THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ORGANISATIONAL ORIGINS OF THE GREENS

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ABSTRACT

The Greens have grown in strength as an electoral force in the last decade. Some of the discussion about this has sought to comprehend the party and its support base as a 'left bloc' political formation. An understanding of the process of the formation of the party further illuminates this analysis. It also helps to explain the 'dry years' of the party in the 1990s. This paper will consider the history of the origins of the Greens and what that suggests about its course for success in winning broader support.

INTRODUCTION

The main federal electoral successes of the Greens have come in the last decade. Its general election lower house vote grew to 4% in 2001, more than 7% in the middle of the decade and 11% in 2010. It began to win Senate seats in more than one state at a time and, more slowly, lower house seats, first one at a by-election in 2002, and then one in a general election in 2010.

These successes have drawn some to attempt to understand the Greens and the party's support base. Much of this effort considers evidence from the last decade.

The earlier history of the party, however, and in particular its multifarious origins in the period of the Hawke and Keating governments, also illuminates the characteristics of the Greens and Greens supporters. In this period support for the ALP weakened, which made a new party of the Left possible. The Greens are the stand out result of the attempts to realise that possibility. Nonetheless, among those who took the name 'Greens' at that time, there were differences about what Green politics should involve. This was expressed primarily in a conflict about the sort of party structure and membership that Greens wanted. In the course of that conflict, a national Greens emerged, but because of how that happened, the existing momentum for a new party was temporarily exhausted. Little progress was made in improving the numbers of members, the overall vote, and the organisational reach of the Greens throughout the party's 'dry years' (Amanda Lohrey is the source of this term, 2002, 40, but she uses it somewhat differently) of the 1990s, relative to the opportunity that had been available. What can be observed and understood about the difficulties the party experienced in the period of its formation might speak to how the synergies of the Greens and their support base apparently now being realised can progress.

The Greens: An Environmentalist or a Broader Left Party?

Amanda Lohrey's 2002 essay on the rise of the Greens offered an important early analysis of the party and its support base. According to her, the Greens authentically represent a 'progressive constituency'. This constituency consisted of a 'core ecology vote' and a 'broad-based protest vote'.(64, 66-68)

Many have maintained that the Greens have an environmentalist origin and focus. (for example: Hawker 2009, 12, 16; Hoffman and Costar 2010, 702; Williams 2006, 325-28, 337) Moreover this has sometimes been tied to a view that socialist politics or ideological commitments would render the party ineffective or introduce conflict into it.(Hutton and Connors 2004, 36; Manning and Rootes 2005, 403-08)

As the Greens' vote has grown, however, the broader support for the party has been discussed. Some recent works suggest a different analysis of the Greens and the party's support base. David Charnock found that Greens support had always depended on voters with 'left' attitudes. He concluded that the Greens 'appear to have little practical alternative to working within the "left bloc" framework' electorally.(2009, 246-56) Ashley Lavelle noted that a consequence of 'the death of social democracy' and left electoral challenges was that the Greens' articulation of a clear alternative had resulted in the party's policies being perceived as more social democratic than those of the ALP.(2008, 42, 171)

Critiques of the Greens' leftism argue that it is limited. One argument is that a relatively narrow support base for the party's protest 'against the political system in general' will make its left stance difficult to sustain electorally.(Hawker 2009, 11-14) Others discuss factors that apparently contradict the leftism: support from among conservative small business people and middle class professionals (Bramble and Kuhn 2011, 189); or the party not accepting class as an organising concept for the party's politics and strategically orienting to trade unions, as the ALP does.(Bramble and Kuhn 2011, 184; Tietze 2010, 27, 33-34)

Events in the period of ALP government between 1983 and 1996, the time of the Greens' orgins sheds light on these counter-arguments.

First, at that time the ALP continued its pursuit of the 'national interest' and, thus, the management of Australian capitalism,(Bramble and Kuhn 2011, 6-11), hardly a Left perspective in any sense similar to that of the Greens.(Hawker notes the Greens socially-based concerns are 'internationalist': 2009, 16) or organising politics from a class struggle perspective (at least, not that of an independent working class). Most unions played an important part in the government's approach through the ACTU-ALP Accord: then, as always, the trade unions are not necessarily politically left-wing.

