

New parties in the long decade of ALP government

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Working class party identification and support changed in the 'long decade' (1983-1996) of ALP government. Intense identification with the ALP declined and within the class several attempts were made to form new parties. The pluralist understanding about the relationship of party and class - a party appeals to a class and, if successful, provides that class' identity - is inadequate for understanding this development. An alternative argument is that a critical mass of especially interested and socially connected people is the basis of collective action not only for social movements but for a party based in the mass of a class. This paper will consider whether or not working class party formation and activity during the long decade provides evidence supporting this argument.

The Australian Labor Party won parliamentary majorities and formed the federal government from 1983 until 1996. The electoral basis for that 'long Labor decade' (Beilharz 1994, ix) was support from the bulk of the working class. During this decade, however, the character of identification with the ALP within the working class changed. In relation to that change, several attempts to form new parties were supported in the working class.

This paper will explore the formation and activity of new parties in the working class during the decade. It will consider whether or not this provides evidence for an argument that a critical mass of especially interested and socially connected people is the basis of collective action not only for social movements but for a party based in the mass of the class. It will also show how and why much of the potential for a new party in the working class was exhausted by the end of that period. That exhaustion may help to explain any shift in the votes of workers to the Liberals (Howard's "battlers") and the emergence of the figure of Pauline Hanson, which occurred at the close of the period. However, the scope of the paper does not extend to a discussion of those developments, because of the distinct factors, trends, and time period involved.

Although surveys of political attitudes regularly ask respondents about party identification, political science only rarely discusses people's political consciousness, and, in particular, workers' political class consciousness, in a broad sense. In relation to the decade, two examples stand out:

- Andrew Scott (1991), and, following him, Michael Thompson (1999) argued that a 'working class' in 'routine *jobs*' (tradespersons; clerical, sales, and service workers; machine operators; labourers; and so on) had previously been the principal support base for the ALP. According to them, a reason for this was that the party concerned itself with 'bread-and-butter working-class grievances' about economic inequality and security. Both also argued that since the 1960s a 'middle class' of professionals and para-professionals with a '*career*' had become predominant in the ALP's membership. Scott argued that this changed the party's ethos in a way which marginalised the concerns of the routine workers (Scott, 10-13, 16-17, 23-46; 2004, 108-09) Thompson, writing after the ALP electoral defeats of 1996 and 1998, instead claimed the routine workers had been alienated by the party (although Goot and Watson found no trend towards blue-collar support, including among self-employed 'aspirational', for the Coalition: 2007, 269-70). He argued this was because while, in the early years of the long decade, the government had concentrated on economic reform, which the working class had supported because it supposedly met the class' hopes for 'decent jobs' and a more equal society, from 1987 the party 'was more and more captured by the values of middle class groups' (Thompson 1999, ix-x, 1-23, 35, 43-44, 69-70, 82,

91, 93-94). Scott, on the other hand, thought evidence to show that the government's radical economic restructuring had instead brought about job losses and community disintegration and had been rejected by 'most Australians' was abundant (Scott 2004, 200).

- Paul Kelly (1994) claimed class consciousness was one of those elements of 'the foundation of support for the old Labor Party [which] had collapsed or were falling' in Australian society in the 1980s. He substantiated this with an argument that the 'new Labor model of governance ... transcended Labor's penchant for economic intervention, income redistribution and class antagonism' (15, 19).

Thus, for Kelly, the ALP wrote the script through which the working class played out the development of its consciousness. Scott's and Thompson's two classes, on the other hand, took to the historical stage with their lines dictated by the day-to-day or 'career' conditions of their lives.

Scott and Thompson, however, each arrived at the same conclusion as Kelly about where historical agency lay - with the ALP. Scott wrote the party would need find out more about what its supporters and potential supporters wanted the ALP to do (1991, 69). Thompson called on the ALP to uphold what he supposed were working class values (1999, x, 95). All three arguments consider that a party provides not only the identity, but also the structural reality of a class (G. Sartori, cited in Jaensch 1989, 67). In political science, this is a common view about parties. They play the active historical role. A class receives party appeals and, potentially, supports a party, but collective action within a class only plays a role in founding parties, if at all (Jaensch 1989, 61-69; Ware 1996, 5-84; and see, for example: Goot 2004, 652-54; Lavelle 2004, 646-47).

