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The Accord and Working-Class Consciousness

**The Politics of Workers under the
Hawke and Keating Governments, 1983-1996**

Thesis submitted by
Jonathan STRAUSS BA(Hons) Monash
in May 2011

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Arts & Social Sciences
James Cook University

Statement on the Contribution of Others Including Financial and Editorial Help

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- A minimum resource grant of \$1000 per annum from the Faculty of Arts, Education and Social Sciences when enrolled at James Cook University (pro-rata when enrolled part-time);
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Abstract

This thesis aims to develop the understanding of workers' class political consciousness. In particular, the thesis addresses the ways and why workers unmade and remade the working class and, more specifically, their class political consciousness under the ALP federal governments from 1983 to 1996.

The literature about the period largely fails to view the politics of workers as subject to workers' agency. To approach the problem thus posed, the thesis' inquiries range across workers' activity in unions, social movements and the formation of new political parties.

The thesis considers that the working class is formed as workers respond to their experience using elements of their consciousness. Moreover, a relatively small core of activists, who organise collective actions and generate social learning among workers, initiates workers' class struggle.

The operation of the core for organising collective action among workers outside the political mainstream is the thesis' focus. The thesis' research primarily involves qualitative analysis of documents and reports of events. Quantitative research includes a newspaper survey of protest events and new analyses of raw survey data.

The thesis proposes a model of class analysis that recognises that, in the long Labor decade, a political trend that represented an alliance of some better-off workers with capital would inevitably exist, while the creation of an antagonistic and hegemonic working-class politics was uncertain. Because this model is controversial, the thesis first elaborates its theory about the better-off workers, or "labour aristocracy". The theory is then validated in a new analysis of the Australian working class' political history. This establishes that the ALP expresses opportunist politics among workers and that workers' militancy rose in the 1970s.

With regard to the period, the thesis first shows that union workplace organisation declined. It relates a series of agreements between the government and the ACTU that aimed to boost labour productivity, the Accord, to a reduced prevalence of the factors that motivated workers to be a delegate.

Second, the thesis discusses three elements of opposition within the unions to the Accord. Shop committees questioned the approach adopted only when themselves under threat. Wage militancy remained largely confined to tactics that confronted employers. Among the union left, the opposition to the Accord as a social contract lacked the political perspective and organisation to unite.

Third, the thesis suggests some social movements flourished. These might have provided opportunities for building the core for organising collective action among workers, but in each radicalisation was isolated or slow and partial.

Finally, the thesis considers the falling intensity of ALP identification. Some workers engaged with new party projects. When the Greens formation as a national party came however, divisions and failures had exhausted much of the impetus for a new party.

Thus, in the long Labor decade, there were new, principally electoral, mobilisations of workers. Meanwhile, in existing forms of workers' mobilisation, many who would have comprised the core for organising collective action were instead alienated from it. The core for organising collective action declined. Also, among the core, those who might have practiced antagonistic and hegemonic workers' politics were relatively inexperienced in that and usually did not agree with it. Many were workers who had been relatively privileged, but no longer were.

The thesis concludes that the new party projects of the long Labor decade were a movement of workers towards a party that expressed their concerns, while the ALP has been and is a "bourgeois labour party". Thus, social justice policy is important for the successes of the Greens, while the ALP exerts a pro-capitalist influence among workers. A more fundamental conclusion is that the core for organising collective action among workers is the material form of workers' class political consciousness, whose strength depends on whether or not workers' political parties and social movements constructively interact.

The thesis provides a better understanding of the ALP and the new parties in terms of class. The thesis also grounds the notion that "class happens". Although the core for organising collective action among workers is usually a small grouping of workers, it is a key to the formation of the working class.

The thesis shows that much of politics of workers is about how will class happen. If that is ignored, changes in the structure of party politics will surprise the political analyst.

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Abbreviations

ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
ACOA	Administrative and Clerical Officers Association
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ACU	Association for Communist Unity
AFAP	Australian Federation of Airline Pilots
AGWG	Australian Greens Working Group
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMWU	Amalgamated Metal Workers Union (see Note below)
BLF	Builders' Labourers Federation (see Note below)
BWIU	Building Workers Industrial Union (see Note below)
CFMEU	Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (see Note below)
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
DSP	Democratic Socialist Party
FEDFA	Federated Engine Drivers and Firemens Association
FCA	Federated Confectioners Association
FPU	Food Preservers Union
GA	Green Alliance [NSW]
GEM	Green Electoral Movement
MF	Miners Federation (see Note below)
NDP	Nuclear Disarmament Party
PND	People for Nuclear Disarmament [Victoria] ¹
QGN	Queensland Green Network
RA	Rainbow Alliance
SPA	Socialist Party of Australia
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
TLC	Trades and Labour Council [WA]
TWS	Tasmanian Wilderness Society, later The Wilderness Society

¹ The People for Nuclear Disarmament organisations in each city or state operated independently. In this thesis only the name of the Melbourne-based organisation will be abbreviated.

Note on names of unions

Many unions were generally known by names which did not closely follow their formal titles or changed their names several times between 1983 and 1996 as they went through a series of amalgamations. For the sake of consistency in the text only one or two names are used. Listed below are the names used, followed by alternative names:

- Amalgamated Metal Workers Union: Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights Union; Metals and Engineering Workers Union; Automotive, Metals and Engineering Union; Australian Manufacturing Workers Union.
- Builders Labourers Federation: Australian Building Construction Employees and Builders' Labourers Federation.
- Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union: Construction, Mining and Energy Union. In construction, had previously been principally the Building Workers Industrial Union.
- Miners' Federation: Australasian Coal and Shale Employees Federation; United Mineworkers Federation.

Prologue

From March 1983 to March 1996, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) governed federally, led first by Bob Hawke and then by Paul Keating, who had been Treasurer for all but a short period under Hawke. In this 'long Labor decade',¹ the electoral base of the Hawke-Keating government was in the votes of workers.

The Hawke-Keating government, with the support of capital, applied market liberalism as its organising principle and rationale for government intervention. This policy regime, which 'freed' capital from state 'interference' while maintaining a strong state in order to defend the rights of capital and open up new areas for capital to exploit, is known as 'neo-liberalism'.²

The government's policy regime was not specifically economic. It was applied in policy fields near to and far from the economic realm, such as: financial markets; employment strategies; administration of unemployment; education; public service management; public sector enterprises, which were privatised or subjected to competition policy; and trade and foreign affairs, including the alliance with the US. The policy regime also did not constitute a specific economic policy: for example, the Accord, which was a series of agreements between the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the national peak body of the union movement, and the government, and also consultations between ACTU and other senior union officials and the government on a range of policy matters, at first involved centralised wage fixing. Yet the Accord was part of neo-liberalism because it helped the government manage the unions' response to its policy regime, while the ACTU's aim for the Accord was to create jobs and gain 'social wage' benefits such as Medicare and industry superannuation through union support for the international competitiveness of Australian capitalism and the development of a 'productive culture' among workers. Like other neo-liberal policy regimes, the Hawke-Keating government's was a response to the period's capitalist

¹ Peter Beilharz, *Transforming Labor: Labour Tradition and the Labor Decade in Australia*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. ix.

² Ashley Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy: Political Consequences in the 21st Century*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008, p. 13.

structural crisis in which the Australian state's efforts were directed to trying to raise the rate of surplus value and, thus, the rate of profit.³

Among the results for workers of the government's neo-liberal policy regime were: a longer working day; work intensification, including increased 'flexibility' in hours of employment; a shift in consumer goods production to low-wage countries by reducing tariffs; wage restraint, which left workers' earnings stagnant through the 1980s; and increasingly, efforts to raise labour productivity more quickly, in particular through a fragmentation of wage fixing from the late 1980s by introducing efficiency principles and then enterprise bargaining. The shares of national income shifted in favour of capital and against labour. The distribution of earnings and household disposable income became increasingly unequal, despite the claim that the ACTU wages policy was 'solidaristic', supposedly 'targeting the widest group of people and offering the greatest gains to the low-paid',⁴ because in fact those in private sector, market-oriented managerial and professional jobs made the strongest gains, while real pay for those in the 'disappearing middle' of the distribution range fell. Also, those workers would have suffered, along with the poor, from cutbacks in the collective provision of goods and services by governments.⁵

Parts of the response of workers to this are well-established. Union membership fell from about 50 per cent of workers in 1982 to about 40 per cent in 1992, and then at twice that rate from 1992, through 1996, to stagnate below 25 per cent in the new century. The ALP primary vote dropped to less than 40 per cent in 1990: in the long term, that vote has not risen again.

Among unsympathetic critics of the government and the unions the Accord is much to blame for that response: for example, Scott MacWilliam stated its 'more substantial

³ Mark Beeson and Ann Firth, 'Neoliberalism as a Political Rationality: Australian Public Policy since the 1980s', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 34, no. 3, November 1998, pp. 217, 222-29; David Burchell, 'The Curious Career of Economic Rationalism: Government and Economy in the Current Policy Debate', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 30, no. 3, November 1994; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Cambridge, Blackwell, 1992, pp. 181-86; Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century*, London, Abacus, 1995, p. 412; Martin Painter, 'Economic Policy, Market Liberalism and the "End of Australian Politics"', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 31, no. 3, November 1996; Michael Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation Building State Changes its Mind*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

⁴ Brad Norrington, *Sky Pirates: The Pilots' Strike that Grounded Australia*, Sydney, ABC Enterprises, 1990, pp. 99-100. Ross Gittins coined the term.

⁵ Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training, *Australia at Work: Just Managing?*, Sydney, Prentice Hall, 1999, chs 2-6; Tom Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia: A History from Flood to Ebb Tide*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 125, 138-39; Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 186; Bill Martin, 'The Australian Middle Class, 1986-1995: Stable, Declining or Restructuring?', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 34, no. 2, August 1998, pp. 141-148; Ian Watson et al., *Fragmented Futures: New Challenges in Working Life*, Sydney, Federation Press, 2003, pp. 44, 95-101, 119-29.

consequence has been in crushing working class confidence'.⁶ This view that workers' class consciousness collapsed is the one the author has had most often expressed to him. Yet much of the practice of the author's social networks in the period—the participation in the labour and social movements, the efforts to form new parties, and the presentation of radical ideas and forms of culture—belied that view if the collapse was thought of as immediate or absolute. Life was more complex.⁷

More sympathetic critics of the government also find that what they considered 'the political and industrial wings of labour' were 'after the end of the Accord ... particularly weak'.⁸ What happened, however, is now presented as a paradox.⁹ Workers' votes elected a government and the unions, that are mass organisations of workers, reached agreements with that government, yet what in this view is understood to be the working class declined. This suggestion of paradox, however, is not an explanation of history.

Each of these commonsense views supposes the working class is what, according to that view, the class ought to be¹⁰—that is, in revolt, or in the institutions that workers support. The inability of an analyst who starts within such a framework to address the complex conditions and results of the working class' actions springs from the *a priori* nature of their categories.

Human beings make history. The conditions under which humans live, which they first encounter as given and might only then set out to transform, constrains their agency. Also, they are, no doubt, often confused in their understanding of their situation or what the consequences of their actions will be.¹¹ Nonetheless, 'class happens', as E.P. Thompson wrote:

When some men [sic], as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.¹²

⁶ Anne O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord and its Impact on Western Australian Trade Unions in the Aftermath*, Honours thesis, School of Social Sciences, Curtin University of Technology, 1996, p. 52.

⁷ This has been the socio-political, as opposed to the intellectual, inspiration for this thesis.

⁸ Frank Stilwell, 'The Accord: Contemporary Capitalist Contradictions', in Kenneth Wilson, et al. (eds), *Australia in Accord: an Evaluation of the Prices and Incomes Accord in the Hawke-Keating Years*, Melbourne, South Pacific Publishing, 2000, p. 280.

⁹ Damien Cahill, 'Labo(u)r, the Boom and the Prospects for an Alternative to Neo-liberalism', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 61, June 2008, p. 333.

¹⁰ This is the optative mood: C. Wright Mills, *The Marxists*, Melbourne, Penguin, 1982, p. 20.

¹¹ E.P. Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory: or an Orrery of Errors', in E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays*, Merlin, London, 1979, pp. 298-99.

¹² E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, Penguin, 1980, pp. 9-10.

Class, taken over time, cannot be considered as a structure. In that sense, a class is better conceived as a body of people 'who have a *disposition to behave as a class*'.¹³ The 'class structure' of various social relations of production determines the variation of people's experiences from which that disposition springs. This means analysts and participants might understand human responses to experience in terms of 'class'. However, the historical agency that might be analysed as belonging to class has been exercised in life by the people who created collective action as they integrated their consciousness of class into their responses to the circumstances confronting them.¹⁴

Classes are made by people's "'handling" of [experience] in conscious ways' that are 'embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms'.¹⁵ To join a picket line, to rally against war or to protect forests, or to support a party involves a choice among values as well as an assessment of material interest.¹⁶ Thompson argued that 'classes arise because men and women ... come to struggle, to think and to value in class ways: ... [T]he process of class formation is a process of self-making'.¹⁷ Moreover, class is concerned not only, or even primarily, with the circumstances of radicalisation, when masses of people take part in historic events. Such times proceed from changes in 'classes which have already formed themselves'.¹⁸

The question posed for the research of this thesis is, therefore, how—in what ways and why—was the working class and, more specifically, workers' class political consciousness unmade and remade in the long Labor decade.¹⁹ For this purpose, the thesis inquires across a range of workers' experiences in unions, social movements and the formation of new political parties. The obverse of that range of inquiry is that the thesis might be considered limited in that many individual themes that are important in their own right, such as the neo-liberal policy regime's specific effects on women and Indigenous people, receive only coincidental attention, rather than being examined in a detailed way. The early stage of historical research into the period nevertheless makes such an exploratory approach valid. Also, the approach taken is perhaps the only way to begin to holistically grasp the question posed. That leaves behind any simple location of opposing class allegiances. The thesis' purpose is to examine the trends in

¹³ E.P. Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English', in E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, Merlin, London, 1979, p. 85.

¹⁴ Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English', p. 86.

¹⁵ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 10; Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory', pp. 298, 366.

¹⁶ Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory', pp. 367-68.

¹⁷ Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory', pp. 298-99.

¹⁸ Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, London, Pluto Press, 1979, pp. 17-18.

¹⁹ Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory', p. 242; Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, p. 17.

the size and strength of groups that were involved in the development of workers' class political consciousness, which facets of that consciousness shone or were dimmed, the life of institutions, and the constant polarisations this way or that across class lines. As Thompson noted: 'Politics is often about exactly this—how will class happen, where will the line be drawn? And the drawing of it is ... the outcome of political and cultural skills.'²⁰

Outline of the Thesis

The thesis first surveys the literature that has sought to explain the creation of, maintenance and challenges to working class practice in the long Labor decade. This review finds substantial descriptions and illustrations, and also some insights. Yet there is no adequate explanation of workers' politics in terms of their historical agency.

The second chapter of the thesis discusses the theory and method it uses for its research into and explanation of the period. The chapter points out that workers take part in making and remaking the working class through collective action and its social learning. The chapter then describes the qualitative and quantitative methods used to study the development of the capacity of the core for organising collective action among workers. Finally, the chapter frames this discussion through adopting a model of class analysis that rethinks the revolutionary agency of the working class. According to this model, in the long Labor decade a political trend that represented an alliance of some better-off workers with capital was inevitable, while the creation of an antagonistic and hegemonic working-class politics was uncertain.

The model of class analysis employed in the thesis uses a controversial category, the 'labour aristocracy'. Therefore, in chapter 3 of the thesis, a theory of the labour aristocracy is elaborated, emphasising the emergence of this stratum through sustained concessions by capital to labour.

In the next chapter of the thesis, that theory of the labour aristocracy is applied to a rethinking of the history of the Australian working class. This demonstrates the validity of the theory in that context. The chapter also outlines the rise in workers' militancy in the 1970s, that preceded the period the thesis discusses.

Chapter 5 of the thesis first shows that, in the long Labor decade, the number of union delegates among workers fell. This is related to the motivation of workers to

²⁰ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 10; Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English', p. 86.

become delegates, because under the Accord the forms of union activity in the workplace which would have prompted that motivation declined.

The next three chapters discuss elements of opposition to the Accord: closest to the workplace, shop committees; upsurges in wage militancy in the latter half of the 1980s; and opposition to the Accord as a social contract among the union left. The opponents of the Accord never, however, managed to oppose it together, and were for the most part overwhelmed.

The thesis next attends to the chances to develop the core for organising collective action among workers in other social movements. Chapter 9 shows these movements' mobilisations were initially strong, then fell back and finally partially recovered. It also discusses reasons why networks of activists did not develop in three movements that had sustained campaigning and some development of political understanding.

Finally, the thesis considers party politics. In Chapter 10, workers are shown to have reacted against the ALP, as it carried out its neo-liberalism, through a weakening identification with the party. In turn, two more chapters discuss the efforts made among workers to create new parties : the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP), which was an electoral breakthrough; failed regroupments of the left and organising of independents; and the formation of the Greens, which survived the period.

Thus, the thesis concludes, the Hawke-Keating government's neo-liberal regime was able to reduce the concessions by capital to workers without, at least immediately, a challenge to the power of capital. Many of those who would otherwise have constituted the critical mass in organising workers' mobilisations which might have resisted those losses were instead alienated from such mobilisation. Past forms of working class action dwindled. This tendency, weakening workers' solidarity, was the most powerful of those in the formation of the working class in the period. Nonetheless, in the electoral arena and party organisation there was also the beginning of a radicalisation of workers, largely among those who had previously been relatively privileged, as that strata of workers narrowed as a result of capital's gains. The Australian working class was not only unmade but remade in the long Labor decade.

The Accord Misread

A substantial literature relates to the politics of workers under the Hawke-Keating government and, specifically, the Accord. This mainly consists of research and commentaries produced at the time or as postmortems. From that, disciplines such as industrial relations, political science and sociology have provided many relevant empirical tests and illustrations.¹ As much as possible these are referred to in the appropriate chapter. This part of the literature, however, only occasionally offers insights for a study of the politics of workers that considers their historical agency. A few recent works about the period are more reflective historically and, together with the responses to these, substantially expand the literature for such a study. Yet these still do not provide an analytical framework that adequately incorporates the agency of workers in history

This chapter first discusses three explanatory themes that, in turn, predominated in the discussion of the politics of the long Labor decade during that period: corporatism, labourism, and social change factors, especially globalisation. The work within these themes implicitly excludes the agency of workers.² Then the chapter considers how the literature has usually treated class political consciousness: either it is made to be dependent on political parties or it becomes a sum of individual attitudes rather than a collective subjectivity. Finally the chapter considers studies that are more relevant to a history of workers' politics because of their focus on changes in ideas or culture or their discussion of whether and how organisations involving workers or different parts of the class mobilised.

Corporatism, Labourism, and Globalisation

After the election of the Hawke-Keating government, which proclaimed a search for a societal 'consensus', a discussion quickly arose about whether or not its regime was 'corporatist'. Corporatism was thought of as an accommodation within a centralised and hierarchical political structure of big business and unions, as the principal economic interest groups, and the government. This discussion also considered whether or not conditions existed or would continue to exist for form of corporatism and

¹ See: Stilwell, 'The Accord', p. 268.

² Sometimes the literature explicitly excludes workers from explanations of the period, such as in 'new statism'. See, for example: Ann Capling and Brian Galligan, *Beyond the Protective State: The Political Economy of Australian Manufacturing Industry Policy*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 54, 57.

whether the Accord at least enabled the pursuit of democratic and social goals benefiting the broad population or instead promoted the interests of one or another of the interest groups involved at the cost of small business, the poor or union radicalism.³

The corporatist analyses focused, however, on what were secondary aspects of a corporatist regime. According to Leo Panitch's analysis of corporatism, its most important aspects are the processes of workers' incorporation into the regime and developments in the day-to-day class struggle. Those developments are the source of such a regime's instability. He suggested that workers were more likely to leave the unions than to directly oppose their unions' collaboration with the state.⁴

From 1986, analyses concerned with labourist crisis-management seem to have become more favoured.⁵ These analyses considered that labourist politics is a particular alliance of a party and a union movement. Their respective immediate concerns are management of the capitalist state and 'achievement of better wages and conditions from a profitable and productive mixed economy'. The two concerns are linked by common pragmatic commitments on the part of the ALP and the unions to pursuing social justice and winning reforms through government, as well as by common value systems which placed labour as a special cause within the social order.⁶

³ Peter Beilharz, 'Labor Rules: D'Accord? A Response to Chilla Bulbeck', *Thesis Eleven*, no. 14, 1986, p. 108; Peter Beilharz and Rob Watts, 'The Discovery of Corporatism', *Australian Society*, 1 November 1983; Peter Beilharz and Rob Watts, 'The Accord and Morals', *Australian Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, February 1985; Peter Beilharz and Rob Watts, 'Accord Crossfire', *Australian Society*, vol. 4, no. 4, April 1985; Peter Beilharz and Rob Watts, 'Industry Policy: Making History?', *Politics*, vol. 21, no. 1, May 1986; Mark Bray and Pat Walsh, 'Accord and Discord: the Differing Fates of Corporatism under Labo(u)r Governments in Australia and New Zealand', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 6, no. 3, October 1995; Chilla Bulbeck, 'A review of the Accord's first three years', *Thesis Eleven*, no. 14, 1986; Capling and Galligan, *Beyond the Protective State*, pp.45-47; Francis G. Castles et al., 'Conclusion: the Great Experiment in Perspective', in Francis G. Castles, et al. (eds), *The Great Experiment: Labour Parties and Public Policy Transformation in Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 218-19; Francis G. Castles et al., 'Introduction', in Francis G. Castles, et al. (eds), *The Great Experiment: Labour Parties and Public Policy Transformation in Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 11-12; Geoff Dow, 'The Case for Corporatism', *Australian Society*, vol. 3, no. 11, November 1984; Geoff Dow et al., 'From the Politics of Production to the Production of Politics', *Thesis Eleven*, no. 9, July 1984; Rolf Gerritsen, 'The Necessity of 'Corporatism': The Case of the Hawke Labor Government', *Politics*, vol. 21, no. 1, May 1986; Ian Marsh, 'The Prospects for Australian Political Realignment: 1988 Revisited', in Ian Marsh (ed.), *Australia Can Compete: Towards a Flexible Adaptable Society*, Sydney, Longman Cheshire, 1989, pp. 252-53; Daren McDonald, *The Accord and the Working Class: Political Gimmick or Viable Strategy*, n.c., n.p., 1985; Max Ogden, 'Union View', *Australian Society*, vol. 4, no. 11, May 1985; Randal G. Stewart, 'The Politics of the Accord. Does Corporatism Explain it?', *Politics*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1985; Katharine West, *The Revolution in Australian Politics*, Melbourne, Penguin, 1984.

⁴ Leo Panitch, 'Trade Unions and the Capitalist State', *New Left Review*, no. 125, January-February 1981. On the confirmation of Leo Panitch's prediction, see: Braham Dabscheck, 'The Accord: Corporatism Visits Australia', in Kenneth Wilson, et al. (eds), *Australia in Accord: an Evaluation of the Prices and Incomes Accord in the Hawke-Keating Years*, Melbourne, South Pacific Publishing, 2000.

⁵ Peter Beilharz, 'The Australian Left: Beyond Labourism', *Socialist Register*, vol. 22, 1986, p. 227; Peter Beilharz, 'Beyond the Accord', *Arena*, no. 74, 1986, pp. 24-28; Gwynneth Singleton, *The Accord and the Australian Labour Movement*, Melbourne University Press, 1990, pp. 84-87.

⁶ Singleton, *The Accord*, pp. 192-96.

Therefore, the long Labor decade could be considered a development, or even a culmination, of the labourist tradition.

As the years of the Hawke-Keating government rolled on, however, labourist arguments were ever harder to sustain. Industrial relations stopped evolving within the pattern created by the 1907 Harvester judgement.⁷ Nor could the government be readily seen, as had been argued earlier, as only deepening the ALP's 'technocratic laborism', leaving the party as the main political instrument produced by the working class and a provider of 'important resources for socialist politics'.⁸ For some who hoped the unions could return to a 'transformative politics', the barriers to that had now risen much higher: 'the pressure for pragmatism in the ALP' as it sought electoral support now came not just from the self-employed and other small business owners, but also from unorganised workers.⁹ From the end of the 1980s, much of the labourist analysis debated whether or not the Hawke-Keating government had broken with the ALP's traditions. Some raised a banner inscribed 'betrayal' over what they observed were the ALP's prostrate bodies: its social democratic reforms and expression of working class interests.¹⁰ Others filled the ranks of 'continuity' with apparently upright party figures: the ongoing effort, even in the new ALP policy, to humanise capitalism;¹¹ the ALP's call for social harmony; and its subordination of workers representation to the requirements for managing Australian capitalism.¹²

By rooting the actions of the ALP and the unions in their conjoint institutional structure, not in workers' agency and their relationship to these institutions, this

⁷ Cf.: Shaun Carney, *Australia in Accord: Politics and Industrial Relations under the Hawke Government*, Melbourne, Sun Press, 1988, p. 204.

⁸ Bob Connell, 'Socialism: Moving on', in David McKnight (ed.), *Moving Left: The Future of Socialism in Australia*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1986, pp. 33-35, 39-41.

⁹ Peter Ewer et al., *Politics and the Accord*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1991, pp. 175-78.

¹⁰ Tim Battin, 'A Break from the Past: The Labor Party and the Political Economy of Keynesian Social Democracy', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 28, no. 2, July 1993, pp. 233-39; Dean Jaensch, *The Hawke-Keating Hijack: The ALP in Transition*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1989; Graham Maddox, *The Hawke Government and Labor Tradition*, Melbourne, Penguin, 1989, pp. 1-13; Graham Maddox and Tim Battin, 'Australian Labor and the Socialist Tradition', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 26, no. 2, July 1991, pp. 189-90. Also: Sean Scalmer, 'Being Practical in Early and Contemporary Labor politics: a Labourist Critique', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 43, no. 3, 1997.

¹¹ An alternative view of this is that the traditional ALP stances had generated new policies to meet the world's changing conditions: Troy Bramston, 'Hawke, Latham and Labor tradition', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 76, no. 1, Jan-Feb 2004. Apologia comprise the collection Troy Bramston edited with Susan Ryan: Troy Bramston and Susan Ryan (eds), *The Hawke Government: A Critical Retrospective*, Melbourne, Pluto Press Australia, 2003.

¹² Carol Johnson, *The Labor Legacy: Curtin, Chifley, Whitlam, Hawke*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1989; Rick Kuhn, 'Labor in power', *Arena*, no. 88, 1989, pp. 136-42; Rick Kuhn, 'A Comment on Maddox and Battin, Johnson, and Manning', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 27, no. 2, July 1992; Rick Kuhn, 'The Limits of Social Democratic Economic Policy in Australia', *Capital & Class*, no. 51, Autumn 1993; Haydon Manning, 'The ALP and the Union Movement: 'Catch-all' Party or Maintaining Tradition?', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 27, no. 1, March 1992. Also: Tom Bramble and Rick Kuhn, 'Continuity or discontinuity in the Recent History of the Australian Labor Party?', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 2, June 2009, pp. 281-84, 289-92.

analysis was largely silent about workers' class political consciousness. Rick Kuhn, for example, considered it briefly and contradictorily. The ALP, he argued, represented social democratic reformism. Yet, according to him, continuing and even strengthening workers' identification with the ALP would indicate a more perceptive and working-class consciousness and an increasing class polarisation in society.¹³

Among labourist analyses, that of Gwynneth Singleton stands out. She noted that not only the structure of the labour movement but its broader ranks possessed 'common basic interests and values', such as the protection of wages and employment, concerns about equity, a 'brotherhood' in working class awareness and a 'feeling of mateship'.¹⁴ Therefore she could find workers' solidarity problematic. According to her, the rhetorical nature of union solidarity and the inability of unions to campaign against the ALP¹⁵ in order to stop policy that undermined workers' solidarity, such as enterprise bargaining, left the unions vulnerable when the government and business jointly supported economic liberalism. Singleton maintained the essence of labourism had been, given business retained economic power, a balance of industrial and political achievements by the labour movement (in an 'historic compromise' in which union disappointment was as much a part of the labourist tradition as social reform). In 1990, she argued that the Accord years might be seen as unusually successful in this regard, with the increased goodwill in the personal ties of government and ACTU figures increasing the satisfaction of inter-related goals of the party and the unions. In 1996, however, Singleton suggested the interdependent equality of the ALP and the unions had been lost, contradicting the intention of labourism to put unions in control of politics.¹⁶

The impact of social change was a third explanatory theme that emerged for the neo-liberalism of the Hawke-Keating government. For example, the decline in number and significance of male manual workers, considered as the traditional base of ALP

¹³ Kuhn, 'The Limits of Social Democratic Economic Policy', pp. 45-46. The trend in workers' identification with the ALP that Rick Kuhn pointed to was only a temporary reversal of a longer-term decline: see ch. 10.

¹⁴ Singleton, *The Accord*, pp. 9, 170.

¹⁵ Ian Hampson suggested this inability, to which a 'much trodden career path from union leadership to political incumbency' had made a key contribution, was a condition for the ACTU's acquiescence to economic liberalism: Ian Hampson, 'The Accord: A Post-mortem', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1996, pp. 72-73.

¹⁶ Singleton, *The Accord*, pp. 1-9, 59-67, 126-91, 197-99; Gwynneth Singleton, 'The Accord in Retrospect: A Marriage of Convenience', in Kenneth Wilson, et al. (eds), *Australia in Accord: an Evaluation of the Prices and Incomes Accord in the Hawke-Keating Years*, Melbourne, South Pacific Publishing, 2000, pp. 87-92.

support, and the rise in turn of service workers was frequently discussed.¹⁷ Analyses along this line, however, did not explain why the changes in productive processes they described, any more than those occurring in previous periods of capitalism, might at that moment have brought about a qualitative change within capitalist social relations of production.

The key hypothesis in the discussion of the period with regard to social change, however, was 'globalisation'. This claimed economic internationalisation now played the dominant role in determining the character of society.¹⁸

Paul Kelly and Peter Beilharz both argued that the conditions in Australia, that had previously sustained a mutually advantageous compromise between labour and capital, or 'settlement', had changed because of globalisation. According to Kelly, the end of the settlement had come under the Hawke-Keating government, in turn undermining the institutional pillars and ethos of the ALP but continuing the party's practical tradition of 'adapting the party ideology to community expectations'. Hawke, ACTU secretary Bill Kelty and especially Keating had met the 'new challenge for the

¹⁷ See, for example: Frank Castles, 'How Not to Make Friends and Influence People', *Australian Society*, April 1991, p. 26; Richard Flanagan, 'Death to the Machine Age', *Modern Times*, July 1992, pp. 5-6; Roy Green, 'Reconnecting with the Workplace: How Labor Can Win Again', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 68, no. 4, Summer 1996; John Wiseman, 'A Kinder Road to Hell? Labor and the Politics of Progressive Competitiveness in Australia', *Socialist Register*, vol. 32, 1996, pp. 97, 101.

¹⁸ The hypothesis was disputed. Some argued that the interests of capital within nations still need to be considered as causal factors for neo-liberalism. They pointed to where capital had reasserted its sway over the labour process or the state in industrial relations, trade, monetary and fiscal policies. Mark Beeson also argued that Australian government policies, for which the leadership of the labour movement had substantial responsibility, had exaggerated globalisation's impact and encouraged the domestic supporters of neo-liberalism. Mark Beeson, 'Organised Labour in an Era of Global Transformation: Australia Reconstructed Revisited', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 39, June 1997, p. 68; Stephen Bell, 'Globalisation, Neo-liberalism and the Transformation of the Australian State', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 32, no. 3, November 1997; Roy Green and Andrew Wilson, 'The Accord and Industrial Relations: Lessons for Political Strategy', in Kenneth Wilson, et al. (eds), *Australia in Accord: an Evaluation of the Prices and Incomes Accord in the Hawke-Keating Years*, Melbourne, South Pacific Publishing, 2000. Also: Francis G. Castles, 'On the Credulity of Capital: Or Why Globalisation Does Not Prevent Variation in Domestic Policy-Making', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 68, no. 2, Winter 1996. Peter Beilharz later suggested that the model of globalisation, as it supplanted the project of organised capitalism in the 1980s, reconfirmed that capital, rather than the state, was the central social agent: Peter Beilharz, 'Australia: The Unhappy Country, or, a Tale of Two Nations', *Thesis Eleven*, no. 82, August 2005, p. 81. Such arguments do not consider the agency of workers within nations (or internationally), the concern of this thesis.

ALP—the identification of a position for a social democratic party in a new world order of growing and international market competition'.¹⁹

Beilharz instead argued that the terms of Australian capitalism were being renegotiated by a modernising ALP, together with the unions as strategic industrialisers. Informed by labourism, the socially protective response of that capitalism to its economic vulnerability had been based on the market providing welfare to the 'deserving', which could include capital. So now, through the Hawke-Keating government's neo-liberalism, the ALP would modernise Australia: the communitarian social morality that might have resisted that form of modernisation had retreated as the influence of its communist and Catholic sources eroded.

The chief result of the ALP's modernisation, according to Beilharz, was a new labourism. The party emptied itself of its previous policy and incorporated new, liberal, issues, such as Asianisation, multiculturalism and citizenship. The party also emptied itself organisationally, at the branch level, and of its claim to a link to the identity and mass institutional forms of labour.²⁰ Yet Beilharz also mentioned another outcome that was likely: a 'second industrial divide will split the labour force further into two, the skilled aristocracy of labour and the unskilled sub-proletariat which supports it'.²¹

¹⁹ Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: Power, Politics and Business in Australia*, rev. ed., Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1994, pp. 20, 685 especially. See also: Bob Catley, *Globalising Australian Capitalism*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1996; Bob Catley, 'The Decline of the Left in Australia 1974-2004', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 23, no. 1, First quarter 2004. David Peetz, who was critical of the efforts of the unions in response to the Hawke-Keating government political strategy, nonetheless considered 'broader economic forces' limited political strategy in the period to pursuing microeconomic reform in one way or another. He therefore rejected suggestions that the structural economic change against unions' interests in the Accord period 'would not have occurred in the absence of a Labor government ... [and] that a Labor Government without the Accord would have been more responsive to the true interests of unions': David Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World: The Future of the Australian Trade Union Movement*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 162-63.

²⁰ Peter Beilharz, 'Social Democracy and Social Justice', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 25, no. 1, May 1989, pp. 91-95; Beilharz, *Transforming Labor*, pp. ix-x, 1-7, 36-48, 197-201, 215-19, 221-22; Peter Beilharz, 'The Neon Light on the Hill: Labour and Socialism in a Postmodern Australia', *Arena Magazine*, no. 18, August-September 1996, pp. 24-26. See also: Francis Castles, *Australian Public Policy and Economic Vulnerability: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1988. Beilharz's former collaborator, Rob Watts, argued the ALP remained connected to the labour movement: Rob Watts, 'The Hanson Factor and the Labour Movement', *Arena Magazine*, no. 27, February-March 1997, pp. 37-38.

²¹ Beilharz, *Transforming Labor*, p. 176. The editors of the journal *Arena* argued that a 'dual society' had been created because of technological changes related to intellectual practice, information media and the proliferation of commodities. In this argument, a significant segment of intellectually-trained workers were 'in'—that is, integrated with the interests of capital, and especially those capitals oriented to new technology—through an alliance that was reworking political culture, with government and unions required to assist capital, while most workers were 'shut out'. John Hinkson, 'Hawke and the New Politics', *Arena*, no. 64, 1983; John Hinkson, 'Queensland Today, Australia Tomorrow?', *Arena*, no. 71, 1985; Geoff Sharp, 'The Right Consensus', *Arena*, no. 66, 1984; Doug White, 'Consensus and Survival', *Arena*, no. 65, 1983; Doug White, 'Heading to the Right?', *Arena*, no. 68, 1984; Doug White, 'The Medium of the Consensus', *Arena*, no. 69, 1984; Doug White, 'The Corporate Push', *Arena*, no. 81, 1987; Doug White, 'Renovating Cooperation', *Arena Magazine*, no. 24, August-September 1996. This argument is subject to the critique of technological determinism discussed above: see Herb Thompson, 'The Wark-Sharp Interchange on Reconstructing Australia', *Arena*, no. 86, 1989, pp. 147-48.

Thus, Beilharz posed both a past and possible future 'settlement' between capital and labour and the stratified basis on which labour had entered its negotiations with capital. Unfortunately, the relationship between these two points remained unexplored, as had the role of the workers within what Belinda Probert, and others, including Beilharz, had earlier claimed was the further institutionalisation under the Accord of the 'the ALP's special relationship with a relatively privileged sector population, the employed, unionised and mostly male workforce' in alliance with manufacturing employers.²² Instead, in Beilharz's analysis, the agency of capital is dominant and that of workers is reactive and insignificant. This parallels the views of other proponents of the globalisation thesis, for whom workers had available to them only political strategies which subordinated their interests within a framework of those of capital.

Class Consciousness and Party in Political Science

Paul Kelly's analysis is of interest in another respect. Among the elements of 'the foundation of support for the old Labor Party' which he claim 'had collapsed or were falling' was class consciousness. He did not develop this point: his substantiation of it was, apparently, that the 'new Labor model of governance ... transcended Labor's penchant for economic intervention, income redistribution and class antagonism'.²³ Nonetheless, such direct reference to class consciousness is rare in the political science literature about the long Labor decade.

Andrew Scott also addressed class consciousness in relation to the development of the ALP. He argued that workers 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 him, this support 'evolved partly as a natural extension of the trade union loyalties they formed on the job' and partly from the party's concern with these workers' 'bread-and-butter working-class grievances' about economic inequality and security. Since the 1960s, however, professionals and para-professionals with a 'career', and concerns about environmentalism and feminism had become predominant in the ALP's membership. This had changed the party's ethos so that the concerns of the routine job workers were marginalised; these workers

²² Belinda Probert, 'Social movements and socialism', in David McKnight (ed.), *Moving Left: The Future of Socialism in Australia*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1990, p. 75. Also: Beilharz, 'Labor Rules', p. 107; Joseph Camilleri, 'After Social Democracy', *Arena*, no. 77, 1986, p. 58.

²³ Kelly, *The End of Certainty*, pp. 15, 19.

developed a notion that politics was a career pursuit separate from their daily lives; and the loyalty of these workers to the party became 'residual'.²⁴

Michael Thompson largely followed Scott's analysis of the social base of the ALP. However, Thompson considered that Hawke-Keating government policy had at first concentrated on economic reform, which the routine job workers had supported because it met their hopes for 'decent jobs' and a more equal society. Then, from 1987 the ALP 'was more and more captured by the values of middle class groups', which had alienated the workers in routine jobs from the party.²⁵ Scott rejected this, noting that abundant evidence (not cited by him, but presumably including the results of attitude surveys, as discussed below) showed that the government's radical economic restructuring had been rejected by most Australians after it had brought about, after all, job losses and community disintegration.²⁶ Thompson's view would have been plausible as a consideration of working class practice if, in a context of capitalist globalisation, the alternative to neo-liberalism was a capitalist economic nationalism, but that was not the only alternative posed to neo-liberalism during the long Labor decade.

Kelly, Scott and Thompson each raised the issue of political consciousness among workers, but none of them thoroughly tested what political consciousnesses are there and what interests such consciousnesses might express and support. Instead, a view about political consciousness among workers is derived from other phenomena.

Kelly, for example, identified changes in the ALP, for which support was concentrated among workers. He concluded, therefore, that working class consciousness had changed. However, this does not recognise that workers' support for the ALP has only ever come from *some* workers. Allowing for the time being his claim that the ALP has expressed class antagonism,²⁷ an equally valid proposition is that because of changes in the ALP, workers with an antagonistic class consciousness may once have supported the party, but had stopped doing so, while other workers

²⁴ Andrew Scott, *Fading Loyalties: the Australian Labour Party and the Working Class*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1991; Andrew Scott, *Running on Empty: Modernising the British and Australian Labour Parties*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 2000, pp. 108-09. Also: Ian Ward, 'The Middle-Classing of the ALP: The Victorian Branch 1961-1981', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1988, p. 71.

²⁵ Michael Thompson, *Labor without Class: The Gentrification of the ALP*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1999, ix-x, 1-23, 35, 43-44, 69-70, 82, 91, 93-94. Thompson denied Scott's view that the routine workers believed politics was a concern separate from their lives. However, according to Thompson, the ALP's actions still determined their alienation from political life.

²⁶ Scott, *Running on Empty*, p. 200. Another aspect of this was that the votes of manual workers, including among self-employed 'aspirational', did not tend to move toward the Liberal-National coalition, which also favoured such restructuring: Murray Goot and Ian Watson, 'Explaining Howard's Success: Social Structure, Issue Agendas and Party Support, 1993-2004', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 2, June 2007, pp. 269-70.

²⁷ See ch. 4 for an alternative view.

began to support the party. Thus, the ALP would continue to receive the support of much of the working class, and yet cease to express class antagonism, without any change overall in the consciousness of the working class.

Scott and Thompson instead ascribed bread-and-butter concerns to routine workers. These workers, they supposed, would have that view of politics because of the nature of their working lives. In that case, the consciousness of these workers would be so invariantly. The two authors thus only needed to find times when the ALP ostensibly paid attention to those concerns in order to assert that the ALP then represented and offered an opportunity for political participation to these workers. Yet their claims that this was true in the years immediately after the end of the Second World War, for example, can be challenged.²⁸

The problem of deriving, rather than studying, what political consciousnesses exist, arises when parties are treated as the political organisers and actors, within party systems, rather than as mediated institutional outcomes of the activity of people and their classes and class strata. In the former approach, a party is defined as an institution which seeks influence in a state and usually consists of more than one interest in society, so that it to some degree attempts to aggregate interests, shapes political culture, institutionalises people's relationship to government, and presents and evaluates policy. According to this approach, a party may appeal to a class and have a class basis of support, but the concern is the party's variation of its appeal and whether or not it then has the support of a class. The party is not considered the 'consequence' of the class:

Rather, and before, it is the class that receives its identity from the party. Hence class behaviour presupposes a party that not only feeds, incessantly, the 'class image', but also a party that provides the structural cement of 'class reality'.²⁹

An approach in which the explanation of a party's character and behaviour rests on reference to a party system, which is understood to serve certain social requirements,³⁰ excludes the party's supporters, members and/or activists as factors that determine its character. At most, within this approach, a party's founding set of political ideas might include the participation of people in political life. A party has people only if *it* needs *them*: the understanding of parties as a form of collective action is one-sidedly concerned with institutional recruitment; a leadership unable to deflect party activists

²⁸ Jonathan Strauss, 'How Was Labour Divided? Working Class Politics in the 1940s', in Julie Kimber, et al. (eds), *Labour Traditions: The Tenth National Labour History Conference*, Melbourne, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History - Melbourne, July 2007.

²⁹ G. Sartori, cited in Jaensch, *The Hawke-Keating Hijack*, p. 67. For this discussion as a whole, see Jaensch, *The Hawke-Keating Hijack*, pp. 61-69.

³⁰ This is the structural functionalist mode of explanation.

who develop their own vision for the party is considered to have a difficulty; lost party identification is treated as 'dealignment'; and 'new' issues are something to which old parties usually adapt. The possibility of people founding a party 'as a way by which those concerned about an issue (or a range of issues) can seek to exert influence' appears, if at all, as an afterthought.³¹ For example, Murray Goot argued that major parties might 'open up space for new parties ... [by moving] to roughly the same position *after previously taking divergent positions*'. He continued::

Labor's short-lived radicalism on uranium mining was a catalyst for the [Nuclear Disarmament Party], and the formation of the Australian Greens followed closely on Labor's wooing of the environmental vote in 1990.³²

The implication is that the anti-nuclear, environmental, and social justice activism of those who then went on to form or support the NDP and the Greens had largely depended on ALP policy stances being receptive.

Ian Marsh, however, did pose the formation of a new party as a possible resolution of the situation in the 1980s. He suggested movement activists had the initiative in adding to the political agenda because the major parties had stopped aggregating interests and thereby diminished their capacity to cue public opinion.³³

Attitudes

If studies of parties as parts of party systems do not offer profound insights into workers' class political consciousness, so as to provide a basis for treating workers as historical agents, then studies of their attitudes, in particular those that have tried to systematically record opinions, perhaps might. For example, there were a number of large-scale national or near-national representative surveys conducted during the period. These asked respondents in interviews or questionnaires about their socio-political attitudes, identifications and—much less systematically—activities, among other things. Typically, the surveys' findings have been reported in quantitative,

³¹ Gabriel A. Almond et al., *Comparative Politics Today: A World View*, 8th ed., New York, Pearson Longman, 2004, p. 81; Alan R. Ball and B. Guy Peters, *Modern Politics and Government*, 7th ed., Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 111-25, 136-37; Kenneth Newton and Jan W Van Deth, *Foundations of Comparative Politics: Democracies of the Modern World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 223; Alan Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 5, 63-84.

³² Murray Goot, 'Convergence of the Major Parties and Emergence of Minor Parties: A Response to Lavelle', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 3, November 2004, pp. 653-54. On the formation of the NDP and the Greens, see chs 11 and 13.

³³ Marsh, 'Prospects for Australian Political Realignment:' pp. 249-53; Ian Marsh, 'Consensus in Australian Politics', in Ian Marsh (ed.), *Australia's Choices: Options for a Prosperous and Fair Society*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2003.

statistical forms.³⁴ Findings from different surveys of this kind about particular data have subsequently been used by various researchers to develop time series.

Some other surveys have been more closely concerned with political consciousness and have also provided qualitative results. In particular, two studies with these interests bookend the period. In 1979, Chris Chamberlain researched class consciousness. His focus was on differences between what workers thought and valued, drawing upon their lived experience, and the dominant ideas the workers would have received. In 1996, Michael Pusey enquired about the reaction to neo-liberalism of 'middle Australia', which was defined as the people whose incomes were between the twentieth to the eightieth percentile of income distribution in society. That strata's relative material fortunes had suffered during the period. Much of the two studies cannot be directly compared, but Pusey's finding of sustained disagreement with neo-liberalism accords with the differences Chamberlain found.³⁵ Also some findings are around similar points: about the group most frequently viewed as having too much power, big business had replaced unions; trust of politicians and major parties had declined; and those who felt employers were out to make as much as they could had fallen by half, to one-third of respondents.³⁶ Attitudinal changes such as these suggest dissenting behaviour might be found increasingly, in the time between the two surveys, in electoral activity rather than industrial action directed against companies because of workplace injustices.

Survey research, however, has explanatory power in relation to practice only if individual consciousnesses are a cause of social action. Behaviour often fails to reliably correspond to attitudes, particularly dissident opinion.³⁷ Michael Emmison, for example, proposed that 'the relationship between consciousness and action ... needs to be understood as one of mutual constitution' in which consciousness is more appropriately regarded as a collective subjectivity than as an individual one.³⁸

³⁴ See, for example: Janeen Baxter et al. (eds), *Class Analysis and Contemporary Australia*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1991; Jonathan Kelley and Clive Bean (eds), *Australian Attitudes: Social and Political Analyses from the National Social Science Survey*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1988.

³⁵ Chris Chamberlain, *Class Consciousness in Australia*, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1983; Michael Pusey, *The Experience of Middle Australia: The Dark Side of Economic Reform*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

³⁶ Chamberlain, *Class Consciousness in Australia*, pp. 66, 78, 104; Pusey, *The Experience of Middle Australia*, pp. 133, 142, 162.

³⁷ Brian Graetz, 'Social Structure and Class Consciousness: Facts, Fictions and Fantasies', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 22, no. 1, March 1986, p. 49; Gerard Griffin and Stuart Svensen, 'The Decline of Australian Union Density—A Survey of the Literature', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 38, no. 4, December 1996, p. 529; Elim Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1993, pp. 140-41.

³⁸ Michael Emmison, 'Conceptualising Class Consciousness', in Janeen Baxter, et al. (eds), *Class Analysis and Contemporary Australia*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 255-58.

Emmison outlined some general implications of his perspective. Survey research could not evidence class consciousness itself. It could only show an individual's 'consciousness of class' and provide a means to assess the relative explanatory power of class in any relationship between class location and socio-political attitudes.

In applying this approach, however, Emmison and other analysts became inconsistent in their discussion of the relationship of consciousness and action. They put two propositions: that 'powerful and effective class organisations ... beget class sentiments in their individual members'; and that a 'classist' discourse is required for a relationship between class structure and class consciousness. The theoretical priority granted organisation and discourse allowed action again to be discussed 'as an integral component of class consciousness', but the 'mutual constitution' of organisations and discourse by class agency was ignored. Rather, as Emmison suggested, a collective, action-oriented concept of consciousness could only be achieved through a return to more qualitative methods of research, as has been favoured, for example, in history.³⁹

Australia Reconstructed?

Historical discussion of the long Labor decade in relation to the politics of workers is, however, relatively undeveloped.⁴⁰ Examples of more direct, if highly varied, consideration of the role of ideas in socio-political mobilisation come from other disciplines.⁴¹ One assessment is that the Australian labour movement might have rethought its traditional strategies in response to the economic problems from the mid-1970s, although that begs the questions of how this rethinking happened and why one strategy was chosen among those which could be conceived. According to others, the concept of Australia becoming internationally competitive served intellectually to organise efforts to intensify the subordination of labour, or liberal individualism had become a significant cultural force as Australia for the first time experienced the full impact of modernity. Yet another view is that economic policy had overwhelmed debate

³⁹ Emmison, 'Conceptualising Class Consciousness', pp. 257-61; John Western et al., 'Class Analysis and Politics', in Janeen Baxter, et al. (eds), *Class Analysis and Contemporary Australia*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 322-23; Mark Western, 'Who Thinks What About Capitalism? Class Consciousness and Attitudes to Economic Institutions', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 35, no. 3, November 1999, pp. 363-66.

⁴⁰ Relevant published articles or parts of articles in, for example, labour and social history include: Joe Collins and Drew Cottle, 'Labor Neoliberals or Pragmatic Neo-Laborists? The Hawke and Keating Labor Governments in Office, 1983-96', *Labour History*, no. 98, May 2010; Leighton James and Raymond Markey, 'Class and Labour: The British Labour Party and the Australian Labor Party Compared', *Labour History*, no. 90, May 2006, pp. 30, 35; Ashley Lavelle, 'Social Democratic Parties and Unions in Australia and Britain', *Labour History*, no. 98, May 2010, pp. 56-60, 66-67. In comparative studies, James and Markey focus on institutional and policy changes in the Labor parties, and Lavelle on the institutional relations between each country's party and unions. The article by Collins and Cottle is discussed below.

⁴¹ Cf.. Painter, 'Economic Policy', pp. 287, 293.

about public life. This view argued that this had occurred because political practitioners sought to deny responsibility for social ills and intellectuals on the left pursued post-modernist agendas of diversity which led them to celebrate the market.⁴² Another commentator noted that workers' attitudes suggested they were mostly not persuaded that the new world order was in their interests, so arguably they were held back from 'a wave of political dissent' by only the Accord, highly targeted social security, and their loss of faith that taxation, which might have funded community services and economic interventions, was based on an ability to pay.⁴³ In that commentary, however, workers' agency continues to be considered solely in terms of popular attitudes.

Boris Frankel offered a broader framework of analysis for the period. According to him, a struggle to reshape Australian political culture was occurring. In this, two agendas which pursued international competitiveness had determined modernising policies in Australia. The one which dominated, including in Hawke-Keating government strategy, consisted of market and regulatory liberalisation measures, combined with social liberality—but the mobilisation for this was outside the working class, and thus neither a component of the class' consciousness nor a facet of its politics. The other was one which the labour movement, led by Communist Party and ALP union officials and accompanied to some extent by Hawke-Keating government policies, attempted to develop. Yet compare, Frankel suggested, earlier notions of working-class culture, which had expressed militancy, syndicalism and a desire to create a post-capitalist society, to the 'productive culture' now proposed for the working class.

Indeed, according to the principal document enunciating the 'productive culture', *Australia Reconstructed*, that culture involved the 'widespread awareness of the fundamental importance of *creating* wealth and income ... [including] at the workplace'. Consequently, increasing productivity was 'an inescapable issue'. The agenda for a productive culture was 'nothing less than the reconstruction of Australia ... [through a] far greater understanding of the integral relationship between technology, work organisation, skill formation and modern industrial relations', such as the promotion of industrial democracy and a union commitment 'to conflict resolution through

⁴² Bray and Walsh, 'Accord and Discord', pp. 13-19; Dick Bryan, 'National Competitiveness and the Subordination of Labour: an Australian Policy Study', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 11, no. 2, December 2000; Gregory Melleuish, 'Understanding an 'Age of Uncertainty'', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1995, p. 133; James Walter, *Tunnel Vision: the Failure of Political Imagination*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 84-87.

⁴³ Clive Hamilton, 'Workers in the Globalised World', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 2, Winter 1997.

negotiation'. Success in pursuing that agenda would create 'a deeper social solidarity and commitment'.⁴⁴

Frankel argued that the intent of the labour movement agenda might have contradicted that of the liberalisation agenda, but in practice the agendas complemented each other in a drive to transform Australian-based businesses into global market forces. The variety of social democracy the labour movement's agenda proposed was made impossible by the deregulation measures of the Hawke-Keating government and a labour movement ill-equipped for political and cultural transformation.⁴⁵

Frankel then showed the other boundaries of the new political culture. Not only had the unions 'surrendered much of their political and critical independence' to the project of 'developing an internationally competitive "productive culture"',⁴⁶ but the two agendas represented the general limits for discussion in the mass media and among public intellectuals, and for the development of educational practice. Also, the less radical members of the social movements and marginal cultures could join in the mainstream on the basis of a discourse about 'diversity' and government rhetoric, administrative reforms and superficial social interventions.⁴⁷

What Frankel does not make clear is whether or not productive culture had taken hold broadly among workers. A characteristic he noted later about the unions was their lack of active members. That would mean relatively little active support for their views. He was also concerned that mainstream educational institutions and media, and most public intellectuals, were not key sources of radicalism, but this absence in the long Labor decade might have represented only a retreat for radicalism from a rather unusual height reached in the 1970s. Changes in what Frankel called the media's 'secondary market' of community radio, political and social movement periodicals, independent journals and a variety of other publications (in the 'ethnic press' or gig

⁴⁴ ACTU/TDC Mission to Western Europe, *Australia Reconstructed: A Report by the Mission Members to the ACTU and the TDC*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987, pp. v, xiii, 154. Embracing productivity increases was not, however, a totally new union strategy, since labourism had previously sought profitability and left managerial prerogative unchallenged: cf. Bradley Bowden, 'A Collective Catastrophe: Productivity Maximisation and Workplace Bargaining in the Australian Coal Industry', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 42, no. 3, September 2000, pp. 364-65.

⁴⁵ Boris Frankel, *From the Prophets Deserts Come: The Struggle to Reshape Australian Culture*, Melbourne, Arena Publishing, 1992, chs 1-3; Boris Frankel, *Zombies, Lilliputians & Sadists: The Power of the Living Dead and the Future of Australia*, Perth, Curtin University Books, 2004, p. 62.

⁴⁶ Frankel, *Zombies, Lilliputians & Sadists*, p. 143.

⁴⁷ Frankel, *From the Prophets Deserts Come*, chs. 6-8. Carol Johnson also discussed the integrative aspects of the regime, which according to her were achieved by the Hawke-Keating government presenting an inclusive but right-wing vision of common identification in cooperation 'to build a transformed Australian economy': Carol Johnson, 'Broadening the Political Agenda: Towards Socialist Democracy in Australia', in Tim Battin and Graham Maddox (eds), *Socialism in Contemporary Australia*, Melbourne, Longman, 1996, p. 181.

guides, for example) might have been just as important for developing an alternative to productive culture, but he did not elaborate on developments in that arena. However, he did consider left political organisations, which he identified as relevant to the role of public intellectuals. He wrote these off as 'has beens' imprisoned by Hawke-Keating government policies and their own illusions, or as radical left 'zombies' out of tune with contemporary popular cultural values and attitudes but lingering on.⁴⁸

In the public sphere, according to Frankel, opposition to the reshaping of political culture could be characterised overall as a vacuum: the public was depoliticised, the electorate was not to be alienated, unwilling unionists were constrained and mass parties which advocated radical socio-economic change were absent. The Accord approach won out, he wrote, because of a 'dearth of coherent alternative strategies'.⁴⁹ Significant organised resistance existed only latently, as an ultimate barrier. In his account, the initiative for neo-liberalism came from a corporate and Liberal Party new right, and its 'human face' from the Hawke-Keating governments' pragmatic tactics.⁵⁰ In that context, workers were acted upon, not active.

Thus, in the discussions of the politics of workers considered so far, the idea(s) or the intellectuals or institutions that bear them played the active part in determining workers' class political consciousness. Workers passively received the ideas or supported the ALP.

Towards a History of the Politics of Workers

Some arguments about the adoption and maintenance of the Accord by the labour movement and the Hawke-Keating government's neoliberalism, however, do consider changes among workers. For example, several studies examine how objections and objectors to the Accord were marginalised. They therefore indicate opposition to the Accord, but do not assess its significance because they are focused on the creation of a culture of compliance, generally through the behaviour of ACTU and other senior union officials.⁵¹ A variant of this discussion of the suppression of dissent is Chris Briggs' argument that the Australian state 'position[ed] the ACTU as a conduit for the

⁴⁸ Frankel, *From the Prophets Deserts Come*, pp. 317-320; Frankel, *Zombies, Lilliputians & Sadists*, pp. 96, 268.

⁴⁹ Boris Frankel, 'Picking up the Pieces', *Arena Magazine*, no. 7, October-November 1993, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁰ Frankel, *From the Prophets Deserts Come*, pp. 320-29; Boris Frankel, 'Beyond Labourism and Socialism: How the Australian Labor Party Developed the Model of 'New Labour'', *New Left Review*, no. 221, January-February 1997, pp. 3-33; Boris Frankel, *When the Boat Comes in: Transforming Australia in the Age of Globalisation*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 2001, pp. 30-35, 208.

⁵¹ Tony Brown, 'Silencing Dissent to Win Consent: National Training Reform in the Accord Years', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 15, no. 1, August 2004, pp. 37-46; Scott MacWilliam, 'Marginalising Opposition to the Accord', *Arena*, no. 92, 1990, pp. 146-49; Gerry R Voll, 'Time's up for TUTA— a Corporatist Casualty', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 8, no. 2, December 1997, pp. 88-95.

exercise of state power' into the unions, which had centralised under the ACTU in reaction to the cooption, regulation and discipline of the state.⁵²

Tom Bramble's trade union history argues instead that the Accord partly resulted from the collapse of dissent in the unions:

- In 1982, union militants were paralysed by the loss of the sizeable radical current organised around the Communist Party, which could have provided political analysis to counter claims that wage rises led to unemployment and a collapse of confidence among the broader union membership.
- Then, for the rest of the 1980s, rank-and-file activism was curbed and the unions that wanted to take action were victimised by most union leaders. 'By attacking traditions of union struggle and solidarity, the ACTU undermined the fundamental principles on which trade unions could prosper'.⁵³
- From 1987, as economic conditions improved, some workers rejected wage cuts. The union officials moved towards decentralised wage fixing partly in response to this.
- In the 1990s, while workers 'understood that they were the victims of a process of restructuring'⁵⁴ and resisted conservative state governments and condition-cutting enterprise agreements, the senior union leaders no longer faced organised opposition. 'The networks of union militants once held together by the various left-wing organisations ... had vanished'.⁵⁵ The leaders were generally secure in and able to enjoy their 'relative comfortable' material and organisational position, while the union membership base collapsed.⁵⁶

Thus, according to Bramble, little pressure came from union members to counteract the 'pressure from employers, tribunals, courts and governments to discipline rank-and-file

⁵² Chris Briggs, 'The Paradox of ACTU Hegemony', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 12, no. 3, April 2002, pp. 77, 86-95.

⁵³ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 157.

⁵⁴ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 171.

⁵⁵ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 178.

⁵⁶ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, pp. 120-78.

workers' in the balance that he thought determined union leaders' behaviour, including their adoption and maintenance of the Accord.⁵⁷

While Bramble's analysis of the union leaders' behaviour might suggest their support for the Accord was not out of character, others suggested the support of at least some union officials for the Accord represented a qualitatively distinct development. In one of a series of pamphlets, a railways workshops delegate and Socialist Workers Party leader, Dick Nichols, stated:

The really new factor in the political situation today is the near unanimity of trade union leaders and Labor Party politicians that there should be no industrial resistance to the right (new or old), and that the only legitimate political focus is the Labor parliamentary caucus. In many ways, the old left—the traditional trade union left—is the real new right. Rather than the attacks of the boss, which are a normal condition of trade unionism, the biggest problem facing unionists today is the new right trade unionism.⁵⁸

Such arguments, however, would be merely theories of 'class treachery' if the workers' reactions to this were not explained.⁵⁹ Another one in the same series of pamphlets argued that part of the wealth being shifted to the capitalist class was being returned selectively to the groups of workers most vital to capital. Those who benefitted would 'feel they have a stake in the country and the way it's run today'.⁶⁰ However, this concern about how some workers might view their social position was not pursued. A later pamphlet from the same group suggested that why the Accord, as a social contract, would harm workers was 'easy to see'.⁶¹ Yet few workers apparently did.

Mark Beeson argued that union support for enterprise bargaining, in particular, had reinforced a trend towards individual workers' fates being bound up with that of

⁵⁷ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 22. In his history, Bramble did not claim, as he had elsewhere, that the officials, because they worked for unions, which existed to bargain about the sale of labour-power, necessarily sought to restrain the workers' struggles within the boundaries of capitalism: Tom Bramble, 'Award Restructuring and the Australian Trade Union Movement: A Critique', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 2, no. 3, October 1989, pp. 372-90; Tom Bramble, 'Managers of Discontent: Problems with Labour Leadership', in Rick Kuhn and Tom O'Lincoln (eds), *Class and Class Conflict in Australia*, Melbourne, Longman Australia, 1996, pp. 40, 49, 53; Tom Bramble, 'Social Democracy and the "Failure" of the Accord', in Kenneth Wilson, et al. (eds), *Australia in Accord: an Evaluation of the Prices and Incomes Accord in the Hawke-Keating Years*, Melbourne, South Pacific Publishing, 2000, pp. 256-58, 263; Tom Bramble, 'Australian Union Strategies since 1945', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 11, no. 3, April 2001, pp. 6, 8; Tom Bramble, 'Labour Movement Leadership', in Rick Kuhn (ed.), *Class and Struggle in Australia*, Sydney, Pearson Longman, 2005, p. 84. See also: Dianne Fieldes, 'Still Here, Still Fighting: The Working Class in the Nineties', in Rick Kuhn and Tom O'Lincoln (eds), *Class and Class Conflict in Australia*, Melbourne, Longman Australia, 1996, pp. 34-36.

⁵⁸ Dick Nichols, *New Right Trade Unionism and the Crisis of the Left*, Sydney, New Course, 1987, introduction.

⁵⁹ Frank Stilwell, *The Accord ...and Beyond: the Political Economy of the Labor Government*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1986, pp. 29-31. See, for example: Len Cooper, 'The ACTU/ALP Accord and the Capitalist Crisis', *Thesis Eleven*, no. 9, August 1984, p. 148.

⁶⁰ Steve Painter, *Two-Tier Society: The Politics of Capitalist Decline in Australia*, Sydney, New Course, 1987, pp. 4-7. Also: Nichols, *New Right Trade Unionism*, pp. 18-20; Jim Percy, *Labor's Gravediggers*, Sydney, Pathfinder Press (Australia), 1985, p. 8.

⁶¹ Pat Brewer and Peter Boyle, *13 Years of Hard Labor: Lessons from the Accord Experience*, Sydney, New Course Publications, 1996, p. 20.

particular firms.⁶² That trend broke down workers' collective identity, which would have been the basis for an alternative policy agenda.⁶³

Herb Thompson also suggested a process of workers consenting to the Accord was occurring. 'Sincere unionists', he wrote, were subject to cooption into 'consensus planning' if they 'failed to fully comprehend ... the responsibility of the state to reproduction of the social relations of capitalism'.⁶⁴ Rare would be the moment, then, when all but a few workers could resist cooption.

Thompson's claim about the character of consent to the Accord is somewhat surprising because it is at odds with his discussion of the factors that determined the chances of union officials retaining the support of a unionised workforce. In his study of the workers' attitude towards the representation offered it by different unions in the 1986-87 Robe River dispute he depicts an interactive relationship between the union members and officials. To prevent membership dissent, the officials needed to be able to: persuade the membership of their point of view; satisfy explicit membership requests; and substantially address other needs and objectives the membership thought to be important, such as membership participation.⁶⁵

Recent Reflections on Parties and the Politics of Workers

Agency emerges more broadly as an important factor in the politics of workers from Ashley Lavelle's comparative study of the death of social democracy and its political consequences because, according to him, those consequences have been shaped by 'the actions of alternative political forces' such as the alternative globalisation movement and some left parties. With regard to the latter, he rejected the 'vacuum thesis', upheld by analyses of a 'political opportunity structure' and advocated by many of the leaderships of these left parties, including in the Greens in the 1990s. The vacuum thesis argues that if a major party abandons traditional policies, that political space is opened up for challenger parties to fill. He showed that thesis was problematic. First, the far right had also grown even though the rightward shift of social

⁶² Mark Bray and Pat Walsh mentioned a similar argument. Because of economic decline and insecurity many workers might have come to define their interests in terms of their firm's survival, rather than adhere to the more centralised union policy with which the corporatist analysis of Bray and Walsh was concerned. However, they do not explore this argument: Bray and Walsh, 'Accord and Discord', p. 21. This argument was drawn from: W. Streeck, 'Neocorporatist Industrial Relations and the Economic Crisis in West Germany', in J. Goldthorpe (ed.), *Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984. Streeck considered a militant response was also possible to those economic conditions: Streeck, 'Neocorporatist Industrial Relations', pp. 296-97.

⁶³ Beeson, 'Organised Labour', p. 68.

⁶⁴ Herb Thompson, 'Raising Profit at Workers' Expense', *Australian Left Review*, no. 89, Spring 1984, p. 15.

⁶⁵ Herb Thompson and Howard Smith, 'The Conflict at Robe River', *Arena*, no. 79, 1987, pp. 85-86.

democracy left it no obvious space. Second, the prospects of the left electoral challengers varied according to their articulation of a clear alternative (he noted that much of the Greens success arose from the perception that the party's policies are more social democratic than those of the ALP), their independence from government, and their internal coherence.⁶⁶

The assessment by Joe Collins and Drew Cottle that what happened in the long Labor decade was 'Neo-Laborism', and a new history of the ALP by Bramble and Kuhn represent two responses to Lavelle's argument. Collins and Cottle argued that although the ALP and the ACTU participated 'in a concerted effort to restore ruling-class hegemony at the expense of labour' that was in 'obvious contradiction with ... [them] being defined as representative of labour interests', this was not neo-liberalism. Rather than representing the aspirations of sections of the Australian ruling class, the Accord 'reasserted traditional laborist ideology within a drastically transforming political economy'. The Accord, they argued, 'represented the counter-hegemonic aspirations of radical sections of the Australian labour movement acting opportunistically and pragmatically'.⁶⁷ However, opportunist labour movement politics in a period without reforms favourable to workers would be a Labor neo-liberalism. Collins and Cottle also maintained that the ALP represented: 'the only formidable alternative to the Liberal Coalition in Australian Parliamentary politics. In terms of political representation of organised labour ... the ALP is the the better of two evils.'⁶⁸ Yet when this was published the Greens had recently determined the government in Tasmania and the party's vote would increase to 11 per cent at the federal election which shortly followed, bringing a doubling of the Greens Senate representation and lower house seat win for the party for the first time in a general election, compelling evidence to question the surety of the claim of Collins and Cottle.

