

# SOURCES OF STUDENT DISSENT: LA TROBE UNIVERSITY, 1967-72

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Student unrest on university campuses in the late 1960s caught social theorists by surprise. Capitalism, after all, was functioning as an efficient economic mechanism and cold war conservatism was winning against socialist alternatives. Moreover, the end of ideology was asserted to have occurred. The campuses were silent. Then, suddenly, in 1964 students at Berkeley University launched their free speech movement. And by 1968, *Time* magazine was speaking of 'the biggest year for students since 1848'.<sup>1</sup> Student uprisings were taking place from Argentina to Yugoslavia.

These movements were often revolutionary in that they sought the overthrow of existing ways-of-life. Nourished by intellectual sources which were traceable to Marxism they were sometimes regarded as dangerous to the very fabric of Western society. Indeed, they tended to function outside of institutional politics.

The problem confronting theorists was how to explain the advent of essentially similar student rebellions, occurring at roughly the same time, throughout the Western world. The student movements of the advanced capitalist societies simply did not fit the existing theoretical models. One of the most perplexing factors relates to what Hannah Arendt has described as their '*almost exclusively moral motives*'.<sup>2</sup> Generally, there was little self-gain for the student in the objectives of student movements. They were, indeed, movements based on '*human subjectivity in this, the era of the scientific and technological revolution*'.<sup>3</sup>

There is, of course, no single master hypothesis. It is necessary to look for the specific concatenation of causes that combined in the post-war period to produce the 1960s phenomenon,<sup>4</sup> and to locate student movements in their particular geo-political, cultural, and social contexts.

Lewis Feuer, possibly the most influential critic of the late 1960s, is notable for his violation of both methodological tenets. Feuer attributes student rebellion to oedipally-projected politics; that is, the ideological acting out of the sons' subconscious hatred of their fathers.<sup>5</sup> Feuer, however, fails to account for the fact that not every generation produces a radical core, even though presumably the parricidal urge is constant.<sup>6</sup> His reliance on student songs and poems as primary sources highlights the second methodological flaw, for it cuts across historical as well as cultural lines. And empirical studies into the familial background of American student activists contradicted Feuer's emphasis on son-father antagonism.<sup>7</sup>

Arthur Koestler suggested that Western youth's rebellion was a by-product of an existential vacuum.<sup>8</sup> In other words, they were unprecedentedly affluent, but also unprecedentedly unhappy. Roszak and Keniston dealt with the same paradox in speaking, respectively, of youth's 'immiserization' and the contradiction between psychological adulthood and sociological adolescence.<sup>9</sup>

Other popular hypotheses of the time suggested that youth was naturally rebellious. The natural rebel theory, however, failed to account for such phenomenon as the silent generation of the 1950s. Bruno Bettelheim blamed student unrest on the alleged self-hatred arising from permissive child-rearing, liberal schooling, and subsidized university education.<sup>10</sup> Yet are we to believe that all student rebels, from Paris to Tokyo, were so reared?<sup>11</sup>

Conspiracy theories also assumed a certain vogue, epitomized by Van Maanen who traced all campus unrest to Moscow.<sup>12</sup> Altbach's work, however, indicated the extremely limited nature of international student co-ordination.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, there is abundant evidence of Soviet opposition to left adventurist students, be they in Prague, Poland, or Paris.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, it is worth mentioning the derivative hypothesis; namely, that students here were merely keeping up with the rebellious Joneses 'over there'. Australian student movements certainly adopted some of the terminology and techniques of their American, Japanese, and European counterparts. One could say that they were being sensible in applying tested tactics, and internationalist rather than imitative. However, the copy-cat hypothesis begs the question: why were students rebelling, in so many different places at the same time, in the first place?

A natural starting-point is the universities themselves; or rather, how the new technical and managerial requirements of post-war capitalism affected them. Tertiary education was encouraged to expand rapidly and, nourished by the baby boom, continued to produce society's professionals and skilled workers. A new form of intellectual labour was also required, however, social engineers, such as advertising agents, editors, fashion designers, and market researchers became the technicians of consumption and consent. '*The new developments of capitalism*' were indeed making education '*one of the crucial areas of change*'.<sup>15</sup>

Australia's university planners, cognizant of our second industrial revolution, found themselves caught between two different models. On the one hand stood the Newman ideal: the Alma Mater, knowing her children individually, and lauding '*the cultivation of the intellect as an end for its own sake*'.<sup>16</sup> On the other, the American model, epitomized by Clark Kerr's multi-varsity, in which the university became the main plant of a knowledge

industry, serving national growth in the same way as had railway and automobile industries in a bygone era.<sup>17</sup>

Such key strategists as the Murray Committee (1957), the Martin Committee (1964), and the Australian Universities Commission predicated their recommendations on the assumption that universities were not, and should not be, fundamentally anything other than a servant of national economic growth. A conceptual stress between the two models is apparent in Murray's Report. But it is all but gone in the Martin Report, which concluded that,

*Education should be regarded as an investment which yields direct and significant economic benefits through increasing the skill of the population and through accelerating technological progress.<sup>18</sup>*

With new universities popping up in New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland and Victoria, Australia's higher education system was booming along with the economy. One thing was wrong, however; some students felt uneasy about being units of human capital; especially when university authorities persisted with the 'community of scholars' myth. This contradiction became a constant factor underlying student unrest and manifested itself in various forms, as will be seen later.