This paper is focused on working class contributions to the formation and activity of parties. It needs a framework of class analysis which provides concepts suitable to explore this phenomenon (Wright 2005a, 192). The development of new parties among the mass of the working class suggests a discussion of conflict, and, perhaps, some trend towards an historical variation of society. An approach to class analysis anchored in attempts to explain inequalities in individual life chances by market and socio-cultural mechanisms does not have the means to do this (Wright 2005a, 182, 185-89). Nor do postmodern approaches, which argue the class idiom in politics has declined in the latter half of the twentieth century so that "contemporary advanced societies remain unequal, but in a classless way" (Pakulski 2005, 154, 169-179; see also Hindess 1987, 121). Weber's class analysis is based on market exchange, and on that basis largely excludes class antagonism (Wright 2005a, 182, 190). The main finding of another argument based on market exchange, that 'rents' secured by 'exploitation classes' which restrict the supply of some asset generate antagonistic conflicts between owners and non-owners of that asset, is that 'capitalism has been successful in eliminating rents to labor' (Sørensen 2005, 120-21, 150-151): thus, workers' class antagonism has supposedly disappeared or been effectively suppressed. Finally, Marxist class analysis starts with social relations of production which are class relations because the rights and powers over resources deployed in production are unequal among people with respect to the appropriation of the results of the resources' use. In that tradition, 'the most significant aspect of historical variation in inequality ... [is] in the *manner in which an economic surplus is produced and appropriated*', while conflict is explained by the 'exploitation' involved, which is elaborated 'in terms of a process through which labor effort is appropriated from one class by another'. The result is a fundamentally binary class model - in capitalism, exploited workers, who rely on the sale of their labour-power for their subsistence, and exploiting capitalists, appropriating the products of the workers' labour (Wright 2005b, 5-10, 15, 189-90).

To address the variety of class relations and class locations within these relations which can be observed in everyday life, Marxists such as Erik Olin Wright have increased the complexity of their tradition's analysis of these phenomena without forsaking its class model in relation to conflict and social change, as in his discussion of the issue of class compromise (Wright 2005b, 10-19). Wright's structural approach, however, poses a number of problems.

Wright states class interests 'are the material interests derived from their location-within-class-relations' (Wright 2005b, 20). This contradicts the expansive view of working class interests that can be derived from what Wright stated is Marxism's normative emancipatory root (Wright 2005a, 182, 191), which its founders called 'the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things' (Marx and Engels 1846, 49). For example, while proponents of 'ecological rationality' (Plumwood 2005, 610) have criticised Marxism for its scorn of a discourse of environmental limits, they have also noted that eco-Marxism is now predominant in that intellectual tradition (Dryzek 1997, 41-42, 182, 191).

Also, Wright's structural approach to class agency has not consistently integrated 'processual views' like those of E. P. Thompson, as he has suggested it should (Wright 1997, 492-94). Thompson argued that 'class struggle' was prior to 'class', and that classes arise when people 'come to struggle, to think, and to value in class ways: thus the process of class formation is a process of self-making, although under conditions which are 'given'' (1978, 298-99). An integrated concept of 'class' would therefore embody both the choices for action posed by the contemporaneous experience of social relations and the legacy of the past experience of class struggle. In turn, 'class consciousness' would involve not only an awareness of class interests, but also the cognitive and affective identity of class members (Wright 1997, 494-95). Yet Wright has sometimes denied collectivities can have consciousness (Wright 1997, 382; cf. Wright 2005b, 21), even though many theoretical and empirical analyses (see, for example, Kelly 2000), as well as game-theoretic modelling (Chwe 1999; Macy 1990; Marwell and Oliver 1993; Simpson and Macy 2004) support a view that collective action happens through social networks and culture. On that basis, collective consciousness exists, even if no organisational mechanism formulates decisions (cf. Hindess 1987, 110-111). Moreover, while collective action usually originates from a relative few who are connected to each other, especially responsive to a common interest and believe their action can be effective (Kelly 2000, 79), the collectivity is the condition for their initiative. Such an original 'critical mass' of extremely active participants is more likely to be found among larger, relatively heterogeneous, population bases (Marwell and Oliver 1993, 56). Also, a collective action which arises within the working class will generally lack material resources and for social leverage must instead rely on gaining 'strength in numbers' by reaching out to involve broader parts of the class. (Macy 1991) .

Finally, Wright's treatment of class stratification is problematic. To consider stratification, he stepped outside class relations to consider market capacities to secure rents. However, he accounted only for quantitative differences in economic assets – that is, the concentration in a few hands of scarce resources. In competitive markets, qualitative differences in labour productivity among the assets held by owners of capital allow higher productivity enterprises to realise a value for their product which is derived from the average cost of production rather than their lower one, the additional value being transferred to those enterprises from lower productivity enterprises. This creates 'surplus-profit'. When capital immobility preserves such surplus-profits, they become monopoly superprofits (Mandel 1972, chs 2-3).