⁶⁶ Bob Brown and Peter Singer, *The Greens*, Melbourne, Text, 1996, p. 64; Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy*, pp. 42, 171; David F. Patton, 'Germany's Left Party.PDS and the "Vacuum Thesis": From Regional Milieu Party to Left Alternative?', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 22, no. 2, June 2006. Lavelle's study considers social democracy died when its parties dropped any ambition to reform capitalism in response to the end of the capitalist long boom in the 1970s: Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy*, chs 2-3. Lavelle has counterposed this to 'timeless analysis that emphasizes the commonalities in all Labor governments': Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy*, p. 51. Among the targets of Lavelle's criticism are Bramble and Kuhn: Lavelle, 'Social Democratic Parties and Unions', p. 57. However, Bramble and Kuhn have identified the end of the long boom as a major restriction on social democratic reformism and even discussed the Hawke-Keating government as an example of "reformism without reforms": Bramble, 'Labour Movement Leadership', pp. 84-85; Tom Bramble and Rick Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict: Big Business, Workers and the Politics of Class*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 23, 121. In fact, what Lavelle did that Bramble and Kuhn did not is to suggest how workers might, short of starting from a revolutionary perspective, set about forming a political alternative to advance their interests, as will now be discussed.

⁶⁷ Collins and Cottle, 'Labor Neoliberals or Pragmatic Neo-Laborists?', pp. 34-35.

⁶⁸ Collins and Cottle, 'Labor Neoliberals or Pragmatic Neo-Laborists?', p. 33.

Bramble and Kuhn argued instead that the Greens 'leftism' was limited because one of its bases of support was among conservative small business people and middle class professionals. On the other hand, the ALP was distinguished among all capitalist parties by its working class base. Even when it attacked workers' living standards, it was able to rely on workers' support.⁶⁹ 'Class conscious workers', the two authors wrote, 'tend to regard Labor as their party', if no longer with illusions about it undertaking reforms: 'The more class conscious workers are, as measured by union membership, the more they support the Party.'⁷⁰ The support of workers for the ALP, Bramble and Kuhn argued, although consistently betrayed, has been reproduced throughout the party's history by 'a particular form of working class consciousness'. In this consciousness, workers mix, from their experience of collective struggle, an awareness of their power and common interests that constitutes 'a basic sense of class identity'; and, from their subordination to employers, feelings of their powerlessness, inability to act directly to change society and, therefore, reliance for reforms upon parliament as an arm of the state.⁷¹

The presentation by Bramble and Kuhn of their understanding of working class consciousness reflected in the ALP is significant but problematic. Some workers might instead have felt powerful because they considered they could effect reforms they wanted through electoral and parliamentary activity. In that case they would support a party like the ALP, which in carrying out such reforms through parliament and government, would not betray these working class supporters. The problem with regard to understanding working class support for the ALP then becomes one of identifying the workers who have supported the ALP on this basis and what their influence has been within the working class. Similarly, the problem of workers' agency with regard to a party like the Greens is not only that agency, which Lavelle discussed, that has made it an alternative party for workers. The agency among workers that could perceive that the party is an alternative for them and would feel an interest in that also needs to be considered in an analysis. As Lavelle acknowledged 'objective [from the point of view

⁶⁹ Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, p. 184. At this point Bramble and Kuhn claimed this not only about the Accord, but also about the period during and after World War II, even though that period ended in, as they record in the same work, a strike wave and increasingly hostility to the ALP from Communist Party union officials: Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, pp. 58-64. Bramble and Kuhn also treat the Accord period relatively uncritically in this regard. They did not try to estimate the extent to which 'delegates ... were prepared to follow instructions from their union's headquarters [and become] the front line of employer efforts to convince workers that redundancies and major changes to work practices were inevitable and, indeed, desirable' and they claimed 'strikes fell to very low levels in the 1980s and remained subdued in the 1990s', as if strike levels in the two decades were similar: Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, pp. 107-08. For analysis of the situation with regard to delegates, see ch. 5 and also chs 6-8; on strikes, see Table 5.3 and Figure 5.1.

⁷⁰ Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, pp. 186, 189.

⁷¹ Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, pp. 5, 12-13, 22-23.

of a party] conditions of growth for alternative forces' must be met, including a 'wider radicalization in society'⁷² before a party such as the Greens could fully develop into an alternative in politics among workers.

Conclusion

Of the literature discussed, the interest of Lavelle's analysis in 'the prospects for the emergence of alternatives to social democracy'⁷³ most closely approaches this thesis' concerns. Claims such as 'Australia's political party system ... [remains] resiliently two-party dominant', without stating the boundary of new political developments beyond which the claim would be abandoned,⁷⁴ are rejected.

Of course, the Greens were only one of many projects pursued within the politics of workers in the long Labor decade. Most of these went down paths previously trodden successfully but now blocked or along others that petered out. Some elements of workers' politics in the period can only be considered as a means of protest that would shape future politics.⁷⁵ Many opponents of neo-liberalism lived 'one society behind reality'.⁷⁶ Clearly, such projects can be considered less important than others, yet here failed projects are not to be condemned to the 'condescension of posterity'.⁷⁷ First, because, knowing about the characteristics of what failed helps in understanding the characteristics of what succeeded. Second, because the failure of these projects was often less than complete. Their trace elements can be found today elsewhere, and knowledge of where they have come from might be valuable.

The thesis will take up two themes of the literature. One theme the thesis will consider is the variety and the potential contradictions of the ideas and views among workers and in the leaderships of the organisations that workers support. The more suggestive arguments in the literature about this circumstance in workplaces and unions, such as those of Beeson and Herb Thompson, have been indicated above.

⁷² Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy*, p. 171.

⁷³ Lavelle, 'Social Democratic Parties and Unions', p. 57.

⁷⁴ See: Rob Hoffman and Brian Costar, 'Not Going Green: The Higgins By-Election of 2009', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 45, no. 4, December 2010, p. 694.

⁷⁵ Flanagan, 'Death to the Machine Age', p. 6.

⁷⁶ Damien Cahill, 'The Contours of Neoliberal Hegemony in Australia', *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 19, no. 2, April 2007, p. 230. This expanded on Boris Frankel's suggestion about contemporary Leninists: Frankel, *Zombies, Lilliputians & Sadists*, p. 71. Cahill has the advantage, however, that he sees the Greens as an exception. Frankel's book, according to its index, does not refer to the Greens at all.

⁷⁷ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 13. Bramble's valuable trade union history to some extent engages in such condescension. Its focus is on explaining the activities and views of the dominant union officialdom. The dynamics of politics among workers is observed in that light. In part that means downplaying the processes of support for the Accord strategy among workers that occurred alongside the demobilisation of dissent he shows. More significantly, in terms of this thesis, the efforts to create new industrial leaderships and parties among workers, as opposed to the declines of existing ones, are not incorporated into that history's analysis.

Singleton, in particular, questioned the unity of the union movement and its capacity for independent action, putting into question the nature of workers' solidarity. Frankel drew this theme into a broader framework of analysis. Attitude surveys pointed to the possibility dissent might come to be found more in electoral activity rather than industrial action. Changes in the identification with the ALP, such as those Scott discussed, and the potential for new political parties mentioned by Marsh and discussed by Lavelle will be highlighted.

The second theme, which several authors raised, is that a relatively privileged sector of workforce was being created, or the conditions of its existence were being reinforced. This has been discussed as dividing the working class, and, perhaps, bringing the privileged workers and their organisations into an alliance with capital. Arising from this is the claim that a class 'settlement' had existed in the past and, as Beilharz posited, might in the future.

The thesis proposes to discuss these themes within a presentation of a historical materialist perspective of the long Labor decade. What is not available, ready-made in the literature, is a framework for such a history of workers' politics. The next chapter will elaborate one.

Workers' Class Political Consciousness

The concept 'class' was declared dead—not for the first time—in the 1990s. The certificate was signed by postmodernism. This perspective was concerned with an aspect of this thesis. The postmodernist argument was that class was formed as an idea: specifically, by class idioms in politics. These had, supposedly, become insignificant in the latter half of the twentieth century, to the point where 'contemporary advanced societies remain unequal, but in a classless way'.¹

Yet the news was exaggerated. What 'class' refers to has remained very much alive in twenty-first century societies and the concept has continued to re-emerge in discussion. So questions about class, such as what happened to the politics of workers in the long Labor decade, and why that happened, are not just of historical interest.

To pursue the history of class political consciousness, as is sought in this thesis with regard to workers, a framework is needed for analysing class and class political consciousness. This chapter therefore first examines the ontology of class in history. From that, workers' class practice will be appraised as conscious collective action. Then the method by which workers' class political consciousness has been researched here will be discussed. Finally, the chapter considers problems in the constitution of the working class as an emancipatory subject.

Class

Theories of class are legion. Many approach class analysis as an attempt to explain inequalities in individual life chances. They cite market or socio-cultural mechanisms. Classes themselves are invariant. Class may have emerged historically, as, for example, Max Weber understood it by linking it to the appearance of market exchange. On that basis, however, class antagonism is either excluded altogether, because exchange within a market is between equals, or class structures exist when 'rents' are secured by 'exploitation classes' which restrict the supply of some asset, thus generating antagonistic conflicts between the owners and non-owners of that asset. However, the argument along this line has concluded that 'capitalism has been successful in eliminating rents to labor', so class antagonism involving workers as a

¹ Jan Pakulski, 'Foundations of a Post-Class Analysis', in Eric Olin Wright (ed.), *Approaches to Class Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 154, 169-179. See also: Barry Hindess, *Politics and Class Analysis*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1987, p. 121; Robert White, 'The Life of Class: A Case Study in a Sociological Concept', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 36, no. 2, August 2000.

class has been effectively suppressed.² The result in postmodernist analysis, as mentioned above, was much the same.

Historical materialism envisages a future classless society. That, however, will only emerge from today's capitalist societies, as workers, who are the producers under capitalist social relations of production but are exploited through their alienation from the means of production by the capitalists owners of those means of production, engage in class struggle that leads to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and hence to the abolition of all classes.³ The working class is the 'proletarian movement', the 'actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes'⁴—that is, 'the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things'.⁵ Slavoj Žižek's exposition of the historical materialist perspective provides a contemporary expression of the central connection of 'class' to a movement for emancipation in that perspective. Žižek identified the contradiction 'between the included and the excluded' as crucial to the prevention of capitalism's reproduction. The excluded embody a 'position of universality' which provides a subversive edge not found in 'private', liberal democratic solutions to the conflict that arises from the

² Aage B Sørensen, 'Foundations of a Rent-based Class Analysis', in Eric Olin Wright (ed.), *Approaches to Class Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 120-21, 150-151; Eric Olin Wright, 'Conclusion: If Class is the Answer, What is the Question?', in Eric Olin Wright (ed.), *Approaches to Class Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 182, 185-90. The argument discussed, made by Sørensen, presumes capitalism: he does not consider that the restricted ownership of capital, which is necessary for there to be workers who will work for the capitalists rather than themselves, might be a source of antagonistic class conflict. (Historical materialism considers that the ownership by some and alienation of others from the means of production, rather than wage levels or other determinants of living standards, is the source of antagonistic class conflict.)

³ Karl Marx, 'To Joseph Weydemeyer, 5 March 1852', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 39, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1982, pp. 62-65.

⁴ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 6, Progress Press, Moscow, 1976, p. 498.

⁵ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'The German Ideology', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1976, p. 49. At that point, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels called that movement 'communism'. Later, having taken the title of Communists, they stated: 'the Communists ... have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole ... always and everywhere [they] represent the interests of the movement as a whole': Marx and Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', p. 497. They also argued: 'The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered.' Marx and Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', p. 498. This contradicts the view of Eric Olin Wright that Marxism is based on a *norm* of emancipation: Wright, 'Conclusion', pp. 182, 191-192. Instead, that norm appears to be needed for Wright's Marxist-informed structuralism. He defines class interests as 'the material interests derived from their location-within-class-relations', which appears to deny broader aims for the proletarian movement. He also applies a binary capitalist-worker model in relation to conflict and social change, such as in his discussion of the issue of class compromise, but uses more complex models to discuss the variety of class relations and class locations within these relations as he observes these in everyday life. Finally, while he suggests discussion of class agency should consistently integrate 'processual views', he does not achieve this consistently. See: Eric Olin Wright, *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 492-94; Wright, 'Conclusion', pp. 189-90; Eric Olin Wright, 'Foundations of a Neo-Marxist Class Analysis', in Eric Olin Wright (ed.), *Approaches to Class Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 5-20.

antagonisms in the domains of the 'commons', such as the threat of ecological catastrophe.⁶

Thus, if the existence of the working class is bound up with the dominance of capital-labour social relations of production in a particular historical phase, so that these relations are a fundamental condition for the working class, analysis of the class cannot be confined to those relations because the class exists as an emancipatory movement as well. Analysis of the working class also requires a coherent view of all the elements that enter into that movement, such as relations 'of power, of consciousness, [of the] sexual, cultural, [and] normative'⁷ and of neighbourhoods, communities, identities, social movements and status groupings.⁸

Also, given the working class, according to historical materialism, will rise to the position of ruling class, the sense in which a class exists historically is that it is *becoming* a class 'for itself'.⁹ The working class is not already constituted in the productive relations and only waiting to enter the class struggle and attain class consciousness. Instead, the struggle undertaken in people's response to their experience is *class* struggle if it begins to challenge capitalism's exploitative relations, and the ideas and values involved in that struggle are part of class consciousness. Thus, as E.P. Thompson writes: 'Class formations and class consciousness ... eventuate in of an open-ended process of *relationship* ... class struggle is the prior

⁶ Slavoj Žižek, 'How to Begin from the Beginning', *New Left Review*, no. 57, May-June 2009, pp. 52-55. Proponents of 'ecological rationality' criticise Marxism for scorning a discourse of environmental limits, but they have also noted that eco-Marxism is now predominant within the Marxist tradition: John S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 41-42, 182, 191; Val Plumwood, 'Inequality, Ecojustice and Ecological Rationality', in John S. Dryzek and David Schlosberg (eds), *Debating the Earth: the Environmental Politics Reader*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 610.

⁷ Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory', pp. 254.

⁸ Rosemary Crompton and John Scott, 'Introduction: The State of Class Analysis', in Rosemary Crompton, et al. (eds), *Renewing Class Analysis*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000, p. 5.

⁹ Karl Marx, 'The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the *Philosophy of Poverty* by M. Proudhon', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. vol. 6, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1976, p. 211. Frequently, a class 'in itself' and a class 'for itself' are presented as a dichotomy, where the former is then understood as related to the size, concentration, occupations, and/or level of unionisation of a workforce and the latter to be concerned with awareness of class structure, employment of class discourse and identification with a class: Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, pp. 8-9. In fact, with regard to the phrase cited, Marx's contrast is with a mass of workers which is 'already a class as against capital', but those workers have not yet 'in the struggle, ... [become] united and constitute[d] itself as a class for itself': Marx, 'The Poverty of Philosophy', p. 211.

concept to class; class does not precede but arises out of struggle.¹⁰ Indeed, a class both arises and is forever transformed in the class struggle: the working class is continually being remade, more or less quickly and profoundly.¹¹ At issue is *why*: for example, autonomist Marxism critiques an emphasis on 'the power of capital and its accumulative logic'. It favours an understanding that workers, through the political challenge they present to capital, play a dynamic role in shaping the class struggle, driving capital to economic and political renovations in order to subdue and defeat them.¹² Inspired by such thinking, Verity Burgmann, for example, perceived emergent aspects of working-class opposition to globalisation in recent developments in unionism, such as new arenas and forms of union organisation and industrial action, a growing integration of more vulnerable sections of the workforce, and community, environmental and anti-globalisation campaigning.¹³ Indeed, similar aspects have appeared whenever workers have regrouped in the class struggle, and not only in the industrial arena, but in political and cultural activity, such as: England's early general unions and Chartism; 'new unionism', the various forms of syndicalism, and industrial unionism; the revolutionary trend of Social Democracy and the progressive activities of the parties of the Comintern tradition; the New Left; new and workers' theatre; and 'socialism of the 21st century'.

¹⁰ Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory', pp. 298-99. See also: Paul Edwards, 'Late Twentieth Century Workplace Relations: Class Struggle without Classes', in Rosemary Crompton, et al. (eds), *Renewing Class Analysis*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000, p. 146; Andrew J. Richards, *Miners on Strike: Class Solidarity and Division in Britain*, Oxford, Berg, 1996, pp. 230-31. Paul Edwards states, however, that part of the core of Thompson's idea of 'class struggle without classes' is 'that classes exist as a result of the fundamental processes around the system of production, and can thus be identified independently of any beliefs among class actors'. Instead, Thompson only argued, as Edwards noted, that the actors need not use a *language* of class to be class actors. See: Edwards, 'Late Twentieth Century Workplace Relations', p. 142.

¹¹ Thompson's work on the formation of the working class in late Georgian England was itself criticised for not considering that the class was also remade, after the 1840s, through changes in the nature of industry and of political outlooks within the class: Perry Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, London, Verso, 1980, pp. 43-49. The criticism is part of a much broader and partly effective long-running critique by Anderson of Thompson. For this thesis Thompson has the advantage over Anderson of positing classes as historical agents. Anderson relies on the definition of classes by 'objective' productive relations to match historical records of, for example, slaves in Athens, Indian castes and workers in Meiji Japan, when these did not, according to Anderson, struggle or think in class ways: Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, pp. 39-42. At issue in historical materialist analysis, however, is how such classes relate to the movement to abolish class and the other oppressive aspects of 'the present state of things'.

¹² Verity Burgmann, 'The Seven Wonders of the Labour World', in Bobbie Oliver (ed.), *Labour History in the New Century: Eleventh National Biennial Conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, Perth, Black Swan Press, July 2009, pp. 219-20. However, autonomous Marxism's claim, which Burgmann affirms, that the 'dominant classical Marxist tradition' emphasises the power of capital is wrong. For example, the *Communist Manifesto* argues that in preventing the crises of capitalist society, the bourgeoisie is helpless but not the proletariat: cf. Giovanni Arrighi, 'Marxist Century, American Century: The Making and Remaking of the World Labour Movement', *New Left Review*, no. 179, January-February 1990, p.30. Classical Marxism presumably also includes the Russian Bolsheviks, yet Gramsci characterised the October Revolution they led as 'the revolution against Karl Marx's *Capital*': Antonio Gramsci, 'The Revolution against "Capital"', in Quintin Hoare (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920)*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1988, p. 34. A failure to perceive the remaking of the working class rather seems to result principally from of an undue emphasis on *either* structure *or* agency in the class struggle.

¹³ Burgmann, 'The Seven Wonders of the Labour World', pp. 220-26.

Finally, the historical materialist understanding of workers' 'class political consciousness' considers what the working class must grasp in the struggle for emancipation. V.I. Lenin was only codifying the practice of the German Social Democrats in the last quarter of the 19th century¹⁴ when he argued that workers should and could be exposed to, feel outrage at, and react against all aspects of oppression from the point of view of the movement for emancipation. This is because that consciousness is:

[B]ound up ... not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical, understanding —of the relationships between *all* the various classes of modern society ... the[ir] economic nature and the[ir] social and political features ... [of] what interests are reflected by certain institutions and certain laws and how they are reflected.¹⁵

Such a consciousness does not come solely from workers' experience of conflict with employers and the state. In workers' class political consciousness, the relationship between, for example, industrial militancy, which in the first instance is a coping strategy for workers confronting the world of work,¹⁶ and political radicalism is only that of a necessary part to a whole.¹⁷ Workers' class political consciousness is also based on experience and ideas that come 'from outside the sphere of relations between the workers and employers'.¹⁸

Workers' class political consciousness, thus conceived, cannot be described by analytical deduction from workers' material character and interests. This applies regardless of whether the ascribed or imputed consciousness which results from such deduction is a 'bread-and-butter' reformism or what revolutionaries would find 'historic', 'necessary' and politically desirable. These deductions are two sides of a coin: the totality of Georg Lukàcs' self-knowing proletarian consciousness becomes, under non-revolutionary conditions, a workers' consciousness passively constituted in fragmented

¹⁴ Paul Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, 1990, pp. 9-12; Lars T Lih, 'Lenin and the Great Awakening', in Sebastian Budgen, et al. (eds), *Lenin Reloaded: Towards a Politics of Truth*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2007; Alan Shandro, 'Lenin and Hegemony: The Soviets, the Working Class and the Party in the Revolution of 1905', in Sebastian Budgen, et al. (eds), *Lenin Reloaded: Towards a Politics of Truth*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 308-13.

¹⁵ V.I. Lenin, 'What Is to Be Done?', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1986, pp. 412-13.

¹⁶ Mike Donaldson, *Time of Our Lives: Labour and Love in the Working Class*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1991, pp. 13-14. Mike Donaldson distinguishes between the approaches of men and women to workplace militancy: Donaldson, *Time of Our Lives*, pp. 16, 44-53.

¹⁷ Cf. Scott Lash, *The Militant Worker: Class and Radicalism in France and America*, London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1984, p. 2. Scott Lash stated that the relationship between industrial and political radicalism is 'tenuous', and contrasted this to the 'Leninist' formulation that union consciousness is a precondition for political consciousness, or at least correlated to it. Lash supported this claim with evidence of workers who are industrially radical but politically conservative, and socially radical workers who are for the most part not industrial militants. Yet in Lenin's conception, industrial radicalism no more than any other radicalism is peculiarly necessary for, and thus correlated to, class political consciousness. Also, Lash considered political radicalism only through class imagery, rather than as an overall approach to class rule, which would require a radical practice. Lash, *The Militant Worker*, pp. 2, 74-78, 133-34.

¹⁸ Lenin, 'What Is to Be Done?', p. 422.

social experience, and obediently submissive.¹⁹ Thompson points out that from such deduction what is disclosed is 'class-consciousness, not as it is, but as it ought to be.'²⁰

Classificatory schemes might be offered, if these adequately typify class consciousnesses in relation to class practices. John Kelly, for example, suggested that the structure of workers' class consciousness involves a class identity which is sectional, corporate or hegemonic and a perception that the relations between classes are complementary, conflictual or antagonistic.²¹ A workers' class political consciousness which is becoming both hegemonic and antagonistic is presumably necessary for developments in workers' revolutionary practice. Indeed, such classifications might guard against another problem. If 'workers' actions should be judged *on their own terms* and not with reference to an abstract and demanding model of class consciousness',²² then those terms should also not be understood to exclude the possibility of emancipatory social transformation. While the historical potential of workers' actions is not always immediately evident in those actions, it is always present. Through this, their consciousness gains a class character.

A historical materialist perspective is the best on which to develop a concept of working-class consciousness that can consider historical variations in the politics of workers. The perspective holds that class arises out of class struggle. It brings within the boundaries of its understanding of the working class all the elements of the struggle for social emancipation. It recognises, too, that the class is subject to being remade in the class struggle. Finally, workers' class political consciousness is related to these processes, rather than being deduced from their structural conditions.

Collective Action

If the working class arises out of class struggle that is at the same time the struggle for social emancipation, then this occurs in a process of developing collective action. To know about the working class, we need to grasp how and why workers' collective action happens, in particular in political contention and social movements.

Collective action has been substantially researched since the 1960s. Many sociologists reacted against the then prevailing view in their discipline that collective action was a social psychosis or deviant behaviour. The emphasis in collective action

¹⁹ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, London, Verso, 1991, pp. 93-106; István Mészáros, 'Contingent and Necessary Class Consciousness', in István Mészáros (ed.), *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, p. 93; Bertell Ollman, 'How to Study Class Consciousness and Why We Should', *International Socialist*, vol. 1, no. 14, n.d., p. 66.

²⁰ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 11.

²¹ John Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, London, Verso, 1988, pp. 86-88.

²² Richards, *Miners on Strike*, p. 10.

research became the capacity of social movements to mobilise campaigning resources and how this was achieved through social movement organisations.

Studying social movements by studying their organisations proved to be problematic. The character of social movements is not fully captured. A social movement's organisations are only part of that movement: compared with any or even all of its organisations, a movement is relatively heterogeneous in its value structures, political approaches and organisational forms. What a movement has most of all in common is what it is against. Enforcing other differences as points of exclusion from a social movement may deny it forces that it needs for success. Timothy Doyle argued that a social movement is best envisaged as a palimpsest of individuals, networks, informal groups and organisations. Networks are fundamental to a social movement. Within each network, individuals communicate about common goals. Among the networks, they compete for the movement's adherence to the orientation each believes the movement should have. As the movement's networks intersect, it is indirectly bound together. Informal groups take more tangible forms, such as adopting a name, but resist adopting formal structures. The formal organisations may primarily exist to pursue movement objectives or be ones which adopt a movement objective because it assists the organisation in pursuing its main objectives.²³

In truth, Doyle's palimpsest may hardly be complex enough to depict a social movement. Hybrids of groups and organisations are possible where a group affiliates to and receives support from an organisation: in that case, the group gains formal status separate from its own functioning, while the organisation's identity and capacity spreads beyond its own membership. Also, the influence of networks is at least partly related to the positions and/or role played by their members in organisations and groups and therefore subject to the latter's processes of selection (by election or appointment) and recognition of authority.

The study of social movement organisations through a resource mobilisation perspective also did not solve a theoretical problem which had been posed for the concept of collective action. Mancur Olson asserted that 'rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interest'.²⁴ Olson's response to the existence of social movements as an apparent contradiction of his assertion was to

²³ Timothy Doyle, *Green Power: The Environment Movement in Australia*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2000, pp. 6-44, 78-80; Timothy Doyle and Aynsley Kellow, *Environmental Politics and Policy Making in Australia*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1995, pp. 88-89. On competition about a movement's orientation, see, for example: Jonathan Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle in the Victorian Nuclear Disarmament Movement*, Honours thesis, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Monash University, 1986.

²⁴ Mancur Olson, cited in Pamela Oliver and Gerald Marwell, 'Whatever Happened to Critical Mass Theory? A Retrospective and Assessment', *Sociological Theory*, vol. 19, no. 3, November 2001, p. 293.

argue that movement participation resulted from selective incentives which were gained, rather than an interest in the good, to be provided by collective action, that the movement claimed to pursue. Members of groups such as unions received exclusive, effectively private, benefits. Individual participation in collective action could spring from being paid to take part or wanting to avoid ostracism for inaction.

Olson's arguments have problems. Collective actions are needed to fund payments or enforce fines. As engagement in a collective action broadens, its solidary incentives for participants, such as enjoyment of the activity, esteem from others for task performance, greater intensity of friendships from common experiences, and feelings of self-worth from knowing an action helped are no longer exclusive benefits.²⁵ All other things being equal, an individual's motivation to engage in collective action can come only from the incentive involved in valuing a contribution to collective action because of the benefit of the good to be provided or progress towards that, whereas individual action will not provide that good or progress. In that case, Olson's logic is unassailable: an individual *qua* independent actor would know that he or she could not make a noticeable contribution in a collective action and so would not make a contribution, because it would be at a cost to the individual without any possible benefit.²⁶

Much, if not most, social movement literature in recent decades has not addressed Olson's logic about individual participation in collective action. It has referred to

²⁵ Roger V Gould, 'Why Do Networks Matter? Rationalist and Structural Interpretations', in Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (eds), *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 243-51; John Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*, London, Routledge, 2000, pp. 68-70; Hyojoung Kim and Peter S Bearman, 'The Structure and Dynamics of Movement Participation', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 62, no. 1, February 1997, pp. 71-72; James A Kitts, 'Collective Action, Rival Incentives, and the Emergence of Antisocial Norms', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 71, no. 2, April 2006; Michael W. Macy, 'Chains of Cooperation: Threshold Effects in Collective Action', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 56, no. 6, December 1991, p. 730; Gerald Marwell and Pamela Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action: A Micro-social Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 187-188; Oliver and Marwell, 'Whatever Happened to Critical Mass Theory?', pp. 293-94; Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, pp. 67-72. Gerard Marwell and Pamela Oliver incorrectly classify the value that a potential participant in collective action attaches to its goal as a selective material incentive: the benefits of any collective action are gained by the whole group involved, although the action's purpose is valued variously by the individuals involved. They also classify feelings of self-worth as a purposive incentive of collective action, yet while a participant in a collective action could not consider their involvement in the action worthy without agreement with the action's purpose, their attitude to their own worth from participation relates to their feelings of having assumed responsibility for and having defended common interests, not the pursuit of the collective good itself.

²⁶ Oliver and Marwell, 'Whatever Happened to Critical Mass Theory?', p. 296. This is what Olson posed as the problem of efficacy for individuals in collective action. Generally, another problem he identified, in which group members are motivated by cost avoidance to 'free ride' on others' contributions which provide a collective good because the benefits of the good cannot be withheld from non-participants, is given priority in discussions of Olson's work. See for example: Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, pp. 66-68; Michael W. Macy, 'Learning Theory and the Logic of Critical Mass', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 55, no. 6, December 1990, p. 809; Macy, 'Chains of Cooperation', p. 730; Oliver and Marwell, 'Whatever Happened to Critical Mass Theory?', p. 294. Yet collective action must first take place before some can seek to free ride on others for its benefits, so the free rider problem is secondary to the problem of individual efficacy in collective action.

resources external to social movements to explain how an individual might think that potential contribution has become more valuable than before because it now has a greater chance of success or the individual valuing what may result more highly. The political process perspective believes the relationship between collective action and institutional politics offered opportunities for action. Alberto Melucci's synthesis of social movement theory points to a source of norms for action in the formation of symbolic collective identities through individual's interactions in pre-existing networks.²⁷ However, the conundrum Olson posed was that an individual cannot consider their potential contribution to collective action to have any value at all because it would have no noticeable effect. In practice, in the literature, identities have appeared as disembodied cultural phenomenon. A reference to social networks as a whole does not suggest how new identities can emerge, since humans generally have multiple social ties which provide conflicting information, norms and identities about collective action. A leading proponent of the political process perspective, Doug McAdam, wrote that explanatory mechanisms that would allow modelling of individual participation in collective action are still needed.²⁸

Critical Mass Theory

An alternative approach to addressing Olson's 'logic of collective action' is to explicitly assume that individuals are *interdependent* social actors, as the rational choice theorists who developed 'critical mass theory' have done.²⁹ Individuals are now able to contract with others to take part in collective action. The contracting might be done explicitly, by prior agreement, such as through a meeting, or implicitly, by undertaking a collective action in the expectation that others will respond by taking part. Through that contracting, individuals can make a noticeable contribution to collective action. The individual can then value his or her contribution according to the individual's interest in

²⁷ Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 20-21, 39-41; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 19-23, 71-84, 89-136.

²⁸ Doyle, *Green Power*, pp. 18-22; Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin, 'Network Analysis, Culture and the Problem of Agency', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 99, no. 6, May 1994, pp. 1446-47; Stewart Lockie, 'Collective Agency, Non-human Causality and Environmental Social Movements: A Case Study of the Australian "Landcare Movement"', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 40, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 45-48; Sarah Maddison and Sean Scalmer, *Activist Wisdom: Practical Knowledge and Creative Tension in Social Movements*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2006, pp. 24, 32-34; Doug McAdam, 'Beyond Structural Analysis: Towards a More Dynamic Understanding of Social Movements', in Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (eds), *Social Movement and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 284; Ann Mische, 'Cross Talk in Movements: Reconceiving the Culture-Network Link', in Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (eds), *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003; Florence Passy, 'Social Networks Matter. But How?', in Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (eds), *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 22-23.

²⁹ Oliver and Marwell, 'Whatever Happened to Critical Mass Theory?', p. 295.

the collective action and the difference the contribution makes to the collective action. If that value is higher for the individual than his or her cost in making the contribution, he or she will, acting rationally, take part in the collective action.³⁰ To further understand these processes, critical mass theory has incorporated elements such as: probabilistic modelling for action; the costs of collective inaction; the role of broad-based mobilisation in collective action's success; changing interest levels through sequences of collective actions; comparison of 'indirect' signalling through protest action with more explicit contractual agreements to protest;³¹ the role of early moderate involvement in accelerating a protest campaign;³² and the relevance of different communication processes to those with higher and lower interests in a collective action.³³

Yet the fundamental conclusions of critical mass theory and what it explains about agency in collective action are straightforward enough. On the one hand, collective action by its nature ultimately relies on broad-based mobilisation. At some point in the mobilisation of a social movement, the chance of success for a collective action is so great that even those who have relatively little interest in the consequences of the collective action will find the cost of taking part has become less than the benefit to be gained. On the other hand, collective action will tend to not start if: interest in what a collective action can achieve is relatively evenly spread and therefore low in each individual; networks of people are relatively evenly spread, so that effective contracting is limited; or the concentrations of interest and of networks are separated.

If there are people who have a greater interest in a collective action and better networks to reach out to people about it, however, the cost of bringing together participants for collective action is reduced. Fewer people need to be mobilised in the

³⁰ This is the sense in McAdam's statement that rational choice theorists, in contrast to others involved in the sociological study of social movements, have articulated various models of entry into collective action: McAdam, 'Beyond Structural Analysis', p. 287.

³¹ This point is drawn from research on the 1989-91 Leipzig demonstrations by Susanne Lohmann: Oliver and Marwell, 'Whatever Happened to Critical Mass Theory?', p. 304. However, the capacity a social movement organisation or group has to direct collective action constitutes a kind of contractual agreement among the members and other adherents of those bodies. Also, explicit and implicit contracting for action are often not empirically distinct: decisions for action by existing social movement activists frequently take into account the action's 'indirect' effects on the future action of others.

³² This point also comes from Lohmann's Leipzig research: Oliver and Marwell, 'Whatever Happened to Critical Mass Theory?', pp. 308-09. Yet employing the terms 'moderates' and 'extremists' appears to abstract from the sufficient interest to be involved in a particular collective action of its participants to the general interest in collective action of those participants. In the early stages of a social movement about which interest proves to be broadly felt, only a relatively random few of those who will be willing to act collectively are engaged: generally moderate or generally extreme participants, so long as they feel sufficient interest in the collective action, are as likely as each other to take part. A rapidly growing movement then results from the broad interest in it: the early participation of moderates in the movement is correlated with that growth, but is not the cause of that growth.

³³ Michael Suk-Young Chwe, 'Structure and Strategy in Collective Action', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 105, no. 1, July 1999; Kim and Bearman, 'The Structure and Dynamics of Movement Participation', p. 72; Macy, 'Learning Theory', pp. 813-14, 819-24; Macy, 'Chains of Cooperation', pp. 732-34, 746; Oliver and Marwell, 'Whatever Happened to Critical Mass Theory?', pp. 302-05.

network for organising the collective action: the remaining participants in a collective action are mobilised only for the collective action itself. Therefore, those who are ready to contribute more to collective action, through their willingness to act and their capacity to get others involved, are 'selected' for involvement in a network for organising collective action. Furthermore, such 'organisers' are also more easily reached when their network is more centralised. Therefore, 'collective action arises around those interests for which there are groups of especially interested and resourceful individuals who are socially connected to one another'.³⁴ These groups usually comprise 'a relatively small number of participants who make such big contributions to the cause that they know (or think they know) they can 'make a difference''.³⁵ Critical mass theory 'is about the role of large contributors in collective action'.³⁶

A collective action in and of itself is dependent on existing networks of its organisers. A risk that exists for an attempt at mobilisation is that its potential organisers will not be interested in that mobilisation.

In a social movement, however, new dynamics come into play as it goes through its sequence of collective actions. To succeed a social movement must 'reach out' to continue to gain the critical mass of contributions needed for its collective action at each stage in its development. The social movement can try to replace those organisers whose interest wanes and to bring in still more organisers.³⁷

Also, a social movement's network for organising collective action is not undifferentiated, but generally comprises connected networks of activists. Finally, a social movement need not continue to rely on pre-existing networks, but can create its own social connections within its network for organising collective action and more broadly.³⁸

Critical mass theory therefore indicates that the agency of the organisers of collective action, rather more than the behaviour of the mass involved in collective action, needs to be explained when asking why collective action happens. Yet, as discussed above, the social movement literature has generally struggled to explain why people become especially interested in collective action.³⁹ The literature's analytical

³⁴ Marwell and Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action*, p. 54.

³⁵ Marwell and Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action*, p. 55.

³⁶ Marwell and Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action*, p. 186.

³⁷ Marwell and Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action*, chs 5-7.

³⁸ These points are not raised by Marwell and Oliver, but see the discussion above about the palimpsest character of social movements.

³⁹ Critical mass theory does not attempt such an explanation, because it assumes that taking collective action occurs through rational choices: Macy, 'Learning Theory', pp. 810-12; Marwell and Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action*, pp. 11, 190.

difficulty has been to ground the capacity for human agency 'in the structures and processes of the human self'⁴⁰ conceived as 'sensuous human activity'—that is, the interaction, at once material and conscious, of a human with her or his natural and social environments.⁴¹

Cognitive Praxis and Workers' Class Political Consciousness

Unusually, Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison proposed social movements should be understood as 'constituted by the cognitive praxis that is entailed in the articulation of their historical projects' by movement intellectuals.⁴² According to Eyerman and Jamison, a social movement reinterprets professional knowledge in the new context of the movement and mediates the transformation of everyday knowledge into professional knowledge. They noted that the initiative for the formation of a social movement very often comes from intellectual activity, usually by established intellectuals. The development of a movement's identity and organisation then calls forth new kinds of intellectuals. A social movement produces knowledge in collective processes of social learning, in part through the evaluation and planning of collective actions. A social movement's creation, articulation, and formulation of new thoughts and ideas define it in society and provide its core identity.

Thus, most activists are movement intellectuals in some sense. From that comes the ideas and practices of participatory democracy in social movements. Yet there is also a tension between this and a movement's tendency towards professionalisation that stems from its desire to effectively educate, communicate, organise, lobby, negotiate and debate.

Inspired by the studies of particular social movements, such as E.P. Thompson's, Eyerman and Jamison stated:

⁴⁰ Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, 'What is Agency', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 103, no. 4, January 1998, pp. 973-74.

⁴¹ Karl Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1976, p. 3. The other alternative to a 'structuralist' (institutional or cultural) rejection of human agency is the view, as stated by Emirbayer and Mische, that the self is 'an internal conversation ... a dialogical structure, itself thoroughly relational': Emirbayer and Mische, 'What is Agency', p. 974. Conceptual proof is in the analytical pudding. The latter conception, however, appears to rely on distinctions which are made categorically rather than established as causal. For example, the self 'possess[es] analytic autonomy vis-à-vis transpersonal interactions': Emirbayer and Mische, 'What is Agency', p. 974. A notable feature of the works of Tarrow, Melucci, Emirbayer and Mische and McAdam which are cited above is that these sustain exacting descriptions, but struggle to explain what has been observed.

⁴² Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991, pp. 43-44. Eyerman and Jamison do not explicitly claim the theoretical tradition suggested in this section. They do associate their concept of 'movement intellectuals' with Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals' and their criticism of Marxists is not that they have not recognised cognitive praxis, but that they 'have difficulty moving beyond the cognitive praxis of the nineteenth-century movements: for them, class identity is still the fundamental kind of identity': Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, ch. 4 and p. 164.

Consciousness is itself a historical construction ... a form of identity, a kind of knowledge that is formed in the context of a social movement. Our attempt to characterize cognitive praxis is a way to specify—and even more crucially, contextualize—the making of consciousness: consciousness, we claim, can be broken down into its component parts and related explicitly to the emergence of new forms of knowledge production.⁴³

They identified these component parts of consciousness as three essential dimensions of the cognitive praxis of a social movement: the cosmological, which is the movement's approach to its world view; the technological, being the protest topics and alternative techniques pursued by the movement; and the organisational, by which the movement establishes its internal and external social relations.⁴⁴

The emergence of the working class movement, exemplified by the Chartists and the growth in the late 19th century of unions and workers' parties, is an important example of cognitive praxis. As Marx and Engels noted, workers' combination and intellectuals' activity resulted in the 'organisation of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party'.⁴⁵

Contemporary working class mobilisation is, however, generally excluded from analysis as collective action in the sociology of social movement literature. Several reasons are offered for this. Some analysts consider class is no longer meaningful.⁴⁶ Sidney Tarrow argues class solidarity constitutes a 'strong' tie, in contrast to the 'weak' ties that coordinate a national social movement across classes and groups.⁴⁷ Many have argued that the labour movement of the 19th century was largely successful, so that its concerns have been addressed in and its organisations incorporated into a changed social order. In contrast, contemporary social movements are considered to continue to aim to change social values, use tactics different to those of the labour movement and have informal participatory organisational structures. Another contrast offered between the present-day labour movement and newer movements is a claim that the latter, and especially the environment movement, have a middle-class character.⁴⁸

Yet these arguments in the literature exaggerate the differences between the labour movement and newer social movements.

⁴³ Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, p. 164.

⁴⁴ Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, pp. 43-68, 81-92, 98-108, 113-114.

⁴⁵ Marx and Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', p. 493

⁴⁶ Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, p. 164. On similar theorising and an argument against it, see: Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, ch. 7.

⁴⁷ Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, pp. 51-52.

⁴⁸ Doyle and Kellow, *Environmental Politics and Policy Making*, pp. 120-21; Timothy Doyle and Doug McEachern, *Environment and Politics*, London, Routledge, 1998, pp. 56-57.

First, the professional and other white-collar occupations that are found to be well-represented among those active in the social movements are often also occupations that now form an important element of the labour movement. On the other hand, workers in routine jobs do participate in the social movements to some extent, have sometimes played an important role in them, and may do again as these movements continue to develop.⁴⁹

Second, contrary to what the sociology of social movement arguments suggest, these movements are organisationally and politically sufficiently alike that all can be usefully considered as social movements:

- On the one hand, the sociology of social movement literature as a whole shows the newer social movements need strong as well as weak ties to succeed. On the other hand, the labour movement has had and continues to have the form of a palimpsest, with, among its elements, networks for organising collective action.
- As in any social movement, what the labour movement's networks for organising collective action think is not simply the ideas found broadly among those they would organise. For example, 'the abstract ideologies that circulate within the labour movement—varieties of Marxism, Christian socialism, social partnership, etc—are consequently of fundamental importance in understanding the concrete, day-to-day behaviours of workers'.⁵⁰ More generally, the networks, as the movement's intellectuals, produce its 'cultures of solidarity'.⁵¹ Thus, in these networks the labour movement retains its potential for a transformative struggle, beyond the broader forms of workers' solidarity in conformist 'going with mates' unsanctioned strikes or union membership and party support that do not transcend workers' serial rivalry and/or passivity.⁵² Thus, the labour movement has never been completely institutionally accommodated and incorporated.

⁴⁹ See chs 4 and 9.

⁵⁰ Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, pp. 24-37.

⁵¹ Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p. 16.

⁵² Andrew Metcalfe, *For Freedom and Dignity: Historical Agency and Class Structures in the Coalfields of NSW*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1988, pp. 88, 188-90. Metcalfe describes these conformist forms of solidarity as larrikinish and respectable respectively.

- All social movements are, however, subject to pressures towards institutional accommodation. They can all offer to stop campaigning in exchange for concessions.⁵³

If there is a difference between the labour and the newer social movements, it is not that the former is not a social movement. Rather, the labour movement, because it was the first social movement in which workers posed the possibility of emancipation, has had a much longer encounter with the aim of achieving political power. Therefore, a larger variety of the possible responses of a social movement to that encounter can be observed in the labour movement, whereas among other social movements there has been only the rejection of the aim and the formation of parliamentary parties.

In the politics of workers, a party form has been conceived that is posed in terms similar to those of a network for organising collective action standing at the heart of a movement:

To enable [the] mass of the class to learn to understand its own interests and its position, to learn to conduct its own policy ... there must be an organisation of the advanced elements of the class, immediately and at all costs, even though at first these elements constitute only a tiny fraction of the class.⁵⁴

The network in this party form is, however, somewhat distinct from the networks for organising collective action in the social movements. It seeks through its own aims and the movement it organises to concentrate, in relation to political power, the aims and actions of all social movements. The party, Lenin wrote, should be:

Engaged exclusively in all-sided and all-embracing political agitation ... that *brings closer and merges into a single whole* the elemental destructive force of

⁵³ A number of studies have sought to apply social movement literature categories and concepts to labour movement concerns: Leda Blackwood et al., 'Putting the Group Back into Unions: A Social Psychological Contribution to Understanding Union Support', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 45, no. 3, December 2003, pp. 491-98; Tony Brown, 'Organizing for the Future: Labour's Renewal Strategies, Popular Education and Radical History', *Studies in Continuing Education*, vol. 28, no. 1, March 2006; Sandra Cockfield, 'Mobilising at the Workplace: State Regulation and Collective Action in Three Workplaces, 1900 to the 1920s', *Labour History*, no. 93, November 2007; Stephen Darley, 'But the Working Class Don't Care about the Environment ... Do they?', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 13, no. 2, June-July 1994; Ralph Darlington, 'Shop Stewards' Leadership, Left-Wing Activism and Collective Workplace Union Organisation', *Capital & Class*, no. 76, Spring 2002, p. 98; Marc Dixon and Vincent J Roscigno, 'Status, Networks and Social Movement Participation: The Case of Striking Workers', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 108, no. 6, May 2003; Doyle and Kellow, *Environmental Politics and Policy Making*, pp. 177-78; Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*; Rick Grannis et al., 'Working Connections: Shop Floor Networks and Union Leadership', *Sociological Perspectives*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2008; Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*; Hilary Wainwright, 'Rethinking Political Parties', 8 February 2008, <http://www.tni.org/archives/act/17920>, accessed 27 March 2008.

⁵⁴ V.I. Lenin, 'How Vera Zasulich Demolished Liquidationism', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 19, Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1980, p. 409. This presumes a distance between the thinking of the 'advanced elements' and the 'mass' of the class. Therefore, a question can be raised about how the party might objectively find out the interests of the class: Eagleton, *Ideology*, p. 91. Lenin argued that the party's outlook should be shaped through its connections with the masses' collective action and that the party's actions had to be verified by workers' practice, such as in elections, demonstrating that the class 'from its own experience' has come to agree with that outlook: Lenin, 'How Vera Zasulich Demolished Liquidationism', pp. 405-09; V.I. Lenin, 'Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 31, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1982, pp. 24-25.

the masses and the conscious destructive force of the organisation of revolutionaries.⁵⁵

Growth in the collective action of the masses, such as in mass strikes, provides the conditions under which the two forces can merge.⁵⁶ An alternative conception has been that a party or group should include as members all workers and others who support its aim of gaining political power and carrying out the changes it proposes. Yet, in practice, much of the membership of such parties is not active in the organisation and the parties have within them networks which intervene into social movements in pursuit of each network's aims for the politics of workers.

Workers' class political consciousness comes from that consciousness' production partly in the activity and interactions of the networks for organising collective action in social movements, partly in the activity and interactions of the networks for organising collective action in the workers' movement in relation to political power, and also partly in the interventions of the networks for organising in relation to political power into the networks of the social movements. Consideration of the various networks separately, therefore, does not readily adduce their interactions and the specific dynamics of those interactions. The relations of workers' networks for organising collective action must also be considered. The totality of the networks and their relations will be referred to as the core for organising collective action among workers.⁵⁷

Neither the inclusion of parties among the networks nor the use of the word 'core' is intended to imply a stability that does not exist. Indeed, the thesis considers whether or not workers' class political consciousness was rotting at the core.

The core for organising collective action among workers is, however, central to workers' class political consciousness. The core is that consciousness' material form. Thus, workers' class political consciousness will connect with the movement for emancipation when, having begun with class struggle and developed through collective action, the core articulates the movement for emancipation in such a way that the class

⁵⁵ Lenin, 'What Is to Be Done?', p. 512.

⁵⁶ Lenin, 'What Is to Be Done?', 373-482, 511-13; V.I. Lenin, 'The Reorganisation of the Party', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 10, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, p. 32; V.I. Lenin, 'To S.I. Gusev, October 13, 1905', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 34, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, pp. 357-58; V.I. Lenin, 'Lecture on the 1905 Revolution', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 23, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981, p. 241. The theorisation of the relationship of the mass strike to political radicalisation is most closely associated with Rosa Luxemburg (Rosa Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', in Mary-Alice Waters (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York, Pathfinder Press, 1980.). However, Lenin also studied strike waves: V.I. Lenin, 'The Historical Meaning of the Inner-party Struggle in Russia', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 16, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, chs 2-3; V.I. Lenin, 'Strike Statistics in Russia', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 16, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977. See also: Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, ch. 5.

⁵⁷ Within the core for organising collective action, the decisions are made about workers' collective action (including non-participation and dissent) even if there is no organisational mechanism to formulate decisions: cf. Hindess, *Politics and Class Analysis*, pp. 110-11.

struggle becomes a broader and more profound experience of social transformation by, for and of what has thus made itself the working class.

Focus and Method in this Thesis

The material form of workers' class political consciousness conditions the scope of this thesis. One aspect of this is that aggregates of individual consciousnesses, such as surveys provide, are not studied. This is not to suggest individual workers' conceptions, images, attitudes, and ideational and verbal responses to the world are 'false'. Nor are individual consciousnesses precluded from significance. The actions of small numbers of leaders or activists are a key to collective action. Nonetheless, cognitive praxis, such as the development of a sense of injustice, group differentiation, solidarity and opposition to other, a will to collective organisation and action, and defence against opponents' countermobilisation, emerges in processes of collective action.⁵⁸ Workers' collective action is the thesis' object of study.

Other aspects of the scope of the thesis posited include: the adequacy of the time-span with regard to processes of class formation; the determination of the boundaries of the core for organising collective action among workers; the differentiation of approaches to collective action within the core; and the methods of analysis and the fit of its quantitative data sources to its categories.

E.P. Thompson suggested the processes of class formation must be 'studied as they work themselves out over a considerable period': in his own study of the making of the English working class, for example, this is a span of more than 50 years.⁵⁹ This study summarises or puts aside numerous details, yet it spans just 13 years, with the re-making of the Australian working class that went on in this period not beginning or ending within those years. The study seeks to compensate for this by some discussion of key features in the previous history of the development of workers' class political consciousness, as well as concerning itself with certain emergent aspects, such as industry bargaining and the Greens, that became more prominent subsequently.

A concentration on the core for organising collective action among workers is also indicated. However, the available data allows only a partial depiction of that core's extent in the long Labor decade.

In the unions, for example, there were around 4000 full-time officers and perhaps more than ten times as many honorary positions as office-bearers, committee

⁵⁸ Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, p. 150; Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, pp. 4-8, including endnote 17; Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, p. 44.

⁵⁹ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 12.

members and conference delegates.⁶⁰ The unions also had about 60,000 workplace delegates (some of whom would have also held other union positions), according to estimates based on the Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Surveys in 1989-90.⁶¹ Although many delegates were active in that role for less than an hour per week, these delegates formed networks for collective action. A few tens of thousands of workers would also have been members of political parties, although they would not necessarily have been active in those. At least thousands more workers would have been members of social movement organisations and groups, although their numbers and level of activity are difficult to determine. The membership figures of some environmental organisations in the early 1990s have been published: several organisations had tens of thousands of members, but this membership very often amounted to a subscription payment.⁶²

The scope of informal networks for organising collective action and the intersections of the networks within the core for organising collective action among workers are difficult to identify. The majority of the social surveys used in this thesis⁶³

⁶⁰ For an indication of this, see: Australian Trade Union Training Authority, '1979-80', *Annual Report*, 1980.

⁶¹ For further discussion of estimates of delegate numbers, see ch. 5

⁶² Thomas Bramble, 'Deterring Democracy? Australia's New Generation of Trade Union Officials', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 37, no. 3, September 1995, p. 403; Ron Callus et al., *Industrial Relations at Work: The Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991, p. 102; Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment*, pp. 149-51. See also chs 5 and 8.

⁶³ These surveys, made available through the Australian Social Science Data Archive by the original depositors, are:

- D. Aitkin, Macquarie University Australian Political Attitudes Survey, 1979, [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1979. [hereafter 1979 PAS]
- J. Kelley et al., Australian National Social Science Survey, 1984 [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1984. [1984 NSS]
- J. S. Western, et al, The Class Structure of Australia, 1986 [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1986. [1986 CSA]. Unlike the other surveys, this only questioned employed persons.
- Ian McAllister and Anthony Mughan, Australian Election Survey, 1987 [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1987. [1987 AES]
- J. Kelley et al., National Social Science Survey 1987-1988: Inequality [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1988. [1987-88 NSS]
- J. Kelley et al., National Social Science Survey: Family and Lifestyles, 1989-1990 [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1990. [1989-90 NSS]
- I. McAllister et al., Australian Election Study, 1990 [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1990. [1990 AES]
- R. Jones et al., Australian Election Study, 1993 [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1993. [1993 AES]
- Roger Jones et al., Australian Election Study, 1996 [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1996. [1996 AES]

Those who carried out the original analysis and collection of the data bear no responsibility for the further analysis and interpretation herein.

put, at most, questions about participation *per se* in collective actions, not about more active involvement.

The 1986 Class Structure in Australia survey, which interviewed only people in work, did ask respondents not only if they were unionists, but also if they had ever participated in various kinds of collective action, if they had ever been union delegates or officials, and if they were active as members of parties (not named), social movement groups (the only relevant type specified was nuclear disarmament groups) or 'job related organisations' (not necessarily their union). This left respondents to decide what being 'active' meant. Since more than a quarter of unionists claimed to be active in a job related organisation, while only one-third of these unionists had ever been a delegate or official, those claiming to be active in this way almost certainly extended beyond the core for organising collective action among workers. Thus, the outer limit of that core is probably better marked, in terms of this survey data, by a person being:

- not only a union member active in a job related organisation, but also at some time a delegate; and/or
- active in a party and an ALP, Democrats or Nuclear Disarmament Party supporter; and/or
- active in a nuclear disarmament group.

Six and a half per cent of employee respondents fell within the core using this categorisation. Of them, five out of six had engaged at least once in one or more movement activities such as writing to newspapers, contacting parliamentarians, union action, joining organisations, demonstrating or party work, compared with less than half of the rest of the employees sampled: the same ratio also applied to current unionisation.⁶⁴ For those employees who had performed at least one of these activities, core members had on average performed twice as many of these activities at least once. The greatest difference between the core and the rest according to type of activity was in joining organisations, which the core, at a rate of 43 per cent, was four times more likely than the rest to have done at least once.

Consideration of the extent and character of the core for organising collective action among workers throws a particular light on the discussion in the social movement literature of the relationship of movements to communications media. In particular, Eyerman and Jamison claimed the mass media, as opposed to movement media, had

⁶⁴ Between 12 and 22 per cent of respondents had taken part at least once in each of these activities. Attending public meetings (39 per cent) and signing petitions (71 per cent) was more common among employee respondents.

become crucial to a social movement's relations to the broader public and its strategic interaction with opponents.⁶⁵

The smaller numbers in the core for organising collective action among workers would appear to restore some of the significance of movement media, such as that discussed by Frankel.⁶⁶ With regard to, for example, print media apparently at least partly directed towards the core, the commercially published *National Times* ceased publication in 1987, at which time its circulation had fallen from more than 100,000 a few years before to below 87,000. Thereafter, the most broadly distributed periodical was probably the monthly *Frontline*, the initiative of some trade unions in Victoria.⁶⁷ It began in February 1993 with a distribution of 20,000. That had fallen to 15,000 two years later. The independent journal *Australian Society* reported a circulation of 10,000 when it began in 1982 and again at the beginning of 1991.⁶⁸ In 1986, John Mathews proposed the publication of a 100,000-circulation labour movement weekly to be called *Seven Days*. The project was backed by, among others, ACTU president Simon Crean and ACTU secretary Bill Kelty. Nonetheless, it foundered, perhaps partly because an apparent contradiction between its organisational ties to the ALP and its proclaimed 'hunger for reform' and criticism of ALP governments. Among political periodicals, *Tribune*, a weekly produced on behalf of the Communist Party of Australia, had sales⁶⁹ of around 7000 per issue from 1979-1982, but reports in 1986 and 1987 put these at around 4000 and the paper's circulation when it closed down in 1991 was about 2700. *Broadside Weekly*, which involved some who previously worked on *Tribune*, ran from June 1992 to March 1993. Its typical circulation was about 2000. The circulation of the Socialist Workers Party's weekly, *Direct Action*, grew from around 1500 in 1980-81 to peak below 2500 in 1984, and averaged around 2000 for the rest of the decade.⁷⁰ From 1991, the renamed SWP, the Democratic Socialist Party, became the principal organisational basis for the distribution of *Green Left Weekly*, although this publication

⁶⁵ Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, pp. 99-100, 138. Tarrow suggests as an alternative that a movement may 'have the internal resources to perform protests': Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, p. 113.

⁶⁶ See ch. 1.

⁶⁷ Correspondence proposing the newspaper came from Len Cooper, Victorian branch secretary of the Communication Workers Union. Publishing Board members included Victorian branch representatives of the electrical, plumbers, Food Preservers, Vehicle Builders, Health Services (No. 1), printing, media and arts, and teachers unions. Len Cooper, Left Unions' Newspaper, Food Preservers Union, Box 3, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 13 April 1992; Len Cooper, A Union Newspaper Proposal, Food Preservers Union, Box 3, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 4 November 1992; n.a., Frontline Publishing Board Members, Food Preservers Union, Box 3, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 1992.

⁶⁸ The journal then took the name *Modern Times*, but that ceased publication within a few months.

⁶⁹ The archival documents do not specify whether or not the figures given include subscriptions.

⁷⁰ The rate of increase in this circulation much lower than that in the number of SWP members, indicating some combination of increasing difficulty in motivating distribution of the newspaper by members and in distributing the newspaper to the public.

had a broader group of contributors and sponsors: its circulation each issue averaged about 4000 or more every year until 1995. The circulation of other political periodicals appears to have been much smaller: for example, between 1993 and 1995, typical sales of the International Socialists' *Socialist Worker* at the start of the university year were 2000 per month.⁷¹

Within the outer limit to the core for organising collective action among workers, consideration of its capacities must also take into account the division of people and their networks according to the particular approaches to collective action they promote. Among these approaches are those that tend to make their claims within and draw substantial resources from conventional politics. Their development in the long Labor decade, at least in terms of key events and figures, is relatively well-known from the existing literature. Other approaches to collective action stand largely or entirely outside such politics. The particular concern of this thesis is the development of the tendencies toward operating outside conventional politics, without denying that this occurred in interaction with the opposing tendency, within the core.

Analysis in the thesis is primarily qualitative. Three sources of data have been used: archival and published documents; loosely structured interviews with a few individual participants;⁷² and, occasionally, the author's knowledge, which was gained, during the long Labor decade, as a participant in social movements and political

⁷¹ Peter Boyle, Email, 18 April 2008; Peter Murphy, Email, 14 November 2007; James Supple, Request for Info, 14 November 2007; Communist Party of Australia, NO Minutes + Correspondence 1986, Communist Party of Australia, MSS 5021 add on 1936, Box 14 (76), Mitchell Library, Sydney, 1986; Communist Party of Australia, National Committee Minutes Reports 1987, Communist Party of Australia, Series MSS 5021 add on 1936, Box 14 (76), Mitchell Library, Sydney, 1987, various documents; Communist Party of Australia, National Officers' Report [for 1982 Congress], Communist Party of Australia, MSS 5021, Box 9 (155), Mitchell Library, Sydney, n.d., p. 9; Democratic Socialist Party, Distribution [of Direct Action; of Green Left Weekly], Democratic Socialist Party, file made available to author, Sydney, n.a.; The Activist; Australian Society; Frontline; Green Left Weekly; David Bowman, 'Whistleblowers', Australian Society, November 1986, p. 36; David Bowman, 'An Adventure in Journalism', Modern Times, June 1992, pp. 10-11; George Morgan, 'Labour Weekly', Australian Society, March 1986, p. 4; n.a., 'Labour Weekly Project Launched', Australian Society, February 1986, pp. 26-27.

⁷² The interviews were conducted during earlier research through Murdoch University on the same topic. The author retained the audio tapes in his possession. Unfortunately, the quality of most of these recordings was poor (to unuseable) and only partial transcripts could be prepared.

parties.⁷³ A great deal of this material is drawn from and informed by what Sarah Maddison and Sean Scalmer have called 'activist wisdom'. This understanding of collective action is developed through intuition, experimentation and adaptation in the carrying out of social movement activity. That activity can include discussion and debate about strategy and organisation, persuading people to participate, and lobbying, negotiation, and media liaison. The activists involved, in order to make choices in their responses to dilemmas involved, apply their practical knowledge, in particular about the means of successful campaigning. That knowledge consists of rules of thumb that activists learn in their formal education and work experience, and, most of all, in their activity in, observation of, and discussion about social movements. That knowledge is chiefly concerned with understanding social relationships, because its aim is to help with garnering support and quelling opposition. The form of practical knowledge is very often narrative: the activist tells stories of her or his understanding of what happened.⁷⁴

Maddison and Scalmer recently presented the elements of activist wisdom they had found in their Australian-based research. Activists tried to solve eight problems: what types of action to engage in; how to organise; how to establish a movement's identity; relating demands for reform and revolutionary practices; melding local and global orientations; meeting aims for redistribution and recognition; whether to 'go mainstream' or hold out for alternative visions; and maintaining hope and facing despair. The differences among activists very often point to a need to seek greater understanding, but some conclusions are clear. Instrumental action is needed to make substantial political claims, but with much movement activity happening away from the public eye, expressive action also binds together and inspires movement activists. Organising in a social movement is empowering and related to activists' deepening commitment, but also a complex activity which can sour when division is experienced. The practice of movement democracy does not confirm any specific organisational

⁷³ When such knowledge is used as a source in the thesis, this is stated. I was active in, among a range of groups and activities: first Monash People for Nuclear Disarmament and then also Hawthorn People for Nuclear Disarmament, from which I served as a delegate to People for Nuclear Disarmament in Victoria, from 1982 to 1986, and also the Nuclear Disarmament Party from 1984 to 1985; the Community Research Action Centre at Monash University, as a student activist, from 1984 to 1986, and the socialist youth organisation Resistance from 1984 to 1989, serving as a branch organiser in Canberra in 1987, on the organisation's national executive in 1988, and again as a branch organiser in Perth in 1989; the Public Sector Union in Perth from 1990 to 1995, including serving twice as a workplace delegate in the Department of Social Security and as a branch conference delegate, and as the local coordinator of small National Challenge rank and file group; a Wilderness Society branch in Perth in the early 1990s; the organisation of a rally opposed to the obligations the proposed Newstart Allowance would impose on the unemployed; Friends of East Timor in Perth, from late 1992 or early 1993 to 1995; and the ALP from 1982 to October 1984, and thereafter the Socialist Workers Party, later renamed the Democratic Socialist Party. Membership of the SWP and DSP gave general direction to the other activity, and organised writing for and distributing *Direct Action* and *Green Left Weekly*.

⁷⁴ Maddison and Scalmer, *Activist Wisdom*, pp. 5, 39-60.

form as advantageous, but tends to converge around contention with liberal-democratic governments, pragmatic procedural justifications and provisions for creativity. A movement identity is only a partial and contingent unity: affirming difference in order to know who's 'out' must be combined with finding policies that maximise unity and move a campaign forward. The apparent absence of a credible overarching emancipatory project has decoupled the cultural politics of recognition and the social politics of redistribution. Finally, to make sense of a political decline of social movements while bolstering activism, activists have needed a consciousness that involves a long historical view, a measured acceptance of the movements' present fate, a sense that a chaotic turn of events is possible, and an activist identity.⁷⁵

The character of activist wisdom establishes its limitations: it is case-specific and typically applies to local situations; in that sense, it is not broadly reflective; and its conscious explication is usually for a specific purpose, so it is rarely the subject of a general record.⁷⁶ Instances of attempts to systematise the activist wisdom of social movements stand out. In the French 'new' social movements, 'sociological interventions' by Alain Touraine and other social scientists enjoined mixed groups of militants to engage in self-analysis. The analysis of the groups was intended to take the movements beyond reactions to the existing order into a battle over the culture and values for the post-industrial society which Touraine believed was emerging. The scope, if not necessarily the aims and methods, of Marxists' political interventions into social movements, are similar. Moreover, many of Marxism's political conclusions, in particular, have been drawn out of movement experiences, such as its expectation of workers' combination, its proposition that revolutionaries should not use 'the ready-made state machinery'; and its support for factory councils.⁷⁷

This thesis also has its origins in its author's orientation as an activist around a perspective that larger scale collective action in social movements is a condition for the development of the movement for emancipation. The thesis seeks to draw attention to reasons for the apparent decline of that movement, and of social movements generally, as well as to countervailing developments. This might be compared with collective

⁷⁵ Maddison and Scalmer, *Activist Wisdom*, chs 3-10.

⁷⁶ Maddison and Scalmer, *Activist Wisdom*, pp. 7, 43. Maddison and Scalmer's work stands out in this regard. Histories of social movements and memoirs of movement activists unconsciously refer to elements of activist wisdom. This includes the present author's previous research on the peace movement in Melbourne in the 1980s: Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle*.

⁷⁷ Antonio Gramsci, 'L'Ordine Nuovo and the Factory Councils [Section II]', in Quintin Hoare (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920)*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1988; Maddison and Scalmer, *Activist Wisdom*, pp. 15-16, 29-32; Marx, 'The Poverty of Philosophy', pp. 210-11; Marx and Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', pp. 492-93; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'Preface to the 1872 German Edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 23, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1988, p. 175.

action theorisation to date, which appears to have been primarily devoted to explaining the dynamics of advancing social movements.

Data collection was focussed on events and groups which expressed dissent from the ALP government and the Accord between the government and the ACTU. As well, some developments in the metalworkers' union were more closely examined. This was a union where, in the 1970s, substantial efforts were made to develop delegate and shop committee structures. During the long Labor decade, this union was where much of the discussion about the Accord took place and much of the initiative for the Accord's various stages of development originated.

Quantitative analysis complements the study's qualitative analysis to provide a discussion more systematically representative of workers' collective action. For example, a newspaper survey has quantified trends in protest activities and involvement in them.⁷⁸

Different thesis chapters analyse raw data from the period's political attitude and social science surveys. The thesis uses responses in those surveys about what the respondents did or had done. The thesis' analysis of party identification might appear to contradict that claim, but in this case the respondent has been asked about what he or she does—that is, which party the respondent identified with—rather than an opinion about the party. Indeed, the qualitative data employed in the thesis' analysis is subject to the same critique. A person's expression of opinion has been assessed with regard to whether or not the expression of opinion was for public knowledge. If it was, then how the expression of opinion might have constituted part of an attempt at achieving a collective action is considered.

A feature in past discussion of political attitude and social science survey results has been the frequent treatment of occupation as a proxy for 'class', rather than beginning with respondents' employment status as an employer, self-employed or employee—that is, a 'worker'. In this thesis, survey respondents have been categorised as workers if they stated their employment status or background (if not working) as that of an employee (including the unemployed), unless the respondents identified as upper class, supervised large numbers of employees, or were officers in repressive state apparatuses (the military, police or prisons). A respondent's spouse was considered to determine the respondent's class if:

⁷⁸ See Chapter 9.