An equally basic originating source of campus disquiet is to be found in the youth culture of the time. The advent of a teenage market after the War nurtured a generation gap which, if not new, was certainly unprecedentedly wide and deep. Advertisers and retailers found that the best way to capture the market was to appeal to youth on their own terms. Radio station 3UJZ, for instance, captured twice as many listeners in the 16-24 age group as its closest rival by programming controversial modern music.<sup>19</sup>

An autonomous youth culture — confined to those between puberty and thirty, and characterized by a rejection of the adult world, a desire for greater freedom and independence, and with its own leaders and symbols<sup>20</sup> — had emerged by the mid-sixties. Discotheques such as 'Teenrage' and 'The Underground'; films ('If', 'The Graduate', 'Easy Rider', and 'Wild in the Streets'); television shows ('Kommotion', 'Action', 'It's All Happening', and 'Countdown'); and newspapers such as 'Go Set' and 'Revolution' summed up, in their titles, the youth *zeitgeist*. But ultimately, it was pop music that became the definitive language.

The youth-culture-political dissent nexus pivoted around the fusion of rock music with the folk protest tradition. Youth could identify with their musical heroes in a way that was not possible with society's elderly authority-figures. And some, like John Lennon, were consciously seeking to

*'use music as some sort of a platform to bring people together.'*<sup>21</sup> From 1965, when the pacifist lyrics of Barry McGuire's 'Eve of Destruction' had caused a sensation, to the early seventies, a political protest trend is apparent in rock music. One survey concluded that, in the late sixties, pop songs *'more than ever addressed themselves to a wide variety of social issues'*.<sup>22</sup> It is significant that the demise of rock's political tangent tallied with the demise of the youth protest movement.

It is also pertinent to identify the political matrix of the youth/student revolt. The baby boom generation were the first to be born under the cloud of the atom bomb. Many were entering their teens at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. And by the mid-1960s, nuclear weapon capacity was sufficient to threaten civilized life itself.<sup>23</sup> The Cold War consensus guaranteed that American and Soviet rivalry would be interpreted as a battle between Good and Evil. One issue, however, changed all that. The American bombing of North Vietnam in 1965 shattered the Cold War perspective, and for many revealed America in the role of world policeman, using its vast technological and military might against a small developing country thousands of miles from its shores. Moreover, the horror and indiscriminate nature of the war was being conveyed throughout the world via television.

Various developments in media technology had resulted in immediacy in newscasting. Any world event could be reported in Australia within 24 hours. And by 1965, 95 per cent of Australian households were in reach of a television set.<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note that Keniston's subjects frequently mentioned some world-historical event as a catalyst for their activism and that television was often the primary information source.<sup>25</sup> If youth was being made more aware as a result of the global village, then issues such as conscription were providing an opportunity for the new awareness to be applied politically.

In Australia, conscription made the Vietnam war an unavoidable issue for thousands of young people. Registration periods occurred twice yearly and any 20 year old male who failed to comply could receive a two-year prison sentence. The politicization of Australia's campuses intensified dramatically during May 1968, not out of imitation of the Paris uprisings, but in response to proposed amendments to the National Service Act. Clause 22, making it a criminal offence for the principal officers of educational institutions to decline to provide confidential information concerning students liable for registration, aroused intense and widespread opposition. The following table indicates the large proportion of La Trobe University students who were eligible for registration during the years 1967-72. A similar picture would exist at other campuses.

Year	Melbourne Metropolitan Home Residences (MHR) of Students Living at Home	MHR in Working-Class Suburbs <sup>38</sup>
1968	201	81 (40%)
1969	182	61 (33%)
1970	162	71 (43%)
1971	220	96 (42%)
1972	544	218 (44%)

(Source: Registrar's Department)

La Trobe University was literally born into the period when a Vietnam protest movement was gaining momentum; when the youth culture's political aspect was reaching its height; when student revolt was assuming world-wide proportions; when student movements were developing locally (at Sydney, Queensland and Monash universities); when police violence was transforming moderate protestors into revolutionaries;<sup>26</sup> and when the Labor Party's 1966 electoral defeat, and softening of its Vietnam policy, was facilitating the growth of New Left alternatives.<sup>27</sup>

La Trobe was formally opened on 8 March, 1967. A week before the inaugural ceremony, the Vietnam war's biggest battle had taken place near the Cambodian border, leaving one hundred dead. President Johnson announced that the demilitarized zone, as well as North Vietnam, would be bombed. And Australia was committing the largest fighting force sent overseas since World War Two — including conscripts. The war provoked the first post-war Australian university conflict between students and Administration when at Monash the Vice-Chancellor attempted to ban the Labor Club from raising funds for the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.

At La Trobe, a handful of the university's 552 students established a Socialist Club which opposed the war and conscription. It was not until 1970, however, that a student movement came into being, with a strategic objective challenging university authority, a large base of active and passive support, a social structure (allegiances and status positions, recognized and accepted leaders, and a division of labour), and a unique form of social consciousness (characterized by a rejection of institutional politics and a perspective which integrated campus strategies with those of wider social movements). Vietnam was the general catalyst; but it is ultimately necessary to delve into the specific circumstances of the particular university.

The events on the La Trobe campus were enormously complicated and any attempt at summary will involve simplification. Essentially, the unifying theme linking various student protest activities concerned opposition to the social role of the University in capitalist society. The centrality of Viet-

nam is clear as the principal campaigns were prompted by anti-militarist sentiment. In 1969, for example, a proposal to establish a campus Citizens' Military Force regiment aroused widespread, determined and successful opposition. And in June 1970, a student movement was born in the course of protests against Defence Department use of the University's careers service. The movement reached its peak in April 1971, when more than one thousand students gathered for a general meeting, called by the Labor Club, and launched a campaign for the resignation of the Chancellor, Sir Archibald Glenn.<sup>28</sup>

The student Left maintained that Glenn's position summed up *'the entire social function of the university under capitalism, as a servant of capitalism'*.<sup>29</sup> In addition to being Chancellor, Sir Archibald was also managing director of Imperial Chemical Industries (ANZ) and a director of the parent company in London, ICI. The former had been listed for consumer boycott by the Moratorium Campaign because of an \$800,000 Defence Department contract, while the latter had been condemned for involvement in South Africa's ammunition and explosives industry.<sup>30</sup>

Protests against the University's governing body, the Council, culminated in a blockade on 19 July. Large numbers of police intervened, and disciplinary charges and police charges were laid against the perceived leaders. Further protests (including occupations of Administration offices, and further discipline, resulted in the year ending with 12 students under exclusion; 23 fined a total of \$3,175; and Sir Archibald's announced intention to resign. It had been the most intense university conflict in Australian history, involving the unprecedented use of police against student protestors on their campus. The three key elements of dissent at the time converged: namely, opposition to the Vietnam war; concern over the role of the university; and youthful rebellion against things aged and stodgy.