Second, stronger identification with the ALP started dropping.(Goot 1999, 22) This movement was not, however, politically conservative. Instead, it gave impetus to attempts to form parties that were on the Left, including the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP) and the leftward turn of the Democrats partly associated with Janet Powell's leadership.(Economou 1997, 262-64) The Greens were part of that movement.

Finally, the political science discussion at this time was about a possible broad party 'dealignment'. Indeed, the new party movement started with a bang: in ten months from the NDP's foundation in June 1984, the party won a vote of 7.2% nationally in the Senate and recruited 10,000 members, before its first and only conference in April 1985.(*Direct Action*, 1984-85) Also, as the Democrats moved to the left, the party's vote peaked in 1990. The issue with regard to the Greens could be why did the party take a decade or more to reach these levels(on party membership, see Willingham 2011)—and now how it might move beyond that.

ANALYSIS

Emergence of Green parties

The national Greens effectively had three points of origin (The Greens WA emerged through a separate process of amalgamations of organisations and groupings in that state: *Green Issue: Newsletter of the Greens WA*, 1989-90; River 1994, 12-15). The best known of these was among environmentalists in Tasmania. In 1972, they created the United Tasmania Group. In 1982, Bob Brown became the first parliamentarian from their ranks. Later in the 1980s, the parliamentarians began to call themselves Green Independents.

As well, two green parties were started in 1984: in Brisbane, the Green Party, and in Sydney, the Greens. A leading figure in the Green Party was Drew Hutton. Over the next two years, he advocated for 'a national party, that if it wasn't in the mainstream, it at least had a possibility of being so, and having close connections with the conservation movement'. Not achieving success in that, in 1987 he took part in the formation of the Rainbow Alliance.(Hutton 1994)

The initiative for the Sydney Greens came from inner-city libertarian socialists. This party registered the name 'The Greens' to get its lower house candidate identified as such on the ballot paper.(Harris 2010, 71-72). The Sydney Greens favoured creating Greens parties as local or regional alliances acting as auxiliaries for a community-based, direct action politics.(Harris 2007, 203)

From the late 1980s, starting with the lead-up to the March 1990 federal election, there was a chance to put the Sydney Greens' perspective into action. The reaction against the experience of the ALP was deepening. Greens parties appeared to provide a difference from the major parties in their refusal, largely, to compromise on or tradeoff policies, (Burgmann 1993, 217-19; and as a Greens WA newsletter explained: cited in Jorquera 1996) and in which to be active.(Brewer 1991b). As well, many were inspired by the experience of the West German and other European Greens parties. The Greens registration was offered to any group which subscribed to the four basic principles of the German Greens: a sustainable economy, grassroots democracy, social and economic equality, and disarmament and non-violence .(Green Alliance 1989, 8; Harris 2007, 205-06)

In NSW, the alliance approach was explicit. The September 1989 founding conference of the Green Alliance declared:
> We don't want to form a traditional hierarchical party. The form appropriate for a Green party or organisation in NSW now is a growing alliance of local parties, groups and special interest organisations. (Green Alliance 1989, 8)

All who were interested were invited to take part in the state-wide GA and to form or join a local Green group. Eventually six local Green parties were formed in Sydney and others founded on the Central Coast, in the Hunter and the Illawarra, and in the electorates of Cowper and Richmond in the state's northeast. More than 400 in the GA Senate pre-selection.(Brewer 1994; *Direct Action*, 1989-1990; Harris 2007, 206) In Victoria, SA and the ACT there were also Greens-registered Alliance parties. The SA Green Alliance was initiated in February 1990, when the Green Party (SA) decided not to stand..(*Direct Action*, 1989-90)