- The respondent indicated he or she was working part-time, was unemployed, or had an employment status, but not a working time, but the spouse was working full-time, unless the respondent's income was 25 per cent or more of the family's income or 50 per cent or more of median family income in that survey.⁷⁹
- The respondent indicated neither employment nor self-employment (relevant only if an employment status indicated for the spouse).

These criteria were not all available in each survey (see Table 2.1). Also, respondents did not always answer questions about employment status. After consideration of spousal influence, the premise that a large majority of adults for most of their lives are, have been or will be employees rather than employers or self-employed was used to assume such respondents had an employee background. Exceptionally, those who claimed an occupational background for which, in the surveys' responses, self-employment was the majority employment status of those with that occupational background (farm and shop management and some medical professions and building trades), were assumed to be self-employed.⁸⁰

The assumptions and presumptions made in the thesis with regard to its categorisation of survey respondents mean that the composition of the categories might not strictly align with the category names. Moreover, before the thesis analysis has begun, some survey samples were weighted towards certain localities and, in most cases, the samples were drawn from the electoral rolls, thereby excluding from sampling many migrants and others not on the rolls. The employment of migrants, in particular, has tended to concentrate in certain occupations. The mixed and partial sample groups of the thesis maintain validity, however, because they are consistently and reasonably defined and are used to present not absolute proportions of responses as such, but trends through the years of the period in these proportions within groups, and comparisons of these proportions among groups.

The Working Class as an Emancipatory Subject

Marxist class analysis encounters not just practical problems. It faces the charge that it is teleological.

⁷⁹ The 1979 PAS and 1994 NSS reported income in categories. For these, the respondent's spouse determined class attachment only if her or his income exceeded that of the respondent by at least three categories.

⁸⁰ A majority of respondents in these occupational categories who indicated employment status were self-employed. This is based on all the surveys except for the 1979 PAS and 1994 NSS, which used categories incompatible with the remaining surveys at that level of detail.

Table 2.1 Criteria available for exclusion of respondents from ‘worker’ group in surveys

Survey	Number of employees supervised	Upper class identification	Police or Prison Officers	Own work time	Spouse work time	Self and spouse income	Out of Work
1979 PAS	101 or more	Yes	Yes ¹	Full-time or part-time	Full-time or part-time	Category	Yes
1984 NSS	No	Yes	Yes	Full-time or part-time	Hours ²	Amount	Yes
1986 CSA	100 or more	Yes	Yes	Hours ²	Full-time or part-time	No	N/A
1987 AES	No	Yes	Yes	Full-time or part-time	Full-time or part-time	No	Yes
1987-88 NSS	98 or more	Yes	Yes	Full-time or part-time	No ³	Amount	Yes
1989-90 NSS	98 or more	Yes	Yes	Full-time or part-time	Full-time or part-time	Amount	Yes
1990 AES	No	Yes	Yes	Full-time or part-time	No	No	Yes
1993 AES	100 or more	Yes	Police only	Full-time or part-time	Full-time or part-time	No	Yes
1994 NSS	N/A ⁴	Yes	No	Full-time or part-time	Full-time or part-time	Category	Yes
1996 AES	No	Yes	No	Full-time or part-time	Full-time or part-time	No	Yes

¹ Also military personnel

² 30 hours or more treated as full-time

³ Assumed to be full-time

⁴ No respondent supervised more than 95 workers

All historical theory is arguably teleological. However, in comparison to those theories which accept what is—more exactly, what is said to exist—as the state of being, or the endpoint of some process of development, the charge sticks more readily against Marxism because it refers to what it understands to be a real movement, but one towards a future emancipation as yet hardly realised. Furthermore, the organisation of workers against capital, which has been a fairly generalised

phenomenon, and the at least periodic appearance of 'class struggle', has not been followed by a similar development of class consciousness.⁸¹

Within the Marxist tradition many attempts have been made to explain how the development of workers' class political consciousness has been hindered. Among these are arguments that this consciousness is subject to the prejudices of workers' stratification by craft, gender, race, ethnicity, nation and/or religion. Also, bourgeois and petty bourgeois notions have been thought to enter the workers' movement through capital's domination of the means of ideological dissemination, the prior social backgrounds of many workers, the prospect for some workers of social mobility out of the working class, intellectuals who are attracted to the workers' movement and the personnel of the apparatus of the labour movement gaining privileged positions. As well, some Marxists have proposed that workers' belief in the possibility of major improvements in conditions under capitalism lingers even when the general economic prosperity which made that possible is gone, or that workers think that equality in their political and juridical lives, separated from their circumstances in the world of production, makes the former socially neutral and, therefore, a potential means for self-determination.⁸²

In these arguments, Marxism has tended towards 'explaining stability rather than to aiding revolutionary strategy'.⁸³ This has been true even in the use made of Antonio Gramsci's appropriation of the concept of civil society 'to mark out the terrain of a new kind of struggle which would take the battle against capitalism not only to its economic foundations but to its cultural and ideological roots'.⁸⁴ Gramsci thought that, in the

⁸¹ Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, pp. 72-77.

⁸² Perry Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review*, no. 100, November 1976 - January 1977, p. 28; Bramble, 'Managers of Discontent', pp. 40-48; Tony Cliff, 'Economic Roots of Reformism', 1957, <http://www.marxist.org/archive/cliff/1957/06/rootsref.htm>, accessed on 14 March 2005; Eagleton, *Ideology*, p. 113; Fieldes, 'Still Here, Still Fighting', pp. 35-36; Marx and Engels, 'The German Ideology', p. 59; Ellen Meiksins Wood, 'The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism', *New Left Review*, no. 127, May-June 1981; Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 14.

⁸³ Gavin Kitching, *Karl Marx and the Philosophy of Praxis*, London, Routledge, 1988, p. 167. Thus, the arguments all refer to influences alien to the workers' movement: see Max Elbaum and Robert Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy: The Material Basis for Opportunism in the Labor Movement', *Line of March*, May-June 1982, p. 62.

⁸⁴ Ellen Meiksins Wood, 'The Uses and Abuses of Civil Society', *Socialist Register*, vol. 26, 1990, pp. 62-63. With the exception of civil society, Gramsci's concepts, and key contrasts and metaphors, had already been employed by the Russian revolutionaries and the early Communist International in related ways. His concept of 'organic' intellectuals is related to his views about the revolutionary party: see Eagleton, *Ideology*, pp. 118-19. On coercion and consent, see, for example: V.I. Lenin, 'Differences in the European Labour Movement', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 16, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 350. On 'hegemony', see: Anderson, 'Antonio Gramsci', pp. 15-18. On the contrasts and metaphors, see: V.I. Lenin, 'The Collapse of the Second International', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 23, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981, p. 254; V.I. Lenin, 'Fourth Conference of Trade Unions and Factory Committees of Moscow', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 27, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1985, p. 464.

advanced capitalist social formations of the West, a coordination in civil society of the interests of the ruling class and of the subaltern classes that partly realised the subaltern classes' interests could secure an 'historic bloc' of these class forces under the ruling class. In the consent of the subaltern classes to that class rule was a ruling class hegemony that, since it was not achieved by coercion alone, could not be overturned by claiming power simply through an assault on the state. Yet, contrary to Gramsci's view, both the state and civil society create both coercion and consent. In particular, civil society in class societies generates coercion through consent. Within capitalism, 'civil society' is bourgeois society, with that social order's incumbent oppressions, starting with the capitalists' appropriation of the products of the workers' labour.⁸⁵ A revolutionary workers' movement can no more wield civil society as it is for the movement's purposes than that movement can the use the 'ready-made State machinery'. The emancipatory movement's counter-hegemonic struggle must develop independently of bourgeois 'civil society'.

Given the inadequate results within Marxism of retaining a formal commitment to a perspective of working class agency, but changing neither the form the analysis has taken nor the location of class struggle, the alternative of rethinking revolutionary agency is suggestive.⁸⁶ Martin Nicolaus has noted that this is 'the distinguishing characteristic of Lenin's method of class analysis, of which his theory of the labour aristocracy is an important product'.⁸⁷

Lenin argued that:

Revolution cannot begin so easily in the advanced countries as the revolution began in Russia ... to start without preparation a revolution in a country in which capitalism is developed and has given democratic culture and organisation to everybody, down to the last man – to do so would be wrong, absurd.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Eagleton, *Ideology*, pp. 112-13; Frederick Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 24, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1989, p. 293; Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1986, pp. 5-23, 125-276; Meiksins Wood, 'The Uses and Abuses of Civil Society', pp. 63-80; Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, ch. 4. Eagleton, *Ideology*, pp. 112-13; Frederick Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 24, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1989 [1880], p. 293; Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, pp. 5-23, 125-276; Meiksins Wood, 'The Uses and Abuses of Civil Society', pp. 63-80; Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, ch. 4. Thus, Gramsci did not keep his formulations of the relationships of either the state and civil society or coercion and consent stable: Anderson, 'Antonio Gramsci', pp. 12-13, 18-26, 31-34, 40-51; John Hoffman, *The Gramscian Challenge: Coercion and Consent in Marxist Political Theory*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984.

⁸⁶ Kitching, *Karl Marx and the Philosophy of Praxis*, pp. 168-69.

⁸⁷ Martin Nicolaus, 'The Theory of the Labor Aristocracy', *Monthly Review*, vol. 21, no. 11, April 1970, p. 92.

⁸⁸ V.I. Lenin, 'Extraordinary Seventh Congress of the RCP (B): Political Report of the Central Committee', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 27, Progress Press, Moscow, 1985, pp. 98-99.

Democracy under capitalism promised reforms to the workers, as long as they renounced revolutionary struggle. Lenin stated socialists should not reconcile themselves to the workers' mass organisations if the latter took the stance of a 'bourgeois labour party' that did not aim for the masses' liberation from capitalism, but for the reconciliation of a relatively privileged minority of the proletariat with capitalism. Instead, he wrote, socialists should 'go down *lower* and *deeper*, to the real masses', among whom those organisations would not really organise and in whom the agency for emancipation still lay. Among the majority of the proletariat, Lenin stated, would be found the opportunity to use experiences such as in World War I to explain 'the inevitability and necessity of breaking with ... national-liberal labour politics'.⁸⁹

Approach of this Thesis

Two related aspects of class history in the long Labor decade are the particular concerns of this thesis. One is the dynamics of collective action among workers: specifically, the development of the capacity of the core for organising collective action among workers to act as movement intellectuals constructing a class political consciousness. The thesis' discussion reaches beyond the understanding that this capacity declined. It considers why, despite the conditions of capitalist crisis, few workers responded through an active radical opposition. As well, the crisis narrowed the material basis for a labour aristocracy, which brought into question the conditions of the stratum's existence and unsettled the stratum's composition. In response, the way in which class collaboration was conducted from within the working class is found to have changed. This tended to alienate workers from their existing forms of social mobilisation and suppress their collective action. Nonetheless, the conditions for the emergence of struggles for working class hegemony were not removed. A partial radicalisation, especially of those losing their previously relatively advantaged positions, developed. New forms of collective action by workers appeared.

The second aspect is that the Australian working class was thus remade. To understand that, as is necessary for any notion of historical causation, some model is required. Yet, as Thompson suggested, the historian is compelled to 'maintain a quarrel between the model and actuality' that will not conform to it.⁹⁰ Thus, the model being used is better made explicit as a first step towards guarding against the model becoming an axiom.

⁸⁹ V.I. Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 19, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981, pp. 117-20.

⁹⁰ Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English', pp. 77-78.

The model used in this thesis is that while the potential for a universally emancipatory movement remains embodied in the socio-political exclusion of workers, a bourgeois labour party among at least some workers is inevitable, given the existence of a labour aristocracy. That model is confronted by the reality of workers living within a changing complex of social relations, and through struggles about power and political consciousness, in particular in the form of party influence. Little wonder that the theorisation of the labour aristocracy have been the subject of substantial controversy. Indeed, the existence of the stratum has been frequently denied.

Yet the previous chapter concluded that considerations of the effects of a relatively privileged stratum of workers have continued to emerge. This thesis proceeds by putting these considerations up front. It begins with an elaboration of a theory of the labour aristocracy and then its application to the history of the workers' movement in Australia in the next two chapters. This stands as preparation for the main effort of the thesis, to explore how class happened during the period.

3

What Is the Labour Aristocracy?

Workers have been socially differentiated in many ways. With regard to which of these might be most relevant to the formation of policy that affected the remaking of the working class in the long Labor decade, the literature suggests the 'labour aristocratic' stratification.

This aspect of the literature is problematic. When it attempts to argue cause and effect, the policy regime plays the active part. The labour aristocracy appears only as a description. That is in tune with the historically relatively widespread use of the term to nominate what has been observed as a stratum of workers who have higher, and in particular more regular, earnings, better conditions of work, better living conditions (including when sick or aged), higher status and better prospects for social advancement.¹

Into the discussion about Britain's 'artisan' labour aristocracy of the 19th century, however, Engels introduced the novel concept that its condition was that country's industrial and colonial world monopoly. Later, during World War I, Lenin related his analysis of monopoly capitalism, in which a structurally differentiated capitalism now existed in all parts of the world, to the existence and political consequences of several labour aristocracies, for which the classic British model no longer provided an exact guide.²

The theory of the labour aristocracy has been controversial. Many analysts have rejected its view that the stratum exists in a way that is significant for politics among workers. This chapter elaborates the theory in response to these controversies. The chapter first considers the theory's scope and significance. Then it reviews the various arguments about the theory: the source and also the nature of the 'bribe' to the labour aristocracy, the stratum's composition, and the relationship of the labour aristocracy to both the labour bureaucracy and the rest of the class.

¹ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964, p. 273. In one recent example, the term is used to describe a stratification of retail and hospitality workers with regard to interactions of employees and customers and relationships among employees: Chris Warhurst and Dennis Nickson, 'A New Labour Aristocracy? Aesthetic Labour and Routine Interactive Service', *Work, Employment and Society*, vol. 21, no. 4, December 2007, p. 794.

² Eric Hobsbawm, 'Lenin and the "Aristocracy of Labor"', *Monthly Review*, vol. 21, no. 11, April 1970, pp. 47-48, 50-55.

The Theory of the Labour Aristocracy

The theory of the labour aristocracy considers the condition for the appearance of opportunism, which is a particular kind of reformism. Opportunism sacrifices the fundamental interest of the whole working class in social emancipation to the more immediate interests of the labour aristocratic stratum of workers: it is 'in other words, an alliance between a section of the workers and the bourgeoisie, directed against the mass of the proletariat'.³ This class political consciousness, when it is upheld by workers who are, relative to the mass of workers, experienced in and conscious of the class struggle, is a retreat from class struggle.

The condition that the theory is concerned about is not any peculiar feature of a national working class, but a common feature of all nations where domestic monopolising capitals dominate. Each of these capitals gains monopoly superprofits. These superprofits provide a more sustained basis than capital's profit from other sources for a varied array of concessions in the conditions for class struggle to a stratum of workers. The stratum of workers that benefits from this, the labour aristocracy, then becomes the social base of opportunism.⁴

The theory argues that labour aristocrats are workers who have a complex of interests in the relations of production: their fundamental class interest stems from their exploitation in the capital-wage labour relationship, while their privileged position relative to other workers is tied to the fortunes of 'their' monopolising capitals. They can then respond to their complex of interest in different ways: some might pursue their antagonistic class interest, and others will act in accordance with their ties to monopolising capitals. This claim is not made to suggest that the connection between monopolising capitals and the labour aristocracy determines the class political consciousness of any individual relatively privileged worker. Its intent is to establish that that social relationship is the condition in which an influential part of this stratum of workers reaches settlements with 'their' capitalists that put aside the historical interests of the working class in favour of the collaboration with monopolising capitals needed to secure their relative privilege.⁵ In particular, Lenin argued, 'a "*bourgeois labour party*" is

³ Lenin, 'The Collapse of the Second International', p. 242.

⁴ V.I. Lenin, 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: Preface to the French and German editions', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 22, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1985, pp. 193-94.

⁵ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', p. 81; Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', pp. 110-11, 118-19.

inevitable and typical in *all* imperialist countries ... this shift in class relations will find political form, in one shape or another, without any particular "difficulty".⁶

An argument against the theory of the labour aristocracy is that the theory's presentation has been unclear about 'under what conditions ... [relatively privileged] workers play a reactionary role and under what conditions a progressive role'.⁷ In fact, Lenin stated that 'unless a determined and relentless struggle is waged all along the line against these parties – or groups, trends, etc., it is all the same – there can be no question of a struggle against imperialism, or of Marxism, or of a socialist labour movement'.⁸ Thus, he argued that only revolutionary class struggle politically independent from the opportunist trend could win any part of the labour aristocracy away from opportunism.⁹ Otherwise, while the revolutionary political trend is rooted in the working class' general condition of exploitation, the opportunist trend also has its social basis, which is in the labour aristocracy's condition of relative privilege.¹⁰

An alternative view about the sources of the working class' political trends relates these to the capitalist conjunctures of boom and crisis. According to this view, when

⁶ Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', pp. 116-17. Before World War I, the idea that a labour aristocracy bribed by imperialism was a social root of opportunism had circulated quite widely within the Second International: Lars T Lih, 'Lenin's Aggressive Unoriginality, 1914-1916', *Socialist Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, Fall 2009, p. 104n. However, the conclusion that an opportunist party was what was typical in the advanced capitalist countries was new. In contrast, in 1913 Lenin claimed that:

Naturally, when Australia is finally developed and consolidated as an independent capitalist state, the condition of the workers will change, as also will the *liberal* Labour Party, which will make way for a *socialist* workers' party ... The rule is: a socialist workers' party in a capitalist country. (V.I. Lenin, 'In Australia', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 19, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1980, p. 217.)

⁷ Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, pp. 33-34. Kelly and Paul Le Blanc both refer to the same example in Lenin: Russia's pre-war metalworkers, who embraced a revolutionary perspective on the basis of effective socialist activism: Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, pp. 292, 332n. But this example indicates the condition determining the role of labour aristocrats is class struggle and class political consciousness: more importantly, the rest of the working class, if active, is expected to be a revolutionary subject.

⁸ Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', pp. 110, 116 – 118. See also: Robert Clough, 'Watchdogs of Capitalism: The Reality of the Labour Aristocracy', *Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism*, no. 116, December 1993/January 1994.

⁹ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', pp. 80-81. Marc Linder argued that 'no sociologically relevant sections of the organised French or German working classes' collaborated with the bourgeoisie before World War I: Marc Linder, *European Labor Aristocracies: Trade Unionism, the Hierarchy of Skill and the Stratification of the Manual Working Class before the First World War*, Frankfurt, Campus Verlag, 1985, p. 225. Yet this refers to circumstances that are exceptional from a contemporary viewpoint. In these cases, in Germany especially, revolutionary parties led the organised workers before the labour aristocracy based on concessions sustained from monopoly superprofits emerged at the end of the 19th century. So the effects of relative privilege had to overwhelm that legacy. Linder also claimed that 'collaboration during that war encompassed the entire national working class' and that any accuracy on the part of the theory of the labour aristocracy 'has not been with regard to a privileged minority of the working class but rather to the organised working classes as a whole in their manifest political behaviour': Linder, *European Labor Aristocracies*, pp. 225-26. However, whether or not the whole working class in Germany, for example, was collaborative during World War I is unclear, partly because only a minority of workers were organised. Also, although the postwar period is outside the scope of Linder's work, the organised working class in France, in Germany and so on was then divided between opportunist and revolutionary wings, although monopoly capitalism continued in each country.

¹⁰ See Clough, 'Watchdogs of Capitalism'.

capitalism is prosperous and can allow reforms, many workers come to believe major social improvements are possible without political upheavals. Then, when that prosperity ends, this belief lingers unless overcome by a revolutionary uniting and generalising of the lessons of the day-to-day struggle.¹¹ The theory of the labour aristocracy observes, however, that opportunism is relatively resistant to capitalist crises, even when, as before World War I, the working-class movements had anticipated the war and promised to rouse opposition to it. Unlike the higher profits of capitalist long booms, which might temporarily offer the means to promote reformism broadly among workers, monopoly superprofits exist as long as capitalist monopoly does. This is true even during capitalist structural crises, when the mass of the class is likely to face increasing oppression. The material basis for opportunism among at least some workers is persistent.¹²

The labour aristocracy's features are thus broadly defined from the basis of its existence in receiving concessions sustained by monopolising capitals' superprofits: the labour aristocracy is a stratum of relatively privileged workers that is connected by its conditions for class struggle to the fortunes of 'its' monopolising capitals; that connection produces within it an opportunist political trend. Those features frame the historically specific development of each labour aristocracy.¹³ That development, however, poses certain issues which in the literature about the labour aristocracy are controversial. These issues are: the capacity for capital to concede relative privileges; the character and the mechanism of this 'bribe'; the restriction of privileges to some workers; the composition of the stratum; the labour bureaucracy as an alternative basis of opportunism; and the continuation of revolutionary politics among relatively privileged workers and the support for opportunism among other workers. These issues need to be examined with regard to the theory's concerns that workers' relative privileges will constitute a relationship between those who benefit and monopolising capitals and that opportunism expresses the interests of that relationship.¹⁴

Sources of Monopoly Superprofits

In the criticism of the theory of the labour aristocracy, the monopoly superprofits available to sustain concessions to a stratum of workers are limited in two ways. One of these ways is to not discuss monopolies of capital leading to higher labour productivity,

¹¹ Cliff, 'Economic Roots of Reformism'.

¹² Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', pp. 63, 69-70.

¹³ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', p. 70.

¹⁴ J.M. Barbalet, 'The "Labor Aristocracy" in Context', *Science & Society*, vol. 51, no. 2, Summer 1987, pp. 135-36; Max Elbaum and Robert Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy: The Material Basis for Opportunism in the Labor Movement - Part II: The US Labor Movement since World War II', *Line of March*, September-October 1982, p. 97.

but an alternative source of surplus profit, market monopolies. The instability of this source of surplus profit and the price increases that result from it, against which workers must then fight to maintain their living standards, are then presented as arguments against the theory, even though this form of surplus profit is irrelevant to the theory.¹⁵

The other way the quantity of monopoly superprofits is limited is that these are understood to come solely from colonial and neo-colonial exploitation.¹⁶ However, monopoly superprofits result from the lasting higher labour productivity of some capitals. Ernest Mandel identified three main sites of uneven development giving rise to such differences in labour productivity: among nations, among regions within a country and among (and also within) branches of industry. These sites vary in their significance in different periods of capitalism (industry differences were most important in the latter half of the 20th century, for example), but also co-exist in each period.¹⁷

All sources of monopoly superprofits must be accounted for in assessing the capacity of capital to concede the labour aristocracy's relative privileges. The analysis by Engels of politics among the better-off workers in England in the latter half of the 19th century linked these workers' opportunism to England's vast colonial possessions and the superior, but eventually declining, position of English industry.¹⁸ Lenin contrasted monopolies based on modern, up-to-date finance capital with those based on military power, vast territories, and special trade regimes.¹⁹ After World War II, US monopolising capitals possessed the most far-reaching economic, military and diplomatic advantages, while other monopolising capitals relied more, for example, on

¹⁵ See: Humphrey McQueen, *Tariffs, Arbitration and Price-fixing - Class Struggle or Intra-capitalist Settlement?*, manuscript provided to author, November 2007; Charlie Post, 'The Labor Aristocracy Myth', *International Viewpoint*, no. 381, September 2006, <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article1110>, accessed on 5 January 2010. Charlie Post argued 'against' the theory of the labour aristocracy this way:

[There is not] a strong correlation between industrial concentration and higher than average profits and wages. Instead, profit and wage differentials were rooted in differences in labor-productivity and capital-intensity of production ... The higher wages that workers in unionized capital-intensive industries enjoy are not gained at the expense of lower paid workers, either at home or abroad. Instead, the lower unit costs [that is, the lower prices of production and consequent monopoly superprofits] of these industries make it possible for these capitals to pay higher than average wages. As we have seen over the last thirty years, however, only effective worker organization can secure and defend these higher than average wages.

¹⁶ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', p. 73; A.J. Polan, *Lenin and the End of Politics*, London, Methuen, 1984, p. 165. But see: Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', pp. 105, 115; V.I. Lenin, 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 22, Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1985, pp. 266, 268, 301.

¹⁷ Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, London, Verso, 1987, ch. 3.

¹⁸ Frederick Engels, 'England in 1845 and 1885', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 26, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1990, pp. 295-301.

¹⁹ Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', pp. 115-16.

their history of capital exports, or on spheres of influence in various regions of the world.²⁰

The 'Bribe'

If a labour aristocracy is to be shown to exist, its 'bribe' must also be demonstrated. A claim against Lenin's presentation of the theory of the labour aristocracy is that it did not attempt to describe the means by which the labour aristocracy received its 'sop' from monopoly superprofits. According to some, what is therefore an assertion of bribery is an implausible suggestion that the capitalist class and some workers conspire to trade-off the capitalists' granting of benefits to those workers for their collaboration with capital.²¹

Such a trade-off has sometimes been consciously and even explicitly sought by politically dominant sections in the bourgeoisie and in the opportunist trend itself.²² Yet the theory of the labour aristocracy is not especially concerned with such conscious action.

The bribe is not a conspiracy. The relationship between monopolising capitals and the labour aristocracy that the theory exposes is 'the *substance* of the policy pursued by the *entire* world bourgeoisie'.²³ That policy substance was considered to be well-known by the time Lenin elaborated the theory of the labour aristocracy: the limitation of workers' struggle to unionist and other spontaneous forms results in unions engaging in sectional struggles and potential alliances with employers and greater bourgeois ideological influence among workers. In this regard, opportunism in the labour aristocracy is only a special case that emerges under conditions where substantial concessions are possible and their distribution can be restricted to a certain stratum of workers.²⁴

Thus, the labour aristocracy coheres from spontaneous tendencies in the class struggle. In the first instance, workers' striving to improve their conditions does not aim

²⁰ Robert Clough, *Labour: A Party Fit for Imperialism*, London, Larrikin Publications, 1992; Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy: Part II', p. 89.

²¹ Barbalet, 'The "Labor Aristocracy" in Context', p. 135; Linder, *European Labor Aristocracies*, p. 107; Tom O'Lincoln, 'Trade Unions and Revolutionary Oppositions: a Survey of Classic Marxist Writings', n.d., <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/intros/ol-tu.htm>, accessed on 13 May 2003. Cf.: Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', p. 115.

²² See, for example: John A. Davis, 'Socialism and the Working Classes in Italy before 1914', in Dick Geary (ed.), *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe before 1914*, Oxford, Berg, 1992, p. 191; Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, London, Verso, 1988, p. 102; Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', p. 117; Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism*, New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1972, pp. 154-55.

²³ V.I. Lenin, 'Opportunism, and the Collapse of the Second International', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 21, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1980, p. 444.

²⁴ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', p. 88; Hobsbawm, 'Lenin', pp. 49-50.

to end the subjection of labour to capital, but it might generate 'sparks of political consciousness'.²⁵ Capital sometimes makes concessions to try to bring workers' fights to an end before those sparks set the working class aflame. In this sense, the working class' successes become 'instrument[s] of deception and corruption' of the workers,²⁶ but competition among capitals generally prevents the concessions being sustained. With monopoly superprofits, however, some concessions for some workers from monopolising capitals can be sustained, with the burden of such concessions falling upon the non-monopolising capitals from which the superprofits are drawn.²⁷ The experience of workers who benefit from those sustained concessions is that under capitalist rule they can win and keep concessions above the general conditions of the class. The 'conservative motto ... a fair day's pay for a fair day's work', under which workers fight the immediate effects of capitalism but not for capitalism's abolition,²⁸ can be more readily promoted. Among such workers, a tendency towards conscious class collaboration can emerge alongside their experience of collective action. The potential of workers' struggle thus turns towards its opposite.²⁹

The theory of the labour aristocracy distinguishes the bribe as support from the bourgeoisie *beneficial* to a section of workers (and not just payoffs to and betrayals by labour movement leaders) from other phenomena that divide workers. To examine the social relationship between monopolising capitals and the labour aristocracy in its historically specific circumstances, however, a number of other phenomena must be accounted for. For example, the higher living standard of some workers is not a proxy

²⁵ Lenin, 'What Is to Be Done?', pp. 382-86, 415-416n. Lenin's propositions in this work about a subservience of workers to the spontaneous element in their class struggle leading to increased bourgeois ideological influence among workers and 'selfish' union struggle were derived 'mainly' from the experience of the 19th century British labour aristocracy: Hobsbawm, 'Lenin', p. 49.

²⁶ V.I. Lenin, 'The Platform of Revolutionary Social Democracy', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 12, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 217.

²⁷ Hobsbawm argued instead that 'the relatively favourable terms' of English artisans were 'to a large extent, actually achieved at the expense of their less favoured colleagues; not merely at the expense of the rest of the world', because craft restriction on entry to trades lead to a relative glut in the rest of the labour market: Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men*, pp. 322-23. How workers achieved relatively favourable conditions in companies, industries or regions in England that would have been less profitable than average because of a higher value of labour-power due to a long-term relative shortage of labour-power is unclear. What is suggested here is that companies, industries or regions in England that were *more* profitable through monopoly superprofits gained from other capitalists found it judicious to make concessions of part of those superprofits to certain sections of workers (not limited to, nor including all, artisans).

²⁸ Karl Marx, 'Value, Price and Profit', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 20, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1984, pp. 148-49. Cf.: Andy Corr and Kevin Brown, 'The Labour Aristocracy and the Roots of Reformism', *International Socialism*, no. 59, Summer 1993, p. 58.

²⁹ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', p. 100; Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy: Part II', p. 93. Cf.: Barbalet, 'The "Labor Aristocracy" in Context', pp. 140-46. Barbalet argued that only subcontracting could structurally explain the class collaboration of the labour aristocracy, separating it from the working class as a whole and linking it to manufacturing capitalists in interests and orientation. This might be true for capitalism in general. Monopolising capitals have other opportunities for workers' privileges and other interests that can be held in common between those capitals and the privileged workers.

for the bribe. Some part of the difference between that living standard and the living standard of other workers could be related to the different physiological and intellectual requirements for the reproduction of their labour-powers, rather than socio-historical differences in the values of labour-powers that result from the class struggle. Therefore, the existence, relative size and tendency to growth or decline of wage differences do not necessarily tell us anything about the bribe.³⁰ Groups of workers also have differences in their conditions of class struggle for reasons other than labour aristocratic stratification. Neo-colonialism, women's oppression, and racism reduce the value of the labour-power of the oppressed workers, as well as tending to reduce the value of labour-power generally by dividing workers in the class struggle. The bribe also divides the working class, but for the privileged workers it increases the value of their labour-power, so its sources are another interest they have other than their fundamental interest as workers.³¹

The fundamentally spontaneous nature of the bribe means no definitive statement of the method of its distribution is possible.³² Numerous systems of economic, political and cultural concessions have existed: for example, the status of 'respectable' worker, corporate 'welfare capitalism', and the various forms of 'state organised corporate capitalism' (the Northern European; the British/Belgian; the North American; the Japanese; and the Australasian, the 'wage-earners' welfare state').³³ These assume the character overall of an improvement in the conditions of struggle, including political rights, for the relatively privileged workers. The stability of these workers' employment has been particularly significant, securing their livelihood and promoting workers' organisation through protections from harassment or dismissal of activists, job competition from the unemployed, newly trained workers and immigrants, and/or job loss through the introduction of labour-replacing machinery.³⁴

³⁰ Cf.: O'Lincoln, 'Trade Unions and Revolutionary Oppositions'.

³¹ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', p. 77; V.I. Lenin, 'Speech Delivered at the Third All-Russia Trade Union Congress', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 30, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 512.

³² V.I. Lenin, 'The Second Congress of the Communist International', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 31, Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1982, p. 230. Cf.: Polan, *Lenin*, p. 167.

³³ See: Francis G. Castles, *The Working Class and Welfare: Reflections on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand, 1890-1980*, Wellington, Allen & Unwin, 1985, p. 103; Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, pp. 114-15. Barbalet argued working-class opportunism was peculiarly produced by the 'welfare state' in a period when its benefits were gained by only a small minority of workers. According to him, widening social citizenship had made the theory irrelevant for analysis of periods from the mid-1930s: Barbalet, 'The "Labor Aristocracy" in Context', pp. 136-37.

³⁴ Workers can identify labour aristocrats by the stability of their employment. See, for example, the 1992 comments by coalminers organiser Bob Graham who believed 'working people will be divided into three broad groups: At the top, those permanently in employment, comprising an "aristocracy of labour" ...': Peter Anderson, 'Unions Will Face Tough Times Under Contract Labour Laws', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 81, 25 November 1992, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1992/81/2004>, accessed on 19 February 2008.

Other stratifications among workers, such as unionisation (splitting the class into the organised and unorganised), 'core' and 'peripheral' strategic industrial positions, or primary and secondary labour market position also benefit each particular better-off part of the working class with more secure employment. Nonetheless, the relationships of the labour aristocratic workers to the bourgeoisie and the rest of the proletariat are not the same as those of the otherwise privileged workers to the bourgeoisie and the unorganised, peripheral or secondary labour market workers respectively.³⁵

The bribe resists and corrals the spontaneous tendency of the working class towards collective action and organisation by integration, through a class culture of internal stratification, privatised consumption and disorganization. The bribe can also incorporate workers in a qualified and contingent way through 'mediation and regulation ... by *collective, self-formed institutions*'.³⁶ Even when workers are organised, however, the exclusivity of the bribe is also integrative. That exclusivity accentuates the stratifications of the class, works against more general and socialised provision of the class' needs, and gainsays working class solidarity. This happened, for example, within the German working class between 1900 and 1914. The skilled, stably employed and respectable part of the working class was 'negatively' integrated through the industrial, political and cultural activities of the Social Democratic movement, which increasingly included the *mass* of that section of the working class. This labour aristocracy acquired 'a sense of belonging' to the social order in which its movement was allowed under sufferance to exist.³⁷

Nevertheless, incorporation is the more politically significant response to workers' organising. For example, efforts to achieve class unity and independent politics in the US from the 1880s onwards encountered developments in incorporative bribery. These included support for craft unionism and municipal progressivism, representation in the patronage machinery of the Democrats and the electorally successful reformist wing of the Socialist Party of America, seniority provisions in union-negotiated agreements as a

³⁵ Cf.: Sherry Linkon and John Russo, 'Can Class Still Unite: Lessons from the American Experience', in Guy van Gyes, et al. (eds), *Can Class Still Unite? The Differentiated Workforce, Class Solidarity and Trade Unions*, Sydney, Ashgate, 2001, p. 317; Andrew J. Richards, 'The Crisis of Union Representation', in Guy van Gyes, et al. (eds), *Can Class Still Unite? The Differentiated Workforce, Class Solidarity and Trade Unions*, Sydney, Ashgate, 2001, pp. 24-25.

³⁶ Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, pp. 7-8..

³⁷ Dick Geary, 'Socialism and the German Labour Movement before 1914', in Dick Geary (ed.), *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe before 1914*, Oxford, Berg, 1992, pp. 110-34; Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, pp. 288-292; Gary P. Steenson, "*Not One Man, Not One Penny!*": *German Social Democracy, 1863-1914*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981, p. 153.

protection against layoffs, union health and pension plans, and a state university system accessible to the families of workers on unionised wage rates.³⁸

Incorporation and integration influence the significance of labour aristocrats' class identification through altering these workers' perception of their place in society. Workers' beliefs that they and employers have interdependent functions, or that they are in conflict with employers about industrial interests but share broader social interests, can combine with not only more sectional, or even individualistic, identifications of interests and corporate identifications with the interests of workers as a whole, but even a hegemonic identification that workers are or should be the leading class in society. Alongside hegemonic identification with the class, recognition of the salience of antagonistic conflict of the working class with the social order is needed to constitute a revolutionary workers' class political consciousness.³⁹

The Composition of the Labour Aristocracy

The conditions of monopoly capitalism affect each nation's working class. In the nations where domestic monopolising capitals dominate, competitive pressures on wages and jobs tend to be dulled. Also, democratic and social reforms often benefit broader sections of the working class than the labour aristocracy. Thus, the international differentiation of workers is accentuated, while the division within national working classes with labour aristocracies between the stratum and the rest of the working class is moderated, with the stratum's numbers reinforced as well.⁴⁰

The labour aristocracy still, however, receives a greater share of the concessions. Max Elbaum and Robert Seltzer wrote that there is a gradation of benefits that starts with the limited gains of broader sections of workers and ends with those of the stratum of relatively privileged workers. They then argued that the theory of the labour aristocracy cannot 'locate ... that point when quantity (of privilege) turns into quality' but predicts a 'pronounced correlation between the extent of privilege and opportunist politics'.⁴¹ The labour aristocrats are the most susceptible to opportunism. There is no need for a strict monopoly of skills or some other stratification among workers to create a 'labour aristocracy' based on partial unionisation rights and enfranchisement. The labour aristocratic stratification has its particular link to monopoly superprofits and then

³⁸ Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, pp. 30-50; Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy: Part II', pp. 93-102.

³⁹ Cf.: Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, pp. 86-88.

⁴⁰ Hobsbawm used such developments to suggest the labour aristocracy disappeared as a stratum of the class in Britain in the early 20th century: Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men*, pp. 300-02, 323-31; E. J. Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour*, London, Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1984, pp.266-71.

⁴¹ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy: Part II', p. 91.

interacts with other stratifications of workers, such as those around skill, employment, organisation, regional differences and national, women's, racial, and religious oppression. The bribe is drawn towards those parts of the class which are positioned strategically in the class struggle.⁴² It develops as they change. The bribe, however, also qualitatively transforms the other stratifications in its creation of a labour aristocracy. For example, when all newly employed workers lost job security in Spain in the 1980s, the significance of occupation in differentiating labour market conditions between those with and without employment tenure was reduced, while the reduced relative capacity of the unprotected workers to organise and act tended to create a new 'insider-outsider' division in the class.⁴³

Thus, the frequent equation of the labour aristocracy with skilled workers or craft unionists collapses together two categories which have different bases of determination and do not inevitably coincide. Yet, historically, skilled workers, especially unionised ones, are the archetype of the bribe's transformation of working-class stratification. These workers are better placed within the working class to engage in collective action. Their spontaneous exclusive organisation, which makes them a relatively experienced and organised section of the class, expresses the first principles of class organisation. However, under conditions of monopoly capitalism, these workers' experience in part consists of sustained concessions to them by monopolising capitals. Their entry into the labour aristocratic stratification is accompanied by the development among them of class collaboration in their politics.⁴⁴

⁴² Barbalet argued that the 'uneven structure of capital' is 'important in accounting for differences in earnings between, say, regions, industries, and firms', but does not '[sponsor] variation in labour's bargaining strength' (for example, any group of workers can organise), before concluding that 'unequal capacities within the working class to resist capitalist class power explain the structure of earnings and therefore inequalities of pay': J.M. Barbalet, 'Class Theory and Earnings Inequality', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, vol. 21, no. 3, November 1985, pp. 332, 336. However, differences in earnings (and the living standards generally) of workers are a result of class struggle in which the varying power of workers to resist the demands of capital interacts with the capacity and inclination of capitalists to accede to that resistance. The favourable situation of the labour aristocracy is not the result solely of the its superior organisation and/or of any other quality or 'right' that labour aristocrats might attribute to the stratum: Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', p. 82.

⁴³ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', pp. 79-83, 92, 94-96; Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy: Part II', pp. 97-102. Elbaum and Seltzer do attempt to characterise the social composition of the strata, but apparently contradicted such attempts by stating that they were concerned about politics and that they identified the influence of the labour aristocracy in the class' political practice: Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy: Part II', p. 91. On Spain, see: Javier G. Polavieja, 'Labour Market Dualisation and Trade Union Involvement in Spain', in Guy van Gyes, et al. (eds), *Can Class Still Unite? The Differentiated Workforce, Class Solidarity and Trade Unions*, Sydney, Ashgate, 2001. Cf.: Cliff, 'Economic Roots of Reformism'; M..E Howard and J.E King, *A History of Marxian Economics*, vol. I, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 260; Linder, *European Labor Aristocracies*, pp. 229-39; O'Lincoln, 'Trade Unions and Revolutionary Oppositions'.

⁴⁴ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', pp. 84-89n; Lenin, 'Left-wing Communism', pp. 50-52.

The Labour Bureaucracy

The theory of the labour aristocracy identifies in social formations dominated by domestic monopolising capitals a social basis for opportunism *within* the working class. The theory, however, also acknowledges social bases for opportunism other than among workers. One of these other social bases for opportunism is the labour bureaucracy. The conditions of workers' lives make it difficult for them to hold the labour movement's leadership to account. Meanwhile capital seeks collaboration with the movement's leading personnel (union and party officials, parliamentarians, labour lawyers, associated intellectuals, and so on). The result is the creation of a caste, the labour bureaucracy, whose particular interests are bound up with their employment in the apparatus of the movement. Those interests are contrary to those of workers, including the labour aristocracy, who are employed by capitalists and the state.⁴⁵

If, however, monopoly superprofits sustain benefits for both the labour aristocracy and the labour bureaucracy, the interests of the stratum and the caste coincide. The caste can consciously represent the sectoral interests of the labour aristocracy. At the same time, it will work to prevent the stratum joining with other sections of workers in common, class-struggle, movements. The obverse of the political influence of the labour bureaucracy is its dependence on some part of the labour aristocracy for a broader base of support in society.⁴⁶

From sources within the Marxist tradition, Tom O'Lincoln, Tom Bramble and others argued that the labour bureaucracy is the only *social* basis of opportunism. Bramble applied this to Australia. This argument contrasts the labour bureaucracy's traits—a willingness to compromise, and a commitment to industrial legality and organisational preservation—to those supposed to belong to workers - an interest in opposing compromises and power through industrial action. It offers further arguments for the bureaucratisation of the movement apparatus in addition to that found in the theory of the labour aristocracy. One of these arguments claims that the apparatus personnel's mediation between labour and capital creates an interest for them in continual negotiation about the terms of workers' exploitation. Another argument claims that unions, and parties which express their politics, are located within capitalism: through

⁴⁵ For example, many of the arguments made by Tom Bramble about an increasing distance between the officials and membership in the long Labor decade might be refuted, but not his observation that the numbers of union officials increased while the number of union members decreased: Bramble, 'Deterring Democracy?'; Richard Hall et al., 'The Bureaucratisation of Australian Unions? Evidence from a National Survey', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 36, no. 3, November 2000.

⁴⁶ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', pp. 89-92; Grigory Zinoviev, 'The Social Roots of Opportunism', in John Riddell (ed.), *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International*, New York, Monad Press, 1984, p. 482.

their negotiation with capital they promote compromise and reproduce labour's subjection to capital rather than strive to transform capitalism. Moreover, the officials are considered to constitute a vacillating 'conservatising layer', whose militancy is directed not only against anti-unionism, but also against rank and file opposition to them and the development of struggles challenging the social order.⁴⁷

The argument that the labour bureaucracy is the social basis of opportunism asserts that those who are in the apparatus of the workers movement are invariably bureaucratic. For example, O'Lincoln wrote that a 'tendency ... clear in Marx and Engels' day' resulted in the political parties produced by the working class movements in Europe '[taking] on finished form as *reformist parties*'.⁴⁸ This masks the issue of what these parties were in the meantime. For example, the highly influential German social democrats had radicalised in the 1880s. If their 1891 party program accommodated revolutionary and reformist elements in the one organisation,⁴⁹ the revolutionary element could predominate when there was no labour aristocracy as a root for opportunism within the working class. These parties' political education and experience played a vital role in the formation of the Bolsheviks and the communist parties. When Lenin, in 1915, criticised the previous perspective of an inclusive party, he limited his argument historically—the perspective was an 'old theory that ... *has now turned* into ... a tremendous hindrance'⁵⁰—and accounted for these parties' development through the emergence of monopolising capitals.

In the claims made to support the argument that all union officials, for example, are fundamentally conservative about capitalism, 'differences in political socialisation' John Kelly noted, are 'disregarded or downgraded'. The argument, he points out, ignores the variety of union leadership policies and actions and of union member reactions to that leadership, and overestimates both workers' radicalisation through industrial action that is not politicised and the labour movement leadership's conservatism under the impact of struggle.⁵¹ Kelly suggested an account of the historical variation in the role of officials under changing conditions of stability and crisis can be based on the union officials' needs to threaten to use their organisation's industrial power to secure agreements and to prevent the exercise of this power once agreements have been reached.⁵²

⁴⁷ Bramble, 'Managers of Discontent'; Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, ch. 7; O'Lincoln, 'Trade Unions and Revolutionary Oppositions'.

⁴⁸ O'Lincoln, 'Trade Unions and Revolutionary Oppositions'.

⁴⁹ Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Lenin, 'The Collapse of the Second International', p. 257. Emphasis added.

⁵¹ Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, pp. 152-53. Cf.: Tom O'Lincoln, *Years of Rage: Social Conflicts in the Fraser Era*, Melbourne, Bookmarks Australia, 1993, p. 149.

⁵² Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, pp. 156-60, 166.

The broader politics of the labour bureaucracy, however, also exerts itself in times of crisis. A section of officials have carried over their opportunist politics from circumstances of stability into those of crisis.⁵³ Meanwhile, in times of both stability and crisis, Marxists such as Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci and Leon Trotsky have sought to secure anti-capitalist activity in the labour movement apparatus through political interventions by the revolutionary party.⁵⁴

O'Lincoln pointed out that why workers continue to follow opportunist leaders needs to be explained.⁵⁵ A bargain struck by workers' organisations is not necessarily an accommodation by labour of capital. The balance of forces in a struggle between labour and capital may have forced the workers to compromise. So long as the workers are then ready to renew their struggle when the conditions for them to do so improve, their temporary agreement with their employers is not an abandonment of the class struggle.⁵⁶ Thus, what needs to be explained with regard to opportunism is the retreat of masses of workers from the class struggle, not the officials' action through which this might occur.

Focusing the explanation for opportunism on the character and actions of the labour bureaucracy fails to address this problem. Such an explanation assumes that when workers are not militant they are politically absent. In this case, it puts the labour bureaucracy in command instead. This sort of explanation also glosses over the issue that the militancy of labour aristocrats might just be disenchantment with a particular leadership's pursuit of their privileges. Finally, in this explanation, radical working class leadership exists separately from workers' activity until the latter, without the former's influence, becomes radicalised through the 'logic of capitalism'. That contradictory and crisis-ridden logic is, however, the condition of all working class politics. The theory of

⁵³ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', p. 92.

⁵⁴ Antonio Gramsci, 'Our Trade Union Strategy', in Quintin Hoare (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings, (1921-1926)*, New York, International Publishers, 1978; Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, ch. 9; Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', part 8; Leon Trotsky, 'The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International', in George Breitman and Fred Stanton (eds), *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, New York, Pathfinder Press, 1977, p. 118. Gramsci had earlier advocated revolutionaries be active in factory committees, 'the negation of industrial legality', rather than unions: Quintin Hoare (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1988. Yet Gramsci also argued that trade union officials might regard industrial legality as not a permanently necessary compromise. Then they would carry out the preparatory work for a victorious political offensive by the working class against capital. The trade union would be a tool of revolution; and 'union discipline, even when used to make the workers respect industrial legality, would be revolutionary discipline.' Antonio Gramsci, 'Unions and Councils', in Quintin Hoare (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920)*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1988, pp. 265-266. Again, later, Gramsci would discuss how a union could be directed by the revolutionary party by freely choosing party members as leaders, with the desire that the party control these officials: Antonio Gramsci, 'The Fable of the Beaver', in Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, p. 226.

⁵⁵ O'Lincoln, 'Trade Unions and Revolutionary Oppositions'.

⁵⁶ Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, p. 181; Lenin, 'Left-wing Communism', pp. 68-69.

the labour aristocracy suggests that the revolutionary struggle against opportunism in the working class, including in the labour movement apparatus, must also take account of the conditions for opportunism that result from capitalism's development into societies dominated by monopolising capitals.⁵⁷

The Labour Aristocracy in the Working Class

The labour aristocracy as a stratum is antagonistic to the rest of the working class. Against the workers' spontaneous movement, the stratum will use its position in working class organisations and its access to resources such as funds, the media, and meeting halls to defend its privileges and alliances with capital.⁵⁸ The labour aristocracy might deny solidarity to working class resistance, subordinate that resistance to itself, or even subsume that resistance, as occurred in the organisation of mass production workers in the US from 1933 to 1950.⁵⁹

Nonetheless, the labour aristocracy very often leads the rest of the working class. The stratum tends to include the more stably organised workers, whereas large sections of the working class do not usually have their own means of collective expression. Therefore, the stratum emerges as the 'natural' voice of the working class. That development is supported by the partial extension to other workers of labour aristocratic concessions, and by the coincidences of interest between the labour aristocratic stratum and some other parts of the working class that arise from other stratifications of the class. This reinforcement of the social basis for opportunism within the working class is particularly important because it brings the bourgeoisie's influence to bear on the mass of the proletariat.⁶⁰

According to the theory of the labour aristocracy, then, workers are not strictly differentiated politically according to their position within the aristocratic stratification. Opportunist labour aristocrats politically hegemonise a broader part of the class, but also labour aristocrats, as workers, can have a revolutionary workers' class political consciousness. From this, however, arise two claims that the theory's attribution of the social base of opportunism to the stratum is not empirically verified.

One of these claims rests on the proportionally stronger attraction of skilled or better-paid workers than unskilled and poorly-paid workers to radical politics.⁶¹

⁵⁷ See: Lenin, 'Left-wing Communism', p. 52. Cf.: Bramble, 'Managers of Discontent', p. 53; Bramble, 'Social Democracy', p. 258; Fieldes, 'Still Here, Still Fighting', p. 36.

⁵⁸ Clough, 'Watchdogs of Capitalism'; Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', pp. 93-94.

⁵⁹ Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, ch. 2.

⁶⁰ Elbaum and Seltzer, 'The Labor Aristocracy', pp. 94-97; Lenin, 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', p. 118.

⁶¹ Polan, *Lenin*, p. 169; Post, 'The Labor Aristocracy Myth'.

However, more favourable conditions for workers' struggle against capital determine the composition of the labour aristocracy. They can pursue either their sectoral interests or the working class' historical interests more readily than can other parts of the class: what they do is the outcome of their political outlook.⁶² Therefore, the stratum's members tend to be disproportionately represented in *all* the political activity of workers, although the orientation of the revolutionary political trend to the concerns of the lower strata of the working class can significantly increase the involvement of those workers in that trend.⁶³

The other claim considers the support of the lower strata of workers for opportunism. The theory of the labour aristocracy, however, does not explain the articulation of the opportunist trend, which instead depends on phenomena such as political leadership and the actions of parties.⁶⁴ The theory is concerned with how working class support comes to and is sustained for this trend. It argues that the support the lower strata offers opportunism depends on that offered by the labour aristocracy and that the form of this support is conditioned by the ways in which the labour aristocracy's interest in class collaboration is pursued. Individualism and failure to defend other workers on the part of the labour aristocracy has contributed to mass political abstention by the lower strata in countries such as the US and Britain.⁶⁵ this may be masked in other countries by partial prohibitions of political abstention such as compulsory voting laws. Opportunist political organising by, and a more collectivist policy from, the labour aristocracy might encourage more involvement by the lower strata, but the potential of such activity is constrained because its premise is a more effective pursuit of the labour aristocracy's interest in class collaboration.

Conclusion

According to the theory of the labour aristocracy, the conditions of existence for the two principal political trends in the working class movement are different. Opportunism arises as a spontaneous tendency from the domination of domestic monopolising capitals and their capacity to offer sustained concessions to workers who enter the class struggle. Under such conditions, the existence of a labour aristocracy, the political expression through national chauvinist 'bourgeois labour parties' of the interest

⁶² Lenin, 'Lecture on the 1905 Revolution', pp. 240-42.

⁶³ As is shown, for example, by the membership composition of the inter-war German Communist Party compared with that of the pre-war SPD. See: Polan, *Lenin*, p. 169n; Zinoviev, 'The Social Roots of Opportunism', p. 494.. See also: Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour*, p. 244.

⁶⁴ See the discussion between Lenin and William McLaine: John Riddell (ed.), *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920*, 2 vols., vol. 2, New York, Pathfinder Press, 1991, pp. 736, 739.

⁶⁵ Clough, *Labour*, part 6; Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, p. 3.

of the stratum's members in the source of its relative privileges, and the exertion of the influence of that working class politics among workers more broadly, are inevitable. Revolutionary working class politics, which is based on the historical antagonism of capital and labour, can begin to be created only through a part of the class committing itself to that task and finding the tactics needed to conduct the class struggle for that purpose. This is the general conclusion of the theory, the significance of which, within Marxism, lies in its explanation of the relative stable existence of labour and social democratic parties.

In addition, from the theory of the labour aristocracy a number of hypotheses can be proposed about what politics might emerge from the labour aristocracy in each conjuncture of the development of capitalism. This thesis is considering, in particular, a period of capitalist structural crisis in which capital was under particular pressure to raise its rate of profit:

- If workers do not react militantly against the attacks launched by capital, this does not necessarily mark workers' absence from political life. Instead, sections of workers might, in order to shore up the concessions to at least some workers and also, perhaps, the relative competitiveness of 'their' monopolising capitals, seek greater collaboration with capital at the cost of other workers, including other, erstwhile, groups of labour aristocrats. This would help to explain how a labour neo-liberalism is possible, in particular with regard to why, in the case of the Accord and the Hawke-Keating government, a pro-capitalist regime could retain substantial support from the labour movement.
- The policy measures of a labour neo-liberalism would change which workers attracted the bribe. The strength of various groups of workers in the class struggle would be affected differently. In particular, workers' greater class collaboration would tend to mean a relative decline in their collective, self-formed, institutions. Within opportunism, workers' incorporation into bourgeois civil society would give way to their social integration with the capitalist social order, based on individualised workers' benefits. Thus the forms and scope of the bribe would change. The theory of the labour aristocracy therefore indicates the conditions relevant to the 'disappearing middle'. However, these workers' losses in job security, working conditions and organising effectiveness, and the failures of their insurgent social movements to win responses to their demands might also serve as a root of an explanation of the opportunist trend losing the support of an increasing number of workers.

In the next chapter the validity of the general conclusion of the theory of the labour aristocracy will be tested against the history of the Australian working class from the 1860s to the 1970s. In the remainder of the thesis, as it discusses the development of workers' class political consciousness and the processes of working class formation in the long Labor decade, whether or not the hypotheses put above are demonstrated will be considered.

4

The Labour Aristocracy in Australian History

The theory of the labour aristocracy suggests that the long Labor decade was not a peculiar period in the history of Australian workers' politics in which a bourgeois labour party was present. Indeed, the ALP already had substantial organisational continuity spanning a century.

This chapter systematically applies the theory of the labour aristocracy to reanalyse the history of politics among workers in Australia until the formulation and implementation of the Accord. This will provide background for the thesis' attempt to study the politics among workers under the Accord. At the same time, the value of applying the theory with regard to Australia will be subjected to a preliminary test.

The discussion here will first survey how the concept 'labour aristocracy' has been used in Australian labour historiography. Then the development of monopolising capitals in Australia will be outlined. After that, analysis will be offered of: the relationship between capital's concessions to the labour aristocracy sustained by monopoly superprofits and the emergence of opportunism among workers; the nature of the 'Australian Settlement'; and the further development of the labour aristocracy and of politics among workers, until the beginning of the 1980s.

The Labour Aristocracy in Australian Labour Historiography

The theory of the labour aristocracy has rarely been used in Australian labour historiography. It has never been thoroughly applied in a single analysis, employing all of its elements together.

When the existence of a labour aristocracy is discussed in that historiography, the stratum has usually been considered as groups of skilled manual or professional white-collar workers who are distinguished by and seek to maintain the distinctiveness of their level and, especially, regularity of earnings, job control and social status. The stratum is sometimes identified with a group that does not suffer social oppressions, such as Australian and British born men after the World War II, whose concerns predominated in the trade unions over those of migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds and of women. Also, the stratum has been referred to in order to explain Australian labour movement policies that upheld traditions of craft exclusiveness. However, according to the same historiography, such labour aristocratic stratification of

the working class has not precluded the formation of a coherent class interest and its independent political expression in reformist electoral and parliamentary action.¹

Some discussions of an Australian labour aristocracy are more elaborated. In two afterwords to *A New Britannia*, Humphrey McQueen introduced a discussion which related the emergence of the monopolising phase of capitalism and the rise of the ALP in the 1890s. However, he continued to relate the stratum to the exclusivist practices of skilled workers. In the later afterword, he concluded that he had inflated the 'possibility ... that monopoly profits had allowed for an aristocracy of labour among certain skilled workers ... into an explanation for Laborism'.²

Martin Thomas stated 'the position of the Australian working class as a labour aristocracy' has been central to the strength of the labourist tradition. He considered the whole class, compared with overseas working classes, generally 'better-organised, with a greater scope to win small improvements through small struggles and, therefore, less likely to leap suddenly to revolutionary conclusions', while, from its defeats in all the substantial class confrontations between 1890 and 1917, it '*emerged* ... lacking in revolutionary exuberance and ready to look for amelioration to nationalistic liberal-labour politics'.³ Yet, contrary to Thomas, some revolutionary enthusiasts were also to be found among workers. 'Better' working-class organisation could also have served the class in struggling for great improvement. What had happened depended on what various sections of the class intended by and learnt from their struggles.

Francis Castles discussed how a historic class compromise as a strategy of social protection might be arranged 'either as a consequence of the ruling class detaching a section of the labour interest (Lenin's historic compromise of monopoly capital and the 'aristocracy of labour'), or as a result of labour detaching a fraction of capital (essentially, the solution proffered by the social democratic hypothesis)'. Nonetheless, he wrote, the circumstances for the former arrangement were 'highly exceptional'.⁴

¹ Ken Buckley and Ted Wheelwright, *False Paradise: Australian Capitalism Revisited 1915-1955*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 14-15; Jock Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land: Australia's Post-War Immigration*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1988, pp. 141-42; R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*, 2nd ed., Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1992, p. 203; Greg Patmore, *Australian Labour History*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1991, p. 66; Andrew Wells, *Constructing Capitalism: An Economic History of Eastern Australia, 1788-1901*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 158. See also: Malcolm Waters and Richard Volpato, 'Political Preference in the New Middle Class: A "Correspondence Analysis" of the Orientations of Australian Professional Workers', *Politics*, vol. 24, no. 1, May 1989, p. 20.

² Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social Origins of Australian Radicalism and Nationalism*, rev. ed., Melbourne, Penguin, 1986, pp. 255-57, 262-67; Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia*, 4th ed., Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 2004, p. 264.

³ Martin Thomas, 'Australian Labour History and Marxism', in Carole Ferrier and Rebecca Pelan (eds), *The Point of Change: Marxism/Australia/History/Theory*, Brisbane, Australian Studies Centre, 1998, pp. 31-33.

⁴ Castles, *Australian Public Policy and Economic Vulnerability*, pp. 70, 76.

Finally, according to Jürgen Kuczynski, 'temporarily enormous superprofits' from cheap, high yield mining production as a result of the new exploitation of resources between 1850 and 1870 created the circumstances for great advances by skilled workers and an improvement in the overall conditions for workers. He considered that, in the 1870s and 1880s, unionists and skilled workers became a labour aristocracy which was militant but remained aloof from the unemployed and the mass of the working class. On the other hand, he argued that the great strikes of the 1890s infused the labour movement with new life through the formation of the ALP, a drive to organise unskilled workers and a weakened labour bureaucracy.⁵ Kuczynski's concern with the copper, gold, and silver rushes had drawn his attention away from the more sustained monopoly superprofits gained through higher labour productivity.

Existing research provides material to analyse the longer-term development of monopoly superprofits in Australian capitalism and the influence of this on the capitalist polity and politics among workers.⁶ Australian labour historiography has not yet provided that analysis. As a result, the historiography has concluded that when a relationship of the Australian Labor Party to the working class has existed, that relationship was not problematic: for example, 'most labour historians have assumed that the Labor Party was founded on the shared experience and common interests of working-class people'.⁷ Yet the relationship of workers' mobilisation in collective action to the development of the ALP has been limited:

- The ALP was founded in such a mobilisation, but it has continued to develop through the subsequent downturns and upturns of working-class activity.⁸
- Workers' mobilisations have also been related to the development of alternatives or partial breaks from the ALP, such as the Industrial Workers of the World and the Communist Party. Even after the radicalisation of the 1960s and 1970s, which saw no significant alternative to the ALP emerge, the ALP vote dropped to about 40% in the 1980s and 1990s as the issues raised by social movements which formed in that radicalisation played a key role in the creation of new electoral formations.

⁵ Jürgen Kuczynski, *A Short History of Labour Conditions under Industrial Capitalism*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, London, Frederick Muller, 1945, pp. 78-80, 91-95.

⁶ Cf.: Tom O'Lincoln, *United We Stand: Class Struggle in Colonial Australia*, Melbourne, Red Rag Publications, 2005, p. 9.

⁷ Frank Bongiorno, *The People's Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition, 1875-1914*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1996, pp. 7-8.

⁸ Cf.: Terry Irving, 'Labourism: A Political Genealogy', *Labour History*, no. 66, May 1994; Terry Irving, 'The Roots of Parliamentary Socialism in Australia, 1850-1920', *Labour History*, no. 67, November 1994.

- Workers' mobilisations are not necessarily related to the ALP as an organisation at all. For example, the ALP was divided and ambivalent towards the movement against the Vietnam War: the greater part of the party was never involved.⁹

The limited relationship between workers' mobilisations and the development of the ALP indicates that a contradiction has always existed between aspects of working class experience and interests and the party's outlook. Therefore, what kinds of mobilisations were going on, what interests they sought to serve and what solidarities they developed must be reconsidered. Our attention is directed beyond the framework of a working class comprised of organised and yet-to-be organised workers that has dominated past interpretations of Australian labour history.¹⁰ The key concern becomes political trends in the working class, which the theory of the labour aristocracy argues will be expressions of the distinct experiences and conflicting social interests that result from the different material circumstances of labour aristocrats and the workers in 'lower' stratum. A new interpretation of Australian labour history that is derived from a study of monopoly superprofits and their influence follows. It will show why the ALP, a liberal capitalist party, necessarily gained the support of part of the working class.

The Development of Monopolising Capitals

'By the late 1850s', Andrew Wells noted, 'the formation of a capitalist labour market and the capitalist alienation of landed property was achieved' in Australia.¹¹ The bulk of the economically active population became urban proletarians after the gold rushes.¹² These workers were the basis for the mass mobilisations that won responsible democratic government in the colonies and new land laws.¹³

The politics of land alienation in the colonies were, however, a class compromise expressed in the resultant pattern of land ownership. While the legislation on selection was presented as offering opportunities for all alike to acquire property, it nonetheless led rapidly to a predominance of large-scale private property. The squatters pre-emptively acquired the most valuable parts of their runs, but, unlike the 1840s, when the pastoralists seized land by squatting, the land laws forced the pastoralists to pay the government for freehold and leased land. This, along with rising costs and international competition, compelled significant capitalist investment to reduce costs

⁹ M.J. Saunders, 'The ALP's Response to the Anti-Vietnam War Movement, 1965-73', *Labour History*, no. 44, May 1983.

¹⁰ Marilyn Lake, 'The Independence of Women and the Brotherhood of Man: Debates in the Labour Movement over Equal Pay and Motherhood Endowment in the 1920s', *Labour History*, no. 63, November 1992, p. 1.

¹¹ Wells, *Constructing Capitalism*, p. 64.

¹² Wells, *Constructing Capitalism*, pp. 46-52.

¹³ See: Irving, 'The Roots of Parliamentary Socialism', pp. 99-100.

and maintain and improve profit rates. Fencing, water conservation and machinery were used, while the government's land revenue was spent on agricultural research and transport systems. From the 1860s, pastoralism, primarily wool growing, surpassed an also increasingly mechanised mining industry in terms of the total value of what they produced.¹⁴

At this time, most Australian-produced primary industry commodities were exported, but the Australian production of a commodity never dominated that commodity's world market. Thus, the values of each of the commodities were co-determined by their production prices in Australia and the production prices of the same commodity produced elsewhere. Yet, from the 1860s, labour productivity in Australian primary production was high when compared with other countries: around the turn of the century, the value of per capita primary production in Australia was at least 50 per cent higher than that of the US (despite a smaller proportion of the workforce being employed in primary production in Australia than in the US), Argentina and Canada, and higher again than that of Europe.¹⁵ Thus, the Australian commodities' 'prices of production compared favourably to those of other producers' and as a consequence, Australian prices of production for the commodities were less than the value realised for the commodities in the world market.¹⁶ The result was capitalist monopoly superprofits.¹⁷

Australian capitalism's polity ensured that domestic commodity production and circulation supported this capitalism's favourable unequal exchange of values in the world market. Manufacturing was protected using revenue accruing from primary production for export. Industry therefore grew, replacing the manufactured imports from which overseas monopolising capitals might in their turn have reaped monopoly

¹⁴ Donald Denoon, *Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983, pp. 82-83, 101-03; Charles Fahey, "'Abusing the Horses and Exploiting the Labourer": The Victorian Agricultural and Pastoral Labourer, 1871-1911', *Labour History*, no. 65, November 1993, pp. 100, 106-07; John Merritt, *The Making of the AWU*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 10-11; Wells, *Constructing Capitalism*, pp. 33-41, 61-62, 69-73, 75, 82-83, 101-103, 146.

¹⁵ Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Washington, US Department of Commerce, 1975; T.A. Coghlan, *Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia*, Sydney, Government Printer, 1890-1904; Denoon, *Settler Capitalism*, chs 4-5; Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900-1921*, Sydney, Hale & Ironmonger, 1979, p. 249. These conditions applied to wool production, in particular, in which the chief competitors to Australian pastoralists, in Germany, continued to shepherd flocks rather than employing fences and boundary riders: Merritt, *The Making of the AWU*, p. 9; J.A. Perkins, 'Rehearsal for protectionism: Australian wool exports and German agriculture, 1830-1880', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 25, no. 1, March 1985, pp. 25-28, 31, 35.

¹⁶ Wells, *Constructing Capitalism*, p. 146. Wells misstated this as 'the price paid for exported commodities exceeded their value'. That was true only from an Australian standpoint. As well, Wells' categorisation of the government revenue as 'state-appropriated ground rent' misidentifies the source of these funds. He showed the pattern of land ownership and usage that gives rise to capitalist ground rent did not exist in Australia: Wells, *Constructing Capitalism*, pp. 144-45.

¹⁷ Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, pp. 72, 77.

superprofits in Australia. Therefore, Wells' assessment that 'traditional branches of industrial production, especially large-scale urban manufacturing, were retarded'¹⁸ must be qualified. Protection meant Australian manufacturing was less retarded than it otherwise would have been. At least in the latter part of the colonial period, Australian manufacturing was not especially backward compared with other countries; rather, unlike primary production, it was not in advance of manufacturing overseas.¹⁹

Therefore, in the 19th century, Australian capitalism's agriculture and industry developed unevenly, but also in combination. Thus, this capitalism established a home market and became an independent capitalist social formation, and at the same time it also acquired capitalist monopoly superprofits.²⁰ This contradicts the various views that Australia was (and remains) a dependent country.²¹ Instead, the understanding of Australian capitalism presented here is that in the 19th century its productive capital resided in the colonies and garnered both profits and superprofits, while British capitalists invested their bank capital in Australia and received returns accordingly.²² Even with regard to Australian capitalism's receipt of monopoly superprofits, its position in the British Empire was beneficial not so much because Australia was a beneficiary of a doling out of the wealth seized from the empire's colonial possessions but because raw materials produced in Australia had ready access to English markets.²³

In the last century, the same combined development made Australia an advanced capitalism continuing to enjoy monopoly superprofits. These superprofits suffered from the large fluctuations and the long-term reductions in the price and volume of demand for the particular raw material exports they were based upon compared with manufactured goods. Offsetting the effects of those pressures on Australia's ongoing sources of monopoly superprofits were: the development of Australian colonialism and neo-colonialism in the South Pacific; a diversification away from a concentration on wool to a broader range of agricultural and mineral exports after World War II; growth of manufacturing exports from the 1950s to the 1970s; and increased capital exports in

¹⁸ Wells, *Constructing Capitalism*, p. 75.