La Trobe was also extraordinary in that the campus continued to experience student demonstrations and occupations in 1972. Elsewhere, student movements had declined during 1971, reflecting the demise of the anti-war movement and political youth culture. The La Trobe student movement was kept alive in 1972 as a result of Supreme Court injunctions taken out by two conservative students (joined by the Council as co-plaintiff at a later date) with a view to restraining the Students' Representative Council (SRC) from paying the fines imposed the previous year.<sup>31</sup>

The continued involvement in campus politics of some excluded students also resulted in additional injunctions, sought by the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Myers, restraining them from entering the premises of the University. When one of the four restrained was lodged at Pentridge Prison, for

contempt of court, in April, without trial or rights of appeal or bail, the very trouble which the injunctions sought to avoid was in fact ensured. Theoretically incarcerated indefinitely, or until such time as he purged his contempt and promised to abide by the court's order, Fergus Robinson became central to the movement's existence. Had he not been imprisoned, or had the Vice-Chancellor's injunctions not been obtained in the first place, there is little doubt that disruptive forms of protest would have ceased with an occupation in late March demanding financial autonomy for the SRC.<sup>32</sup>

The above outline overlooks some important events and factors but the essentials are sufficient for my purpose in this article. Namely, given the general context in which student movements arose, why did the La Trobe experience take the form that it did? We may start by looking at the students themselves.

In 1972, 86 per cent of La Trobe students were from metropolitan homes, compared with 75 per cent at Monash and 79 per cent at Melbourne.<sup>33</sup> James Walter suggests that country students are less likely to be politically active, but it must be pointed out that Monash's turbulence was not diminished by its larger proportion of non-metropolitan students. Furthermore, Graham Little's survey of participation levels of Melbourne University Arts students revealed only a minor discrepancy between those from country and city backgrounds.<sup>34</sup>

The fact that only 54 per cent of La Trobe students lived at home, compared with 72 per cent (Monash) and 70 per cent (Melbourne)<sup>35</sup> might be significant in terms of freedom from parental constraints and the lodestone effect of Leftist student households. I would suggest, however, that home residences might be more useful if taken as an index of social class origin of students.<sup>36</sup> Bearing in mind that an average of 75 per cent of La Trobe students during the period 1967-72 were from metropolitan homes,<sup>37</sup> and given that by the late 1960s there were clearly defined status suburbs in Melbourne, the following working-class residential emphasis emerges:

Miriam Henry's 1970 survey found that 44 per cent of La Trobe students had fathers who were either office/sales workers, skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled workers. Only 5 per cent came from top managerial backgrounds.<sup>38</sup> Any assumption that students from working-class are more protest-prone is very dubious, however; Little's survey suggests that students from lower white-collar, lower self-employed, skilled manual families are less likely to be campus activists than those from professional, upper white-collar, upper self-employed ranks.<sup>40</sup> Among the leading activists at La Trobe, for instance, an Ivanhoe Grammar Clique was so named because of its common schooling. The four members were centrally important strategists, identified with the revolutionary Maoist line, and their fathers were, respectively: a factory owner, a production engineer/manager, a Montmorency estate agent, and an accountant. Of course, there were some leading activists from working-class families. But the fact that students from such different origins could adopt the same protest styles and politics highlights the inadequacy of social class as a variable. It is far more fruitful to proceed on the basis of recognizing the unique position of the student at university.

La Trobe was primarily an Arts-based university. Unlike Melbourne, with its faculties of Medicine, Law, Architecture, and Engineering, La Trobe's only professional faculty was its School of Education. And we know from Henry's research that a huge proportion of the student body was bonded to the Education Department of Victoria.<sup>41</sup> In 1969, 55 per cent of all undergraduate students were in either Arts or Social Sciences.<sup>42</sup> By 1972, by which time the School of Education was functioning, 73 per cent were in Arts, Social Sciences and Education.<sup>43</sup> The remainder were in Agriculture, Biological Science, Physics, and Psychology. Various Australian studies (Little<sup>44</sup> Rootes<sup>45</sup> and Feather<sup>46</sup>) have revealed consistent differentials in values and propensity for campus activism between Arts and Science students.

With one or two exceptions, the leading La Trobe activists were Arts students. Indeed, an examina-

**LA TROBE UNIVERSITY STUDENT AGES, 1967-72**  
(Percentage of total student population in brackets.)

	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
Total students	552	1163	2052	2519	3012	4302
Male Students	329 (59%)	721 (61%)	1284 (62%)	1536 (61%)	1804 (60%)	2575 (60%)
Males Aged 16-20 (inclusive)	249 (45%)	493 (42%)	831 (40%)	865 (34%)	891 (29%)	1236 (29%)
Number of Males who turned 20	53 (9%)	133 (11%)	269 (13%)	275 (11%)	256 (8%)	340 (8%)

Source: Annual Census collections, Registrar's Department.

tion of the 29 charged with breaches of discipline in 1971 reveals that 25 were in Arts and Social Sciences. The reason for the Arts' students' activism may relate to the nature of their studies, which frequently include critiques of society and introductions to revolutionary ideas. Furthermore, a certain type of person is attracted to the Arts in the first place. In Feather's findings a portrait of individuals concerned with the finer, more noble, qualities of life emerges. Whatever the case, Arts students were the shock troops of student movements. And La Trobe was an Arts-based campus.

La Trobe was also the newest, and fastest-built university. Generally, there was no sense of common purpose and no campus traditions. It seemed as though there was just one big bumbling bureaucracy. The campus was isolated, situated eight miles from Melbourne in between a mental hospital and a cemetery. Surrounded by residential suburbs, La Trobe students could not develop the close relationship with their external community that Melbourne students enjoyed with Carlton's colourful pubs and coffee shops. Campus social life, and routine, were for many dictated by bus company time-tables.

Demoralization and a nine-to-five mentality could, and did, result. But, in such a situation, the student Left was made all the more appealing. It was, after all, active, bringing life to what some regarded as a soulless suburban university.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, while the vast size of the campus (480 acres) and the small population contributed to the sense of isolation, it also meant that there were only one or two dining and recreational centres for all students. Glenn College Dining Hall, for instance, was in the early years frequented by a majority of students who would grab a cheap muddy coffee in between tutorials or rub shoulders with friends over lunch each day. The Caf was central to the development of a student political culture. It was the largest, the best, and for a while the only, gathering place. It was not really surprising that the first major demonstration should have taken place there.<sup>48</sup>

The lack of campus traditions was also a double-edged sword. It is possible that some people were attracted to La Trobe precisely because it was not in the grey conservative mould of an institution like Melbourne University. Indeed, La Trobe was innovative and radical in that it had established schools rather than faculties and a collegiate system to avoid problems of anonymity.<sup>49</sup>

The college concept provoked considerable controversy, however, with the Left regarding it as pernicious. *'Nothing ever happens in this place'*, complained one news sheet, *'because the existing system is breaking the student body up'*.<sup>50</sup> The extent to which the college concept and some university authorities were out of step with modern Australian attitudes (let alone youth per-

spectives) was highlighted by the attempt to sustain a dinner-in-gown policy once a week during 1967. All students, at that time, were members of Glenn College. By 1968, the gown imposition was abandoned, with some administrators learning that La Trobe students were not nineteenth century Oxbridge boys.

The gulf between the governing authority and the student body reflected the pyramidal power structure of the university, with the Council on top. However, the separation was also social and cultural. There were some 64 councillors during the period 1967-72. Of these, only ten served for the entire period. This core of the Council was decisive in setting university strategy and came to epitomize, in many a student's mind, the Council's image. The Council core had an average age of 57; lived in exclusive suburbs (Toorak, South Yarra, Canterbury, Blackburn and Malvern); had attended exclusive grammar schools or top high schools; enjoyed membership of Establishment clubs which were sometimes racially and sexually, as well as socially, exclusive (7 were members of the Melbourne Club); and nearly half were wealthy businessmen (3 chaired corporations such as ICI, Comalco, and BHP). Two Knights, two Queen's Counsellors, and a Companion of the British Empire completed a portrait which was antithetical to the student culture and its commitment to social egalitarianism and youth style.

The most important area of attitudinal separation, however, concerned the very role of the university in society. Henry's survey suggests that a radical and idealistic ethos prevailed among the student body. 81 per cent believed that the university should be concerned with critically examining social values. Only 14 per cent felt it should be concerned with preserving traditions of scholarship.<sup>51</sup> 77 per cent saw the prime function as being the production of cultured and broadly educated individuals. Only 19 per cent saw it in terms of producing trained specialists.<sup>52</sup> In keeping with such perceptions, most La Trobe students had decided to attend university, mainly, because they wanted to broaden (their) education (46 per cent), participate in university life (10 per cent), or both (24 per cent). Only 38 per cent had more mundane motivations, such as obtaining a meal ticket (16 per cent), fulfilling scholarship/studentship obligations (19 per cent), parental pressure (5 per cent), or combinations of those factors (8 per cent).<sup>53</sup>

Thirteen suggestions are made to cope with these areas of concern, though none has any obvious or easy remedies. As a partial solution for the first of these areas of concern, the authors suggest the adoption of a concept of partial dependence on parents and progressively increasing the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS) 'dependent' allowances between the ages of 18 and 21.

*A University is a corporation devoted to education, scholarship and research. It should evolve in accordance with social requirements, intellectual ideals and development in knowledge and in educational theory and practice. It is appreciated that it is largely supported by public funds.<sup>54</sup>*

Sir Archibald's reference to the university as a corporation included productive activity which he defined as teaching and research.<sup>55</sup>

As Managing Director of ICI (ANZ), Glenn was a recipient of Australian universities' productive activity. His perception was the prevailing attitude of university planners, as summed up by the Martin Report's formula for higher education as an investment in human capital.<sup>56</sup> Dr Myers, as chief administrator, took the human capital approach to its logical conclusion and described the university as a sausage machine, conceding however that *the raw material — the students — was far more variable than meat in a sausage.*<sup>57</sup>

That social requirements can sometimes conflict with intellectual ideals, was being acknowledged at such places as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other American campuses which were being shaken by protests against their involvement in war-related research. In some Australian universities, confrontation also took place at those junctures at which the intellectual ideals were contradicted by the social requirements. In general, the student Left accepted that the university could not be a community of scholars, that it was an impossibility as well as a myth. The question was: 'Whom should it serve?'<sup>58</sup> Thus, in the opinion of the Labor Club,

*It is correct that a University should provide well-trained personnel for society. But our present universities serve the minority interests of capitalism and hence do not serve the people.<sup>59</sup>*