The superprofits of monopolising capitals allow some concessions in the conditions of class struggle which capital makes to one or another section of workers, in reaction to the latter's struggles to improve their immediate conditions, to be sustained even, when the

circumstances which compelled the concessions no longer exist. Thus, these concessions become relative privileges, some of which are enjoyed by at least a fairly broad group of workers of a particular country, while others are part of a gradation of privileges from which emerges the 'labour aristocracy' as the better-off stratum of workers. That stratum tends to be the basis for an opportunist politics in the working class which sacrifices the general interest of the working class in emancipation for the exclusive interest of preserving the conditions of those privileges – that is, in upholding the fortunes of 'its' monopolising capitals. A 'bourgeois labour party' is, therefore, typical in all advanced capitalist countries, such as Australia (Elbaum and Seltzer 1982, 80-81; Lenin 1915, 242; 1916, 116; Strauss 2007a, 198-99).

Discussing this stratification of the working class as an issue of 'relatively privileged strata' might appear more useful than continuing with the controversial 'labour aristocracy'.

However:

- The labour aristocracy, unlike, for example, Scott's '*relatively* privileged section of the workforce' consisting of professionals and para-professionals (Scott 1991, 46-49), is not an occupational stratification. It is defined by a relationship of sustained concessions from capital. That does not correspond to the occupational divisions of the working class, although the relative privileges of the labour aristocrats are frequently associated with various occupations because the latter influence the capacity of the workers to fight for concessions and the strategic considerations of capital about sustaining concessions made. Historically, 'skilled' tradesmen, especially the better unionised, have been the core of the labour aristocracy: their position as relatively privileged workers is ignored by Scott in his discussion of the ALP prior to the 1970s. Professionals and para-professionals are also often relatively privileged, but whether or not this is true of some of those occupations, in particular where employees are predominantly female, is debatable. These are considerations in the categorisation of the labour aristocracy below.
- Also, the political unity which may exist among different development of the labour aristocracy rather than the occupational division of labour to which it is subjected is this paper's concern.
- Finally, while Scott's 'middle class' is only able to exclude the routine workers from politics, the labour aristocracy remains part of the working class and is able to influence, through the concentration in its hands of various resources used by workers in the class struggle, the character of the struggle of the rest of the working class – the 'lower stratum' – as well (Strauss 2007a, 199).

Thus, there is more than one political program – a party's 'appeal' – that may be active in the working class at any time. Parties, some of which may be collective actors, compete to influence the class' activity. One may be, and very often is, dominant, and others might challenge that domination. This is the context in which the working class 'receives' the various class identities proffered to them by parties.

The attempts in the long Labor decade to form new parties within the working class were not without historical precedent. The working class radicalisations from the end of the 1880s into the early 1890s and in the middle of the 1940s were both partly expressed in growing support for left alternatives to the ALP (Strauss 2007b; 2007c).

In the long decade, however, this new party ferment was more sustained. This suggests many working class people: perceived a need to break out of the framework for politics in the working class offered by the ALP; were in contact with others who agreed; and formed a shared conviction that they could do this. Indeed, this was achieved against trends of

declining industrial disputation and organisation and social movement mobilisation. It may have even partially substituted for those trends as a reaction against the ALP's version of neo-liberalism.

Yet this ferment had also largely exhausted itself by the end of the long decade. We know the Greens today as a party which is the electoral alternative to the left of the ALP, but this status was largely gained during the last decade. Earlier, it stagnated for several years after the Greens formation as a culmination of the varied efforts of thousands of people towards creating new parties, of which only the most significant examples in what is a complex history are discussed here. If one issue is whether or not a critical mass of contributors sufficient for the success of a new party project might have existed, another is what prevented that potential's realisation by curtailing reactions to government policy, the availability of activist connections and/or confidence in how the projects were working.

The class basis for the new party projects

Trends in party identification, party engagement and voting patterns provided broad indications of those in the working class who were considering opportunities beyond the ALP. In this paper, data from various social surveys – Aitkin's 1979 study [hereafter 1979 PAS], the Social Science Surveys (Kelley, Bean and Evans 1990 [1989-90 NSS]; Kelley et al. 1996 [1994 NSS]; Kelley, Cushing and Headey 1984 [1984 NSS]; Kelley, Evans and Bean 1988 [1987-88 NSS]), the Class Structure in Australia survey of employed persons (Western 1986 [1986 CSA]), and the Australian Electoral Studies (Jones et al. 1993 [AES 1993]; Jones, McAllister and Gow 1996 [AES 1996]; McAllister et al. 1990 [1990 AES]; McAllister and Mughan 1987 [1987 AES]) - and federal election results (Australian Electoral Commission 1999; *Election statistics; General election for the House of Representatives; The Senate election*) are used to study these.