¹⁹ Denoon, *Settler Capitalism*, pp. 152-54; R.V. Jackson, 'The Colonial Economies: An Introduction', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 38, no. 1, March 1998, p. 7.

²⁰ Wells, *Constructing Capitalism*, p. 80.

²¹ See, for example: Ken Buckley and Ted Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers: Capitalism and the Common People in Australia, 1788-1914*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 247, 249; Robert [Bob] Catley and Bruce McFarlane, *Australian Capitalism in Boom and Depression*, 2nd ed., Sydney, Alternative Publishing Cooperative, 1983, pp. 7, 9; Connell and Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*, pp. 13-14; Denoon, *Settler Capitalism*, pp. 192, 228; Brian Fitzpatrick, *The British Empire in Australia*, 2nd ed., Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1949, p. 348; McQueen, *A New Britannia*, chs 1, 4. See also: Dick Nichols, 'The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales', *Socialist Worker*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1989, pp. 38-39.

²² See: Wells, *Constructing Capitalism*, p. 141 (but cf. pp. 134, 152).

²³ Cf.: Jim McIlroy, *The Origins of the ALP: A Marxist Analysis*, Sydney, Resistance Books, 2004, p. 34.

the early to middle 1970s. Also, the general profitability of Australian capitalism was assisted by: the development of the home market through the federation of the colonies into the Australian state; the emergence of the system of 'protection all round', in the 1920s, which supported both industrial and agricultural production for the home market; and the development of domestic financial and commercial capital, such as the relocation of the international market for Australian wool from London to the Australian cities from which it was shipped.²⁴

Concessions from Monopoly Superprofits and the Development of Opportunism

From the middle to the late nineteenth century, some contemporary observers of Australia stated it was a workers' 'paradise' of high wages, the eight-hour day, unionisation and democratic rights.²⁵ After the economic depression and industrial strife of the 1890s, the restoration of these conditions during the first decades of the new century led to a view that the country was a 'social laboratory' of state economic interventions, welfare provision, industrial and labour market regulation, including immigration controls and union recognition, and government by an ostensibly working-class party, the ALP. Despite concerns about the restriction and unequal distribution of workers' better conditions and the limited effect of the state and the ALP's actions, labour historiography has generally understood the principal trend in the politics of workers across that whole period to be one towards a unity effective for the common interests of the working class.²⁶

Past assessments of the ALP that have questioned the existence of a relationship between the party and the working class have argued that the development of the party separated it from the trend of working class advance in the process of the party's formation in the 1890s, or in the 1950s or the 1960s. While the theories that the ALP changed after World War II, respectively a claim that the previous application of the 'labor theory of democracy' through the ALP was lost and the 'technocratic Labor

²⁴ Denoon, *Settler Capitalism*, p.191; R.A. Foster, *Australian Economic Statistics 1949-50 to 1994-95*, Sydney, Reserve Bank of Australia, 1996, pp. 7, 22, 39; Stuart Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, Melbourne, McPhee Gribble, 1989, pp. 38-40, 55-56; Simon Ville, 'The Relocation of the International Market for Australian Wool', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 45, no. 1, March 2005, pp. 73-93; Jon West, 'Is Australia a Neo-colony?', in Jon West, et al. (eds), *Socialism or Nationalism? Which Road for the Australian Labor Movement*, Sydney, Pathfinder Press (Australia), 1979, pp. 53-54, 58-60.

²⁵ For example, H.W. O'Sullivan, a president of the Sydney Trades and Labour Council, cited in Sean Scalmer, *The Little History of Australian Unionism*, Melbourne, Vulgar Press, 2006, p. 22.

²⁶ Buckley and Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers*, pp. 153, 162-63, 175-176; Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia, 1850-1910*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1970; Irving, "The Roots of Parliamentary Socialism", p. 101; Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 1988, p. 46, and chs 6, 8; McQueen, *A New Britannia*, pp. 264-66.

thesis', both argue that workers' political mobilisation then ceased,²⁷ the arguments about the earlier period do not:

- McQueen suggested the effort by wage-labourers and small proprietors to resist their proletarianisation created the party as a 'petit-bourgeois' chauvinist response to monopolisation within the labour movement. This response defined socialism as an expansion of state activities. Only the activity of militants in later years produced a contrasting proletarian consciousness.²⁸
- Bramble and Kuhn argued that workers had instead acquired a basic sense of class identification in the three decades before the ALP was founded. The unions grew rapidly and, according to Bramble and Kuhn, a layer of full time officials emerged. Then, with the defeats suffered in the strikes of the early 1890s by workers, they gained a sense that their direct action was powerless to bring about social change. This, Bramble and Kuhn stated, was the decisive impetus for the formation of the ALP. They noted that the labour movement had been discussing its need for parliamentary representation for some years (various labour councils had successfully supported individual candidates and eventually a ticket in Victoria in 1889), but now 'many unionists and especially union officials began to look to parliamentary action' and compulsory arbitration. Yet in future years, rank and file activity would revive to pose challenges for the party's influence among workers.²⁹
- Raymond Markey's more detailed account of the ALP's origins in NSW argues that a cycle of labour movement mobilisation developed from the late 1870s because workers expected continuing increases in their living standards but experienced a relative stagnation of these. In 1891, at the height of this working-class radicalisation, the urban unions in 1891 had sought to establish 'a class-

²⁷ Bob Catley, 'The Technocratic Labor Thesis Revisited', *Thesis Eleven*, no. 82, August 2005, pp. 98-99; Sean Scalmer, 'The Affluent Worker or the Divided Party? Explaining the Transformation of the ALP in the 1950s', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 32, no. 3, November 1997, pp. 410-15. The thesis Scalmer maintains that 'labour into politics' was replaced by 'politics into labour' by the 1950s was also presented, without explicitly drawing out the claim about the result in terms the relationship of the ALP and working class advance, by: Terry Irving and Allen Seager, 'Labour and Politics in Canada and Australia: Towards a Comparative Approach to Developments to 1960', *Labour History*, no. 71, November 1997, pp. 269-73.

²⁸ McQueen, *A New Britannia*, 4th ed, pp. 267-276.

²⁹ Bramble, 'Managers of Discontent'; Bramble, 'Labour Movement Leadership', pp. 80-81; Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, pp. 12-13, 25-28. The structure of the class consciousness, in the form of a class 'identity', that Bramble and Kuhn claimed that workers acquired at the time of the formation of the ALP and continues to be expressed by the party (see ch. 1) bears a remarkable similarity to the 'frozen' class identity of frustrated 'parliamentary socialism' and constrained industrial militancy that Terry Irving claimed the Australian working class arrived at in the 1920s: Irving, 'The Roots of Parliamentary Socialism', pp. 108-09. The difference between Bramble and Kuhn and Irving is that unlike Bramble and Kuhn, Irving considered that a socialist politics based on parliamentary action is viable, the demonstration of this being the attraction of 'practical trade-union based socialists' to the ALP: Irving and Seager, 'Labour and Politics', pp. 261-63.

based organisation, pursuing class political strategies in parliament ... [and a] social democratic policy' of political reform and industrial legislation. In the following years the labour council weakened. A new policy stance emerged. This exchanged workers' benefits for support for tariffs. The stance 'was the product of the ideology of labourism', petty-bourgeois racism and populist agrarianism, expressing the perspective of a new leadership of urban utopian socialist politicians and the Australian Workers' Union (AWU). That leadership then had to defeat a subsequent challenge from union militants and left socialists.³⁰

The suggestion made above, however, is that the ALP has never been based on the experience and interests shared by all workers, but instead on the experience and interests shared by a stratum of workers which has made that stratum part of the working class but susceptible to opportunism. The argument for this is based on a further examination of the character of the working-class mobilisation in Australia that peaked at the start of the 1890s.³¹ This was the context in which the politics of the Australian working class broke from its previous confine of direct support for liberalism and its 'friends of labour'.³²

The superprofits of Australian-based monopolising capital were able to sustain concessions to a stratum of workers from the 1860s onwards. The relatively better-off workers included: the more exclusive building, metals and printing trades; the 'relatively well-paid' Victorian gold miners; locomotive drivers; coastal seamen; stevedores skilled in stowage for long voyages; the more experienced pastoral workers, especially those who could do shearing work, which had pay rates far superior to other rural work; and even, until the 1880s, the face workers among the NSW coalminers, who led the

³⁰ Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 1988, pp. 1-7, 29-170, 198-199, 284-315. Earlier Robin Gollan argued that before federation the ALP's policy already 'owed more to liberal thought than to the socialist ideas and militant trade unionism that had been responsible for its formation', although he does not question that there was a relationship between the party and the working class.

³¹ The causes of the mobilisation were similar throughout Australia. See: Jenny Lee and Charles Fahey, 'A Boom for Whom? Some Developments in the Australian Labour Market, 1870-1891', *Labour History*, no. 50, May 1986.

³² Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia, 1850-1910*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1970, chs 4-5.

industry's unionisation drive in order to protect their higher earnings and work autonomy (craft unions emerged in the industry in the 1890s).³³

This labour aristocracy dominated the labour movement. The strata made up the main part of union membership, which was less than ten percent of workers until the middle of the 1880s and peaked in 1891 at little more than twenty percent of workers in both NSW and Victoria, and less in other colonies. Except for the Broken Hill miners, other workers, less well-paid and working longer hours, rarely organised themselves effectively, even if they were involved in strikes: the organisation of women tailors, other wharf labourers and shedhands, for example, depended not only on their own capacities but support from the labour councils or the shearers union.

The organisation of the labour movement expressed key concerns of the labour aristocrats. Its principal form was the eight-hour-day movement. This was not conducted as a sectional campaign, but even though 'the boon' was at least sometimes won quite easily, it was still gained by only a small proportion of workers.³⁴

The 'Chinese issue' was also very important organisationally for the labour movement. From 1878, sustained action by white workers in the developing mass unions of seamen, wharf labourers, shearers, and metal miners, and also through the trades and labour councils, led by furniture workers, won restrictions on Chinese labour

³³ Fahey, 'Abusing the Horses', pp. 101-04; Charles Fahey, 'The Aristocracy of Labour in Victoria, 1881-1911', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 26, no. 102, April 1994; Robin Gollan, *The Coalminers of New South Wales: A History of the Union, 1860-1960*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1963, chs 2-4; J. Hagan and C. Fisher, 'Piece-work and Some of its Consequences in the Printing and Coal-Mining Industries in Australia, 1850-1930', *Labour History*, no. 25, November 1973; G. R. Henning, 'Fourpenny Dark and Sixpenny Red', *Labour History*, no. 46, May 1984; Ben Maddison, 'Skill, Maurice Godelier and Labour History', in Terry Irving (ed.), *Challenges to Labour History*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 1994, p. 125; Andrew Metcalfe, 'Sex and Solidarity: Fraternity, Patriarchy and Labour History', in Terry Irving (ed.), *Challenges to Labour History*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 1994, pp. 100-01; Patmore, *Australian Labour History*, p. 66.

³⁴ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rise of Broken Hill*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1968, pp. 95-96; Bradley Bowden, 'The Limits to Consciousness: Urban Workers in the Maritime Strike of 1890', in Carole Ferrier and Rebecca Pelan (eds), *The Point of Change: Marxism/Australia/History/Theory*, Brisbane, Australian Studies Centre, 1998, p. 80; Bradley Bowden, '"Harmony ... between the Employer and the Employed": Employer Support for Union Formation in Brisbane, 1857-90', *Labour History*, no. 97, November 2009, pp. 108-19; Raymond Brooks, 'The Melbourne Tailoresses' Strike 1882-83: an Assessment', *Labour History*, no. 44, May 1983; Buckley and Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers*, p. 174; Allison R. Churchward, 'Attempts to Form a Union: The Employees of the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company', *Labour History*, no. 42, May 1982; Connell and Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*, p. 113; Alice Coolican, 'Solidarity and Sectionalism in the Sydney Building Trades: the Role of the Building Trades Council 1886-1895', *Labour History*, no. 54, May 1988, p. 113; Rod Felmingham, '"To Unite More Closely": the First Year of the South Australian United Trades and Labour Council', *Labour History*, no. 45, November 1983, p. 17; Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, pp. 72-75; Rupert Lockwood, *The Miraculous Union: A Hundred Years of Waterfront Unionism*, Melbourne, Waterside Workers' Federation, 1985; Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, p. 6; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, pp. 136-70, 318-19; John Niland, 'In Search of Shorter Hours: the 1861 and 1874 Iron Trades Disputes', *Labour History*, no. 12, May 1967; Dennis Rowe, 'The Robust Navy: the Railway Construction Worker in Northern New South Wales, 1854-1894', *Labour History*, no. 39, November 1980, pp. 30-42; Danielle Thornton, '"We Have No Redress unless we Strike": Class, Gender and Activism in the Melbourne Tailoresses' Strike, 1882-83', *Labour History*, no. 96, May 2009, pp. 23-34.

in the workforce that the white workers perceived as supporting their job security. The movement overall did not seek common life conditions for Asian and Melanesian workers, nor take pleasure in the solidarity the latter workers offered through their organisation and industrial action, nor ally itself to the cross-class opposition to such racist restrictions. Unfortunately, in labour historiography, the white Australian labour movement's choices have often been glossed over with arguments such as: events before 1878 do not show union or white worker anti-Chinese agitation, as opposed to sentiment; white workers were making assessments of what was 'unrealistic'; or white workers were expressing views that sprang from the capitalist class's ruling ideology of racism.³⁵ Indeed, the racist restriction of the work force was not a simple collaboration between white workers and their bosses. The workers who first benefited had acknowledged skills acquired through apprenticeship or experience or held strategic positions in the production of exports and in domestic transport. This benefit was only one of the privileged conditions of class struggle that constituted these workers as a labour aristocracy.

The course of the defeated 1890 maritime strike and its aftermath further demonstrated the significance of the labour aristocracy in the labour movement:

- The strike was not a mass strike. Support for the strike among manual workers came especially from the better-off. The industrial mobilisation of the previously unorganised was minimal and employers were reported to have found strikebreakers among the 'lowest strata'.
- Yet only the unskilled workers' organisations were defeated, as on Sydney's wharves. Overall union membership in NSW continued to grow for another year.

³⁵ Buckley and Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers*, pp. 150-52; Verity Burgmann, 'Capital and Labour', in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class*, Sydney, Hale & Ironmonger, 1978, pp. 23, 33; Ann Curthoys, 'Conflict and Consensus', in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class*, Sydney, Hale & Ironmonger, 1978; Phil Griffiths, 'Containing Discontent: Anti-Chinese Racism in the Reinvention of Angus Cameron', *Labour History*, no. 94, May 2008; Raymond Markey, 'Populist Politics', in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class*, Sydney, Hale & Ironmonger, 1978, pp. 68-69; Andrew Markus, 'Divided We Fall: the Chinese and the Melbourne Furniture Trades Union, 1870-1900', *Labour History*, no. 26, May 1974; Henry Reynolds, *North of Capricorn: The Untold Story of the People of Australia's North*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2005, chs 9-10.

- The strike's supporters in Sydney then began to form the ALP in NSW. Union sympathisers now mobilised, renewing the labour aristocracy's influence in the lower strata through inspired socialists and single taxers.³⁶

Thus, McQueen identified a resistance to proletarianisation in the 19th century workers' radicalisation, at a time when many labour aristocrats were also small landholders (in particular, the shearers) or aspired to become small employers. Yet the workers' chauvinist and state 'socialist' response was an opportunist demand for better conditions of struggle for some workers. This can be distinguished from a proletarian consciousness of militancy and a struggle for social emancipation. Nonetheless, that opportunism was also a form of workers' class political consciousness.

Bramble and Kuhn overemphasised the role in the unions and the formation of the ALP played by union officials as a social layer with its own conditions of life compared with that of workers who were union members. There were very few such officials to play the role claimed for them by Bramble and Kuhn. Until the 1890s, even the unions that survived typically did not have full-time officials: their executive members remained at their trade. Those unions rebuilt after the 1890s strikes often relied on ALP parliamentarians playing executive roles. The engineers union appointed its first full-time official in Australia in 1890, but only for a brief period, and then had no more until towards the end of the first decade of the new century. The AWU's body of organisers was exceptional. Moreover, the pay rates of many full-time union officials were similar to the better-paid of the workers they represented. If that pay was better than that for the average worker, this was perhaps because the officials had some greater security of employment, but certainly because the unionised workers were among the better-off workers.³⁷

Markey's analogy between the formative character of Labor in NSW and early social democracy for the European parties in the 19th century only partly holds. Social democracy in Germany, for example, was characterised by a spirit of opposition.³⁸ In NSW, the same spirit—found in support for the major strikes, the agitation of the predominantly poorly unionised, unskilled workers who were now unemployed, and

³⁶ K.D. Buckley, *The Amalgamated Engineers in Australia, 1852-1920*, Canberra, Australian National University, 1970, pp. 113-17; Buckley and Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers*, p. 184; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, pp. 158-62; John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth, 1890-1910*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1976, pp. 31-32; Bruce Scates, *A New Australia: Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 85-90; Stuart Svensen, *The Sinews of War: Hard Cash and the 1890 Maritime Strike*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 1995, p. 238.

³⁷ Bowden, 'Employer Support for Union Formation', p. 118; Buckley, *The Amalgamated Engineers*, pp. 87, 108-09, 171-72; Merritt, *The Making of the AWU*, pp. 55, 73-75, 103.

³⁸ Steenson, *Not One Man, Not One Penny!*, pp. 32-39, 54-68, 83-91.

reading, an integral part of the oppositional culture, for example—was rooted among the socialist left and other radicals who were only tenuously associated with Labor.³⁹ Indicative of this was the affiliation of the Australian Socialist League, not the ALP, to the Socialist International. However, the concept of an all-inclusive party was held in common internationally. The ASL, which was formed in 1887, quickly began to discuss forming ‘an Australian Labor Party’. After the ASL temporarily disintegrated in 1889, it reformed in time to support the maritime strike and then the founding of the ALP.⁴⁰ Then, from the ASL’s right wing, came the urban politicians who were the counterpoint to the AWU within the ALP.

Finally, Markey’s account understates the conditionality of the support for protection in the ALP’s strategy. That strategy was not stuck on an alliance with protectionist liberal manufacturers. It was to make alliances in the bourgeois polity to promote the elements of the party’s liberal labour movement program. In parliament, the strategy meant offering to support one or another bourgeois faction, free trader or protectionist, in exchange for concessions, until the party gained government itself and then carried on the strategy through its own policy tradeoffs. In general, that would mean an alliance with the liberals. In Victoria, the party was able to exist for more than a decade as a relatively loosely organised permanent ally of the colony’s protectionist liberals, who then went on to dominate liberal bourgeois politics in the new federal polity. The more advanced development of the party in NSW, which therefore predominated in the character of the federal ALP, as a party more independent of the bourgeois parties, followed from the conditions under which the strategy was conducted there. NSW’s colonial capitalist polity, for which its tariffs would be directed against Victorian and South Australian agricultural production, had involved liberal free traders and conservative protectionists. The approach of federation posed the prospect of free trade between the Australian colonies and protection against the rest of the world: this compelled a reshuffling of that polity. The party changed its alliance, from the liberals to the conservatives, as it sought support for the measures it wanted. To enforce each of its parliamentary alignments, it developed and combined candidates’ pledges and parliamentary caucusing.⁴¹

³⁹ Verity Burgmann, *In Our Time: Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905*, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1985, ch. 4-5; Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, pp. 139-40; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, ch. 8; Scates, *A New Australia*, ch.2.

⁴⁰ Burgmann, *In Our Time*, pp. 36-39, 49, 74-76.

⁴¹ Bongiorno, *The People’s Party*, pp. 84-93; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, p. 2; Bede Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism: The Labor Movement in New South Wales 1870-1900*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1973; Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp. 43-44.

The labour councils directed this strategy so long as they were able. The agitation among workers in support of the striking Broken Hill miners in 1892, in which the NSW labour council was involved, was substantial. This gainsays suggestions that working-class mobilisation was declining before the dominance of reformism in the ALP. Yet the labour council, even after the opposition liberal parliamentarians' censure motion against the government excluded condemnation of the suppression of the strike, urged the party to 'use every endeavour to oust the present government' and thereby promote the liberals to office.⁴²

The struggles in the ALP during its initial development expressed the context of its formation. The ebb in workers' radicalisation in the ALP's first years laid the basis for the ALP to be a new way for an opportunism supported by labour aristocrats to dominate the politics of workers.⁴³

The 'Australian Settlement'

In the first years of Australian federation, the existing elements of what had become the liberal labour program—White Australia, protection, arbitration, state economic interventions and welfare activity and regional colonialism—became part of the national polity. This was a class settlement in which the labour aristocracy's leadership of the working class was exerted.

Whether the settlement should be seen as definitive has been called into question. McQueen denied the existence of an 'Australian Settlement' because capital and labour continued to resist each other and, in particular, compulsory arbitration was opposed by 'most employers and many workers', the latter in part because of the living standards proposed in the arbitration courts' decisions. Markey believed a new workers' mobilisation ended the settlement after just a decade.⁴⁴

Nonetheless, the development, in response to the labour movement, of the system of concessions by capital to workers into relative wage justice had, by the 1920s, restored the moral economy of the 1880s. Excluded from this justice were indigenous Australians, who were subject to state 'protection' with its corrupt control of their work payments, and women, who were subject to gender inequalities in paid work and social

⁴² Bongiorno, *The People's Party*, pp. 38-50; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, chs 4-6, 9; Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism*, pp. 30, 84-87, 117-21, 142-44, 168-69.

⁴³ Bongiorno, *The People's Party*, chs 1-2; Buckley and Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers*, pp. 198-200; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, chs 7-8 and 10.

⁴⁴ Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, pp. 1-2, 316; McQueen, *A New Britannia*, 4th ed, p. 275; McQueen, *Tariffs, Arbitration and Price-fixing*.

reproduction.⁴⁵ Even among white male workers, a gradation of benefits continued, if in an altered form in which the arbitration system was central.

Arbitration progressively applied a 'living wage' determination of pay and conditions through an award structure of a basic wage with margins for skill and an eight-hour standard working day. Federal court judgments affirmed social necessity as the basis of determining wage rates and asserted the priority of that norm against company profitability. The 1907 Harvester judgement granted male labourers the basic wage of 7s per day (for a six-day working week), which was purported to be a 'fair and reasonable remuneration' that was sufficient for living in 'frugal comfort' with a dependent spouse and children. The significance of the basic wage was reduced by: the low level of this pay rate; under-award payments in times of high unemployment; the intermittent employment of many labourers (partly addressed by arbitration through the later awarding of loadings); the categorisation, until after World War I, of many jobs as 'sub-labouring'; the lower pay rates awarded by the market-oriented state arbitration courts and wages boards that, with the support of many employers, determined most workers' wages; and the irregularity of cost of living adjustments. Nonetheless, the reduced hours and increased wages eventually awarded to labourers brought them to the living standard which was usually understood to have applied before the 1890s depression and which unions had thereafter sought. While some have suggested the

⁴⁵ Donaldson, *Time of Our Lives*, pp. 31, 106; Raelene Frances, 'Marginal Matters: Gender, Skills, Unions and the Commonwealth Court - A Case Study of the Australian Printing Industry, 1925-1937', *Labour History*, no. 61, November 1991; Raelene Frances, 'Gender, Skill and the Regulation of Labour Markets: Victoria 1890-1930', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 40, no. 3, September 1998, pp. 405-08; Mark Hearn, 'Securing the Man: Narratives of Gender and Nation in the Verdicts of Henry Bourne Higgins', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 37, no. 127, April 2006, pp. 15-20; Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, pp. 30-31, 36-38; Tom Sheridan and Pat Stretton, 'Pragmatic Procrastination: Governments, Unions and Equal Pay, 1949-68', *Labour History*, no. 94, May 2008; John Wanna, *Defence not Defiance: The Development of Organised Labour in South Australia*, Adelaide, Adelaide College of the Arts and Education, 1981, pp. 14, 21; Andrew Wells, 'State Regulation for a Moral Economy: Peter Macarthy and the Meaning of the Harvester Judgment', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 40, no. 3, September 1998, pp. 379-380.

Melanie Nolan pointed out that sexist behaviour and ideology are not enough to explain female award pay rates and unions seeking equal pay rulings in order to exclude women from employment. Sometimes unions in pursuit of 'class interests' had genuinely campaigned for and won arbitration decisions: Melanie Nolan, 'Sex or Class? The Politics of the Earliest Equal Pay Campaign in Victoria', *Labour History*, no. 61, November 1991. However, if 'class interests' can explain both genuine and sham union equal pay claims, this is because the interests involved are those to do with preserving an occupation's labour aristocratic standing when it was experiencing an influx of women workers.

Stephen Garton suggested the privileges secured for unionised workers by, for example, arbitration came at the "cost of other more disadvantaged sections of the working classes": Stephen Garton, 'What Have We Done? Labour History, Social History, Cultural History', in Terry Irving (ed.), *Challenges to Labour History*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 1994, p. 58. However, as discussed in ch. 3, if concessions to workers are sustained from monopoly superprofits, then the value transfer to the monopolising capitals comes from other capitalists (or non-capitalist producers who trade commodities). What workers lost was, more exactly, some relatively privileged workers' solidarity for struggles of the more disadvantaged workers, and some relatively privileged workers' participation in struggles of the class as a whole.

living wage was a 'socially useful myth', the replacement of capital's 'capacity to pay' by it in the determination of workers' pay and conditions gave it some substance.

Awards also included a 'rate for the job' or margin, an amount payable for the supposed comparable worth of various types of work. Tradesmen were among those paid margins—the 3s in Harvester for a fitter and turner was typical—although these were discounted for more specialised work within a trade. Shearing work was awarded a considerable margin in 1911 because, arbitration court president Henry Bournes Higgins stated, 'it is not everyone who can become a shearer ... [the work] requires close attention, and involves considerable strain'.⁴⁶ The higher pay for salaried officers in the railways, granted by management partly in order to differentiate them from wage workers, was preserved in the officers' awards.

The real value of margins changed with movements in the cost of living. Deflation was advantageous for the employed. In inflationary periods, the labour market often allowed those getting margins to pursue over-award payments instead. Otherwise, over-award payments were rare at this time. Some casual labourers won compensation for their intermittent employment and experienced labourers who retained their strength might have been able to get a little extra.

The scale of difference among male workers' living standards suggests that margins were determined not only by the mores of gender and the different incomes needed to create the physiological and cultural conditions for the capacities of various workers. The margins also substituted for labour aristocrats' earlier claim to 'respectability'. A liberal satisfaction of the physiological needs of manual work, which were not less for labouring work than for trades work, needed only ten percent more than the basic wage, according to union submissions. Also, the basic wage calculation incorporated the purchase of at least some of the cultural items needed for the higher functional literacy, knowledge of current affairs or technological developments, or further professional or scientific studies perhaps required for a trade or clerical work. By this time, too, an apprentice's pay increasingly covered his day-to-day living expenses. This reduced what a tradesman as a family patriarch needed to provide for his teenage sons. The scanty evidence available about the wealth of workers, such as probate

⁴⁶ Fahey, 'Abusing the Horses', p. 101.

records and wage case submissions on housing, shows the better-off workers more readily bought houses and durable goods.⁴⁷

Arbitration also offered a foothold for unionisation. Compulsory—that is, state administered—arbitration gave unions a new form of union recognition. The unions could make claims against employers, investigate possible breaches of awards and, sometimes, be awarded some form of preference in employment for unionists, which could result in compulsory unionisation.

Some workers were better positioned than others to use their new union recognition, however. After the NSW shop assistants won an award in 1907, their union increasingly organised only males, even though the proportion of shop assistants who were women increased. The smaller unions which benefited from the system's institutional support were generally those oriented to a skilled exclusivity, or to organising salaried staff explicitly in opposition to all-grades unions. Meanwhile, many smaller primary industry unions amalgamated with the AWU because of difficulties in operating within the system.

Advantages that arbitration offered to weakly organised and smaller unions cannot, however, explain most of the dramatic growth of unions during the first two decades of the twentieth century. That growth must primarily be accounted for by larger, better organised unions which needed and wanted to organise workers' collective action within arbitration or beyond its ambit, for example, in the sphere of job control. While many unions strategically oriented to arbitration law and the use of powers it granted them, others employed varying strategies of membership mobilisation, in which arbitration played a secondary part, if any, to craft regulation or collective bargaining.

⁴⁷ Buckley and Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers*, p. 238; Donaldson, *Time of Our Lives*, p. 106; Charles Fahey, 'Unskilled Male Labour and the Beginnings of Labour Market Regulation, Victoria 1901-1914', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 33, no. 119, April 2002, pp. 150-58; Charles Fahey and John Lack, 'A Kind of Elysium Where Nobody Has Anything Difficult to Do': H.B. Higgins, H.V. McKay and the Agricultural Implement Makers, 1901-26', *Labour History*, no. 80, May 2001, pp. 107-15; Colin Forster, 'An Economic Consequence of Mr Justice Higgins', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 25, no. 2, September 1985, pp. 95-100; Hagan and Fisher, 'Piece-work and Some of its Consequences', p. 26; Mark Hearn, 'A Good Man for the Department': The Ethos of the Railway and Tramway Officers Association of New South Wales, 1913-1939', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 30, no. 112, April 1999, pp. 62, 64, 73-74; Hearn, 'Securing the Man', pp. 7-12; Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, pp. 32, 51; P.G. McCarthy, 'The Living Wage in Australia-the Role of Government', *Labour History*, no. 18, May 1970, pp. 6-9, 13-18; P.G. McCarthy, 'Wages for Unskilled Work, and Margins for Skill, Australia, 1901-21', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 12, no. 2, May 1972; Humphrey McQueen, 'Higgins and Arbitration', in E.L. [Ted] Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, Sydney, Australia & New Zealand Book Company, 1983, pp. 146-48; Richard Morris, 'The NSW Ship Painters and Dockers 1900-1914: A Small Union and the Institutionalisation of Industrial Relations', *Labour History*, no. 43, November 1983, p. 21; Martin Shanahan, 'No Paradise for Workers: the Personal Wealth of Labourers Prior to World War I', in David Palmer, et al. (eds), *Australian Labour History Reconsidered*, Adelaide, Australian Humanities Press, 1999; Robin Walker, 'Aspects of Working-Class Life in Industrial Sydney', *Labour History*, no. 58, May 1990, p. 39.

The latter were not limited to those of skilled or militant workers: for example, collective agreements covered the tobacco products industry for several decades, and salaried unionists sometimes negotiated directly with their employers.

Politics in the working class conditioned the pattern of unionisation. A higher rate of unionisation among a group of workers expressed, in some combination, the results of workers' militancy and the concessions around the right to organise. So not only craftsmen and coalminers, but teachers, meatworkers, wharf labourers and others were highly unionised. Moreover, a union's development could encompass all the various influences on unionisation. The AWU organised shearers and shedhands between 1904 and 1908 through industrial action and securing an award. Then the union oriented to arbitration, in which it sought new awards for which it could be a respondent and therefore gain coverage. Nonetheless, the union also grew by amalgamations with other unions that often initially organised on a more militant basis than the AWU.⁴⁸

Finally, while the living wage's reinforcement of a patriarchal family structure tended to reduce competition for all 'male' jobs, arbitration boosted the relative employment security of craftsmen. It increasingly supported the revival of apprenticeship: awards extended the apprenticeship requirements to more trades, added some controls on apprentice numbers and also improved apprentice pay rates. Similarly, professional qualifications became necessary for some clerical and commercial positions, excluding

⁴⁸ Sandra Cockfield, 'Arbitration and the Workplace: A Case Study of Metters' Stovemakers, 1902-22', *Labour History*, no. 90, May 2006, pp. 49-55; Fahey, 'Unskilled Male Labour', p. 159; Fahey and Lack, 'A Kind of Elysium', pp. 113-14; Peter Gahan, 'Did Arbitration Make for Dependent Unionism? Evidence from Historical Case Studies', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 38, no. 4, December 1996; Hearn, 'A Good Man for the Department', pp. 64-66, 72-73; Mark Hearn and Harry Knowles, *One Big Union: A History of the Australian Workers Union*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 100-47, 167; Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, p. 51; Ray Markey, 'Explaining Union Mobilisation in the 1880s and the Early 1900s', *Labour History*, no. 83, November 2002, pp. 27-36; Merritt, *The Making of the AWU*, p. 350; Bruce Mitchell, 'The NSW Teachers' Federation', *Labour History*, no. 17, November 1969, p. 67; Gail Reckie, 'The Shop Assistants Case of 1907 and Labour Relations in Sydney's Retail Industry', in Stuart Macintyre and Richard Mitchell (eds), *Foundations of Arbitration: the Origins and Effects of State Compulsory Arbitration*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 275-84; Peter Scherer, 'The Nature of the Australian Industrial Relations System: A Form of State Syndicalism', in G.W. Ford, et al. (eds), *Australian Labour Relations: Readings*, Melbourne McMillan, 1987, p. 85; Peter Sheldon, 'In Division is Strength: Unionism among Sydney Labourers, 1890-1910', *Labour History*, no. 56, May 1989; Peter Sheldon, 'System and Strategy: the Changing Shape of Unionism among NSW Construction Labourers, 1910-1919', *Labour History*, no. 65, November 1993; Peter Sheldon, 'The Missing Nexus? Union recovery, Growth and Behaviour during the First Decades of Arbitration: towards a Re-evaluation', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 26, no. 104, April 1995; Peter Sheldon, 'Compulsory Arbitration and Union Recovery: Maritime-Related Unions 1900-1912', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 40, no. 3, September 1998; John Shields, 'A Matter of Skill: the Revival of Apprenticeship in Early Twentieth-Century NSW', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 37, no. 2, June 1995, pp. 255-56; Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, pp. 35-40; Wanna, *Defence not Defiance*, pp. 56-58; Barbara Webster, 'A "Cosy Relationship" If You Had it: Queensland Labor's Arbitration System and Union Organizing Strategies in Rockhampton, 1916-57', *Labour History*, no. 83, November 2002. Traditionally, compulsory arbitration has been considered the key factor in the growth of Australian unionism. The literature cited, however, reflects the significant debate that has arisen about the impact arbitration had on union growth compared with the mobilisations of workers to organise unions.

from competition for these jobs both women and those men who couldn't gain these credentials. Concepts of career employment, and public sector tenure, helped protect the jobs of some white-collar workers. Some labourers gained relatively permanent employment in the railways or with large private companies. The tobacco product monopoly honoured its offer of no job cuts due to 'slackness of trade'.

The development of the White Australia policy, which, for more than half of the twentieth century, the labour movement largely supported and through which it now won the general exclusion of resident 'coloured' populations from unionised employment and of contract labour migration, also meant some workers' lost the relatively better employment security they had enjoyed. Seamen now focused their efforts on winning cabotage in coastal shipping. Initially they were unsuccessful. Lack of progress in collective bargaining also forced them to enter the arbitration system in 1910. Although they then rode the postwar strike wave to its peak in 1919, in a six-month strike which won them cabotage, major gains in pay and conditions, and a special tribunal, they were soon back under arbitration.⁴⁹

The Labour Aristocracy and Opportunism in Australia

Thus, by the 1920s, most adult white male workers experienced at least some concessions in their conditions of class struggle, and the class' upper stratum had gained a relative advantage in these. The 'settlement' apparatus included a range of employment conditions, White Australia, and 'protection all round', but arbitration organised the principal concessions in the class struggle which created an upper stratum of the working class.

⁴⁹ Linda Colley, 'How Secure Was That Public Service Job? Redundancy in the Queensland Public Service', *Labour History*, no. 89, November 2005, p. 150; Bradon Ellem and John Shields, 'H.A. Turner and 'Australian Labor's Closed Preserve': Explaining the Rise of 'Closed Unionism' in the Broken Hill Mining Industry', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 11, no. 1, August 2000, pp. 85-89; Bradon Ellem and John Shields, 'Making a "Union Town": Class, Gender and Consumption in Inter-war Broken Hill', *Labour History*, no. 78, May 2000, pp. 121-35; Fahey, 'Unskilled Male Labour', pp. 145-50; Fahey and Lack, 'A Kind of Elysium', pp. 107, 115; Forster, 'An Economic Consequence of Mr Justice Higgins', p. 103; Gahan, 'Did Arbitration Make for Dependent Unionism?', p. 679; Hearn, 'A Good Man for the Department', pp. 63, 73; Hearn, 'Securing the Man', pp. 12-15; Lenore Layman, "'To Keep up the Australian Standard": Regulating Contract Labour Migration 1901-50', *Labour History*, no. 70, May 1996; Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, p. 32; Ray Markey, 'The Aristocracy of Labour and Productive Re-organization in NSW, c. 1880-1900', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, March 1988, pp. 49-59; Julia Martinez, 'Questioning 'White Australia': Unionism and 'Coloured' Labour, 1911-37', *Labour History*, no. 76, May 1999; McQueen, 'Higgins and Arbitration', p. 151; Mitchell, 'The NSW Teachers' Federation', pp. 67-68; Richard Morris, 'Mr Justice Higgins Scuppered: the 1919 Seamen's Strike', *Labour History*, no. 37, November 1979, pp. 52-55, 60-62; Melanie Nolan, 'Making Clerks and Re-shaping the White-Collar Workforce in the Twentieth Century', *Labour History*, no. 63, November 1992, p. 82; T. Sheridan, *Mindful Militants: The Amalgamated Engineering Union in Australia 1920-1972*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 106; Shields, 'A Matter of Skill'; Diane van den Broek, 'Partners in Protest: the Case of the 1929 Timber Workers' Strike', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 7, no. 2, December 1996, p. 150.

The focus of many analysts on the administration of the arbitration system has led them to claim that arbitration made unions into state agents, or that arbitration was the state's main means to coopt organised labour by increasing the unions' numbers and organisational strength, while circumscribing union militancy.⁵⁰ Yet arbitration was only the most significant form of a social relationship, the content of which—concessions by capital to a stratum of workers and the class collaboration from within that stratum with the bourgeoisie—has not been limited to that form. Wells described that relationship: a 'sophisticated "political settlement" between capital and labour that redistributed profits and wealth earned by rural export industries to urban manufacturing industries, and from capital to labour and, within labour, directed these gains from the skilled to the unskilled and semi-skilled male worker'.⁵¹

Wells' claim about redistribution among workers must be qualified. Differences in pay between skilled workers and the rest of the working class had lessened as arbitration levelled up labourers' wages, but arbitration also legally reinforced the remaining difference because getting a 'margin for skill' awarded was the only chance of making real gains on the basic wage. The way piecework operated had the same effect. Moreover, the main challenges in the 1920s and 1930s to the standards in hours and pay previously established through arbitration most directly affected less well-off workers, and the real value of the basic wage was not increased until after the World War II.⁵²

Only a relatively narrow stratum in the working class gained further concessions in the class struggle beyond those gained by most white male workers. Some workers fell from the upper strata. The introduction of oil-fuelled ships and better land transport undermined the strategic position of the seamen: their union's membership fell by more than half in the decade from 1923 and when the union began to recover, it suffered a major strike defeat in 1936. Generally, however, the tendency towards fragmentation of the upper stratum of the working class, which existed at the end of the nineteenth century, was reversed. Those considered skilled workers, and many professional and commercial employees such as teachers, bank and insurance clerks, and some other office workers, now had certain common experiences in their relations with the

⁵⁰ Buckley and Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers*, p. 223; Fitzpatrick, *The British Empire in Australia*, ch. 7 iv (a); Scherer, 'The Nature of the Australian Industrial Relations System', p. 94; Wanna, *Defence not Defiance*, pp. 47, 65-75. See also, for example: Bramble, 'Managers of Discontent', p. 41.

⁵¹ Wells, 'State Regulation for a Moral Economy', pp. 379-80.

⁵² Buckley and Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers*, p. 237; Vere Gordon Childe, *How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1964, p. 133; Cockfield, 'Arbitration and the Workplace', p. 51; Fahey, 'Unskilled Male Labour', pp. 155-57; Hagan and Fisher, 'Piece-work and Some of its Consequences'; McCarthy, 'Wages for Unskilled Work', pp. 155-57; Andrew Moore, 'The Pastoral Workers Industrial Union', *Labour History*, no. 49, November 1985, p. 72.

capitalist class and the state. Among those experiences, continuity of employment stood in first place, especially for the stratum's white-collar members.⁵³ The chief features of this stratification persisted until the 1940s and even, substantially, into the 1980s.

This stratification among workers became a fundamental determinant of the character of working-class politics. The characteristics of the upper stratum ensured it and its particular interests were more significant than its numbers alone would suggest. It was better represented and resourced in the unions (and also in other social organisations of the working class, such as friendly societies). Thus, craft interests and industrial peace were very often the motif of the labour movement, and wage militancy, too, was primarily about gaining and maintaining the margins or over-award payments of the relatively better-off workers. Industrial actions were often token stoppages to establish that disputes existed, which then allowed unions to resort to arbitration. Yet even tactics like that required some degree of industrial organisation. Moreover, the unions and the aims of their action did not necessarily exclude other workers from collective action.⁵⁴

Trials of strength between capital and labour over wage and other workers' claims therefore occurred, giving rise to strike waves. However, only a greater breadth of industrial action, in particular through the involvement of workers other than those who were already organised, and its politicisation, could transform any of these strike waves into a mass strike in which substantial advances in workers' political consciousness and organisation towards their class rule might have been possible.⁵⁵ In the period at the end of and after World War II, a strike wave for the first time had the characteristics of a mass strike. This was not only because of strikes by previously unorganised or

⁵³ L.J. Louis, 'Recovery from the Depression and the Seamen's Strike, 1935-6', *Labour History*, no. 41, November 1981; Markey, 'The Aristocracy of Labour', p. 59.

⁵⁴ Thomas Bramble, 'Conflict, Coercion and Co-option: the Role of Full-Time Officials in the South Australian Branch of the Vehicle Builders Employees Federation, 1967-1980', *Labour History*, no. 63, November 1992, pp. 135-37; Thomas Bramble, 'Trade Union Organizing and Workplace Industrial Relations in the Vehicle Industry 1963 to 1991', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 35, no. 1, March 1993, pp. 42-44; Buckley and Wheelwright, *False Paradise*, pp. 73-74; Erik Eklund, 'The 'Place' of Politics: Class and Localist Politics at Port Kembla, 1900-30', *Labour History*, no. 78, May 2000, pp. 107-08; Bradon Ellem, "'Hell for Leather": Industrial Relations and Politics in the Boot Trades, 1945-1955', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 7, no. 1, June 1996, pp. 127, 132-33; Peter Fairbrother, 'Union Democracy in Australia: Accommodation and Resistance', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 28, no. 2, June 1986, pp. 182-84; Raelene Frances, "'No More Amazons": Gender and Work Process in the Victorian Clothing Trades, 1890-1939', *Labour History*, no. 50, May 1986, pp. 106-12; Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, p. 50; Tom O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream: The Decline of Australian Communism*, Sydney, Stained Wattle Press, 1985, p. 55; D.H. Plowman, 'Unions in Conflict: The Victorian Trades Hall Split 1967-1973', *Labour History*, no. 36, May 1979; Robert Tierney, 'Racial Conflicts in the Australian Automotive Industry in the 1950s: Production Line Workers, the Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation and Shop Floor Organisation', *Labour History*, no. 76, May 1999; Wanna, *Defence not Defiance*, p. 68.

⁵⁵ Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, pp. 36-40, 93-127.

poorly organised workers and the influence of Communists and other militants, which included their efforts to achieve internationalist solidarity action and introduce a broader radicalism. The ALP also conducted its most broad and sustained attempt to propagate the 'ALP viewpoint' and establish avowed party control of unions through the Industrial Groups (in Western Australia, maintaining that control by resisting an attempt to form a labour council independent of party structures). While political radicalisation was in decline from 1947, the resistance of ALP governments, federal and state, to the strike wave was not the key to its defeat. In that, other factors were important. First, involvement in the strike wave was still relatively limited: for example, the Broken Hill miners, who had played a leading part in the 1890s strike and the strike wave of 1919-1920, had established an exclusive local labour market in 1931 and in 1943 exchanged improved 'lead bonus' payments for an end to 'go-slow' actions and union support for shop committees. Second, the Groups opposed shop committees and workers' participation in union bodies. Third, some ALP-led unions decided to oppose the coalminers in their 1949 strike.⁵⁶ Thus, when there was 'a matchless opportunity for working class advance',⁵⁷ the opportunist trend pursued a reconciliation of workers' interests with capital through a modified capitalist order.⁵⁸

The result of the conflict of the 1940s was a reinforcement of the 'wage-earners' welfare state' and a relative stabilisation of the labour aristocratic stratification: the basic wage was increased; discounted female pay rates were retained; the old margin proportions were restored; state fiscal action now sought to maintain full employment and provided more comprehensive welfare measures. In the following years, arbitration penal powers, abandoned in 1930, were reintroduced, but were defeated by a union campaign in 1969. Automatic cost of living adjustments of the basic wage also stopped in 1953, and, in 1967 the award structure was changed to a 'total wage' on the employers' initiative, but 'living wage' standards were not consistently attacked. In the 1970s, wages generally rose, increasingly though over-award payments or consent

⁵⁶ Robert Bollard, "'The Active Chorus': The Great Strike of 1917 in Victoria', *Labour History*, no. 90, May 2006; Ellem, 'Hell for Leather', pp. 131-40; Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement 1920-1955*, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1975, chs 4-6; Heather Goodall, 'Port Politics: Indian Seamen, Australian Unions and Indonesian Independence, 1945-47', *Labour History*, no. 94, May 2008, pp. 48-64; Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, pp. 54-60; Malcolm Rimmer, 'Work Place Unionism', in Bill Ford and David Plowman (eds), *Australian Unions: An Industrial Relations Perspective*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1989, pp. 126-30, 136; Scalmer, 'The Affluent Worker or the Divided Party?', pp. 408-09; Tom Sheridan, *Division of Labour: Industrial Relations in the Chifley Years, 1945-49*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1989; John Shields, "'Lead Bonus Happy": Profit-sharing, Productivity and Industrial Relations in the Broken Hill Mining Industry, 1925-83', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 37, no. 3, November 1997, pp. 229-41; Strauss, 'How Was Labour Divided?'; Lucy Taksa, "'Defence, not Defiance": Social Protest and the NSW General Strike of 1917', *Labour History*, no. 60, May 1991; Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*.

⁵⁷ Buckley and Wheelwright, *False Paradise*, p. 179.

⁵⁸ Scalmer, 'Being Practical'.

awards secured by collective agreements, and also through successes in equal pay campaigns for indigenous and women workers. These improvements occurred, despite the discounting of wage indexation, which operated between 1975 and 1981, until a 1982 wage freeze.⁵⁹

By the beginning of the 1980s, the occupational composition of the labour aristocracy changed. The strategic position of many skilled workers was undermined. In electricity production in Victoria, the employer favoured technicians and dredge operators against maintenance workers: the former stood somewhat aloof from the latter's major strike in 1977. In newspaper production, printers' jobs and job control were threatened, while the role of journalists was strengthened, through the introduction of computerised technology.⁶⁰

Workers on the wharves and in the coalmines faced substantial changes initiated by capital in the forms of their work. They used their industrial organisation to try to retain some control over production and employment. The waterside workers were largely unsuccessful in opposing job losses through the introduction of bulk loading, although the attempt to get rid of the union itself failed. For decades, the coalminers fought closures of many underground mines and the introduction of continuous production, which was backed by the mine owners and other unions in the industry. These groups of workers could also try to exchange cuts in jobs for sustained pay improvements, at least for some of them, as occurred in response to the containerisation of shipping in the 1960s. Waterside workers moved to permanent company employment and then secured biennial collective agreements. According to a 1982 estimate, pay on the wharves was as much as twice as high for those employed in container terminals compared with the rest, up from a difference of just a few hundred dollars more per year in the late 1960s.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Charlie Fox, *Working Australia*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1991, pp.154-164; O'Lincoln, *Years of Rage*, pp. 27, 224-26.

⁶⁰ O'Lincoln, *Years of Rage*, pp. 6, 77; Julianne Schultz, 'How the Journalists Became Trade Unionists', *Australian Society*, 22 October 1982, p. 25.

⁶¹ Bradley Bowden, 'Heroic Failure? Unionism and Queensland's Coal Communities, 1954-67', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 11, no. 3, April 2001; Gollan, *The Coalminers of New South Wales*, pp. 235-38; Darryl Hull, 'Queensland Sugar Ports: Labour and Technological Change', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 6, November 1979; Roy Kriegler and Grant Stendal, *At Work: Australian Experiences*, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1984, p. 66; Wendy Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work: What's Happening to Work in Australia - An Oral Record*, Sydney, Catalyst Press, 1997, pp. 220-21; Wendy Lowenstein and Tom Hills, *Under the Hook: Melbourne Waterside Workers Remember Working Lives and Class War, 1900-1998*, enlarged and updated ed., Melbourne, Bookworkers Press, 1998, pp. 151-74; Tom Sheridan, 'Australian Wharfies 1943-1967: Casual Attitudes, Militant Leadership and Workplace Change', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 36, no. 2, June 1994, pp. 275-82; Greg Smith, 'Contending Interests in the Supply of Australian Coal to the World Market', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 2, Winter 1991, p. 144; Claire Williams, *Open Cut: The Working Class in an Australian Mining Town*, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1981, pp. 69-70. By the beginning of the 1980s, the incomes of seafarers varied greatly, so that in the ports, one might earn as

The proportion of administrative and professional workers grew, especially in the public sector, with increased state economic regulation and education and welfare provision. These workers reorganised into larger, more militant, unions, although to the considerable extent that that militancy defended the workers' professional status and distance from other workers, 'the foundation for an essentially conservative political approach to educational [in the case of teachers] and industrial matters' was laid.⁶² They also began to play an extraordinary part in politics in the working class. By 1981, their ranks provided about half of the ALP's employed members and often sustained its branch activity. Teachers were especially well represented in the ALP, so much so that a great many of the more industrially active teachers would have been ALP members.⁶³

The labour aristocratic stratification also acquired a new ethnic character. The labour movement was included in the post-war political accord about mass immigration, and the eventual breakdown of the old White Australia policy through, for example, a 1945 law that further reinforced the apprenticeship system. That accord guaranteed that workers born in Australia or Britain largely composed the upper stratum, while migrant workers who lacked English language skills tended to be in the lower stratum. The latter were not economically peripheral, however: they were central to commodity production and also highly unionised. Yet unions only began to accept their responsibilities to these members in the 1970s.⁶⁴

Workers' activity and organisation in the workplace developed in other ways in the 1970s. Two strike waves, which peaked in 1974 and 1981, involved a variety of workers in strikes and other industrial action such as sit-ins. Stoppages in support of wage demands increased. So did actions for political demands, including the 'green bans', anti-uranium campaigning and the first national general strike, in defence of Medibank. Campaigns for reduced working hours were sometimes posited as a means of job creation. Workplace representation, often organised in shop committees,

little as \$15,000 per year, whereas in offshore construction their annual pay could reach almost \$50,000: R Wilson, Letter to P. Geraghty, Communist Party of Australia, ML MSS 5021, Box 10 (155), Congress Amendments and Resolutions (Original Copy), Mitchell Library, Sydney, 13 September 1982, p. 6.

⁶² R.D. White, 'Teacher Militancy, Ideology and Politics', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 19, no. 2, July 1983, p. 266.

⁶³ Warwick Eather, 'A City to Struggle in: Wagga Wagga and Labour, 1940-75', *Labour History*, no. 78, May 2000, p. 144; P.R. Hay, 'Labor Vacates the Bush: The Eclipse of Working-Class Values in Victoria's Western District', *Labour History*, no. 54, May 1988, pp. 73-76; Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work*, pp. 164-65; John O'Brien, *A Divided Unity! Politics of NSW Teacher Militancy since 1945*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1987, pp. 8-10; John M. O'Brien, 'The Collective Organization of Australian Academic Staff 1949-83', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 35, no. 2, June 1993; Scott, *Fading Loyalties*, ch. 4; Ward, 'The Middle-Classing of the ALP', pp. 206-12.

⁶⁴ Collins, *Migrant Hands*, chs. 1, 4-6; Constance Lever-Tracy and Michael Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class: Ethnic Segmentation and Industrial Conflict in Australia*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988, pp. 1-22, 52-53, 234; Shields, 'A Matter of Skill'.

became more effective: in many metals industry factories, with the greatest union encouragement coming from the Victorian branch of the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union; on large construction sites; in the Queensland open cut coalmines; among printers and electricity workers; and in the Pilbara iron ore mines, the Port Kembla steelworks, the Ford Broadmeadows plant and parts of the public service.⁶⁵ Many shop stewards and members also showed substantial initiative and independence in proposing claims and campaign tactics, although their response to calls for action from union leaderships became less critical later in the decade. Other ways in which the development of workers' activity and organisation was limited include: the metal unions' membership did not resist the 'no extra claims' provision of the industry's 1981 agreement; workplace organisation concentrated on job regulation, rather than policy-making; workplace organisation was already in decline by 1982, in, for example, car assembly plants in Adelaide; many of the more militant unions, such as teachers' (with the partial exception of the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association), were still only weakly organised within individual workplaces; rank and file job organisation was not associated with political radicalism and organisation; and many union leaderships, such as that of the metalworkers union, asserted an independence from political parties on policy which included a withdrawal from the nationalisation strategy suggested by socialist perspectives.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Waterside workers had established Job Delegate Associations in the 1950s: Hull, 'Queensland Sugar Ports', p. 69; Krieglger and Stendal, *At Work*, p. 66; Lowenstein and Hills, *Under the Hook*, p. 128.

⁶⁶ John Benson, 'Workplace Union Organisation in Australia', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 1, no. 3, October 1988, p. 413; Bowden, 'Heroic Failure? Unionism and Queensland's Coal Communities, 1954-67', pp. 86-87; Bramble, 'Conflict, Coercion and Co-option', pp. 45-53; Fairbrother, 'Union Democracy in Australia', pp. 180-86; Stephen J. Frenkel and Alice Coolican, *Unions against Capitalism? A Sociological Comparison of the Australian Building and Metal Workers' Unions*, Sydney, George Allen and Unwin, 1984, chs 11-13; Gerard Griffin, 'White-Collar Unionism 1969 to 1981: Some Determinants of Growth', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 25, no. 1, March 1983, p. 32; Barry Hill, *Sitting in*, Melbourne, William Heinemann, 1991; John D. Hill et al., 'The Industrial Attitude of Australian Private Bank Employees', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 27, no. 3, September 1985, p. 315; Russell Lansbury and Duncan Macdonald (eds), *Workplace Industrial Relations: Australian Case Studies*, *Australian Studies in Labour Relations*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 16; Ashley Lavelle, 'Under Pressure: The Whitlam Labor Opposition and Class Struggle, 1967-72', *Labour History*, no. 96, May 2009, p. 119; Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class*, pp. 215-233, 288-289, 296; Ross M. Martin, 'Political Strikes and Public Attitudes in Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1985; Brenda Miles, 'Who Says the Public Service Is Boring?', *Workplace*, Spring 1992, p. 26; Brian Murphy, 'Changing the Union: The 1981 Ford Strike', *Australian Left Review*, no. 79, March 1982, p.32; O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, pp. 140-48; O'Lincoln, *Years of Rage*, chs. 5-11; Gerry Phelan, 'Shop Floor Organisation: Some Experiences from the Vehicle Industry', *Australian Left Review*, no. 78, December 1981; Julius Roe, 'Putting Victoria on the Rails', *Australian Left Review*, no. 81, September 1982, p. 36; Sean Scalmer and Terry Irving, 'The Rise of the Modern Labour Technocrat: Intellectual Labour and the Transformation of the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union, 1973-85', *Labour History*, no. 77, November 1998, pp. 64-73; Andrew Spaul and Susan Mann, 'Teacher Unionism in Australia: The Case of Victoria', in Martin Lawn (ed.), *The Politics of Teacher Unionism: International Perspectives*, London, Croom Helm, 1985, pp. 17-18; Herb Thompson, 'The Capital-Labour Relation in the Mining Sector', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 15, September 1983, p. 76; Williams, *Open Cut*, pp. 51-62, 68-69, 81-111; Claire Williams, *Blue, White and Pink Collar Workers in Australia: Technicians, Bank Employees and Flight Attendants*, Sydney, Allen

Conclusion

An understanding of the situation of politics among workers at the start of the 1980s needs, however, to search deeper than an estimation of the strengths and weaknesses of labour movement militancy. Applying the theory of the labour aristocracy has indicated the deep social roots and the historical construction and layering of workers' class political consciousness. Working class radicalisation cannot be defeated by means which, having been used, are exposed and exhausted. The class' opportunism is based in the benefits sustained from monopoly superprofits for a relatively privileged upper stratum of the working class, the labour aristocracy

In Australia, a labour aristocracy had existed for more than a century before the 1980s. Its principal benefits had been concessions of relative employment security and legally enforceable graduated pay levels and working conditions underpinned by a concept of meeting workers' consumption needs.

From the existence of the labour aristocracy has flowed the continuity of the ALP, once it was formed, as an 'independent' party of class collaboration supported from among these workers as it defends their interest in the good fortune of Australian monopolising capitals. From the development of the stratum's character, that has been conditioned partly by the concessions to the stratum and to the broader working class and partly by opportunism's effort to head off challenges to its domination among workers, has stemmed the party's changes.

Thus, 'middle-class' professional and administrative workers had become more prominent in the party along with their increased importance in the labour aristocracy. Also, as mentioned above,⁶⁷ the onset of the international capitalist structural crisis in the 1970s ruled out capital easily sustaining concessions. Instead, capital would now seek to make its concessions to workers within a framework of promoting profitability. Finally, the ALP in the 1970s had struggled to contain the development of a militant syndicalism among workers.

Among what the ALP offered capital by the time of the 1983 election, the Accord would reverse the syndicalist developments that had occurred among workers. Given the Accord succeeded in that respect, the next chapter considers the effect that had on the labour movement's capacity for organising collective action. By way of contrast, the

& Unwin, 1985, pp. 16-143. See also: Rimmer, 'Work Place Unionism', pp. 130-38. Cf.: Kriegler and Stendal, *At Work*, pp. 2-3, 87-88, 104, 162, 167-68, 202, 219.

⁶⁷ See the discussion of Lavelle, ch. 1.

following chapters discuss first, attempts in the labour movement to prevent the Accord's success, and then other ways in which opportunism was challenged in the long Labor decade.

5

Union Workplace Organisation Declines

Unionisation and industrial disputation are relatively widespread collective actions by workers that embody elements of workers' class political consciousness in the traditions, discourse, feelings of solidarity, collectivist values and ideas attached to those actions. Trends in such actions substantially reflect developments in workers' class political consciousness. In the 1970s, the levels of these actions—as measured by union density (the proportion of union members among employees) and the number of strikes, working days lost to strikes and workers participation in strikes—were relatively high.¹ In the long Labor decade, those levels of activity declined.

Delegates² can create networks of collective action in workplaces. This chapter first outlines the decline that also occurred in the rate (the number of delegates per 100 workers) and workplace presence of delegates in order to indicate the trend in the capacity of delegates to sustain collective action and, thus, the aspects of workers' class political consciousness reflected in unionisation and industrial disputation. The trend in the delegate rate is then correlated with those in union density and strike participation. The strength of that evidence is weighed up against that for the causes usually proposed for the decline in union density in the period: this suggests the decline in the networks of collective action that delegates provided is a major explanatory factor for the decline in union density. Thereafter, the chapter proceeds to discuss, with regard to the Accord, what might have caused the decline in delegate numbers and workplace presence.

Delegates

The reports of the two major surveys of industrial relations in the long Labor decade, the Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Surveys (AWIRS) that were conducted in

¹ See ch. 4.

² 'Delegate', 'shop steward' and 'workplace representative', and 'area steward' and 'convener' (for delegates committees), were all terms used by Australian unions to describe their workplace representatives. Here 'delegate' refers to any such position. 'Delegates' also serves somewhat as a proxy for union activists as a whole, because, as holders of a recognised position, they featured as the usual subject of surveys and in reports on industrial disputes. However, not all delegates were active unionists, and union activism extended to that of both rank-and-file members, and officials and organisers.

1990 and 1995,³ largely fail to suggest changes with regard to delegate activity and numbers that could have contributed to the decline in union density. The reports do state that between 1990 and 1995 the time spent on union activity by the surveyed delegates fell.⁴ Yet they also state that in 1995, compared with 1990: more of these delegates had spent a lot of time in the previous year on one or more of the various delegate tasks (except for the handling of individual grievances);⁵ slightly more of the larger workplaces in 1995 than in 1990 had one or more delegates working mostly on union matters; and more surveyed delegates had access to union training in 1995 than in 1990.⁶ Also, the number of delegates compared with union members was shown to

³ Each AWIRS questioned one or two managers, a delegate—usually the senior delegate of the union with the most members at the workplace—if there, and employees at a number of workplaces with 20 or more employees, and one manager at a smaller number of workplaces of 5 to 19 employees. As well, in 1995, some of the workplaces of 20 or more employees that had been included in the 1990 survey and were still operating were surveyed again. Other than the AWIRS, the available data about delegates across the workforce is scanty at best. A 1983 survey by four NSW employer associations found 60 per cent of businesses with 50 or more employees had at least one shop steward: Dick Sappey, 'Being Small Isn't Beautiful', *Australian Society*, vol. 2, no. 4, May 1983, p. 16. Relevant archival records from unions seem almost non-existent. The author's searched documents from the AMWU, which traditionally had promoted the development of delegate structures, and found only a discussion paper presented in July 1996—that is, from just outside the period under discussion: Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Delegates Convention, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Z628, Box 24, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1996. The author also attempted to examine items about workplace visits in the weekly written reports by officials and organisers of the Victorian branch of metalworkers union to the branch's leadership bodies as a possible source of data about the activity of delegates, but the initial comparison of reports from 1986 and 1995 showed apparent gaps in the archive of the later year, as well as perhaps more inconsistent reporting, so this research was not continued: Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian Branch, State Council and State Administrative Committee Minutes, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian Branch, Accession 106/119, Boxes 1, 11 (Item 98), University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 1995; Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian State Council, Minutes, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian Branch, 106/119, 1, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 21 July 1986.

⁴ A later study claimed that, in the 1995 AWIRS, only 18 per cent of respondent delegates reported spending more than one hour per week on union matters, down from 24 per cent in the 1990 AWIRS. Michael Crosby, 'Down with the Dictator: The Role of Trade Unions in the Future', in Ron Callus and Russell Lansbury (eds), *Working Futures: The Changing Nature of Work and Employment Relations in Australia*, Sydney, The Federation Press, 2002, p. 124. The AWIRS data does not allow consideration of whether or not union activity had spread more evenly among delegates within workplaces.

⁵ Negotiations with management and participation in consultative committees were prominent as tasks on which respondent delegates were spending more time. A study of the construction industry also suggested much of the time which union officials and delegates in the past would have spent talking with each other and on the job was now spent talking to management.: Herb Thompson and Julie Tracy, 'The Building and Construction Industry: Retaliation or Reform', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 5, no. 1-2, March-June 1993, pp. 79-80. For example, the consultative committee at one construction company met fortnightly: Libby Lester and Clare Curran, 'Rebuilding Australia', *Workplace*, Winter 1992. Another study of senior delegates in forestry, manufacturing and stevedoring concluded, however, that they were active and their functions had not been changed by the emergence of consultative committees: Stephen Cahoon and Jim Garnham, 'The Functions of the Australian Shop Steward', in Ray Fells and Trish Todd (eds), *Current Research in Industrial Relations: Proceedings of the 10th AIRAANZ Conference*, Perth, Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand, February 1996, p. 113. Thus, the hours spent on these tasks by such delegates may not be relevant either to the effectiveness of their activity or their numbers, but the purpose of the consultation and negotiations may be, as is discussed below.

⁶ Callus et al., *Industrial Relations at Work*, p. 279; Alison Moorehead et al., *Changes at Work: The 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey*, Melbourne, Longman, 1997, pp. 140, 143, 166-69, 466-467, 492-493.

have increased by nearly 10 per cent between 1990 and 1995.⁷ This might suggest an increasing number of union activists, all other things being equal. (Otherwise delegates might have become less effective in recruiting and retaining union members, delegate structures among workers weaker, and delegate numbers may even have fallen, although not as quickly as the number of union members.) Finally, the proportion of workplaces where at least one delegate was present was virtually unchanged: 53 per cent in 1990 and 52 per cent in 1995.

The AWIRS reports, however, did not glean all that can be found from the surveys' data⁸ about trends in delegate activity and numbers between the two surveys. Consideration follows of three sets of results that are relevant to whether or not delegates became less effective in forming the networks for collective action by workers in the workplace. First, the correlation of delegate rates and union densities in individual workplaces for the respondent delegate's union (therefore, the number of workers on which these rates are based is according to those who are or could be members of that union in that delegate's workplace) are examined. Second, the delegate rates and presence of delegates across various sizes of workplaces are discussed. Finally, estimates are made of the total number of delegates in 1990 and 1995, and the delegate rate for the whole workforce in each year is then determined. In this case, a comparison is made with the findings of a 1980 Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) survey of unions about their organisational positions. From that comparison, whether the decline in the delegate rate continued in much the same way from the 1980s into the 1990s or changed over that time is assessed.

⁷ The 1995 AWIRS report states that 'in 1990, unionised workplaces had 10.6 delegates per 100 union members. In 1995 this had increased to nearly 11.6.' Moorehead et al., *Changes at Work*, p. 143. Yet even after excluding unionised workplaces without delegates, the 1990 AWIRS report states a delegate rate of only about 2.6: Callus et al., *Industrial Relations at Work*, p. 105. How this figure was arrived at is unclear, however, since the 1990 AWIRS failed to ask managers the number of union members in their workplace: Department of Industrial Relations, Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey 1989-90: The Employee Relations Management Questionnaire, Australian Social Science Data Archive, accessed on 3 July 2007, <http://nesstar.assda.edu.au/ASSDAData/questionnaires/ASSDA.QUESTIONNAIRE.00600.pdf.zip>, pp. 27-28. The 1995 AWIRS did ask managers that: Department of Industrial Relations, The Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey: Employee Relations Management Questionnaire, AWIRS 95 main survey, Australian Social Science Data Archive, accessed on 12 January 2009, <http://nesstar.assda.edu.au/ASSDAData/questionnaires/ASSDA.QUESTIONNAIRE.00977-erm.pdf.zip>. According to them, for all surveyed workplaces the unweighted delegate rate was 2.8; and for workplaces between 20 and 49 employees, which were under-represented in the survey, the rate was 4.8.

⁸ Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (formerly the Department of Industrial Relations), Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey, 1995 [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 2004; Department of Industrial Relations, Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey, 1989-1990 [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1991. Those who carried out the original collection and analysis of the data bear no responsibility for the further analysis and interpretation herein.