This burst of Green party formation occurred despite the resistance it faced from many of the professional activists in the peak environmental organisations. They had closely aligned the environment movement nationally with the ALP in the 1987 election.(Doyle 1991) They claimed the new Green parties were fragmented, inexperienced and lacked electoral support, but also seem to have been unwilling to accept the objectives of the Greens—rejection of major parties as 'manifestly inadequate' and a commitment to democracy in decision-making—and the range of groups and people involved.(Arnold 1989, 56; Burgmann 1993, 222; *Direct Action*, 1989; Green Alliance 1989, 8) The same organisations were influential in the decision of the Queensland Green Network not to stand a Senate ticket: the QGN endorsed two lower house green candidates.(Sibelle 1994)

A National Greens Party is Proposed and Opposed

After the 1990 election, the Hawke-Keating government introduced laws that provided 'resource security' for the forestry industry. The groups—TWS, in particular—become more open to backing a Greens party.

In July 1990, Hutton met with Brown. Brown felt the Greens' achievements in Tasmania, the unacceptability to Greens of the growing separation of rich and poor, and ALP inaction on land rights and the environment made 'clear … that we should have a national Greens'.(Brown 1994; Hutton 1994) In the following months, they contacted and met with the Greens WA Senator, Jo Vallentine, leaders of the Democrats and the Rainbow Alliance, and leading peak environment group figures, to discuss the formation of a national Green party.(*Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Norman 2004, p. 161) Hutton also was the Brisbane mayoral candidate in the Green Alliance campaign for council elections in southeast Queensland that developed out of QGN discussions and as various parties—the Democrats, the DSP, Rainbow Alliance, and also the Socialist Party of Australia—and independent activists eventually nominated 16 candidates for Brisbane and three other councils' wards. Hutton. With supporters, up to three hundred people were involved. DSP member Maurice Sibelle, who was elected campaign coordinator, stated 'a certain solidarity [developed] among the people who ran … It did reflect itself in the ease with which we worked together, despite the political differences'. The Green Alliance mayoral vote was eight per cent and ten of its ward votes exceeded 10 per cent, including one 26 per cent vote.(Eddy 1996, 298; Hutton 1994; Sibelle 1994)

In April 1991, Brown told the Ecopolitics V conference: 'The question now, to me, is not one of whether we're going to have a cohesive national green force, but when. And the sooner, the better.'(Nichols 1991) His green party would be a complementary electoral apparatus and reforming 'voice in parliament' for community groups(Brown 1994) and would be organised to compete with the established major parties, and the media and 'multinational organisations', in order to 'give the electorate the alternative'.(Painter 1991b)

Brown's proposal interpreted the Green principle of participatory democracy in a particular way. First, according to Brown, 'trying to get the perfect organisation which doesn't allow any individual to be more or less than any other individual within that framework before we move on' was a 'big danger': full, informed consensus on every matter was not possible. The Greens, he argued, should 'highlight trust in the people that represent us'.(Painter 1991b)

Second, the Greens would be directed by broader populations over and above party members. Most important among those was the green movement, constituted as the spectrum of community groups. With that movement, a connection that was constituted by constant liaision, common work, representation and dialogue would provide a basis for developing party membership and policy.(Brown 1994; *Green Left Weekly*, 1992-1995; Stannard 1991) The movement would also hold parliamentarians to account, while the Greens membership, the movement's 'tip of the iceberg', would choose another representative.(Brown 1994; Painter 1991b)

Hutton has identified the opposition to Brown's proposal as coming from three sources: the Greens WA, the 'Green parties controlled by the DSP [Democratic Socialist Party]', and the proponents of autonomous local Green parties.(Hutton 1994; also Lohrey 2002, 35) The proposal challenged the perspective of each of these three that Greens politics should pursue a restructuring of society. (see, for example, Harris 2007, 203)

Within the Greens WA were members who supported a radical politics. In 1992, Christabel Chamarette, who had recently replaced Vallentine as a Greens WA senator, was asked what sort of change the Greens sought. She replied:

> I was going to say revolutionary change, but I prefer the term 'transformation', because transformation implies using what we've got in a radically new way ... so what ordinary people are saying has more value than what parliamentarians are saying.(Noakes 1992)

Thus, the Greens WA 1992 decision to remain independent of, but collaborate with, the national Greens was not the result of WA parochialism.(cf. Brown and Singer 1996, 85; Lohrey 2002, 35) The membership vote on joining the Australian Greens in fact supported participation in a national Greens in principle, but two-thirds backed the Greens WA remaining independent.(*Green Issue: Newsletter of the Greens WA*, 1992) This suggests that many Greens WA members felt uneasy about the national party that was being formed.