Who among the respondents to those surveys might be considered to belong to the 'working class' was problematic. Given the information on their work and family circumstances garnered by the surveys, this was resolved pragmatically. Respondents' stated employment types and occupations (or that of a spouse working full-time, if the respondent was not in paid work) serve as proxies for the social relations involved. Survey respondents were not considered working class if they: identified as upper class; had significant supervisory responsibility; or indicated a background of self-employment or of military, parliamentary, judicial, police or prison service employment.

The differences between the labour aristocracy and the rest of the working class was also considered. Occupation again pragmatically defines the stratum: administrative and managerial, professional and para-professional (except those in the female-dominated occupation of nursing), and metals, electrical, building and printing trades backgrounds are distinguished as labour aristocratic.¹

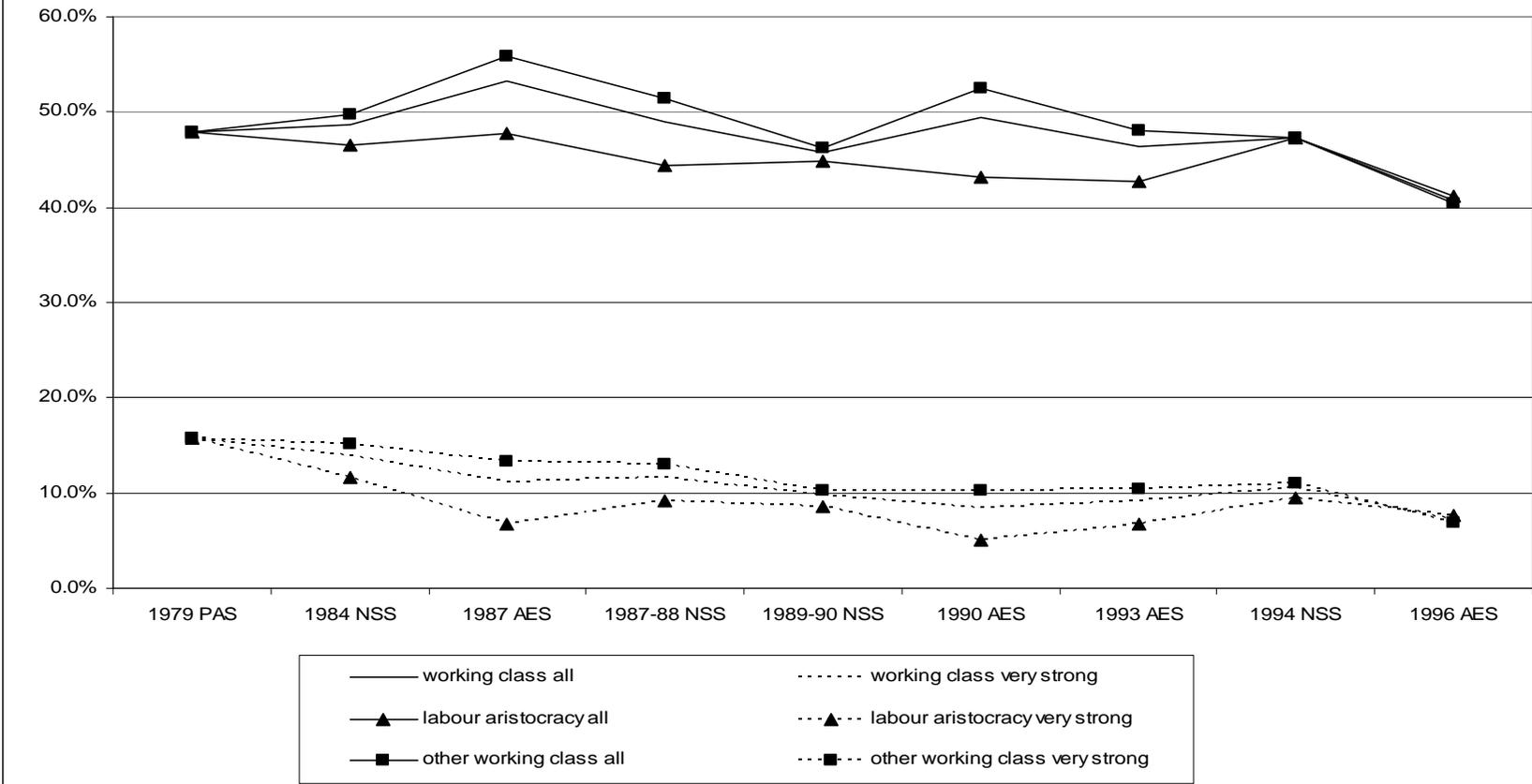
The proportion of working class respondents in the social surveys who stated ALP identification was relatively stable until the close of the long Labor decade (see Figure 1). A trend of steady decline among labour aristocrats was at first largely balanced by some increase among other workers. The latter's identification, after falling back, in the early 1990s, to the same level as before the government's initial election, dropped sharply before the 1996 election, when 'there was a general revolt against the ALP among low income earning voters' (Singleton, Martyn and Ward 1998, 122-23, but also cf. 129).