In the AWIRS data, delegate rates in individual workplaces correlate with the workplaces' union densities. In particular, intensive union workplace organisation correlates with very high workplace union densities.

Any relationship between workplace delegate rates and workplace union densities was complicated, however, by the effects of compulsory unionism. In the workplaces where compulsory unionism existed, union membership was usually 100 per cent or close to that. No consistent correlation between proportions of delegates among workers and union density would appear. As long as compulsory unionism was a norm, it may also have weakened the potential relationship between delegates and unionisation generally.

As late as 1990, compulsory unionism remained a norm, at least for blue-collar workers with delegates in their workplaces. This was despite the fall, from the 1970s, in the proportion of workers who were compulsorily unionised.⁹ Delegates' responses to the first AWIRS show that:

- The delegate's union, if the union's members were mostly blue-collar workers in the delegate's workplace, had compulsory membership for all workers covered by that union in about 60 per cent of these workplaces. Another ten per cent of these workplaces had compulsory membership provision for at least some of the workers covered by the union. If the members of the delegate's union were mostly professionals, para-professionals or clerks, only about 10 per cent of the delegate's workplaces had compulsory membership for 'all employees'.¹⁰
- The influence of the delegate rate on union density in individual workplaces was relatively weak, even when no compulsory membership provision applied. Instead, delegate rates in a workplace correlated with the union's membership arrangement in that workplace: the more intensive the union's organisation in a workplace, the more likely the workplace was to have compulsory unionism.

⁹ Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, pp. 87-88.

¹⁰ The AWIRS question to delegates on the workplace's union membership arrangement asked delegates to describe the arrangement 'for your union' with regard to whether 'all employees' were required, encouraged or discouraged, or 'some employees' were required, 'to be members of this union': Department of Industrial Relations, Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey 1989-1990: The Union Delegate Questionnaire, Australian Social Science Data Archive, accessed on 3 July 2007, <http://nesstar.assda.edu.au/ASSDAData/questionnaires/ASSDA.QUESTIONNAIRE.00600.pdf.zip>, p. 3. This was potentially ambiguous. The question's context was the delegate's union, but not all employees at the workplace may have been able to join the delegate's union. Therefore, a delegate answering this question may have considered only the membership arrangement or arrangements applying to the members and potential members of his or her union. Alternatively, the delegate could consider all employees of the workplace. Then, if there were employees of the workplace who could not be members of the delegate's union and were not compulsorily unionised, the delegate would have responded 'some employees' even if all employees covered by the delegate's union were required to be members.

The 1995 AWIRS delegates' responses suggest any norm of compulsory unionism was finished. In each of the major occupational categories, about 40 per cent less workplaces had compulsory unionism provisions for all workers covered by the delegate's union. A positive relationship between the intensity of union workplace organisation and compulsory unionism was again found in the delegates' responses.¹¹ However, the union membership arrangement most delegates now faced in their workplaces was that employers neither encouraged nor discouraged union membership. Under that arrangement, the correlation of the delegate rate in a workplace with its union density was stronger than it had been in 1990.

The delegate responses to the 1995 AWIRS also showed the delegate rate of a union in workplaces had become more important to achieving high union densities in their workplaces, whereas compulsory unionism began to fail to do that. In the comparable AWIRS 1990 data, the positive correlation of a union density at or above 90 per cent with a higher than average delegate rate was confined to workplaces where union membership was not compulsory but was encouraged by management (see Table 5.1a). Findings from the AWIRS delegate responses five years later show that in such workplaces the influence of higher than average delegate rates on such union density declined. However, that influence had increased in compulsorily unionised workplaces, where seven out of eight of the more intensely organised workplaces surveyed had union membership of 90 per cent or more, and in workplaces where employers neither encouraged nor discouraged unionism (see Table 5.1b).¹²

¹¹ David Peetz argued that such a result (in this case applying only to workplaces with delegates), which 'might be expected ... if [union compulsion] arose from unions' ability to enforce unionism at the workplace', was contradicted by the 1995 survey findings ('if anything, the reverse was the case'): Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, pp. 94-95. His evidence was the member-to-delegate ratios of closed shops compared with other workplaces. However, this meant he had put together all compulsorily unionised workplaces, whether the arrangement was a result of union ability, or of employer or state actions, for which an association of compulsory union membership and intensive union organisation would not be expected. Inevitably this would weaken the expected relationship. Also, member-to-delegate ratios are not independent of union enforcement of compulsory membership. Workers who are unwilling to join are presumably less likely than other workers to become delegates: therefore, the member-to-delegate ratio would tend to be higher under compulsory unionism than in open jobs, *ceteris paribus*. A worker-to-delegate ratio is more relevant for considering the impact of the proportion of delegates in a workplace on the union membership arrangement. In both AWIRS surveys, the unweighted delegate rate was 4.4 in workplaces with at least some compulsory unionism, compared with 3.9 for completely open jobs.

¹² Alternatively, the worker-to-delegate ratio in a workplace, as well as delegate presence and delegate activity, could be dependent on critical union densities: see Joe Isaac, 'Australian Labour Market Issues: An Historical Perspective', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 40, no. 4, December 1998, p. 711. Yet, as discussed previously (see ch. 2), the initiative for collective action lies with its network of organisers, and depends upon them, provided they have some successes—for example, in organising workers.

Table 5.1a Workplace membership saturation¹ and strong organisation² of the union with most members in workplaces with union delegates, 1990 AWIRS delegate responses

	<i>union membership arrangements</i>					all encouraged	all neither encouraged nor discouraged
	award	agreement	management policy	union policy, etc	other		
with strong union organisation	100%	92%	82%	89%	100%	72%	38%
without strong union organisation	97%	90%	95%	97%	100%	47%	35%
number of workplaces	57	200	32	130	22	210	318

Notes:

¹ Union membership saturation is a union density of 90 per cent or more of all workers who are members or potential members (if not a member of another union) of the respondent's union.

² Strong union organisation is a delegate rate of four or more. In this instance, the workers are the members and potential members (if not a member of another union) of the respondent's union. In assessing this, responses in which the numbers of the respondent's union's delegates, members or potential members (unless membership was compulsory) are missing are excluded.

Table 5.1b Workplace membership saturation¹ and strong organisation² of the union with most members in workplaces with union delegates, 1995 AWIRS delegate responses

	<i>union membership arrangement</i>						all encouraged	all neither encouraged nor discouraged
	award	agreement	<i>all compulsory members through:</i>		other			
			management policy	union policy, etc				
with strong union organisation	86%	89%	86%	88%	100%	49%	38%	
without strong union organisation	79%	80%	71%	79%	67%	46%	31%	
number of workplaces	33	100	14	86	6	171	535	

Notes:

¹ Union membership saturation is a union density of 90 per cent or more of all workers who are members or potential members of the respondent's union.

² Strong union organisation is a delegate rate of four or more. In this instance, the workers are members and potential members of the respondent's union. In assessing this, all responses in which the numbers of the respondent's union's delegates, members or potential members (unless membership was compulsory) are missing, or the number of the respondent's union's delegates are greater than or equal to the number of members, are excluded, as is one other response (of 300 delegates for 580 members)

Given the indications from the AWIRS that, in the first half of the 1990s, the delegate rate in a workplace with a delegate presence grew in significance as a determinant of union density, the rate's decline helps to explain the decline in union density (see Tables 5.2a and 5.2b: columns headed delegate rate). The fall in the delegate rate was concentrated in larger workplaces, especially in those with 500 or more employees.¹³ As the delegate rate decreased, more workers in workplaces with a delegate presence would have been deprived of workplace-based networking for collective action.

Union density would also have been adversely affected by a decline in delegate presence across workplaces. The AWIRS show the proportion of workplaces that had a delegate present increased for workplaces from 20 up to 49 employees, but decreased in workplaces of 50 to 99 employees and of more than 200 employees. The balance of the workforce's employment also shifted towards smaller workplaces but their delegate presence was at best average. Thus, fewer workers had some delegate presence in their workplace: according to the 1995 AWIRS report, 69 per cent, down from 76 per cent in 1990.¹⁴

Finally, the number of delegates compared with the number of workers across the entire workforce fell during the long Labor decade. The 1980 TUTA survey found 71,462 delegate positions Australia-wide.¹⁵ The then total number of employees was 5.13 million.¹⁶ Thus, the delegate rate was about 1.39 across the entire workforce.

The 1990 AWIRS report states:

On the basis of information from our management respondents ... there are about 50,000 delegates in the survey's population of workplaces with twenty or more employees ... On the basis of information collected from workplaces with between five and nineteen employees, the total delegate number in Australia is estimated to be no greater than 60,000.¹⁷

¹³ This was despite the fall in the mean size of those workplaces between the 1990 and 1995 AWIRS. In both surveys the delegate rate decreased as workplace size increased, so that reduction in workplace size should have increased the rate.

¹⁴ Moorehead et al., *Changes at Work*, pp. 466-67.

¹⁵ Australian Trade Union Training Authority, '1979-80', pp. 4-5. This figure might exaggerate the number of delegates there were because not all delegate positions were necessarily filled. Malcolm Rimmer suggests other reasons why this figure could be inflated as an estimate of the number of delegates, such as a worker holding more than one delegate's position: Rimmer, 'Work Place Unionism', p. 138. A lower figure for the number of delegates in 1980 decreases the decline in the delegate rate to 1990 discussed below

¹⁶ Weekly Earnings of Employees (Distribution) 6310.0.

¹⁷ Callus et al., *Industrial Relations at Work*, pp. 102, 122n.

Table 5.2a Estimated number of delegates at workplaces of twenty or more employees with delegates, 1990 AWIRS

Employees in workplace	Number of employees ('00s)	Employees with delegate present (%)	Workplaces with delegates	AWIRS weighted		Author's calculations					
				1990 AWIRS report	Delegates per workplace	Delegates	Delegates per workplace	Delegates	Corrected ²	Delegate rate	Delegates
500+	10100	96	900	18.3	16470	20.1	18090	17774	1.62	15708	15456
200-499	6700	89	2000	5.5	11000	6.0	12000	14645	1.94	11568	14118
100-199	6000	73	3100	2.9	8990	3.0	9300	11415	2.11	9242	11343
50-99	5700	56	4500	2.1	9450	2.2	9900	11916	3.01	9608	11564
20-49	4700	40	5700	1.4	7980	1.5	8550	9381	4.58	8610	9448
Total number of delegates					53890		57840	65131		54736	61929
					<i>ABS weighted¹</i>						
100+	21619				34571			41563			38798
20-99	17933				30055			36723			36231
Total number of delegates					64626			78286			75029

Sources: ABS Weekly Earnings of Employees (Distribution) 6310.0; Moorehead et al, *Changes at Work*, pp. 466-67, 488-89

Notes:

¹ Published ABS data provides only the number of *full-time* employees by the size of the workplace. Part-time employees are assigned to workplace size categories according to the ratio in which part-time employees appear in 1995

² For delegates' responses

Table 5.2b Estimated number of delegates at workplaces of twenty or more employees with delegates, 1995 AWIRS

Employees in workplace	Number of employees ('00s)	Employees with delegate present (%)	Workplaces with delegates	<i>1995 AWIRS report</i>		<i>Author's calculation</i>					
				Delegates per workplace	Delegates	Delegates per workplace	Delegates	Corrected ¹	Delegate rate	Delegates	Corrected ¹
500+	9600	90	800	13.9	11120	14.2	11360	12573	1.37	11837	13094
200-499	6600	81	1800	5.2	9360	5.6	10080	10950	1.81	9676	10512
100-199	7200	69	3600	2.8	10080	3.0	10800	12186	2.09	10383	11716
50-99	7000	55	5300	1.9	10070	2.1	11130	12709	2.93	11281	12881
20-49	6100	42	7700	1.4	10780	1.6	12320	13698	4.63	11862	13189
Total number of delegates					51410		55690	62115		55039	61392
<i>ABS weighted</i>											
100+	20590				26890			31420			31081
20-99	18501				29446			37294			36818
Total number of delegates					56336			68714			67899

Sources: ABS Weekly Earnings of Employees (Distribution) 6310.0; Moorehead et al, *Changes at Work*, pp. 466-67, 488-89

Notes:

¹ For delegates' responses

In 1990, there were 6.57 million employees. Thus, a fall in the delegate rate to about 0.91 is indicated. The 1990 AWIRS report estimate for workplace with twenty or more employees, however, is inadequate for a number of reasons. The estimate itself is presumably based on the report's calculation of the number of delegates per workplace¹⁸ and its weighting of sampled workplaces according to the number of workplaces with various numbers of employees. On that basis, the estimated number of delegates is nearly 54,000 (see Table 5.2a: columns headed 1990 AWIRS report). In addition:

- From the original data, the author recalculated the average number of delegates per workplace and the delegate rates for the same categories of workplace size. The resulting figures are higher than those of the report. The new figures for the average number of delegates per workplace add a further 4000 to the estimate based on that. The new figures for the delegate rates add nearly 1000 to the estimate based on that (see Table 5.2a: columns headed author's calculations - delegates).
- Delegate respondents provided information on the total number of delegates in workplaces for about 83 per cent of the workplaces that management stated delegate numbers. The delegates tended to report higher delegate numbers than management. Also, delegates responded from several workplaces where management stated there were no delegates or did not state a number of delegates, reporting still more delegates. The author has adjusted the estimates of delegates accordingly (see Table 5.2a, columns headed author's calculation - corrected: a conservative assumption has been made that no other managements failed to state there were delegates in a workplace, if in fact there were).
- The author found that the AWIRS weighting by the numbers of workplaces of various sizes produces a corresponding weighting by the total number of employees in the various size categories. Yet that weighting did not match the published Australian Bureau of Statistics data on the numbers of employees in

¹⁸ The report also provides an overall delegate rate and delegate rates for different workplace size categories. However, these delegate rates are incorrectly calculated. For example, the delegate rate stated for workplaces of 100 to 199 employees with delegates is 3.3, while the average number of delegates in such workplaces is 2.9. Yet these workplaces all have at least 100 employees, so the delegate rate at such workplaces must be less than the average number of delegates per workplace.

workplaces. Scaling the delegate numbers already estimated to the ABS data (excluding employees for whom the size of their workplace was unknown)¹⁹ increases the estimate of the number of delegates further (see Table 5.2a, under ABS weights). The ABS data is not as specific as the AWIRS report in its categories of workplace size, but the maximum possible effect of variations in the AWIRS category numbers within the ABS ones would reduce the final estimate of delegate numbers by only one-half of one per cent.

Therefore, calculating the estimated number of delegates in workplaces of twenty or more employees from the delegate rate, the result is about 75,000. The higher estimate of more than 78,000 that results from a calculation using the average number of delegates per workplace to calculate may be considered an upper limit for this re-estimation: this figure would be affected by the greater likelihood of larger workplaces having delegates and therefore having more delegates per workplace than average-sized workplaces within each category of workplace size. Accepting the AWIRS report estimate of about 10,000 delegates in all smaller workplaces (the small workplace survey in fact revealed a substantial number of delegates in these workplaces, especially in the public sector) the estimated total number of delegates in 1990 is 85,000. Thus, the delegate rate across the entire workforce was 1.29. The delegate rate had fallen by about 7 per cent in the 10 years since 1980.

The total number of delegates in Australia in 1995 can be estimated in the same way (see Table 5.2b). Discrepancies in responses about delegate numbers between management and delegates similar to those of the 1990 AWIRS survey occurred in the 1995 AWIRS survey.²⁰ The difference between the AWIRS weighting and the ABS data is significantly less, while the possible effect of internal category variations is greater, but still less than one per cent of the estimate of the total number of delegates. The estimate of 10,000 delegates in all smaller workplaces is still used, even though the rate of delegates in these workplaces had dropped by at least one-third according to

¹⁹ ABS and AWIRS data on the number of employees in the workforce are also not strictly comparable for certain other reasons.

The ABS figures referred to the number of employees. The AWIRS asked about the number of employee positions in workplaces, which would be higher because about 200,000 employees had second jobs.

The ABS included and AWIRS excluded employees in the agriculture, forestry and fishing, and defence sectors. The number of employees for whom employment in these sectors is their main job is again about 200,000.

Not only do these two variations tend to cancel each other out in terms of total numbers, each area of variation has or is likely to have low rates of unionisation.

²⁰ Among these discrepancies were a few delegates who reported the number of their own union's delegates in their workplace, but not the total number of delegates, where management had not stated a number of delegates.

the small workplace survey. Thus, delegates are estimated to have numbered 78,000, in 1990. Among 6.89 million employees, the delegate rate was 1.13. The rate had fallen by more than 12 per cent since 1990—that is, at at least three times the pace at which it declined in the 1980s.

Union Density and Industrial Disputes

Union density and the level of industrial disputation were also falling during the long Labor decade (see Table 5.3²¹). In the 1980s, the decline in union density and strike action might be considered as a reversion from the 1970s strike waves to a ‘normal’ time. Compared with the period after the post-war strike wave, in the 1950s and 1960s, the decline in union density was similar, according to the figures supplied by unions (see Figure 5.1²²). The level of strikes in the 1980s was somewhat more than in the 1950s and 1960s: as well, the number of union bans campaigns reached a peak in the middle years of the 1980s.²³ This maintenance of union density and industrial disputation in 1980s occurred even though unemployment, which is often thought to inhibit union organisation and activity, was higher in the 1980s than in the earlier period. Then, in the 1990s, union density and the level of workers’ industrial action collapsed.

²¹ From 1913, the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted a census of unions annually. The membership figures provided by unions are not reliable for determining union density because workers who were members of more than one union were double counted and unemployed and unfinancial members were included. The ABS first surveyed households about union membership in 1976, then in 1982, 1986, 1988 and 1990, and annually from 1992. The household survey is now generally used to measure union density. The union census data allows some comparison of union densities between periods because the basis of its collection remained unchanged.

²² For Figure 5.1, the 1982-1995 span of years in the 1980s and 1990s arises from the availability of the household survey of union members. The choice of the 1955-1968 span of years, within the overall period of decline in union density from 1953-1970, rather than starting in 1953 or finishing in 1970, is based on there being some similarity between the declines in union density before and after this span of years and those of the long Labor decade. In the latter case, according to the members’ survey, union density in 1976 was 51 per cent, and also continued to fall after 1995. A consequence of these choices for year spans is to *downplay* the acceleration of the rate of decline in union density in the last years of the later period.

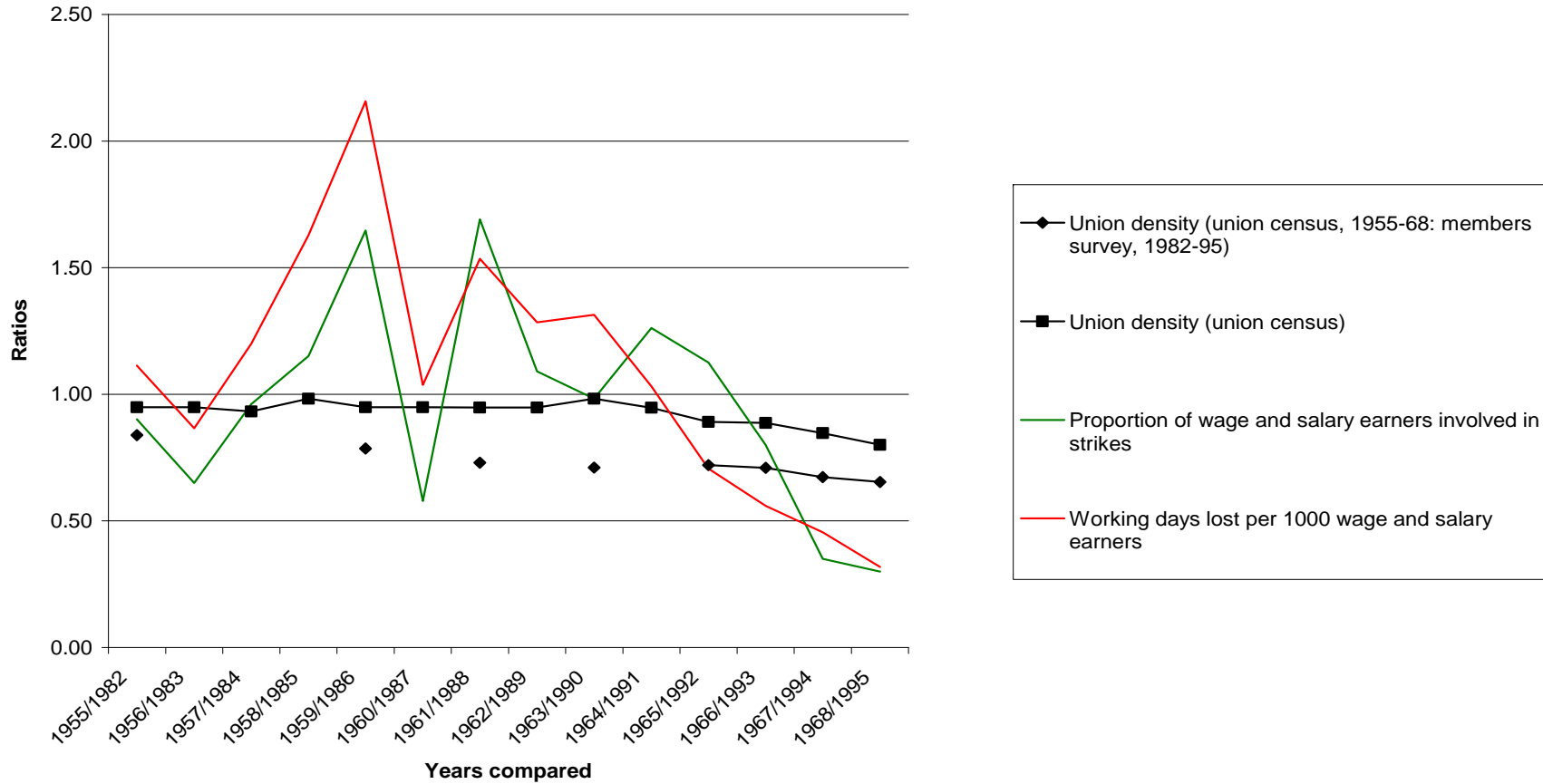
²³ James Ted McDonald, ‘Work Bans in Mining and Manufacturing’, *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 38, no. 1, March 1996, pp. 43-52; Robyn Lindsay Sheen, *Patterns in Australian Industrial Conflict: 1973-1989*, PhD thesis, Political Science, Australian National University, 1992, p. 72. These two researchers used a weekly digest of industrial activity published by the federal industrial relations department. From August 1988, the digest changed to a monthly publication: *Report on Industrial Disputes*. From this point, it always reported fewer strikes than the ABS (even though strikes in which less than ten working days lost were included in the digest): this difference grew more or less exponentially until the digest ceased in 1995. Its presentation of bans appears to follow a similar trend to that of its misrepresentation of strikes. This suggests that with the transition to a monthly publication, the digest’s data collection became unreliable and that this unreliability increased as time went on. No attempt has been made here to extend the research based on the digest.

Table 5.3 Union density and industrial militancy, 1979-95

Year	Union density: household survey	Union density: union census	Wage and salary earners involved in strikes	Working days lost per 1000 wage and salary earners
1979		55%	37%	778
1980		55%	22%	633
1981		54%	23%	779
1982	49.5%	56%	13%	370
1983		56%	9%	313
1984		55%	10%	241
1985		57%	10%	225
1986	45.6%	55%	12%	242
1987		55%	10%	221
1988	41.6%	54%	15%	266
1989		54%	11%	184
1990	40.5%	56%	11%	210
1991		53%	18%	250
1992	39.6%	49%	14%	148
1993	37.6%	47%	8%	100
1994	35.0%	44%	4%	76
1995	32.7%	40%	5%	79

Sources: Trade Unions Statistics 6323.0, Trade Union Members 6325.0, Foster, R.A., *Australian Economic Statistics*, pp. 187, 213; Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, p. 26

Figure 5.1 Union density and industrial militancy, 1982-95 compared with 1955-68



Sources: Trade Union Statistics 6323.0; Trade Union Members 6325.0; Foster, R.A., *Australian Economic Statistics 1949-50 to 1994-95*, Reserve Bank of Australia, Sydney, 1996, pp. 187, 213; Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, p. 26.

The many historical examples of 'industrial action providing the critical point for changes in union membership' and the simultaneity of the falls in industrial activity and union density suggest a positive causal relationship between the two phenomena is possible. However, they do not seem to have been statistically related overall in postwar Australia.²⁴ Instead, there might be one or more independent causes of the falls in both industrial activity and union density.

In this regard, previous arguments about the decline in union density can be considered. For example, no claims have been made in the literature about trends in the period in the factors that are thought to influence individual decisions to become or continue to be a union member. Furthermore, the evidence, such as the accelerating decline in union density, does not consistently support the arguments that proposed factors such as reduced employment in sectors of the workforce that are highly unionised,²⁵ unfavourable macroeconomic variations or most institutional and organisational changes.²⁶ Also, these arguments supposed the decline in union density followed from changes that had reduced workers' willingness to unionise. Yet survey responses show that the 'propensity' of workers to join unions did not decline in the first half of the 1990s.²⁷ Also, a comparison of the 1979 PAS and 1996 AES suggests that

²⁴ Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, ch. 5; Bruce Western, 'Postwar Unionization in Eighteen Advanced Capitalist Countries', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 58, no. 2, April 1993, p. 277.

²⁵ Such arguments, as explanations for an overall decline in union density, also ignore union movements' past successes in organising emergent industries, occupations and groups of workers: Dianne Fieldes, 'From Exploitation to Resistance and Revolt: The Working Class', in Rick Kuhn (ed.), *Class and Struggle in Australia*, Sydney, Pearson Longman, 2005, p. 62; Griffin and Svensen, 'The Decline of Australian Union Density', p. 507.

²⁶ Griffin and Svensen, 'The Decline of Australian Union Density', pp. 507-33; Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, ch. 6; Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, p. 150; David Peetz, 'The Accord and the Paradigm Shift in Union Membership', in Andrew Wilson, et al. (eds), *Australia in Accord: An Evaluation of the Prices and Incomes Accord in the Hawke-Keating Years*, Melbourne, South Pacific Publishing, 2000, pp. 142-44; Bruce Western, 'The Puzzle of Australian Union Decline', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 32, no. 1, March 1996, p. 40. John Kelly matches the periods of transition and stability in long waves of capitalist development to trends in union density—economic transition to union growth and economic stability to union decline—for twentieth century Britain: Kelly, *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, ch. 5. However, Australian developments do not follow this course closely.

²⁷ Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, pp. 38-41. The common practice is to identify a stated willingness to join a union as 'union propensity', but workers' statement of this does not exhibit the 'natural or habitual inclination' that would arise from their situation as employees, which the term suggests, but a more conscious phenomenon—their belief that being union members would help satisfy that inclination.

workers' unionisation behaviour strengthened slightly between the two surveys.²⁸ More specifically, most workers when asked in surveys stated the Accord was a 'good idea', a measure of opinion confirmed by the impressions of union officials and the experience of at least one Accord opponent.²⁹

According to David Peetz, the decline in union density should instead be explained principally by the reduced 'reach' of unions to workers. This had occurred, he argued, because of the decline in compulsory unionism, which had accelerated in the 1990s, like the decline in union density. He considered this an institutional change in industrial relations. In support of this argument, he observed that the loss of compulsory unionism was concentrated in workplaces where 'employee attachment' to unions was weak and that union density in 'open jobs' remained almost unchanged. These points, however:

- Beg the question of whether employee attachment to unions in each such workplace had always been weak or only *became* weaker during the period, thereby newly opening the way to compulsory unionism being removed and a reduction in union density.
- Ignore that the stable union density of open jobs of about one-quarter involved the continual recombination of the workplaces where the 'closed shop' had just ended, which generally had higher union densities than that, with the workplaces that were already 'open jobs', which must therefore have had falling union densities.³⁰

The common problem of these previous arguments about a factor that contributed to the decline in union density is that they do not consider union membership as a collective action. Their emphasis has been on the factor's effect on workers generally

²⁸ This comparison involves responses to:

- Questions about being a union member.
- Questions about compulsory union organisation and, for compulsorily organised union members, if they would otherwise have been members voluntarily, in the 1979 PAS.
- Questions about union membership preference and circumstances of union organisation, in the 1996 AES.

Of employees surveyed in 1979, 40 per cent of the 32 per cent who were in compulsorily unionised jobs wanted to be union members and 27.5 per cent of those who were not compulsorily unionised were union members. Therefore, 31.5 per cent of employees showed they wished to be unionised.

In 1996, 10 per cent of employees surveyed were in compulsorily unionised jobs and of them 51 per cent agreed they would rather be in a union. Among the remaining employees, 32.5 per cent were unionised. Overall, the exhibited willingness of workers to join unions was 34.3 per cent.

²⁹ Peter Gahan and Simon Bell, 'Union Strategy, Membership Orientation and Union Effectiveness: An Exploratory Analysis', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 9, no. 3, April 1999; Dick Nichols, 'Party and Resistance Work in Industry', *The Activist*, vol. 3, no. 1, February 1993, p. 24; Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, p. 151.

³⁰ Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, pp. 84-97; Peetz, 'The Accord and the Paradigm Shift', pp. 142, 151-153. Peetz used a union membership retention rate of 35-54 per cent for his calculations of the impact of the drop in compulsory unionism on union density.

joining and leaving unions, not on how the factor influences a worker to be part of or to withdraw from the core for organising collective action among workers who can then mobilise a broader mass of workers as union members.

Some of the literature and also aspects of the experience of unions addresses the relationship of union activism and, in particular, delegates to union density. For example, one argument about why union density declined is that the Accord blunted the enthusiasm of union officials and organisers.³¹ Such an effect would have been counteracted, however, by both the increase in the number of union full-timers and, in the 1990s, the inclusion in their ranks of Organising Works union recruiters.³² By the end of the long Labor decade, many union officials were themselves emphasising the role that delegates played in successful union organising.³³ Later analysis of the AWIRS panel responses shows that between 1990 and 1995 union density was better maintained in workplaces where union delegates were present and better still if delegates had been active in bargaining.³⁴ Yet that analysis did not consider trends in the number or effectiveness of delegates.

What is proposed here is that the decline in the delegate rate and the losses in the relative effectiveness of delegates' contributions to workers' mobilisation and the creation of a labour movement help to explain the declines of both union density and the level of industrial action during the long Labor decade. In the 1990s, the decline of

³¹ Griffin and Svensen, 'The Decline of Australian Union Density', p. 526.

³² The Organising Works recruiters had little success at this time. See: Recruitment and Retention, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Z628, Box 21, Noel Butlin Archive, Canberra; Recruitment and Retention 1996, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Z628, Box 21, Noel Butlin Archive, Canberra; Gerard Griffin and Rosetta Moors, 'The Fall and Rise of Organising in a Blue-collar Union', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 46, no. 4, March 2004, pp. 39-40, 42-45; Adrian Tuazon, 'Is Trade Unionism on the Road to Extinction', *Frontline*, no. 29, October 1995, pp. 11-12.

³³ Rae Cooper, 'Commentary', in Ron Callus and Russell Lansbury (eds), *Working Futures: The Changing Nature of Work and Employment Relations in Australia*, Sydney, The Federation Press, 2002, p. 134; Edward M. Davis, 'The 1995 ACTU Congress: Recruitment and Retention', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, June 1996, p. 170. For examples of this role of delegates, see: Edward Davis, 'Trade Unions, Myth and Reality', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 2, June 1978, p. 22; Lindsay Tanner, *The Last Battle*, Melbourne, Kokkino Press, 1996, p. 213; Louise Thornthwaite, 'Union Growth, Recruitment Strategy and Women Workers: Queensland telephonists in the 1970s', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 7, no. 1, June 1996, pp. 94-104; Mindy Thorpe, 'Members Responses to Union Activity at the Workplace: An Empirical Study of Members' Perceptions of Support from and Commitment to the Transport Workers Union, Queensland Branch', in Raymond Harbridge, et al. (eds), *Current Research in Industrial Relations: Proceedings of the 12th AIRAANZ Conference*, Wellington, Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand, February 1988.

³⁴ Michael Alexander et al., 'Delegate Structures and Strategic Unionism: Analysis of Factors in Union Resilience', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 40, no. 4, December 1998, pp. 668-70, 675-82; Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, pp. 114-20. Alexander et al and Peetz both discussed the relationship between union density and delegate presence and number in parallel with discussion of the relationship between workers' satisfaction with unions and delegate presence and numbers: Alexander et al., 'Delegate Structures and Strategic Unionism', pp. 667-69, 673-75; Peetz, *Unions in a Contrary World*, pp. 48-49, 139-40. This suggests they did not perceive delegates as directly promoting union density through networking.

the delegate rate accelerated, as did the declines in union density and workers' struggle.

This is an argument that, among other things, the reach of unions retreated, but this was in the form of a weakening of the attachment of workers to unions through their delegates. In the period, and especially in the 1990s, delegates increasingly failed to constitute a network which organised workers as a labour movement.

The decline in the delegate rate was not as great as that of union density, although the sizes of these declines grew closer as both fell rapidly in the 1990s. In part, other factors might influence union density, albeit less significantly. Also, what motivates workers to become, act as, and remain delegates need not be the same as, nor have the same dynamics as, what motivates workers to join and stay in unions. The motivation of workers to participate as delegates is what this chapter will now discuss. In that context, some arguments that the Accord played a part in the decline in union density which are supported by regression analysis will be considered. These arguments include that: the Accord did not provide unions with coherent 'solidaristic' ideology; it stopped unions from assuming an oppositional stance; it weakened the economic power of individual unions; and it was adopted undemocratically.³⁵

Delegate Motivations

The decline in delegate numbers drove much of the decline in union density. To explain the decline in union density, then, the decline in delegate numbers must be explained.

In 2002, the co-director of the ACTU Organising Centre, Michael Crosby, argued 'that almost every union reports the loss of a generation of activists' because:

Delegates ... tend[ed] to be the most highly skilled and experienced workers. The incentive for them to take a redundancy package ... was intense. They could achieve a large payout and be confident of another job.³⁶

This prospect would have been attractive to many individual delegates. For example, an anecdotal belief among anti-Accord federal public service delegates was that the union's delegate structures had been gutted as long-employed delegates took redundancies.³⁷

Other evidence, however, does not support the view that redundancies meant extensive losses of union activists were inevitable. According to the 1995 AWIRS panel delegate respondents, at least for their unions the overall delegate rate had not deteriorated. The delegates in these workplaces had stayed, or had been replaced by

³⁵ Gahan and Bell, 'Union Strategy'; Griffin and Svensen, 'The Decline of Australian Union Density', p. 526.

³⁶ Crosby, 'Down with the Dictator', p.124.

³⁷ Author's recollection.

others. The fall in the delegate rate in the 1990s appears to have been concentrated in new workplaces. In those, delegates who had taken packages and started working again could have been delegates once more, or other workers could have become delegates for the first time, but neither had. Perhaps sometimes in a new workplace no worker was in any sense willing to be an active unionist, but since two surveys of unionists have found that 20-30 per cent of those who responded would consider being delegates or otherwise active in their union, that seems unlikely to have been a general experience.³⁸

One issue posed is whether or not the motivations existed to turn the willingness of many workers to consider being a delegate into the action of becoming and staying one.³⁹ The literature about delegate motivations has largely considered the situation in Britain: there delegates have traditionally had a greater role at the workplace in collective bargaining than delegates in Australia.⁴⁰ Two Australian studies, one, by John Benson, of the leadership and ideology of power industry delegates in Victoria and another, by Stephen Cahoon and Jim Garnham, of the functions of senior delegates, each asked the reasons why their interviewees had become delegates, but in doing so failed to distinguish between the purposes and the catalysts among the workers' motivations to be delegates. Research by Barbara Pocock which was concerned with women's participation in union leadership in South Australia asked female and male unionists 'if you are active in the union, why are you active?', prompting consideration in the unionists' responses of the purpose of their activism.⁴¹

Two recent Australian studies explore why workers are delegates more thoroughly. A study of the role that nursing delegates play in union organising discusses some of the principal traits of delegates and also a broad range of the catalysts union members

³⁸ Barbara Pocock and Centre for Labour Studies, Union Membership in South Australia [computer file], Canberra, Australian Social Science Data Archive, The Australian National University, 1993; Timothy Bartram et al., 'The Role of Job Representatives in an Organizing Strategy: The Case of the Australian Nursing Federation', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2008, pp. 35-37. In fact, Bartram et al. state that 'almost 50 percent of rank-and-file members indicated that in some circumstance they might consider becoming a representative', although they do not offer further explanation of this: Bartram et al., 'The Role of Job Representatives', p. 41.

³⁹ In at least some industries, other factors might also have come into play. A boilermaker stated that construction workers with a history of union activism were finding it hard to get work, so "unions are finding it hard to get blokes to have a go, take the delegate's job": Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work*, p. 128.

⁴⁰ Greg J. Bamber and Claire Runciman, 'Foodco', in Russell Lansbury and Duncan Macdonald (eds), *Workplace Industrial Relations: Australian Case Studies*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 189; Darlington, 'Shop Stewards' Leadership', p. 103; Simon De Turberville, 'Union Decline and Renewal in Australia and Britain: Lessons from Closed Shops', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, vol. 28, no. 3, August 2007, pp. 390-92.

⁴¹ Pocock and Centre for Labour Studies, Union Membership, question 28; John Benson, *Unions at the Workplace: Shop Steward Leadership and Ideology*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 54-57; Cahoon and Garnham, 'The Functions of the Australian Shop Steward', p. 107; Barbara Pocock, *Raising Our Voices: Activism amongst Women and Men in South Australian Unions*, Adelaide, Centre for Labour Studies, 1994. Benson's study was conducted in 1982.

might require to become delegates, but its presentation of the importance of the various motivations continues to confuse purposes and catalysts. Andreas Pekarek's research is concerned solely with the factors relevant to workers being delegates. His analysis distinguishes purposes and catalysts. However, he discussed purposes in terms of the traits of delegates. It does not attend to the problem of how workers come to understand that by being a delegate they might attain what they, because of their traits, want.⁴²

A number of personal traits have been found to be potentially significant in priming workers to be delegates. The literature suggests that the more important of these are altruism; a sense of responsibility for oneself as part of a group; and an ideological commitment to unionism.

Altruism is cited most often as the trait relevant to being a union delegate. This is supported by the relevance of altruism to the purpose workers most frequently claim for being a delegate or union activist. In the SA survey, about half of those who were active unionists stated that 'to help other workers' motivated their activism. The other two motives that more than a third of these active unionist respondents each cited —'I want better wages and conditions' and 'to stand up for myself'—also suggest altruism. Being an active unionist would have benefited other workers, at least in the workers' own workplace, as much as the active unionist. A delegate, who would typically identify with fellow union members in the workplace as a group, would usually have felt that to be important. This result is reinforced by Pekarek's finding that altruistic purposes were often the principal reason why his interviewees had become delegates. This finding held even though he attributed workers' feelings of reciprocal obligation after union assistance in grievance resolution to a concept of exchange. Instead, that situation could be understood to have encouraged the worker to express his or her altruism. Compared with altruism, self-interest appears to be not very important in being a union delegate. In the SA survey, few were interested in a career in the movement. The individual benefits of being a delegate that are more frequently cited by delegates, such as acquiring skills and having more varied and interesting working lives, are not generally material ones.⁴³

Despite the literature's emphasis on altruism as a trait of delegates, this is less directly related to a delegate's conclusion that being a delegate will serve his or her

⁴² Bartram et al., 'The Role of Job Representatives', pp. 29-32, 35-37, 39-42; Andreas Pekarek, 'Why Become a Shop Steward? Evidence from Australian Unions', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 19, no. 3, April 2009.

⁴³ Bartram et al., 'The Role of Job Representatives', p. 41; R.J. Moore, 'Motivation to Become a Shop Steward', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 18, no. 1, March 1980, p. 97; Pekarek, 'Why Become a Shop Steward?', pp. 172-73, 177-78; Pocock, *Raising Our Voices*, p. 40.

purposes, altruistic or otherwise, than other traits. A delegate's altruism may be more a context to being a delegate. The altruism generates friendships and demonstrates the nature of the leadership offered, and, through that, those who will be led can come to consent to that leadership.⁴⁴

The sense of responsibility to oneself and to others a delegate might have, however, generates a mood to 'take charge' and gain some control over workplace matters of concern to workers.⁴⁵ A worker might be a delegate in order to satisfy this mood.

Another expression of union activists' sense of responsibility is the desire of delegates to influence how their union operates or, if necessary, to which union they belong. For example, a new Amalgamated Metal Workers Union (AMWU) shop steward at shipbuilding in Fremantle told an interviewer 'the union upholds the principle of democracy, and that's very important to me'.⁴⁶ Shearers in Victoria formed the Shearers and Rural Workers Union in 1994 in competition with the Australian Workers Union: soon some mushroom pickers, who also had been AWU members, became activists in the new union because they wanted 'to choose our own union [and] to negotiate wages and conditions'.⁴⁷ Delegates are more likely to act if they believe they can achieve what they want, and to stop their activity if they do not.

The commitment to unionism among delegates emphasises unions' contributions to social justice and their political role. Often it springs from a family background of union support and is congruent with a delegate's political and cultural views. Yet few delegates state that a belief in union principles was why they became a delegate. Commitment to unionism incorporates broader elements of workers' outlooks, such as a 'general interest in matters affecting workers'⁴⁸ and a 'generally more adversarial approach to management'.⁴⁹ It involves some combination of:

- Identification with fellow workers. The delegate knows the concerns, desires and perspectives of other workers and puts that knowledge into practice in social

⁴⁴ Grannis et al., 'Working Connections', p. 667.

⁴⁵ Bartram et al., 'The Role of Job Representatives', p. 42; Moore, 'Motivation to Become a Shop Steward', p. 97.

⁴⁶ Chris Lindsay, 'Metalworkers at the Forefront of Change', *Workplace*, Summer 1992-93, p. 25.

⁴⁷ *Green Left Weekly*, 1994-1995; Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work*, pp. 82-83. These workers' union affiliation was recognised by the Victorian Employee Relations Commission. In the 1990s, some mineworkers in SA, Tasmania, the Pilbara and at Mt Isa also left the AWU and joined the CFMEU. This was opposed by federal and state industrial relations commissions, and AWU coverage was restored: *Green Left Weekly*, 1993, 1995; Doug Hunt, 'Union Rationalisation: The Case of Mount Isa Mines', in Tom Bramble, et al. (eds), *Current Research in Industrial Relations*, Brisbane, Proceedings of the 11th AIRAANZ Conference, February 1997, pp. 169-71.

⁴⁸ Benson, *Unions at the Workplace*, p. 56.

⁴⁹ Darlington, 'Shop Stewards' Leadership', p. 109.

networking.⁵⁰ For example, a finance sector delegate, Alison McLellan, stated: 'I knew the problems that women faced in the workplace'.⁵¹

- A collectivist orientation which rests on concepts of solidarity and unity. This strengthens the relationship between identification and activism.⁵² Scott Bartlett, another workplace representative for the Finance Sector Union, told an interviewer:

Our [bank] branch didn't have someone to circulate information, raise topics and report back to the FSU. I thought it was important for someone to do it ... My philosophy about unionism has always been 'as long as members stick together, there'll always be strength in numbers'.⁵³

- A distrust of employers.⁵⁴ 'If you don't complain, they won't fix it', Trevor Rodda, the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) sectional committee chairman at Olympic Dam, suggested in an interview.⁵⁵

A delegate's commitment to unionism need not imply radicalism. Michael Gutteridge, a shop steward in the confectioners' union, which was regarded as a left-wing union, resigned because of personal problems. He explained that:

[I] cannot devote as much time as I would like [to be a delegate]; union members deserve one who can ... devote 100% of his time to the cause. This of course to me, means peace + harmony between both company and union.⁵⁶

Nor did this commitment necessarily involve much interest in politics or a view that the delegate's union role is political. Delegates, Pekarek suggested, typically feel their political interest increases once they have taken up the position.⁵⁷ Confusion is also engendered in this regard by difficulties in thinking of politics other than in its mainstream forms. For example, a union activist, Fleur, considered herself 'a political animal', but she had 'became disenchanted with the union movement—too political without being really political'. She had not pursued a possible job as an organiser because 'I wasn't interested in rising through the channels'.⁵⁸

Nonetheless, a delegate needs to develop a radical image of society and to push for a greater say for workers in order to move away from a passive and legalistic

⁵⁰ Grannis et al., 'Working Connections', p. 651, 654-55, 662-663.

⁵¹ Paul Bird, 'Amalgamation Helps Unions Confront Change', *Workplace*, Winter 1994, p. 37.

⁵² Bartram et al., 'The Role of Job Representatives', p. 41.

⁵³ Bird, 'Amalgamation Helps Unions Confront Change', p. 37.

⁵⁴ Bartram et al., 'The Role of Job Representatives', pp. 41-42.

⁵⁵ Mark Hearn, 'The Big One Grows Bigger', *Workplace*, Winter 1993, p. 23.

⁵⁶ Michael Gutteridge, Letter to Carlo [Frizzerio], Food Preservers Union, Box F5, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 23 February 1993. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁷ Sue Bull et al., 'Experiences in Rebuilding the Community and Public Sector Union', *The Activist*, vol. 4, no. 15, December 1994, p. 37; Pekarek, 'Why Become a Shop Steward?', p. 176. Pekarek also considers he found the party membership of workers when they become delegates to be low. Yet three of his admittedly small sample of 17 delegates had been ALP members, a high proportion compared with overall proportion of workers who are ALP (or other left party) members.

⁵⁸ Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work*, p. 27.

pursuit of union members' wishes towards dynamically representing the members.⁵⁹ In Britain, researchers have found that 'key stewards displayed both ideological and political orientations which reflected a motive to resist': their organising *a priori* challenged management while making deals to achieve effective unionisation.⁶⁰ Among a small sample of Australian senior delegates nearly half cited their belief in union principles as one of the reasons they had become a delegate.⁶¹

Moreover, while the 'agitator' theory of strikes should be disregarded, the views and organisations of militants play an important part in their decisions about whether or not being a delegate would be purposeful. In particular, members of left political parties have communication and coordination resources, a concern about the history and development of struggle and the potential for change, and a commitment to propounding ideas and distributing literature for political influence and adherents.⁶²

The motivations to be a delegate, however, do not involve only the reasons through which many workers might stand ready to be one. The relationship of the leader and the led are generally reciprocal.⁶³ Not only personal factors, but also social processes, helped determine who delegates were.⁶⁴ Encouragement for the worker to be a delegate is the most significant of the catalysts which impel a worker to be a delegate. Very often, fellow workers, including delegates and former delegates, or a union organiser identify as a potential delegate a worker who speaks out at meetings and ask that worker to take on the role.⁶⁵ If a worker must first speak out before others can encourage him or her to be a delegate, this might suggest the worker needs self-confidence. Yet the personal factors that might contribute to such self-confidence, such as prior organisational experience, even in unions through mass meetings and

⁵⁹ Yonatan Reshef, 'Shop Stewards' Image of Industrial Society and their Modes of Performance', Journal of Industrial Relations, vol. 30, no. 2, June 1988, pp. 235-42.

⁶⁰ Tony Dundon, 'Post-privatised Shop Steward Organisation and Union Renewal at Girobank', Industrial Relations Journal, vol. 29, no. 2, June 1998, pp. 133-34. Also: Stephanie Jameson and Keith Johnson, 'Hotel Shop Stewards—a Critical Factor in the Development of Industrial Relations in Hotels?', International Journal of Hospitality Management, vol. 8, no. 2, 1989, p. 172.

⁶¹ Cahoon and Garnham, 'The Functions of the Australian Shop Steward', p. 107.

⁶² Darlington, 'Shop Stewards' Leadership', pp. 103-10. See also: Thompson, 'The Capital-Labour Relation', p. 64.

⁶³ A partial exception is suggested here because a union officialdom or a political current, for example, may support workers for selection as delegates in order to promote its views among union members to the exclusion of alternative views.

⁶⁴ These motivations should not be confused with the mechanisms for obtaining the position of delegate (election, appointment and so on).

⁶⁵ Pekarek, 'Why Become a Shop Steward?', pp. 168, 178-179. Examples of such encouragement would include the author's own experience and see: Peter Murphy, 'Transport's New Driver', Workplace, Autumn 1994, pp. 30-33; Greg Reilly, 'First Elected Female Official', The Metal Worker, vol. 5, no. 9, October 1984, p. 9. More informal discussions could also be an opportunity for workers to first identify and then encourage a workmate to be a delegate. Occasionally, written, conflictual debate has ensued, such as when a letter of complaint was written by some members about a confectionery workers delegate, to which a large group of members responded in support of the delegate: Food Preservers Union, Shop Stewards Correspondence, Food Preservers Union, Box F5, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 1994.

industrial action, have not been found to be a strong influence on a worker being a delegate. A worker speaks out to express their concerns, not with an intention to lead. Officials and other workers observe this effort: the confidence the worker needs to be a delegate is theirs to grant. Workers also sometimes feel compelled by their own experiences of unsatisfactory representation in the workplace or experiences of management injustice to be delegates, but such self-determined decisions to pursue selection as delegates tend to occur when the encouragement of others is not available.⁶⁶

The forms that encouragement to be a delegate take will vary substantially. Individual unions and workplaces have had different organising cultures, and union leaderships and policies change. The membership growth of unions during campaigning may be related to the chances that then arise to find and mentor potential new activists. For example, as the nurses' union in Victoria pursued its wages and conditions campaigns from 1984-86, 'members [were] volunteering to be key members, [for] positions which had previously been difficult to fill'.⁶⁷ Female organisers from the Challenge leadership in the ACT branch of the Public Sector Union (PSU) believed that their assertive profile encouraged middle-aged women, and also some younger women and men, to become more active.⁶⁸

The intentions and the catalysts involved in workers becoming and continuing to be delegates are not those involved in workers joining unions. The previously discussed discounting of arguments that the Accord affected the propensity of workers to join unions does not apply. The arguments above about the Accord causing a decline in union density through adverse effects on union solidarity, oppositional culture, economic power and/or democracy can be considered as arguments about how the Accord reduced the motivations to be a union delegate. If the presence of delegates in workplaces and the delegate rate consequently declined, then a decline in union density would follow.

⁶⁶ Grannis et al., 'Working Connections', pp. 651, 667-668; David Peetz et al., 'Activism amongst Workplace Union Delegates', *International Journal of Employment Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, October 2002; Pekarek, 'Why Become a Shop Steward?', pp. 161-163, 172-76, 178-83; Pocock, *Raising Our Voices*, pages. Many workers resist leading their colleagues because of their feeling that they lack familiarity with industrial matters. Another personal factor, difficulties with the English language, has been a barrier to a worker being a delegate.

⁶⁷ Heather Gardner and Brigid McCoppin, 'The Politicisation of Australian Nurses: Victoria 1984-1986', *Politics*, vol. 22, no. 1, May 1987, p. 26.

⁶⁸ Bull et al., 'Experiences in Rebuilding', p. 37.

The Accord Drives Down Motivations to Be Delegates

The successful efforts of unions under the Accord to reduce industrial disputes presumably reduced the opportunities for workers to hear others speak out and thus learn who they should encourage to be delegates. However, evidence is not readily available to substantiate this. Comparatively, a considerable array of anecdotal material supports the view that the aims and practices of the Accord did not motivate workers to be delegates.

Under the Accord, the unions generally eschewed industrial action in support of claims, largely opposed extra claims beyond the provisions of the Accord, backed the introduction of grievance procedures as an alternative to industrial action in response to employer breaches of agreements and, as time went on, traded away past gains in working conditions in attempts to maintain or improve pay. To delegates, all that would have appeared to contradict their taking on the task of controlling workplace conditions and to fail to assert workers' power. The unions' push for consultative mechanisms in the workplace did not compensate for this because managements maintained control of how decisions were made in the workplace.⁶⁹ So, for example, one experienced firefighter serving on his union branch's committee of management had 'lost faith in the whole process' after young union officials argued for negotiations, rather than for the industrial action through which, he believed, the union would set the terms for an agreement.⁷⁰

Delegates would have also felt a loss of control in their unions. The Victorian nurses union secretary, Irene Bolger, considered that 'the unions [had] altered their relationship with their own memberships ... the union is dictating to its membership the appropriate course of action, rather than vice versa'.⁷¹ According to the former AMWU researcher Chris Lloyd, many workers had lost their 'belief that they actually have some power in the wage fixing process'.⁷² That change of mind was well founded. The discussions unions had had in the past about preparing logs of claims had often been reduced to wrangling over small changes.⁷³ Campaigns to win claims and implement changes were controlled from above. As a result, for example:

- A Waterside Workers Federation member observed 'less keen participation by the members than has historically been the case' in his union when 'a top-down

⁶⁹ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, pp. 152-53.

⁷⁰ Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work*, pp. 30-31.

⁷¹ Irene Bolger, 'Australia Reconstructed: A Personal View', *Arena*, no. 83, 1988, p. 162.

⁷² Peter Ewer et al., 'A Change of Heart', *Australian Left Review*, no. 134, November 1991.

⁷³ O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, p. 48.

mechanism of ... decision-making' about restructuring on the wharves was used.⁷⁴

- A metal workers' delegate at a meeting in Adelaide at the end of 1993 described how the rank and file had questioned him about a campaign in his workplace cut short by a deal done at a higher level of the union, He then asked who would be a delegate in such circumstances.⁷⁵

Mobilisations at the local level were now often organised in order to achieve consent to changes in work practices: in shipping, the Seamen's Union organised stopwork meetings which agreed to job restructuring, with reduced crews on new vessels, before the determination of compensatory wage increases. If union activists were opposed to restructuring, as, for example, a survey among union organisers in the construction industry found, little time was available to discuss that.⁷⁶ Bolger argued the unions were compelled to enforce the Accord upon their membership because of 'the extent to which the Accord has successfully ascribed to unions the role of policing the values of the capitalist'.⁷⁷

The amalgamations of unions at this time were also imposed on the ranks of the unions, in contrast to the unions' previous history of member-driven amalgamations and concern for grassroots participation in decision-making. According to Herb Thompson, the purpose of the amalgamations was the reconstruction of unions as agents of productivity reform: the arbitration commission, which had the power to grant a union sole coverage in a workplace or an industry, backed this.⁷⁸ Bill Ethel, federal president of the Building Workers Industrial Union, around which a CFMEU division that covered much of the construction industry was built, thought that among construction workers amalgamations had been 'enormously destructive' because 'our energies were tied up in this bureaucratic restructuring, rather than restructuring on the job'.⁷⁹ The clerks union's Victorian branch secretary Lindsay Tanner cited instances of changes of union coverage under new federal awards that had inferior conditions: the 'invariable result was ... deunionisation'.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Geoff Walsh, 'Wharfies' Restructuring Goes Ahead', *Direct Action*, no. 740, 22 May 1990, p. 3.

⁷⁵ *Green Left Weekly*, 1 December 1993.

⁷⁶ Richard Morris, 'Shipping's New Industrial Relations: The International Context and the Australian Experience', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 32, no. 3, September 1990, pp. 325-28; Thompson and Tracy, 'The Building and Construction Industry', pp. 79-80.

⁷⁷ Bolger, 'Australia Reconstructed', p. 162.

⁷⁸ Herb Thompson, 'Enterprise Bargaining and the Accord', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 30, December 1992, pp. 49-50.

⁷⁹ Liz Ross, *Dare to Struggle Dare to Win! Builders Labourers Fight Deregistration 1981-94*, Melbourne, Vulgar Press, 2004, pp. 256-57.

⁸⁰ Tanner, *The Last Battle*, p. 186.

The larger unions created by amalgamation would have meant an individual unionist was more likely to believe they could not influence their union's direction through activism. The difficulties of creating the larger leadership groups needed to win union elections also probably frustrated some of those seeking through reform groups to change how their unions worked.⁸¹

Union efforts to achieve productivity increases undermined the chance for workers to realise their union commitment through being a delegate. Industry and award restructuring began to be implemented at the workplace level in 1987, and was followed by enterprise bargaining in 1991. The reactions of delegates to their engagement in workplace negotiations about restructuring were mixed. Delegates at telecommunications manufacturer Ericssons pointed out that: 'things will change inevitably, and therefore it is best that the employees and their union put forward positive change proposals and not simply react to management's ideas'.⁸² At a fertiliser factory in Kwinana years of restructuring discussion involved six union officials and thirty delegates: all the while, according to an organiser, Ann Tombs, 'nobody knew what it meant ... [yet you were] supposed to get in the workplace and do it'.⁸³ Also, the context of such negotiations tended to orient union activists towards their relationships with management before those with the workforce. Delegates' efforts to keep factories operating sometimes extended to putting together consortia including plant managers and various business operations, and finding money for feasibility studies.⁸⁴

As well, wage claims proceeded in different industries on different bases and with varying capacities to achieve 'structural efficiency'. Campaigning became fragmented, which cut across solidarity among workers.⁸⁵ Moreover, those who were or might have been active in unions tended to be relatively uninterested in personal advancement and more interested in collective action and results. Thus, they, compared with other workers, could be expected to feel there was less value in the prospects held out for the Accord, such as the substitution of services-based unionism for industrial organisation, the trading-off of conditions for nominal wage increases, and even

⁸¹ John Adamson et al., 'What Alternative to Keltysism?', *Direct Action*, no. 740, 22 May 1990, p. 9.

⁸² Ericssons Shop Stewards Seminar, Proposals Emanating from 3 Day Ericssons Shop Stewards Seminar on Restructuring, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 666, Restructuring Oct '88, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 5 September 1988 (received).

⁸³ O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, pp. 47-48.

⁸⁴ J. Blackwell, Progress Report Ford New Holland, Cranbourne, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian Branch, AMWU 101/38, M9, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 25 October 1989; John Burgess and Duncan Macdonald, 'Productivity, Restructuring and the Trade Union Role', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 3, no. 1, March 1990; Rimmer, 'Work Place Unionism', p. 140.

⁸⁵ Bolger, 'Australia Reconstructed', p. 162. This was true even though comparative wage justice was maintained in a "backdoor" form: Roy Green, 'The "Death" of Comparative Wage Justice in Australia', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 7, no. 2, December 1996.

apparent benefits such as the award restructuring promise of more structured career paths.⁸⁶ This was not, for some at least, limited to instrumental calculations, but was considered an expression of their values. A Pilbara miner told an interviewer:

Everything we got now we had to strike for—from a vacuum flask, to a crib room to a smoko. These strikes were for six weeks at a time ... [newer workers] don't understand that that's how the system worked and, at the end of the day, how it still works.⁸⁷

At the time, some observed that the sort of worker who formerly would have been a delegate was now not being or becoming one. Coalminers' organiser Bob Graham told a 1992 rally of his union's members that:

There used to be many (what affectionately could be called) old plough horses in the unions, people who did not seek high office but who collected dues and represented the union on the job. But they thought the Accord method was not the way they understood union activity and stopped doing it.⁸⁸

Given delegate rates were maintained in ongoing workplaces, the loss of workers motivated to be (and also encouraged to be) delegates was not enough to prevent replacements being found for the delegates in these workplaces who did not stay in their positions. However, as new workplaces arose, the networks of labour movement activists were not extended into them. The combination of the inclinations of some workers to be delegates and the opportunities to expose and encourage those inclinations was not sufficiently strong in the new workplaces to maintain the strength of the delegates' networks.

Left Parties in the Workplace

The failure of left parties and organisations to hold together networks of union activists during the long Labor decade⁸⁹ partly reflected the difficulties in maintaining militants' activism under the effect of the Accord on delegate motivation. It also reflected the dynamics related to the developments of those parties.

Members of the Communist Party, the largest left party, had continued to encourage workplace activism in the 1980s,⁹⁰ regardless of the party's broader role in unions. The party's collapse removed the largest group carrying out this activity. Yet even among the remaining left parties, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), for example, had had members active in mining, manufacturing and public transport workplaces in the mid-1980s, including a few senior delegates. By 1989, after the party had focused

⁸⁶ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, pp. 152-53; O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, pp. 49-50; Rimmer, 'Work Place Unionism', p. 141.

⁸⁷ O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, p. 47.

⁸⁸ Anderson, 'Unions Will Face Tough Times'.

⁸⁹ See ch. 1.

⁹⁰ See, for example: Joe Palmada, 'State of the Unions', *Australian Left Review*, no. 103, February-March 1988.

for several years on new party projects and the student movement, most of that union presence and the rank-and-file groups associated with that were lost.⁹¹

As well, the motivational ideas and organisation of union activism, coming from unions, social movements and political organisations, may have weakened in the long Labor decade. In part, the question of politics among union activists is one of their 'memory'. An observer of an early 1990s education seminar for a union-based international solidarity group noted that 'all of the women attending were activists in their respective unions; from teachers, social welfare or manufacturing. Most had not heard of or vaguely remembered *Australia Reconstructed* and the early debates around the Accord.'⁹²

Also, some groups of militants split as the Accord continued. In 1995, for example, the Electrical Trades Union branch elections in Victoria and WA were each contested between two groups of Accord opponents, with members of the two branches' existing leaderships on each side.⁹³

The disappearance of union militant networks associated with the political left in the 1990s was perhaps not complete. In 1993 and 1994, for example, Dick Nichols, a former Eveleigh railways workshop shop committee secretary, believed elements of such networks were 'beginning to come together' again. These elements included: the members of the various socialist parties, groups of militant workers in places such as the Latrobe Valley and in Sydney, and of officials in Melbourne; supporters of the publications *Frontline*⁹⁴ and the more irregularly-published *Solidarity*, the left of the construction union in WA and in Victoria; and the opposition to the leadership of the federal public service union in some of its branches.⁹⁵

Generally lacking, however, were large groups of militant activists. When a union's members were angry about incumbent officials' inadequacies, such groups were needed first to win the leadership of the union and then—the more difficult task—to lead once the anger against the previous incumbents had dissipated. Challenge, in the ACT branch of the PSU, was one of the few leadership campaigns successfully mounted by Accord opponents. In 1993, Challenge brought together many of the rank-and-file members who were campaigning against agency—that is, departmental—

⁹¹ *Direct Action*, 1984-1990; Nichols, 'Party and Resistance Work', p. 23.

⁹² Melanie Sjoberg, 'The Labour Movement Unicorn', *The Activist*, vol. 1, no. 8, December 1991, p. 38.

⁹³ *Green Left Weekly*, August-September 1995.

⁹⁴ This publication was much more successful than the 1985 effort of the builders labourers, food preservers and furnishing trades unions, *Alert: Direct Action*, 26 June 1985.

⁹⁵ Nichols, 'Party and Resistance Work', pp. 27-28, 34; Dick Nichols, 'The Working Class and the Unions Today', *The Activist*, vol. 3, no. 13, December 1993, p. 14; Dick Nichols, 'DSP Tasks in the Labour Movement', *The Activist*, vol. 4, no. 3, August 1994, p. 21, 23-25, 29.

enterprise bargaining in the federal public service and a minority in the branch leadership who had spurred into action by the 1993 federal budget job cuts. It had a core of about 10 activists, about 20 attended its monthly meetings, and it developed a support base of about 150 among around 21,000 members.⁹⁶

Those involved in Challenge did not expect to win positions. Their main aim in the union election campaign was to extend opposition to agency bargaining. When Challenge did win a majority on the branch executive, it began to implement its platform, such as monthly branch meetings and accelerated delegate training. Challenge came into conflict with the union's national leadership priorities, which were restructuring the union and reaching agency bargaining agreements. The branch had sole responsibility for the members in the ACT government service, and there the new leadership chose instead to prioritise the concerns these members had raised. Challenge's position within the branch was strengthened when the remaining non-Challenge officials and organisers left. Yet this revealed a lack of clarity about what the politics of the branch organisers would be. Previously, the expectation had been that branch organisers would join the ALP faction of the elected officials. The involvement of small socialist parties did not substitute for that. The International Socialist Organisation was on Challenge's fringe. Democratic Socialist Party members were elected to the branch executive or worked as organisers, but at first there were just three DSP members in the branch and there were never more than about 10. During 1995, the relationship between the branch secretary and the DSP assistant secretary and organisers became more fraught. Challenge split after the 1996 federal election.⁹⁷

Conclusion

Towards the close of the long Labor decade, union activists often seemed confused about industrial mobilisation. A commentator noted that the shop committee leading a 1993 strike against redundancies at the Toohey's brewery in Sydney did not roster pickets around-the-clock for all of the brewery's entrances nor did it try to stop trucks going through its pickets until a group of supporters turned up and sat down on the road.⁹⁸ In 1995, a metals delegate at an Adelaide stopwork meeting asked: 'Are we

⁹⁶ These numbers appear to be fairly typical for successful challenges to union leaderships. Lindsay Tanner's pro-Accord reform group in the Victorian branch of the Federated Clerks Union in the 1980s eventually pulled together more than 200 workplace contacts among 18,000 members: Tanner, *The Last Battle*, p. 91.

⁹⁷ Greg Adamson, 'PSU campaigning in Canberra', *The Activist*, vol. 3, no. 12, December 1993, pp. 37-38; Greg Adamson, 'Movement Building and Party Building in Canberra', *The Activist*, vol. 4, no. 15, December 1994, pp. 31-35; Greg Adamson, 'Experiences in the ACT CPSU', *The Activist*, vol. 6, no. 17, November 1996, pp. 12-13; Greg Adamson, 'Our Work in the CPSU', *The Activist*, vol. 6, no. 6, May 1996, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁸ Nichols, 'The Working Class and the Unions', pp. 11-12.

going to pursue the claim to the bitter end? Last year we voted for industrial action, but what happened?'⁹⁹ A rank and file teachers group in Melbourne believed their union's favoured 'cluster actions' of 10-15 primary schools and four or five secondary schools was breaking down the members' solidarity. Schools would not take industrial action because of pressures to compete for students. At a May 1995, the group won a stop-work meeting vote for its proposal that regional industrial action should in the city be based on *half* the metropolitan area.¹⁰⁰

This chapter showed that, numerically, the extent to which delegates could constitute labour movement networks as part of the core for organising collective action among workers declined steadily during the 1980s and more sharply during the 1990s. Workers had less experience of the presence and activity of union delegates. This correlates with the pattern of decline in union density.

The chapter then suggested that the Accord contributed to the delegate decline. The ACTU strategy in the long Labor decade, that developed from no extra claims into tying pay increases to trading off working conditions for productivity gains, meant that workers who were delegates were less likely to experience what motivates workers to be delegates. These motivating factors include taking charge of the situation in the workplace and their union, acting on their interest in matters affecting workers and their feelings of solidarity, and confronting management. Perhaps there were also fewer opportunities for other workers to encourage a worker to be a delegate. Furthermore, the dominance of the Accord in the unions and more generally of opportunist politics among workers was a context for the decline of existing left-wing ideas and organisations, which had provided militants with rationales to participate as organisers of collective action, including unionism.

The Accord, therefore, kicked off a 'vicious' spiral in the labour movement of declining activist networks, weakening strategic power, giving back past concessions won in work practices and, hence, further decline in the networks which organised the movement. Unionised workers would have been affected generally, but those for whom workplace organisation had been a part of their strategic strength through which they had won and held on to concessions were most likely to have experienced qualitative changes in their working lives and lifestyles. That would tend to change the composition of the labour aristocracy.