The alternative proposal to Brown's was for a loose network of autonomous Green parties. The DSP pushed that proposal as a provisional measure, in support of creating 'a grassroots party of a radically different type' rather than 'another traditional parliamentary party'. The DSP also suggested that time should be taken to in order avoid domination of the process by any group.(Sibelle 1991) This meant, as Harris pointed out, that the DSP adopted a decentralist rhetoric while not supporting autonomous organisation in principle and itself working as a unified group.(Harris 2007, 203) Nonetheless, the DSP's arguments were related to the transformative politics of 'decentralism'. It opposed what appeared to be moves to claim exclusive control of the name 'Greens' and it proposed the subordination of the activity of elected Greens representatives to 'the democratic empowerment of members'.(n.a. 1991)

Also, that some Greens parties the DSP was involved in opposed Brown's proposal does not substantiate the claim that the DSP 'controlled' or 'colonised' (Harris 2007, 206) those Green parties. First, the evidence from this time does not support the claim: the DSP did seek to ensure that there were Greens election campaigns and that it was part of them,(Harris 2008, 9) but not a controlling position in those such as the leading candidate in Senate tickets.(*Direct Action*, 1989-90) Second, the claim does not allow that other members of these Greens parties simply might have agreed with the DSP's view.

Opposition to the national Greens project also came from Greens who supported the autonomy of regional parties.(Brewer 1991b; Painter 1991a, 1991b) The libertarian socialists in Sydney, however, were frustrated by the divorce of grassroots activists from the debate about forming national structures, a new lull in Green politics, the failure to create the 'anti-party party' that had been wanted and the marginalisation of Green politics as a fundamental social-ecological critique. Now, according to Tony Harris, the national registered officer for the Greens, those who had taken the initiative in 1984 in Sydney, 'had seen the realpolitik writing on the wall and were prepared, to a degree, to lower our expectations'.(Harris 2007, 200, 206-07)

Founding the Greens Nationally

After Bob Brown's Ecopolitics V speech, the calling of an election in NSW pushed back the timing being considered for a meeting about the formation of a national Greens to August. Also Harris withdrew from the national discussions about the future of the Greens and, acting on his authority alone, handed over his position as the Greens registered officer to Steve Brigham, from the Illawarra Greens. By the middle of May, Brigham, Hall Greenland, who was another of the libertarian socialists in the Sydney Greens and had played a key role in bringing together GA, Brown, Hutton and Vallentine circulated a letter that proposed an August conference. (*Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Harris 2007, 200-01)

In June, proscription of members of other parties from the Greens became a prominent issue. Typically parties in Australia, most significantly the ALP, have proscribed members of parties that had contested elections against them. The Green parties in Tasmania and WA had already introduced a partial proscription that prevented members of other parties having full voting rights.(*Green Issue: Newsletter of the Greens WA*, 1990; Hall and Lapthorne 1989) Harris also seems to have had this issue in mind when he spoke at the Ecopolitics V conference:

> I think all the green perspectives belong within green politics…
> In the best of all possible worlds, tomorrow all the green parties, the Democrats, the New Left Party ... the Democratic Socialist Party ... could all disband our existing organisations and dissolve into a new organisation.(Painter 1991b)

Supporters of the national Greens project now asserted that the broader alliances existing in the Green parties were not 'the correct basis for a new political party'(Hegge 1991) and advocated proscription of members of all other parties . In Brisbane, Hutton and others called on the Queensland Green Network to support the national Greens proposal with proscription: the QGN agreed, but because the network was constituted with an open membership, the project's supporters there established the Australian Greens Working Group (AGWG). In the Illawarra Greens, a meeting was convened to discuss on and vote for proscription without informing the DSP members who were involved.(*Green Left Weekly*, June-July 1991)

In July, a GA meeting resolved that its delegation to the August conference would support a national organisation of autonomous parties and agree to some form of proscription of other parties 'either immediately or under a sunset clause'. Also, teleconferences largely comprised of the Greens parties and groups that had implemented a form of proscription agreed that proscription should be a precondition for attendance at the August conference. Other Green parties went to the conference on the basis that they had agreed to consider proscription after a national green party was established and operating for some time.(Brewer 1994; Brown 1994; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Hutton 1994)

The teleconferences had decided on invitations, delegation sizes and agenda for the August conference. All Green parties were invited: from Queensland, the AGWG was invited, and also the Capricornia candidate that the QGN had supported, Craig Hardy, but not the QGN; from Tasmania, two of the Green electorate parties sent representatives. The delegation sizes emphasised the groups which had taken part in the conference organising process.(*Green Left Weekly*, 1991)

Proscription was the first item on the conference agenda. It was quickly applied to the meeting itself: two delegates, who were DSP members, were compelled to leave. The North Shore delegate, Tony Jas, walked out in protest at what he thought was a small group trying to define what the Greens would be. The resolution on a 'sunset clause' was to enforce proscription of members of other parties in parties that would constitute the national Greens within six months. (Brewer 1991a, 1991b) The conference then discussed the structure for the new party without attempting to make a decision about this.

The discussion about the new party's structure persisted for the next year, primarily in NSW. This fight, a 'fundamental battle' according to Brown, had confirmed for him his view that proscription of members of other political parties was necessary for the new Greens party. Eventually, as those who had supported autonomous organisation largely dropped out of the debate or shifted to supporting the national Greens project, an agreement on party structures was negotiated and the Australian Greens were founded.(Brewer 1994; Brown 1994; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Harris 2007, 207)

The national party began with branches in only New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania. In Victoria in 1991, according to Hutton, there were 'very few' supporters of the prospective Australian Greens: the branch developed over the next two years, but could field candidates in only half of the state's lower house seats in the 1996 federal election. The ACT branch was formed in 1993, and the SA and NT branches formed in 1995. (Brown and Singer 1996, 84-85, 87; Hutton 1994)

In NSW, the Greens started to grow again in the lead-up to the 1995 state elections: Ian Cohen was elected to the upper house after the Greens vote increased to four per cent. However, the party also had a temporary rival, the No Aircraft Noise party, in inner-city Sydney. The role of the Greens WA senators with regard to the 1993 Budget and native title legislation, and the assistance offered by their offices to campaigns, helped give the Greens generally prominence and credibility among social movement activists. Nonetheless, a recovery in the mid-1990s of the Democrats vote in the state cost Chamarette her seat in 1996. In the same election, the Greens in Tasmania, with Brown as their lead candidate, won a Senate seat for the first time. (*Green Left Weekly*, 1993-1996)

Authenticity, Democracy and Exclusivity: Consequences in Forming the Greens

A decade after the formation of the national Greens, Lohrey argued that the Greens had 'emerged as the authentic representatives of … the new progressive constituency', being 'an organic leadership'.(2002, 68-69) Her account had noted, however, the relative stagnation of the party in the 1990s. This she explained by referring to 'a change in the political mood' in that decade. In this way, she glossed over the contribution that the party's own decisions about made to that stagnation.(2002, 35-38)

If the national Greens' leading party members had had 'authenticity' in 1991 or 1992, that would have enabled the party to operate well without absolutely democratic structures. It would have given Greens' members and supporters confidence in their parliamentarians and apparatus and, thus, would have partly substituted for democracy in the party. Then, to preserve that confidence, as Brown stated later, Greens' parliamentarians needed to engage in a 'real exercise of integrity … to be able to act for the members of the Greens, to be able to recognise that much wider electorate'. (Brown 1994) He might have felt that would be sufficient, given that in Tasmania, despite the tensions with supporters and communities that had emerged in 1989 after the Green Independents had won the parliamentary balance of power, the Greens had some success evolving more recognisable structures of power as they went.(*Direct Action*, 1989-90; Flanagan 1990, 129-30; Hopkins 1989, 8)

In 1991 and 1992, however, the leadership of the national Greens had sufficient grounding in the social movements for authenticity only in Tasmania, and perhaps also in WA.(Eddy 1996, 302; Macdonald 1996) In much of the country—Victoria, SA, the ACT and western Sydney—the party initially had little or no formal existence. In most states, including NSW and Queensland, the Greens struggled to form effective branches or raise its vote to more than three per cent..

The votes for proscription at the August 1991 conference indicated this was the prospect for this national Greens proposal. These votes included 15 for, six against and six abstentions, with 3 anti-proscription delegates excluded or absent, for the sunset clause—that is, just half of the conference. This was despite the favouring of the pro-proscription position in both the allocation of delegation sizes and the way the conference had been organised. If past campaigning and the potential for growth of the parties had been additional criteria for determining the delegation sizes,(as Marit Hegge, a supporter of the proposal, stated they were: 1991) then the delegations from Victoria and SA, where the Greens parties had opposed proscription before the conference, and also WA probably should have gained delegates at the expense of the NSW parties and, especially, the pro-

proscription AGWG. Also, a number of groups had pre-emptively introduced proscription, while others had suggested they would not attend the conference unless support for proscription from everyone else was a precondition for attendance. Finally, the conference agenda made proscription the first item for discussion, without other issues of strategy or structure for the Greens parties debated beforehand or together with this.

Greens who wanted to form a national organisation which proscribed members of other parties claimed that was their right. Yet they also sought to exclude Greens who were members of other parties from the Greens as a political movement and challenged the registrations of Green parties that did not conform to proscription (deregistrations took a few years to be completed). In the meantime, the original Greens organisations in Victoria, South Australia, the ACT and western Sydney, where much of the initiative for their formation and maintenance had come from the DSP, were lost to a national Greens organisation. So were many of the Green parties' members, both DSP and non-DSP, who opposed proscription and/or the more centralised structures proposed for the national Greens party.(Brewer 1991b; Eddy 1996, 310; Friel 1995; Hegge 1991; Macdonald 1996)

The Greens' more recent success might be seen to confirm the value of the national Greens project that Brown proposed. This presumes, however, that the Greens as the party has now developed was the party envisaged in the 1991 proposal for a national Greens. It has not been that party.

First, the Australian Greens' structure was not what had been proposed. The balance between national and state organisations now favoured the state structures. Also, the party's members gained the formal right to mandate the policies of the party's parliamentarians.(Norman 2004, 163-64)

Second, the Greens as a political party has not turned out to be, as Hutton proposed, peculiarly ecological and thus able to approach mainstream politics in connection with the large environment movement organisations. In fact, the Greens have never had a singular environmental focus: the Sydney Greens party was initiated by socialists, and Brown also long ago stressed the importance of social justice issues in his political activity.(Brown 1994) The Greens have been a left bloc party, undeniably ecologically informed, but also informed by the reaction against what the ALP in government was doing and the absorption of much of the 'old' left into that.

In that context, the national Greens proposal threatened the nature of the party as an organisation for collective action through its practice and prospect of excluding activists from decision-making. Because its proponents did not have the established authority, democratic participation by Greens members in the national party's formation was needed in order to resolve the differences among Greens activists without the party suffering substantial losses. For the activists, the kind of Greens party that would emerge was at stake. The experience of Greens parliamentarians' integrity in responding to party policy and social movement perspectives did not provide for reciprocal relations within the networks of activists that would gain the confidence of many Greens activists. In this case, responsibility for the party could have substituted for not having confidence in it.

Proscription reinforced the threat and worked against its solution. First, as Greens activists organised to press for their various views, it targeted the forms of that which had a history prior to the Greens. Also, when the activists belonged to organisations that would be proscribed but considered that their membership of these organisations fitted within the political framework of the Greens—as the members of the DSP did, for example, whereas those in Rainbow Alliance did not—they continued to feel responsibility for those organisations. Only successful experiences in the new party could have completed the replacement of past loyalties with loyalty to the new party.(Baker 1996) Excluding that possibility through proscription created rivalry for the national Greens, not so much electorally as for the adherence of activists and in the movement media.

Against the cost of proscription to the Greens, the party might have gained more from the measure. Proscription has been maintained in the Greens and has continued to be viewed favourably within the party.(see Norman 2004, 163)

Hutton, for example, accepted that the DSP had decided 'in the late 80s to … be green' and also that its socialist 'left humanism' was 'okay' ideologically within the Greens. Yet he considered that because DSP members insisted on 'maintaining their own organisation … inside the Green party', that cemented the deep division' between them and Greens with views like his and they 'became ineligible to be involved in the Green party'.(Hutton 1994) Supporters of the national Greens proposal feared DSP members were not loyal to the Greens in the form of a successful national party.(Norman 2004, 162-63)

From the DSP members' point of view, they were committed to the Green Alliances and thought Brown and Hutton believed these were successful.(Sibelle 1994) They suspected the national Greens proposal was 'a grab … for domination and control'.(n.a. 1991), especially once proscription was raised. The DSP and some other activists particularly objected to the suggestion that members of parties other than the Greens parties, in order to join the new nationally-organised party, would need to dissolve their existing parties first, without some experience of the new party.(Baker 1996; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991)

The DSP responded to what it saw as a vitrolic campaign. In particular, it suggested Brown's desire to move towards a merger with the Democrats was underpinned by an agenda for a similar, right-wing, Green party. Yet the DSP included the same group of Democrats that Brown was talking with in its discussions about the left.(Brewer 1994; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Sibelle 1994)

Nonetheless, Brown and Hutton held the initiative in proposing a national Greens party. Their proposal included a schema about the party's relationship with the environment movement and mainstream politics that did not align the proposed party with key sources of support for the Greens. At the end of the 1980s, Greens parties formed across Australia with the involvement of a number of groupings interested in socially transformative politics, and again in more recent years the party has involved people from a range of political backgrounds and views, although not usually on an organised basis. Yet the national Greens proposal greatly restricted that expression of the successful Greens' policy combination of ecological and social justice concerns without trade-offs between the goals involved in each.

CONCLUSION

The development of the Greens nationally, at the end of the 1980s, came as the ALP continued to lose support in reaction to its government. Unlike other new party projects of the 1980s, the Greens survived to become an effective political force. This can be largely attributed to the positing of the party as a potential replacement for the ALP (Brown and Singer 1996, 2) and the party acting on the main opportunities that were available to it, which were electoral and parliamentary activity. In these ways, the Greens laid the basis for a future break in the structure of party politics.

First, however, the Greens had to overcome the consequences of the implementation of much of a proposal about how to form the national Greens that limited the scope for the party's policy and its organising of collective action in the early 1990s. The various Green parties formed by the end of the 1980s had again brought together a relatively broad range of activists who were inspired to act. Then the plans for centralisation of the party and proscription within it provoked substantial opposition among Greens, primarily among those who approached Green politics from a social justice focus, whereas the proposal was underpinned by a focus on ecological politics. In the end, the views of that opposition were only partly accommodated in the new national party. Meanwhile,

many people, if not excluded from the Greens, were 'whittled away' through feeling that their experiences and campaigning networks were being ignored. They might otherwise have built Greens branches or autonomous parties.(Brewer 1994; Macdonald 1996) In turn, the opposition blocked thorough exploration of other opportunities to quickly broaden the party even further, such as among the left Democrats, and sometimes became rivals.

Thus, the Greens failed to consolidate the critical mass of activists to maintain the electoral breakthrough that was first achieved in the 1980s, nor was the party generally successful in developing an organic relationship with the social movements. At this point the momentum for a new party took a backward step. Contrary to Robert Manne's view that many Green supporters backed the ALP until 1996,(Manne 2010, 10-11) they were in fact already seeking a new party of the Left under Hawke and Keating, but in the 1990s mostly could not find one.

Environmental and social justice activists drawing together political support has achieved increasing electoral success through the past three decades. A generally uncompromising adherence to policy and broader organisational approaches have provided the basis for uniting these elements of the 'left bloc'. The Greens have advanced along this path. When they have deviated from it, they have faltered. Their likely road for success is to reinforce the party's position of and in the Left.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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