¹ The 1994 NSS used broader occupational categories. For that survey, nurses are included among professionals and para-professionals, and all trades are grouped as "skilled workers".

The proportion of working class respondents in the social surveys who stated a 'very strong' ALP identification, however, had already dropped from more than 15 per cent at the end of the 1970s to 10 per cent or less in the first half of the 1990s. This fall in intense ALP partisanship came first among labour aristocrats. The low point for such party identification among public sector professionals came in the mid-1980s. In the 1990s, the proportion of those workers who expressed such identification increased slightly. Among labour aristocratic tradespeople, this intensity of ALP partisanship declined steeply, to settle at rock bottom, at the end of the 1980s. Among the rest of the working class, there were sharp falls in very strong ALP identification in the late 1980s and after 1994.

With the lower level of very strong ALP identification, ALP membership numbers fell (Curran 1991, 15). The surveys show lower levels of participation in election campaigns by the party's identifiers and a weakening orientation to the ALP of those involved in social movement campaigning. By the 1990s, few ALP identifiers attended events or engaged in party work. The reduction in election campaign activity was more prominent among the labour aristocracy, who before that had carried the bulk of the burden. Very strong ALP identifiers became less likely to have been involved in demonstrations: the 1987 AES found this less likely than for the working class as a whole. ALP identifiers also originally dominated the ranks of social movement groups, but were scarcely one-fifth of environment group members by 1996.

Figure 1 ALP identification



Sources: AES, NSS and PAS as indicated

Since ALP identification had predominated among the workers who, through their activities in elections, parties, social movements and unions, made the working class an historical agent, reduced ALP partisanship in the long Labor decade may have been a starting point for changes in workers' class political consciousness. Discussion of that trend has considered it principally as a reactive 'dealignment' from the major parties. The purported result was a protest vote, which was focused on the Senate and was not directed by partisanship. (Goot 2002, 39-43; Marsh 2006, 5-7; Papadakis 1993, 174; Western and Tranter 2001, 456-57).

Among working class votes, protest characteristics are most evident in those for the Australian Democrats. Part of the Democrats vote came from weak ALP identifiers and those who did not identify with any party. Another part came from labour aristocratic professionals and para-professionals: they might be expected to be relatively confident they could influence the political system through protest, and they also tended to consider the Democrats an 'establishment' party (Waters and Volpato 1989, 24). At the end of the 1980s, however, when the Democrats briefly moved leftward, identification with the Democrats rose and spread more evenly among the working class and the Democrats' lower house and Senate votes became less differentiated.

The concept of 'dealignment' however, presents identification with the major parties as 'natural' and downplays the specificity of the trend in party identification - away from the ALP - in this period. The Nuclear Disarmament Party 1984 Senate vote of 7.2 per cent (greatly understated in the 1984 NSS survey) therefore stands out. It was a dramatic break from established voting patterns. It came largely from those who had or still identified, often strongly, with the ALP, particularly among workers outside the labour aristocracy (see Table 1). Labour aristocrats gave the NDP greater support, but they were not predominant as they were in the Democrats vote. Later, among the small number of working class supporters of the Greens, identification was strong, at least initially. Also, the party's vote was relatively stable, and was higher in the lower house than in the Senate in those seats it regularly contested.

In the long Labor decade, many workers ended their allegiance to the ALP. The lead in this came from within the labour aristocracy. However, other workers also took up the opportunity to back the new party projects which emerged. A potential for political realignment existed in the working class.

Table 1 NDP and Greens working class support

Survey title	NSS	NSS	NSS	AES	NSS	AES
Survey year	1984	1987-88	1989-90	1990	1994	1996
Senate vote	3.4%	2.0%	2.5%	1.9%	3.6%	2.8%
<i>labour aristocracy</i>	4.3%	2.3%	3.1%	2.6%	4.6%	2.9%
- <i>professionals and para-professionals</i>	5.1%	2.6%	3.8%	2.9%		2.8%
- <i>tradespersons</i>	4.4%	2.9%	2.1%	2.5%		3.8%
<i>other working class</i>	2.9%	1.8%	2.3%	1.6%	3.0%	2.7%
Proportion of Senate vote from						
NDP and Green identifiers	1.2% ¹	3.7% ¹	14.4%	22.6%	19.6%	13.2%
very and fairly strong ALP identifiers	39.5%	40.7%	30.3%	19.4%	15.2%	15.8%
<i>labour aristocracy</i> ²	30.8%	27.3%	33.3%	28.6%	19.0%	5.9%
- <i>professionals and para-professionals</i> ²	40.0%	42.9%	41.7%	11.1%		9.1%
- <i>tradespersons</i> ²	12.5%	0.0%	14.3%	33.3%		0.0%
<i>other working class</i> ²	46.8%	50.0%	28.4%	11.8%	12.0%	23.8%