⁹⁹ Margaret Gleeson, 'Metal Workers Vote on Enterprise Agreements', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 180, 22 March 1995, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1995/180/12360>, accessed on 28 July 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Bull et al., 'Experiences in Rebuilding', p. 36; Norrian Rundle, 'Victorian Teachers Campaign over Workload', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 189, 31 May 1995, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1995/189/11861>, accessed on 5 August 2007.

Opposition to the Accord which at least partly overturned it was required if the decline in the unions of the core for organising collective action among workers was to be reversed. The following chapters discuss the strengths and degree of success of key workplace and other industrial forms in which opposition to the Accord emerged. The first of these forms to be considered, in the next chapter, is that which was closest to the workplace, in shop committees and similar delegate structures.

6

Shop Committee Struggles

Delegate numbers and presence in workplaces fell in the long Labor decade. One way this might have been reversed was through actions by delegates in their workplace networks such as shop committees. These delegate structures had strengthened the capacities of union delegates as part of the core of organisers of collective action among workers in the 1970s. Moreover, this could be achieved relatively independently of the activity of political organisations, as the Ford Broadmeadows plant delegates had shown in the 1970s.¹

Shop committees were not organisationally independent of the structures of unions. Nonetheless, the committees were potentially influential. Especially in larger workplaces or groups of workplaces, they represented substantial parts of the workforce, grouped together large numbers of delegates, and had resources, including senior stewards working full-time or part-time as representatives. Also, what the committees could do remained largely undefined at the beginning of the period.²

Early in the period, delegates and delegate structures played leading roles in disputes. They led actions such as the rallies at the Comeng locomotive factory in Sydney and an occupation of the offices of the factory's new owners, and the tent cities at General Motors' Adelaide plants. This role sometimes persisted. Until 1992, the local union convenors were key figures in campaigning in the Pilbara mines. In 1990, maintenance and boiler house workers struck at the Hoechst factory in the Altona petrochemical complex for three months and organised on-site rallies in support of a delegate who had been penalised for helping to publicise health and safety issues at the plant.³

At first, too, delegate structures could still be strengthened. At the Kent Brewery in Sydney, a combined unions shop committee was created: the abusive attitudes of the maintenance workers towards the production workers were tamed, and a vote by the production workers to participate overcame the resistance of their union officials. In 1987, all the maintenance and operator unions in the electricity generation industry in Victoria were at last affiliated to the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council. The GTLC

¹ Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class*, pp. 296-97.

² Rimmer, 'Work Place Unionism'. Many of the workplaces or sets of workplaces (Pilbara mines, Victorian electricity production, defence production facilities) discussed here each employed from 3000-12000 workers at the start of the long Labor decade.

³ *The Metal Worker*, 1983-1984; *Direct Action*, 1983, 1990; *Green Left Weekly*, 1992.

had powers to negotiate on industry-wide issues and was a forum for developing regional negotiating strategy and disseminating ideas.⁴

In 1983, the Combined Union Council at the Rosebery zinc mine on Tasmania's West Coast led a successful six-week strike. It mobilised the unions' members in actions across the state and the country. In Hobart, Rosebery miners picketed the company's smelter for three weeks and approached unions and unemployed organisations for support. The CUC sought support at the company's other zinc mine at Elura in NSW, and among the railways and wharf workers in Newcastle, who would have shipped the Elura mine's ore to the smelter. It also sent a delegation to lobby the ACTU congress. As well, the CUC published a picket bulletin with news for both picketers and the miners and their families in Rosebery. On the heels of the Rosebery miners' success, strikes occurred at the smelter, at the Elura mine, among the West Coast electricity workers, and at the Goliath cement factory in Tasmania.⁵ In Rosebery itself, an ALP branch was reformed, which then voted to reject the Accord. A few of the miners who were already influenced by socialist ideas briefly joined the Socialist Workers Party. Another SWP member then came to work in the mine: in later years he became first secretary of the CUC and then, when a West Coast mining unions body was formed, president of that.⁶

Defeats for Workplace Union Structures

Despite such early successes, many shop committees and other delegate bodies struggled to survive and function in the period. On the one hand, employers would close plants, impose redundancies or split up workplaces and companies. The closing down of a factory would take the shop committee with it. Even if only some jobs were being cut in a workplace, many union activists would leave, perhaps feeling that the redundancy packages offered were their best opportunity to go when they were under pressure from management: for example, nearly all the delegates left the Kambalda mine in 1986, and at Hamersley Iron Ore in the Pilbara in the year after the 1992 strike most of the union convenors took packages. Nearly two-third of the 1990 strikers at

⁴ Palmada, 'State of the Unions', pp. 22-23; Len Pullin and Ali Haidar, 'Industrial Restructuring and Labour Collectivity in the Latrobe Region', *International Employment Relations Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2002, pp. 10-11; Kathryn Steel, 'The Gippsland Trades and Labour Council and Industrial Agency in the Latrobe Valley, Victoria', in Julie Kimber, et al. (eds), *Labour Traditions: Papers from the Tenth National Labour History Conference*, Melbourne, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History - Melbourne, July 2007, 180-183.

⁵ At the Goliath factory, like the Rosebery mine, the production workers were Australian Workers Union members. The local secretary of the union, Geoff Chamely, stated the union in the past had been passive, but 'to get a fair deal at Goliath, I'm afraid, you have to be militant': Norm Dixon, 'Goliath Victory Nears', *Direct Action*, no. 469, 29 February 1984, p. 10.

⁶ Author's recollection; Renfrey Clarke, *The Picket: Tasmanian Mine Workers Defend their Jobs*, Sydney, Pathfinder Press (Australia), 1984.

Hoechst left within months of the strike after six weeks of 'retraining and re-education' courses off-site, company demands to work twelve-hour shifts alongside those who had replaced them in the plant, and then redundancy offers. The NSW railways' Chullora Workshops were restructured into five autonomous units, among which the more active shop committee members were all in one. In the various units, unionists increasingly operated separately: in 1993, one unit's workers refused to join a strike in opposition to job cuts.⁷

On the other hand, union actions also increased the difficulties faced by shop committees. Of course, union workplace structures and hierarchies had come into conflict in the past. At least some of their clashes during the period are probably still best explained in terms of these bodies posing as alternative leaderships for workers.⁸ However, the implementation of the Accord introduced two new developments in the relationships between these union bodies.

First, the areas of conflict between union workplace structures and hierarchies shifted, reflecting the Accord's emphasis on preventing industrial action and encouraging industrial restructuring. For example, in 1987 four joint meetings of Federated Ironworkers Association and Amalgamated Metal Workers Union delegates meetings at the steelworks in Port Kembla rejected company proposals for no-strike provisions, which delegates had previously ensured were excluded from the 1982 38-hour agreement. The AMWU then brought officials from Sydney to hold a separate delegates meeting for that union. The AMWU delegates accepted a redrafted no-strike proposal, although the FIA delegates rejected this also. Thereafter, the delegates' organisations took a long time to revive: in 1993, the rolling mill delegates' committee had not met for years, although it was then brought back to life and successfully led a dispute.⁹

In 1988, the Eveleigh railway workshops shop committee executive debated the proposed closure of the workshops. It rejected AMWU national secretary Doug Cameron's claim that the workshops' closure was 'inevitable'. Inside the old buildings, some executive members wrote, was modern machinery and workers whose work was being contracted out. Industrial and political action should support their workplace's

⁷ *The Metal Worker*, 1985-1986; *Green Left Weekly*, 18 January 1991, 14 July 1993; D. Davies, 'The Decline of the NSW Railway Shop Committee', in Ray Fells and Trish Todd (eds), *Current Research in Industrial Relations: Proceedings of the 10th AIRAANZ Conference*, Perth, Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand, February 1996, pp. 126-31; Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work*, p. 46.

⁸ See, for example, the clash between the Sydney mail-sorters and their metropolitan committee, and the postal union's NSW branch: *Direct Action*, 1984-1985.

⁹ *Direct Action*, May-August 1987; *Green Left Weekly*, 1993.

modernisation and oppose the contracting out of their work. Such views only won minority support, however, even among unionists across the railway workshops in NSW. Soon only a minority of delegates at Eveleigh continued to call for a campaign against the closure of the workshops. The shop committee secretary claimed workers knew the officials had no enthusiasm for a fight and this helped to dissuade the workers from a campaign. Yet the minority's argument, that there should be resistance to actions such as the closure of the workshops or the unions would be weakened, was not enough to persuade most workers that an alternative leadership was on offer through the dissident shop committee delegates.¹⁰

The alternative to such 'agreement' with delegates was what Ted Gnatenko, a former senior metalworkers' delegate in an Adelaide car plant who had become an education officer in the union's SA branch, pointed out was the norm under the Accord: 'agreement without consultation' with delegates. That, he suggested in 1989, would 'also mean that the shop steward system ... will tend to wither away through simple lack of use'.¹¹

The second effect of the Accord on the relationship between union workplace structures and union hierarchies came from the influences on workplace structures of the Accord's orientation towards achieving productivity increases. The Hawke-Keating government introduced methods to change work practices through 'consensus'. A number of employers, known as the New Right, asserted increased 'managerial prerogative' in order to accelerate the changes. The ACTU and most union leaders opposed the New Right in favour of union recognition as such. They defended this position primarily through legal actions.

In several major disputes between the unions and the New Right, the dominant union leadership approach came into conflict with groups of delegates and worker activists:

- In February 1985, in the middle of a dispute between the South East Queensland Electricity Board and its linesmen, the linesmen were sacked with the support of the state government. An initial broader industrial campaign backing the linesmen was called off by the Queensland Trades and Labour Council leadership. The linesmen's union, the Electrical Trades Union, with the support of the ACTU, then pursued a federal award for the SEQEB work. The linesmen's strike committee maintained that a federal award would do nothing to help the workers get back

¹⁰ *The Metal Worker*, August-September 1987; *Direct Action*, 23 September 1987.

¹¹ Cited in: Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, pp. 129-30.

their jobs, which the committee considered was a key demand for the linesmen. The committee also thought the dispute had national significance as a contest of strength in which workers' rights to industrial action and ultimately, to organise, were being defended. It argued for a renewal of widespread industrial action. This position had some support among other workers. Nonetheless, industrial action in solidarity with the linesmen only occurred intermittently and stopped entirely in October. As well, the linesmen became involved in campaigning for democracy and electoral reform in Queensland, but in a group supported by a small minority of unionists and ALP parliamentarians rather than that backed by the QTLC. The militant linesmen's original hopes of support from the ACTU were replaced by a belief that the Accord had influenced the union peak bodies to isolate the linesmen. The militants discussed how, in their words, many union officials and the ALP had forgotten the capacities of the rank and file, and become enemies of the workers' movement. They began to think of themselves as radical activists rather than being oriented to Labor. By the end of the year, they were operating independently of the unions, running a candidate of their own in a state by-election.¹²

- At the Robe River iron ore mine in the Pilbara in 1986 and 1987, the company unilaterally overturned a large number of work practices. The mineworkers launched an industrial campaign in response. The company sacked them. Union legal efforts were successfully focused on their reinstatement. Many argued this was an exemplary victory for what they thought was reasonable unionism. At the mine, during a strike in January 1987, the workers defeated an attempt to bring in strike breakers: the unemployed locals recruited as strike breakers joined the strike. The Robe River workers were also confident of rallying support in the region and thought that ACTU involvement would mean solidarity action across the country. Their expectations about other union members might have been misplaced, but in any case these were not tested. As well as the national focus on court action, union officials barred the Robe River workers from going to other

¹² *Direct Action*, 1985; Brian Gowrie, 'Friends and Enemies', *Direct Action*, no. 624, 26 August 1987, p. 14; John Knight and Ron Lingard, 'New Force Grows in Queensland', *Australian Society*, August 1985, pp. 23-24. Writing about the dispute later, Simon Blackwood accepted the QTLC assessment that industrial action would not have resulted in success and suggested that the refusal of the ETU to admit defeat further demoralised the union movement. He failed, however, to bring the role of the linesmen into his account: Simon Blackwood, 'Doomsday for the Queensland Labour Movement? The SEQEB Dispute and Union Strategy', *Politics*, vol. 24, no. 1, May 1989, pp. 70-73. So, surprisingly, did Tom Bramble, who stated "the hopes of the SEQEB linesmen [became] entirely directed towards the legal process": Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 140. Bramble did not refer to either the strike committee or the linesmen's weekly mass meetings which, from October, began to side with the tactical proposals of the committee, rather than with those of their union officials.

Pilbara workplaces to discuss broader industrial action. In the end, the workers remained on site, but they were subject to the demoralising effects of working under employer-imposed working conditions.¹³

- In 1992, at the Australian Pulp and Paper Manufactures mill in Burnie in Tasmania, workers struck and picketed for three weeks with strong community support. Again, delegates understood the national significance of the dispute. They were also elated with their picket line victories. At a membership meeting they successfully argued against an ACTU-brokered agreement with the company because of the agreement's lack of detail, as well as a desire to act in solidarity with log haulers, who were not included in the agreement. However, two weeks later, their union officials told another mass meeting that there was little choice but to accept a similar agreement, which was then adopted with about 20 workers dissenting. Subsequently, in the middle of discussions about the loss of 200 jobs, the company announced plans to double this cut. One delegate rhetorically asked: 'What's the point of having discussions when they go behind your back and set the rules to suit themselves?' His answer:

The consultations, touted by the ACTU as a victory following the strike, are just window dressing. APPM tolerates them just to win back some of the damaging public relations it lost during the picket.¹⁴

Disputes between the unions and New Right employers about work practices and workplace union organisation gave industrial relations in the long Labor decade many of its most spectacular incidents. These climaxed in the 1995 Weipa dispute in which the ACTU sought to keep about 70 bauxite workers unionised. Yet the proportion of shop committees directly affected by such disputes was still relatively small.

The Accord's emphasis on developing collaborative relations and consultative bodies between unions and employers affected shop committees more broadly. It brought into question the independence of unions from employers at the workplace. For example, at the Kwinana oil refinery in the mid-1980s, a combined unions council was organised for the first time. Its purpose was not to oppose a company proposal for more than 200 redundancies, but to negotiate how to carry that out. The unions

¹³ Combined Unions Disputes Committee, *Workers Voice: The Official News Sheet of the Combined Unions Disputes Committee*, Australian Council of Trade Unions, N147, 709, Robe River (WA) Dispute, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 22 January 1987; Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work*, pp. 17, 176-189; O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, pp. 34, 41; Palmada, 'State of the Unions', p. 21.

¹⁴ *Green Left Weekly*, April-July 1992; Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, pp. 169-70; Ian Jamieson, 'APPM to Shed 400 Jobs', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 66, 12 August 1992, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/3264>, accessed on 15 February 2008; Herb Thompson, 'The APPM Dispute: The Dinosaur and Turtles versus the ACTU', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 3, no. 2, December 1992, pp. 155, 159.

believed that this approach was successful because 12 jobs were saved. The workers' view of the result, however, might be indicated by the observation that there were 'still not many volunteers for the job of steward'.¹⁵ When privatisation began in the Victorian electricity industry in the early 1990s, breaking up the ownership of the plants, the unions competed for the favour of the company involved at each site in attempts to gain single union coverage agreements and the role of the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council dwindled.¹⁶

At Ford, employee involvement schemes were introduced from 1983. Some stewards were involved, including the senior production union steward at Broadmeadows, Frank Argondizzo: he took this up as an opportunity for workers to communicate their concerns to each other and management. Broadly in the vehicle industry, by the beginning of the 1990s, the workforce may have been more sceptical about such schemes and the ACTU's productivity agenda, given the provision of training had been delayed and the industry's substantial redundancies. Some shopfloor workers taking part in a 60-strong, six-week-long union working party on industry reform at the end of 1990 appear to have had similar feelings. Meanwhile, at stewards' meetings at Broadmeadows, vehicle builder Hasan Donmez and a few others opposed 'work rebalancing'. He also spoke to management about this work intensification in the plant, which he believed was leading to rising health problems, absenteeism, and tension in industrial relations among workers in sections of the plant that felt they were targeted. Donmez became one of a number of delegates who lost their jobs in 1991. He was sacked, supposedly because he had refused to conduct a 'work rebalancing' trial. When he was given notice, work in the plant stopped and up to 200 workers briefly occupied the plant: among the occupiers, another 20, of Latin American, Turkish and Vietnamese ethnicity, were subsequently dismissed as well. The sacked workers picketed the plant and Donmez staged a hunger strike. The union's branch secretary, whose election Donmez had supported, promised the shop committee he would pursue Donmez's reinstatement, but subsequently he repeated the company's allegations

¹⁵ R.E. Fells, 'Negotiating a Redundancy Agreement', *Economic Activity*, vol. 29, no. 3, July-August 1986, pp. 12-14; R.E. Fells, 'Industrial Relationships at the Plant Level: A Case Study', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 29, no. 3, September 1987. See also: Nichols, *New Right Trade Unionism*, p. 25. Fells claimed the stewards' involvement in the negotiations enhanced their status. That was presumably with management. Their status with the workers does not appear to have increased.

¹⁶ *Green Left Weekly*, 4 August 1993; Pullin and Haidar, 'Industrial Restructuring and Labour Collectivity', pp. 9-13.

against Donmez. Another round of redundancies at Ford Broadmeadow soon followed these sackings.¹⁷

Defence Production Shop Committees

ACTU and other union officials paid close attention to the implementation of consultative mechanisms and efforts to increase productivity at the mostly government-run defence production sites. These facilities mainly filled military orders, for which they had to compete with private companies, but they were restricted in seeking 'outside jobs'. Therefore, they struggled to find the range of work that would avoid 'idle time' among their large engineering workforces.¹⁸

The Government Aircraft Factory and the Williamstown Naval Dockyards were the first of these plants to experience full-blown 'Industrial Democracy'. At GAF, union activists had been discussing alternative work to building military aircraft, the factory's usual product: they hoped to take advantage of the capacity of the workforce at the factory to produce other aircraft and other technologically sophisticated machines. Yet, according to Maurice Sibelle, a metal worker shop steward and an advocate of this direction for the factory, a lot of shop stewards now became preoccupied in tripartite committees. There the delegates were pushed

to improve productivity and ... to take responsibility for the factory's efficiency; ... workers were forced to look very narrowly at what they could produce, to accept that those industries were not profitable, and then that was an excuse to rationalise or close down.

By 1984, Sibelle was a full time health and safety representative: his assumption of this role, he believed, was 'a method by which they were able to isolate me ... one of the few people in the factory who weren't supporters of the Accord'.¹⁹

The 'breath of life' at the Williamstown dockyard was the centrespread of the May 1985 *The Metal Worker*, the journal of the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union. Blacksmith steward Ewen MacDonald told the newspaper: 'Now workers have a say.

¹⁷ *Green Left Weekly*, 7 August 1991; Thomas Bramble, 'Union-Management Cooperation in the Vehicle Industry 1983-92', *Labour & Industry*, vol. 5, no. 1-2, March-June 1993, pp. 91-96; Russell D. Lansbury et al., 'Reforming the Australian Workplace through Employee Participation', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, June 1996, p. 41; Libby Lester, 'How Unions Produced a New Model Car Industry', *Workplace*, Winter 1991, pp. 22-24, 26; Constance Lever-Tracy, 'Fordism Transformed? Employee Involvement and Workplace Industrial Relation at Ford', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 32, no. 2, June 1990, pp. 188-92; Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work*, p. 40.

¹⁸ See: James Doughney, Ammunition Factory Footscray Papers, private collection, Melbourne, 1984-1988; *The Metal Worker*, 1983, 1985-1986; *Direct Action*, 1983, 1986-1987, 1990; John Bottomley, 'The Privatisation of Williamstown Dockyard: Lessons for Trade Unions in the Government Sector', *Labor College Review*, no. 9, May 1990, p. 41. The government-run railway workshops faced a similar regime: see, for example, John Alford (ed.), *The Future of the Railway Workshops: A Proposal by Rail Unionists*, Melbourne, Australian Railways Union, Amalgamated Metals, Foundry and Shipwrights Union and Australian Transport Officers' Federation, 1983.

¹⁹ Maurice Sibelle, Interview, 1994; *The Metal Worker*, 1983. Sibelle was a SWP member.

Industrial democracy has created a new equality'. The newspaper claimed that 'the workers believe their jobs are secure'. The reports still sounded cautionary notes: AMWU organiser Brian Baxter admitted industrial democracy had its 'teething problems', but felt the current situation was much better than a fight for jobs; AMWU steward Billy Degiorgio, who raised uncertainties about future work, 'isn't so sure'.²⁰ Perhaps that breath was more a sigh. An observer concluded from discussions with dockyards delegates that the 'foisting' on them of industrial democracy had had a 'demoralising effect'.²¹ The delegates went into consultations without clerical support: they felt they were being 'snowed'. Management used the discussions to pursue its interest in multi-skilling, while the shop committee was not able to have the inequities between the blue-collar workers they represented and the dockyard's public service employees addressed. A delegate who was appointed as the industrial democracy coordinator factionalised in the shop committee. Management appointed another worker to produce a joint management-worker magazine without consulting the shop committee.²² In fact, stated Jimmy Bethel, a delegate, 'the shop committee was bitterly divided' about industrial democracy.²³

In 1986, job cuts began in the defence factories and shipyards: GAF lost 800 positions, more than half of the cuts first announced, the remainder being at the Garden Island and Williamstown dockyards. The unions supported GAF's corporatisation as a public company with a board dominated by private sector directors. The following year, 540 retrenchments, including three-quarters of the delegates, were proposed. This proposal was defeated by a two-week strike, but voluntary redundancies proceeded. In 1990, the shop committee had trouble gaining support for a campaign against a new round of retrenchments.²⁴

²⁰ Bottomley, 'The Privatisation of Williamstown Dockyard', p. 45; n.a., 'English, Art-All in a Day's Work', The Metal Worker, vol. 6, no. 4, May 1985, pp. 4-5; n.a., 'Wildock Given Breath of Life', The Metal Worker, vol. 6, no. 4, May 1985, pp. 4-5.

²¹ Richard Curlewis, 'Notes', Lines Newsletter, special pre-conference issue, September 1986.

²² Bottomley, 'The Privatisation of Williamstown Dockyard', pp. 47, 49.

²³ n.a., 'Dockyard Workers Say No to Sackings', Direct Action, no. 564, 23 April 1986, p. 6. Paddy Garrity was a long-standing ALP member who worked at the dockyards from 1981 to 1985. He became a Ships Painters and Dockers Union steward and was an advocate of the arts, health and literacy projects at the dockyards introduced in the 1980s. He considered that the shop committee "had been caught in an industrial time warp" when he arrived at the dockyards. According to him, some delegates "wanted to go back to the good old days ... [of] stand-up, slug-out fights with management" rather than have the projects: Paddy Garrity, 'Dockyard Daze: An Experiment with Art in Working Life in Williamstown Naval Dockyard 1983-85', Overland, no. 149, Summer 1997. In 1985, Garrity was editor of the dockyards' magazine, WWD Worker. n.a., 'English, Art-All in a Day's Work', p. 5. So he was probably the management magazine appointee referred to by Bottomley (see previous fn).

²⁴ The Metal Worker, 1986-1987; Direct Action, 1986-1987, 1990. Another two years on, the metalworkers union organiser in the industry claimed the factory had a strong shop committee: John Corsetti, 'Clear the Runway', Workplace, Spring 1992, p. 30.

The Williamstown dockyard workforce felt the 1986 redundancies broke the promises made to it about employment and consultation. A March mass meeting rejected ACTU recommendations about how to respond. It demanded that alternative work be found and that there be no sackings.²⁵ Barry Corbett, an AMWU steward, stated the view of many delegates:

Industrial democracy ... tied us up in all these committees with management and softened us all up for the bitter pill. Any talk of industrial democracy now will be simply laughed at.²⁶

Union officials opposed industrial action in response to the redundancies: 'better to lose 350 jobs than to lose the whole lot', one told a mass meeting. To the stewards this indicated the unions had no strategy to oppose the whittling away of the workforce and to deal with differences with the government.²⁷ A July mass meeting pressed for an improved redundancy payout. Days later, the dockyards' AMWU members condemned the government for a failure to provide work and called for the union to disaffiliate from the ALP. The next day the ACTU asked delegates to hold separate meetings of their union membership on their attitude to the retrenchment package: the Federated Clerks Union members, for example, 'reluctantly accepted' it.²⁸ After this, about 500 workers applied for redundancy, many senior shop stewards among them.²⁹

The government sold the dockyards the following year. At the start of 1988, the whole workforce, who were still Defence employees, were offered redundancies. Then a dispute arose because three unions, backed by the ACTU, claimed coverage at the dockyard and sought to exclude 20 other unions that had had some members there. The new owners sacked the remaining 250 workers. The shop committee identified the dockyard workers' problems as the ACTU's enthusiasm for restructuring rather than re-employment and some unions' decisions to seek privileged positions and a compliant membership. When re-employment was offered, 46 workers were excluded from coming back, including the shop committee president and secretary, and three of the other five remaining stewards. In June, with no workers re-employed, the ACTU's favoured unions withdrew their recognition of the shop committee and the dockyard's

²⁵ Direct Action, March-April 1986.

²⁶ Reihana Mohideen, 'Labor Launches Massive Attack on Defence Jobs', Direct Action, no. 561, 2 April 1986, p. 3.

²⁷ Bottomley, 'The Privatisation of Williamstown Dockyard', pp. 43, 45.

²⁸ Federated Clerks Union, [Williamstown Naval Dockyard], Federated Clerks Union, FCU, 402, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, July 1986, various documents.

²⁹ Bottomley, 'The Privatisation of Williamstown Dockyard', p. 55.

delegates were barred from ACTU meetings. A year later the shop committee disbanded.³⁰

At the Ammunition and the Ordnance factories in western Melbourne, in 1986, management tried to cut back the paid time for union activity of the shop committee officials and restrict shop stewards' rights in favour of a proposed consultative committee. The Ammunition Factory's committee stated industrial democracy was contrary to 'the independence of the committee and its democratic structure of control by stewards and the workforce'. The committee's stance was supported by AMWU officials. The ACTU also backed the delegates in the dispute, but the Ammunition Factory's committee president noted the reason its representative, Bob Richardson, gave for this at a dispute strategy meeting of the unions: the ACTU was 'more interested in prod[uctivity]/viability' and 'if [the shop committee] would have to change, so be it ... but ACTU and unions won't tolerate UNILATERAL ACTION'.³¹ Paid time for the shop committee officials was retained, but the consultative committees were established. In 1987, the Ammunition Factory stewards became involved in negotiations on redundancies, and after May 1989, most of the remaining defence plants became part of the corporatised Australian Defence Industries and up to a third of their remaining jobs were cut.³²

In May 1989, the shop committee at the privately-run Cockatoo Island Dockyard led 1500 workers in a strike and occupation of the island, with the support of the Ships Painters and Dockers Union, some other unionists, and radical political activists. The workers had been campaigning against job losses for years and now faced a proposal to close the dockyards in 1992. The AMWU tried to get better redundancy provisions through the action. The ironworkers' union officials and the NSW Labour Council directly opposed the occupation. The council called on the dockyard workers to end their strike and defeated a SPDU proposal for a state-wide 24-hour strike in support. Dockyard delegates questioned the council's motives and the idea that the dockyard workers support for the ALP could be taken for granted. Dockyard mass meetings continued to vote against redundancy proposals, although with declining majorities, and strikers demonstrated outside a council meeting, where the shop committee president and others were arrested. In August, the labour council and the ironworkers' union backed an arbitration commission decision against the strike, and the first ACTU

³⁰ Direct Action, May 1988; Bottomley, 'The Privatisation of Williamstown Dockyard', pp. 51-57; Michael Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, MA thesis, Department of Politics, Latrobe University, 1991, p. 161.

³¹ Doughney, Ammunition Factory. Emphasis in original.

³² Doughney, Ammunition Factory; Direct Action, 1989.

meeting about the campaign showed that neither it nor any union other than the SPDU would support the strike. The shop committee recommended acceptance of an improved redundancy offer. The committee stated it wanted to continue the campaign by other means, but it did not lead any further major action before the dockyard closed.³³

Conclusion

While direct political influences on shop committees was relatively weak, the opportunist neo-liberal offensive set the parameters of their activity. In general, the committees did not question the strategy adopted by the ACTU and most unions. Sustained disputes by shop committees with union hierarchies were rare. Also rare were instances such as those of Eveleigh and Cockatoo where delegate committees put their disagreements with their union officials before workers more broadly. Moreover, many of the examples above of shop committees pursuing disputes involved committees with some radical political presence through a socialist party activist or a tradition that the committee was influenced by such a party. Yet these committees remained ill-prepared to struggle: their disputes with union hierarchies, about the effects of the Accord, arose only during campaigns.

A workplace-based politics did not produce substantial opposition to the Accord. Instead, at the end of the 1980s, many of the more militant and independent committees, that were more often found in larger workplaces, were depleted or gone. Since the committees had been a means for workers to collectively influence the circumstances in their workplaces and to encourage other workers to be delegates, this decline, which preceded the acceleration in the decline in delegate numbers, probably intensified the effects of the Accord on motivations to be a delegate. Hence, the reduction in the capacities of the networks of labour movement activists are likely to have become greater, with an increased effect on those sections of workers whose strategic strength in the class struggle had lain in workplace organisation.

Shop and other delegate committees did not offer a strategic alternative to the Accord. Two more forms of opposition to the Accord within the unions will be discussed in the next two chapters. Some unions took independent action, typically in the form of

³³ Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union, Cockatoo Island, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 683, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1989; Cockatoo Dockyard Combined Unions Shop Committee, Cockatoo Union Delegates Vow to Fight on, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 684, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 31 May 1989; Cockatoo Dockyard Combined Unions Shop Committee, [Statement], Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 683, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 15 August 1989; *The Metal Worker*, 1984; *Direct Action*, 1986, 1989; John Tognolini, 'Cockatoo Island Dockyard: Lessons and Questions', *Party Forum*, no. 6, 29 November 1989, p. 22; John Tognolini, 'Defiant Workers Occupy Cockatoo Island', *Direct Action*, no. 695, 16 May 1989, p. 4.

wages militancy. The Accord was also criticised with regard to its character as a social contract between capital and labour. The remaining chapters will consider sources beyond the unions, in other social movements and in political party activity, for building the core for organising collective action among workers.

Wage Militancy Suppressed by the Accord

In the early years of the long Labor decade, the reduction in industrial disputation from the level of the strike wave of the early 1980s returned industrial relations to a certain normalcy. Militant tactics were still being used in, for example, workers' campaigns about job losses. By early 1984, the number of strikes at the Port Kembla steelworks, where the new government's Steel Industry Plan was being implemented, approached 1979-80 levels, although the actions were much shorter. Nonetheless, perhaps only one union campaign involved a claim that explicitly exceeded what the Accord allowed. At the beginning of 1985, the ACT branch of the Hospital Employees Federation, which covered non-clinical workers, claimed a 30 per cent pay rise and additional staff. The HEF branch's secretary, Hedley Rowe, had abandoned support for the ALP in the 1984 election campaign. Industrial action by the branch's members was well-supported and won part of the claim.¹

From 1986, however, a more active interest in wage increases appears to have developed among workers. This was expressed, for example, in delegates' discussions and in some unions' campaigns. By 1990, three waves of wage militancy had arisen. These are discussed in this chapter, along with the context set for them by the derecognition of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) and by the introduction, through the 'two-tier' wage determination system and award restructuring, of the structural efficiency principle, which required workers to offer productivity increases through relinquishing working conditions in order to get wage increases (see table 7.1).

Wage militancy had the potential to defy the Accord, which demanded that unions make 'no extra claims' for pay and conditions beyond each version of the agreement and, increasingly, pursue structural efficiencies for pay rises. Unlike shop committees, unions engaged in wage campaigns were organisationally independent. If some unions had defeated key Accord principles such as 'no extra claims' and the pursuit of increases in productivity, that might have helped to revive delegate networks. On that basis, workers' class political consciousness could have developed towards supporting independent working-class action.

¹ D.M. Rice, Letter to W. Kelty, Australian Council of Trade Unions, N147, Box 558 - Secretary's - Steel Industry, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 12 April 1984; Direct Action, 1983-1985.

Table 7.1 Versions of the Accord, wage fixing principles and wage pressure, 1983-1995

Year	Accord "Mark"	Wage fixing mechanism or Principle	Consumer Price Index increase	Average Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings ¹ (AWOTE) (increase)	Award rates index increases	National Wage Case increases taking effect
1982/83	I	Wage freeze	11.5	11.2%	10.7%	n/a (none in 1983)
1983/84		Cost of living increases	6.9	7.5%	5.5%	8.6%
1984/85			4.3	7.1%	5.2%	2.6%
1985/86	II	(delays and discounting)	8.4	6.7%	4.7%	3.8%
1986/87	III	Restructuring and Efficiency (second tier)	9.3	6.5%	4.9%	2.3% + \$10 (AWOTE \$439)
1987/88	IV	(award review)	7.3	6.6%	4.4%	\$6 (AWOTE \$468)
1988/89	V	Structural Efficiency	7.3	7.1%	6.7%	3% + \$10 (AWOTE \$501)
1989/90		(award restructuring)	8.0	7.1%	5.8%	\$20-\$30 (AWOTE \$536)
1990/91	VI		5.3	5.8%	5.1%	2.5%
1991/92		Enterprise Bargaining	1.9	2.8%	3.5%	
1992/93	VII		1.0	2.2%	1.3%	
1993/94		Safety Net Adjustment	1.8	3.6%	1.0%	\$8
1994/95			3.2	n/a	1.1%	\$8

¹ Adult full-time. Average of relevant calendar years. Full-time average weekly earnings of workers on junior rates relative to adult average weekly earnings fell by about 8 per cent between the late 1970s and the late 1980s.

Adapted from Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 138 and Gardner, Margaret and Palmer, Gill, *Employment Relations: Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management in Australia*, 2nd ed., Macmillan, Melbourne, 1997, p. 410. Additional material from Foster, *Australian Economic Statistics*, pp. 207, 209, 243

Nurses and Plumbers

Nurses, having restructured their professional associations into unions—the Royal Australian Nursing Federation (RANF) and, in NSW, the Nurses Association (NA)—became more active industrially in the early years of the long Labor decade. Their aim

was to reverse the increase in workloads and overturn their profession's status as women's work with relatively low pay and a truncated career structure.²

Only in Victoria, however, were such developments followed by a major strike, which lasted 50 days. The high expectations the nurses had held for a new award, handed down in June 1986 following a five-day strike the previous year, contributed to this. The award did next to nothing for student nurses, cut payments for further qualifications, and allowed the state government to classify most nurses as grade one, the lowest level. Irene Bolger, elected as RANF branch secretary in a May 1986 by-election, recalled in an interview how at her 'first meeting as secretary ... there was a lot of anger' among the union members. This, she said, persisted throughout the months of industrial action, so that even at the campaign's last mass meeting, there was significant opposition to reaching an agreement with the government.³

In this situation, anti-Accord activists could lead the RANF into action against the Accord. Many nursing unionists might have dreaded the strike's approach, but felt that it was inevitable. According to one delegate, they had had 'to come to terms with it. It's the only way we are going to win.'⁴ Bolger told members that, after months of negotiations, 'we've just got to bring this to an end' through strike action.⁵ Many members felt that she was helping them to stand up for their profession and believed that, through her, the union was doing what they wanted it to do.⁶

Only months before, Bolger, then an organiser, had been an unsuccessful candidate for secretary. She was then banned by the union council from going to a hospital for which she had responsibility, where nurses had struck over staffing and rejected management proposals to resolve the dispute. Bolger believed that the Accord was a means to control unions, had failed to defend living standards, had wrongly made workers responsible for productivity and the profitability of private companies, and had increased the market's domination of society. Now, she told members, they

² Judith Bessant, "'Good Women and Good Nurses": conflicting identities in the Victorian nurses strikes, 1985-86', *Labour History*, no. 63, November 1992, pp. 166-67; Richard Curlewis, 'The Victorian Nurses' Strike-1986', *Labor College Review*, no. 5, October 1989, p. 33; Gardner and McCoppin, 'The Politicisation of Australian Nurses', p. 26; Elizabeth Pitman, 'Goodbye, Florence', *Australian Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, February 1985.

³ Irene Bolger, Interview, 1994; Curlewis, 'The Victorian Nurses' Strike', p. 33.

⁴ Robyn Marshall, 'We All Know What We're Fighting For', *Direct Action*, no. 593, 26 November 1986, p. 5. Also: *Direct Action*, September-November 1986; Curlewis, 'The Victorian Nurses' Strike', p. 33.

⁵ Bolger, Interview.

⁶ *Direct Action*, October-December 1986.

'should be prepared to face the political consequences' of the new claim for pay rises for grade one and student nurses being judged contrary to the Accord.⁷

Many of the union's members took part in the campaign's discussion. The cumulative attendance at the campaign's six mass meetings and a general meeting between June and December was more than 32,000. Separate meetings, and often secret ballots, decided on the walkouts (that is, refusal to attend to admitted patients) from general wards. During the strike, an organising committee met daily. News was spread through a strike bulletin and a community radio program.

From August 1986, bans were imposed and eventually spread to 68 hospitals. A mass meeting at the end of October voted to strike indefinitely. Walkouts occurred at no less than 14 hospitals. The nurses also organised a number of marches. Perhaps the most significant was one to the Trades Hall Council building. Through that march, the nurses reinforced their claim to conduct the campaign themselves, rather than have the council take control of the dispute.

Pickets were established at many hospitals. HEF Victorian branch officials called for that union's members to cross the picket lines. Some HEF members refused to cross and some enrolled nurses, among whom the HEF competed with the RANF for members, joined the RANF and the strike. Other HEF members, assisted by police, drove trucks through the pickets at least once. Nurses at a country hospital told an

⁷ Bolger, Interview; Direct Action, 1986, 1988; Bolger, 'Australia Reconstructed', pp. 160-64; Louise Connor, 'What's in it for Women: A Roundtable on Women in Unions', Australian Left Review, no. 100, July-August 1987, p. 19. Bolger stated she was not a "formally educated socialist", but that she had come from a "pretty poor family" and found economic inequalities unfair, that during the strike "the solidarity of the nurses keeps me going ... [and] makes it all worth it ..." and that the opposition to the strike of the parliamentary caucus of the Socialist Left, of which she was a supporter, showed the union was doing what it should: Robyn Marshall, 'A Pretty Clear Idea of What Nursing is About', Direct Action, no. 592, 19 November 1986, p. 4. Some opponents of the Accord in the union were organised socialists, such as Socialist Workers Party members Lalitha Chelliah, an organiser, and Pauline Scott, a Royal Melbourne Hospital job representative during the 1986 strike and branch president from 1987 to 1988, who were supportive of Bolger's actions in the strike, and members of the International Socialist Organisation and of Socialist Action, who were not (on SA's Liz Ross, see fn. 15): author's recollection; Direct Action, 1986; Rose Scott and Rosealie Vallance, 'A Way With Words And A Knack For Healing Industrial And Other Wounds', The Age, 6 June 2008, <http://www.theage.com.au/national/a-way-with-words-and-a-knack-for-healing-industrial-and-other-wounds-20080605-2mce.html>, accessed on 16 April 2010. Bolger was not the only anti-Accord nursing union official: Jenny Haines, NA secretary, had been the sole official to vote against the Accord at the ACTU conference in February 1983 (see next chapter). In July 1986, a NA claim for 39-56 per cent pay increases was met by an arbitration decision granting increases of between 2 and 11 per cent for most nurses in NSW. The majority of the union's council, led by its president, Pat Staunton, who was also president of the NSW Labour Council, opposed an industrial campaign or even a delegates meeting in response, and gagged Haines and assistant secretary Bronwyn Ridgway. Haines and Ridgway's Progressive Nurses Reform group successfully petitioned for a Special General Meeting to discuss claims for 39 per cent pay increases across the board and the 38 hour week in the private sector, but could only win a third of the vote at the meeting: no stopwork was called, so senior nurses, who had the greatest gains from the arbitration decision, could attend more readily than other nurses with less flexible working hours. A year later, Staunton, Haines and Ridgway each ran competing tickets in a union election: Staunton's received about 60 per cent of the vote, the others about 20 per cent each. Direct Action, 1986-1987.

interviewer they had not enforced pickets against local small businesses, whose operators they knew, supplying their hospital. In the end, the nurses union did not seek to stop trucks with basic hospital supplies. Thus, the pickets generally acted more as ongoing demonstrations and solidarity activities and as collection points for supporters' contributions.

The government's criticism of the nurses seems to have hardened the striking nurses' resolve and influenced other nurses to join the union. The mainstream media took a side—the November 12 editorial in *The Age* was entitled 'The Nurses Must Not Win'—and a mass meeting slow-handclapped its journalists out of the venue. Widespread popular support for the nurses, however, was expressed in comments the media reported and newspaper letters pages and through donation and well-wishes received at the nurses' pickets.

After three weeks, 14,000 nurses were on strike. As the strike continued into December, a few nurses returned to work, reputedly driven by financial stringency. Other nurses moved towards intensifying the strike through walkouts from emergency and acute care wards.⁸

A gloss has sometimes been put on the solidarity of other unions' officials with the nurses' strike to the effect that it was stronger than for other campaigns at the time. However, only the beleaguered Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) was consistently supportive. Otherwise, official solidarity was exceptional. The ALP and union leaderships, including parts of the left, were generally hostile to demands which according to them 'went beyond the limits of the ... Accord'.⁹

Following a November 20 decision of Latrobe Valley electricity workers to plan industrial action in support of the nurses, the ACTU intervened in the dispute. Ostensibly, the ACTU also supported the nurses, but the RANF nationally voted to keep control of the dispute. Also, after an ACTU presentation to the Industrial Relations Commission on December 15, the nurses continued to strike, which forced the ACTU to change its stance to one more in line with the nurses' view. The strike finished on December 20 with the nurses winning a substantial part of their claim.¹⁰

⁸ Author's recollection; *Direct Action*, June-December 1986; Bessant, "Good Women and Good Nurses", pp. 167-68; Curlewis, 'The Victorian Nurses' Strike', pp. 33-37; Sally McManammy, 'Nurses' Work, Nurses' Worth', *Arena*, no. 77, 1986; Liz Ross, 'Dedication Doesn't Pay the Rent! The 1986 Victorian Nurses' Strike', in Sandra Bloodworth and Tom O'Lincoln (eds), *Rebel Women in Australian Working Class History*, Melbourne, Interventions, 1998, pp. 141-42, 144, 147.

⁹ Bessant, "Good Women and Good Nurses", p. 172.

¹⁰ *Direct Action*, November-December 1986; Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 136; Ross, 'Dedication Doesn't Pay the Rent!', p. 144.

The success of the nurses' anti-Accord action was isolated. Three key reasons for this can be suggested.

One of these reasons is that the situation within the nurses union itself did not support further such action. In the aftermath of the strike, many nurses apparently felt guilty. This was, perhaps, the reverse side of the positive contribution the nurses' 'ideology of serving' had made to their industrial action.¹¹ The anti-Accord majority evaporated. In the branch's next election, in 1988, a group associated with the ALP, which Bolger had now left, won overall. Bolger was re-elected as branch secretary, but in the following year she was forced out of the union over allegations of impropriety. A petition to the union of more than a thousand members supported her reinstatement. After an out-of-court settlement she stood in a by-election for the position, but gained only 44 per cent of the vote.¹²

A second reason why the nurses' success was inconsequential with regard to the development of a broader anti-Accord politics in the unions is that, while they had developed their claim when a wages 'push' among workers was rising, when the nurses struck that broader development was temporarily weakening.¹³

In the middle of 1986, many union members were restive about falling wages.¹⁴ The Communist Party of Australia's National Executive discussed how:

Rank and file feeling in some industries (metal, teaching, public sector, building and construction) ... indicated a growing level of discontent over the drop in workers purchasing power and an increasing wish for the union movement to take effective action on wages.¹⁵

The proposed 'two-tier' wage determination system for 1987, in which the larger second tier, a four per cent wage increase, was tied to restructuring which would boost productivity, would do no more than maintain the real value of awards against consumer price increases from 1986.¹⁶ Opposition to the two-tier proposal emerged within official union structures:

- The Victorian branch of the Australian Public Service Association, the members of which worked in the lower grades of the federal public service, where jobs were

¹¹ On that contribution, see: Gardner and McCoppin, 'The Politicisation of Australian Nurses', p. 26.

¹² *Direct Action*, 1989; Curlewis, 'The Victorian Nurses' Strike', pp. 37-39.

¹³ This is why Bolger's estimation that a solidarity movement with the nurses could not be formed seems reasonable. Cf.: Ross, 'Dedication Doesn't Pay the Rent!', pp. 147-48.

¹⁴ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 145.

¹⁵ Communist Party of Australia, Minutes of National Executive Meeting held in Sydney, 22 & 23 August, 1986, Communist Party of Australia, Series MSS 5021 add on 1936, 14 (76), NO Correspondence 1986, Mitchell Library, Sydney, August 1986, item 2. CPA members, however, acted very inconsistently on the proposals adopted by the party's executive in response: to support individual union claims, to raise concerns about the two-tier proposal for Mark III, and to put 'negotiated matters ... to the widest numbers of workers before adoption'.

¹⁶ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 138.

now threatened by reclassifications and budget cuts, opposed the two-tier system. A July 20 APSA mass meeting in Melbourne called for immediate industrial action and a response by the union nationally. At the national level, however, the union would consider withdrawing from the Accord only if the ACTU agreed to further wage discounting.

- The other federal public service union, the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association, suggested a modification of the two-tier proposal to include full cost of living increases for lower pay rates and greater scope for second-tier rises. A number of ACOA delegates meetings would not accept the proposal even with this modification.
- The printing union in NSW debated the proposal's requirement for a no extra claims commitment. Its mass meeting accepted the commitment because the federal executive of the union had already done so.
- The NSW Teachers Federation rejected the proposal.¹⁷
- Sections of the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union also debated the two tier system. In July 1986, one-third of its Melbourne delegates meeting voted against the official motion supporting the proposed system. In inner Sydney, AMWU delegates called indexation a 'farce', asked why there was not an industry wide campaign, and commented that a decline in shopfloor organisation was likely: more than 100 supported the suggestion of a mass meeting.¹⁸

The climax of the broader upsurge of wage militancy in 1986 came on October 15, when the AMWU national council narrowly supported changes to the two-tier system similar to those raised by the ACOA. The Victorian branch secretary, John Halfpenny, who had initiated discussion of these changes, told a supportive delegates meeting in Melbourne the following day that the trade union movement had disagreements about wages policy. While he defended previous wage decisions, he insisted that mass meetings to discuss wages policy and full indexation were now needed. He stated that since employers had wasted the wage stability unions had offered them, workers needed to be able to fight for the unions' wages policy: 'We have to start resuming some of our traditional activities, so that we can get a proper deal'. A Government Aircraft Factory delegate responded:

We've been the bunnies. Profits have gone through the roof. They've cut our wages, and the federal government has helped them. This time, we say no bloody deal! No deal until our members have a say! No deal until the

¹⁷ Direct Action, July-October 1986.

¹⁸ Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian State Council, Minutes; Direct Action, 23 July 1986.

government delivers!¹⁹

A week later, however, the AMWU national council reversed its October 15 decision.²⁰ Mass meetings of metal industry unions held in Adelaide and Melbourne in late October then rejected the national council's recommendation and adopted resolutions based on that of the Victorian AMWU delegates meeting. AMWU Victorian president Frank Cherry stated it would be 'good' to develop a position based on rank and file discussion. AMWU SA branch secretary Mick Tumbers suggested compromise, but was countered by a shop committee chairperson, Mark Walkley, who argued that ALP offers were not the only alternative to New Right policies.²¹

Finally, during the first week of the nurses' strike, an ACTU conference confirmed the agreement of most of the official representatives of the unions to the two-tier proposal.²² The AMWU and the Building Workers Industrial Union (BWIU) successfully amended the ACTU draft resolution to the conference, but, according to the plumbers union president George Crawford, this only 'altered the wording a bit'.²³

The upsurge among workers in support of wage increases was, at least for the moment, overwhelmed. Not that the ACTU's inattention to wage levels and increasing concern about productivity necessarily had much positive support among union members, nor were anti-Accord unionists uninspired by the nurses strike. For example, the attempt to adjourn a poorly attended ACTU-organised rally inside the Melbourne Concert Hall in late November, after it had passed the official motion, was rejected. Instead, rank-and-file activists successfully moved condemnation of the ACTU for failing to carry out an industrial campaign to defend jobs and conditions and support the nurses. This suggests the Accord's supporters had been unable to mobilise for the rally, while anti-Accord activists had.²⁴

Yet the comments of Food Preservers Union secretary Tom Ryan on the November 1986 ACTU conference were accurate in their ruefulness:

One is always hopeful that the rank and file of the various trade unions will get the message through to those officials who voted with the ACTU executive

¹⁹ Reihana Mohideen and Steve Painter, 'Metals Stewards Oppose New Wages Straitjacket', Direct Action, no. 588, 22 October 1986, p. 3.

²⁰ See next chapter.

²¹ Direct Action, October - November 1986.

²² E. M. Davis, 'Unions and Wages: ACTU Federal Unions Conference November 1986', Australian Quarterly, vol. 59, no. 1, Autumn 1987, pp. 4-14.

²³ Frank Martinez, 'Two Tiers: Unions in Impossible Situation, Says Tom Ryan', Direct Action, no. 591, 12 November 1986, p. 7.

²⁴ Robyn Marshall, 'ACTU Condemned at Melbourne Anti-cuts Rally', Direct Action, no. 593, 26 November 1986, p. 10.

yesterday, that enough is enough and that it's about time we started seeking wage justice.²⁵

This had not happened yet.

The third reason for the isolation of the success of the nurses' wage campaign as an anti-Accord action was that another anti-Accord campaign arising at the same time was not only isolated within the union movement, but defeated. In July 1986, construction plumbers and gasfitters claimed a 36-hour week and \$70 per week site allowance in preference to the building industry superannuation agreement, with its no extra claims provision. The plumbers' claim was prepared by delegate meetings, which discussed the pay their union's members had lost in the last few years, and by mass meetings which adopted the proposed national campaign against opposition from the SA branch and most members in Newcastle. According to their union officials and organisers, the members thought improvements in immediate payments and hours and the 'traditional means' of fighting for wage justice reasonable. 'Sooner or later', stated Queensland branch secretary John Thompson, 'someone had to take a stand against the accord. Our members have decided to be part of that push.'²⁶

The plumbers union's officials expected support to rally around opposition to the Accord. Crawford moved an amendment to include the catch-up for cost of living increases at the November ACTU conference. However, only a few building unions in Victoria adopted similar claims. A BWIU delegates meeting in Melbourne voted for a claim like the plumbers, against their branch leadership.

The plumbers campaigned through bans. Their union claimed the \$70 allowance was won on many sites. Nonetheless, the campaign as a whole was lost, after the union accepted fines imposed on it under the secondary boycott provisions of the Trade Practices Act in March 1987 and the ACTU conference in April opposed the union's campaign. At the conference, left unions argued that individual unions should be allowed their own strategies, but the ACTU president, Simon Crean, responded that unions operating outside the two-tier system would not be defended by the ACTU.

The two-tier system was, however, extended to include a severance pay claim by the BWIU. This union felt that both it and the Accord were under pressure from the popularity of the claim of the plumbers and the other building unions, including the BLF. A win on severance pay would provide an alternative which would satisfy members.

²⁵ Martinez, 'Two Tiers', p. 7.

²⁶ Reihana Mohideen, 'Plumbers Discuss \$60 Rise, 35 Hours', *Direct Action*, no. 578, 6 August 1986, p. 4; Reihana Mohideen and Tom Wilson, 'Plumbers Support Wage Rise, Shorter Hours Drive', *Direct Action*, no. 579, 13 August 1986, p. 3; Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. 120.

In the latter half of 1987, the plumbers' union came back under the Accord. The union subsequently withdrew its claim.²⁷

Derecognition of the Builders Labourers Federation

The campaign of the plumbers, as well as that of the nurses, arose in the context of the April 1986 derecognition of the BLF in the ACT, NSW and Victoria. The BLF's opposition to the Accord was not espoused openly nor strategically very often, but through its industrial struggles it had clashed with the ACTU and the Hawke-Keating government. Not only was the union deregistered from the arbitration system, but builders labourers were coerced to join other unions, principally the BWIU and the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association (FEDFA). That coercion had the support of these unions and the ACTU, and was assisted by the presence of police, as well as security guards, on construction sites.

As a result of the BLF derecognition, whole groups of militant unionists were lost to the labour movement or continued their activity without official recognition and in the face of police harassment and government restrictions on employers making concessions to the union. The BLF's NSW and ACT branches effectively collapsed. In NSW, the BLF branch had divisions in its leadership and lacked solidarity from other unions, following the federal BLF's successful intervention against the militant branch leadership headed by the Communist Party's Jack Munday a decade before. The ACT BLF was relatively isolated as a union organisation in one smaller city: for example, local concrete truck drivers recognised its pickets, but the NSW Transport Workers Union did not and mobilised drivers to break them. In Victoria, the union for years retained several dedicated officials and organisers, several hundred members, the support of some sections of builders labourers, such as steelfixers, and the solidarity of many other activists. Still, most builders labourers were driven out of what had been the BLF's most effective branch and into an increasingly incompetent BWIU one. By the early 1990s, the BWIU in Victoria had no more members than the BLF alone had had before derecognition. Only a national BWIU intervention into the Victorian branch led by the anti-Accord and anti-derecognition president Bill Ethel reversed the branch's slide towards collapse.

Reform groups appeared in the BWIU in the ACT, NSW and Victoria immediately after derecognition of the BLF. The strongest, led by carpenter delegates, was in

²⁷ *Direct Action*, August 1986 - April 1987; Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 133; Tom McDonald and Audrey McDonald, *Intimate Union: Sharing a Revolutionary Life*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1998, pp. 303-05; Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, pp. 214-16.

Victoria. It failed because of the consciousness among BWIU members of the legal restrictions on the revival of BLF-style unionism and the splitting of the BLF's coverage between the BWIU and the FEDFA. The BWIU branch leadership in Victoria was reformed, but only after several years, when, in the context of the formation of a construction industry union nationally through amalgamation, the remaining BLF leaders, headed by John Cummins, could be incorporated.²⁸

According to a historian of the BLF's struggle against derecognition, Liz Ross, the union was vulnerable because:

[In] the 1980s in Australia ... the link between trade-union action and building a [revolutionary socialist] party was weak. Without the strong pull of such a revolutionary party the BLF, its officials and members were affected by all the rightward pressures. And in their struggle against deregistration it led them to make mistakes.²⁹

Yet, as Ross noted, 'the far left CPA(ML) [the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)] had a major influence in the union' and the union 'certainly promoted [if not revolutionary unionism, then] a strong political unionism' with a larrikin character.³⁰

Therefore, the more specific issue to which Ross pointed, that 'as for the major political question, the Accord, [the BLF had] no strategy to fight it politically from the start',³¹ is what needs to be explained. That explanation can proceed at least partly through an

²⁸ Ross, *Dare to Struggle*. The general thoroughness and the empathy for the builders' labourers militants of Liz Ross's study obviates the need here for much more than the above summary about what happened in and to the BLF in the 1980s. Two factors that may also have affected the Victorian BWIU reform group's vote in the 1987 branch elections might be made more explicit, however. The FEDFA's recruitment of former BLF members reduce the "hit" generally of the latter within the BWIU, as Ross discussed, but more specifically it reduced the number of former BLF members voting in the BWIU compared with ongoing BWIU members. Potential votes for the reform group were also probably lost among the 1500 BWIU members who had left that union for the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners: some of those who left were no doubt attracted by the craft particularity of the latter union, but others had left in disgust at the actions of the BWIU in relation to the BLF. Also, her explanation of the history of the BLF is subject to the critique that follows. For additional material on the BLF derecognition, including its attitude to the Accord, see: Don McDonald, Telex to Simon Crean, Australian Council of Trade Unions, N147, Box 671, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 28 February 1986; *Direct Action*, 1985-1987, 1989; Brian Boyd, *Inside the BLF*, Sydney, Ocean, 1991, pp. 301-12; Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 135; John Cleary, 'Issues of the BLF Deregistration', *Lines Newsletter*, special pre-conference issue, September 1986, pp. 10-11; McDonald and McDonald, *Intimate Union*, pp. 295-305; Thompson and Tracy, 'The Building and Construction Industry', p. 77.

²⁹ Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, p. 24.

³⁰ Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, pp. 283, 287.

³¹ Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, pp. 283, 287.

examination of the circumstances of the Australian far left and, in particular, of the CPA(ML).³² In that regard, the BLF's problems resulted from the following factors:

- The CPA(ML) was just one of the various small organisations of a divided far left. That disunity began to be addressed by many of those involved only when the BLF's derecognition was nigh.³³
- The formally clandestine organisation of the CPA(ML) was rather incongruous with the Australian political situation. This presumably reduced the organisational reach of the party among builders' labourers.
- Most importantly, perhaps, under the leadership of the CPA(ML), the BLF failed to take up all chances available to challenge the domination of the ALP in the workers' movement, especially in the early years of the Accord. Ross reported various BLF members' comments that the union had needed greater discussion of the relationship between the effects of the Accord and support for the ALP. Also, as Ross noted, in Victoria the BLF and the ALP 'weren't close ... largely as a result of the Maoist politics of some in the leadership',³⁴ but this seems to have been a tactical rather than a strategic stance. As derecognition approached, the BLF moved to become more involved in the ALP, applying for affiliation to the Socialist Left faction, even though the trajectory of many ALP members during the BLF's derecognition was to quit the party.

Thus, the BLF acted to secure achievements for its members and in solidarity with other people. Also, within the union, slogans of struggle and the idea that workers' and employers' interests conflicted circulated freely. However, most of the more active members appear to have thought of the BLF as '[the] basis on which you rebelled against society'.³⁵ A broader class political outlook, such as might arise from the influence of, and be expressed through adherence to, a revolutionary party, is not

³² Ross instead proceeds from a general proposition:

To go beyond [the limits of trade union struggle] you need to link trade union work with building a revolutionary socialist party. It is only a revolutionary party, based on militant rank and file workers across all unions, that can fuse economic and political action, that can organise and lead workers, in a way that can challenge the state. (Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, p. 23.)

This abstracts, however, from the experience of building a revolutionary party. Such a party could never be built all at once, nor at the same pace across all unions (nor, indeed, among all workers). Thus the link of union and party will be stronger at first in some unions than others, and workers' experience of what the unions with such revolutionary leadership achieve would do much to determine whether or not the link between union action and a revolutionary party were generalised, or not, in an insurrectionary situation.

Ross failed to detail how the CPA (ML) exerted influence in the union, excepting a mention that the BLF's federal and Victorian secretary, Norm Gallagher, was a CPA (ML) member. She ignored altogether the role of other far left parties, such as that Bernie Hockings, one of the carpenter delegates leading the BWIU reform group, was a SWP member: author's recollection.

³³ See the next chapter, and also ch. 11, for further discussion of that development.

³⁴ Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, p. 199.

³⁵ Ralph Edwards, cited in Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, p. 287.

evident. The BLF was an expression of the militant syndicalism that had developed among Australian workers before the Accord.

The success of the derecognition action against the BLF and the plumbers' defeat suppressed that militant syndicalism in the construction industry: a period of quietude descended in the industry.³⁶ While the BLF, nurses and plumbers' disputes constituted the opening phase of a series of disputes in which that syndicalism threatened the Accord, for the threat to succeed the development of opposition needed to be much broader.³⁷

The Second Tier

In April 1987, the two-tier wage scheme, in the form proposed by the arbitration commission, was adopted by an ACTU conference. Only a few unions opposed it.

Trading-off work practices for wages, a central feature of the second tier, had not previously been a principle of wage determination. Many unionists in the workplace and even union organisers did not know how that would work or what its consequences might be. A dissenting Storemen and Packers' Union (SPU) delegate believed there was 'huge uncertainty ... [about] what the 4 per cent negotiations mean' and also great resentment about the time taken in the bargaining.³⁸

In the next few months, a number of metals and other manufacturing shops won four per cent pay rises without agreeing to significant restructuring. A Food Preservers' Union (FPU) organiser would later claim that at the Heinz factory in Melbourne 'the Union did not give anything away', having only agreed to look at the award.³⁹ AMWU officials, however, were looking for restructuring proposals. In June 1987, assistant national secretary Greg Harrison stated publicly that the agreements like these reached by his union's members were over-award payments. When the union's Victorian administrative committee complained to Harrison that his remarks had led employers not to negotiate on the four per cent claim because the remarks suggested a further

³⁶ Thompson and Tracy, 'The Building and Construction Industry', p. 78.

³⁷ Cf.: Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. 101. Rizzo argued "the critical period" for the Accord, in which "hard-left" unions and other Accord opponents come together, began with the construction industry disputes. In fact, the "hard-left" unions were effectively side-lined by the results of these disputes.

³⁸ Ramani De Silva, 'Metal Bosses Press for Extra Givebacks', *Direct Action*, no. 624, 26 August 1987, p. 4.

³⁹ Peter Van Veen, Statement, Food Preservers Union, Box 33, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 1991. For a further example of an agreement without significant concessions, this time involving the FIA, see: Vic Taylor, 'Receptacles', in Russell Lansbury and Duncan Macdonald (eds), *Workplace Industrial Relations: Australian Case Studies*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 45-46.

second-tier wage claim might be made, Harrison reiterated his view that the second tier was 'not an exercise in achieving an over award increase'.⁴⁰

Some groups of workers viewed the outcome of their second-tier negotiations favourably. The federal public service clerical officers' mass meetings supported the service's package, in which the major concessions were imposed on the clerical assistants. Even in NSW, where the package was opposed by a clerical officers' rank and file group which had won the union branch secretary's position, the vote was more than 90 per cent in favour. There was more opposition in the clerical assistants' union, with some criticism by officials and majority votes against in Victoria, Queensland and WA. The union's overall membership, nonetheless, voted to accept the deal.⁴¹

Some workers mitigated the effect of the changes agreed for the second-tier pay rise by deflecting them. At one Melbourne paint factory where workers were opposed to making concessions, a national union official attended to persuade the union's members to take part. The bargaining process was worked through, but 'very few of the offsets were adhered to in a way that realised their full value in terms of useful savings'.⁴²

For others, the two tier system seemed increasingly undesirable. Many noted that the wages of women, who were a greater proportion of lower-paid workers, were falling behind as the industrially strong parts of the workforce quickly secured second-tier agreements. Joan Corbett, the women's officer of the Australian Teachers' Federation (ATF), whose members' pay continued its relative decline in this period, stated: 'I get very pissed off with the argument that, to protect women workers, we have to wear whatever the ACTU determines'.⁴³

Leadership bodies of the Australian Workers' Union, traditionally the staunchest union proponents of arbitration, vowed not to take part in the future in any similar system. They complained to the ACTU about the employers' second-tier claims and the system's lack of uniform and regular wage increases. The AWU leaders suggested that

⁴⁰ Greg Harrison, Letter to Alan Ritter, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian branch, AMWU 101/38, Box M9, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 29 June 1987; Alan Ritter, Letter to Greg Harrison, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian branch, AMWU 106/119, M9, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 16 June 1987.

⁴¹ *Direct Action*, November 1987.

⁴² Malcolm Rimmer and Elsa Underhill, 'Paintco', in Russell Lansbury and Duncan Macdonald (eds), *Workplace Industrial Relations: Australian Case Studies*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 76, 93.

⁴³ Connor, 'What's in it for Women', pp. 21-22; Martin, 'The Australian Middle Class, 1986-1995', p. 142.

to 'move towards a genuine collective bargaining situation' was better than to lose award conditions in order to 'merely attempt to maintain the value of wages'.⁴⁴

Warehouse workers in Sydney, members of the SPU, viewed management proposals for a second-tier agreement as cost cutting. At a September 1987 SPU mass meeting in Sydney, members criticised the requirement to make concessions for wage increases. 'We have nothing more to give', one commented. Another member said he was 'glad Greg Sword [the union's secretary] is here today. He can go back and tell the ACTU that the accord stinks.'⁴⁵

The great variation in the circumstances under, and the time in which, workers gained the four per cent pay increase became a source of grievance. Academic unionists found that the second tier and the ongoing application of 'structural efficiency' principles in award restructuring brought with them the threat of increased managerial prerogatives over their terms of employment. Academics eventually reacted with their first national strike in 1990. Many unionised private sector clerical workers compared their agreements, in which they had made substantial concessions, with the minor trade-offs of more active unions. Vehicle builders union officials observed 'considerable membership antagonism about the trade-offs under the four per cent and were adamant that attempts to secure further concessions would be strongly resisted'.⁴⁶

Such problems, however, were those of workers who had second-tier agreements. After a year, 40 per cent of workers did not.⁴⁷ As late as the end of 1988, workers at a sugar refinery in Melbourne struck for six weeks to win the four per cent. An AMWU organiser who was involved, Alan Cole, sarcastically told *Direct Action* this was a wage fixing system 'designed to deliver to everyone'.⁴⁸

Towards Award Restructuring

In 1988 and 1989, the two tier system was replaced. In the new wages system, awards would be reviewed and then restructured. In line with an aim of increasing productivity, as expressed in the ACTU's adoption of *Australia Reconstructed* and the decision in

⁴⁴ G.A. Barr, Letter to Simon Crean, Australian Council of Trade Unions, N147, Box 718, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 4 December 1987; E.C. Ecob, Letter to Simon Crean, Australian Council of Trade Unions, N147, 718, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 23 October 1987.

⁴⁵ Bamber and Runciman, 'Foodco', pp. 200-01; Reihana Mohideen, 'SPU Resists Bosses' Demands for Second-Tier Givebacks', *Direct Action*, no. 629, 30 September 1987, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Russell Lansbury and Duncan Macdonald, 'Automakers', in Russell Lansbury and Duncan Macdonald (eds), *Workplace Industrial Relations: Australian Case Studies*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 165; John O'Brien, 'Becomin "Unionate"?' From Staff Association to National Union: The "Industrialisation" of University Staff 1983-1993', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 45, no. 1, March 2003, pp. 39-42; Tanner, *The Last Battle*, pp. 71, 82.

⁴⁷ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 146.

⁴⁸ Garry Walters, 'Sugar Workers Strike', *Direct Action*, no. 681, 31 January 1989, p. 5.

the September 1988 National Wage Case, trade-offs of conditions for wage increases were to be the sole basis for determining pay rises.

The development of the ideas of and support for award restructuring within the unions was driven by discussion in the metals industry and the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union in particular. Within that union, some participants in a discussion at a November 1987 Trade Union Training Authority national school backed the proposal for a new award. A principal feature proposed for the restructured award was 'multi-skilling' across existing occupational boundaries. Skills were reconceived. They would no longer be considered part of the body of knowledge of a particular trade. Instead, they would be thought of as being at various levels within streams which were related to types of products. For example, the AMWU national council's recommendations on award restructuring to the union's delegates in June 1988 envisaged three skills streams for fitters: mechanical, electrical, and instrument. An individual worker could have skills in more than one stream. Others within the AMWU felt that the membership, which had not participated in developing the approach, would resist the proposed change and would also react against any changes to the length of apprenticeship. They also raised concerns that multi-skilling would fall outside members' control. As well, in the June 1988 AMWU recommendations, a demand from the union's national leadership for real wage increases appeared for the first time since the Accord began. This call reflected the felt need to respond to the fall in household income of metal workers, a fall ranging for the previous four years from 9-12 per cent for fitters to 3-6 per cent (but 'probably closer to 8 per cent') for female process workers, according to estimates from the union's research centre. Probably many workplace representatives, like Frank Argondizzo, at Ford Broadmeadows, believed that a wages conflict was brewing because of the decline in real wages and the variations in wages between factories that had developed.⁴⁹

Demands for wage increases could contradict the progression of the Accord toward award restructuring.⁵⁰ A 300-strong delegates meeting called by Victorian Trades Hall

⁴⁹ Amalgamated Metal Workers Union National Research Centre, *The Living Standard of Metal Workers and their Families: March Quarter 1984 to March Quarter 1988*, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 665 Metal Industry Award Restructuring 1988-89, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, June 1988; Stewart Anderson, *Report of Stewart Anderson - State Organiser, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian Branch*, AMWU 106/119, Box 16, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 16 November 1987; Greg Harrison, *Award Restructure and MTFU Conference*, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 666, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1988; Lever-Tracy, 'Fordism Transformed?', p. 193. The research centre's findings on metal workers' household income were presented as preliminary conclusions.