While it is crucial to acknowledge that the student Left was closer to the general student culture than those in authority, it must also be recognized that the student movement was never a majority movement, in the sense of regularly involving more than half the student population in its confrontational activities. Social movements are rarely, if ever, majorities. They stand or fall according to the extent to which they are supported by the masses. The La Trobe movement enjoyed broad support at critical times, and its actions were legitimized by the practice of never initiating significant campus protests without first convening a general meeting of students, at which any point of view could be expressed. Basically, Alan Barcan's assessment of an earlier student generation applies to La Trobe: namely, the activists are always a minority but a *'creative minority whose importance is out of proportion to its numbers'*<sup>60</sup>

An intensely political culture dominated the campus during 1970 and 1971, nourishing and being nourished by the student movement. The apolitical student could not avoid Left wing politics in the form of wall slogans and posters, or the vast supply of leaflets which seemed to be given out at every corner. *Red Moat* (published by the La Trobe Communists), *Enrages* (Labor Club), *Probe* (Postgraduate Association/Research Workers' Union), *Black Barb* (SDS), *Red Ned* (SDS-Anarcho-Marxist), *Libertarian Revolution* (Anarchists), *Flowering Rifle* (Anarchists), *Red Atom* (Science Study Group), *The New Course* (Socialist Youth Alliance), *Dubček* (Strawberry Collective), *Women Arise!* (Women's Liberation Group), *The Spark* (the Left Opposition within the Labor Club), and *Proletariat* (Labor Club Marxist-Leninists) represented the Left, as well as highlighting the divisions within it. The conservative Right similarly contributed to the politicization process with *Moot Point* (Moderate Student Alliance) and *Liberty* (Democratic Club).

The Labor Club acted as an umbrella for the various factions and separately organized groups. The particularly serious nature of campus confrontations during 1971 can, in part, be explained in terms of the rise and complete dominance of the Maoist faction within the Club. While Maoism had much in common with New Left style, its essentially Leninist character enabled a tightly-knit, well-disciplined, formation to emerge. The process was apparent in September 1970 when the Maoists independently organized an anti-war procession along a local street, Waterdale Road. The less militant Club leaders had effectively disassociated themselves from the demonstration.

Waterdale Road became a *cause celebre* for students and civil libertarians throughout Australia when local police brutally dispersed the marchers. A second attempt at demonstration met an even worse fate, with the University Chaplain — who had attended as an observer — expressing his *'complete disgust at the behaviour of the police'* in a letter to the dailies.<sup>61</sup> And the postgraduate representative on Council published an account of the shocking events.

*Armed policemen leapt out of cars and chased students bashing any they could catch; some policemen unable to catch the students drew their guns and threatened to shoot.<sup>62</sup>*

The standing of the Maoists was greatly enhanced, with some emerging as eloquent and competent leaders. The Maoists coup within the Labor Club was not completed, however, until April 1971 when a Club Conference endorsed the establishment of an Action Committee with the power to call general meetings of students and to make decisions concerning daily activities. On the surface, it seemed reasonable and democratic, as demands

on the organization had to be answered on a daily basis and any member could attend Action Committee meetings each morning at 9.30. In practice, however, the Maoists and their allies proved the only ones dedicated/fanatical enough to do so.

The Maoist mentality was not only confrontational, but based on a weird no-lose logic which saw progress as inevitable and constant. The key factor was struggle. So long as there was militant action, authorities would either have to make concessions (hence, limited victory) or resort to repression (which would promote further struggle). And like the New Left in general, the Maoists consciously operated outside of co-optive, institutional, politics.

The strategy based on 'mass action for effective results, not "representative" action',<sup>63</sup> was rendered very credible because of the conservative nature of the SRC. At critical moments, the SRC was dominated by conservatives, but its legal status really defined the limits of its politics; as was revealed in 1972 when it tried to pay outstanding fines. Statute 2.4 defined one of the SRC's aims as being,

*To secure good order and seemingly good conduct of students within university precincts, or any official student or university function wherever held.<sup>64</sup>*

From 1967-72, the SRC did not seem possessed of special status in the eyes of the student body, and was viewed with the same cynicism as other components of the university power structure. The Left had no trouble in by-passing it and calling its own general meetings which, on two occasions in 1971, attracted more than one thousand participants.

The Maoist-led student movement, however, was sustained by the tendency of the authorities to respond in ways which were seen by large numbers of students to be unjust and outrageous. A repression-resistance cycle developed whenever disciplinary charges were laid with a view to curbing campus unrest. Invariably, the moderate students would support the militant minority under such circumstances, especially if police had been involved. To understand this process it is necessary to look at some features of discipline in the University.

At La Trobe, Statute 8.1 (3) established a Proctorial Board which, being established by subordinate legislation and only quasi-judicial in status, possessed absolute discretion in determining the extent to which its procedures would be governed by principles of natural justice.<sup>65</sup> The board's failure to guarantee open hearings, hearings on campus, legal representation for defendants, trial by peers, and transcripts of evidence, de-authorized it in the eyes of many students. Disciplinary tribunals were also delegitimized when there was inadequate student representation. The five-person Proctorial Board contained only one SRC nominee. More-

over, the selective application of charges in the first place — with only the ring-leaders being charged — rendered accusations of victimisation rather plausible.

Just as important as the nature of the disciplinary tribunals, however, was the view of student dissent underlying the Vice-Chancellor's reliance on such measures. In August 1969, he had responded to the first campus confrontation — when seventeen Labor, Club/SDS members invaded a Council meeting in support of observer rights — with restraint and tolerance.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the Vice-Chancellor's view of student unrest in the early years was classically liberal. 'If a university is so passive that there are no student protests and complaints', he had asserted 'then it is a very poor university'.<sup>67</sup> During 1970, however, his attitude hardened considerably, and early in 1971 a vital addendum had been added:

*Whether or not their views are justifiable, there is little doubt that they are sincerely held by most of those who take part in protests and demonstrations on specific issues, such as the war in Vietnam.*

*There are, however, some — and I believe, a small minority — who take the opportunity provided by such incidents to introduce violence or an incitation to violence, and this in turn often attracts participants who are not members of the university or connected with it in any way...<sup>68</sup>*

The conspiratorial perception of a subversive external enemy, with an internal fifth column, might have developed during the campus conflict concerning Defence Department recruiters in June 1970. It is highly unlikely, however, as Dr Myers had resolved that particular controversy by promptly rescinding exclusions imposed against six of the participants. At the time of the above remarks, the Vice-Chancellor was under no pressure from the student movement, which was toying with an off-campus orientation, and he had survived 1970 in good standing by calling for an inquiry into the Waterdale Road events.

The pressure on Dr Myers to take a much harder line against student dissent came, quite publicly, from the Democratic Labor Party which had blamed him for having 'repeatedly failed to take any action against the pro-violence minority'.<sup>69</sup> It is possible that the secret Peace with Freedom (PWF) cell operating on the campus also exerted pressure on Dr Myers. According to a speech on 'The Student Problem' given by Tony Macken at a National Civic Council (NCC) conference, PWF cells existed within each university and depended on the NCC for logistic support.<sup>70</sup> According to Macken,

*The groups have representatives on university councils who can put pressure on Vice-Chancellors.<sup>71</sup>*

It should also be noted that during 1971, the Council's functions in dealing with the student movement were to an extent taken over by the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee (VCAC). The VCAC membership during 1971 reads like a *Who's Who* of senior academic and administrative adherents to the pro-violent minority conspiracy theory. All were firm opponents of the student movement and there was no representative of student opinion.<sup>72</sup>

The intensity and severity of the La Trobe experience can be explained in terms of Dr Myers' stringent responses as well as in terms of the Maoist strategic objective of destroying the university as a servant of capitalism.<sup>73</sup> The two, in a sense, complemented each other. A repression-resistance dynamic sustained the student movement.

Dr Myers had various opportunities during 1971 and 1972 to attempt to reconcile the conflicting parties through compromise and negotiation, but failed to do so. His intransigence emerges as a central justification for militant action in student literature. Indeed, the call for Glenn's resignation had been deemed non-negotiable, despite its centrality in the list of student demands. The entire cycle of student-action/Administration-reaction might have been avoided had Glenn's position been deemed a legitimate subject of concern by the Vice-Chancellor. Indeed, the movement's drift toward direct action received its most significant boost after the April general meeting, when Dr Myers declined an invitation to address a general meeting on his return from the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee in Sydney.<sup>74</sup> Eventually, a statement was released but completely ignored the Glenn issue.

By October, with seven students excluded and others under way, the Vice-Chancellor's determination was expressed in the form of heavy-gauge wire gratings being rivetted over administration office windows; the same windows from which occupying students had escaped police arrest. Against such a background, it is not surprising that Dr Myers rejected out of hand the approaches of a staff-student committee which had been established on 7 October as a final effort to communicate and gain reasonable response.<sup>75</sup> He refused to consider any suggestion that disciplinary procedures be temporarily suspended until such time as campus discussion of the issues had taken place.<sup>77</sup> The Vice-Chancellor seemed blind to the significance of the October 7 Committee, which described itself as an alternative to confrontations.<sup>78</sup> Even the militants had cautiously supported its efforts, clearly indicating that they too sought a way out of the repression-resistance bind.

Similarly, the following year, students had ended their seizure of the administration offices after the gaoing of Robinson, as a gesture of their willing-

ness to negotiate. On 17 April, a staff-student deputation presented a good faith motion to the Council, but its attitude to the central issues remained unchanged. Proctorial Board penalties, it resolved, were not subject to negotiation; civil action from the previous year would continue; and Dr Myers was directed to proceed in Supreme Court actions.<sup>79</sup> Two weeks later, the second excluded student, Brian Pola, joined Robinson at Pentridge.

There are other instances of the Vice-Chancellor rejecting attempts by the militants to bring about a negotiated settlement of campus problems. Perhaps the most telling example took the form of an SRC Referendum in May 1972 to ascertain student opinion on, among other things, the Supreme Court injunctions, the reinstatement of all excluded students and the withdrawal of police and civil actions. The voting on these issues favoured the Left, with 1,005 of the 1,667 voters seeking the discharge of the injunctions. The militants had shown considerable confidence in student support, with the WSA group declaring prior to the Referendum:

*We are prepared to bind ourselves to the decision of a legally-constituted staff-student referendum...*

*Is the Vice-Chancellor?*<sup>80</sup>

The Council's response, at its 15 May meeting, was to note the Referendum results but not to act upon them.<sup>81</sup> Two days later, a writ for the arrest of the third excluded student, Barry York, was issued. Any possibility of either the Council or the movement calling a truce in light of the Referendum was thus laid to rest.

By June, when York was also imprisoned, student participation in campus protests had entered a dramatic decline. The movement seemed to have defined a new symbiosis with the changing political environment. Indefinite imprisonment, without trial, almost became uncontroversial. Moreover, the essential campus spirit was gone. The new student intake seemed rather conservative, and the activists were basically the 1969-71 generation. By July, the hard core were maintaining a symbolic struggle out of obligation to their imprisoned comrades rather than out of fervent desire.

With the Council suffering enormous moral pressure from the very existence of the three excluded students in prison, and finding it increasingly difficult to justify the need for such injunctive relief, the Vice-Chancellor moved for the discharge of the injunctions and for the prisoners' release in August. On 4 August, after conditions of entry to the campus had been agreed upon, Justice Smith granted their release.

As the enjoinees had neither apologized to the court nor purged their contempt, the release was



interpreted as a victory by the remnant student Left. However, it also marked the end of the La Trobe student movement. The atmosphere was one of relief that it was all over rather than celebration.

While the La Trobe student movement developed in response to the social, political, and cultural environment into which it had been born, and while it was shaped by the responses to it and by campus conditions, it is ultimately necessary to identify the *zeitgeist* which made many seemingly outrageous activities par-for-the-course as far as their youthful participants were concerned. Faded wall slogans constitute the hard evidence of that bygone era. And various sixties' songs, such as Eric Burdon's anti-war classic 'Sky Pilot', remind us that the essential problems are still with us — even if the rebellious esprit de corps is not.

### References

1. 'Why Those Students are Rebellious', *Time* 3 May 1968, pp 30-31.
2. H. Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, N.Y., 1972, p 166.
3. R. Garaudy, *The Turning Point of Socialism*, Paris, 1968, p 19.
4. G. Jones, 'The Meaning of the Student Revolt', in G.A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn (eds.), *Student Power*, Middlesex, 1969, p 30.
5. L. Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations*, N.Y., 1969. The absurdity of Feuer's 'psycho-history' is revealed in its application to some twentieth century events. The Chinese revolution, for instance, is seen as a product of, 'Mao's conflict with his father and its primacy as a motivation for his political ideas...' (p 183).
6. Feuer's thesis is certainly amiss in the gloomy 1980s where, despite fulfillment of his precondition for revolt (i.e. the de-authorization of the older generation), the prevalent student culture is cynical and conservative.
7. See:  
R. Flacks, 'The Liberated Generation: an Exploration of the Roots of Student Protest', in *Journal of Social Issues*, 23, 3.  
A. Gold, R. Christie, and L. Friedman, *Fist and Flowers: a Social Psychological Interpretation of Student Dissent*, N.Y., 1976.
8. A. Koestler, 'Rebellion in a Vacuum', in B. Crick (ed.), *Protest and Discontent*, Middlesex, 1971, p 22.
9. T. Roszak, 'Youth and the Great Refusal', in *The Politics and Anti Politics of the Young*, California, 1969, p 8.  
K. Keniston, *Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth*, N.Y., 1968, p 260.
10. B. Bettelheim, 'Obsolete Youth: Towards a Psychograph of Adolescent Rebellion', in *Encounter*, September 1969.
11. Bettelheim interpreted student opposition to the Vietnam war in terms of the self-hatred arising from draft deferment. Yet campus resistance continued after the lottery system was introduced in America and students no longer automatically deferred.
12. G. Van Maanen, *The International Student Movement: History and Background*, The Hague, 1966.
13. See: P. Altbach and N. Uphoff, *The Student Internationals*, N.J., 1973.
14. See: K. Mehnert, *Moscow and the New Left*, California, 1975.
15. D. O'Neill, 'The Student Movement: Analysis and Strategy' (paper presented to Qld. Radicals' Conference, 1 September, 1968), p 8.
16. Cardinal Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Cambridge, 1931, p 75.
17. C. Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, Cambridge, 1963.
18. *Martin Report*, (Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia), Canberra, 1964, Chapter I, paragraph I (v).
19. *Broadcasting and Television*, 6 April 1961.
20. J. Jupp, 'The Discontents of Youth', in Crick, *op. cit.*, p 69.
21. John Lennon quoted in *Go Set*, 12 July 1969, p 17.
22. M. Lystad, *As They See It: Changing Values of College Youth*, Mass., 1973, pp 100, 110. (Lystad surveyed lyrics of songs in *Hit Parader* and *Top Hits* magazines.)
23. It is remarkable that only meagre research has been undertaken into the psycho-social consequences of adolescent development in the nuclear age. A notable exception in the 1960s was Sibylle Escalona (See: 'Children and the Threat of Nuclear War' in *Behavioral Science and Human Survival*, California, 1965.)  
Recent studies have been completed by J. Mack and W. Beardslee in Boston. (See: 'The Impact on Children and Adolescents of Nuclear Developments' in American Psychiatric Task Force Report, *Psychosocial Aspects of Nuclear Developments*, Washington, 1982.)
24. *Broadcasting and Television*, 8 December 1966.
25. K. Keniston, 'The Sources of Student Dissent', in W. Anderson (comp.), *The Age of Protest*, Calif., 1969, p 240.
26. 1966 and early 1967 Melbourne witnessed displays of police violence. Batons were wielded against anti-conscriptionists (in March), opponents of President Johnson's visit (in October), protestors against the hanging of Ryan, and demonstrators against South Vietnamese dictator, Ky. The pattern continued until 1971. (See: B. York, 'Police, Students, and Dissent: Melbourne, 1966-72', in *Journal of Australian Studies* May 1984. (forthcoming).
27. Under Whitlam's leadership, the ALP modified its Vietnam policy to support holding operations rather

- than a complete withdrawal. (*ALP Platform*, 27th Commonwealth Conference, Adelaide, 1967, pp 32-34.)
28. The general meeting also demanded the rescission of a clause of the University's admission policy which barred any student excluded from another campus from enrolling at La Trobe. And it called for exposure of any relationship between the University and the Joint Intelligence Organization. The Glenn demand, however, dominates the student literature.
  29. *Enrages* (Labor Club news sheet), 24 March 1971.
  30. ICI is listed in G. Thayer's *War Business: the International Trade in Arms*, N.Y. 1969, p 297. Reports critical of ICI's role in South Africa appeared in *The Observer* (London), 28 March 1965 and *The New York Times*, 2 September, 1963.
  31. The injunction also restrained the excluded student Brian Pola from resuming his position as president and/or member of the SRC.
  32. The financial autonomy issue had become academic by April, with the deadline for payment of fines having passed and the SRC defendants withdrawing from the case in fear of costs being awarded against them.
  33. J. Walter, *The Perception of Conflict: Profiles from Student Politics* (B.A. Hons. thesis, La Trobe, 1974), p 91.
  34. G. Little, *The University Experience*, Melb., 1970, p 104 (61 per cent of Arts students from country backgrounds rated 'Medium-High' compared with 67 per cent from city origins.)
  35. Walter, op. cit.
  36. The Registrar's office was unable to supply statistics concerning parental occupations.
  37. The assumption of 75 per cent average during 1967-72 is based on official statistics for the years 1967 and 1968 (75 per cent) and on Walter's 1972 figure (86 per cent). (See: *La Trobe University Record*, 2, 8, October 1968, p 9, and Walter, op. cit.
  38. By 'working-class suburbs' during 1967-72 I mean: Western suburbs (Footscray, Brooklyn, Tottenham, Newport, Williamstown, Sunshine, St. Albans, Altona). Inner city suburbs (Essendon, Moonee Ponds, Pascoe Vale, North Melbourne, Parkville, Carlton, Brunswick, Coburg, Fitzroy, Collingwood, Abbotsford, Clifton Hill, Fairfield, Darebin, Flemington). Northern suburbs (Fawkner, Craigieburn, Airport West, Glenroy, Tullamarine, Broadmeadows, Northcote, Preston, Thornbury, Reservoir, Thomastown, Lalor, West Heidelberg, Campbellfield). Other (Fishermen's Bend, Keilor, Avondale Heights, Maribyrnong, Prahran).
  39. Henry op. cit., p 225.
  40. Little, op. cit., p 102.
  41. Henry, op. cit., p 227 (52 per cent were 'bonded' in 1970).
  42. La Trobe University Council: *Fourth Annual Report*, 1969, p 63.
  43. *La Trobe University Bulletin*, 3, 30, 2 June 1972.
  44. See: Little, op. cit., p 94.
  45. See: C. Rootes, *Australia's Student Radicals: the Nature and Origins of Dissent* (B.A. Hons., Qld., 1969), p 87.
  46. See: N. Feather, 'Educational Choice and Student Attitudes in Relation to Terminal and Instrumental Values', in *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 22, 2, August 1970.
  47. Bruce Wilson (SRC Editor, quoted in J. Perlez, 'The Student Press', in *The Australian*, 1 April 1970.
  48. In June 1969, hundreds protested in the Caf against poor quality food.
  49. The original long-term plan was for the campus to be divided into ten separate colleges, each with 1,000 resident/non-resident members. In 1971, there were two colleges (Glenn and Menzies), with Chisholm joining them in 1972. The college concept was abandoned during 1971 and a central Union facility opened in 1973.
  50. *Enrages*, 1, 8, 1969.
  51. Henry, op. cit., p 214.
  52. Henry, op. cit., p 215.
  53. Henry, op. cit., p 216.
  54. A. Glenn to Minister of Education Bloomfield, 23 September 1964, cited in *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, 1964, p 521.
  55. Ibid.
  56. *Martin Report*, v. 1, p 4.
  57. *Preston Post*, 18 October 1967.
  58. *La Trobe University: Who Does it Serve?* (Labor Club tabloid), 19 April 1971.
  59. *Enrages*, 21 June 1970.
  60. A. Barcan, 'Changes in Student Outlook', in *Quadrant*, 1, 1, 1956-57, p 67. (La Trobe Labor Club membership reached a peak during 1970, but even then it was only 8 per cent of the student body (or, 150 students). Yet it was able to mobilize more than a thousand students (33 per cent of the student population) against the Council in 1971.)
  61. *The Age*, 22 September 1970, p 9.
  62. *Probe* (Postgraduates Society), 2, 7, September 1970. The Moderate Student Alliance, which had sent observers, declared that, 'There had been absolutely no provocation from the students' ('MSA Statement', September 1970).
  63. *Red Moat* (La Trobe Communists), 20 April 1971.

64. Statute 2.4(2) (g), in *La Trobe University Act, Statutes, and Regulations* (La Trobe University, 1972).
65. Blake & Riggall (University Solicitors) to Vice-Chancellor, 14 March 1972, (DSRC 72/4), p 2.
66. Dr Myers had severely reprimanded the offenders. (Myers to P. Reid, SRC President, in *SRC Newsletter*, 2, 20, 1969, undated.)
67. *The Australian*, 25 August 1969.
68. *Message from the Vice Chancellor to Graduating Students*, 3 April, 1971, pp 7-8.
69. Victorian DLP leader, F. Dowling, quoted in *The Herald*, 20 July, 1971.
70. 'The NCC and the Universities', in *The Catholic Worker*, May 1971, p 11.
71. PWF was essentially a Rightwing conservative 'united front', established around 1965 by B.A. Santamaria and F. Knopfelmacher. (*Statement by John Chandler (Former Vice President of PWF in Adelaide)*, in *National U*, 8, 5, 26 April, 1972, p 7.
72. Members of the VCAC in 1971 were: Professors Wolfsohn, Goldman, and Eliezer, Chief Librarian Borchardt, Registrar Taylor, Business Manager Barnes, and the Vice-Chancellor's assistant, D. Sherwin.
73. *Red Moat*, 3, 12, April 1970.
74. *Report by Vice-Chancellor on Item 3(c) (Deputation) of the Agenda for Fiftieth Meeting of Council*, 13 May 1971, (C71/21).
75. *Motions Presented to Council*, 27 April 1971.
76. *Notice* (October 7 Committee), October 1971.
77. *La Trobe University Bulletin*, 2, 53, 13 October 1971.
78. *Notice, op. cit.*
79. Minutes, Council Meeting, 17 April 1972 (C72/26)
80. *Red Moat* (WSA), 5, 6, 27 April 1972 (*Red Moat* was published by the La Trobe WSA during 1972).
81. *La Trobe University Bulletin*, 3 28, 16 May 1972. (The nearest thing to a gesture emanating from the meeting concerned the wide terms granted to a working party which had been established in April to organize campus forums.)



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