¹ Both these surveys found only about 0.1 per cent of respondents identified with the NDP. No survey tested identification with the NDP between the time of the 1984 federal election and the 1985 split in the party (see below). The 1986 CSA found about one-quarter of its respondents who intended to vote NDP in the Senate stated they were NDP supporters (who totalled 1.8 per cent of respondents).

² Read as: 'Among labour aristocrats/labour aristocratic professionals and para-professionals (that is, excluding nurses)/(metals, electrical, building and printing) tradespersons/other workers, the proportion of the NDP and/or Greens Senate vote from very or fairly strong ALP identifiers was ...'

Sources: AES and NSS as indicated

Activists' connections and confidence, and the processes of new party projects

Many people who were involved in new party projects in the long Labor decade in some sense understood this circumstance, too. For example, in 1990 Chris Lloyd stated: 'There is an enormous electoral space out there for a party which is capable of coming to terms with the issues that matter to the people who vote in that space' (13). However, those who spearheaded the new party activity had considerable differences about how to realise that potential. They largely failed to resolve these, as can be observed in examples of party activity such as the rise and fall of the NDP, and the formation of the Greens. This paper will now seek to explain why much of the potential for political alternatives was (temporarily) exhausted.

The NDP grew rapidly from its foundation in June 1984 until its first national conference in April 1985. It formed branches in all states and the ACT before the 1984 federal election. Membership reached 10,000. This growth had two bases. Many people involved in or supportive of the large peace and nuclear disarmament movement reacted against the ALP ignoring movement demands. The other was the potential the NDP offered them to act (Denborough 1994; *Direct Action*, 1984-1985; Fisher 1995, 3-4; Prior 1987, 5-6). It adopted three of the movement's demands as its platform:

1. To close all foreign military bases in Australia.
2. To prohibit ... passage of nuclear weapons through Australian waters or airspace.
3. To terminate immediately all mining and export of Australian uranium (White 1984, 13).

The NDP then split at the conference. A group (hereafter, the 'split group') which included the party's only successful Senate candidate, Jo Vallentine, and its popular figurehead, Peter Garrett, walked out.

The NDP split was the culmination of differences that emerged among party members in the months after the election. The debate which occurred appears somewhat confused. People on either side sometimes used the same terms, yet sought different results. Also, it focused not so much on questions of strategy as on the split group's practices and its proposals such as the proscription of members of other parties, decision-making by postal ballots and parliamentary members acting independently of the party (Annear 1985, 10; Fisher 1995, 58-62, 68-71).

NDP members did not dispute their party was 'fundamentally radical' (Vallentine 1989, 9; also Denborough 1994). Also, on either side of the split, many thought the party must tend to be incorporated into some broader politics (Fisher 1995, ix, xii, 5-7, 10, 43, 85-86; Percy 1984, 25; Quigley 1986, 15). The disagreement among NDP members was concerned with what to do about that radicalism and, therefore, what kind of party they wanted.

The split group thought radical politics threatened the NDP. According to Vallentine, the party was unsustainable (1989, 9), while the NSW Senate candidate Gillian Fisher has identified with 'middle-class professionals' in the party who had been among those vital to the party's early successes and now wanted it to have 'credibility in the wider community' (1995, 82-85, 96). Garrett asked about the NDP: 'How can you hold so firmly and so hard to a structure like a party?' He answered: 'I mean, it's not worthy of it' (Prior 1987, 9). Garrett and Vallentine understood the NDP as a new method of public education about the nuclear disarmament issue (Prior 1987, 7).

Other NDP members supported the party remaining as it had been constituted. Implicit in that view was an understanding that the party was part of a radicalisation: some argued that proposals for change reflected pressure to be 'respectable'. (Hockings, Wilcox and Perrott 1985, 17). The radicalisation, however, was limited to anti-nuclear issues. Therefore, the NDP would organise that collective action through a membership which was 'open to all who support the platform of nuclear disarmament' (NDP National Constitution, cited by Fisher 1995, 137). NDP founder Michael Denborough believed the party's platform united support from across the community (1994). The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) members involved also thought that this was what the NDP should be like (Percy 1984, 24, 28).

The NDP's existence, and its operation in a way that included them, was much more significant for these members than for the split group. For example, Jenny Cotterell, a conference organiser, believed 'many people for years have been sick of going to demonstrations and doing lots of things and not getting any action' and 'saw the NDP as a means of achieving a tangible result'. (De Silva 1985b, 25; Prior 1987, 9) The split-group's efforts to exert control, in the belief they faced a 'take-over' of the NDP by the SWP (Fisher 1995, 58-63, 90-95; Quigley 1986, 17), reinforced opposition to it. Marie-Anne Hockings, a NSW Senate candidate from Newcastle, stated at the time of the split:

The party arose because rank-and-file members of the Labor Party were not listened to by Bob Hawke. We want this to be a new type of party, in which the parliamentary representatives take note of the rank and file. (De Silva 1985a, 3)

The various meeting and postal votes which followed showed a majority of the party's more active members, at least, agreed (*Direct Action*, May-July 1985; Fisher 1995, 66, 68-73; Goodfield 1985, 27; *Peace Talk*, 1985).

The disagreements in the NDP may have been underpinned by differences between some labour aristocrats, and others in the working class whom the party had brought into political activity. Fisher's 'middle-class professionals' were, she wrote, 'fairly comfortable with the machinery of elections and party politics' (Fisher 1995, 82). However, the party had then attracted a more diverse working class membership and support base, which, perhaps, felt that the party *was* gaining 'credibility' more broadly in the working class and supported how this had been done.

The NDP survived the split, but still declined because the links among thousands of people which the NDP had created, in no small part by the incorporation of the attractive profile of figures such as Garrett, were sundered. The party's internal development could not now produce a new party as an alternative to the ALP.

Timothy Doyle and Aynsley Kellow believe, as well, that 'the development of a Green Party was almost certainly hindered by the formation of the Nuclear Disarmament Party in 1984, which diminished the electoral chances of another new party' (1995, 130). However, while libertarian socialists founded a Greens party in Sydney in 1984 and registered 'The Greens' name, the people who might have formed a more far-reaching Greens party could not get it together through the middle of the 1980s. Left over from various efforts were the Tasmanian 'Green Independents' parliamentarians led by Bob Brown and the group supporting Vallentine, who was re-elected as an independent Senator from WA in 1987. (Fisher 1995, 5-6; Harris 2007, 174-175; Wiseman 1986, 55).

Doyle and Kellow, however, may instead have meant that the NDP had adversely affected the broader conditions for successfully forming a Greens party: Elim Papadakis suggests the NDP

experience 'made environmentalists wary of ... the problems of transforming a social movement into a vehicle for parliamentary politics' (Papadakis 1993, 180) The experience of the NDP presents as an opportunity squandered, but it was first an opportunity taken to create a new party. Inaction – which is what waiting for a green party would have involved – could have meant many who of those who had questioned their adherence to the ALP falling back under that party's sway. Instead, the success of the NDP in its first months stood as a memory of what a new party could achieve, established as an ambition the formation of an electoral alternative to the ALP with strong partisan support, and inspired the later new party projects. That result predominated over any wariness felt about the NDP experience among those attempting to create a new party.

Renewed green party organising from 1988 gave rise to: autonomous suburban and regional parties in NSW; alliances in NSW, Vic, the ACT and SA; the Queensland Green Network; and parties in SA and WA. In WA, the Green Party then amalgamated at the start of 1990 with three other groups, including Vallentine's, to form the Greens WA. 'Greens' registrations were distributed to these organisations on the basis of adherence to 'four basic principles' which were expressed by the founding conference of the NSW Green Alliance as: 'a sustainable economy, grassroots democracy, social and economic equality, and disarmament and non-violence' (Brewer 1994; *Direct Action*, 1989-1990; Green Alliance 1989; Green Issue, 1989-1990; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Harris 2007, 205-06).

The Greens appealed to many people because they rejected the Democrats' deal making. The Greens WA Senators exemplified this by sticking to their stated positions in negotiations, such as those about the 1993 Budget (*Green Left Weekly*, 1993).

Overall, however, the mobilisation that formed the Greens was weaker than that which formed the NDP. The numbers in each individual group, including the Tasmanian greens and Greens WA, was at most several hundreds, but often much less. Except in NSW, the formation of the green alliances relied heavily on the efforts of the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP - the new name of the SWP). Moreover, after the 1990 federal election, enthusiasm for involvement in the green parties generally ebbed (*Direct Action*, 1989-90; Green Issue, 1990; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Harris 2007, 206; Houweling 1990, 6).