⁵⁰ AMWU officials appear to have anticipated opposition to their views of this kind, preparing speakers' notes (for a meeting or meetings that are not specified) to use in exercising a seconder's right of reply: Greg Harrison, *Reserve Speakers Note - For Right of Reply if Required*, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 666, Award Restructure and MTFU Conference, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1988.

Council in April 1988 supported the principle of 'comparative wage justice'. The delegates also proposed that, beyond the THC proposal for an across-the-board national wage rise, catch-up claims on losses since 1981 and additional, unlimited pay increases might be pursued. At the end of June, a week-long public transport strike began in Victoria in support of an immediate six per cent wage rise. Half-a-million, mainly public sector, workers struck for a day on July 6. The ACTU called for strike action nationally on July 13. On July 7, however, the state government and the THC leadership reached an agreement to bring the Victorian public sector claim into line with the ACTU's claim. The agreement was presented to a THC meeting that night.⁵¹

A THC secondary teachers' union representative and reform group member, Michael Naismith, pointed out that until then:

A democracy had been encouraged by Trades Hall, which had reflected the sentiments of Victorian workers ... It was THC consultation with the members that was crucial to the industrial campaign, not the role the media thought Halfpenny [who was now secretary of the THC] had played. The ranks had influenced the THC position ... a lot of workers thought they were doing more than just putting pressure on the ACTU; they were taking the government head on.

Naismith unsuccessfully proposed that the THC, which was moving to accept the agreement, call a delegates meeting to discuss the agreement instead. He later stated the ACTU's strike call was a 'set up job ... used to cool off things'. According to Naismith, 'in any future public sector campaign ... workers [would be] looking for a united leadership prepared to fight'.⁵²

ACTU support for award restructuring was confirmed by an August 1988 conference vote, which only five unions opposed, and an executive decision in December 1988. This was backed by actions such as AMWU officials supplying documents to management in the defence production factories that union delegates there had not seen: a senior defence production delegate, Rolf Goebel, claimed this was done in order to make the sector a pacesetter for award restructuring in the whole metal industry. Some groups of workers, given the opportunity, would reject these decisions, as ACOA mass meetings did in September in Melbourne and in Liverpool (in Sydney). Or workers would seek a pay increase without making concessions on their working conditions, as maintenance tradespersons won at a Sydney-based metal and glass company—again, against AMWU opposition.⁵³ At this time workers in many

⁵¹ Direct Action, April-July 1988.

⁵² Reihana Mohideen, 'Victorian Trades Hall Puts the Lid on Wages Campaign', Direct Action, no. 659, 13 July 1988, p. 16.

⁵³ Direct Action, August-December 1988.

workplaces could, with genuine union support, strike for and win claims. As the Victorian secretary of the Federated Clerks Union (FCU), Lindsay Tanner, wrote:

Buoyed by a strong economy and starting from a low base, we won gains big and small in workplaces across the state. Almost at any given time we had members on strike somewhere, and innumerable improvements were won without industrial action ... [Sometimes] we had to persuade members to return to work after they had won the dispute. They wanted to stay out and crush the company completely.⁵⁴

Expressions of opposition to the new wage determination system were heard in some of the highest union hierarchies, such as the ACTU wages committee and the AMWU national council. Notes taken at some of their meetings by AMWU assistant national secretary Greg Harrison—who was a staunch supporter of award restructuring and thought opposition among delegates to it ‘hysterical ... narrow selfishness [and] elitism at its worst’⁵⁵—reveal to some degree the extent of the opposition to the new wage determination system:

- During one discussion at the AMWU national council, he thought that the union ‘must face up to concerns of our members’, which he understood to be declining living standards in comparison to the big pay increases for ‘bosses’ and booming profits. The union’s campaign would be called ‘Pay Back Time’. During the discussion, the Queensland branch secretary, Aussie Vaughan, asked how the union could retreat from its promises to members that restructuring would involve pay increases above cost of living rises.⁵⁶
- In an ACTU wages committee meeting, some union officials supported a cost of living based pay campaign. The banking union’s Len Hingley cautioned that increases would need to be available for all. The construction unions’ Tom McDonald stated that at the end of the restructuring period a return to a cost of living based system was needed. The representatives of the SA United Trades and Labour Council, the WA Trades and Labour Council, the Australian Teachers Federation and state public service unions all backed a general round of pay rises equal to the increase in the Consumer Price Index. The UTLC made a call: ‘Campaign!’ The WA TLC claimed its affiliates were unanimous in this view and expressed fears of suffering ‘political fallout from older blue collar workers’. The ATF’s Di Foggo and Halfpenny both also supported award restructuring, but Halfpenny warned support for it lessened the further from the peak body one went. A ‘real lack of enthusiasm from organisers’ was evident, he said. According

⁵⁴ Tanner, *The Last Battle*, pp. 160, 186.

⁵⁵ Greg Harrison, [Notes], Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 665, Metal Industry Award Restructuring 1988-89, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1988-89.

⁵⁶ Harrison, [Notes].

to Halfpenny, 'a unifying wages position' was needed, which would mean abandoning traditional relativities. Laurie Carmichael and Bill Kelty, as the ACTU representatives, urged patience and pointed to forthcoming income tax cuts.⁵⁷

- Early in 1989, the AMWU national council discussed recent delegates meetings on wages. The reports were: 'Sth Aust. Separate wages and restructuring. Anti ALP. No more adventurism and deals with ALP – bitter and vocal. Purged deep suspicion. Support AMWU plan. West Aust. Poorly attended ... NSW 340 total attendance. Agree debate subdued. Independent militant line defused opposition ... QLD 173 attendance. Resolution endorsed. VIC Record attendance 715.' In response, AMWU secretary George Campbell stated he was 'still concern[ed] about restructuring – and [had] doubts re workplace impact. Not in favour of full CPI but COL related. Must keep link with CPI or will wear productivity bargaining.' He acknowledged criticism about a lack of consultation and posed a question about holding mass meetings.⁵⁸

As late as October 1989, the Municipal Employees Union federal council threatened to disaffiliate from the ACTU in protest over the new wage-fixing guidelines. It demanded assurances that there would be no trade-offs of working conditions under it. Again, the Printing and Kindred Industries Union held mass meetings in June 1990: the Sydney meeting resolved industrial workers had been tied into a system of concessions which now had to stop.⁵⁹

Implementing Award Restructuring

As award restructuring began to be implemented in 1989, expressions of opposition arose from the ranks in a number of unions. For example, at teachers' union meetings in Victoria in April 1989, one-third of secondary teachers attending did not support a career structure proposal. Technical teachers voted just 128-123 in favour of their award restructuring package.

Some Federated Ironworkers Association members opposed the open-ended character and incomprehensibility of the steel industry award restructuring package. The FIA and BHP, nonetheless, organised a 'joint working party' to support the package's adoption. The union's officials also suggested that unless the package was

⁵⁷ Greg Harrison, ACTU Meeting [notes], Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 667, [green file], Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1988.

⁵⁸ Greg Harrison, National Council - Melbourne [notes], Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 665, Metal Industry Award Restructuring 1988-89, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra. These notes appear to be from a national council meeting on Feb 6 1989, which had been preceded by delegates meetings.

⁵⁹ Direct Action, 1989-1990.

agreed to, workers could miss out on a wage rise and faced possible layoffs. A membership vote in June accepted the package.

At the aircraft manufacturer Hawker de Havilland workers rejected a \$42 increase offered in order to open award restructuring negotiations in favour of a \$90 claim. That claim was in line with the original decision of the AMWU that endorsed the ACTU's December award restructuring decision (when the metal trades award restructuring agreement was reached, however, claims for increases were limited to \$30). In the first half of 1989, mass meetings of both Qantas maintenance and Telecom workers rejected award restructuring deals. One reason was the desire of some workers to seek higher wage increases.⁶⁰ In June 1989, the arbitration commission complained that wage increases given by employers were not consistent with its declared structural efficiency principles, but were being paid for market or other reasons.⁶¹

Waterside workers overwhelmingly favoured a restructuring plan recommended by their union leadership under which 3000 of them would be paid redundancies and 1000 new workers would be hired. However, the employers then delayed implementing the plan because they were already enjoying falling dispute levels, job redesign in container packing, general cost cutting of as much as 70 per cent, and the retirement without the generous redundancies of the restructuring plan of 600 workers, generally due to poor health. The comment of one Melbourne waterfront worker was that 'we have no career paths, which can only create an us and them situation'.⁶²

The skills training and career paths touted as a key gain of award restructuring were problematic in other ways. Managements tried to restrict the training of process workers to the enterprise's particular requirements in terms of number trained in particular skills and the set of skills each workers was trained in. Workers were not necessarily offered the chance to learn skills they wanted or needed. Workers also faced barriers to acquiring skills, such as a need to learn better English, but an inability

⁶⁰ Opposition to individual award restructuring proposals continued until as late as 1991. At Shell's Geelong refinery, a mass meeting unanimously rejected the company's job redesign, which cut 37 jobs. A motion from the floor to reject restructuring in favour of a more direct wage campaign was then ruled out of order by Kelty, who was chairing the meeting. He argued restructuring could not be rejected because pay rises had already been received in return for it, and then he urged patience. Two months later, after a small increase in the company's pay offer, a mass meeting accepted the restructuring proposals: Green Left Weekly, February-August 1991.

⁶¹ Direct Action, April-June 1989.

⁶² Zoe Reynolds, 'The Myths of Waterfront Reform', Workplace, Autumn 1991, pp. 7-9; Peter J Turnbull, 'Waterfront Reform in Britain and Australia-In Principle and in Practice', Journal of Industrial Relations, vol. 34, no. 2, June 1992, pp. 236-41, 45.

to attend classes because of shift work. As well, tradespeople objected to process workers receiving similar pay to them without serving apprenticeships.⁶³

Unionists such as Neil Flynn, a WA construction union official, found award restructuring 'frustrating—it was tailored to the metal trades and then everybody else had to squeeze in'.⁶⁴ In construction, the workload of officials increased as they became involved in committees and reform agencies, leaving them with much less time for handling rank and file issues.

Problems could arise from the different approaches of unions to negotiations about award restructuring and the structural efficiency principle. Job security was among a number of major concerns the train drivers union had, its NSW branch secretary, B.J. Willingale, wrote, but, he believed, 'the ARU [Australian Railways Union], of course, is only concerned with the 3% in its pocket and is not concerned for the price that goes with it.' He also noted that members could 'either sell themselves short or be sold short' in evaluations of job skills, because they 'are totally oblivious to the kind of job descriptions that are applied to our work'.⁶⁵

In shipping, the Seamen's Union pursued 'upskilling' from the mid-1980s. The union had agreed to the integration of deck and engine room work on new tonnage. Thus, the positions eliminated on ships were those not covered by this union: mates and officers, engineers and tradespersons. The other shipping unions found they could not stop these developments, which were also supported by the federal government and shipowners. These unions carried out some campaigns supporting their members' employment and wage relativities, and experienced internal dissent, while being compelled into a 'pragmatic accommodation' of the eventual amalgamation of the shipping unions.⁶⁶

Even within the metals industry, award restructuring affected various workers differently and could potentially divide them. Breaking down the division between mechanical and electrical work advantaged AMWU members, because they could now pursue the traditionally more highly paid electrical work, while electrical tradespeople

⁶³ John L Cordery et al., 'Multiskilling in Practice: Lessons from a Minerals Processing Firm', Journal of Industrial Relations, vol. 34, no. 2, June 1992, pp. 274-79; Clare Curran, 'Nowhere to Go', Australian Left Review, no. 119, July 1990, p. 13.

⁶⁴ O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, p. 50. See also: Mark Bray, 'Award Restructuring and Workplace Reform in New South Wales Road Freight Transport', Journal of Industrial Relations, vol. 34, no. 2, June 1992, p. 223.

⁶⁵ B.J. Willingale, Letter to K Matthews, Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, Z154, Box 9, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 4 May 1990, pp. 1, 3.

⁶⁶ Martin Bryne and Michael Hess, 'Shipping's New Industrial Relations: A View from Below', Journal of Industrial Relations, vol. 34, no. 4, December 1992, pp. 582-86; Morris, 'Shipping's New Industrial Relations', pp. 325-28.

had no such incentive to acquire mechanical skills. In particular, the electricians' licensing system, which reinforced their job security, was threatened, although the ACTU eventually intervened to preserve it. Garry Main, the Electrical Trades Union Victorian assistant secretary, stated in May 1990 that he had opposed multi-skilling because of likely job losses and pursued pay increases which looked at productivity but avoided giving away conditions. Main claimed that 70 per cent of his branch's members had won increases without concessions.⁶⁷

The Pilots Dispute

The climax of the conflict between the Accord's orientation to increasing labour productivity and the desire of many workers for real wage increases was the domestic airline pilots dispute. At the beginning of 1989, the pilots claimed a 29 per cent pay increase that would catch-up on real losses during the 1980s and maintain real pay through to the end of the year. Their most consistent demand during the dispute, however, was for direct negotiations between their organisation, the Australian Federation of Airline Pilots, and the airlines. In August 1989, the AFAP members resigned *en masse* in an attempt to avoid companies' legal claims against them for supposed damages arising from their work bans. The pilots faced the combined opposition of the government, the ACTU and the airlines. The first groups of pilots went back to work only after Christmas. Most did not try to fly—and some were never re-employed by the companies—until after the March 1990 election, when the Hawke government's re-election ended any prospect of a change in government policy: on March 7, the AFAP returned to arbitration.

The pilots' main concern, as expressed in the statements of Brian McCarthy, the AFAP president, was that their pay had been determined by the Accord when they had not chosen to take part in it and had had no input into it. The AFAP was not affiliated to the ACTU, nor had the AFAP been consulted about the Accord. Specifically, the AFAP rejected the proposal, made during the dispute, of a job reclassification that under award restructuring would result in a pay rise of more than six per cent. When the demand that the pilots adhere to the wage-fixing guidelines was made, McCarthy replied that the guidelines were not appropriate for the pilots. The pilots believed they were professional workers, whose pay should be compared with executives. Yet McCarthy also associated the pilots with other workers. He pointed out that under the guidelines 'Australia's wage and salary earners are carrying the brunt of the economic

⁶⁷ Direct Action, May 1990; Herb Thompson and Julie Tracy, 'Restructuring, Reskilling and Retraining: Inside the Building and Construction Industry', Journal of Australian Political Economy, no. 31, June 1993, pp. 1, 15.

malaise'.⁶⁸ On another occasion, he stated that the pilots were being subjected to exemplary treatment by the government and the ACTU in order 'to show the rest of the union movement and Australia' what would happen to them if they took a stand outside the Accord.⁶⁹ The AFAP, however, did not consistently pursue these appeals to workers. Its advertising addressed itself to 'All Australians'. McCarthy called on the 'people of this country' to support negotiations. And the AFAP offered to provide pilots for Christmas flights because 'we're all family people'.⁷⁰

The pilots' solidarity was strong for months. Its basis was the overwhelming support of members for the union's actions, which they had decided on at well-attended meetings. They were also not entirely isolated within the airline industry. The flight engineers and aircraft refuellers, for example, apparently felt that they had had no solidarity from the pilots in the past and offered them none now, but the flight attendants were initially sympathetic to the pilots. Due to safety regulations, if the attendants' refused to work on the few domestic commercial flights being flown by pilots from the airlines' managements, these could not continue. In September, mass meetings of the attendants condemned the airlines for refusing to negotiate with the pilots and resolved to seek 'one in, all in' treatment for themselves. Some attendants were working rosters that left them worse off than if they were stood down with income support, as engineers and refuellers had been. For the attendants' trouble, Hawke criticised them and the ACTU did not oppose the insertion of stand-down clauses in their award: most lost pay until compensation began to be offered two weeks later.⁷¹

Indeed, with respect to contributions to the development of workers' class political consciousness, the dispute tested the ACTU and other unions more than the pilots' federation. A number of union leaders criticised specific actions of the government and the airlines. However, the motion eventually presented by left unions to the ACTU Congress in September did not take a side in the dispute and its movers accepted an amendment from Keltly which attacked the AFAP leadership and stated living standards had been 'more than maintained'. The motion, with that false claim, was carried overwhelmingly despite opposition from the train drivers, Len Cooper from the telecommunications union, and the teachers' representative Sonja Rutherford. The pilots only had ongoing support from a few unions and groups of workers: the train drivers and the international pilots; some Victorian branches of unions; within meetings

⁶⁸ Cited in: Direct Action, 'In Defence of \$70,000-a-year Pilots', *Direct Action*, no. 685, 28 February 1989, p. 6.

⁶⁹ Norrington, *Sky Pirates*, pp. 61-62, 70.

⁷⁰ Norrington, *Sky Pirates*, pp. 14-15, 124-39.

⁷¹ Norrington, *Sky Pirates*, pp. 31, 84-87.

of labour councils in SA and WA; and, for example, the Port Kembla painters and dockers, and the Cockatoo Island shop committee.⁷²

As the pilots' dispute was drawing to a close and the federal election approaching, a metals industry agreement was settled. Chris Lloyd, who had then been at the AMWU national research office, later stated the metal unions were 'poised to go out ... [and] held a strong bargaining position': thus, the agreement's provisions, which raised the priority of labour 'flexibility', had 'astonished and angered many unionists'.⁷³

Lloyd also raised the lack of a forum in the unions to discuss credible alternatives to the Accord.⁷⁴ At the same time, any wage militancy was now isolated. Attempts by transport workers in Victoria and Brisbane to run campaigns for pay increases without concessions through mass meetings in the first half of 1990 appear to have had no broader impact.⁷⁵

Conclusion

Workers' militant syndicalism was expressed by some unions and groups of workers in three upsurges of wage militancy: the individual union campaigns in 1986; in response to the introduction of award restructuring, the relatively broad agitation for real wage increases which reached its high point in June and July 1988; and, as award restructuring was implemented from 1989, the actions among which the pilots' dispute had the most far-reaching effects.

The wage militancy, however, was not strong enough to divert the ACTU from its strategy of seeking international competitiveness and a 'productive culture'. Instead, the ALP, the ACTU, labour councils and some of the largest unions combined in various ways to suppress wage militancy, defeating nearly all the union campaigns and crushing some of the unions involved. Some unions which had previously promoted

⁷² Australian Council of Trade Unions, Minutes 1989 Congress, ACTU Congresses, S784, Box 4, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1989; Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen Australian Council, Meeting Agenda, Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, N154, Box 9, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1990; Australian International Pilots Association, September 1989 Newsletter, Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, N154, Box 39, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1989; Ken Matthews, Australian Council: General Secretary's Report to Victorian Divisional Council, Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, N154, Box 9, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1990; Dennis White, Pilot's Dispute, Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, N154, Box 39, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 24 November 1989; Direct Action, August-December 1989; Norrington, *Sky Pirates*, pp. 100-07; Doug White, "'Fly by Night": The Politics of Reconstruction', *Arena*, no. 89, 1989, pp. 44-48.

⁷³ Chris Lloyd, 'Accord in Discord', Australian Left Review, no. 119, July 1990, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Lloyd, 'Accord in Discord', p. 13.

⁷⁵ Direct Action, April-June 1990. Bray shows many transport workers, given their experience of the second-tier negotiations and continuing employer demands for cost-cutting, were hostile to award restructuring. They thought it was irrelevant and a threat to their jobs and incomes: Bray, 'Award Restructuring and Workplace Reform', pp. 222-23.

militancy, such as the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union (AMWU), the Building Workers Industrial Union and in the maritime industry, bear a particular responsibility for that mobilisation through their roles in the derecognition of the BLF, the introduction of award restructuring measures and the diversion of opposition to the government's stance during the pilots dispute.

Given the strategic industrial positions of many of the unions that tried to win wage increases and the economic recovery through the 1980s from the recession at the decade's start, the defeats inflicted on workers' syndicalist actions were not principally the result of lost industrial strength and solidarity. They were well prepared socially and politically by the labour aristocratic stratification of the working class and the political experience and organisation among workers arising from that. The pilots, who still sought to attain social respectability as a prop for superior career conditions, had gone into industrial action alone as in the past, but when this proved unable to succeed, they could in the middle of a dispute neither learn how to seek nor get workers' class solidarity. The plumbers were also better-off workers, but in their case they were highly integrated into opportunist politics and unable to find their way to political independence. The BLF, and to a large extent the Victorian public transport and other public sector workers, too, were not better-off workers, but they had not developed independent political leadership, either. The nurses in Victoria, on the other hand, who were even more isolated from the 'mainstream' of the labour movement, more readily obtained such leadership, at least briefly, and that leadership successfully related to the popular support for the nurses' cause. Other previously militant unions moved more into the mainstream in the period, partly on the basis of new concessions (severance pay; access to electrical work; extended career paths) that maintained an element of relative privilege for at least some of their members and partly through the industrial and political orientation of the unions' leaderships.⁷⁶ In effect, industrial militancy was outflanked by an overall mobilisation of the opportunist trend that sustained its opposition to militancy in the unions.

The suppression of wage militancy in the latter half of the 1980s amplified the conditions under which delegate networks weakened, undermining the chance for an independent working-class development of workers' class political consciousness. Success against the opportunist mobilisation would not have been possible without a broader range of activity against the Accord than wage militancy. Efforts within the unions to achieve this are the subject of the next chapter.

⁷⁶ See next chapter.

Opposition to the Accord as a Social Contract

The aims of the Accord that the ACTU most frequently discussed were increased employment and additions to the 'social wage', but the means proposed for this would be wage restraint and improvements in labour productivity, in order to secure and raise profits and, consequently, new investment. The ALP had sought to establish an incomes policy from the 1970s on, but the ACTU Congress did not endorse the proposal for an incomes policy with no extra claims provisions until 1981. The first version of Accord was then developed through negotiations between the ACTU and the ALP. The two organisations announced a joint prices and incomes policy in August 1982 and finalised their agreement in a document in December. It was endorsed by unions at an ACTU special conference in February 1983. At varying intervals, special ACTU conferences endorsed further versions ('Marks') of the Accord negotiated between the ACTU and the Hawke-Keating government. These agreements increasingly related pay increases to changes in work practices (see Table 7.1): Mark VIII was not implemented due to the government's defeat in the 1996 election.

Strong support for the Accord came from some left unions, particularly the larger ones. That support was vital for its emergence and survival in the face of the opposition to the Accord from several sources, which included not only the two that have already been discussed (the shop committees' differences about how to oppose New Right attacks and to resist job losses, and wage militancy) but also rejection of the Accord related to its character as a social contract. This chapter's topic is this source of opposition to the Accord. Its basis lay in the division in workers' opinions about the Accord. Many opposed it, at least partly because they had not been able to express their opinions about it. The otherwise supportive left unions and political groupings reflected that by making some criticisms of the Accord. Other left unions and groups of activists opposed or came to oppose the agreements because of their social character. However, these elements of opposition were disparate: each remained relatively isolated from the others as it arose and its strength then dissipated. From this opposition to the Accord, no alternative was offered that had both the strategic perspective and sufficient backing to succeed. Thus, in the unions the decline in the core for organising collective action continued unabated. In fact, the chapter notes, the only defeat in wages policy that the Accord suffered came after the introduction of enterprise bargaining in 1991, when some unions eventually campaigned for and started to win industry-level bargaining instead.

Support for and Opposition to the Accord among Workers

A number of arguments have been put forward about why opposition to the Accord did not coalesce. Patronage, for example, has been proposed as a factor. According to this argument, conforming unionists were offered parliamentary seats, jobs as ministerial advisers, positions at the top of newly-amalgamated unions, memberships of the boards of statutory authorities, and the like. Such perquisites were withheld from the recalcitrant.¹ However, most active unionists, let alone the broader mass of workers, are unlikely to ever be the recipients of such patronage.

Another argument considers that the Accord was secured by opposition being blocked, marginalised and intimidated. The evidence is the demands that were made for conformity, regardless of intentions, so that even many union officials who supported the Accord claim to have experienced such pressure coming from central ACTU figures. Whether that pressure was felt throughout the networks that organised the labour movement is at issue, however. The government, an ACTU that in the 1980s was more authoritative than ever before, other unions and their supporters criticised and threatened the coverage of unions which expressed opposition to the Accord. Intellectuals and artists who supported union militancy were attacked in various ways and isolated from the union ranks. Discussion within and among unions was suppressed through changes to the trade union training content and methods. Expressions of different points of view among unions at ACTU congresses almost disappeared. As well, occasions when officials and organisers failed to support workers in developing campaigns or sought to get workers to end industrial action are often cited: for example, members of the Communist Party, which supported the Accord, were now typically disciplinarians against industrial action.² Such behaviour was not a new phenomenon in the unions, but perhaps it was now more intense and widespread.

Sometimes, too, secrecy was demanded of groups of workers who achieved success in industrial action. For example, it was a condition demanded by the ACTU for its support for printing workers who struck to enforce a 35-hour working week

¹ Len Cooper, cited in: Brown, 'Silencing Dissent to Win Consent', p. 41; O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, pp. 31-33.

² Tom Ryan, Report of General Secretary and Federal Council to Meeting of Federal Conference, Melbourne, Australian Metal Workers Union, Z628, Box 64, Federal Office, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 8 December 1988, pp. 1-5; *Direct Action*, 20 September 1983, 19 June 1985; *Green Left Weekly*, 27 November 1991, 8 September 1993; Bronwyn Barwell and Ian Milliss, 'Auteur Ego', *Australian Left Review*, no. 127, April 1991, p. 36; Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, pp. 131-34, 150-51; Brown, 'Silencing Dissent to Win Consent', pp. 38-45; Gerard Griffin, 'The Authority of the ACTU', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, June 1994, pp. 85-98; MacWilliam, 'Marginalising Opposition', pp. 146-48; O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, pp. 33-36, 51; Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, p. 117; Voll, 'Time's up for TUTA', pp. 88-95; McKenzie Wark, 'Glorious Defeats', *Australian Left Review*, no. 126, March 1991, p. 47.

agreement that had been reached before the 1983 NWC decision. Such secrecy would restrict the chance of other workers making claims for comparable conditions or, generally, of workers coordinating their campaigns.³ How widely among workers this stricture ran, however, is unknown: indeed, a widespread imposition of secrecy would inevitably become known, reducing its effect.

Some commentators argued that the vast bulk of union members did not thoroughly discuss and vote on the Accord, and that if this had occurred, it would never have been accepted. The claim's premise seems sound, but the conclusion is not substantiated.⁴

The broader ranks of union members had been involved in discussions of developments which then became key provisions of the Accord. For example, throughout the 1970s AMWU conferences had rejected no extra claim provisions, but the 1981 metals agreement, which was adopted in mass meetings, nonetheless included one. By August 1982, two-thirds of the 60 largest federal awards, covering more than one million workers, had some form of no extra claims provision.⁵

Also, the impact of the Accord varied among workers. Some would have felt better-off under it, either absolutely or by comparison with the results of a Coalition government. In the Accord's early days, Accord proponents cited the reintroduction of a national health insurance scheme, in the form of Medicare, as the chief broad gain of the agreement. Later, additional family payments for those on low incomes slowed the slump in their living standards otherwise arising from declining levels of award pay. Reclassifications of existing jobs so that they were more highly paid provided a 'safety valve' in response to the pressure for pay rises when the Accord dictated wage rates would not increase. Job security for existing workforces was also ensured in industry restructuring plans even while the numbers of workers in the restructuring industries fell

³ John Kelly, 'Collie Workers Win Shorter Hours Strike', *Direct Action*, no. 496, 19 September 1984, p. 6.

⁴ Jim McIlroy, 'Meeting Discusses Labour Struggles after Wage Case', *Direct Action*, no. 463, 6 December 1983, p. 13. On the lack of a broad discussion in the unions of the Accord, see, for example: Stan Sharkey, Interview, 1994; *Direct Action*, 19 June 1985; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991-1992; Don Sutherland, 'Metal Fatigue', *Australian Left Review*, no. 85, Spring 1983, p. 27. The AMWU had conducted a "social wage" publicity campaign in the middle of 1982, but in a May 1983 report in the union's journal, the union's leading official, Laurie Carmichael, stated delegates meetings and mass meetings were "being called to explain the *new situation*" (emphasis added). However, the only reported stewards' discussion of the Accord involved Queensland and Northern Territory stewards in July the following year. The union's first mass meetings since December 1981 were in December 1984: these took up the issue of job security: *The Metal Worker*, 1982-1984. Many of the union's delegates took part in discussions about the second-tier proposal, but no mass meetings to discuss this are reported: *The Metal Worker*, 1987; *Direct Action*, 1987.

⁵ ACTU Research Section, Wage Movements in the 60 Largest Federal Awards/Agreements, Australian Council of Trade Unions, N147, Box 580, Wage Rates W.J. Kelly ACTU 1981, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 10 August 1982; Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 116; Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. 59. The metals agreement was made before the onset of the 1982 recession, so AMWU members' agreement was presumably *not* driven by immediate experiences of retrenchment in the metals industry.

sharply—by almost half in shipping, for example. Also, as mentioned above,⁶ certain groups of workers were able to operate more easily in the wage fixing regime of trading off working conditions for pay increases: they needed to concede fewer conditions, got agreements more quickly, and suffered less from the effects of award restructuring.⁷

Support for the Accord among workers had several dimensions:

- The ALP presented the Accord in its election campaigns as its policy—often as a key one it would implement in government. In that sense, the vote of the majority of unionists for the ALP was also an endorsement of the Accord.
- Some individual unionists stated their belief that the Accord was a potentially effective union strategy. In 1986, a tramways union member wrote that the Accord was an attempt to improve union members' lot and, if the ACTU's efforts with regard to the social wage were insufficient, the 'total opposition' of some sections of the union movement to the Accord was 'unfair' to the members of those unions.⁸
- Some workplace votes explicitly supported the Accord, even after debate. A 1983 discussion of the Accord by railway shunters in Melbourne heard fellow workers criticise it, but most continued to support their union officials' adherence. The Ford Broadmeadows stewards endorsed it in April 1983. They stated their 'full support' for the government's project of economic recovery through shared responsibility. Yet the senior production workers' delegate, Frank Argondizzo, was a sponsor of the anti-Accord Social Rights Conference held a year later. In 1988, he asserted that the basic conflict at Ford remained unresolved and that the reduction in disputation occurred only because there were less immediate causes for disputes, rather than 'a lesser willingness to take action'.⁹

Nonetheless, expressions of opposition to the Accord from many individual unionists, workplaces and groups of workers also emerged quickly. For example, a metal industry delegate reported that at a joint union forum in Adelaide in August 1983 'consensus' dominated the major speeches, but that was 'not reflected in the questions and brief statements from the floor of the forum, or in the informal discussion afterwards'.¹⁰ In the same month, 'a socialist and job militant', Frank Otis, narrowly won

⁶ See previous chapter.

⁷ *Green Left Weekly*, 23 February 1994; Burgess and Macdonald, 'Productivity, Restructuring and the Trade Union Role'; Richard Morris, 'Shipping's New Industrial Relations: A Reply to Bryne and Hess', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 34, no. 4, December 1992, pp. 590-91.

⁸ Rowan Burns, 'Why Should I Join the Union', *Australian Society*, July 1986, p. 55.

⁹ *Direct Action*, 1983-1984; Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 128; Lever-Tracy, 'Fordism Transformed?', p. 193.

¹⁰ Sutherland, 'Metal Fatigue', p. 27. See also: Voll, 'Time's up for TUTA', p. 92.

an official position in one of the postal unions in Victoria. He had attracted members' support with 'policies ... [to] defend and improve their wages and conditions': according to Otis, the Accord was 'all for the bosses'.¹¹ In September 1983, arbitration commissioner Graham Walker was hearing a \$40 claim by 60 chemical workers: 'down on the job', he said, 'the organisers are going with the rank and file in a different direction' to the Accord. Ron Gordon, the workers' union official, responded that: 'Everybody is wondering whether the accord will stand up. We are not the last cab off the rank by any means.'¹² The following month, there were some union discussions of the arbitration commission's national wage guidelines, which were largely based on the Accord. Across Queensland, mass meetings of the telecommunication technicians' union opposed the guidelines. About 30 of 250 metal industry delegates voted the same way at an October 4 meeting in Melbourne: opponents of the guidelines raised concerns about the prospect for wage increases, the fate of the 35-hour week campaign, the chance in future of defending jobs through industrial action and the lack of time to hold meetings with members. At the factory of one of the delegates, the workers had met and unanimously rejected the guidelines. A delegates meeting for SA nurses, who had not yet won a 38-hour week, unsuccessfully urged their union's state council to reject the guidelines.¹³

Such incidents, however, were not the beginnings of a progressively growing upsurge of opposition to the Accord among union members. Rather, expressions of hostility developed more in relation to particular experiences of its effects.

For the bus drivers in Melbourne who left the Motor Transport and Chauffeurs Association in 1985 to join the tramways union, the Accord had become 'a sore point' because it was cited by MTCA officials as a reason not to take action to enforce the drivers' award. Once these bus drivers had joined their new union, they struck in support of their award conditions and to defend their sacked delegates.¹⁴

At the Williamstown Naval Dockyard, when retrenchments were imposed in 1986, Barry Corbett, an Amalgamated Metal Workers Union steward, stated: 'The unions need to throw off the shroud of the ACTU and admit that they haven't got the answers in the accord.'¹⁵ The AMWU members at the dockyard had already called for the union's disaffiliation from the ALP: Corbett and other defence production industry

¹¹ John Compton, 'Socialist Wins in UPT Poll', Direct Action, no. 449, 24 August 1983, p. 11.

¹² Douglas Lorimer, 'ALP, Union Tops Ram Through Wage Freeze Accord', Direct Action, no. 453, 20 September 1983, p. 3.

¹³ Direct Action, October 1983.

¹⁴ Janet Wilson, 'Bell Street Delegates Sacked', Direct Action, no. 516, 20 March 1985, p. 6. See also: Direct Action, 1 August 1984, 6 February 1985.

¹⁵ Robert Ryan, 'Sack Pack Friday at the Dockyards', Direct Action, no. 582, 3 September 1986, p. 3.

delegates who opposed the job cuts considered the party was playing a leading role in what was happening in the unions and hence criticised the party. The ALP was also criticised by individual workers and groups of unionists in response to strikes, job cutting and the BLF derecognition: occasionally such critics called for their union to disaffiliate. The front page photo of the AMWU's March 1987 *The Metal Worker* was of two Newcastle State Dockyard workers campaigning against the dockyards' privatisation: they held a placard that proclaimed the 'New Right' Labor Party. A year later, a report by the union's national secretary was obliged to argue against the disaffiliation suggestions that were coming from some groups of members.¹⁶

The view held by many rank and file union members that they were not consulted about the Accord was probably the most consistent catalyst for expressions of opposition among workers. When the Accord was introduced, union training officers reported this was a source of opposition. The lack of discussion among union members before the introduction of the two-tier system was the topic of a flurry of telexes to the ACTU. In unions which had a tradition of membership discussion of issues, such as the AMWU, this concern had some prominence. In March 1987, the union's Victorian branch approached the National Council in an effort to defer an ACTU conference pending membership discussions. The inner Sydney local AMWU branch and a letter from a Port Kembla shop steward published in *The Metal Worker* discussed the lack of rank and file participation in decision-making. National official Greg Harrison noted comments by Aussie Vaughan, the union's Queensland branch secretary, to the effect that 'workers perceive all decisions being thrust down from ACTU and national level'.¹⁷

Support for the Accord: the AMWU and the CPA

Nonetheless, the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, like most unions whose officials were aligned with the ALP left, the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) or the Association for Communist Unity,¹⁸ remained supporters of the Accord, while criticising it in various ways.¹⁹ The AMWU played an important role in securing this kind of

¹⁶ *The Metal Worker*, 1987-1988; *Direct Action*, 1986, 1989.

¹⁷ Amalgamated Metal Workers Union National Council, Minutes, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian Branch, 101/38, Box M9, National Council Meeting Minutes and Documents 1987, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, March 1987, item: National Wage Case; Australian Council of Trade Unions, Australian Council of Trade Unions, N147, Box 716, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1985-1986; Australian Metal Workers Union Sydney Branch, Minutes, Australian Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 520, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1988; Greg Harrison, Metal Industry Award Restructuring, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 665, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1988-1989.

¹⁸ The Association for Communist Unity was formed in 1983. Its key members were union officials who had been members of the Socialist Party of Australia, but who supported the Accord, while the SPA did not.

¹⁹ Michael Rizzo identifies the ALP left as the source of both the staunchest supporters and severest critics of the Accord in Victoria: Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. vii. The character of the criticism of the Accord by the ALP "hard left" is discussed below.

support. Previously it had been a pacesetter in campaigning for wages and conditions and an ideological leader among those unions which saw themselves as part of the union left. It now endorsed the 1981 ACTU Congress incomes policy proposal and then the Accord.

The AMWU's shift was reflected among its officials. Victorian secretary John Halfpenny moved from the CPA to the ALP between 1980 and 1982. Then there was the stance taken by those who remained in the CPA, such as AMWU assistant secretary Laurie Carmichael. Neither Carmichael nor any other member of the CPA national executive dissented when, at an August 1981 meeting of that body, Linda Rubenstein stated:

If you look at ... the trade unions, and no-one around the table will disagree that, despite what we've said, and we've been mainly the one to be saying that the organisation, the trade union organisation in Australia, is moribund, has considerable limitations in its structures, outlook and so on, and we've done more than anyone else in this respect, there is little evidence that there's any great change occurring in the trade union movement to meet what is an essential requirement for the working class and their organisation in the [1980s].²⁰

The June 1982 CPA Congress supported a prices and incomes policy: Carmichael stated this would be a working class 'intervention'. Two Seamen's Union officials associated with the CPA discussed how automatic cost of living adjustments were the 'only vehicle' to bring a class character to the wages struggle.²¹

The left unions that followed the AMWU believed that support for the Accord was necessary to remain relevant and part of the broad labour movement. These supporters of the Accord argued, ostensibly from a radical perspective, that the movement should pursue national rather than sectional demands and forms of struggles. Carmichael reportedly criticised the 1981 metal industry agreement, suggesting that the labour movement suffered from a labour aristocracy in which a few strong unions won benefits while the rest went without.²² When, at the 1983 ACTU Congress, a Food Preservers Union organiser, Gail Cotton, defended members of her union striking in support of a pay rise, Carmichael responded:

²⁰ Communist Party of Australia, National Executive Verbatim, Communist Party of Australia, ML MSS 5021, Box 9 (155), 1982 Congress, Mitchell Library, Sydney, 8 August 1981, p. 18.

²¹ Wilson, Letter to P. Geraghty, p. 7; Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, pp. 70-71.

²² Carmichael's apparently Leninist formulation contradicts the understanding that the privileges of the labour aristocracy are not temporary advantages gained 'in the field' by workers through better organisation which eventually flow on to other workers, such as the 38-hour week that was won in the 1981 Metals Industry Agreement: see chapter 3.

Those who have the idea that the road to socialism is made of individual wage struggles in half a dozen factories without mobilising all of the workers ... have no bloody idea whatever.²³

Another aspect of the AMWU's concept of national demands was that the union now looked toward the Accord to incorporate an industry development policy of economic modernisation with union input through political influence. This can be compared with the union's attempts, in the 1970s, to intervene in capitalist production and investment decisions. The failure of that earlier policy had not, however, led to a reversion to the union's previous orientation to the socialist concern about private ownership. According to the AMWU and the unions that followed its lead, unions which opposed the Accord had rejected the movement's collectively determined arrangements, taken a stand outside it, and brought on the neoliberal attacks on the movement.²⁴

After the adoption of the Accord, CPA leaders, including Carmichael and teacher unionist Rob Durbridge, discussed how achieving the Accord would inevitably require popularisation of its proposals and mass actions in support of these.²⁵ The metals unions' leaderships identified industry policy as their bone of contention with the government. AMWU researchers investigated how it might be implemented through tripartite forums. In the middle of 1984, these unions announced their 350,000 members would mobilise around it. With government support but against company resistance, metal union delegates in Melbourne's western suburbs were pursuing industry policy and industrial democracy: in 1984 they wrote a submission for an Industries Assistance Commission hearing on protection and in 1985 launched the pamphlet *Gearing Up for Jobs*. In the AMWU's newspaper, the first reports of shopfloor actions in support of industry policy, which described activities such as shop stewards meetings and a petition, appeared in 1985. Carmichael and Halfpenny led moves at the 1985 ACTU Congress to adopt a new industry policy, after the second version of the Accord largely ignored the issue. Yet the AMWU also ended its participation in the IAC hearing in November 1985. The impact of the attempt at industry policy on unionism in the workplace was exemplified by the contradictory union responses to the closure of

²³ Douglas Lorimer, 'Why Laurie Carmichael Attacks the Heinz Workers', *Direct Action*, no. 453, 20 September 1983, p. 5.

²⁴ Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, pp. 117-22; Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, pp. 27-30, 35-37, 52, 64; Scalmer and Irving, 'The Rise of the Modern Labour Technocrat', pp. 71-74.

²⁵ Communist Party of Australia, 28th Congress 1984, Communist Party of Australia, ML MSS 5021, Box 11 (155), Mitchell Library, Sydney, 1984; Communist Party of Australia, Notes on the Accord and New Agreement between the ACTU and the Labor Government, Communist Party of Australia, ML MSS 5021 add on 1936, Box 14 (76), NO Correspondence 1986, Mitchell Library, Sydney, March 1986, pp. 2-12; *Tribune*, 1983; Brian Aarons, 'Life under Labor', *Australian Left Review*, no. 86, Summer 1983, p. 20; Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. 99. The socialist commentator Humphrey McQueen proposed, as part of a strategy to bring workers into confrontation with capital's rule, strike action to compel investment: Humphrey McQueen, 'Beyond the Safe Pastures', *Australian Society*, October 1987, p. 30; Humphrey McQueen, 'The Death of a Manufacturing Culture', *Australian Society*, January 1988, pp. 28-32.

the Newcastle State Dockyards in 1987. The unions at the dockyards sought expert advice on restructuring them, while the AMWU delegate talked about workers' control as part of a solution.²⁶

During 1986, the AMWU and other 'mainstream left' unions, along with the CPA, talked about the 'strain' on the Accord. Port Kembla Federated Ironworkers Association secretary Nando Lelli noticed that: 'My people see the Accord as something which is not doing justice to them ... where it says they should receive they do not receive what they deserve.'²⁷ The culprits, according to this view, were free market policies. (The same perspective considered that claims that the Accord was class collaborationist dovetailed with deregulationist views.) In order to save the government, the unions would need to overturn its neoliberal policy direction.

The ACTU, however, was already moving towards 'freeing-up' the wages system. It proposed productivity-based wage determination. A tripartite negotiating committee reached agreement on the two-tier system in the middle of October 1986.

The very next day, the AMWU national council voted eight to seven in favour of full indexation for low to middle income earners.²⁸ This was Halfpenny's position. He opposed the ACTU-proposed system because of the wage discounting involved, his doubts that the system could limit wage claims and his anticipation that union members would revolt because of inadequate consultation. In Victoria, 30 left union branches supported this position. Yet, a week later, the ACTU wages committee voted in favour of the proposed two-tier system unanimously—that is, including the AMWU official who was a committee member. Before the end of the month, another, specially convened, meeting of the AMWU national council supported the ACTU decision.²⁹

There would be no more general criticism of the Accord from unionists and others influenced by the AMWU and the CPA. The Accord's problems were presented as

²⁶ The Metal Worker, 1984-1985; Direct Action, January-March 1987; Peter Ewer, 'Vital Policy Issue Still Simmering', Australian Society, August 1985; John Halfpenny, 'The Effectiveness of the Accord', Journal of Industrial Relations, vol. 27, no. 2, June 1985, pp. 235-38; Rizzo, The Left and the Accord, pp. 65, 95, 132; Scalmer and Irving, 'The Rise of the Modern Labour Technocrat', pp. 74-77; Kim Windsor, 'Workers Help Plan for Jobs', Australian Society, vol. 4, no. 7, July 1985, pp. 20-21.

²⁷ Robynne Murphy, "'We Just Don't Get Paid Enough'", Direct Action, no. 570, 11 June 1986, p. 6.

²⁸ This incident is also discussed in the previous chapter.

²⁹ Communist Party of Australia, Notes on the Accord, pp. 9-14; Laurie Carmichael, 'Accord Stress', The Metal Worker, vol. 7, no. 4, May 1986, p. 4; Doug Lorimer, 'Accord's Left Supporters Getting Nervous', Direct Action, no. 563, 16 April 1986, p. 16; n.a., 'Free Market Policies Strain Accord', The Metal Worker, vol. 7, no. 3, April 1986, p. 1; Rizzo, The Left and the Accord, pp. 146-54.

ones of how to implement a production politics for unions under the conflict endemic in industrial relations and the structural problems of Australian capitalism.³⁰

Support for the Accord: Other Left Unions

Another group of left union officials resisted the draft agreement between the ACTU and the ALP during 1982, but were won to the Accord before the February 1983 ACTU conference. Leading teacher unionist Jennie George had argued that for unions the prospective Accord 'in terms of *its effects on their members* ... is far too one-sided.' Workers would make specific concessions while CPI-based wage increases, controls on prices and profits, and expansion of the public sector were not ensured. She said that the agreement would also concede the idea that wage moderation was needed for economic growth, the activity of unions based on maintaining and improving living standards and the possibility of redirecting the unions' focus 'away from the interests of profit to a system which is concerned with real human needs'.³¹ At some point in the next few months, however, she swung to supporting the Accord.

The BWIU leadership, which had supported an incomes policy at the 1981 ACTU congress, was also among this group of officials. At a December 1982 ACTU executive meeting, Pat Clancy, secretary of the Building Workers Industrial Union and then a Socialist Party of Australia member, was alone in voting against a resolution on the Fraser government's wage freeze. The resolution, which embraced the view that real wages were to be maintained only 'over time', followed the abandonment by the ALP and ACTU negotiators of the Accord of the existing policy to increase awards in line with prices increases.³²

According to Stan Sharkey, another BWIU official, he was among about 30 people involved in a seminar (including George) which prepared the Accord at the Trade Union Training Authority's Clyde Cameron College. Four of those attending started that week's debate strongly opposed to the Accord: according to Sharkey, he 'equated it with the Wilson Social Contract'.³³ But:

At the end of the week I had modified my position and subsequently recognised that it had some value and potential for workers, particularly low paid workers. Instead of being on the outside throwing stones if we were going to get the best out of it, it would be smarter for us to be inside the tent and be part of the process.³⁴

³⁰ Peter Botsman, 'Rethinking the Class Struggle', *Arena*, no. 82, 1988, pp. 34-52; Palmada, 'State of the Unions', p. 22.

³¹ n.a., 'Radical One Day, ACTU President the Next', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 202, 13 September 1995, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/10742>, accessed on 12 August 2007.

³² Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, pp. 69-74.

³³ Sharkey, Interview.

³⁴ Brown, 'Silencing Dissent to Win Consent', p. 37.

From 1983 the BWIU leadership supported the Accord. Several BWIU leaders argued that the Accord should protect living standards and lay the basis for a democratic intervention by workers into the economy. Yet, they argued, the ALP government was vacillating. They felt a campaign among rank and file workers was needed to put pressure on employers and the government to deliver. Moreover, they believed that they had implemented a program explaining this perspective within their union and had, at first, gained membership support. At the September 1983 ACTU Congress, BWIU representatives supported amendments that called for the end to the wage freeze, and indexed pay rises for the period of the wage freeze and in future. However, the BWIU leaders also supported the ACTU's efforts to restrain workers' campaigning for wage increases and other improvements in conditions. They did pursue gains for building workers, such as industry-wide superannuation and redundancy schemes, but only through incorporation of these into one or another of the successive versions of the Accord.³⁵

In 1986 and 1987, some left union officials who supported the Accord voted against the two-tier system at ACTU conferences. These officials came from federal and state public sector unions. They opposed this version (Mark III) of the Accord because the two-tier system abandoned their unions' call to 'catch-up' the relatively larger losses of their clerical and professional worker members from the Fraser government wage freeze. Yet the officials, who had posed this provision of comparative wage justice as the main test of the Accord, had already abandoned campaigning for the catch-up. At the beginning of 1985, when the arbitration commission rejected the federal public service unions' 8.3 per cent claim, most of the unions' officials then recommended to mass meetings that union bans be lifted so the commission would hear an ACTU

³⁵ Sharkey, Interview; Australian Council of Trade Unions, Minutes 1983 Congress, ACTU Congresses, S784, Box 4, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1983; Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. 91.

proposal for a 6 per cent increase.³⁶ Eventually, the pay catch-up sentiment of public sector unionists was partly satisfied through union claims for reclassifications. Like the BWIU's demands, these were incorporated into Accord measures such as award restructuring. In 1990, a research officer for the teachers union admitted that 'the Accord's record on the social wage has not been good', supposedly because this aspect of the Accord had been neglected, but claimed that 'the Accord has provided an opportunity for a wider vision of society [which] is not yet lost'.³⁷ In the same year, a federal public service union official stated the Accord had succeeded because, by moderating wage claims, it had achieved its aim of reducing unemployment.³⁸

Opposition to the Accord: The ALP Hard Left

One group of unions that opposed the two-tier system vigorously were the ALP 'hard left' unions, which included the national leaderships of the Food Preservers Union, the Federated Confectioners Association (FCA), and the plumbers union, and the Victorian branches of several other unions. These unions supported collective bargaining strategies, and membership direction in making claims and industrial action. This led them to frequently oppose the Accord's wage fixing systems. The FPU officials, in particular, demonstrated a practical commitment to these views in wage disputes such as those at Heinz, in 1983, and at Rosella, in 1984-85. They backed the members on the picket lines, at the arbitration commission, and against other union officials'

³⁶ Australian Council of Trade Unions, Minutes 1983 Congress; *Direct Action*, January-February 1985; Peter Robson, 'The Accord and Social Welfare: Current Results and Outlook', *Australian Left Review*, no. 88, Winter 1984, p. 6. The arbitration commission eventually awarded an increase of just 2 per cent. The degree of opposition to these campaign tactics is signified not just by the opposition of many branch officials in the clerical assistants' union, which is discussed below. In November 1985, Trevor Deeming, who was secretary of the clerical officers' national Department of Social Security delegates committee and had proposed strike action and broader bans in support of the wages claim, was a successful rank and file reform group candidate for the position of secretary of the NSW branch of the clerical officers union. DSS delegates in NSW subsequently led campaigns for better staffing, in the face of budget cuts. The campaigning culminated in a 40-day strike in May and June 1988. Deeming backed the strike, but the federal and state executives of the union were hostile to it. In the last weeks of the strike, mass meetings held every few days voted to continue the strike. The arguments made for this were that its chance of great success was shown by already having won some concessions and that to lose would set the precedent of the defeat of the most militant section of the public servants. Eventually, Deeming recommended a return to work because of the lack of mobilisation elsewhere in DSS and an improved offer from the department. Divisions then quickly appeared in the rank and file group, ostensibly about wages policy. When the NSW branch elections were held later that year, Deeming, with 47 per cent of the vote, lost his position. *Direct Action*, 1984-1988.

³⁷ Barbara Preston, 'The Accord and the Social Wage: A Lost Opportunity?', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 10, no. 1, April 1991, pp. 15, 18.

³⁸ Leslie Fallick, 'The Accord: An Assessment', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, June 1990, p. 105.

opposition at the 1983 ACTU Congress and in the pages of *Tribune*. FPU officials also led the opposition to Mark II of the Accord at the 1985 ACTU congress.³⁹

Yet the ALP hard left were not consistent critics of the Accord. George Crawford, the plumbers' union president, claimed that at the ACTU conference in February 1983 there had been no speakers against the Accord. Another claim about that conference is that many delegates pointed to dangers with the Accord and argued against joining in, yet 'Jenny Haines [of the NSW Nurses Association] was caught by surprise when she saw hers as the only hand' that went up to vote against the Accord.⁴⁰ Tom Ryan, secretary of the FPU, stated about the Accord that he 'didn't take it very seriously' then and at the conference 'a less political person' represented the union instead of him.⁴¹

In relation to the 1983 arbitration commission National Wage Case decision, Ryan refused to give the 'no extra claims' commitment required for a union's members to receive the 4.3 per cent pay increase. He wanted to first resolve the union's ongoing disputes and also to be able to seek over-award payments. He began to criticise what he believed was the role that most of the unions were playing as an 'industrial police force'. According to him, union members were being told they could not seek wage increases, and union officials were forgetting the need to organise wages campaigns and losing experience in fighting them. However, in the September 1984 National Wage Case, with the union's disputes finished and its members having won the 4.3 per cent increase as over-award payments, he offered the 'no extra claims' commitment for the rest of the two-year period in which the NWC would apply, in return for incorporation of the members' gains into their award.⁴²

ALP hard left union leaders were also among the supporters of the Social Rights Campaign organised by anti-Accord activists. Yet Ryan's comments in interviews and his correspondence with other union officials indicate that he, for example, was not opposed outright to the Accord. Ryan simply did not expect the unions to make a

³⁹ Australian Council of Trade Unions, Minutes 1985 Congress, ACTU Congresses, S784, Box 4, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1985, On agreement on implementation of Accord; Food Preservers Union, National Wage Case, Food Preservers Union, Box F33, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 1983; *Direct Action*, June 1984, October 1986; Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, pp. 22-27, 35-36, 38, 155-60. In later years, the Victorian union branch which was most prominent in pursuing collective bargaining under membership direction was the Transport Workers Union. Its actions around award restructuring are discussed in the previous chapter. In that union, the incumbent officials had been replaced in 1989 following their lack of support in 1987 for a brewery drivers' campaign for re-employment. However, the new leadership then lost the following election in 1992.

⁴⁰ Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. 75.

⁴¹ Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, pp. 75- 86.

⁴² Food Preservers Union, National Wage Case; Food Preservers Union, National Wage Sept 84, Food Preservers Union, Box F33, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 1984; Ryan, Report of General Secretary and Federal Council, p. 4; *Direct Action*, 1983-1985. Ryan told a 1988 FPU conference "the trade union movement has in the main become the industrial police force of this country": Ryan, Report of General Secretary and Federal Council, p. 4.

similar agreement. Yet 'if the Accord had been implemented in *full*, then it could have been ok', he stated later.⁴³ He and the other officials, reflecting their unions' members' immediate feelings about falling real wages, considered that the Accord might end, and discussed the possibility of withdrawing from the Accord.⁴⁴ However, Ryan suggested approaching the ACTU to review the Accord and the wage guidelines with the aim of avoiding again being locked 'into *such* an accord with any Government'.⁴⁵ Finally, he distinguished between the Accord and the national wage guidelines. 'We do not oppose' the Accord, he stated at the beginning of 1985, because:

The last thing we wanted to do was upset the Labor Party's chances of winning government[, although] had we known it was going to be a Hawke-style Labor Party we might have had second thoughts.⁴⁶

Among the ALP hard left, questioning by many of their belief that they should undertake their political activity through the ALP seems to have only begun in 1985. Following the 1986 expulsion of FPU research officer Bill Hartley from the ALP, an Industrial Labour Party was briefly established. The ILP was supported by many BLF activists. In Victoria, the FPU disaffiliated from the ALP in 1989. The FCA stopped paying affiliation fees in 1988 and advised of its disaffiliation in 1990. It cited Hawke's role in the Dollar Sweets dispute in particular as a reason.⁴⁷

In South Australia, the United Trades and Labour Council also took some stands against the wages provisions of the Accord. In 1986, its secretary proposed support for the two-tier system. A UTLC meeting rejected this in favour of full wage indexation.⁴⁸ In May 1988, a UTLC meeting opposed a ceiling on pay increases. Assistant secretary Chris White told the meeting 'the accord had broken down and remains as it is today ... a device for cutting wages' in which employers would seek trade-offs in conditions for significant pay rises. He proposed unions aim for a return to the application of comparative wage justice.⁴⁹

⁴³ Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. 98.

⁴⁴ W. Claringbold, Letter to T.D. Ryan, Food Preservers Union, Box F43, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 6 December 1984.

⁴⁵ T.D. Ryan, Letter to L. Kyriacou, Food Preservers Union, F43, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 13 November 1984, p. 2. Emphasis added

⁴⁶ Ramani De Silva, 'You Can't Have Consensus Between Capital and Labor', *Direct Action*, no. 509, 30 January 1985, p. 13.

⁴⁷ Federated Confectioners Association, ALP Correspondence To/From, Food Preservers Union, Box F5, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 1988-90, various documents; *Direct Action*, 1985-1987, 1989. In 1985, at the Dollar Sweets factory, FCA members first struck in support of a claim for a 36-hour week, and then, when sacked after refusing to sign an agreement framed by the company, set up a picket that lasted five months. The company sued the union and won an injunction against the picket and an award of court costs against the union. Neither the ACTU nor the government supported the FCA: Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 142.

⁴⁸ *Direct Action*, 29 October 1986.

⁴⁹ Sally Low, 'SA Unions Endorse 6 Per Cent Minimum', *Direct Action*, no. 652, 18 May 1988, p. 2.

Opposition to the Accord: Western Australia

In WA, strands of opposition to the Accord similar to those in Victoria and SA were combined and relatively persistent. The former WA Trades and Labour Council secretary, Peter Cook (who became an ALP senator in 1983 and later an industrial relations minister), acknowledged:

There was a continued perception at the rank and file level that the Accord was not in their best interests. I wouldn't be bold enough to say that is an overwhelming view by the rank and file. I would say it is certainly a majority view held by unions in Western Australia. In any case there's an active and vocal group here who say it wasn't in workers interests.⁵⁰

This opposition was signified by the TLC's response to the 1983 National Economic Summit Communiqué. After Amalgamated Metal Workers Union and Waterside Workers Federation delegates had opposed the electricians' union's effort to have the Communiqué rejected, it was 'noted' in a motion calling for a 'strong, active and independent trade union movement'.⁵¹

Some officials fought with their members in order to keep the Accord process in place over the members' desire, sometimes, to make much greater claims. Other officials were unsympathetic to the Accord because it reduced and even reversed their role in 'representing issues from the rank and file'.⁵²

Scott MacWilliam has argued that the anti-Accord unionists in WA did not have a broader impact because WA unions were largely focused on their state arbitration system, which determined the awards of the vast majority of workers in the state and because the unionists 'realised the thing was settled elsewhere'.⁵³ So, for example, at a TLC meeting in February 1983, when Bill Kelty presented the ACTU's case for Accord, sight-unseen, AMWU state president Harold Peden asked for a copy of the document 'so I could read it before we vote': Peden has been reported to have thought the Accord 'just ... nuts', but publicly supported it.⁵⁴ However, the anti-Accord unionists also probably underestimated what they needed to do. One of the officials, Bill Ethel, stated:

⁵⁰ O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, p. 26.

⁵¹ Michael Rowney, 'Summit Communiqué Rebuffed', *Direct Action*, no. 444, 12 July 1983, p. 14.

⁵² O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, p. 44-46.

⁵³ O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, p. 26. The view that events in WA would have no broader impact was not universal. In 1983, the electricians' union had the support of the state's unions in a dispute in which the union successfully pursued, in contradiction of the national wage guidelines, the implementation of agreements breached in the wage freeze: Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, p. 78. The union's state secretary, Mick Beatty, stated that he hoped a win in the dispute would be "the arrowhead that breaks the whole thing apart": *Direct Action*, 18 October 1983.

⁵⁴ O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, pp. 23-24.

'I think the mistake we made is that we didn't really understand the range of forces aligned against us.'⁵⁵

Uneasiness about the Accord persisted in WA. In 1986, 18 unions active in the public sector expressed concern about the ACTU's lack of consultation about the Accord and about the wage-fixing system as a whole. During 1989 and 1990, the WA branches of two railway unions (the train drivers union and the general union), the hospital workers union and the electricians' union left the ALP. All were partly reacting to issues in state, rather than federal, politics, but, for example, the hospital workers union branch secretary Jim Bush stated the union also felt a 'gradual disenchantment with federal government policies'.⁵⁶

In 1991, a Left Unionists group was established, which publicly criticised the roles of the ACTU and the Labor government. The militants put the argument that unions had taken a subordinate stance. This, they claimed, had led to the fall in workers' living standards, an economic policy that put the burden of economic recovery onto labour, and the decline in union density.⁵⁷

The WA leadership of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Workers' Union (formerly the BWIU) now emerged as a leading anti-Accord force. The branch had opposed the Accord in the past: as a consequence, according to Ethel, '[then secretary Pat] Clancy organised to knock us off', but not successfully.⁵⁸ Ethel himself was elected as WA secretary in 1986. He said the unions were, as a result of their own actions, more constrained 'than at any other time except in war'.⁵⁹ He argued that ACTU strategies helped to legitimise the general interests of capital and to internalise capital's demands within the unions. Ethel believed that ACTU officials in fact supported the results of company actions such as Robe River and APPM in Burnie because that:

Suited their political agenda ... to have everyone think that militancy was not on the agenda, and that anyone who thought it was would be dealt with severely. That's the culture that's got to change.

Ethel stated union officials should 'encourage militancy without wanting to control it, and to the extent that they do, we'll be more successful in getting back to a class position on economic matters' such as reduced hours of work. In 1992, the branch disaffiliated from the ALP. The reason Ethel cited for this was disagreement with the

⁵⁵ Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, p. 235.

⁵⁶ Catherine Brown, 'WA Union Leaves ALP', *Direct Action*, no. 761, 30 October 1990, p. 5.

⁵⁷ *Green Left Weekly*, 1991.

⁵⁸ Lowenstein, *Weevils at Work*, p. 178.

⁵⁹ O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, p. 37.

state Labor government on social justice. Defence of Aboriginal rights was especially important: rallying support through mass meetings, the branch had opposed a development on an Aboriginal sacred site next to the Swan River. He also stated that: 'We took the view that there was no point in us trying to play a reforming role inside the Labor Party, as it is too far gone.' Instead, 'we want people who are tied by conviction and ideology to working class interests, and this should be the backbone of any party in the future'. The union branch, however, had no immediate proposal for such a party.⁶⁰

Anti-Accord activity in WA, however, was arrested after the election of a Coalition state government in 1993. The attention of the state's militant unionists turned to opposition to the new government's public sector cuts and industrial relations changes.⁶¹

Opposition to the Accord: The Far Left

The train drivers' union consistently opposed the Accord from the beginning. Its main forum for this was the biennial ACTU congresses (it does not appear to have voted against wage determination proposals at the ACTU's conferences), where it invariably placed items on the agenda critical of the Accord in some respect. The climax of this opposition came in 1989. At that year's ACTU congress, the union argued that no extra claims provisions had 'contributed substantially to a sense of union irrelevance', described the stance of the ACTU with regard to the ALP government as 'opportunist' and called for an unfettered right to strike. It also sought to amend the wages policy motion and to amend the 'left' motion about the pilots dispute to remove criticism of the pilots.⁶²

Consistent opposition to the Accord also came from far left political parties. Two of these, the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), came together in 1983 to organise the Social Rights Campaign that called for rejection of the Accord. By the time a campaign conference was held in April 1984, about 150 union delegates and officials had given their support to the campaign's manifesto.⁶³ Alan Muir, the Queensland assistant secretary of the telecommunication technicians union, expressed a common view at the conference:

⁶⁰ *Green Left Weekly*, July-September 1992; Frank Noakes, 'What Role for Unions in the '90s?', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 53, 29 April 1992, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1992/53/3365>, accessed on 11 February 2008; O'Callaghan, *The Development and Adoption of the Accord*, p. 35; Jonathan Strauss and Geoff Spencer, "'Workers Need a New Political Voice'", *Green Left Weekly*, no. 67, 19 August 1992, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1992/67/2689>, accessed on 15 February 2008.

⁶¹ *Green Left Weekly*, 1993.

⁶² Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Agenda Items: For Consideration by the Congress of the A.C.T.U., ACTU Congresses, S784, Box 4, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1989, D21, M10, N6*; Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Minutes 1989 Congress*.

⁶³ *Direct Action*, 1983-1984.

The accord will fall apart. I agree with one of the earlier speakers who predicted 12 months ... The government will be unable to produce the goods, and as more and more workers come to this realisation, the cracks that are already evident will open up much wider.⁶⁴

This perspective was mirrored in the continuation (although not for much longer) of the argument by the SWP, for example, that the ALP was still an 'arena of struggle' for socialists.⁶⁵ According to this perspective, workers' struggles would soon return to their old forms.

In the meantime, the anti-Accord far left could be sharp critics of the agreement, but it was isolated in small parties and unions, individual branches within unions, as minorities in the Communist Party (CPA) and the ALP,⁶⁶ as rank-and-file local groups⁶⁷ and groups in unions, and as individual activists.⁶⁸ The experiences of some Social Rights Conference sponsors show this isolation took effect whenever an argument or dispute extended beyond the activist's immediate influence:

- Michael Doogan was the acting senior metal workers steward at car manufacturer GM-H's Fishermen's Bend plant in Melbourne in 1984 when the company proposed to cut employment by 1500 as part of industry restructuring plans supported by the Hawke-Keating government and the unions. A July joint mass meeting of metal and electrical tradespersons called the government plan 'a systematic attempt to destroy car workers' jobs'. In September these workers struck for 12 days. However, they voted to return to work when union officials argued a campaign was too difficult to win without the support of production unions.⁶⁹
- Terry Egan, the Victorian assistant secretary of the federal public service clerical assistants' union, had the support of his own branch to reject the proposed end to the federal public service unions' bans campaign during their 1985 pay dispute. According to him, the federal officials and four smaller branches of the union overruled the four larger branches in order to recommend referring the claim to arbitration.⁷⁰

The strengths and weaknesses of the far-left tendencies in the unions were demonstrated once more in the case of the tramways union in Victoria. Its 'hard-left'

⁶⁴ Greg Harris, 'Accord: an Agreement with Ourselves', *Direct Action*, no. 478, 16 May 1984, p. 10.

⁶⁵ *Direct Action*, 2 May 1984.

⁶⁶ Communist Party of Australia, Congress correspondence from National, Communist Party of Australia, Series MSS 5021, Box 11 (155), Mitchell Library, Sydney, 1984.

⁶⁷ See, for example: *Green Left Weekly*, June-September 1993.

⁶⁸ See also: Pablo Rosa, Letter to the Editors, *The Metal Worker*, Australian Metal Workers Union, Z102, Box 664, Brian Fraser, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1 June 1989.

⁶⁹ *Direct Action*, May-October 1984.

⁷⁰ *Direct Action*, January-February 1985.

leadership was replaced during elections in 1988 and 1989 by a group promising a more consistent opposition to the state government's plan to eliminate tram conductors. The branch moved to disaffiliate from the ALP because members did not want to fund a party which was cutting public transport jobs.

On the first day of 1990, the tramworkers rejected management directions to work without conductors. When they learnt that the government then planned to cut power to the tram system, preventing them from working, they drove hundreds of trams into Melbourne's city centre and left them in the streets. With the tramworkers locked out, the branch president, Monica Harte, nominated as an Independent Labour candidate in a forthcoming state by-election. Harte suggested that the 'campaign is the embryo of a whole new political development', involving 'more and more serious electoral challenges to the ALP by coalition of political, community and union groups'.⁷¹ However, compared with such a prospect, the branch's secretary, Lou di Gregorio, in the end preferred to negotiate a pay rise in exchange for driver-only trams. A majority of the branch executive and a mass meeting supported the deal he proposed. Those in the union, including some depot delegates, who thought like Harte were, as it turned out, still only a minority that could be isolated.⁷²

The far left opposition to the Accord among the unions, however, had a potential that might be realised if a union or unions with more members and a stronger strategic position moved to a stance against the Accord. The outstanding example of this was the eventual rejection by the black coal industry's production union, the Miners Federation (MF), of the stance of the CPA and the ALP left.⁷³

The MF originally gave the Accord unqualified support, but the extent to which MF members ever agreed with the Accord is unclear. From the start, meetings and rallies of miners in the Illawarra heard arguments against it from activists such as Leon Bringhoff, an SPA member and metal workers delegate, and criticised the lack of catch-up and automatic cost-of-living wage adjustments and job security under the Accord.⁷⁴

How much the miners' views would matter, however, relied greatly on the unity they gained through their union and its leadership. This unity was problematic. Opposing job

⁷¹ Chris Slee, 'Independent Labour Campaign Gets Good Response', *Direct Action*, no. 725, 30 January 1990, p. 2; Chris Slee, 'Interview with Independent Labour Candidate', *Direct Action*, no. 724, 23 January 1990, p. 16. The by-election was in Thomastown, which was considered to be an ALP safe seat. Harte initially had the support of other officials in the union branch and of left parties, including the Democratic Socialist Party (formerly the SWP), the New Left Party (the successor to the CPA) and the Rainbow Alliance. The by-election vote occurred after the dispute finished: Harte's vote was 4.7 per cent.

⁷² *Direct Action*, November 1989 - February 1990.

⁷³ Reihana Mohideen, 'Issues Facing the Labor Movement: An Interview with Pat Gorman', *Direct Action*, no. 632, 28 October 1987, p. 7.

⁷⁴ *Direct Action*, 1983-1986.

losses was a key aim of the campaigns run by the union in the 1980s. Yet MF members within each coalmining district and across the various districts also came into conflict when the union became the means through which decisions were made to abandon the jobs of some members.⁷⁵ In addition to this, within the coal industry, the MF was isolated in its opposition to continuous production, which was the main topic in award restructuring negotiations and was likely to be a major source of job losses.⁷⁶ Finally, the experience of the lack of success of the 1984-85 British miners' strike in defending jobs in coalmining was a context for any industrial action by the MF against job losses.⁷⁷

Differences emerged between the MF and the ACTU in 1985, first about a MF productivity-based pay claim based on a 1983 agreement and then around the lack of ACTU support for the union's industrial action against the Queensland government's industrial relations laws in 1987. Yet the MF does not appear to have mobilised opposition to the ACTU at this time. In 1986, the MF opposed the two-tier wage system because it believed that members remained entitled to cost-of-living increases and that poor trading conditions in the coal industry would be used by employers to oppose pay increases. Yet, rather than on that basis building a broader opposition to the system's requirement that workers make concessions to employers to get a pay increase, in 1987 the union accepted the ACTU offer of an exemption from the two-tier system.⁷⁸

From August 1987, coalmine owners moved to cut more than 2000 jobs. Soon after, Pat Gorman, who was the MF's journal editor and a CPA member, discussed the union leadership's thinking in an interview in the SWP's newspaper. The ACTU's officials were consciously accommodating capital, he stated. The inability of the left in the unions to be effective had a foundation in the left's political disintegration. That could be traced to the demise, beginning in the 1960s, of the CPA and was exacerbated by that party's 'abandonment of class analysis and class struggle'. According to Gorman, a lot of left union leaders had 'lost their class perspective'. To rebuild the working-class movement, a flexible revolutionary strategy was needed that involved a fight for rank and file control of the unions and the creation of a new left

⁷⁵ On a conflict between the workers in two mines in the Northern coalmining district of NSW, see: Peta Belic, 'On the Cusp: The Marginalisation of a Coal Mining Community Caught between Tradition and Modernity', in Julie Kimber, et al. (eds), *Labour Traditions: Papers from the Tenth National Labour History Conference*, Melbourne, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History - Melbourne, July 2007, pp. 26-28.

⁷⁶ Bowden, 'A Collective Catastrophe', p. 373.

⁷⁷ As Dick Nichols suggested: Nichols, *New Right Trade Unionism*, p. 26.

⁷⁸ *Direct Action*, 1986-1987. Compare with the MF vote against the ACTU recommendation to a August 1988 Special Unions Conference: *Direct Action*, 30 August 1988.

party. In the absence of that left party, the MF members in the ALP would carry out their struggle there.⁷⁹

The MF pursued two means to oppose the job cuts. It argued the political environment did not allow the union's policy of nationalisation of the coal industry to be achieved. Instead, the union campaigned for the establishment of a national coal marketing authority. At first the MF succeeded in having the authority adopted as ALP policy, but the government refused to establish it and the 1988 ALP conference overturned the policy. After that, in August 1988, the MF council recommended disaffiliation from the ALP: in Queensland, 3000 members voted seven to one to disaffiliate.⁸⁰

MF members had also already voted in favour of national action to oppose the job losses. After a delay of several months during which, as the union's president, John Maitland, noted, the members became 'a bit fed up with us',⁸¹ a national strike began in June 1988. However, a month later the National Liaison Committee of the Combined Mining Unions recommended accepting a Coal Industry Tribunal decision which on continuous production favoured the mine owners. The MF feared the potential for legal action against it and the keenness of other unions to poach its members. The CIT decision was also less costly in terms of job losses in the more productive open cut mines which predominated in Queensland. MF members in that state overwhelmingly favoured acceptance of the tribunal decision, the margin there outnumbering opposition elsewhere. Many in the minority of MF members felt that accepting the conditions of the decision broke with the militant traditions of the union.⁸²

Preliminary Conclusion

The survival of the Accord as a social contract in the 1980s presents a peculiar tale. While the idea of consensual industrial relations might have appealed to many workers, the practice of the Accord very often did not. The Accord's most persuasive feature might have been the absence of an alternative.

The Accord relied on the support of left unions. Yet, as the secretary of the shunters section of the Australian Railways Union in Melbourne, John Adamson, told a

⁷⁹ Reihana Mohideen, 'The Future of Australian Unionism and the Left: An Interview with Pat Gorman', *Direct Action*, no. 633, 4 November 1987, p. 15; Mohideen, 'Issues Facing the Labor Movement', p. 7.

⁸⁰ *Direct Action*, 1988.

⁸¹ Tom Wilson, 'Miners, Power Workers in Dispute', *Direct Action*, no. 650, 4 May 1988, p. 4.

⁸² *Direct Action*, 1987-1988; Nichols, *New Right Trade Unionism*, pp. 25-27. The MF continued to express anti-Accord views. For example, it put similar motions to the train drivers on the 1991 ACTU Congress agenda: Australian Council of Trade Unions, 1991 ACTU Congress Agenda Items, ACTU Congresses, S784, Box 4, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra, 1991.

1990 public meeting, apparently 'every left union ... is opposed to award restructuring and the Accord': they had just 'never ... managed to oppose it together'.⁸³

The opposition to the Accord in WA remained separate. No substantial effort seems to have been made to bring that into contact with what was happening elsewhere in order to achieve concerted action. For example, at the end of 1984, when the Rosella dispute arose at the end of first period of opposition to the Accord, a union official who wanted a TLC meeting to support the Food Preservers Union noted that there was a generally negative reaction to that proposal, but that support was:

Expressed by a number of delegates after the meeting, but they want to feel safe about giving their support.

It is all centred around the Wages Accord, even though a number of unions are not happy about the Accord they are not sure whether to oppose it at this point of time.

The right wing tried to make a big issue about the need for the trade union movement to give their support to the Accord, but we want to leave the debate on the Accord till early next year.⁸⁴

In the first years of the Accord, those who opposed it generally thought it posed no strategic dilemma. They looked forward to its forthcoming demise. They perceived no pressing need to overcome their existing divisions in order to strengthen anti-Accord activity. The call made by the Social Rights Conference for the formation and national coordination of campaign committees in unions did not begin to be fulfilled. When, two years later, the anti-Accord far left gathered nationally at the Fightback Conference in Canberra, its perspectives had started to change, but it was also in retreat. The Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) was fighting for its life. A similar action call emanated from Fightback, but with hardly improved results.⁸⁵

Soon, however, new opportunities to oppose the Accord arose. In the latter half of 1986, dissent in the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union reached its formal high watermark and the Miners Federation also backed cost-of-living pay increases. At the same time, the nurses and plumbers disputes broke out, while the BLF was holding on. Then the ebb tide in the AMWU, as its National Council turned against its own decision to support cost-of-living increases, swept aside the emergence of union unity against an Accord measure. In turn, the MF exempted itself from the two tiers. Then the plumbers were forced to conform. In 1988, the coalminers' strike came at the same time as the Victorian public sector strike, but there was no coordination of this. In 1989,

⁸³ Adamson et al., 'What Alternative to Kelticism?', p. 9.

⁸⁴ H. G Truslove, Letter to Tom Ryan, Food Preservers Union, Box F43, University of Melbourne Archive, Melbourne, 12 December 1984, p. 2. Who the "we" that Truslove refers to in the last paragraph are is not indicated.

⁸⁵ Direct Action, 1986.

when the pilots walked, opposition to the Accord reached the ACTU Congress, but here the train drivers' union carried it almost alone.

Thus, various opportunities to oppose the Accord within the unions existed, but the elements of each opportunity were not coordinated. In the past, as Gorman pointed out, the political party left, and in particular the Communist Party, had played the role, more or less well, of not only networking militants, but giving them some degree of political unity. That party left had disintegrated and was not yet rebuilt.

Like Gorman, Adamson considered a 'pole of attraction for militants within the labor [sic] movement' essential. Adamson stated those 'who are militant but not part of the ALP' should consider that 'unless the ALP Left can show that leadership and can put forward that alternative ... we have no choice whatsoever but to set up an alternative'.⁸⁶

That a renewal of union unity, against the Accord, had not been achieved was because, as Adamson thought, the opposition of some left unions to the Accord was not genuine. Among the unions was a 'Trojan Horse ... once considered to be a segment of the left',⁸⁷ he stated. That would include the left unions and parties that had supported the Accord overall.⁸⁸ Yet the genuineness in practice of the opposition to the Accord as a social contract of other left unions and parties can also be questioned. The left parties began with the view that the ALP was a site for workers' struggle, so that in regard to rebuilding the party left they broke fundamentally from the Accord only to the extent that they came to support new party projects.⁸⁹ The hard left unions' practice in opposing the Accord was also limited. They could contemplate an alternative to the ALP and the ACTU: David Grove, an industrial officer for the FPU in the 1980s, and then for the Victorian branch of the Transport Workers Union under its reform leadership, told the same forum at which Adamson spoke that there was 'no point being in or having anything to do with the ALP ... there has to be an alternative political party', and also that 'there has to be an alternative to the ACTU'.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, these unions exercised no substantial initiative in this regard. They were pushed out of the orbit of the ALP, but continued to respond to the pull of the party's political gravity. In Victoria in 1991, most of the hard left unions drew close to the party again, forming the

⁸⁶ Adamson et al., 'What Alternative to Kelticism?', p. 9.

⁸⁷ Adamson et al., 'What Alternative to Kelticism?', p. 9.

⁸⁸ Rizzo identifies these unions as the "mainstream left" and argues they accommodated the Accord's development because of their "commitment to the Accord structures" and vested interest in ALP governments: Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. ii. Rizzo, however, does not state what that interest was or otherwise explain that commitment.

⁸⁹ See chs. 10-13.

⁹⁰ Adamson et al., 'What Alternative to Kelticism?', p. 8.

Pledge group, which sought to oppose privatisation by opposing supporters of the rest of the union left in ALP state parliamentary preselections.⁹¹

By 1990, opposition within the unions to the Accord as a social contract was exhausted. This opened the way to the formal abandonment through enterprise bargaining of the principle of comparative wage justice, which in the past had maintained wage levels as well as wage relativities.

Postscript: Enterprise Bargaining and Industry Bargaining

In wage bargaining, the second-tier system and then award restructuring had held down pay levels and reduced wage relativities for skilled labour while threatening working hours and penalty rates. Some workers wanted to regain lost real wages through 'a good old fashioned pay rise'.⁹² By the end of 1989, union officials 'were going into the workplace and getting murdered', Kelty stated in a later interview.⁹³

The ACTU's response was to propose that enterprise bargaining could determine wages. Stronger unions would be able to seek higher wages on the basis of productivity increases. When the arbitration commission rejected enterprise bargaining in April 1991, the ACTU led a campaign for it with some support from the Hawke-Keating government. Deals were struck and/or industrial action was taken on the waterfront, in the federal public service, and in the oil, chemicals, road freight, pulp and paper and metals industries. The commission's objections were overwhelmed.⁹⁴

The secretary of the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, George Campbell, later stated the union backed enterprise bargaining because with its 'delegate structure we've always had an ability to extract over-award payments'. Before the end of the long Labor decade, the AMWU was resisting other unions' efforts to recentralise wage determination.⁹⁵ However, the AMWU was at first a union which, in the pulp and paper industry, for example, was more resistant to enterprise bargaining than the rest. Also, in 1990, Campbell agreed to negotiate an overall award wage increase when the metals industry employers offered this as a counter to what they mistakenly believed was an effort to return to over-award claims. This went no further because of the

⁹¹ Rizzo, *The Left and the Accord*, p. 24.

⁹² Gerry Kitchener, 'Into the Void', *Australian Left Review*, no. 129, June 1991, p. 8.

⁹³ Chris Briggs, 'Australian Exceptionalism: The Role of Trade Unions in the Emergence of Enterprise Bargaining', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 43, no. 1, March 2001, p. 33. See also: Herb Thompson, 'Structural Efficiency: Lewis Carroll re-visited', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 1, Autumn 1990, pp. 70, 72.

⁹⁴ *Green Left Weekly*, May-June 1991; Briggs, 'Australian Exceptionalism', p. 31; Roy Green, 'The Wild Blue Yonder', *Australian Left Review*, no. 131, August 1991.

⁹⁵ Briggs, 'Australian Exceptionalism', p. 34, also p. 39.

opposition of the government, the ACTU, and other employers to such a general wage increase.⁹⁶

Enterprise bargaining was a source of many inconsistencies in union policy. For example, the public transport unions in Victoria in 1991 threatened industrial action to back pay claims that did not trade away jobs or conditions, but subsequent enterprise agreements included major job losses. In coal mining, the newly united mineworkers union agreed to 'flexibility' as a response to 'intense international competition': work demarcations were reduced to a basic streaming; workplace consultative processes were introduced; and productivity and wage increases were linked through increases in overtime and available shifts, and production bonuses. Jobs in the industry fell by about 20 per cent between 1990 and 1995. At the Goldsworthy iron one mine, the reclassification of most skilled workers up to one, more highly paid, level removed much of the incentive for workers to engage in further training: productivity gains came through bonuses that resulted, for example, in workers working through the ends of their shifts to 'get the job done'.⁹⁷

Many unions took to heart the idea of partnership between unions and management. This ran into two kinds of problems. Managements weren't necessarily committed to union members' interests. Also, at least occasionally, employers successfully sought support from workers around issues which workers considered concerned them more than those their union officials raised. One clothing factory management's response to its difficulties during the 1990s recession was to demand cuts in wages and penalty rates. The factory's workers backed this, in the belief it would help them keep their jobs, rather than their union officials' call to defend the award, and left the union. The National Rail Corporation sought a 'new workplace culture' through work team structures that were posed as an alternative to union representation as the way to pursue workers' interest. The union's efforts to represent workers were met with hostility and it lost members.⁹⁸ More generally, as previously discussed, levels of industrial disputation and workplace organisation fell to historic lows in the 1990s.

⁹⁶ Greg Rzesniowiecki, Letter to Stewie Maurice, Amalgamated Metal Workers Union Victorian Branch, AMWU 106/119, 16, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne, 17 September 1990; *Direct Action*, 1990.

⁹⁷ *Green Left Weekly*, 1991, 1993, 1995; Bowden, 'A Collective Catastrophe', pp. 372-73; R.E. Fells, 'Award Restructuring, Workplace Reform and the Changing Nature of Australian Industrial Relations', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 4, no. 2, December 1993.

⁹⁸ *Green Left Weekly*, 20 September 1995; Stephen Long, 'Commentary', in Ron Callus and Russell Lansbury (eds), *Working Futures: The Changing Nature of Work and Employment Relations in Australia*, Sydney, The Federation Press, 2002, p. 140; Nichols, 'The Working Class and the Unions', p. 8.

Nonetheless, there was no generalised failure of workers to struggle about their workplace lives in the first half of the 1990s. There were still workers who rejected their employer's interventions against their unions and overtures to them to leave their unions; struck or withstood lockouts for months to defend their jobs and conditions of work; travelled long distances to picket or march; took solidarity action; opposed an employer's racial discrimination or poverty level 'training' wage; joined a union when it campaigned or sought to change their union when it did not; and, through all this thought they had 'stood up' for their rights. In opposing state Liberal governments and employer anti-union actions, workers' involvement in large demonstrations, difficult industrial actions and debates about how to wage these campaigns cannot be faulted as 'token', even if the approach to these campaigns of labour council and union leaderships was. Enterprise bargaining itself was no simple process: sometimes substantial minorities or even majorities of an employer's workers rejected what they thought were unsatisfactory proposals for agreements.⁹⁹

What was not evident was much opposition to the introduction of enterprise bargaining as a system. With regard to independent activity by workers, this was true even of the 1993 government proposal for non-union enterprise bargaining. Perhaps this was partly because by then such activity was already in sharp decline. Also, there was widespread official, including ACTU opposition to the proposal,¹⁰⁰ so workers might have been happy to see that and unwilling to take that further.

The situation in the federal public service was exceptional. There, the union agreed that service-wide arrangements would be broken down through departmental-level 'agency bargaining'. Many members were, however, reluctant to see that and also feared that wage increases would be funded by cost cutting and job losses. In 1991, mass meetings in Melbourne and Perth passed resolutions in opposition to 'agency bargaining'. Forty per cent opposed enterprise bargaining outright in Sydney. In 1992, when members voted on a proposed log of claims, a supplementary motion opposed to agency bargaining received substantial support, including occasionally a majority vote, in the meetings. The union's leadership then set up a three-way vote on agency bargaining that split opponents between two motions about alternatives. The audience for each articulate opponent of agency bargaining was also minimised by holding the vote in workplace rather than mass meetings. In 1993, at mass meetings held in response to announcements of job cuts, agency bargaining was endorsed in principle,

⁹⁹ Green Left Weekly, 1991 - 1995; Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, pp. 171-74, 177-78.

¹⁰⁰ Roy Green, 'Wages Policy and Wage Determination in 1993', Journal of Industrial Relations, vol. 36, no. 1, March 1994, pp. 102-07.

but there was substantial opposition at the larger mass meetings: in Melbourne the official motion was defeated and an alternative motion was then carried. The Challenge win in the ACT branch¹⁰¹ became the basis for the formation of the PSU National Challenge reform group. Across the country, the strength of the national reform group varied greatly – for example, in WA its network of supporters numbered less than a dozen. Overall, in the union's national elections in 1994 and by-elections the following year, it gained votes of about 40 per cent, with its best votes in the ACT, Queensland, and Tasmania. Meanwhile, there was some resistance to proposed agreements in particular departments: 46 per cent of union members who voted opposed one in social security and, after a year's opposition from delegates in human services and health to agency bargaining processes, 40 per cent of members there opposed the agreement.¹⁰²

From 1993, some union leaderships began to criticise enterprise bargaining and develop proposals for bargaining across whole industries. Underpinning this was the reaction of some groups of workers against the industrial relations regime of trade-offs for pay rises.¹⁰³

At successive ACTU congresses, first the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and then the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union argued for generalised wage increases. The leaflet distributed by the CEPU at the 1995 congress pointed out that 'pattern bargaining' by unions across workplaces made agreements within an industry consistent, but did not help members in an industry who could not get an enterprise agreement. Discussion papers that circulated among some unions in NSW and Victoria, and articles in *Frontline* also advocated industry bargaining. This discussion also considered broader goals that unions could pursue, such as maintaining living standards, social reforms, strengthening unions' powers in the workplace, and environmental improvements.¹⁰⁴

During 1994 and 1995, a number of unions developed claims and campaigns for 14-15 per cent pay increases over two years. The main successes were gained by the

¹⁰¹ See ch. 5.

¹⁰² Author's recollection; *Green Left Weekly*, 1992-1995. The union's leadership would occasionally express some aspect of the fears and reluctance of the union members about agency bargaining: see, for example Miles, 'Who Says the Public Service Is Boring?', p. 27. This does not mean the leadership did not push for agency bargaining: cf. John O'Brien and Michael O'Donnell, 'Towards a New Public Unitarism: Employment and Industrial Relations in the Australian Public Service', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, June 2002, p. 70.

¹⁰³ See, for example: *Green Left Weekly*, 1 December 1993, 31 May 1995.

¹⁰⁴ *Frontline*, 1993-1995; *Green Left Weekly*, 8 September 1993.

electricians' and the construction and transport industry unions, where only minorities of union members had been able to secure enterprise agreements previously.

Towards the end of 1994, the TWU, according to its president, Steve Hutchins, set out upon 'a national vanguard campaign, not just for transport workers, but for all workers who have been victimised and exploited under the enterprise bargaining system'.¹⁰⁵ In the campaign, unionists in a couple of the sections of the industry took the initiative because the union felt it could not conduct an industry-wide campaign as in 1981. By May 1995, the union had disaffiliated from the ACTU because the latter continued to push enterprise bargaining while the union argued that it was not appropriate to the transport and services industries.

The initiative for the 1995 construction industry wage campaign came from Victoria, where the branch had a new leadership. Branch meetings directed that the increase should be gained without trade-offs. An elected committee of shop stewards put the claim together and made recommendations for the campaign's direction.¹⁰⁶

The move towards industry bargaining continued after the Hawke-Keating government ended. Eventually this began to take in the AMWU: in 1998, the Workers First reform group, which campaigned on issues such as democracy within the union and opposition to enterprise bargaining, began its rise to the leadership of the Victorian branch.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

The emergence of industry bargaining was the only successful challenge, albeit limited, to the Accord. That success is at least partly attributable to the support industry bargaining had among some union officials. This observation should reinforce the need to pay attention to the complexity of the behaviour of union officials.

Through the long Labor decade, however, the chief union strategy, ultimately known as strategic unionism, was to seek higher labour productivity, in collaboration with 'its own' capital, in order to boost profits. This was consummated in the Accord and carried out with the support of most union officials. Yet this was not solely or even principally the result of industrial relations or union bureaucracy. On the one hand, the predominant response to a structural crisis of capitalism was typical of a labour aristocracy. On the other hand, the elements of opposition to class collaboration did not

¹⁰⁵ Jennifer Thompson, 'Transport Workers Campaign: Time for a Wages Catch-up!', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 168, 23 November 1994, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/7670>, accessed on 28 June 2007.

¹⁰⁶ *Green Left Weekly*, 1994-1995.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, 'Silencing Dissent to Win Consent', p. 46.

unite to offer an alternative. An important reason why that occurred was the lack of a political party that might have substantially aided the development of that unity, following from the previous lack of success or even effort to counter working-class opportunism. Politics among workers was a determinant.

The union strategy came at a great cost to solidarity among workers. In general, from whole unions down to individual delegates, attempts at initiative on their own part failed, even when their members were willing to take action, because of a lack of broader support. The core for organising collective action among workers, as this was constituted in networks of activists in the labour movement, declined substantially.¹⁰⁸

What alternatives remained for the development of workers' class political consciousness is indicated by a comment from a striking Mount Isa Mines worker attending the 1995 ACTU Congress. The worker responded to the applause for Keating by stating that he would rather vote for 'a greenie'.¹⁰⁹ In the following chapters, other options for workers' mobilisation are discussed: first those presented by social movements and then those offered by the appearance of new parties, which culminated in the formation of the Greens.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example: Trish Corcoran, 'Political Work on the Job', The Activist, vol. 4, no. 13, November 1994, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ Green Left Weekly, 3 October 1995.

Social Movement Mobilisation and Demobilisation

For four decades, the long-term trend in the capacity of social movements to reach out and mobilise through protest events has been growth. Yet for the last three decades, social movement mobilisations did not build up the core for organising collective action among workers in a way comparable with those in the latter half of the 1960s and the early 1970s. As a consequence, social movement mobilisations have not been as sustained as in the past nor have they provided the same context for political radicalisation.¹

This thesis is concerned with the period in which the previous growth of the core for organising collective action among workers and the associated development of workers' class political consciousness appears to have ceased and was perhaps even reversed. This chapter examines social movements other than the labour movement to consider if chances existed in these for the core to grow among workers and, if there were any, why those chances were not realised.

Studying workers' mobilisation in these social movements generally, and certainly for the long Labor decade, as is intended here, presents a number of difficulties. Unlike the labour movement, no general survey of their membership or activity is already available as a jumping-off point. Also, the nature of activism across social movements, including the characteristics of membership of their groups and organisations, varies greatly, so any quantitative comparisons of mobilisation must also set out to weigh the significance of their qualitative differences in social movement mobilisations.

Therefore, this chapter will first present the findings of a newspaper survey of social movement mobilisations from 1983 to 1995. The findings shows aspects of the composition of those mobilisations and some trends through time. These results indicate the scope and effectiveness of the networks of workers involved, as well as the

¹ A series of exceptionally large demonstrations shows this. The 1984 Palm Sunday peace marches were larger than the Vietnam Moratorium marches, but there were several of those in succession. The 1985 peace marches were larger again. The November 1992 union and community rallies against the Kennett government were larger than any Palm Sunday march (in one city), but subsequent rallies opposing Kennett's actions were relatively small. Again, the indigenous reconciliation bridge walks in 2000 were larger protest events than any previous ones in more or less every city and overall, but were largely one-off. The even larger February 2003 marches against the second Gulf War were effectively one-offs as well. The 2006 Your Rights at Work demonstrations only pale in comparison to the last in size and that was largely because Unions NSW decided not to hold a central rally. However, the YRAW campaign was probably somewhat more sustained because of the diminished but still extant networks of activists in the labour movement.

potential of the networks to reach out further. Then, to consider social movement mobilisations in the period in more depth, three larger ones—the 1980s peace movement, the free education movement from 1986 to 1989, and the environment movement from 1989—are examined with regard to their intensity and coherence. In particular, the view that the social movements were successfully incorporated into government apparatuses will be compared with a perspective that opportunist influence was exerted *within* each movement.

Participation in Social Movements

The scope of social movement mobilisation might be considered in many ways, including: the number of mobilisations; the intensity of activity around specific issues; the number of people involved; and the range in the scale of activities. None of these aspects of social movements in the long Labor decade have been broadly surveyed. Even the scope of a single social movement's mobilisation has rarely been studied beyond the moments of their foundation and decline, the size of the larger protests, public meetings and conferences, and the memberships of its larger organisations. An occasional question in social surveys in the period was whether or not someone had ever taken part in, for example, a demonstration. The increase in the result would suggest that people had more frequently demonstrated in the recent past compared with previous times: nothing more precise can be concluded.²

Here a protest event analysis of social movement mobilisation for the period is developed on the basis of a newspaper survey which covers the years 1983 to 1995. The number of and attendances at protest events are compared for each year of the period, among categories of issues, and the federal and state capitals.

² The surveys, survey question and 'yes' to having taken part in a demonstration results were:

- The 1979 PAS asked: 'Have you ever taken part in any protest movement on either a local or a larger scale, or demonstrated on any issue?' (this might also include public meetings or other protest movement events) 12.2 per cent of workers.
- The World Values Surveys in Australia in 1983 asked about ever participating in lawful demonstrations. 12.2 per cent of all people: Elim Papadakis, 'Social Movements: The Citizens in Action', in Glyn Davis and Patrick Weller (eds), *Are You Being Served? State, Citizens and Governance*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2001, p. 46.
- The 1986 CSA asked: 'When you have been concerned about social or political issues like increasing taxes, unemployment, or pollution, have you ever done any of the following things? ... Been on a march or demonstration.' 19.5 per cent of employees.
- The 1987 AES asked: 'There are various forms of political action that people can take. Please say, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you would do it, or would never, under any circumstances, do any of them ... Attending lawful demonstrations?' 13.4 per cent of workers.
- The 1994 NSS asked about participation in environmental rallies in the previous five years: 5.9 per cent of workers during that time.
- The 1995 World Values Surveys in Australia asked about ever participating in lawful demonstrations. 17.8 per cent of all people: Papadakis, 'Social Movements', p. 46.

This protest event analysis focuses on 'unconventional', extra-institutional contention by 'challenger' actors because the thesis is concerned with the sources of workers' class political consciousness. For that consciousness, activity that is conflictual, radical, far-reaching and practical is particularly important, compared with activity that is institutionalised, everyday, immediate and ideational, even though institutional 'claim-making', mundane and localised actions, and discursive forms of protest are typically numerically predominant in social movement activity.³

In the analysis, events are usually grouped by calendar year. Yet a series of related protest events can run from one year into the next, or be highly concentrated, lasting only a few days or weeks, within a year.⁴

More fundamentally with regard to the unit of this analysis, the protest events of the long Labor decade, many of these were relatively isolated, infrequent and small conflicts with the social order, rather than part of large and concerted confrontations with capitalist power. This raises the question of how such events are related to the broader concern of this study, the framework for the development of workers' class political consciousness.⁵ At a given level of the class struggle, however, trends in social movement mobilisations, in particular locations and, most of all, nationally, are a condition of that development.

The author coded data for the survey, preventing alternative understandings of coding requirements and minimising random errors in coding. As well, the data source was examined a second time, after a period of more than a year, to correct initial coding errors.

The newspapers selected for the survey were *Direct Action* and *Green Left Weekly*. The two newspapers are related: *Direct Action* ceased publication at the end of 1990 so that its resources could be used to produce *Green Left Weekly* from February of the following year.⁶

³ Ruud Koopmans and Dieter Rucht, 'Protest Event Analysis', in Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg (eds), *Methods of Social Movement Research*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p. 244; Robert J Sampson et al., 'Civil Society Reconsidered: The Durable Nature and Community Structure of Collective Civic Action', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 111, no. 3, November 2005, p. 675.

⁴ Koopmans and Rucht, 'Protest Event Analysis', p. 235.

⁵ Roberto Franzosi, 'The Press as a Source of Socio-Historical Data: Issues in the Methodology of Data Collection from Newspapers', *Historical Methods*, vol. 20, no. 1, Winter 1987, pp. 5-6.

⁶ The name change did reflect a difference in the overall editorial approach of the two newspapers: *Direct Action* declared itself 'the newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party [from 1990, the Democratic Socialist Party] and Resistance'. *Green Left Weekly* did not. However, in *Green Left Weekly* reports of Australian protest events were still largely written by DSP and Resistance members.

Direct Action and *Green Left Weekly* were chosen for the survey because data sources other than newspapers are not readily available and would certainly have had errors and biases of their own. Moreover, a preliminary comparative analysis of newspapers supports the selection. The two newspapers were weekly publications that had relatively broad national reportage for the entire period from groups of supporters in the six state capitals, Canberra, and Newcastle and Wollongong (a group developed in Darwin in the 1990s). This can be compared with, for example, the *National Times* or *Tribune*, which both ceased publication during the period, or the *Socialist* (later *Socialist Worker*) that was smaller, published less frequently and only had supporters based on the east coast of the mainland for most of the period. One or more daily newspapers were published in each city, but without sampling, their use would have require the examination of more than 4000 editions per newspaper, which was beyond the resources available for this research. Yet sampling of these newspapers would probably have yielded distorted data, especially because a small number of events were very large in comparison to the rest. Given a capacity to specify the nature of the errors in the survey and what types of activity are excluded from the data, as well as a limitation of the analysis to informed judgements, the problem of the validity of the protest event data in the survey is minimised.⁷

The method by which protest events were reported in *Direct Action* and *Green Left Weekly* has introduced a number of biases into the survey. Supporters of the newspapers, who were volunteers or poorly paid political organisers, wrote the reports.⁸ They usually wrote about the protest events that they attended and often were involved in organising: sometimes the events would be learnt of through movement discussion or the mass media. Therefore, the newspapers' reporting reflected the activities and concerns of their supporters. So, for example, international solidarity activities were generally well-reported. Meanwhile, events on campus were largely ignored until 1984, with the result that few of these were reported. Also, the

⁷ On the validity problems of newspaper surveys, see Franzosi, 'The Press as a Source', pp. 5-12, 14. The comments on the nature of the two newspapers, other than those that can be observed in the publications themselves, are based on the author's knowledge. Franzosi suggested testing the validity of a newspaper survey by partial comparisons with other newspapers: Franzosi, 'The Press as a Source', p. 8. The six-day daily *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Sunday *Sun-Herald* were surveyed between March and May 1983 and March and May 1993 for Sydney protest event reports. In both periods, these newspapers recorded fewer events in the city than *Direct Action* and *Green Left Weekly*. On the other hand, the events reported on a daily basis were generally larger than the events that those newspapers had not reported but the weeklies had. In other words, while the daily publications might better reflect the social movement's outreach activities (although it is unlikely the largest events were missed by the weeklies), the weeklies might better reflect other aspects of social movement mobilisation that contribute to the building of the core for organising collective action.

⁸ The number of these supporters available to submit reports is not a significant source of bias. SWP membership increased from 1983 to 1984 but thereafter remained at a similar level throughout the period.

newspapers' supporters were especially interested in social movements with larger and relatively frequent activities: but this is potentially advantageous for the survey, because those were the conditions in which workers' class political consciousness might have most readily developed. As well, an event might not be reported at all, even when supporters of the newspapers were closely involved with it, for reasons such as: disappointment with an event's lack of success; insufficient attention by potential authors to writing about it;⁹ gaps in the newspapers' publishing schedules, such as occurred at the end of December and beginning of January each year; and limits on the number of event reports possible imposed by the size of the publication.¹⁰

The protest events surveyed include demonstrations, public meetings, functions and hunger strikes. All events reported by the two newspapers were included in the survey other than:

- Those that would occur in the future.
- Those about industrial issues. Such activities are discussed in the preceding chapters.
- The activities of political organisations, unless that characteristic was coincidental to the event itself. Such activities are discussed in the following chapters.
- Meetings solely or largely of members, representatives and delegates of an organisation or a grouping of organisations.
- Memorial meetings for activists based in Australia, where attendance for personal reasons might have been significant.
- Farmers' actions.
- Actions expressing right-wing political views. These were only infrequently reported.

Two sets of events are included in the survey data without relying solely on reports in the two newspapers. The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras (before 1988, the Sydney Gay Mardi Gras) parades were held annually in February throughout the period. This event was reported in the newspapers only a few times, with estimated attendances that included the parade audiences, which at tens and then hundreds of

⁹ For example, the author did not report at least two relatively successful events which he had played a key role in organising.

¹⁰ The normal size of *Direct Action* was cut from 24 to 16 pages toward the end of 1986, but this might not have meant a reduction in the pages available for protest event reports. Also, a change in editorial style could have reduced the amount of detail provided about each event without reducing the number of events reported. Therefore, whether or not this source of bias contributed to the lower frequency of events reported between 1987 and 1990 (see below) is uncertain. *Green Left Weekly* began as a 24-page newspaper and grew to 32 pages.

thousands outnumbered parade participants many times over. Also, whether or not Mardi Gras was 'political', and therefore a kind of protest event, was disputed. On the one hand, the inconsistency of reportage by the two newspapers and comments there and elsewhere suggest Mardi Gras was hardly or not overtly political. On the other hand, at least some participants and audience members stated and supported claims for the rights and interests of gays and lesbians, Mardi Gras organisers claimed that it was a political expression and developed the political skills of gays and lesbians, and ostensibly political activities were part of the festival around Mardi Gras. An assumption that Mardi Gras was always partly a protest event seems reasonable, although use of the attendance figures would tend to distort the survey. Therefore, the event has been coded as a large protest each year from 1983 to 1987, two such protests from 1988, when lesbians became formally involved, and as three large protests in 1995, when a Mardi Gras history first refers to organised attendance at the parade.¹¹

The Palm Sunday peace movement marches were held each year on the Sunday before Easter in capital cities and many regional towns from 1982 until 1990. Attendance represented a great proportion of all attendances at social movement mobilisations until 1988. *Direct Action* reported attendances in capital cities for most of the Palm Sunday marches, but in 1987 gave figures only for Sydney, Perth and Canberra, and, in 1990, only for Sydney (as 'thousands'). The absence of some Palm Sunday demonstration attendance figures for the body of survey data appeared to skew the survey's results. Therefore, a complete series of estimated attendance figures for these marches was created and included in the survey data. Reports by *Tribune* that total attendance nationwide in the Palm Sunday rallies in 1987 was 230,000 and in 1990 was 30,000, of which half attended in Sydney, were incorporated. For these two years, from those nationwide figures, the specific attendance estimates available for some cities were subtracted. The remainder of the nationwide attendance for each year was then divided among cities for which figures were not available. The proportion of the remainder assigned to a city in each year was determined by the proportion of the attendance in that city of the previous year's Palm Sunday rallies among all the cities for which a figure was being assigned.¹²

¹¹ *Direct Action*, 1984; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991-1992, 1994; Graham Carbery, *A History of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras*, Melbourne, Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, 1995, pp. 49-51, 72-74, 101-102, 143-144, 157, 242, 258; Graham Willett, *Living Out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2000, p. 203. Appendix B tabulates participation and attendance according to Carbery's book..

¹² *Tribune*, 1987, 1990. *Tribune* attendances estimates tended to be lower than those of *Direct Action*: see also Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle*, pp. 45, 63.

The various problems of the newspaper survey and stratagems used to complete it do raise questions with regard to its validity. The concern here, however, is to establish some trends in the opportunities for building the core for organising collective action among workers through social movement mobilisations. For that, the survey results are sufficient.¹³

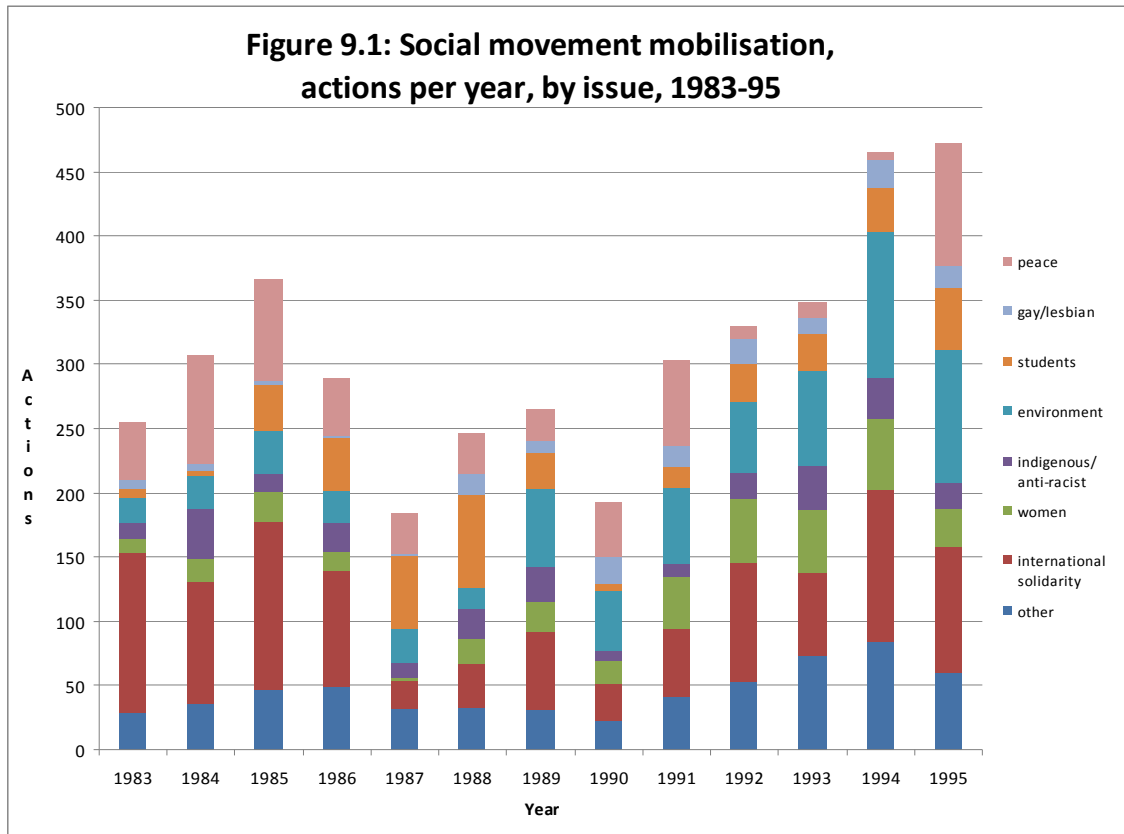
The number of protest events rose in the first years of the Hawke-Keating government, most of all because of a rise in the frequency of peace movement and international solidarity actions (see Figure 9.1). This then slumped in the late 1980s, mainly in the same areas, with student actions only partly compensating. The number of environmental protests increased from 1989, and in the 1990s so did solidarity activities, women's actions, including the emergence of the Reclaim the Night events that opposed violence against women, and, eventually, student actions. In terms of the number of actions, only Sydney, among the capital cities, had not recovered by the end of the period from the late 1980s slump.

Specific issues became the subject of relatively intense activity. South Africa in 1985-86 and East Timor in the 1990s were the foci of solidarity activity. Marking International Women's Day and opposing attacks on abortion rights were key concerns for women's movement activists. Black deaths in custody and developments on sacred sites were frequent causes of indigenous people's actions.

Environmentalists' actions to protect old-growth forests were relatively frequent throughout the period. Yet this issue vied for prominence among environmentalists with, first, uranium mining and, later, a range of urban development and pollution issues.

Proposals to introduce or increase tertiary education fees were the main catalyst for student actions. The spurs to the activism of gays and lesbians were efforts to end legal and social discrimination against them and the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS (although not only gays and lesbians were active around that issue).

¹³ As Ruud Koopmans and Dieter Rucht noted, 'for many analytical purposes, it is not so much the actual level of protest but its composition and trends over time that are of interest': Koopmans and Rucht, 'Protest Event Analysis', p. 247. Appendix C gives further details of how the number of events and the attendance at events was ascertained.



In the peace movement, relatively general nuclear disarmament actions gave way in frequency in the later 1980s to ones focused on opposition to US bases and warship visits. Then, in the 1990s, anti-war actions came in two spikes: in opposition to the Gulf War at the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991 and, in 1995, to nuclear testing, especially by France in the Pacific, with regard to which 87 actions were reported.

The trend in attendances at protest events was somewhat different to that of the number of these events (see Figure 9.2). Attendee numbers peaked in 1985, but also held up strongly until 1988. Thereafter these fell and stagnated until 1993, before a sharp rise through 1994 and 1995.

A small number of very large events greatly influenced the total figure for protest event attendances. From 1983 to 1988, the nation-wide Palm Sunday march attendances, which ranged from more than 160,000 to about 360,000, were never less than 90 per cent of the attendances of all reported peace movement activities. Because of the size of the Palm Sunday demonstrations, peace movement protest events were preeminent among social movement mobilisations of the period as a whole: attendances were as much as those at all other social movement actions combined (see Figure 9.3) with the exception, with regard to the capital cities, of Hobart and also, perhaps, Brisbane.

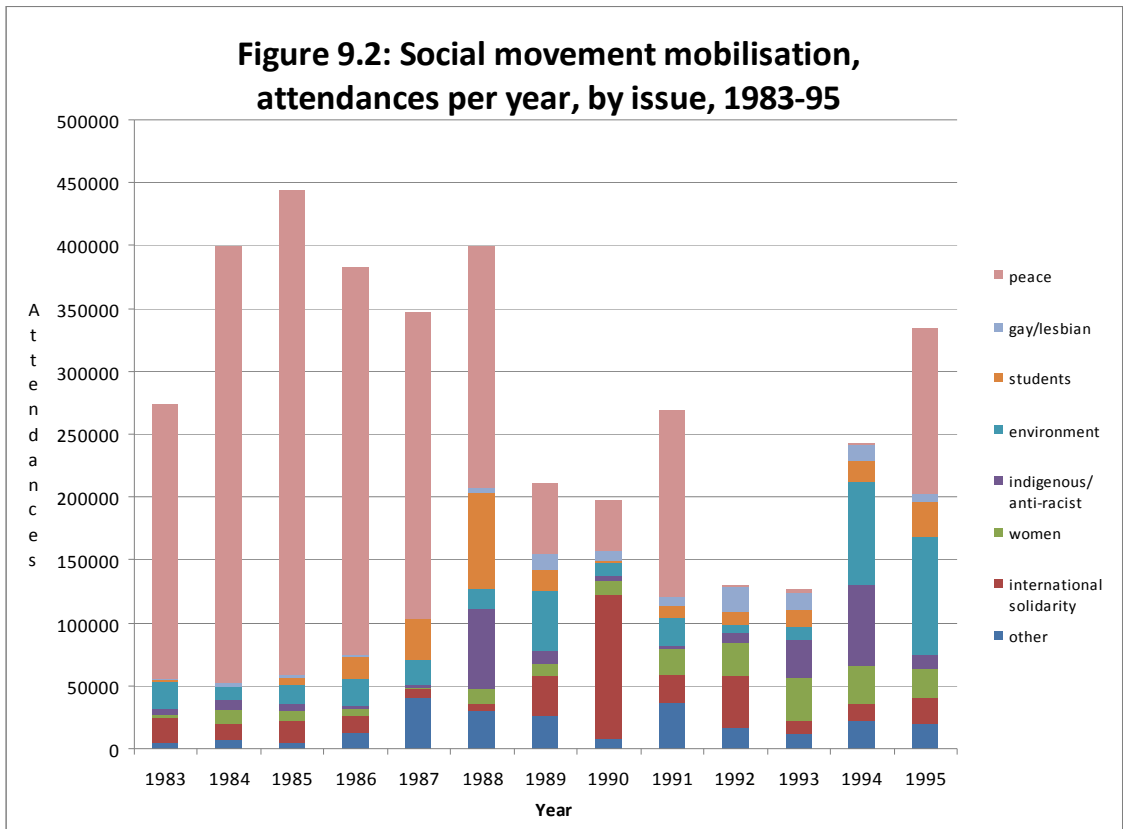
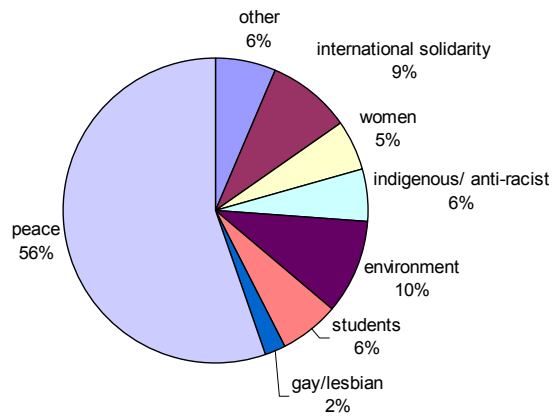


Figure 9.3: Social movement mobilisation, attendances, by issue, 1983-1995



In 1988 there were two other large protest events besides the Palm Sunday marches. Indigenous people and their supporters joined together in a survival march 50,000-strong in Sydney on the 200th anniversary of the European invasion of the country. Also, thousands of secondary students rallied against cuts in the NSW public education system, in addition to tertiary students' free education movement actions.

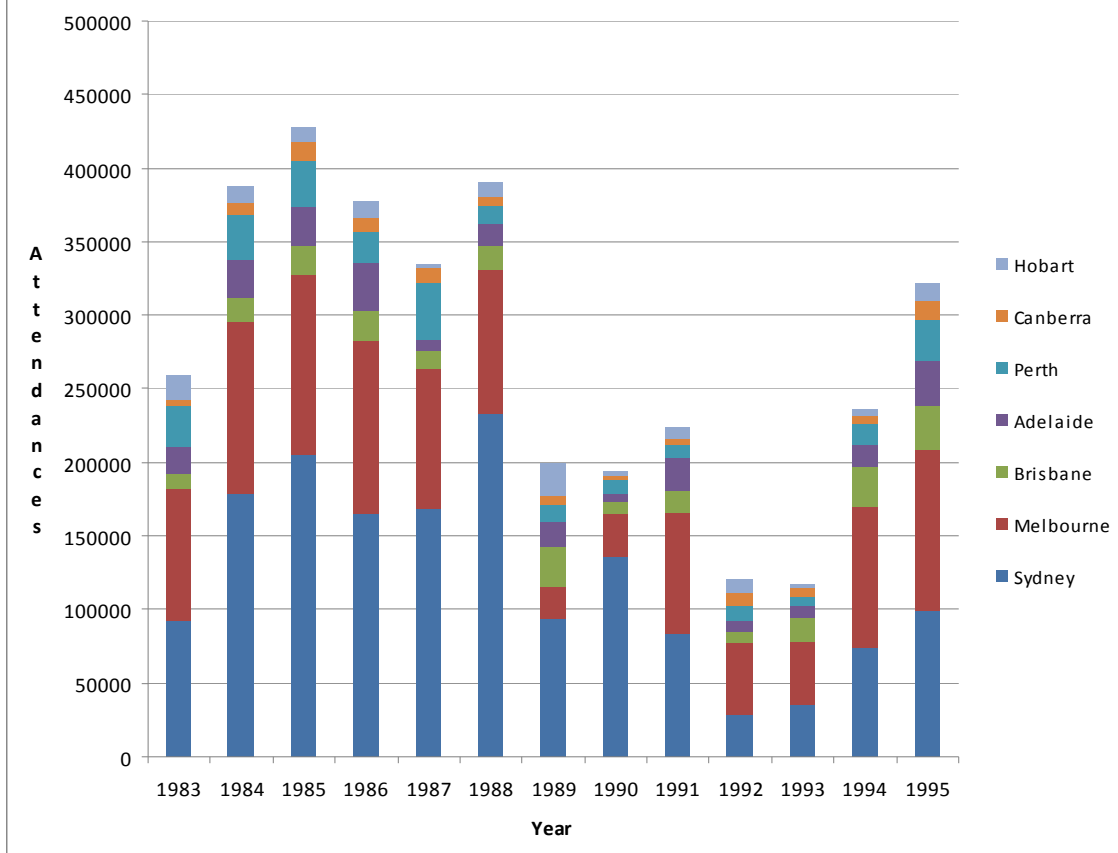
In 1990, a visit by Nelson Mandela attracted 100,000 to a single event in Sydney, as well as 10,000 to two events in Melbourne. The major demonstrations opposing the Gulf War came at the start of 1991. Without these two catalysts, the totals for attendances at protest events in these years would presumably have been as low as those of the next two years.

Attendances at environmental protests were high when forestry issues sparked urban mobilisations, first in 1989 and then from 1994. Reclaim the Night was an entirely new series of larger actions for women's rights. Mobilisations in the early 1990s in support of people living with HIV/AIDS were also substantial. Anti-nuclear testing actions in 1995 were large as well as numerous.

When protest event attendances are broken down by city, the slump in total attendances can be seen to have been concentrated in Melbourne, from 1988, and then in Sydney after 1990 (see Figure 9.4). However, not only was Sydney's decline more persistent, but the city's figures are in any case somewhat inflated by the only outdoor activity for Mandela's visit being held there. Moreover, the largest demonstrations about industrial issues in the long Labor decade, which are not shown here, occurred in Victoria in 1992-93.¹⁴ Brisbane's rising attendances might be partly because of the easing of legal restrictions on street marches there during the period.

¹⁴ Direct Action, 1988 - 1990; Green Left Weekly, 1991 - 1993.

Figure 9.4: Social movement mobilisation, attendances per year, capital cities, 1983-1995



Overall, social movement mobilisation in the form of protest events was weak from 1989 until 1993, although the frequency of these events rose steadily from 1990. It lacked only protests of the largest scale in the last two years of the long Labor decade. Before the period of stagnation, a peace movement grew dramatically during the first three years of the Hawke-Keating government. Even later, issues related to that movement, such as the Gulf War or nuclear testing in the Pacific, were still catalysts for large protests. Two other movements also show some prospect that they might have attained relatively frequent activity and sizeable attendances: the student movement in the latter part of the 1980s; and the environment movement as it developed from 1989. Yet none became a direct well-spring for a building up of the core for organising collective action among workers.

A frequent argument about why social movements in the long Labor decade did not rebuild radical politics is that they were incorporated into the political system and governmental apparatuses through accommodations of a movement's concerns by an existing political party or the availability of jobs for the movement's activists. In this argument, a movement is perceived as vulnerable to incorporation if it was dominated

by an 'elite' network that 'concentrate[d] on influencing powerful figures in the political mainstream over mass mobilisation campaigns', was beholden to activists pursuing career paths or was preoccupied with cultural issues rather than strategies of political economy.¹⁵ Such incorporation of social movements happened. For example, the women's movement in the period, compared with the 1970s held few demonstrations and its spokeswomen often no longer relied on grassroots support. Its shape was determined by supportive legislation and public service roles, diffuse and proliferate feminist networks, its increased group stability and its increased service provision that had to meet the requirements to obtain government funding.¹⁶

Tim Doyle pointed to another problem for social movements. During the environment movement's Wet Tropics campaign in the middle of the 1980s, the federal environment minister demanded the movement have a 'single voice'. Doyle argued that if the movement had followed that course, the more compromising 'professional' movement's organization employees would have gained power in the movement to the exclusion of the movement's radicals.¹⁷ He does not, however, show that this would necessarily happen in a social movement. A movement's radicals might be in a position to defeat its compromisers. This would have further implications for government views about its relations to that movement.

The three examples of insurgent social movements in the long Labor decade mentioned above will now be explored. The discussion will consider whether political or governmental incorporation of any of the movements occurred, how the Hawke-Keating government related to each movement and what influence the internal development of each movement had.

Peace Movement Campaigns for Nuclear Disarmament

The principal issue for the 1980s peace movement was nuclear disarmament. Campaigning had begun in the years immediately before the Hawke-Keating government was first elected. Its origins lay in: the long-standing, but for some years less prominent, peace movement; the movement against uranium mining; and the activist response to overseas developments, such as the renewed arms race of the

¹⁵ Tim Doyle, 'The Green Elite and the 1987 election', *Chain Reaction*, no. 63/64, April 1991, pp. 26-30; Boris Frankel, 'Social Movements and the Political Crisis in Australia', *Arena Magazine*, no. 2, December 1992 - January 1993, pp. 12-13. See also: Stephen Joseph, 'Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat', *Australian Society*, March 1986, pp. 31-32.

¹⁶ Gisela Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement 1950s-1990s*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 35-36, 71.

¹⁷ Doyle, *Green Power*, pp. 10-11.

'second Cold War'¹⁸ and the upsurge of opposition to that shown by large demonstrations in Western Europe and the US. The foundation of a key organisation of the reviving movement, People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND), in Victoria, took place in October 1981. The first Palm Sunday nuclear disarmament marches were held in April 1982.¹⁹ The movement continued to grow during the early years of the new government and its impacts were primarily felt in those years.

Among the organised elements of the movement were organisations such as unions, religious bodies, political organisations and international solidarity groups, and also the anti-uranium mining groups, which did not exist as an integrated part of the movement but did participate. Also, by 1985 there were more than 350 peace groups, such as:

- Pre-existing movement organisations, which had a variety of bases: religious, pacifist, support for cooperative international relations, and so on. Within these, ALP and Communist Party of Australia (CPA) members and supporters, for example, had established profiles as peace and nuclear disarmament activists.
- Occupational groups. Many of these were professionally-based. The medical practitioners' group was founded in 1981 and had more than 1000 members by the beginning of 1984. Lawyers' peace groups formed in Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart and Canberra between 1984 and 1986. There were some employee groups, backed by unions, including one among metalworkers and another among public servants in the veterans' affairs department.
- Newly-formed women's groups. These were typically informed by a radical feminism that opposed global violence, including violence against women. Two women's peace camps were organised, the first at the Pine Gap electronic spying base, in 1983, and the second at Cockburn Sound, a naval base in WA, in 1984.
- Student groups. In Melbourne at least, nuclear disarmament groups were formed quickly at some universities. Small groups of secondary school students began to organise in 1983. By 1985 these had progressed to the point where a

¹⁸ The second Cold War arose when the 1970s 'detente' between the Soviet Union and the United States ended and was replaced by a higher degree of confrontation between them. It was typified by the foreign and military policies of the US presidency of Ronald Reagan. Prominent parts of those policies included discussion of 'first strike' nuclear war options and persistence with a program to deploy land-based 'medium range' (and short flight time) nuclear-armed rockets in Western Europe.

¹⁹ Brendan Carins, 'Stop the Drop', in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia since 1788*, Melbourne, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988, p. 243; Jim Falk, 'The Nuclear Bonds', *Australian Society*, vol. 2, no. 11, December 1983, p. 20; Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History*, Canberra, Peace Research Centre, 1986, pp. 45-46; Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle*, pp. 40-46.

national youth peace conference was hosted by the Canberra group and attended by members of two school-age groups from each of Sydney and Melbourne, as well as one each from Adelaide and Perth.

- Local groups based on suburbs or regional towns. The formation of these continued until at least 1984. There were, for example, 12 of these in WA in the middle of 1984, and 75 in Victoria in 1985.
- Statewide organisations. Typically, these had structures consisting of individual memberships (1500 in Victoria in 1985, for example) and group affiliations. Otherwise, the way they came about and the aims they adopted differed significantly. NSW People for Nuclear Disarmament evolved out of the Association for International Cooperation and Development, a pre-existing movement organisation. In Victoria, PND had a somewhat broader range of leaders. In particular, it involved independent socialist and other radical academics who came into the movement through a peace studies organisation. Still, the perspectives of some movement activists had no voice in PND's leadership bodies. Among the larger movement organisations, PND was the first to call for the immediate closure of US bases in Australia. It also adopted, in a close vote, a policy of opposition to the alliance with the US.
- The Australian Coalition for Disarmament and Peace. This was a loose national organisation. PND was not affiliated to the ACDP for several years, although PND took part in ACDP national consultations.²⁰

The leaderships of the larger peace movement organisations were oriented towards influencing and supporting the ALP. However, for years there was little basis for the movement to be coopted. The Hawke-Keating government made few concessions to the movement. The appointment of an Ambassador for Disarmament appeared to have little consequence. The government took part in the South Pacific Forum negotiations for a regional nuclear free zone treaty which were completed in 1985. Yet US nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered warships could still enter Australian waters and ports,

²⁰ Direct Action, 1983-1985; John Andrews, 'The Physicians Movement for the Prevention of Nuclear War', Peace Studies, no. 3, May 1984, p. 7; Michelle Braid and Philipa Rothfield, 'Women's Action for Peace', Arena, no. 66, 1984; Carins, 'Stop the Drop', pp. 243-45; Shirley Cass, 'How I Turned my Nuclear Dread into Rational Fear', Australian Society, vol. 2, no. 1, February 1983, pp. 30-31; Jan Everitt, 'Peace Directory', Peace Studies, April 1985, pp. 16-19; Falk, 'The Nuclear Bonds', p. 24; Suellen Murray, "'Make Pies Not War": Protests by the Women's Peace Movement of the mid-1980s', Australian Historical Studies, no. 127, April 2006, pp. 81-94; n.a., 'Disarming Lawyers', Australian Society, June 1986, p. 7; Jean Nickels, 'How to Start a Community Peace Group', Peace Studies, June 1985, pp. 22-23; Saunders and Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement*, p. 49; Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle*, pp. 56-57, 92.

whereas these ships had been banned from New Zealand in 1984. Consultations between the government and peace groups only began in 1985.²¹

From 1983, in Victoria, PND's existing leadership found that as more radically-minded networks of activists emerged from within the movement, its control of movement mobilisations was increasingly hard to enforce.²² Critics of that leadership have identified a number of tactics that the leadership used to maintain its control, but these tactics were largely unsuccessful in the period when the movement reached the height of its strength, from the end of 1983 to the first half of 1985:

- The Palm Sunday mobilisations were initially held under general disarmament slogans, but the specific and direct demands of the rallies against US bases and nuclear warships visits became more prominent, until, in 1985, there was no general slogan. This trend was only reversed in the organising of the following year's rally.
- Leading figures sometimes proposed to not have the Palm Sunday mobilisations or that they would not take part in organising those demonstrations. Nonetheless, these actions were held each year and only declined radically in size from 1989, when in Melbourne the march was replaced by a festival.
- Finally, the PND leadership supposedly wanted only an annual large and respectable display of strength and therefore opposed many proposals for action by the organisation, such as supporting the rallies held on the anniversary of the 1945 Hiroshima bombing. Yet when the movement was insurgent it had a rising frequency of activity that the leadership could not entirely avoid if it wished to remain in contact with the movement. The leadership sometimes organised actions. In October 1983, PND demonstrated outside a communications base located at an army barracks at Watsonia (the base transmitted data on the whereabouts of Soviet submarines). Again, in 1985, the PND Council called for an ostensibly radical Hiroshima Day 'Stop the City' demonstration to 'protest against the arms race, unemployment and exploitation'. This was despite the organisation of a Hiroshima Day rally already having begun at the initiative of Young People for Nuclear Disarmament. In

²¹ Cf.: Carins, 'Stop the Drop', pp. 249-51; Doyle, *Green Power*, p. 160; Jim Green, 'Australia's Anti-nuclear Movement: A Short History', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 330, 26 August 1998, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/16973>, accessed on 26 March 2010.

²² Radicals became involved in PND as soon as it was established. However, their actions were not rooted in the development of the movement and as a grouping they lost influence and fragmented quite quickly. Some of those who had been involved in this 'old' left became part of the new left that arose in the movement. Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle*, pp. 46-49, 53-55, 63-65, 77-79.

between, many actions were opposed, even when proposals for them had been adopted by PND general meetings.²³

Whether or not PND operated democratically was a factor that affected its development. At first, individual members could vote at all general meetings and local groups and other affiliates could send delegations of five or ten members. By 1984, 200 or more people were attending PND general meetings that were being held every second month. Changes were put to the August 1984 annual general meeting: individual PND members would be barred from voting except at the AGMs and the size of affiliates' general meeting delegations would be reduced to two members. With the backing of many ALP and CPA supporters and the more politically conservative representatives of local groups these changes were adopted. Attendance at general meetings immediately halved. A CPA activist later observed that PND had steadily declined 'since that dreadful AGM in 1984, when the vast majority of the grassroots activists were sent scurrying away and were, on the whole, lost to PND for ever'.²⁴

In turn, the National Disarmament Conference in 1985 opened a fault line in PND. A criticism of this conference was that it avoided the movement's hard discussions. In fact, the conference was decisive in moving PND closer to the ACDP. It failed to recommend a campaign against a renewal of the Pine Gap lease in 1987, proposing rather that the movement prioritise campaigning against renewal of the lease of the submarine communication base at NW Cape in 1988. However, a grouping of anti-bases activists within PND had emerged from a 1984 peace camp at Watsonia and formed a campaign group against the Pine Gap lease renewal. Following the conference, that group became the Anti-Bases Campaign. By the end of 1986, it helped to initiate a national coalition that became the major organiser of the campaign to rid Australia of the nuclear war-fighting bases, but this coalition lacked the capacity for broad mobilisation that the previous form of the peace movement had.²⁵

²³ *Direct Action*, 27 June 1984; Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle*, pp. 49-52, 61-62, 64, 66-68, 95-96, 98-99, 110-11. Cf.: Verity Burgmann, *Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1993, p. 204. The second edition of Burgmann's book does not add to this discussion

²⁴ Sheril Berkovitch, 'What's Happening to PND? What's Happening to the Peace Movement in Victoria? A Report on the Last Year', *Lines Newsletter*, special pre-conference issue, September 1986, p. 21; Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle*, pp. 68-76, 103-04.

²⁵ *Direct Action*, 1985-1986; Burgmann, *Power and Protest*, p. 204; Carins, 'Stop the Drop', p. 252; Peter Christoff, 'What Rough Beast ...', *Australian Left Review*, no. 94, Summer 1985, pp. 3-4; Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle*, pp. 89-97. Ian Cohen claims that Sydney's "Peace Squadron revitalised the anti-nuclear movement in Australia, after the defeat at Roxby Downs" of a 1984 anti-uranium mining blockade: Ian Cohen, *Green Fire*, Sydney, Harper Collins, 1996, p. 148. But the peace movement's largest actions (and greatest electoral impact: see chapter 11) followed the Roxby defeat, while the Peace Squadron at most played a role in Sydney like that played nationally by the anti-bases campaign.

Thus, the peace movement's upsurge from 1983 to 1985 was reversed and defeated by actions within the movement that isolated its more radical activists from many of those who would otherwise be likely to support them. The existing leadership shut off opportunities for these activists to communicate proposals through to the main existing groups and to lead those groups in action. Any trend toward cooption of the movement only came after that.

Student Movement

When the Higher Education Administrative Charge, which would be paid annually upon university enrolment, was announced in August 1986, a campaign that largely comprised university students arose against it. Attendance at demonstrations across the country on 24 September 1986 was estimated at 12,000. A further round of rallies in March and April 1987 was attended by more than 17,000. Also, at the beginning of 1987, boycotts of HEAC payments were organised on 12 campuses. The strongest of these boycotts was at the University of Queensland (UQ), where it was sustained until August. Campaign groups were set up on many campuses. As well, cross-campus committees were established in most of the larger cities. A degree of national coordination of campaign actions was achieved by meetings of student representatives and activists as the Coalition of Students against Fees and Education Cuts (COSAFEC), later the National Free Education Coalition (NFEC). The campaign is generally thought to have waned from the middle of 1987, especially in Sydney, where an occupation of Education Department offices at the end of the March rally had been attacked by police. The May 1988 proposal to replace the HEAC from 1989 with the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), in which a charge more than five times HEAC would be paid on enrolment or as a proportion of income earned above a threshold level by a previously enrolled student (a 'graduate tax'), spurred a new round of organising. Large demonstrations continued, in Adelaide and Melbourne in particular, until as late as March 1989.²⁶

This student movement, compared with the 1980s peace movement, was a less sustained mobilisation, more socially specific and correspondingly smaller. Nonetheless, this movement is of particular interest with regard to the dynamics of social movements in the long Labor decade. For the development of this movement,

²⁶ *Direct Action*, 1986-1989; Marina Carman, *Cooption or Consolidation: Movement Leadership and Tactical Considerations around the National Union of Students and the Campaign for Free Education 1986-1989*, Honours thesis, Department of Government, University of Sydney, 1997, p. 19; Graham Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here: A Political History of Australian Student Activism*, