorian State Committee of the CPA, and is on the State Council of the Technical Teachers' Union of Victoria. He has also been active in gay liberation for several years. Phil is a member of ALSO (Alternative Life Style Organisation) which organised 1981 Melbourne Gay Day.

The very terms of this question presuppose certain assumptions.

1. Is there such a thing today as a "gay liberation" movement compared with the popular upsurge of the late sixties, early seventies?
2. Are "liberationists" policies the only possible avenue of legitimate action within the gay sub-culture?
3. Is there a precise and clear path that is possible to delineate now, for all those interested to follow?

I would rather take up the question of socialists in the emerging gay community. This to me seems more relevant, realistic and appropriate.

Gay politics in the mid-70's focussed on 'the campaign'. Its agent was 'the activist'. As the sub-cultures politicise, the agent of struggle for gay rights will not be an activist but 'an organizer'. A decisive factor for the success of gay struggles (not of course the only one: alliances with other social forces including the labour movement, feminists and radical-liberals, will be important) will be the extent to which the sub-cultures organize themselves and then develop their own political voice. This is a role for gay radicals: to help in the unification/solidification of the gay subcultures, help them to explore their way politically and to develop clout. That is, build a gay community.

(Craig Johnson, *The New Radicalisation*)

With reference to this quote from Craig and an understanding that these developments are proceeding anyway, I believe it is important to examine our politics and our political practice so that we become effective and credible

organizers within our milieu.

It is my understanding of Marxist politics that one of the major tenets is the role of intervention and the process of winning the majority to a more advanced position. (What winning means, or rather doesn't mean, is explained well, I believe, in *Beyond the Fragments*, Rowbotham et al.)

This long, uneven and sometimes contradictory process involves plateaus, impasses and a lot of uneven development. So be it. This is not a recipe for dependency, rather a clear message. We have to use the basic principles of Marxism to distil and develop our past theory and practice into that which is appropriate today.

With this in mind, my long range perspectives are those of mass work, social and political change as a process and a tentative grappling with the fact that the area we work in is almost incredibly complex. These themes are the background for my work in the gay community. For me, the strategy and tactics that flow from that position must involve part or all of the following elements.

- they must involve and reflect the felt needs of homosexuals.
- they must challenge the dominant ideology of individual solutions for political problems, with an emphasis on collective thought, actions and democratic operations.
- they must build unity — as wide as possible. If mass work is the perspective then building unity is the tactical necessity.
- the day to day tactics must be appropriate to the particular situation.
- they must make an honest attempt to handle contradictions — not to run away or ignore them. This is the crucial element in the understanding of Marxists, that contradictions exist everywhere, it's how we handle them that distinguishes us from liberals or

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unity and openness about operations (including financial) was the distinctive thread that held the whole committee together.

It also became apparent that bar owners and commercial establishments may know how to raise money but they can't run meetings, or organize publicity to any great extent. Once the tentativeness from both sides was overcome a reasonably successful welding of skills took place so that on the day 2,500 people took part in Melbourne's first openly gay exposition.

Of course, it wasn't perfect. It clashed with the early stages of Mayday, and some of the entertainment was questionable. But the positive effects were overwhelmingly good. The International Bookshop did well and was introduced to a new range of customers, most of whom didn't know the place existed. *Gay Community News* sold well (as did *The Battler* I believe).

To me, it's primarily a matter of presenting our politics in a more relevant way, in a way that people can identify with, in a way that isn't bogged down in clichés and rhetoric that won't reach them, let alone penetrate the new gay consciousness. It means a lot of hard work because this is a creative effort, not a prescriptive formula.

The gay community is developing. It's up to gay marxists and socialists to put into that development, to create new alternative ways off approaching problems, to work hard to challenge old pre-conceptions of "gay activists", and finally to win over more and more people to a more complete understanding of our potential strength, the complex terrain we inhabit and the methods needed to gain and keep our freedom.

Michael Hurley

Michael Hurley is a Melbourne teacher and union activist. He has been active in gay liberation for several years, and was a member of the organizing collective of the 1981 Socialism and Homosexuality Conference.

In 1972, Gay Liberationists believed they were making a new revolution; it was to be a clearly social revolution in which masculinity, femininity, sexual repression, the nuclear family and institutionalised heterosexuality would all

disappear. They were heady days. The solidified pain of self-hate cracked into a thousand pieces. The chance of a new way of living and being emerged. Hope dominated our lives.

Ten years of struggle and organising later, Gay Liberation is organisationally scattered. In its place is a series of autonomous political groups with specific purposes, organisational skills and a somewhat grim, but resilient, political commitment. Outflanking these groups numerically is a growing commercial sub-culture whose origins are economic and social rather than specifically political.

Homosexual politics now have two major organisational focuses. The annual national homosexual conference regularly attracts 600 self defining "radicals". The 1981 April Socialism and Homosexuality conference had 150 participants. The first priority of these gays is a public homosexual politics which confronts both discrimination (gay rights) and oppression (gay liberation). But the sense of how these two are connected is fragmented.

Secondly there are the annual celebrations of sexuality which are increasingly dominated by the commercial and social sub-cultures. Numerically, these are far more successful than "movement" politics. Sydney's Mardi Gras from 1978 to 1981 involved 5000 celebrants. Melbourne Gay Day and Queen's Birthday picnic saw 1500. The priority here is a self-assertion of identity through fun.

These changed realities involve revolutionary homosexuals in political choices. The choices are complicated by the tension between a "movement" politics and a class politics; this tension requires a continuous resolution politically. However, it is not solved by the false dichotomy of one or the other. Nor will many of us accept a solution that says "yes" to both, but gives only tactical support to autonomous organising. The historical and political reality of oppression, its lived daily experience, necessitates strategically autonomous groups.

Liquidating autonomy is not an option. Autonomy is the first political choice for the 80's.

But historically and politically in the 70's autonomy was in practice often separatism. The second political choice for the 80's has to be the politics of alliance, coalition and co-operation. This is crucial to extending our social power.

The major tactical re-orientation argued for, so far, within the movement

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ghetto.

There are four major objections to this tactic as presently pursued: the continued definition of homosexual politics largely in the interests of males; the priority given to a cross-class political alliance; the reduction of gay liberation politics to at best, gay rights; and capitulation of revolutionary hope to the brute fact of commercial dominance.

To begin with the latter: the most visible sector of homosexuals is that which socialises in the commercial "gay scene". This scene is social and economic in origin. Its expansion and consolidation is dependent firstly, on the "goodwill" of the state; secondly, on a coincidence of economic and ideological interests on the part of gay entrepreneurs; and thirdly, on the economic forces which determine the success of small business in Australia. At the moment gay business is holding its own on these three fronts.

The closure of sex shops in Kings Cross is the most recent example of the state's "goodwill". "Be gay, Buy gay" is a slogan as much of separate but un-

equal containment as it is a celebration of a culture of resistance. And finally, small business has been going to the wall since the economic boom burst under McMahon. The tactic of sub-cultural alliance will inevitably lead to a campaign in defence of the gay petty bourgeoisie against the state and eventual disillusionment as the gay market bottoms out. The former can easily merge into a nationalist defence of "Australian" business against multinational monopolies and the latter will be blamed on "ultra-leftists" who refused to support the commercial scene.

This scenario is also the main reason for not giving cross-class alliances a high priority. The assumption is not that the petty bourgeoisie is part of the ruling class. Rather, the argument is that there are more important priorities for revolutionaries.

The first of these priorities is strengthening the organisational, political and ideological coherence of the anti-sexist struggle both within and outside gay politics.

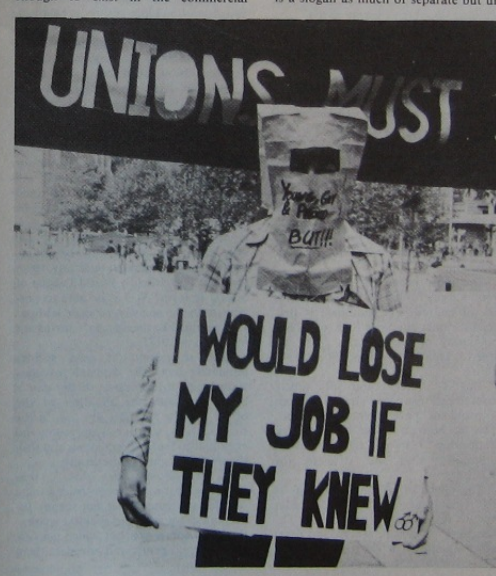
Liberation from the sexual division of labour and from the psycho-social organisation of personal life and sex around gender are strategic to ending class exploitation, women's and gay oppression. Any socialist politics which is restricted to ending the sexual division of labour is not acceptable.

The commercial sub-cultures are segregated, sexist, racist and male dominated. They economically exploit social oppression. We haven't got the forces to organise there without being swamped by a politics that de facto accepts totally different tactical requirements for male and female homosexuals' liberation. It would mean a retreat to the sexism and lesbian separatism that bedevilled homosexual politics in the 70's. We would encourage male gay rights with no revolutionary perspective.

Consequently, demoralisation, similar to that between 1975 and 1978, would recur, as moralistic attacks intensified generally, with no clear focus for opposition.

The tactics for the 80's must provide this focus. We need to protect ourselves as long-term organisers. Revolutionary homosexuals are limited in numbers, resources, energy and influence. There is no point in burning out. This means a careful selection of tasks and targets.

Firstly, we are not in a position to set up ongoing coalitions against repression in our own right. None the less, the Festival of Light, Right to Life, the "Catholic Mafia" in the NSW ALP, the



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Michael Hurley (cont)

Concerned Parents Associations in Queensland and Victoria, the NCC and the various education departments all have to be monitored and selectively counteracted.

Secondly we have to recognise that the unions and the ALP are the major working class organisations. Our work in the former requires consolidation. We have neglected the ALP and must reconsider it as a target for specific campaigns.

Thirdly national conferences and national media are central for general propaganda work, amongst both new activists and the already committed.

Fourthly, each city has to consolidate its gay liberationists into groups with regular contact. We need to support the emerging socialist lesbian forces.

Therefore Sydney has to unify behind the immediate aim of law reform with the perspective of building a campaign against repression. The law reform issue creates the possibility of proving good-will in the sub-culture, re-activating experienced organisers, pushing the Trades and Labour Council to at least financially support its anti-discrimination policy and building popular support. It exposes the right wing of the ALP and flushes out the "moral majority" forces.

Initially this will mean supporting the existing law reform efforts at the basic level of organisational hack-work. Credibility has to be gained if further political suggestions are to be taken seriously. Law reform is not inherently reformist and subjective lack of interest is elitist arrogance. Some of us made the latter mistake in Melbourne and paid for it with the irrelevance which comes from passive defeatism.

In Melbourne, the situation is less clear though any knee-jerk militancy would be a mistake. The 1982 election can be a focus for a campaign to make sex and sexuality re-appear as political issues. Rescission of Education Department guidelines on *Young, Gay and Proud* and *Health and Human Relations courses* could be campaign objectives.

A longer term activity is supporting the building of the national viability of *Gay Community News* as a political alternative to the gay rights emphasis of

the sub-culture's media. *GCN* is the only existing media outlet open to the possibility of radical social change. As such it is a bulwark against the liquidation of all gay liberationist ideology.

Forming and consolidating distribution outlets and readers' groups could provide the impetus for organisation in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

Ultimately, radical homosexual politics rest on consenting homosexual visibility: visibility to each other and wider society. The first German gay wider society. The first German gay movement (1864-1935) broke the silence. The second Gay Liberation movement made us visible. The challenge of the 80's is to consolidate and extend these gains.

Graham Willett

Graham Willett is a member of the International Socialists in Melbourne. As a gay liberation activist he has been involved in *Gay Community News* and was also a member of the organizing collective of the 1981 Socialism and Homosexuality Conference.

New situations call for new analyses and this has become particularly clear over the past few years in the area of gay liberation politics. In response to the new gay consciousness, to the rise of the commercial sub-culture, to the escalating attacks from the right, socialists in general, and gay socialists in particular, have responded with confusion.

The most prominent response has been to argue for a turn to the commercial sub-culture. The argument is that socialists must intervene here to build a community of homosexuals from the hitherto atomised and apolitical sub-culture.

This is a recent and still largely undeveloped theory but already some of its problems have become apparent. There has been no serious analysis of the relationship between the hoped-for community and the struggle for socialism.

The obstacles to the linking up of this community with the broader struggle for socialism are legion. The prevalence of racism, sexism and overt anti-communism in the sub-culture is only passingly acknowledged. More im-

portantly, the material basis for these obstacles is ignored. The cross-class nature of the subculture, the leading role of small and not-so-small capitalists and petit-bourgeois, the gender separatism of its social centres — all these provide real barriers to winning over the commercial sub-culture or any community based on it, to socialist politics.

The class interests of the entrepreneurs who feed off the commercial subculture have, it seems, been perceived more clearly by them than by socialists. This is most apparent in Sydney where a bitter battle was fought to establish an umbrella organization that excluded the left. The NSW Council of Gay Groups is dominated by conservative, commercial interests who more and more are claiming to be the real mouthpiece of the gay community. The separation of an apolitical Mardi Gras from a political Stonewall Day is simply the first step in a campaign to exclude and isolate the left from the "Community".

What all this boils down to is that community-building politics is based on a stages theory of development: first we build a community by allying with all gays, regardless of their politics and then we think about socialism.

But, in fact, the commercial sub-culture exists unmoored only to the extent that it does not threaten the ideological hegemony of the capitalist system. If the community (when it is built) is to play a role in the struggle for socialism it needs to be shown that it will have the cohesion and strength to stand solid against the repression that will be launched against it and, further, to play a part in the socialist offensive. To take only the most obvious historical examples: will it be able to resist any better than did Hirschfield's World League of Sexual Reform? Will it be able to participate in the socialist struggle without fragmenting like the women's movement in Russia in 1917?

The oppression of gays springs ultimately from the demands of class society and the abolition of the one is bound up with the abolition of the other. But the struggles are not, in the final analysis, separate. Oppression and exploitation feed off each other and they should be fought simultaneously.

What follows from this is that socialists must work to construct a mass socialist movement that not merely incorporates the struggles against exploitation and oppression but, which actively binds them together and advances them as one.

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Sydney's Gay Left attempt to mobilize very wide support to oppose this new attack and this represented a great step forward.

The need is for broadly-based overtly radical campaigns around issues that affect us as gays and to which other sectors of society can be won over. The propaganda value of these campaigns is powerful — through them we engage in consciousness-raising among both straights and gays and we develop our politics in a practical and effective way by bringing together gay and socialist politics.

These sorts of campaigns are not, of course, the last word in gay politics and obviously issues cannot be conjured up out of thin air. Working in unions and workplaces, local councils, the left parties and the ALP forms the basis for our day-to-day struggle for reforms and a political awareness of our demands. We must participate in gay caucuses, reform groups, rank and file committees and policy-making bodies. The point we should keep in mind at all times is the limitations of reforms. What can be extracted from the bosses and their political representatives can be lost again. The revolutionary potential of work for reforms lies in educating people and raising consciousness, and in mobilising people so that they discover, in a concrete way, the realities of radical and revolutionary politics.

In Australia at the moment there is no mass revolutionary movement or consciousness and this places limitations on what we can actually do. The role of socialists here and now is essentially propagandist. The aim of our propaganda and our activity is to build — to bring together the oppressed and exploited.

An example of what this actually means in practice can be gained from the Sydney Mardi Gras arrest campaign.

Police attacks on gays have varied from the spectacular and open such as those in Sydney in 1978, to the quiet and low-key, such as the day to day arrests on the beats or the campaign of harassment that is going on in Sydney at the moment.

It is obvious that police do not only attack gays. Women's marches and general left demos are considered fair game; in Brisbane now the punks are being driven off the streets in preparation for the Commonwealth Games; blacks are constantly harassed and bashed by cops; workers' picket lines are often attacked. To organize effectively against police violence we need to draw together all these groups into mass, political campaigns.

The Mardi Gras "Stop the Attacks" campaign in Sydney in 1978 confined itself to the particular case of attacks on gays and thereby lost an ideal opportunity to agitate widely and link up all those who, if socialism is to be possible, must be linked up. This parochial attitude was responsible for the ephemeral nature and impact of the campaign.

Three years later, the cops were on the move again as part of Neville Wran's "clean up the city" pre-election manoeuvring. It was suggested that

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Behind the Fragments

Tom O'Lincoln discusses the issues raised by the left best-seller *Beyond the Fragments*, setting them in the context of the Australian feminist and socialist movements.

THIS book¹ is becoming a best-seller on the left.

But, ironically enough, at first glance it's hard to see exactly where its appeal lies.

Communist Party representatives recommended it highly at major public events both in Sydney and Melbourne in the past year. Yet the book offers them little satisfaction. It is anti-party and the Communist Party is a party. And it distorts Communist history rather gravely.

Feminists are very interested in it. Yet it is an explicitly socialist book, and it contains a few passages that show very graphically the limitations of the women's movement. And I have even known trotskyst sectarians who have recommended it to people simply because it contains attacks on the International Socialists.

What is *Beyond the Fragments* about? Sheila Rowbotham sums up the "main plot" as follows:

... how I think some of the approaches to organizing which go under the headings of Leninism and Trotskysm are flawed; how I think the assumptions of what it means to be a socialist carried within Leninism and Trotskysm and which prevail on the left now block our energy

and self-activity and make it harder for socialism to communicate to most people; why I think the women's movement suggest certain ways of reopening the possibility of a strong and popular socialist movement.

This is a good summary of the argument in Rowbotham's own essay, which is the core of the book. And it explains the initial interest *Fragments* would have for British leftists. In Britain at least one Leninist organisation, the International Socialists*, has achieved something like a small mass presence, and other Leninist groups also have a certain prominence. A critique of Leninism, whether you agree with it or not, is therefore of immediate interest.

In Australia, however, the Leninist left is still at the stage of small propaganda groups. If the book is so widely read here, there must be some other reason.

What is more, the impact the book has obviously had on the consciousness of many leftists, both in Britain and here, cannot be explained by the strength of the critique of Leninism. Nor can it be explained by the concrete alternatives offered by the authors.

For the critique does not stand up to serious examination, and the alternatives are neither original nor particularly im-

*Now well known in Britain as the Socialist Workers Party. In *Fragments* both IS and SWP are used. I have used IS throughout to avoid confusion with the Australian SWP, which is quite a different tendency.

the Fragments

pressive. If large numbers of readers are convinced by this book, they must be strongly predisposed in advance to the line the authors are putting forward.

What layer of left activists is predisposed to the politics of the *Fragments*?

Well, to determine that we have to first examine the contents of the book. I propose to begin with the critique of Leninism, then look at the suggested alternative. Finally I want to look at the political method underlying both. Then we can return to the section of the left to whom this book seems to offer so much.

The Critique

Sheila Rowbotham leads off with a truly blood-curdling treatment of Leninist style.

We are accused of "the assumption that the manipulation of people is justified by the supposedly superior knowledge which leaders of revolutionary groups presume to possess..." We have a "horror of cosiness".

We believe that our party "by a process of apostolic succession inherits Lenin's words", and our word "comrade" carries "echoes of commissars and ice-picks".

And here is Rowbotham's description of what she claims is our ideal militancy:

The individual militant appears as a lonely character without ties, bereft of domestic emotions, who is hard, erect,

self-contained, controlled, without the time or ability to express loving passion, who cannot pause to nurture, and for whom friendship is a diversion.

But if this is the model of our rank and file, our leadership bodies have quite different features:

Central Committees scurry like a lot of white rabbits through a series of internal and factional documents and the smaller the party the greater the hurry.

At least this is less terrifying, but when we get to the individual Leninist leader it is back to the cold, hard type:

A sure sign of a leader of a Leninist political group is a tendency to look past your eyes and over your head when they talk to you.

Now to be sure, she goes on to admit these descriptions, "when stated explicitly [appear] to be a caricature". No wonder, for that is what they are.

Nor is it even an original caricature: it is the traditional anti-communist stereotype of the cold war period. Of course, there are some malignant sects who open themselves to such accusations. But this is supposed to be our conscious ideal — and Rowbotham is writing first and foremost about the International Socialists.

Yet have a look at what the British IS wrote, in a book by Paul Foot which has been widely circulated:

We socialists are not fanatics or timeservers. We are socialists because we

see the prospect which life holds out for all working people. We want the commitment of workers who laugh and love and want to end the wretchedness and despair which shuts out love and laughter from so many lives.

Whether or not we always live up to Foot's words, and whatever grain of truth there might be in the criticisms of Leninist style, it should be obvious that Sheila Rowbotham's description is more an exercise in mud-slinging than analysis.

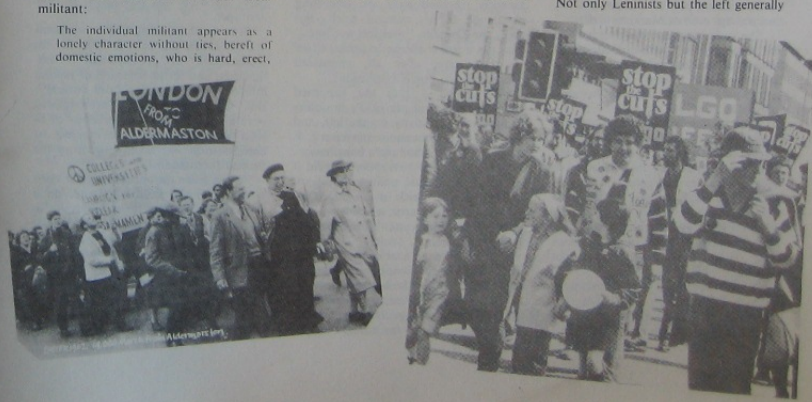
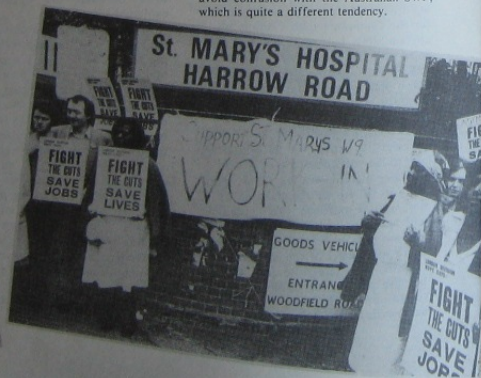
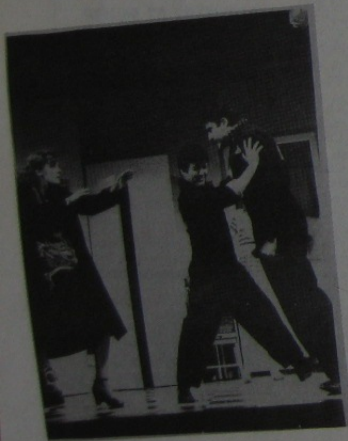
Having conceded in a backhanded sort of way that her allegations might appear to be a caricature, she returns to the attack:

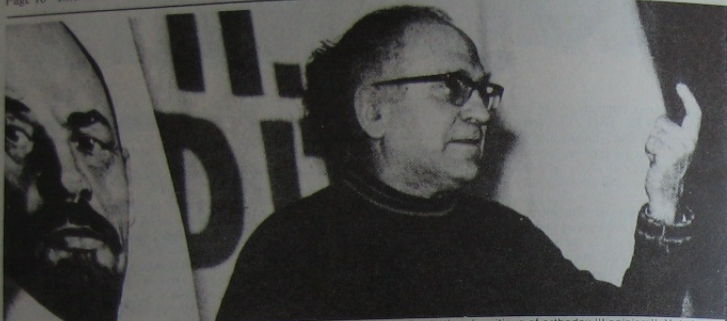
Nevertheless it strikes some chords of recognition on the contemporary left. It surely owes something to the strange things done to little boys in preparing them for manhood in capitalism.

A good half of the anti-Leninist argument is on this level. We are painted as mindless robots led by cynical manipulators: a suitable one-dimensional portrait ready-made to be contrasted with the warm, egalitarian women's movement.

The treatment of Leninist ideas is just as disappointing.

The caricature of Leninist personality sets the stage for an indictment of Leninism — and Marxism generally — for being too narrow in its scope. And of course part of the indictment is correct. Not only Leninists but the left generally





Tony Cliff (right) and friend. Cliff's 4 volume study of Lenin confirms aspects of Rowbotham's critique of orthodox "Leninism". Yet she ignores his work while criticising his organisation.

became very ingrown and dogmatic during the Stalin period and the cold war.

On the question of women's liberation in particular, the "old left" had a long history of neglect, condescension, and even outright hostility.

What is more, the British International Socialists had a particularly disappointing record in regard to women's liberation. We Australian ISers used to have arguments with the British comrades about it in the early seventies, until they saw the light.

All this is well known, too well known to need restating in a book. So Rowbotham must range further afield. She is out to show not just that Leninism took on dogmatic features in a certain historical period, but that these features are a necessary part of Leninist politics, and perhaps even of Marxism itself.

She urges us to cast our eyes back to the balmy days before 1920, when "many radical movements . . . raised the connection between changing our consciousness and making a new culture".

One model is "Owenite socialist feminism", which led its followers to "make their own marriage ceremonies". Another is offered by the "creation of friendly societies and co-operatives . . . cycling clubs, workers' Esperanto Groups, nurseries and Socialist Sunday Schools of the late nineteenth century".

But after 1920 the nasty Leninists came on the scene and handed out blinkers.

Or did they? It is worth looking at the actual history of the Communist Party, right here in Australia, to see how it matches up to Rowbotham's account.

The early Communist Party of Australia encouraged "Red Weddings" which were to institutionalise equality in marriage — very much as did the Owenites!

Later of course the CPA became a Stalinist party. But far from ignoring the importance of cultural, sporting and other such activities, it gave them heavy emphasis at times. Take the Australasian Book Society, the New Theatre, the Realist Writers Group.

Then there was the Eureka Youth League which, according to Audrey Blake, organised activities ranging from sporting groups through a book club, foreign language classes and dancing lessons and on to a drama group and holiday camps.

Not that there was anything inherently revolutionary or liberating about the CPA's cultural work. But then, the Owenite "socialist weddings" were not a real challenge to sexism either — they were, after all, embedded precisely in the family institution!

The point is that the supposed dichotomy between pre-1920's flexibility and cultural sensitivity on the left, and the blinkered Communist movement, is a figment of Rowbotham's imagination. And it appears as even more fanciful if we recall the sexual politics movement led by Wilhelm Reich in the early German Communist Party, which was far in advance of any of the examples Rowbotham names.

She proceeds to a series of half truths about Lenin's own writings and Leninist ideas. Predictably, she bases her critique on *What is to be Done?* and specifically on the famous passage that says political consciousness "can be brought to the

workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle".

To be sure, she knows that Lenin later modified much of what he wrote in that passage. But she says, "he did not fundamentally reformulate the theory of consciousness present in *What is to be Done?* This theory is an essential part of the case for a Leninist Party."

Now it is true that Lenin never wrote another major pamphlet on the party question. But it is equally true that the organisation against whom she is mainly polemicising, the International Socialists, are well known to have reformulated this very theory. Tony Cliff wrote four volumes in the process,¹ in which he makes a sustained argument that Lenin's mature approach to the party question was non-elitist, flexible and open.

It is worth restating Cliff's argument briefly. Lenin did call in 1902 for an organisation of professional revolutionaries, and for an injection of politics into the working class "from outside". But the organisational prescriptions were a response to the conditions of illegal work, and the understanding of consciousness was taken over from the Second International.

When given the opportunity for open mass work, the Bolsheviks took on a profoundly democratic style. And, in response to the mass upheavals of 1905, Lenin wrote that the working class was "spontaneously social-democratic". Moreover he fought within the party for an openness to the thoughts and feelings of the masses.

When party committees proved conservative, he called for opening up the

party to an influx of new working class elements. In 1917 he was prepared to go to the Bolshevik rank and file in order to win the party to the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" And this in a party which was experiencing mushroom growth — and was therefore far from being a party of cadres, let alone professional revolutionaries.

The International Socialists have based both our internal organisation and our external work very much on this reading of Lenin. That is most obvious to the casual observer in the style of our newspaper, which aims to reach a working class audience and involve it, including actively soliciting articles from worker militants who are not necessarily members of the IS. For doing just this we are condemned as "economist" and "workerist" by others who don't share our interpretation of Leninism.

Of course, our view is a minority view internationally and in Australia. But given that Sheila Rowbotham chooses to build her critique around a discussion of the International Socialists, isn't it rather dishonest to completely ignore our actual view on the matter?

Having done just that, she proceeds to a series of generalisations about the failings not only of Leninism, but of Marxism generally. Let's look at a few of them:

... the campaign for a woman's right to choose whether to have an abortion or to have a child raises immediately control over her own fertility and maternity which leads to the more general issues of man's sexual hold over woman, of human beings' relationship to their bodies and the importance of sexual pleasure. All four aspects of the question have been neglected by Marxism. (Emphasis added)

Certainly Marxism has not treated any of these questions as thoroughly as it should. Even so, where would feminism be today without the substantial body of Marxist work, from Engels' *Origin of the Family* through Kollontai's and Wilhelm Reich's many writings?

And while it was non-Marxists like Kate Millet and Shulamith Firestone who initiated a revolution in theory on the "woman question" a decade ago, Marxists are certainly doing their share of the theoretical work today.

Or take this passage: ... revolutionary organizations will readily admit that they've learnt about sexism through the women's movement, racism through black organisations, etc. But when it comes to developing the principles of revolutionary politics, the principles of organising which seek to overthrow capitalism as a whole, this has

traditionally been the internal concern and monopoly of formally political organisations. Such a view had some justification at the time of mass socialist or communist parties as in Europe in the 1900s and 1920s.

On the contrary, it never had any such justification, nor have serious Marxists ever claimed it had. Has Rowbotham never heard of the Russian soviets, from which Lenin drew so many important conclusions about political power? Never heard of the Paris Commune, from which Marx learned such crucial lessons about the capitalist state and how to smash it?

And since she is aiming her critique primarily at the IS, we should also mention how profoundly the experience of the British shop stewards' movement of 1916-8 influenced not only Gramsci's theory of workers' councils, but our own concept of building a revolutionary party.

Our thesis is not at all that we build a monopoly of ideas on how to have a movement or achieve socialism. It is merely that a centralised revolutionary organisation is the best way to generalise, synthesise, and build on those ideas.

For sheer effrontery, however, the prize goes to Lynne Segal. In her essay, Segal first criticises the painfully-crude theories of capitalism and the state put forward by the Leninists, and then goes on to say that "libertarians developed richer theories of the role of the state, and its hard and soft forces of repression, not just through the police and the army but via education, health, sex role conditioning, etc." (p. 162).

How clever. But did they really work that out for themselves? No indeed, for if you take the trouble to look up the footnote at the end of this passage, you find the following:

This relates, as many people will know, to Althusser's now famous essay on ideology . . . in which he argues that class relations are produced through two kinds of inter-related state institutions . . . Some Marxists today point out that Althusser is only a modern and vulgar variant of earlier Marxists like Gramsci and the Frankfurt school . . .

In other words, the "richer theories" of the libertarians are derived from the Leninist Gramsci and the Marxist Frankfurt school, via the Stalinist Althusser!

To summarise briefly: the critique of Leninism is confused, ignorant, sometimes dishonest. But perhaps the proposed alternatives are a bit better? Let us see.

The Women's Movement and the Proposed Alternative

We were promised that the "women's movement suggests certain ways of reopening the possibility of a strong socialist movement."

So it is no surprise at all to find that Sheila Rowbotham paints a glowing picture of that movement, which she claims has been free of dogmatism and sectarianism:

The women's movement has had a great reticence about blowing trumpets . . . There was no bluffing but a careful, scrupulous examination of the minutiae of behaviour, with much more exacting inner standards . . .

We have avoided a dogmatism with which these (Leninist) traditions have become enured.

She then proceeds to blow her trumpet and make astonishingly dogmatic statements about the women's movement. Women's groups "reach continually outwards towards new forms of expressing defiance and resistance . . ." and their sharing of personal experiences "is the source of a most extraordinary power".

The movement "has found a means of remaining connected while growing for a decade". Feminists have been "loathe to circumscribe (themselves) within a new female hierarchy".

Lynne Segal is no more modest. She launches a massive broadside against the International Marxist Group because "they don't seem to accept what we say on the limits of orthodox Marxism" and "do not seem to see the need for feminism to transform the whole nature of working-class politics and the left".

Is this sort of arrogance justified? I'm not in any position to judge the British women's movement, nor, I suppose, are most of my readers. But as this book is a hit in Australia, it seems reasonable to measure its claims against the movement here.

Has it grown for a decade? Not if International Women's Day marches are any indication. They are certainly no larger than they were five years ago, and in Melbourne, at least, they are con-

siderably smaller than they were in the early seventies.

Does the movement have "a most extraordinary power"? Of course not, otherwise women's refugees would not be facing the chop right and left.

And far from "reaching continually outwards", it has shown a distinct tendency to sectarianism. There are those who will not work with men. And then there are those who will not work with women who work with men (Melbourne WAAC excluded IS women on just these grounds).

Then again, there are lesbians who refuse to support the struggle for abortion rights (this problem was serious enough for *Gay Community News* to run an article on it in September 1980).

In Melbourne things have got so bad that not only are men made to march at the back on IWD, but the marshals tried to keep different contingents from using their own sound equipment on the 1981 march.

Of course, it would be wrong to tar all feminists with the sectarian brush. But what we can say is that the contemporary women's movement, like the socialist left, has its share of sectarians as well as constructive activists. And just as much need to be self-critical.

And indeed, when it comes to deriving practical proposals from the feminist experience, the *Fragments* authors are forced to be more realistic. For example there is the famous participatory democracy which is supposed to be an alternative to the "authoritarian" Leninist structures.

But Rowbotham knows perfectly well what's wrong with it:

The problems about participatory democracy are evident. If you are not able to be present, you can't participate. Whoever turns up next time can reverse the previous decision. If very few people turn up they are lumbered with the responsibility. It is a very open situation and anyone with a gift for either emotional blackmail or a conviction of the need to intervene can do so without being checked by any accepted procedure.

Nor are smaller groups any sort of guarantee. Segal admits:

... it is also true that male domination, elitism and passivity can exist in unstructured organizations. People who are less confident, and less experienced at organizing, and who have less time, will find it harder to participate effectively in such groups. I have found that sometimes it can be even harder to combat "leadership" within the small group.

Finally it is worth noting that Rowbotham admits the women's move-



International Women's Day, 1979 in Melbourne. Women's Liberation built a mass movement. What can we learn from it about revolutionary organisation?

ment has remained dominated by middle class women and middle class ideas:

While some working class women have been involved and many others influenced by the women's movement their experience has not been central to the emergence of the new feminism ...

These insights are important, and Australian feminists could learn a lot from them. They are a good indication that women's liberation, for all its strengths, has not produced either an

organisational or strategic alternative to Leninism.

And as we shall see, the attempt to build a new strategy for socialism on the feminist experience does not get the authors very far.

To understand the limits of the *Fragments* orientation we need to look first at their strategic approach. In doing so it is perhaps important for an Australian review to stress at the outset that the book's perspective is meant to

be a socialist perspective.

Its authors are well to the left of the Communist and Labour parties, and one of them belongs to a revolutionary group. While they emphasize autonomous movements of the oppressed, they really do subjectively want to unite them with the workers for a struggle against capitalism. And they understand that without that unity and that struggle, all the autonomous movements cannot win.

Unfortunately, they do not provide a basis for achieving that unity. At the end of the book, the fragments are still fragmented with no prospect of ever being otherwise.

What are all these fragments? Hilary Wainwright gives us a list:

In effect left wing trades councils, socialist resource centres, socialist women's groups, theatre groups, left book-shops, militant shop stewards' committees often carry out, in sum, the functions of a socialist party.

Now this little summary omits the role played by the CP and the revolutionary organisations, but let that pass. What is very odd is the purely random nature of the list. Are left wing trades councils really no more important than theatre groups? Are shop stewards no more central to socialist strategy than bookshops?

Not for the authors of this book! In fact they frequently display a hostility to workplace organisation. Lynne Segal has "rejected the idea that the industrial working class must be the vanguard of revolutionary struggle". And Sheila Rowbotham takes this point of view to a very startling conclusion:

Feminists have pointed out that not only does the emphasis on work exclude women but that the whole approach is presented in terms of the male workers' situation.

For those of us who have read *Hidden from History* this passage comes as something of a shock, because that book contained interesting chapters on working class women and women in trade unions, and it taught us how women's participation in class struggle has been written out of history books.

Now she can write them out of the contemporary working class, suggesting that an "emphasis on work excludes women" as if the struggle at Grunwicks, for example, had escaped her notice.

Of course, if you write women out of the working class you end up with a strategy, at least for women, that focuses on "youth houses, youth newspapers, adventure playgrounds and free schools." (p162) So a lack of class

politics can lead to a return to the traditional female role.

It also has reformist implications. The need for revolution arises, after all, out of the class nature of society and therefore of the state. Moreover a concentration on building adventure playgrounds leads all too often to a dependence on funds handed out by that state.

And in fact there are definite reformist threads in the book. Have a good look at this passage:

For socialists to win a parliamentary majority will be important, but only on the basis of, and accountable to, a strong extra-parliamentary movement able to confront the existing state apparatus and the financial interests it protects. (p18)

Now there are lots of questionable things in this sentence. But for the sake of argument, let's imagine that the capitalists will allow the socialists to get a majority in parliament. At least we are told that a mass movement is needed to confront the state.

But anyone who has followed left debates in the past few years knows that the nature of this confrontation is rather important. Does it involve smashing the state, or some kind of more gradual democratisation? The next sentence reads:

For it is this movement which, having destroyed the coercive powers of the present state, will provide the basis of the new democratic form of political power. (Emphasis added.)

This is quite breathtaking. Between the first sentence and the second, we have slid right past the whole problem of the transfer of power! In real life, unfortunately, this problem cannot be evaded by glib formulations.

Still, that need not concern us further here. Reformist or not, any contribution the authors can make to moving beyond the fragmented state of the left deserves serious consideration. In her final essay, Hilary Wainwright offers the attractive prospect of a "socialist alliance". How do we get this alliance, and what will it look like?

Wainwright begins with a few examples of what has happened already. Unfortunately it is not much. In some areas, she says, trades councils have begun to act like socialist alliances by supporting worthy causes. But there is really nothing new about trades councils doing that. The better organisations of the labour movement have traditionally supported worthy causes.

There are socialist tendencies in the women's and gay movements, who have taken to supporting strikes and fighting

the cuts. But all she can claim is that these tendencies indicate a "strongly felt need" for the alliance they do not prove the viability of any strategy.

Then there are the "numerous local industrially-based organisations" which have been acting "almost like a political alliance for many of the activists concerned". But as Wainwright admits, they have existed since the sixties. They are not a sign of motion in the direction she wants to go.

Finally there is the Speke Area Trade Union Committee, which "did have potential as a political alliance" but failed to realise it; radical technologists and environmentalists; and the Lucas Aerospace workers — but the latter only show "new ways in which activists are building on the own resources and organizations".

Now what these examples prove is that there is a lot of creative work going on. And it is interesting how much of it turns out to be union work and, in the case of socialist feminists and gays, strike support. In other words, the class struggle which the *Fragments* authors reject as a central focus.

But even though Wainwright goes on to appeal once again to the wondrous powers of feminism, she does not provide any evidence that there is any real motion in the world around her toward the kind of alliance she is calling for.

This is important, for good ideas are never quite enough to build a movement. They must also intersect with some kind of motion among the masses. Otherwise they are utopian.

And still we do not know exactly what these socialist alliances are supposed to look like. The section actually headed "Socialist Alliances" is to be found in the last chapter, and contains exactly six pages where alliances are really discussed. These contain a few examples, and some vague hints.

First the Hounslow Socialist Forum. This arose out of a thirteen-month occupation of Hounslow Hospital, and the chairman of the hospital shop stewards' committee is quoted at length. He talks mainly about how the occupation led people to unite, to discuss issues, to break down hierarchies.

The occupation became a base for other campaigns and struggles, a sort of school for activists.

It was used by the firemen in their strike, by the NUJ (journalists), and also by some Labour Party socialists who stood in the local elections on a no cuts, no unemployment program.

Now I think this is the most inspiring page in the book. It is a marvellous ex-

ample of why the best way to build a socialist movement is precisely through *workplace organisation*. In that sense, it is an eloquent refutation of much of the rest of the *Fragments*.

But Wainwright is interested because it led to the formation of a local socialist centre. And what has the centre achieved? Here the text becomes vague:

We hold meetings every fortnight, on topics which put local issues into a broader context. . . . People use it as a place to get support for campaigns and local disputes. We meet at the Labour Hall. We have not yet thought about premises, or anything more ambitious yet.

We need to move slowly.

We are told a bit more about the Tyneside socialist centre. It was set up "initially for educational, cultural, debating and general propaganda purposes", but then it began to "take on a more practical role, organizing antifascist leafleting, helping to provide support for strikes, initiating local campaigns . . ."

This looks hopeful. But then "for a year or so it became overwhelmed by the practical problems of maintaining and improving the only socialist bookshop and bookservice in the area . . ." and is only now "re-emerging from this".

Again, the Islington centre "organises regular Sunday evening debates, educational meetings, and socialist cultural events". Only recently did they decide to "play a more active role". And in Hackney there is a group meeting to "discuss common problems" helped by the existence of an "alternative paper, bookshop and cafe".

The first thing that strikes you is that the socialist centres are strong on discussion and light on action. Another is that they are all localized. In fact, Wainwright says "the signs are that conditions for such alliances — *ad hoc* and loose though they may be — are especially favourable at a local level".

But a series of local centres are local fragments. And this chapter is meant to tell us how to go *beyond* the fragments.

Even so, a discussion of how to build local centres might be useful. But Wainwright maintains a studied vagueness on this. There are "plenty of opportunities". But the "way such alliances *might* come about will vary tremendously".

Working around some national campaign or other "might lead people to seek ways of establishing unity". Or there "might already be some form of unity", which would get us out of answering this awkward question. (p238-9, my emphasis.)

And so on, to the final paragraph in which we are told:

The pace at which these local socialist alliances coalesce and develop, the dialectic between them, and the emergence of a national socialist organization, cannot be laid down in advance. A revolutionary upheaval in Italy or Spain, for example, could rapidly extend people's horizons.

So there you are. Nobody knows how to build even local alliances, let alone the national socialist organization which is slipped in at the finish, after being studiously ignored throughout the discussion. We may simply have to wait until something happens in Spain.

Never mind! It is time to devote another nine pages to criticising the Leninists (p240-9). But I will spare the reader that.

Behind the Fragments: A Fragmented Method

In her essay "A Local Experience", Lynne Segal says flatly that "a Marxism which does not base itself on feminism . . . will not liberate women".

This is one of many passages which suggest that feminist theory is more profound than Marxism. Yet on the same page, Segal admits that compared to the women's movement, "the left groups . . . seemed more able to produce an understanding of the world as a totality".

But if the feminist experience is to show us how to go beyond the fragments, surely an ability to analyse the world as a totality is a pretty basic requirement!

In her introduction to the second edition, Hilary Wainwright admits that the book doesn't "really say anything practical about getting there". If we are to understand why, we need to examine the political method behind the *Fragments*.

Of course the authors would probably deny that they have any method. The back cover blurb says they "do not offer any 'answers' — indeed their distinct concerns and emphases make that impossible".

But even an "anti-method" is still a definite point of view. And in arguing for it, the authors reproduce a certain system of ideas whether they know it or not.

An important part of it turns out to be opposition to seeing the world as a totality.

The roots of this rejection are indeed drawn from the experience of feminism: from the belief that "the personal is political". This was an important insight of women's liberation. The movement pointed out the political implications of many personal matters, from sexuality to doing the dishes.

But that insight also brought with it a certain danger. It could be, and increasingly was, interpreted to mean that politics was *reducible* to the personal and therefore to the subjective.

It is one thing to say that feelings are (in a sense) as important as intellectual insights. It is another to say they are the *same* as intellectual insights, that they can be the basis of analysis.

Yet that is precisely what Sheila Rowbotham says. She says, "Our views are valid because they come from within us." And this notion is counterposed to the Leninist approach in which, supposedly, "thought comes from thought". Hence the repeated emphasis on the "spiritual" aspect of consciousness (eg p109, 122).

Leninists actually think that thought (more precisely consciousness) comes from material being. But never mind. What matters here is Rowbotham's contention that valid ideas can somehow spring from feeling. And everyone's feelings are different, of course, nor is it possible to measure up one feeling against another. Hence the impossibility of "answers".

That is why the perspective in *Fragments* never goes beyond "alliances — *ad hoc* and loose though they may be" and "unity (which) will have to be vague and loose to begin with". And this is to be a vague unity among *autonomous* movements and groups.

Autonomy is a very problematic concept, which has come to mean much more than independent organisation. Women-only groups can be useful, and were *crucial* in establishing women's

liberation. But today the concept of autonomy is taken to mean that there is a distinct feminist theory that is developed by women acting on their own, a distinct feminist struggle which only women can wage, against something called "patriarchy" which is different from capitalism and equally important.



On the picket line. *Beyond the Fragments* suggests that the interests of workers and the oppressed may not always be compatible. This struggle showed the need for unity between them.

There is no space here to discuss the concept in any depth. It is enough to indicate a few of the sectarian implications. Firstly it concentrates on men rather than capitalism as the enemy. No amount of theoretical window-dressing can hide that fact, and there are any number of feminists who don't bother to hide it. And secondly, it has become a *prescription* for every movement of the oppressed.

Take the recent Socialists and Homosexuality Conference in Melbourne. The conference was open to non-gay socialists. In response, the Melbourne Women's Liberation Newsletter took it upon itself to make these comments:

The Collective notes that this conference is an *open* conference for socialists on homosexuality, rather than a conference of socialist homosexuals or a conference for homosexuals on socialism. We feel this is a serious move away from the concept of an independent Homosexual Movement which determines its analysis and strategies among the oppressed group

it represents. . . . We wish to seriously raise the question of the value being placed on the autonomy and independence of the Homosexual Movement, in the context of this proposed conference.

Now if a joint discussion between gay and straight socialist is a threat to the "autonomy" of the gay movement, that autonomy must be a very narrow and divisive thing. And the common tendency to extend the concept to every oppressed group offers the prospect of a very fragmented, squabbling movement for change.

From here it is only a short step to the suspicion that in reality the interests of different oppressed groups don't coincide. And sure enough, Hilary Wainwright comes right out and says so:

Neither is the merging of the movements any solution; there are good reasons for each movement preserving its autonomy, controlling its own organization. For women, blacks, trade unions, gays, youth and national minorities have specific interests which may sometimes be antagonistic to each other both now and

probably in a socialist society. (p6, emphasis added).

This is a very pessimistic view of socialism! It will be a class society (why else trade unions?) with different groups who have conflicting interests. In fact, it looks rather like capitalism. Real liberation would seem to be impossible, and even under socialism we will not manage to move beyond the fragments.

Here, the real importance of socialism, and so of revolution, disappears. A focus on reform would logically be all that's left for activists. Of course, with suitable rhetoric a piecemeal reform can be made to sound profound and radical:

The women's movement has been part of a new recognition which the welfare state has made possible. First, that we need the gains made by the working class and the feminist movements of the past. Secondly, that the existence of these gains makes possible new forms of resistance in which we can fight for control over welfare. Thirdly, that no improvement is ever finally 'achieved'. For within a capitalist

society, the original radical intention can be channelled or transposed into quite different purposes.

The first and third "recognitions" do not really contain anything new. But what is important here is the second: that we can find "new forms of resistance in which we can fight for control over welfare". This sounds radical and subversive. In reality it is sure to mean setting up women's refuges with government funding, only to find yourself cut in the cold with the next round of budget cuts.

Rhetoric or no, simple reform strategies would not sell this book. After all, capitalist society forces such struggles on us anyhow. They are not a strategy. But if liberation is impossible, the process may be useful, then there is and reform is unoriginal, then there is no way forward. The *Fragments* are therefore reduced to proposing an alternative to moving forward.

This cannot be stated openly; the groundwork has to be carefully prepared. One device for doing so is to place a great emphasis on taking things slowly.

"We need to move slowly", says the chairman of the shop stewards' committee at West Middlesex Hospital. "I think history is made very slowly", says Labour activist Gerie Roch. "Outside of left groups, we moved more slowly", says Lynne Segal. This is meant to be much saner than the "Whoosh-Superman" style of the Leninists.

It is also more comfortable, and can serve as a rationalisation for not doing anything ambitious — especially when combined with a stress on *understanding* rather than *changing* reality. So historian Joanna Bornat is praised for seeking "to understand men and women, their institutions and self-conceptions".

The concept of workers' control is attacked because "it does not illuminate the interconnection between different forms of power... It leaves us with a very limited understanding of how we come to be critical of our situation...". But the whole argument is best summed by Sheila Rowbotham:

We need a form of organization which can at once allow for the open expression of conflict between different groups and develop the particular understandings to which all these differences bring to socialism. For if every form of oppression has its own defensive suspicions, all the movements in resistance to humiliation and inequality also discover their own windows. This means that in the making of socialism people can develop positively their own strengths and find ways of communicating to one another what we have

gained, without the transcendent correctness which Leninism fosters.

Beginning with the *conflict* between different groups of oppressed, we arrive at the need for a dialogue, for which a non-alienated environment is needed. The making of socialism means people developing and communicating. It seems to have more in common with developing mutual understanding than with fighting an enemy.

Of course, the mutual understanding is essential — and unlike the *Fragments* authors, we believe it can really occur, and provide the basis for a united movement. But you get the distinct impression that, for Rowbotham and the others, it is a continual process which will never be completed. And they see the process very much as an end in itself. The goal is nothing, the process is everything.

For this process to go on, we need a nice warm environment. Hence the importance for Sheila Rowbotham of "prefigurative political forms". That is, forms of organisation which prefigure socialism. She sees this quality in groups and experiences ranging from the Owenite socialist weddings to Alcoholics Anonymous. She includes among them self-help projects like rape crisis centres — the radical-sounding, piecemeal reform projects.

And she comes close to saying that these projects are good enough in themselves, where after describing their limitations she notes: "In one sense there is no absolute solution within capitalism." (p. 138, original emphasis.) The implication is that there is some sense in which an absolute solution is possible under capitalism.

Like everything else in the book, prefigurative forms are not a new idea. Every movement in opposition to capitalism naturally tries to minimise the influence of capitalist alienation within its ranks, and to create support for its members in the face of the pressures of the surrounding society. We have no quarrel with that. But it can lead to something else: the notion that we can actually create little islands of socialism within a capitalist society, and turn ourselves into non-alienated individuals.

The Communist parties in the Stalin period — the most extreme, distorted form of the "Leninism" the authors opposed — tried to do just this. They expected their members to be "people of a special mould", and portrayed their internal life as a utopia of solidarity. The reality of course was rather different.

The danger in this utopian striving is that it paves the way for demoralisation,

when it doesn't work. Capitalist realities penetrate the organisation, and its members' behaviour doesn't measure up to the ideals. The activists consequently lose faith in socialism itself. If we can't treat each other in a socialist manner, they say, and if our organisation is full of capitalist features, how are we ever going to transform the whole world in a socialist direction?

The answer is that people, and groups, are transformed in *struggle*. This has comparatively little to do with organisational forms, or behavioural prescriptions, and a great deal to do with a political strategy that can lead a united movement to victory.

But as we have seen, the *Fragments* authors oppose such a strategy, nor is their perspective based primarily on struggle.

Who is the Audience?

Beyond the Fragments is based on a philosophy of individual subjectivism: of ideas which are valid because they come from within us. The immediate consequence is a refusal to accept that there can be any "answers" — that is, any correct strategy — because anyone's ideas are as valid as anyone else's.

Applied to movements of the oppressed, this fits neatly together with the suggestion that each group has opposing real interests, which will probably conflict even under socialism.

This deeply pessimistic appraisal is the underpinning for a perspective which amounts to plugging away for piecemeal reform, and establishing pleasant prefigurative forms where we can engage in endless dialogue.

To make this perspective credible, a vastly overoptimistic picture must at a certain point be painted of the strengths of the women's movement and, above all, a mixture of slander and confusion must be served up to clear away the arguments of those who do have a strategy, and who do base their work on the possibility of uniting all the exploited and oppressed.

And in case the whole house of cards crumbles under a serious scrutiny, the authors have one last weapon up their

sleeve. They attempt to immunise their readers against logical argument. In the concluding passages of her essay, Sheila Rowbotham writes these revealing words:

It has been difficult in the last decade for us to bring together our political experience. The versions of Leninism current on the left make it difficult to legitimate any alternative approaches to socialist politics which have been stumbling into existence. These Leninisms are difficult to counter because at their most superficial they have a surface coherence, they argue about brass tacks and hard facts. They claim history and sport their own insignia and regalia of position.

Here is the Catch-22. If the Leninists marshal effective arguments against the *Fragments* viewpoint, the reader is expected to be resentful. If they argue with evidence, that is just another example of their perversity (radical feminists will call it "male logic"). And if they point to the lessons of history, this can be dismissed by lumping it together with their "sporting their own insignia" — whatever that means.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of people prepared to be immunised. Which brings us back to our starting point: what kind of people like this book? Who would be attracted to pessimism, subjectivism, a bit of local reform work and a lot of cosy dialogue? And who wants this badly enough to block off any logical argument against it?

The answer is: a lot of the left, particularly the activists from what we could perhaps call the Vietnam generation.

This is the generation that came out of the heady mass mobilisations of the late sixties and early seventies. The generation that had such grand hopes for transforming the world. And many of whom put in a fabulous amount of effort, dedication and inspiration into trying to do it.

We have not done it yet. And set against our hopes, our achievements to date look pretty puny.

The women's liberation movement, which began with the exhilaration of radical new insights and so many personally liberating experiences, has been in decline since the middle of the seventies.

The students who became Maoists have seen China exposed for the state capitalist country that it is. Most have lost hope, and the handful that cling to Mao-thought these days confess to profound confusion.

We in the International Socialists,

though we have grown several times over since the Constitutional Crisis, remain acutely aware that we are very small compared to the problems that confront us. And it has been an exhausting struggle just to reach our present size.

Hence the attraction of a book which provides a scapegoat (the Leninists), makes a virtue out of necessity (fragmentation is desirable), and suggests that talk is more important than action — except for the local reform action which is all that many leftists feel up to these days.

For feminists, there is the added attraction of a fantasy world in which their movement has "a most extraordinary power".

The attraction of the book arises out of a real problem: the failures of the left and the exhaustion of the activists, and the inability of the revolutionary groups to provide a sizeable focus for mobilisation. Unfortunately, *Beyond the Fragments* offers no solution, unless you accept the solution of self-delusion and retreat.

The failures need to be analysed, the exhaustion coped with, the isolation of the left overcome. Among other things this will undoubtedly demand that Leninists face up to their own weaknesses and mistakes. However it will also require that everyone on the left

faces up to "hard facts and brass tacks". This the *Fragments* authors declare themselves opposed to.

But as Sheila Rowbotham herself says; we Leninists, whatever our faults, have a certain talent for it.

Footnotes

1. Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments*, second edition, London 1979.
2. Paul Foot, *Why You Should Be a Socialist*, London, 1977 p. 93.
3. Peter J. Morrison, "The Communist Party of Australia and the Australian Radical-Socialist Tradition, 1920-1939", Ph.D. Adelaide, 1975, p. 89.
4. Audrey Blake, "The Eureka Youth League" in *Second Women and Labour Conference Papers 1980*, Vol 1, p. 330-1.
5. Tony Cliff, *Lenin*, four volumes, London 1975, 1976, 1978, 1979.
6. Even Tony Cliff is writing a book on the history and problems of organising working women.
7. i.e. April 1981.

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WHOSE



BOOM?

"Now, at the end of this 30-year period of unparalleled expansion, unemployment and inflation are running at disturbing rates; economic instability has increased. Why? What has gone wrong?"

Bourgeois economists are in a flap over the continuing failure of the world economy to right itself. Similarly, left wing economists and marxists agree that there is a world crisis. The dimensions of the crisis make it difficult to ignore, though many economists make valiant efforts. From the mid-1970's the rates of growth of world output and trade have been lower, while inflation and unemployment have been higher, than in any other period since World War II (see Table 1).

These economic facts are only one dimension of the crisis. The instability of global capitalism is also apparent in the escalation of preparations for war, military conflicts and anti-imperialist revolution. These developments have shaken both US and Russian imperialism in Afghanistan, El Salvador, Poland, Nicaragua, Iran and Portugal. The well-trod paths of the American and Russian empires are increasingly unsafe for managers seeking swift profits and defence chiefs looking for secure military bases.

Given that Australia is thoroughly integrated with the rest of the world; through trade, investment and technology flows as well as "defence" pacts, it is hardly surprising that Australia has also felt the effects. Australia's problems are essentially part of international problems, whether they are difficulties in obtaining export orders, cut-price imports, surges in foreign investment or proposals for the deployment of Australian troops

	1960's	1970's
PRODUCTION (industrialised countries) average percentage change per year	4.8	3.6
CONSUMER PRICES (industrialised countries) average percentage change per year	2.9	7.4
WORLD TRADE average percentage change per year	8.5	6.8
UNEMPLOYMENT (90% OECD total)%	2.7	4.3

NOTE 1: average for 1964-1969 and 1970-1979
SOURCES: WE Norton "Erosion of Economic Stability, the International Environment", Paper presented to 50th Congress of ANZIAS Adelaide 12-16 May 1980
OECD Economic Outlook December 1980 Paris.

overseas and the increased presence of US military hardware and communications equipment here.

Recognition of Australia's place in the world is not a strong point for local economists of the left or right. Both generally take certain supposedly unique aspects of the Australian economy as the focus for their analyses of its future directions. Government policy, the scale of foreign investment, and the "resources boom" are paid particular attention by both schools.

Although their conclusions are contradictory, they both use neoclassical tools of economic analysis, coupled with conspiracy theory (in one case a conspiracy by trade union agitators, in the other by multinational corporations). Many orthodox economists conclude that with sound economic management Australia can avoid the problems of world crisis by riding the tip-truck's back. Their opponents think that unlike other developed capitalist countries, Australia is being turned into an underdeveloped nation.

This article argues that it is not possible to understand Australia's economy in isolation from trends in the world economy. It assumes that the world crisis can be best understood in terms of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.² Australia is neither an energy-rich paradise nor a deindustrialising inferno. Like the rest of the world, it is a purgatory for the working class while capitalists attempt to shift the burden of the crisis onto its shoulders.

The first section offers a critique of the Fraser Government's assessment of the significance of the resources boom. The following two sections deal with the "left nationalist" analysis of the Australian economy. In concluding I suggest some strategic implications.

Energy Paradise: Whose Boom?

Despite cuts in the social wage, real wages lower in 1981 than they were in 1975, anguished cries from some Australian manufacturers, and concern in Victoria's leading circles, the Fraser Government has been telling us for several years that the Australian economy is in good shape. Fraser is backed up by other prominent Australians, from the trendy Neville Wran to the reactionary Bjelke-Petersen.

Essentially, they all argue that Australia, or their own bit of it, is and can continue to be an exception to world trends, largely because of the wise policies pursued by their Governments. Fraser, for example, maintains that:

To have a new investment confidence alive at a time when world trade is

depressed and has been slowing, is a notable achievement. ... Moreover, the outlook for the early years of this new decade is very much more promising than that confronting the world economy.³

The OECD (the rich western nations' club) backs up this sort of statement to some extent. Its December 1980 report on the world situation predicted lower unemployment and inflation, and higher growth for Australia in 1981, compared to previous years and the rest of the world. But "the forecast is dominated by strong growth in business investment associated with the development of resource based industries".⁴ The July 1981 report saw a continuation of the growth trend, but with substantially higher inflation during 1982.

The resources boom is essentially the consequence of Australia's fortuitous geology and international economic developments. It has little to do with good economic management by State or Commonwealth Governments. Several other countries are benefiting from these developments to some extent, including for example Canada, Brazil and a number of African countries.⁵

The leap in oil prices during the mid-1970's and their sustained higher levels for the rest of the decade provides the backdrop to Australia's boom. In a period of high-priced energy, Australia is very well endowed with economically recoverable, energy-rich minerals—coal, natural gas, uranium and to a lesser extent oil. The boom advocates say that an expansion of resource development greater than that of the late 1960's and early 1970's is just taking off. They argue that, with sound economic management, the boom can sustain economic growth and benefit all Australians.⁶ (The strategy entailed in "sound economic management" is not something I propose to consider here. The contradictions between this strategy, based on cutting wages, and

TABLE 2
Proposed Mining and Manufacturing Projects at Committed and Final Feasibility Stage (A\$ billion)

Month & Year	Mining	% change	Manufact.		total	
			%	total	%	%
4/1979	8.05		4.40		12.45	
10/1979	9.11	13	7.24	65	16.35	31
5/1980	19.23	98	9.69	34	28.92	76
11/1980	23.05	20	10.33	7	33.38	15

SOURCE: Department of Industry and Commerce Mining and Manufacturing Industries. Proposed Projects Survey various issues.

working class interests is readily apparent to most workers, if not to Treasury economists.)

A resources boom is taking place in Australia. Large new coal, uranium, natural gas and metals, especially aluminium, projects are being undertaken. Table 2 shows the scale of the most likely new mining and manufacturing ventures.

It is true that the methodology used in the Department of Industry and Commerce Survey is open to some doubt,¹ but Australian Bureau of Statistics data

on new capital expenditure also indicate that a surge in investment has started. (See Figure 1.)

There is a correlation between Australia's faster rate of growth over the past couple of years and the start of a new investment boom based in the mining sector. (See Figure 2.)

Despite the resources boom, not everyone is as confident as Fraser and his co-thinkers about Australia's future. There are holes in his arguments, as well as the ground. The harsh realities of the world economy seep in through these

holes to corrode the foundations of "Australia: energy paradise". In the orthodox economic analysis of the boom, international factors are equated with movements in exchange rates and the balance of payments. The underlying causes of the boom in the international market go unprobed. These considerations place both the dimensions and duration of the boom in question.

COMMODITY BOOMS/COMMODITY SLUMPS

The output of a majority of the new projects which constitute the boom can only be realised, as income and profits, on the world market. The "Australian" resources boom is not Australian at all. It is a global phenomenon, caused by high international prices for certain commodities which make new investments profitable. Further, current prices are not the main determinant of future profitability — anticipated international prices are decisive in determining whether a project will go ahead.

The boom is based on a very narrow range of commodities. Almost 70 per cent of the new investment planned at the committed or final feasibility stage in the Department of Industry and Commerce November 1980 Survey were in oil, gas, coal or aluminium production.²

A majority of likely investment in large-scale projects is thus dependent on high world energy prices (electricity is a major cost in the production of aluminium). These investments are therefore very much affected by movements in one of the world's most volatile commodity markets, that for oil. Changes in patterns of energy consumption and even recent movements in both posted and spot prices for oil and current Saudi foreign policy suggest that the "energy crisis" of the 1970's will not be an over-riding economic factor during the 1980's.

Apart from the question of energy prices, all the investments currently being made and planned can only be profitable if the world economy and hence commodity markets expand at a significant rate. However, the experience of the last five to ten years and capitalism's continuing inability to overcome current low average profits suggest that this is a daring assumption to make. In the medium term, the better economic performance of Australia based on world commodity markets cannot continue while the rest of the world economy remains depressed.

The buoyancy of the Australian

economy is substantially dependent on the availability of overseas investment funds. The narrowness of the resources boom's commodity base, and its dependence on high future prices give it a speculative character.

The speculative bubble of new investment is likely to deflate or burst when there is a loss of confidence in the profitability of Australian resource-based investment as a result, for example, of a slump in prices for one or more of the main commodities involved, a briefer than expected cyclical boom or a deeper than expected recession. So far the investments which didn't happen — projects scaled down, abandoned or postponed such as the Rundle oil shale project, and the aluminium smelter at Bundaberg — have been aberrations from the trend. In one to three years' time they may appear as forewarnings of a down-turn in resource-based investment.

Not only is the "Australian" resources boom the consequence of international developments, it is also a component part of an international resources boom. Projects are being initiated in other countries for the same reasons as the Australian ones. It is a marxist commonplace that booms generate the conditions for later slumps. This is particularly true for commodity booms.

The prospect of high profits from a particular commodity generates investment. Since the investment is undertaken by distinct corporate or national capitals there is no way of ensuring that production will not outpace demand. Individual capitals gamble on their projects coming on stream earlier than or having other advantages over their rivals.³ Only globally-planned investment could avoid the cyclical booms and slumps of the business cycle.

The inbuilt tendency for capitalism to turn commodity booms into slumps is accelerated by nations and capitals whose interests lie in low commodity prices. For example, Australia's largest trading partner is trying to generate an oversupply of steaming coal by initiating or encouraging new projects in Australia, Alaska, Canada, China and the US mainland.⁴ It is even suggested that the Ministry of International Trade and Industry's forecasts for Japanese demand for coal have been deliberately inflated.⁵

During the 1960's, iron ore was a glamour commodity like coal and aluminium today, promising great and long-term benefits for Australia. With a stagnant world steel industry, and the

development of diversified sources of supply for iron ore, the picture is not quite so bright today:

In the past decade the price in real terms of our iron ore has fallen in that market (Japan) by some 20 percent, and the cost of iron ore as a percentage of the price of steel, has fallen from 13 per cent to 8 per cent.⁶

Coal and aluminium are likely to follow yesterday's star, iron ore, into obscurity as new projects come on line at a faster rate than demand grows. Eventually, in the next cyclical recession or the one after, prices will drop and stabilise at lower levels. In the medium term, the Australian economy cannot remain out of step with the world economy.

WHO BENEFITS?

Is the boom likely to improve the lot of all Australians while it lasts? Even in this watered-down form, the Government's arguments are flawed. Much of the income generated by resource projects will be in the form of profits. Without the prospects of above-average profits, the projects will not start. Without near-average profits, they will not continue to produce. This major component of income benefits a small number of people, the owners and controllers of the corporations which run the projects, whether Australian or foreign.⁷

The benefits of new projects do not flow on to other sectors of the economy at the same rate during the whole of their lives, even if the prices of their outputs hold up. The flow-on is concentrated in the initial and relatively short construction phase, during which the site is prepared, accommodation and other installations built, and machinery produced and assembled. During this stage, firms in sectors which produce the input for the projects expand their output. The level of employment at this stage is generally very much greater than subsequently, as the process of constructing projects is more labour intensive than actually operating them. The estimated direct employment on new aluminium, bauxite and alumina projects during the construction phase is 10,200 but only 4,700 during the operational stage.⁸

During the second, production stage inputs from other sectors will be restricted to transport, maintenance, some raw materials and services for the labour force. In the medium term, new projects do generate activity in other sec-

tors, especially in the manufacture of equipment. But because many of the inputs into new projects, especially machinery and equipment, are produced in capital-intensive industries, the employment-creating effects, even during the construction stage, are unlikely to cause significant reductions in unemployment.

The employment-creating effects of the boom may even be off-set in the short term by the growth in the work force and redundancies due to technological change, the consequences of falling profit rates in Australian industries, and the crisis in the world economy — for example through reductions in non-resource exports.

It is sometimes argued that the taxation system can redistribute the benefits of the resources boom to the whole "Australian community". At present, however, taxation redistributes wealth from the working to the capitalist class directly, in the form of subsidies, or indirectly through maintaining the capitalist state's bureaucracies, courts and armed forces. Cuts in Government expenditure on the social wage (especially health, education and welfare spending) and increases in indirect taxes on the necessities of life indicate that Fraser is intent on increasing the inequities of the system of public receipts and expenditures.

The resources boom has probably led, itself, to a redistribution to capital, through infrastructure spending. Power stations, roads, police stations, schools, harbours, etc. are largely paid for out of public income. The tariff structure for electricity for aluminium smelters etc. may also lead to domestic consumers subsidising large corporations.

The taxation system does redistribute wealth — from workers to capitalists and between capitalists.

The environmental costs to the "Australian community" of new projects are difficult to assess. The main source of information is environmental impact statements commissioned by the project developers. These costs also cast doubts on their benefits for all Australians. And to them we must add the continuing trampling of Aboriginal rights which accompanies the new projects.

Even the current relatively good performance of the Australian economy cannot be entirely attributed to the resource boom. The surge in real wages over the past year, in contravention of the Government's principles of "sound management", has undoubtedly stimulated the economy in the short term. (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 1
New Fixed Capital Expenditure for selected industries (a) by type of asset
actual expenditure — Original and Seasonally Adjusted series.



(a) Excludes public sector and all enterprises classified to agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, community services and construction. (b) Includes mine development.
SOURCES: ABS ref 5608.0 New Fixed Capital Expenditure in Selected Industries and 5625.0 New Capital Expenditure by Private Enterprises in Selected Industries.

FIGURE 2

FIGURE 2A
GDP Australia 1966-7 to 1980-1 (1974-5 Prices)

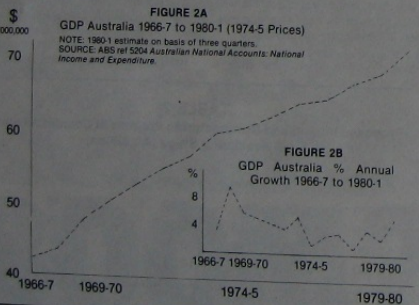
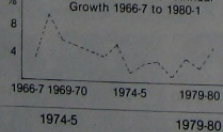


FIGURE 2B
GDP Australia % Annual
Growth 1966-7 to 1980-1



The wages push can be traced to:

1. Initial buoyancy in the economy and, hence, a tightening of some labour markets.
2. Sustained working class combativeness, despite over five years of indexation and cuts in the social wage, breaking out in a new militancy.

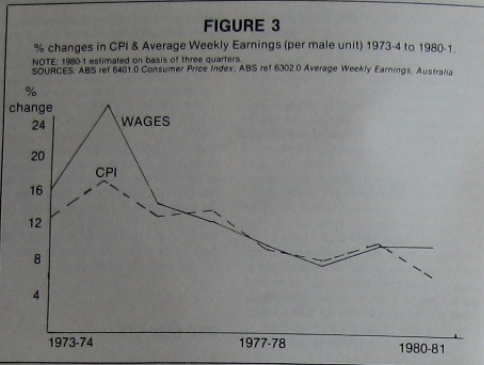
The initial effects of higher wages, already apparent, are an increase in consumer expenditure, a run-down of stocks and increased production. The longer-term effects are less propitious. Employers respond to higher wages by trying to avoid a reduction in their profits. They attempt to increase prices and may reduce production and investment until profits improve. (This is not to say that the struggle for wage rises is futile, only that it has to be unceasing and extended to fights over redundancies, etc., if gains are to be preserved.) The current wages push is likely to continue for some time yet. The main means the Government has for disciplining the workforce — unemployment — has diminished during the "boom". In order to combat inflation the Government will be under pressure to increase unemployment, hamper down the boom, and introduce harsher anti-union measures.

WORLD TRENDS

The conservative supporters of the Fraser Government and its policies are not the only ones to view the resources boom in isolation from its international dynamic. Economists on the left of the ALP and in the CPA have developed a "left nationalist" or populist analysis of the Australian economy and the boom. Left nationalist arguments are examined here, rather than official ALP policies, because they provide a clearer contrast to the Government's line. The left nationalists frequently use anti-capitalist rhetoric and claim that their positions have something in common with socialism. ALP policies, on the other hand, explicitly accept the current capitalist framework and are constituted out of an amalgam of elements from the Government's and the left nationalists' positions.

The following examines the left nationalists' analysis of the current economic situation and the policies which, they argue, will protect working class interests.

To some extent, the left nationalists do explain what is happening to the Australian economy in terms of inter-



national processes. However these processes are not derived from objective economic developments, grounded in the structure of capitalism — competition (economic and military), the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, class struggle. Rather, an international conspiracy underpins the analysis. The multinationals' "individual reorganisations, their individual plans are the myriad elements whose sum constitutes the crisis."¹⁴ The world crisis involves "the restructuring of the world's free enterprise economies by the multinationals."¹⁵

The multinationals have determined the role Australia is to play in the "new international division of labour": "Australian manufacturing is being wound down by deliberate intent".¹⁶ This process is labelled "deindustrialisation", and means that Australia is becoming a vast quarry, supplying minerals for overseas manufacturing industries. The Fraser Government is regarded as a puppet of the multinationals, which are the "dominant fraction" of capital in Australia.

The Infernal Pit

As with their right wing opponents, the left nationalists can point to some evidence to justify their case. The relative contribution of manufacturing to the Australian economy has declined. (See Table 3.)

However, the evidence does not

show that Australia is being deindustrialised. The tendency for manufacturing's share of economic activity to decline is a trend common to most developed private capitalist countries. Belgium, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden and Britain have all experienced falls in the number employed in manufacturing between 1970 and 1978.¹⁷

Falling manufacturing employment is attributable to factors other than deindustrialisation. New labour-saving technology has, so far, had a greater effect on the manufacturing than the services sector. With the diffusion of micro-processor technology through the service sector (word processors, automatic tellers, computerised cash registers, etc.) the growth of employment there is also likely to slow down. Manufacturing's declining share of GDP and gross fixed capital expenditure in Australia does not mean that there has been a fall in the real level of manufacturing output or investment. In fact these have been fluctuating. The trend can be explained by the faster growth of other sectors and a tendency for activities previously allocated to manufacturing to be attributed to other sectors because of, for example, in-house services such as advertising and accountancy, being contracted out and much wider use of leasing arrangements for capital equipment.

The resources boom is resulting in a short-term increase in the level of investment in manufacturing industry. The investments are particularly associated with aluminium production: alumina

refining, aluminium smelting, and associated industries such as the production of graphite electrodes. The construction phase for large resources based projects is leading to substantial increases in investment in Australian manufacturing especially of metal products.¹⁸ Even the Australian Industries Development Association, a lobby group for Australian manufacturers, concedes that the proportion of investment expenditure initially spent in Australia during the construction phase is likely to be high.¹⁹

The only way that left nationalists can maintain their deindustrialisation argument at present is by playing with definitions. They maintain that "resource based" manufacturing is not genuine manufacturing. However, this argument would eliminate the iron and steel industry, food processing, etc. from manufacturing as well. In fact, all manufacturing is based on the processing of raw materials. For marxists, the nature of the production process which is involved, the skills required, capital intensity, rate of surplus value, etc., are more important characteristics of industries than arbitrary distinctions between mining and manufacturing.

IMPERIALISM OR NEW WORLD ORDER?

According to the left nationalists, the multinational conspirators' plan for the world is "the new international division of labour".²⁰ Manufacturing production is supposedly being shifted from developed to underdeveloped countries. Australia is deindustrialising to South East Asia. James Petras has offered a critique of this theory.

Petras points to the continuity in the world division of labour over the past 20 years: "the overwhelming majority of third world countries are still predominantly exporters of primary goods."²¹ While cheap labour is a consideration for growing industrial production in a handful of countries (eg. Brazil, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong), this is only relevant for some labour-intensive industries, notably clothing, "but hardly a basis for sweeping assertions concerning a new international division of labour".²²

The new international division of labour theorists have been fixated by the experience of that handful of countries and taken in by the rhetoric of the

Trilateral Commission. These countries do not provide a model for the transformation of underdeveloped countries. Their industrialisation and that of other third world dictatorships is overwhelmingly dependent on investment from the centres of world imperialism and production for world markets. It is also determined by military considerations and the use of low wage labour to batter down wages of labour in advanced capitalism.²³ The nationalist theory is essentially a substitute for examining the underlying causes of the world crisis.

The new international division of labour, and its corollary in Australian deindustrialisation are, according to the left nationalists, effected by a number of mechanisms. These include increased imports, Australian firms going overseas, mining investment crowding out manufacturing investment and the Gregory thesis.

"Deindustrialisation" suggests that Australian industry is going elsewhere. This can occur either through imports displacing domestic production, or Australian production being shifted "off-shore". However there is little evidence to suggest that either process is significant.

A recent study of the factors responsible for the poor performance of Australian manufacturing indicates that the role of increased imports is small.²⁴ The main reason for the fall in manufacturing employment is that the market has failed to expand enough to offset the growth in labour productivity. That is, the effects of technological change, speed-ups, etc., were more significant than those of increased imports:

For manufacturing as a whole, the increase in the share of imports is estimated to have led to a reduction of 0.6 per cent in employment compared with a reduction of 3.4 per cent in employment due to reductions in unit labour requirements.²⁵

A survey of other studies of the effects of imports in different developed private capitalist countries has found general agreement that changes in trade flows had only small effects on the level of employment.²⁶

The argument for deindustrialisation through Australian firms going off-shore is even shakier than that concerning the effects of imports. Since 1974-75, direct manufacturing investment abroad has only been about 4 per cent of Australian net fixed capital expenditure by private enterprises in manufacturing. A tiny proportion. Further, consideration of Australian investment overseas has to be set off against overseas investment in Australia. When this exercise is

TABLE 3
Manufacturing Industry Share of Employment, GDP and GFCE

Year	Employment ¹		GDP ²		GFCE ³	
	Not(000)	%	\$ million 1974=100	%	\$	%
1966	1186.0	30.5	10,639	25.5	830	48.9
1967	1206.8	30.2	11,326	26.2	831	44.4
1968	1234.3	29.9	12,271	25.9	862	41.2
1969	1269.1	29.7	13,040	26.1	968	39.9
1970	1300.6	29.2	13,352	25.5	1104	36.5
1971	1316.9	28.7	13,724	25.5	1097	34.4
1972	1290.3	27.8	14,468	25.9	1025	37.6
1973	1301.2	27.3	15,209	25.4	1222	32.2
1974	1343.8	27.0	14,603	23.8	1547	33.9
1975	1220.0	24.7	14,555	23.2	1492	28.3
1976	1217.1	24.7	14,698	22.8	1748	29.7
1977	1184.2	24.0			2104	30.1
1978	1152.4	23.4			2428	28.0
1979	1164.5	23.4				
1980	1166.1	23.3				

SOURCES: ABS Employment and Unemployment, Australia, Ref. 6213.0
ABS Employed Wage and Salary Earners, Australia Ref. 6214.0
ABS Australian National Accounts, Gross Product by Industry Ref. 5211.0
Reserve Bank of Australia, Australian Economic Statistics, 1949-50 to 1979-79, 1980
ABS Seasonally Adjusted Indicators, Australia 1980 Ref. 1308.

NOTES: 1. employment at June each year.
2. financial year.
3. financial year, agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, government departments and enterprises, construction and community services excluded.

TABLE 4
International Investment Flows: Australia
(\$ million)

	Direct investment overseas in manufacturing	As % of total direct investment overseas	As % of private new fixed capital expenditure	Net inflow of manufacturing investment	As % of total net inflow
1973-74	90	37		157	42
1974-75	57	61	3.4	227	40
1975-76	47	28	3.2	186	45
1976-77	89	35	5.1	398	48
1977-78	109	55	5.2	238	29
1978-79	93	43	3.8	454	39

SOURCES: ABS Foreign Investment in Australia Ref. 5305.0
ABS New Fixed Capital Expenditure by Private Enterprises in Selected Industries Ref. 5626.0

undertaken it becomes apparent that there has been a consistent net inflow of investment in manufacturing. (See Table 4.) In manufacturing, as in other sectors, Australia has gained from international investment flows. There is no indication that the direction of net flows is about to change.

The mechanism whereby mining investment is supposed to draw investment away from manufacturing is also faulty.¹⁹ BHP's investments in mining are supposed to exemplify this process. Contrary examples, such as North Broken Hill's bid for Dunlop-Olympic early in 1981, are ignored. Capitalism would be simpler, and run more smoothly, if available investment funds had to be invested in one place or another, according to the rate of profit. Unfortunately, as the Whitlam Government discovered, this is not the case. Capitalists may go on "investment strike" if a Government is not behaving itself, or if profit rates are not high enough.

There is no guarantee that more investment would take place in manufacturing even if Australia were devoid of mineral deposits. For that to happen, prospective profits in manufacturing projects would have to be above the average profit rate. If this is not the case, funds may flow overseas or into non-productive, speculative investment, such as real estate or art works.

The Gregory thesis has been clutched by some left nationalists as another mechanism for deindustrialisation.²⁰ The theory is that large foreign investments in Australia or large receipts from new mineral exports will lead to appreciation of the Australian dollar. This in turn makes Australian exports

more expensive on the world market, while imports become cheaper in Australia. Both "traditional" export and import competing (especially manufacturing) production will suffer. As with many conclusions from bourgeois economic theory this one makes a number of questionable assumptions:

- * That increased incomes as a result of the boom won't lead to increases in imports which off-set the effect of foreign investment or exports.
- * That the level of profits remitted to overseas investors will not be an off-setting factor.
- * That Australian exports will grow much more rapidly in the future than they have in the past, despite the slow-down in growth of rural exports (and the arguments above that the significance of the boom has in any case been inflated.)
- * That the Government will stand idly by as Australian industry is crowded out by imports.

Multinationals firms and their alleged stooges in the Fraser Government have not been behaving in accordance with left nationalist scenarios. Between 1974-75 and 1978-79 average annual fixed capital expenditure by private enterprises in manufacturing was 30 per cent of the total. Manufacturing investment was over 35 per cent of total foreign investment. The proportion is even higher, over 40 per cent, when direct foreign investment is considered alone.²¹ Far from deindustrialising, multinationals (to the extent that they can be identified with foreign investment flows) have been doing more to industrialise Australia than local firms.

FAILED CONSPIRACY

Left nationalists do concede that the Fraser Government has made concessions to "domestic capital".²² The magnitude of these "concessions" is so significant that it is more useful to see the Liberal/National Country Party Government as the representative of the whole of the capitalist class, not just the multinationals. Two of the most strategic concessions are in the areas of foreign investment and protection.

During 1980 the Foreign Investment Review Board, the Government body responsible for assessing new foreign investment proposals, started taking a tougher line on mining projects. The FIRB is now insisting on at least 50 per cent Australian equity. The Government is accepting the FIRB's advice. In April 1980, the Government decided to deny approval for the Blair Athol coal project in Queensland, because of insufficient Australian equity. MIM's application for approval to purchase a share in the Oakey Creek coal project was knocked back later that year for the same reason.

Far from being an indication of the weakness of "domestic capital", the change in the FIRB's line is the result of new found vitality:

The way used to be that there was never enough Australian capital to enable the Government to demand from foreign investors 50 per cent local equity. Officials said this was no longer the case.

These revised expectations have arisen...primarily from a surge of domestic capital chasing investment in resource development.²³

If the interests of domestic and foreign capital were genuinely opposed, then Government guidelines for joint domestic/foreign ventures would be irrelevant. Appropriate concessions would involve subsidies to domestic capital raised through levies on foreign capital, because local firms were incapable of equity in large projects. This is the case in many underdeveloped countries, where the survival of the local ruling class is dependent on concessions imposed on foreign capital by the state, but not in Australia.

"Concessions" involving the protection of Australian manufacturing are directly contrary to deindustrialisation. If the multinationals and the Government wanted to do away with manufacturing industry then, presumably, the most appropriate concessions to domestic manufacturers would be assistance in liquidating their capital. Instead the Government is continuing

protectionist measures which raise the profitability of firms in "inefficient" industries. This encourages both continued production and investment.

The clothing, textiles, footwear and car industries are uncompetitive on the world market. Between 1969 and 1978 employment in textiles fell by 5.2 per cent annually and in clothing and footwear by 4.8 per cent. These, the weakest industries, are protected by the most stringent measures: import quotas. The Labor Government, with its 25 per cent across the board tariff cut, was far worse for them than the Fraser Government. (See Table 5.)

An attempt has been made to use the white goods industry as an example of deindustrialisation.²⁴ Domestic production in the industry is dominated by Australian-owned companies whose activities were concentrated during 1979 by the mergers of Simpson-Pope with Malloys and Email with Kelvinator. Unfortunately for the left nationalist, the share of domestic production in the Australian market rose after the implementation of a new Government policy (and after the mergers). The domestic share rose from less than 60 to more than 70 per cent.

In the car industry, export complementation is a means of integrating Australia more closely with world automobile production, while maintaining a local manufacturing base. Complementation involves local producers winning credits for duty-free imports by exporting cars or components.

This internationalisation of the production process is different from the new international division of labour. The former is essentially the closer integration of the world economy, especially of developed countries, prompted by competition and crisis. The latter is the relocation of production from developed to underdeveloped countries and is used by left nationalists to explain the crisis. Mitsubishi, one of the world's largest car makers, demonstrated its faith in the survival of a local car industry, though one reliant on the import and export of components, by buying out Chrysler. The Government is *defending* a local manufacturing base through complementation.

Australian defence policy is being used to protect local industry. Hence the requirement for off-set agreements with overseas suppliers of military hardware. The 1981 negotiations for 75 fighter aircraft from the USA involve 30 per cent Australian industry participation and, possibly, the construction of a titanium plant.

The Fraser Government is not intent on eliminating Australian manufacturing industry. Despite its free trade rhetoric and adulation of mining investment, the Government has consistently bowed to pressure from internationally uncompetitive industries, and rejected recommendations for dramatically lower protection from the Industries Assistance Commission. Its strategy is to use the resources boom to strengthen and protect the whole of the capitalist class by retaining tariffs and encouraging new manufacturing.

The protection of manufacturing capital by the Government is not the protection of jobs. All Australian industries will continue to be subject to pressures for rationalisation and technological change. These are the greatest threats to jobs, not deindustrialisation.

The left nationalists' analysis of Australian capitalism is deficient on a number of counts:

- * Australia is not being turned into a quarry. While there has been a fall in manufacturing employment and stagnation of real output during the late 1970's, these developments do not place Australia outside the general experiences of developed capitalist countries. The construction phase of the resources boom is likely to see a short-term upturn in manufacturing employment and real output.
- * The mechanisms supposedly responsible for deindustrialisation don't seem to be working. The effects of increased imports are small compared to those of the economic crisis and productivity growth. International investment flows are having an *industrialising* effect. The assumptions behind the assertion that mining investment is at the expense of

manufacturing investment, and behind the Gregory thesis, are logically and empirically suspect.

- * Those supposedly responsible for deindustrialisation — multinationals and the Fraser Government — are not behaving as they ought. Foreign investment has tended to go more into manufacturing than local investment, while locally based multinationals have no interest in seeing their investments wiped out. The Fraser Government is protecting and encouraging Australian manufacturing and limiting foreign ownership.
- The decisive factors in the Australian economy are the same as those in the world economy — competition, accumulation and crisis.

From Ho Chi Minh City to the Outback

The left nationalist economic analysis attempts to provide an explanation of the problems workers face every day. The attempt would be worthwhile if it generated new and practical solutions to these problems. Unfortunately as we will see below there are no real solutions in the "transitional programme to socialism",²⁵ "alternative economic strategy"²⁶ or "people's economic programme"²⁷, which set out the "practical" aspects of the left nationalist position. The programme usually sets

TABLE 5
Changes in Employment and effective protection,
selected manufacturing industries: 1968/9-1977/8

	% Average Annual Growth in Employment 1968/9-1977/8	% Effective Protection		
		1968/9	1973/4	1977/8
Textiles	-5.2	43	35	50
Clothing and Footwear	-4.8	97	64	96
Transport Equipment*	-0.6	50	39	66
Total Manufacturing	-1.5	36	27	28

*Transport Equipment is mainly car production
SOURCE: Industries Assistance Commission (IAC) Annual Report 1978-9

out a list of demands for greater public ownership, more planning, worker participation and measures to counteract the influence of the world economy on Australia. The latter, especially, are generally couched in nationalist terms, focussing on the multinationals as the main enemy. Exhortations to involvement in movements and mobilisations are appended to the demands.

Despite the inadequacy of their economic analysis, the left nationalists still find an audience for their ideas. There are three main reasons. First, that they are addressing real problems that workers face every day — redundancies, lower wages, cuts in social services and attacks from the Government. They also offer some strategies for overcoming these problems, often dressing them up in the rhetoric of struggle.

Secondly, the left nationalists appeal to the long tradition of labour nationalism in Australia. It is a populist ideology based on the assumption that "Australian independence" is inherently desirable and in fact obtainable. By selecting multinationals—symbols of modern capitalism—as their main target, the left nationalists link contemporary problems with traditional explanations and remedies. The third reason that left nationalists find an audience is the positions they hold in the labour movement as union officials and representatives of the Labor and Communist Parties. Many workers regard them as spokespeople for the labour movement.

The reasons for the inadequacies of the left nationalist programme can be explained, to some extent, in the same terms as its popular appeal. A key problem faced by many workers today is unemployment. A widely held belief, promoted by manufacturers, is that tariffs and quotas are a means of protecting jobs. Protectionism is the central practical policy implied by left nationalism. The second short-coming of left nationalism is that it sees nationalism as a potentially progressive force in Australia. Thirdly, left nationalists' understanding of the nature of the state is fundamentally the same as the ALP's.

PROTECTION RACKET

The specific practical implications of the alternative economic strategy are limited. But in one area it does offer immediate solutions to the problems faced by Australian workers. Tariffs may only be one part of the overall strategy, how-

TABLE 6
Average Tariff on manufactures:
level in selected countries, 1973.

	Semi-finished manufactures	Finished manufactures
Sweden	4.5	6.6
USA	7.6	7.9
EEC	8.1	9.3
Canada	8.4	10.2
Japan	8.6	11.2
Austria	8.4	16.0
Australia	11.1	21.0

SOURCE: World Bank, *World Development Report* 1978, p. 58 quoted in C. Hamilton, "Against Free Trade," *Australian Quarterly* 52 (1) Autumn 1980.

ever, they turn out to be the only practical tactic that is relevant now. Left nationalists see tariffs as:

... a means of pooling the community's resources, and particularly redistributing resources from the export sector to the rest of society.³⁷

They are also advocated because they allegedly help resist further integration into the international capitalist economy and save Australian jobs. Increased tariffs are only argued for by implication: if tariffs are effective, and manufacturing jobs are being exported, then presumably more tariffs will help solve the problem. The reason why Australian left nationalists, unlike their British counterparts, do not argue explicitly for higher tariffs and more import controls is that Australian manufacturing is already highly protected compared with other developed private capitalist countries (see Table 6). The left nationalists therefore prefer to portray themselves as defenders of existing protection against the onslaughts of the multinationals and their agents in the Industries Assistance Commission. Higher tariffs mean that the profits of protected industries increase, because they can charge higher prices for their products. Hence individual and industrial consumers subsidise their profits. Tariffs do redistribute resources: from unprotected industries to protected industries and from workers to employers, to the extent that the commodities that workers consume are protected.

Tariff barriers can not keep out the cold winds of the world economy. In fact they may be in the interests of multinationals which have production facilities in Australia, by protecting

them from the competition of other multinationals. Car manufacturers in Australia would be the last ones to want complete free trade in cars. Nor do tariffs protect jobs in the medium term. The main job-killer in manufacturing is the overall economic crisis, i.e. decline in markets, technological change and the rationalisation of production. Tariffs and other import controls stop none of these, though they do serve to raise the profits of capitalists in protected industries.

The problems of the world economy foster a beggar-my-neighbour response by different national capitals. Import controls, tariffs, export subsidies and dumping are all hostile acts in international economic warfare. Moves by Australia or other countries to raise tariffs can provoke retaliation and a reduction in the overall level of trade and output. During 1980, ASEAN, for example, threatened to retaliate against Australian tariffs and protection of Qantas. A tariff war would serve to reduce employment in export sectors and eventually sectors which provided inputs for them.

The left nationalist rationale for tariffs provides a useful smoke screen for unions collaborating with employers in submissions to the Industries Assistance Commission and in lobbying the Government. This practice has been most common in the clothing and textiles industries.³⁸ It is no coincidence that the clothing industry has some of the poorest conditions of work in Australia. Even the AMWSU has got into this act with its "Buy Australian" campaign. Collaboration between workers and capitalists fits neatly into nationalist analyses of the Australian economy. It is incompatible with a class analysis.

Arguments about protectionism accept the legitimacy of employers taking action to defend their profits. This opens the way to accepting alternative means of defending profits — through loss of workers' conditions and lower wages. Establishing a common ground of concern about profitability is at the heart of class collaboration. The socialist class position on protectionism was summed up in Australia about sixty years ago by Mick Considine:

The interests of the workers are not, and can never be, identical to those of employers . . .

It is over the surplus value that is wrung from the working classes in the place where they are exploited that the importers and manufacturers quarrel, and attempt to use the workers and the



Steel mill, Wollongong.

political representatives of workers to aid them in securing their respective shares of the plunder.

I say to Free Traders and Protectionists alike, "A plague o' both your houses." The working class . . . is interested, not in perpetuating the economic system of either of you, but in putting an end to both as speedily as possible."³⁹

NATIONALISM: PROGRESSIVE OR REACTIONARY?

The Fraser government's repeated appeals to national sentiment cast some doubts on the possibility of using nationalism in a progressive way. The history of nationalism in the labour movement should serve to confirm these. From its foundation to the 1960's, nationalism in the Labor Party was linked to racism and the White Australia policy. While left nationalists disclaim racism, the ideological basis of nationalism is the same as that of racism. Both see divisions other than those of class as being fundamental. Both nationalism and racism affirm that the enemy is "out there" working against "us" (Australians or whites). The nationalist streak running through Australian labour tradition has served

employers well. It has divided the workforce, promoting the identification of employee with employer, especially during wartime. But there is a parallel tradition, confirmed every day on the shop floor, of hostility to the boss and solidarity with other workers. This tradition is the basis of working class consciousness. Using nationalism to focus attention on multinationals, rather than on employers as a class, only serves to diminish the most fundamental of progressive working class traditions.

The theory of a "new international division of labour" shows the danger of appealing to nationalism rather than class solidarity. The theory can easily become a way of blaming the world crisis on the low wage labour of underdeveloped countries. Arguments about the "export of jobs" generally come down to the assumption that Australian workers have more right to employment than other workers, a quite different emphasis from that which stresses defence of jobs.⁴⁰ Sometimes this is argued for by pointing to the low wages and poor union organisation of overseas workers.⁴¹ But it is doubtful that workers in non-unionised industries overseas will develop better organisation or win higher wages if they are thrown out of work by Australian protectionist policies.

The most militant and progressive (i.e. anti-imperialist) expression of nationalism has been third world national revolutions. But even these revolutions have had only short term successes.

In the post-war period, countries which have sought greater self-sufficiency, such as Burma, and even those which have experienced national revolutions (China, Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, Yugoslavia) were eventually reintegrated into the imperialist chain.⁴²

Cuba and Vietnam are firmly within the Russian sphere of influence, while Yugoslavia and China are in the US camp. The land of the most influential post-war advocate of national independence, Mao, found that, in the long term, capitalism offers third world countries two alternatives: either independence, economic stagnation and a growing susceptibility to military domination, or subordination to imperialism and limited economic growth. The third world countries whose growth has been most spectacular have been precisely the ones most closely integrated with imperialism—South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil.

The marxist view⁴³ is that only socialist revolution in the west, opening up the massive resources of the industrialised countries for planned

economic development on a world scale, can allow the liberation of the oppressed nations. Even so, some countries like China and Cuba achieved short term gains from "national independence". Are even short-term gains a possibility if "Australian independence" were achieved?

In the short term, national revolution has some positive consequences for underdeveloped countries, because links with the world economy are attenuated. Capital outflows to imperialist countries are stemmed, placing resources at the disposal of indigenous state officials, intellectuals or capitalists. They seek to accelerate the rate of local capital accumulation, through investment. Severing preferential arrangements for imports from imperialist powers can open a space for local production for the domestic market. Employment opportunities in capitalist enterprises may therefore open up, providing alternative work for peasants and agricultural labourers. This, and the national liberation struggle itself, weaken the hold of feudal relations of production on the countryside and open the way to the capitalisation of agriculture. This may occur through a process of class differentiation or be imposed from above, in the form of "collectivisation". During the post-war boom there was thus some limited scope for economic growth and diversification, as the above developments exhausted themselves, before the pressures for reintegration with the imperialist system mounted. The end of the post-war boom has severely restricted the scope for independent economic growth and development for underdeveloped countries. The prospects for earning hard currency through exports has declined with world markets, while the strings attached to aid are increasingly stringent. Thus Vietnam was much more rapidly integrated back into an imperialist sphere of influence than, for example, Cuba or Algeria.

Australian independence and corresponding isolation from the world economy would not even offer the limited opportunities for development that are available to underdeveloped countries after national revolutions.

Australia already has a well established base for capital accumulation and a labour force long socialised into capitalist relations of production. "Independence" from the world market would lead to an immediate and long term contraction of the Australian economy. Exports constitute almost 20 per cent of turnover in Australian man-

ufacturing industries. 54.5 per cent of imports are capital goods or inputs into local production.¹¹ Deprived of export markets or imported inputs, many Australian industries would cease production. Without international investment the Australian economy would grow at a slower rate. Like other countries Australia is inextricably bound to world capitalism and can not simply opt out. National independence is a chimera: not only undesirable in practice, but also unattainable.

The nationalist content of the alternative economic strategy is sometimes justified in the following terms; multinationalals are the main enemy, because of their size, mobility and resources. Nationalism can be used to attack the multinationalals and is thus progressive. Breaking Australia's links with imperialism and the power of the multinationalals is the first stage in building socialism. Once this stage is achieved it will be possible to deal with domestic capital more easily.

This position assumes that it is possible to attack multinationalals without threatening Australian domestic capital. But the links between Australian and overseas capital are very close, especially in manufacturing industries. Nationalisations on terms unacceptable to the multinationalals could not be a matter of indifference to their Australian partners, suppliers and clients. Such infringements of private property set precedents for all capitalists. The

response to the "first stage" of the attack on capital will come from the capitalist class as a whole, not just the multinationalals. The purported advantages of using nationalism to divide the ruling class do not exist.

Multinationalals are not necessarily the worst employers and hence the best focus for anti-capitalist attacks. Because of their size, the capital intensity of their operations and their monopoly positions, they may well be more prepared to make concessions on wages, etc., than smaller local firms. Labour intensive, small companies are likely to be the most intransigent and reactionary in their employment policies, if they can get away with it in the face of union opposition.

THE STATE

The left nationalists inside the ALP are quite explicit about the importance of the Labor Party and Parliament to their strategy.¹² The position adopted by another current of left nationalists, mainly the CPA, is more ambiguous on the question of the ALP and the parliamentary road. The Parliamentary Labor Party is subjected to strong and often cogent criticism, while emphasis is placed on the role of the working class and the importance of mass movements.¹³ Does this amount to a real alternative to the stagnant reformism of the Labor Party? Unfortunately it does not. There is a huge gap between the

demands of the left nationalists, even the CPA ones, and their exhortations to build mass movements. When the practical behaviour of left nationalists is examined this theoretical gap broadens still further. In the absence of an explicit rejection of the existing state, parliament must be seen as the only means of filling that gap. Their programme therefore has at least four fundamental pre-conditions:

- the creation of a powerful and principled left wing inside the Labor Party. At present there are no signs that such a force is emerging.
- socialist forces inside the Labor party taking control of it. Past left wing factions in State Labor Parties, the socialisation units in NSW and the old socialist left in Victoria, have been prevented from doing this by the very structure of the Party.
- a Labor left being able to control the Parliamentary Labor Party in office. The possibility of such a situation has never arisen in Australia.
- a left Labor government holding onto office. The fall of the far from radical Scullin government indicates the pressures on any Labor government let alone one committed to a really militant programme.

Should the above preconditions occur (they are in descending order of likelihood), the ruling class can always fall back on its Governor-General, its armed forces or its unofficial assassins.

The question of state power is not something which can be decided in the process of building a movement; its implications will determine the very shape of the movement. Either the goals of nationalisation, etc., will be achieved by the existing state, in which case they are perfectly compatible with capitalism, or they require its replacement by a new state, and some discussion of how this can be done is necessary.

The alternative economic strategy embodies some important working class demands. That does not mean, however, that it has anything to do with socialism. Revolutionaries and reformists frequently raise the same demands. The question is, how can they be won? For reformists, the focus in reform struggles is on the reform; for revolutionaries it is on the struggle and the need to deepen it. The silence of the most verbally militant left nationalists on the means of struggle is indicative. Despite the new jargon, the left nationalist programme is only another version of old fashioned reformism, a jazzed-up, leftish version of the ALP platform.

Confronting the Crisis

Both orthodox and left nationalist economists take Australian developments as their main focus — attributing to the Government and multinationalals control over events which neither possesses. Neither exercises decisive influence over Australia's geological endowment, international commodity markets or the prevailing rate of profit. There are no signs that the world crisis will end during the current decade. Regional wars or the bankruptcy of individual economies may provide some respite. But in the long term, the prospect is for continuing stagnation.

The resources boom will not provide Australia with more than a short-term respite from the problems of the world economy. Growth rates and unemployment levels have improved during the construction phase of the boom. However this is only likely to last for another year or two, at most, until the world business cycle once again goes into recession. The end of the construction phase will be signalled by substantial falls in the prices of boom commodities. Hence the stimulatory effect of the production phase will be limited.

The situation facing Australian workers over the next period is not an inviting one. Even during the boom's

construction phase, the pressures of the world economic crisis will be felt in Australia. In particular, the Government will seek to reduce "unproductive" consumption of surplus value in public health, education and welfare programs, i.e. the social wage. It will be under increasing pressure from employers to take tough action to prevent rises in real wages. However, Fraser may prefer to wait until unemployment levels start rising again before taking on the union movement.

While there is some scope for relatively easy victories on wages during the construction phase of the boom, rationalisation, technological change and redundancies will still occur. After the construction phase, struggles will be increasingly over these issues and take on a defensive character.

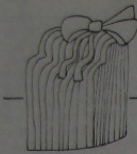
The key problems confronting workers during the 1980's will be those of rationalisation and redundancy. This will be the case in the car industry in particular. The car industry is dear to the hearts of the left nationalists, not only because of its strategic place in the Australian economy, but also because it employs many members of the AMWSU, the main trade union publicist of left nationalism. Yet their presence has been very disappointing.

So far the main official trade union response to changes in the car industry has been to debate about the effects of Government policy and possible alternatives. Conflict over the Government's complementation policies prevented any united strategy emerging from discussions amongst the industry's 16 unions.¹⁴

The lack of a strategy for fighting redundancies was most obvious in the dispute over the closure of GMH's factory at Pagewood in Sydney in mid-1980 where about 1500 jobs were lost.

At the first meeting of Pagewood workers to discuss the closure, trade union officials said there would be a fight to save jobs. By the time of the next meeting all union officials including those from the right wing Vehicle Builders' Union and the left wing AMWSU said the main issue was redundancy pay. The officials opposed occupying the factory over the demand for nationalisation and no redundancies. Some AMWSU and VBU shop stewards were in favour of such action.¹⁵ Occupations at ACI Pilkington in Geelong and AMI in Melbourne, initiated by rank and file unionists, played an important role in winning disputes. At ACI Pilkington one of the issues was redundancy.





WITH EVERY WORD
PROCESSOR ***



SOMETHING TO GOPE
WITH THE
REDUNDANCIES...

At the level of the trade union officialdom, the response to possible redundancies has been protectionist. The NSW Labor Council has asked the ACTU to consider bans on spare parts imports if the complementation scheme causes the closure of any local manufacturers.¹ The ACTU has made a submission to the Industries Assistance Commission as part of a joint fight with car manufacturers against draft recommendations for reduced protection.²

It would appear that the nationalist policies which have dominated the labour movement over the past period have led in practice to paralysis on the job and at the official level to fairly unimpaired protectionist policies. This is perhaps the most damning indictment of the left nationalists. After half a decade of sound and fury, from *Australia Uprooted* through the latest writings of Crough and Wheelwright, workers are no better equipped to face the crisis than before.

C. Harman "Theories of Crisis" in *International Socialism* 2:9 Summer 1980 and "Marx's Theory of Crisis and its Critics" in *International Socialism* 2:11 Winter 1981.

- Address to CEDA 1 October 1980.
- OECD Economic Outlook 28 December 1980* Paris p. 111.
- For the development of minerals production in Africa see G. Lanning and M. Meuller *Africa Undermined* Penguin 1980.
- For example see the Australian Treasury Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Natural Resources: *The Development of the Bauxite, Alumina and Aluminium Industries* Submission 41 February 1981 p. 3. "The main theme of this submission is that if the opportunities presented by prospective developments in the aluminium industry (and resource developments more generally) are to be fully grasped — if the promised new jobs, more efficient use of resources, increased real incomes and improved living standards are to become a reality — governments at all levels will need to ensure that an appropriate and flexible overall policy framework is maintained".
- See Australian Industries Development Association "Forecasting a Natural Resources Boom — A Critique of Methods" *Bulletin* No. 319 June 1980 p. 38.
- Department of Industry and Commerce *Major Manufacturing and Mining Investment Projects* AGPS December 1980, figure calculated from data on p. vii.
- See C. Harman "Marx's Theory of Crisis and its Critics", *International Socialism* 2:11, Winter, 1981.
- For an account of this process in the aluminium industry see A. Hodgkinson "Structural Changes in the World Aluminium Industry and the Implications for Australia", *Journal of Australian Political Economy* No. 9, November 1980, p. 50.
- M. Byrnes "Japan Aids the Planned

Glut", *Australian Financial Review*, 29 September, 1980, and P. McDonald "Japan May Not Want all the Coal it Claims", *National Times*, 1 February, 1981.

- M. Byrnes "Japan Pushes for Over-supply of Steaming Coal", *Australian Financial Review*, 14 September, 1980.
- Sir Russel Madigan, Chairman of Hamersley Holdings Ltd reported in *Australian Financial Review* of 13 April 1981.
- At present the Australian state takes a small share of company profits. Given the cuts in the social wage over the past six years, there is no indication that increased Government revenue from resource based development will be used to improve workers' living standards.
- Australian Treasury* op cit p. 39.
- J. Alford "Australian Labour, Multinationals and the Asia Pacific Region, *Journal of Australian Political Economy* No. 6, November 1979 p. 19.
- Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union *Australia Uprooted* 1977, p. 11.
- L. Carmichael "A People's Programme" *Intervention* 9 October 1977 p. 44.
- OECD Labour Force Statistics 1967-1978* Paris 1980.
- T. Connors "Mining and Metals Top Capital Spending Rises" *Australian Financial Review* 15 May 1981.
- Australian Industries Development Association — "The Natural Resources Boom — Its Implications for Industry" *Bulletin* 321 August 1980 p. 10.
- See E.L. Wheelwright "Cheap Labour Havens and De-Industrialisation" in *Australia and World Capitalism* Penguin 1980 for an exposition of the new international division of labour. The volume is a handbook for left nationalism.
- J. Peiras "A New International Division of Labour" *MERIP Reports* No. 94 February 1981 p. 28.
- ibid p. 30.
- See N. Harris "The Asian Boom Economies and the 'Impossibility' of National Economic Development" in *International Socialism* 2:3 for the special circumstances of industrialisation in Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong.
- J.S. Marsden and H.E. Andersen "Employment Change in Manufacturing: the Role of Imports, Productivity and Output Growth" *Australian Bulletin of Labour* 5(4) September 1979.
- ibid p. 61.
- ibid p. 67.
- The argument is put, for example, by Alford *op cit*.
- For example *Transnational Brief* 4 "Aluminium Overview" April 1981 p. 5. G. Butler "Fears for Australian Manufacturing" *Australian Left Review* No. 75 September 1980, pp. 20-1.

Feedback

Australian Nationalism and Permanent Revolution

From Tom O'Lincoln, Melbourne.

Valery Hall and Andrew Milner wrote some interesting things last issue, but I disagreed with a lot of them. As it happens, I can reply to both Hall's critique of my article on Australian nationalism and Milner's comments on "deflected permanent revolution" in this one article — both because the issues are linked, and because Hall and Milner share the same theoretical perspective on these issues.

In my article I argued that Australia's place in the imperialist system was that of a "small, white and rich nation acting as an independent springboard for the great powers". I sought to trace this role back to its origins in Australia's history as a settler state. In her critique, Hall makes some blatant

errors about settler states and about my argument. She begins as follows:

Certainly, Australia was once a settler state... But settler states eventually become settled, and thereby cease to be settler states... In the late 19th century and early 20th century, Australian nationalism could have been described perfectly adequately in these terms. Today, however, this simply no longer holds true. And for obvious reasons: because, on the one hand, the native population has already been entirely subjugated (almost to the point of genocide) and on the other, Australia has long since achieved political independence from Britain. In other words, Australia has already been settled.

This is all rather transparent. Firstly, a "settled" state with its own national indepen-

Programme, p. 12) are thinly disguised racism. Does investment by Australian corporations in Australia result in any benefit to the neediest people? In fact the larger the working class, as opposed to peasantry and marginal strata, the better the chances of revolution in the third world.

- For example, M. Griffin asks "International Solidarity with Whom? Non-Unionists? Shall we all be scabs together?" *Socialist Review* (Britain) 16 May, 1981. Griffin is a militant trade union advocate of import controls.
- For example see N. Harris *The Mandate of Heaven* Quaker 1978 for the fate of the Chinese revolution.
- See D. Hallas *Trotsky's Marxism* Pluto 1980.
- Industries Assistance Commission *Trends in Australia's Trade in Manufactures* Information Paper No. 3 1981 p. A53. Reserve Bank of Australia *Australian Economic Statistics 1949-50 to 1978-79*, Occasional Paper 8A 1980 p. 10.
- See B. Hartnett "Towards a Counter Strategy for Labour" in Crough et al, *op. cit.*
- See Carmichael "A People's Programme", *op. cit.*
- See *Australian Financial Review* report on 9 September 1980.
- Personal communication with VBU shop steward at Pagewood. Also see *Pagewood News*, "produced by Labour rank and file vehicle drivers at GMH" during the closure dispute.
- See *Australian Financial Review* report on 16 October 1980.
- ibid., 27 August, 1980.

dence can still play the role of spearhead for imperialism. Israel is the obvious example. I said Australia played this role, a role reflecting its origins as a settler state. I don't see that Hall has refuted that at all.

Secondly, settler states do not necessarily "eventually become settled". I doubt if the Protestants are ever likely to become the dominant population of Ireland, for example.

And in any case, Australian whites had subjugated the blacks, and gained independence, before the "early 20th century". Which brings me to my point. My argument had little to do with Aborigines, and a lot to do with Australia's role in southeast Asia and the Pacific. I wrote at length about Australia's "mini-imperialism" in the region, and gave examples of its peculiar dynamic. Hall says *nothing at all* about this.

Instead she diverts the discussion away from politics and toward a rather abstract, economic discussion about imperialism. She rejects Lenin's original categories in regard to the national question:

The postwar world simply cannot be analysed in terms of a simple dichotomy between a few imperialist powers and a great many oppressed nations...

That's true: there are other, mediating social formations. Australia is one. This is precisely what I sought to prove. But what is still perfectly correct in Lenin's approach to the national question is his distinction between oppressor nations and oppressed nations. And when Hall goes on to say that the world consists of "an international order dominated by two superpowers, Russia and America, presiding over an advanced capitalist sector" and, outside this sector, a "vast third world", she only confirms the point.

But Valery is not interested in this practical political point. She wants merely to lay the basis for a lengthy rehash of Michael Kidron's work on post-war capitalism. Now Kidron's work is very useful. I do not doubt that the information Valery quotes is correct (indeed, I was aware of most of it already). But Kidron suffers from a tendency to translate correct insights about the long-term development of the world system rather crudely into short-term political conclusions.

Take his statement, made at the height of the Vietnam war, that imperialism "is dying as a reality and therefore as a useful concept". Or his description of the western economies as state capitalist, an obvious confusion of tendencies with finished realities — with implications that have been correctly described as "Orwellian".

Hall suffers from the same tendency. Having established statistically that Australian foreign investment follows some

Footnotes

- P. McCracken et al *Towards Full Employment and Price Stability* OECD Paris 1977.
- I do not intend to devote space in this article to a defence of marxist economic analysis, a task which has been done thoroughly, adequately and repeatedly elsewhere. For an excellent examination of alternative theories of crisis and a justification of the marxist position see

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Feedback

of the same patterns as other advanced capitalist countries, and that Australian GDP is bigger than that of Holland, she concludes that Australia's role in the world system must be the same as that of Holland.

Very neat. But another glance at her tables shows that the GDP of Turkey is larger than that of Sweden. And quite a good case could be made out that Turkey qualifies as an oppressed nation, while Sweden certainly does not.

Statistics are no substitute for analysis. And in dealing with my article, they are most certainly no substitute for a concrete examination of the political patterns I was looking at.

The same mechanical approach appears in the discussion of permanent revolution in Andrew Milner's otherwise competent treatment of Trotsky. He takes up the concept of "deflected permanent revolution" developed by Tony Cliff in an article in 1963. It is restated, briefly and very incompletely, in *Trotsky's Marxism* by Duncan Hallas.

The facts Andrew cites are mostly correct. Russia in 1917 has been the only successful case of "permanent revolution". By contrast, in many third world countries there have been national revolutions, led by a "class of administrators and intellectuals" which established a fully "statified" economy. And the basic reason is that only the state can mobilise capital effectively enough to attempt industrialisation under modern conditions.

Andrew therefore concludes that the theory of permanent revolution is useful for explaining Russia, but not much more, and that Hallas clings to the term out of something like nostalgia. All very sweeping, but he forges a few things.

If Russia is the only case of successful permanent revolution, it is also the only case of successful workers' revolution via the seizure of state power and the smashing of the old state machine. Yet we still regard the Bolshevik revolution as the "norm". We resist Stalinist and populist suggestions that Russia was exceptional, and that guerrilla warfare or parliamentarism are more "normal" roads to socialism.

To a formalist this might seem unreasonable even nostalgic. But you see, we have a historical explanation for the uniqueness of the Russian revolution. The international working class suffered historic defeats in the twenties and thirties. These defeats both arose from, and contributed to, a prolonged crisis of leadership in the working class. And after World War II, there was a prolonged boom. It is our contention that the emerging crisis of capitalism will return the world to a "normal" state of affairs — normal that is for revolutionaries who believe in workers' power.

This historical dimension is totally lacking in Milner's comments. So he can write, for example, that national capitalist revolutions have been "widespread throughout this century". In reality, they have been largely confined to the postwar period. And the new

economic crisis has placed the viability of such experiments very much in question. One need only look at the collapse of the Chinese regime into a client state of the USA.

Which brings me to the final, and most important issue. Even during the boom, did all the third world state capitalist regimes carry out all the tasks of the bourgeois revolution? Andrew answers in the affirmative:

In fact, these revolutions succeeded in achieving the central tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution (national independence and national unification, redistribution of land in favour of the peasantry, the overthrow of absolutism and the establishment of a republic, the creation of a material foundation for an improvement in living standards, and so on) much as Lenin had originally anticipated the Russian Revolution would do.

Ah, but Britain with its private capitalism and Russia with its state-run economy achieved something more. They achieved the transition to an industrial society, and with it not only the material foundations for an improvement in living standards but the improvement itself.

This third world state capitalist regimes have failed to do. As Chris Harman put it, answering another writer whose approach to the question has a certain symmetry with Andrew's:

Nor for that matter have the regimes in China, Vietnam or Cuba carried through all the tasks of the national bourgeois revolution. It is mere apologetics to pretend that they have solved the problem of industrial development.*

Now this is a very important consideration. It is a point that is absent in Cliff's 1963 article, and in Hallas's book. That is perhaps the most important real weakness in our traditional presentation of the theory of "deflected permanent revolution" — a weakness that leaves the door open for someone like Andrew to take it to absurd conclusions.

Any new presentation of the theory must certainly correct this oversight. For as world capitalism moves into crisis, the unviability of nationally-limited "roads to socialism" (that is, roads to industrial development) becomes increasingly obvious. And therefore our belief that only the working class, as an international class, can end national oppression and achieve real economic development for the third world, becomes increasingly vital.

But what is this, if not the core of the theory of permanent revolution?

NOTES

1. Michael Kidron, "International Capitalism", reprinted in *International Socialism* 6 (old series), London, June 1971, p. 1.
2. By Andrew Milner in his "The Postwar Boom", *Front Line* (now *International Socialism*), Melbourne, October 1971, p. 4.
3. Tony Cliff, "Permanent Revolution", reprinted in *International Socialism* 8 (old series).
4. Chris Harman, "The Inconsistencies of Ernst Mandel", *International Socialism* (old series), December/January 1969/70, p. 41.

REDISCOVERING JEAN DEVANNY

by Carole Ferrier

JEAN DEVANNY's work, both her substantial contribution to political agitation — organising, broadcasting and public speaking — and her large output of novels¹ is not widely known or recognised.

Neither Davidson nor Gollan, in their histories of the Communist Party of Australia deal with her contribution at all,² though she was an active and prominent member of the party from her arrival in Australia from New Zealand in 1929 till her resignation in 1950. Literary critics have, similarly, almost totally ignored her work.

After being temporarily expelled* from the CPA in the early forties, Devanny never recovered her former relative prestige in the Party. Her autobiography, *Point of Departure*, projected in 1945 and completed in 1954,³ which furnishes her own account of her experiences, has never been published.

Pressure, both political and personal came to bear on Devanny when she tried to write her account of her experiences as female activist, agitator and writer. In the early fifties, the cold war mentality was still strong, and to publish a book making major criticisms of the style of leadership and methods of working, and of the treatment of women comrades in the CPA was to give ammunition to their opponents on the right.

In 1953, Devanny wrote to Miles Franklin about the self-doubt and psychological factors influencing her as she tried to complete her autobiography:

In the night I saw my best course to scrap the whole thing, burn the documents and forget about writing. I had a creepy crawl.

*Devanny believed that she had been expelled. However, Wally Clayton declared categorically in answer to my question at the CPA Summer School in Sydney in January 1981: "Jean was never expelled."



ly feeling that I should go away into the bush and hide for ever having imagined I could write. And in the same mail came a letter from a married sister in New Zealand saying how, when I began to write, they all took such pride in me, and how disappointed and shocked they were when I gave it all up for 'notorious' politics.⁴

As a writer (hence 'intellectual') and woman (with strong feminist beliefs) in the CPA in the thirties and forties, Devanny had encountered a great deal of hostility on all these counts: her avowed feminism had brought her into conflict with leading comrades in many of the cities she visited on speaking tours, and was probably instrumental in generating the animosity that was to lead to her 'expulsion'.⁵

If and when her autobiography is finally published, the background to her difficult relationship with the Party will become clearer. Devanny gave her own view of this in a letter:

The basis of all my trouble in the Party was my insistence on an absolute communist outlook on matters involving relations of the sexes. I always came up against, particularly up here [North Queensland] the vile and strong streak of petty bourgeoisdom in the members themselves in respect to sex relations.⁶

The Party leadership was authoritarian, puritan and dogmatic on sexual matters, particularly towards women. In Devanny's *Sugar Heaven* (1936), the character Eileen is not allowed to join because she is conducting an open extra-marital relationship ("women must be above suspicion to get in the party", p. 200). In the Party's publications of this period, the supposedly monogamous

I should like to thank Michael Hurd, Jean Devanny's grandson, for assistance and for providing the photographs published with this article. CF.

nuclear family was the mode of relationship extolled.⁸ Devanny's sexual relationship with Hal, her husband, ended in 1931 "by mutual agreement", and her affair with the figure called "Leader" in her autobiography also presented her with difficulties because of the double standard.

Devanny's problems also extended to the reception of her writing. Outside the Party, her novels were dismissed by a literary establishment preoccupied with denigrating the socialist realist mode — within which Devanny increasingly located herself — but they were not championed within the Party either, or widely translated into the languages of various Eastern European countries as were, for example, those of Katharine Susannah Prichard, always perceived by the Party as much more within its mainstream.

After periods of considerable ill-health, largely produced by the hectic pace at which she lived and worked through the thirties — one morning she woke up temporarily blind — and the personal trauma produced by her individual oppositional role and 'expulsion', Devanny increasingly gave up political activism and novel writing, and devoted herself to natural history and journalism (including a large amount of writing about Aborigines).

Devanny had come to Australia from New Zealand, where she grew up, in August 1929, at the onset of the Depression. She and her family were short of money, and she almost immediately got a job as a 'general' on a sheep station, an experience which gave her material for her novel *Out Of Such Fires* (1934). She then worked as a housekeeper and waitress in Sydney. Karl and Pat, her son and daughter had soon joined the Young Communist League, Pat becoming the secretary.

While participating in a protest march on the Domain in 1930, Devanny was arrested; according to the *Sun*, with an enthusiasm and flamboyance that was to become characteristic, she declared her intention of going to jail:

You all know that I am a writer. I am taking the four days as a protest against injustice. When I come out of jail I shall join the Communist Party.⁹

Devanny rapidly moved into prominent and public positions. As secretary of Workers International Relief she made a trip to Germany in 1931 where she met Klara Zetkin, and from there visited the Soviet Union. She was considered to be one of the Party's most effective speakers and was much in demand.

In addition, she was centrally involved from the mid-30's in the setting up of various front organisations which followed the shift in 1935 from the Party's analysis of the ALP as 'social fascist'. She played a leading role in the establishment of various workers' art groups in Sydney and Melbourne,¹⁰ and the Women's Progress Clubs in North Queensland.¹¹ Female membership of the Party in 1935 was only 200, out of a total of 3000: the task of politicising and recruiting women was one of Devanny's preoccupations and a focus of the approach she advocated in both the fronts and industrial work.



Jean Devanny

Her novel, *Sugar Heaven*, deals with the 1935 cane cutters' strike over Weil's disease. It also develops an extended argument about how the wives of strikers can become politicised by contact with other workers during a strike which breaks down their privatised situation within the family, and liberates them into further development and activity. Her heroine, Dulcie, is a conservative — indeed, a former scab — at the outset of the cane cutters' strike, but gradually develops into a position of solidarity with the working class through attending strike meetings and talking to the militants. By the end of the novel she is emerging as a leader of the women's strike support work.

In her literary production, Devanny had a strong sense of rivalry with Prichard, seeing her as having made time to devote to writing that she herself had not, and thus having achieved a higher level of artistic expression. Prichard, also, was in demand as a public speaker, and the completion of her goldfields trilogy, written in the 1940's, was

delayed by this work. Nevertheless, Devanny's impression of Prichard when they met in the early 30's was: "I saw at once there was nothing of the jack of all trades about her, that is my bane."¹² Devanny increasingly came to feel that she had not given enough attention (or simply time) to craft in writing her novels.

Tension associated with her membership status in the Party since 1942 was alleviated by a visit to Cairns by Wally Clayton in January 1944. "He told me I should not fear but that now at long last circumstances have demanded a clearance of it, and they have taken the trouble to investigate the dreadful things done to me, I shall be given continuity of membership and my name be cleared."¹³ Devanny reported to her friend, Frank Rylands. But she nevertheless felt the need to remove herself periodically from political work in order to write seriously, in this case to complete her projected sugar industry trilogy. By 1946, the manuscript of *Cindie* was with Robert Hale and was published in 1949, shortly before Devanny resigned from the Party.

Over the second volume, *One Can't Have Everything*, dealing with the same characters, Devanny had trouble, and it still remains unpublished. The Australasian Book Society was unwilling to publish it; Devanny engaged in acrimonious correspondence with the Society about its publication, and appealed fruitlessly for Sharkey's intervention. Comrades still in the Party saw her as not putting the 'party line' in the politics of her book. Ted Bacon wrote in 1960:

The responsible comrades are quite definite that they cannot recommend publication of the book in its present form. Apart from other objections, they are critical of the fact that a wealthy farmer's family affairs are made the central theme.¹⁴

The crudity of this in fact outdoes Zhdanov's pronouncements at the 1934 Annual Union Congress of Soviet Writers, in which he had at least suggested that there might be some difference between the literature produced in the Soviet Union after 1919 in the spirit of "revolutionary romanticism", and that produced by writers with a 'socialist realist' method in the countries which had not gone through a revolution. Prichard, in 1950, had encountered criticism from a Soviet critic of her presentation of the role of an almost non-existent CPA in the second novel of her goldfields trilogy, *Golden Miles*.¹⁵ Devanny, similarly, had difficulties

in presenting a CP intervening when it had not been capable of it; she wrote to S. Murray Smith:

One Can't Have Everything is absolutely suited to present conditions up here. It is needed. There is a repetition of the 1929 events I feature. I am in doubt about the statements attributed to communists. It is the one un-true note. There were no communists here at that time capable of making intelligent statements. We could discuss that.¹⁶

This letter also interestingly demonstrates the growing importance to Devanny of literary production and her sense of its being an important practice.

Devanny increasingly came to feel that a writer should move backwards and forwards from work to political agitation to literary production. Writing to Lance Sharkey in 1959, not long before her death in 1962, and having given up entirely agitational work since 1952 she asserted:

My own experience assures me that manual labour, experience of the worker's life, is essential to the unity of art and politics; without this experience, the worker cannot write with the ardour and passion that inspires workers to fight for socialism. It is good therefore to engage in manual labour between books ...

Comrades should be exempt even from branch meetings when writing. Attending the branch, writers like Hardy and myself, good platform workers and intensely interested in all aspects of Party work, became torn all ways, exhausted physically and mentally. Whereas if left alone to torture out conclusions from the experience already garnered, when the job is done one can return to routine Party work, to manual labour, to joy in a good job well done and prepared to wrestle out new ideas from renewed contact with workers in the mass.¹⁷

She was not very successful at this moving backwards and forwards herself, and subsequently came to believe that she had expended too much energy on action and not enough on recordings (around either class or sexual politics) writing in demoralised terms to Miles Franklin in 1953:

Oh Miles, how I have wasted my life. I'm done for now and yet I feel I had it in me to do good work ... I realise that I have not explored the small measure of ability for writing that I possess one whit. I have never really got down to it and thought. That was reserved for politics.¹⁸

Devanny was unduly hard on herself. Many of her novels are interesting in different ways; her earlier novels, set in New Zealand, being particularly notable for their presentation of female characters, her novels such as *Sugar*



Jean Devanny cutting cane in Northern Queensland.

Heaven, Paradise Flow and *Cindie* being illuminating documents of working class life and struggles.

The response to them by more recent left wing critics has been inadequate. Jack Beasley in *Red Letter Days*¹⁹ doesn't give any space to Devanny — but wrote a short 'book'²⁰ about Prichard. Drušila Mojseska's comments: "Jean Devanny was not a good writer and she herself recognised that most of her novels were written either to make money or to make a political statement,"²¹ is unexpectedly close to establishment notions of 'literary value'. Ian Reid also fails to discuss Devanny's work in any detail — perhaps because of unfamiliarity with it — in his innovative account of the literature of the Depression years.²²

One criticism that perhaps can be made is that, despite her earlier comparative frankness in the presentation of sexual relationships and problems, she later played with the idea of using 'sexual interest' as bait to draw readers to swallow the 'message' of a novel. She criticises Dymphna Cusack's *Southern Steel* (1953) in a letter for containing

"great gobbits of crude sex," but then goes on to say: "it is a moot point whether a writer is not justified in including this sort of thing, in order to get his message over."²³

In a letter to Les Greenfield of the ABS she comes down on the other side:

[*Bobbin Up* by Dorothy Hewitt] tends to offend some people, you know, with its frank sex talk. One woman who read it told me she wouldn't leave it where her teenage daughter could get it. ... I may have to renounce my idea that a writer may be justified in using slabs of sex stuff to put over a working class message. Another woman quoted Mr. Kruschke's talk of pornography in America against it.²⁴

Devanny was caught between two stools because of the ambiguous position of women and women writers, generally, and within the Communist Party, in the 1930's and 40's. She tried to be a working-class intellectual and activist at the service of the party and also to bend her novel writing to the didactic mode of the socialist realist novel. Some of the problems she faced are discussed in her *Roll Back the Night* through the central character of Helen who engages in



Jean Devanny with striking workers

debates with her friend Eleanor about being a writer and about the writer's relationship to active struggles:

"Helen, you raise again my own individual problem... Should people like me, powerful and dynamic, put writing and everything else aside and plunge into the actual struggles of the people?"

"No, no! You are participating in the actual struggles of the people by writing..."

... Marx was a writer, Engels, Lenin, Stalin all writers. Writers are the leaders of the people. A writer must be on one side of the people's struggles or the other." (pp 184-5)

If Devanny can speak for herself, to an audience again, through reprinting of her novels, and the publication of her autobiography and other unpublished writings, an assessment of the contribution she made, both in writing and in action, will become possible. At present her voice is almost silenced.

Footnotes

1. Devanny's novels set in Australia and based on her experiences there are *Out Of Sack Fines*, N.Y. Macaulay (1934); *The Ghost Wife*, Duckworth (1935); *The Virtuous Courtesan*, N.Y. Macaulay (1935); *Sugar Heaven*, Modern Publishers, Sydney (1936); *Paradise Flow*, Duckworth (1938); *Roll Back The Night*, Robert Hale, London (1945); *Cindie*, Robert Hale (1949).
2. For an account of Devanny's earlier novels set in New Zealand, see my "Jean Devanny's New Zealand Novels", *Heate* VI, 1, February 1980, 36-47 and, for a

short discussion of the novels set in North Queensland, my "Jean Devanny's Queensland Novels", *Ling* VIII, 3, 1980, 20-30.

Devanny's first novel, *The Butcher Shop* (1926), is shortly to be republished by Auckland University Press with an introduction by Heather Roberts, and Red-back Press in Melbourne plan to republish *Sugar Heaven*. It is to be hoped that further reprints will follow.

3. The two main historical accounts of the early development of the CPA: Alastair Davidson, *The CPA: A Short History*, Stanford University, 1969, and Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement, 1920-1955*, ANU Press, 1975, do not so much as mention Devanny — except that *Sugar Heaven* is listed in Davidson's book in the "Literary" section of his bibliography.
4. In a letter of 8.4.45 she comments: "I really must complete my autobiography before long. I have such a lot to say about classes." Letter to Frank Rylands, N.L., Queensland University Press will reportedly publish one of the several drafts some time in the future.
5. Letter to Miles Franklin, 28.10.53, M.L.
6. Letter to Frank Rylands, 8.4.45, N.L.
7. For a discussion of this, see Joyce Stevens, "Work Among Women in the CP, 1920-1940", (unpublished paper, 1980) and Tom O'Lincoln, "Women and the CPA, 1946-1968", *Heate*, VI, 1, February 1980, 53-66.
8. See Jean Devanny, "The Worker's Contribution to Australian Literature", in *Australian Writers Speak*, A & R, Sydney & London, 1942.
9. Cited in autobiographical material. Devanny wrote at least three drafts of her

autobiography; this material was at JCUL or in the possession of Pat Hurd, Devanny's daughter who, I regretfully note, died recently.

9. For an account of Devanny's work, often with Prichard, in this sphere, see Chapter 4 of Drusilla Modjeska, "Women Writers: A study in Australian Cultural History, 1920-1939", Ph.D. thesis, University of New South Wales, 1979, to be published in 1981 by Angus and Robertson.
10. For an account of these clubs see Diane Menghetti, *The Red North*, Studies in North Queensland History, No. 3, 1981, James Cook University, Ch. 6.
11. Cited in autobiographical material *op cit*.
12. Letter of 3.1.44 to Frank Rylands, N.L.
13. Letter of 31.3.60, JCUL.
14. This is discussed in Ric Throssell, *Wild Weeds and Wind Flowers*, A & R, 1975, 160.
15. Letter to S. Murray Smith, 29.8.57, JCUL.
16. Letter to Lance Sharkey, 2.7.59, JCUL.
17. Letter to Miles Franklin, 14.8.53, M.L.
18. Jack Beasley, *Red Letter Days*, Australasian Book Society, 1979.
19. *The Rage For Life*, Current Book Distributors, Sydney, 1964.
20. Modjeska, *op cit*.
21. Ian Reid, *Fiction and the Great Depression: Australia and New Zealand, 1930-1950*, Edward Arnold, 1979.
22. Letter to Frank Rylands, 10.8.59, N.L.
23. Letter to Les Greenfield, 6.10.59, JCUL.

ABBREVIATIONS:

JCUL: James Cook University Library
N.L.: National Library, Canberra
M.L.: Mitchell Library, Sydney

REVIEWS

War for the Asking

The Vietnam war was a great trauma for liberals. Their faith that things were getting better, however slowly, under capitalism, received a massive shock. Here was a brutal war for no good purpose. And worst of all, as it unfolded, the basic dishonesty of our rulers was revealed.

The war was supposed to be for democracy, but basic perversions of democracy were needed at home to prosecute it. The government didn't tell us the truth about the war — and it is this fact, as much as the bloodshed, that seems to horrify liberals to this day. It is this fact that Michael Sexton appears bent on documenting in his book, *War for the Asking*, with its revealing subtitle, "Australia's Vietnam Secrets".

Here is an antipodean "Pentagon Papers", writ suitably small, but complete with inside dope including facsimiles of diplomatic cables. If you want a look at the sordid details of an imperialist adventure, perhaps you will want to fork out six bucks for it.

Many Marxists will think twice. The dishonesty of the bourgeoisie should be no surprise, nor is it really very interesting. It is not as if capitalism would be more bearable if it were brutally honest.

Still the book is significant. It is important because it documents, even if in a hesitant and piecemeal fashion, a traditional thesis of the International Socialists and this journal — one I attempted to set out in my article, "An Imperialist Colony?" in *IS/D*.

Leftists traditionally contend that Australia got dragged into Vietnam by nasty old US imperialism. I suggested that "Australia did a fair bit of dragging itself." But my only documentary evidence was one article in the *National Times*. My main argument was a broader historical thesis that Australia has always functioned as a spearhead for imperialism in the region, and is usually more hawkishly pro-imperialist than the great powers.

Sexton has done me an immense favour by providing a mass of evidence showing how fully this thesis is borne out by the Vietnam war. In the opening chapter he writes:

[The war] was an opportunity to support and to encourage the United States in its aims, however unrealistic, and to draw it completely into a Southeast Asian war, however debilitating this course might be in the long term for the region or for the United States itself. . . .

Hence the cable in December 1964 from the ambassador in Washington to Paul Hasluck complaining that the "somewhat irresolute American attitude gives cause for increasing anxieties." Canberra was determined to put some backbone into the American stance.

In addition to pressing the Americans to bomb North Vietnam, Australia at this time was concerned to dissuade them from any idea of negotiating with Hanoi. This stand followed automatically from the Australian desire to see the war widened.

In 1965 the Americans were still not totally committed to the Vietnam effort. "The plan was therefore that the Canberra hawks should combine with their Washington counterparts to overcome the doubters in the American administration."

But dragging America deeper into the mire went hand in glove with another, subsidiary exercise. The Menzies government wanted an Australian military presence in Vietnam too. Washington was less than enthusiastic:

... the Pentagon had little interest in an Australian contribution. In fact it was opposed to the use of non-American fighting personnel in Vietnam. But the Australian diplomats and politicians who were eventually to bring about a combat commitment in Vietnam had quite a different set of priorities.

There followed "four months of badgering" to get the State Department to formally request Australian military involvement. Dean Rusk finally and rather grudgingly agreed that it would be "helpful". But one obstacle remained: the government of South Vietnam did not want Australian help. It took a further fortnight of arm twisting before they agreed — *after* Menzies had already announced that the diggers had been "requested" by Saigon.

No sense can be made out of this train of events without a realistic look at US imperialism and Australia's peculiar role as its junior partner. But that is not where Sexton is at. Consequently a rather pitiful and insightful account of events is followed by the wishy-washiest of conclusions.

Our foreign relations must be "more mature". Our past interaction with Southeast Asia has "not been propitious". Perhaps a United Nations code on transnational corporations will help, he suggests.

On the other hand, writes Sexton, the presence of bases like North West Cape and Pine Gap may be "more rational" than our Vietnam exercise.

Sexton is to be thanked for his empirical work. But let's hope that someone with less flabby politics writes a serious history of

Australian participation in the Vietnam War sometime soon.

Tom O'Lincoln

Nazi-Zionist Collaboration

Nazi-Zionist Collaboration by Albert Langer. Published in Britain by DAZO (British Anti-Zionist Organisation), Palestine Solidarity, AZAN (Anti-Zionists Against Nazis) in co-operation with JAZA (Jews Against Zionism and Anti-Semitism) Australia. 120pp. Price \$3.00. Available soon in Australia.

"Some of my best friends are Jews" is a favourite saying of anti-semites who are denying their anti-semitism.

Adolf Eichmann, in charge of the Final Solution for European Jewry said of a Jewish "friend":

By Kastner is a young man about my age, an ice cold lawyer, and a fanatical Zionist. He agreed to help keep the Jews from resisting deportation — and keep order in the collection camps — if I would close my eyes and let a few hundred Jews emigrate to Palestine.

His friend was in fact prepared to sacrifice 100,000 Jews so long as his political goal of the construction of Israel could be achieved. Eichmann's friend was very useful to the SS — he could keep the deportation camps peaceful. All Kastner wanted was to make it possible for a select group of Hungarian Jews to migrate to Palestine.

Kastner is the villain of Nazi-Zionist collaboration. He is the epitome of a collaborator in Europe during the Second World War.

In 1979 the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies took offence at broadcasts from Community Radio station 3CR in Melbourne. Their main complaint was that programmes presented by Palestinians and anti-Zionists contained allegations of Nazi-Zionist collaboration.

Albert Langer, spokesperson for Jews Against Zionism and Anti-Semitism, researched and documented evidence of the collaboration in support of 3CR. He has now published his research in this booklet.

The collaboration began when Hitler came to power in Germany.

The anti-Jewish pogroms started in 1933. The Zionists capitulated. The minority Zionist Union called for the "new German state" to recognise the Zionist movement as

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the representative of German Jewry, and said that government-assisted emigration would provide an answer to the Jewish question. But the Zionists offered what they would pressure Jews throughout the world to call off the boycott of German goods.

The Zionists supported a racial apartheid between Jews and Germans. Jews were not Germans, they were foreigners in Germany. They were assimilable.

These ideas were a godsend to the Nazis. Here were some Jews who in practice supported their racial purity theories. In return, the Zionists press was allowed to continue whilst non-Zionist publications were banned. As Langer says, "... works by Chaim Weizmann and David Ben Gurion appeared quite legally under the regime that considered it necessary to burn the works of Heinrich Heine because the great German poet was a Jew".

The Nazis exerted pressure on the Jews to emigrate, especially to Palestine, then a British mandate.

Again the capitulation to Nazism was rewarded. The Nazis dissolved the German Board of Deputies, and replaced it with their own body. All the leading positions, appointed by the Nazis, went to Zionists.

There is a widespread argument that because the German Jews always maintained that they were good Germans, and they believed that the German people would not harm them, there was no reason for them to leave Germany. This led to their liquidation.

But if they were to leave, the question always posed was - where? The Zionists said only to Palestine. And not only that. They wanted to select suitable emigrants. Non-Zionists just wanted to get out. This insistence on Palestine divided the Jewish community, making effective opposition to the Nazis impossible. Zionism just became a part of the Nazi foreign policy to embarrass the British in Palestine.

When the war started, the collaboration continued. Whole city and suburban districts were surrounded by walls or barbed wire and called ghettos. Jews were rounded up in the ghettos in anticipation of their trip to the concentration camps.

The administration of the ghetto was controlled by the Judenrat (Jewish Council). They were the ones that compiled the lists of people and property and distributed the Yellow Stars. The Budapest Council, for instance, was granted the right of absolute disposal of Jewish wealth and manpower. The Judenrat served as a tool for the Nazis to keep Jews misinformed, confused and submissive. They delivered the Jews to the gas chambers.

Without the Judenrat, many Jews could have been saved.

What Langer insists on is that the Jewish leadership co-operated with the Nazis. And he also says that increasingly the leadership of the Jewish communities was Zionist.

Not all Zionists collaborated, and not all collaborators were Zionists. But the fact remains that two thirds of the membership of the Judenrat were Zionists. There was, however, a resistance. The most widely known example, the Warsaw ghetto, was the exception rather than the rule. In general, left wingers (Communists and Bundists) and Revisionists (right wing Zionists) were strongest in organising the resistance. But even these groups were represented on the Judenrat.

Collaboration with imperialism was intrinsic to the Zionist movement. Langer uses the case of Kastner to illustrate the collaboration between Zionism and German imperialism.

Kastner was accused by an Auschwitz escapee of being a member of a "small group of quislings [who] knew what was happening to their brethren in Hitler's gas chambers and bought their own lives with the price of silence... Kastner went to Eichmann and told him, 'I know of your plans; spare some Jews of my choice and I shall keep quiet...'

An Israeli Zionist, Malchiel Greenwald, published the accusations and the Israeli government prosecuted him for criminal libel.

In 1953 the verdict was given. The Israeli judge found that Eichmann, the architect of the holocaust, knew that the Jews of Europe trusted their leaders. The judge also found that there was no resistance in the ghettos, no revolt against the guards, no escapes across the borders, no sabotage against the deportations. Eichmann collaborated with the Zionists, whom he trusted. Kastner enjoyed the patronage of the Nazis; for he could guarantee that the Jews would go to the gas chambers. The rescue of prominent Hungarian Jews was Kastner's price. The trial judge found Greenwald innocent.

The government appealed. The majority of the appeal court found that Kastner was "morally justifiable" in his actions. They found that Hungarian Jews were incapable of resistance. This was the same sort of contempt that Kastner had for them.

This self-righteousness, the mentality that justifies the actions of the terrorist Begin, but considers that the Arabs are undermenchen, that says that Zionism cannot do any wrong, put the court into the same camp of the collaborators.

In 1957, the Israeli Secret Service killed Kastner. Not to avenge Hungarian Jewry, but to silence him. For Kastner claimed that everything he did was approved by the Jewish Agency (World Zionist Organisation) in

Palestine.

The world Zionist movement approved of Kastner, approved of his collaboration. But they could have followed another course. The Zionist movement had the financial and organisational resources to send arms and ammunition to the ghettos. Instead they smuggled arms to Palestine. They said it was more important to use money to buy land in Palestine from the Arabs.

The Zionist movement had political influence, but they used their access to the allies to hinder the rescue of European Jewry. Instead of heading advice to pressure the allies to bomb the ovens of Auschwitz to stop the murder of 12,000 per day, they argued that only those who split blood would sit at the table that decided the world up after the war.

In 1943 the Zionists stifled an attempt by British MPs to move to allow refugees into Britain and its territories. They said, "Why no Palestine?" The MPs gave up saying they could not help if the Jews could not agree amongst themselves.

In the US, Lawrence Steinhardt showed that Zionism and anti-semitism go hand in hand. He was a prominent Zionist, employed by the State Department. He opposed the refugees coming into the US on racist grounds: Eastern European Jews were scheming, unassimilable criminals. Not the sort of people to become decent American citizens, but the sort that would cause anti-semitism. But he was instrumental in getting Turkey to accept 30,000 Balkan Jews... in transit to Palestine.

A similar scenario happened in Sweden. The local Zionists opposed the settling of 10,000 Jews there because they would create an anti-semitism problem. This analysis, of course, did not apply to Palestine.

But the analysis that *did* apply to Palestine was racist, elitist and agest. It was the selection of a limited number of Jews that were wanted to build a state in Palestine.

The Zionist movement wanted only young Jews, not the old "undesirable" Jews. Weizmann, first President of Israel, only wanted to save two million out of the six million, not the "economic and moral dust". The Israeli Attorney General compared European Jewry to "Sheep for slaughter, for killing, for destruction, for crushing and shame."

These self-haters would have agreed with Goebbels' remark: "The Jews deserve the catastrophe that has now overtaken them."

In 1995, a Jewish army officer, Alfred Dreyfus was court-martialled in France. At his trial and subsequent degradation was a German journalist, Theodore Herzl to save the anti-semitic mobs call for death to the Jews.

Herzl's reaction was not to fight anti-semitism. He initiated a programme, political Zionism, to create a home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

There was, however, another reaction to the Dreyfus trial. The French novelist Emile Zola charged the army and the government with a conspiracy against Dreyfus in his famous open letter *J'Accuse*.

J'Accuse is the message of Nazi-Zionist Collaboration.

Jeff Goldhar

Slump City

Andrew Friend and Andy Mcavell, *Slump City*, Pluto (Britain) 1981, 3.95 pounds.

It came as a bit of a shock to many, in the midst of the royal wedding preparations, to watch Britain explode into mass youth rioting.

Through the following days and weeks, even the right wing media began to present the view that unemployment probably had something to do with the situation. Informed socialists everywhere knew this to be the case; however the scale and intensity of the riots left many of us wondering. *Slump City*, published before the riots, goes a long way towards clarifying the processes and events of the crisis in England.

The two central tenets put forward are nothing very new. They are: capitalism will not break its long wave of stagnation unless the workers pay for it, and the ruling class will use divisions in the working class to attempt to inflict major defeats.

Of vital interest, however, is the authors' exploration of the crisis of social and political control generated by concentrations of people existing on the margins of society, such as the unemployed, single parents, sections of the black community and many unskilled workers. How and why these concentrations occurred, their class composition and their significance for the working class on the one hand and the state on the other are topics of concern for the authors.

In many ways, the changing makeup of British industry and the workforce during the post-war boom parallels that in most other capitalist states, including Australia. As usually declined and manual jobs were deskilled by technology, employment in low-paid, low status service sector jobs increased. During the boom, England, as did other countries, drew heavily on foreign and female workers to fill these new and old jobs. As recession

and decline set in, the same racist and sexist approaches began to swell the "surplus population".

The full force of the changes in Britain's workforce became apparent when combined with the regional and urban dynamics of the post-war period. Although they were complex and uneven, a central feature of these dynamics has been a pronounced build-up of unemployment in older distressed areas, government intervention being quite ineffectual in avoiding this.

In some areas of the big cities, the surplus population (that is, those marginal to the requirements of capital) has reached considerable proportions. Liverpool's surplus population, for example, is cited as being near half the adult population on a city-wide basis and exceeding this level in the inner city areas.

During this build-up, other factors were at work to bring about a strengthening of the repressive apparatus of the state necessary to contain the social crisis and the political opposition produced by mass unemployment (one major example of this being the Right to Work Campaign and its periodic marches across Britain).

The intensifying struggle in Northern Ireland through the seventies, the resurgence of working class militancy in the Heath era, the failure to discipline a generation of working class youth, plus the refusal of black people to suffer the crisis passively have gone hand in hand with Tory economic policy to reorganise towards the pole of coercion the earlier measure of "consent" for law and order.

Thus, many of the methods and procedures first applied in Northern Ireland, with the passive approval of the mainland working class, are now in use on the mainland, CS gas being an example.

Also, over the past few years a number of changes to laws affecting the police have been made, giving them much greater powers (along the lines, in many cases, of those recently sought by the Queensland police).

The 1976 Criminal Law Act encouraged the increased use of summary charges carrying no right to jury trial. In addition, the 1824 Vagrancy Act's charge of being a suspected person has begun to be widely used against the "surplus population". The "sus offence" as it has been called, gives police wide powers of search and intimidation.

The authors refer to the widespread assumption that Britain is a "liberal democracy". They see this view as "profoundly wrong... Britain has for a long time been one of the least democratic of the central capitalist states... and the state itself is protected by the most embracing and powerful secrecy laws in the West." (p. 173)

It's undoubtedly not accidental that Fraser's recent legislation on the industrial front, described by Justice Staples as making the courts an arm of the government, and Bjelke-Petersen's measures bear remarkable similarities to those recently developed by the British police and government to contain the protest movements and an expression of grievances of the oppressed "surplus population".

The increasing opposition to British imperialism in N. Ireland also provided a pretext for the Prevention of Terrorism Act, rushed through after the Birmingham bombings, but mainly used to harass "suspects".

This section of the book, dealing with the use of the police, is important reading for those wondering how much further the state in Australia will go in giving greater and greater powers to the police.

A central thesis of the book is that the split between the surplus population (which includes many Catholics in Northern Ireland, much of working class youth and many of the blacks) and the rest of the working class has been a major facilitating factor in the creation of a new, authoritarian "consensus". The constant stirring of the doubts about their social and material position is seen as at the heart of this split.

A quickening of the already deep currents of racism, or of chauvinism towards the Irish, for example, has been a major effect. It is these divisions within the working class that are crucial importance for the workers' movement of the future.

What solution do the authors propose, then, for the problems they have discussed? They have a number of criticisms of the Bennite left of the Labour Party's Alternative Economic Strategy (that, like Wheelwright and Co., sees the central problem as being that of transnational capital which should, in their view, be replaced by much greater state intervention for 'socialists' advance). They tend to dismiss the role played by mass marches organised by the Right to Work Campaign, the SWP, and the union movement, in cohering the consciousness of the unemployed. But they are correct in saying that "it is no longer adequate to treat the unemployed as fodder for a propaganda campaign against an incumbent government." (p. 182)

The authors don't appear to understand the need for a revolutionary party that can combine and focus the struggles of various sections of the surplus population. Their main call is for "permanent organisations of the unemployed with substantial resources from the trade unions, as integral parts of the labour movement." This might well be valuable, but is only part of what is needed.

Gary Cox