Yet many people also reacted against ALP 'resource security' policies by renewing the push for a national Greens party. Led in 1991 by Brown, Vallentine, Drew Hutton from Queensland, Hall Greenland, who was then left the Sydney Greens, and Steve Brigham, who became the federal Greens registered officer in April that year, they focused on gaining electoral success. For that, they insisted, the Greens needed to allow its representatives to work more independently. Also, the autonomy of the existing Greens parties had to be curtailed and members of other parties proscribed, so that the Greens' ideological division around what Hutton called 'left humanism' would be denied an organisational footing within the party. They believed that the electorate would then get an alternative which could compete with the major parties and face the power of the press and multinational organisations (Brown 1994; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Harris 2007, 200-01; Hutton 1994; Lohrey 2002, 35).

The proposal for a centralised and proscriptive national Greens party was adopted at a conference of Greens parties in August 1991, but support for it was not overwhelming. It did not relate to how the Green parties had emerged in many places. Instead, it excluded many of those who had been attracted to the Greens by this political tradition's radical elements. The size of the

conference delegations and the application of proscription to conference attendance had discounted opposition to the proposal. After the conference, many Greens, in inner-city Sydney, for example, still supported local autonomy for party organisations: changes were subsequently made to the proposed relationship between national bodies and state branches to accommodate that. A vote in the Greens WA, which included members committed to socially transformative politics and members of other parties as non-voting 'associates', rejected affiliation for a decade to the national party even after those changes, although collaboration was maintained between the two parties. The DSP maintained most of the green alliances it was involved in until after the 1993 federal election (Brown 1994; Green Issue, 1990, 1992; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991-1993; Harris 2007, 206-07; Lohrey 2002, 35).

The result was that when, after another year, the national party was formed, the national Greens needed to be somewhat rebuilt as an organic party, based in community campaigns. Only in Tasmania (and also WA) was there a well-established current (Brewer 1994; cf. Lohrey 2002, 2, 65-73). The other founding branches, in NSW and Queensland, were formed by splits, albeit by majorities, away from existing organizations. In the ACT, South Australia and Victoria, as well as the Northern Territory, branches were built up anew. That took several years, as the example of Victoria shows. The Greens supporters in 1991 were a small group. A Greens organisation and then a party were formed in Victoria in 1992, and this became an Australian Greens branch in 1993. In the following year, the branch ran two prominent by-election campaigns, but even in 1996 it contested only about half of the lower house seats in the state (Brown and Singer 1996, 83-87; *Green Left Weekly*, 1992-1996; Hutton 1994; Sibelle 1994).

Conclusion

A view that parliamentarians and other leading party figures, not the activity of party members, should control a party's development won out among the Greens. This was one of a number of expressions of the ambivalence about creating an alternative to 'major party' politics which many of those who were involved in the new party projects had. The problems such ambivalence created were compounded when, as John Baker (1996) notes, past differences among groups and individuals did not stay buried and there was a lack of commitment to democratic principles in debating and voting on existing differences. Key organisers of the new party projects were mostly unwilling to involve all those wanted to take part in the new party projects.

Boris Frankel has asked:

whether more patience, political insight and co-operation could have surmounted the combination of personalities, diverse agendas and unfavourable socio-cultural conditions that prevented a third political force from breaking the mould of party politics (1998, 41-42).

The question is in a sense rhetorical. An abundance of these qualities necessarily would have increased the possibility of a breakthrough.

That these qualities were lacking followed from the same circumstances which demanded them. The organisations and networks, and activists and leaders, involved in the new party projects had limited experiences and understanding. Typically a group had some strength in only a few states or regions (Frankel 1998, 41), types of activity, and/or active (as opposed to the generally held desire for) links to the labour or social movements. The early NDP was exceptional as an effort to pull together a critical mass of activists for that new party project within the anti-nuclear movement.

The problem was reinforced by the opportunity offered to those involved in the new party projects by the masses of working class people who were moving. The labour aristocracy was the stratum of the working class most heavily involved in rejecting the ALP and in the new party projects. However, it came with experience in, and a tendency born of its complex of interests towards, a politics of exclusivity and opposition to radicalisation.

During the period of the Hawke and Keating governments, many working class people stopped intensely identifying with the ALP and considered their political alternatives. These workers' actions reduced the organic support for the ALP. They also created the possibility, while such workers remained politically engaged, of a new left party emerging, but this chance was not substantially exploited then. Organisational exclusions and an emphasis on the immediate results that might be achieved, both rooted in ambivalence about aims, prevented the formation of the critical mass of activists necessary for success in the new party projects: in the Greens this situation was only less grievous than elsewhere. These characteristics in working class politics belong to opportunism based in the labour aristocracy and its concerns about that stratum's relative privileges and relationship to the existing social order, from which most of those involved in new party projects had only begun to move away.

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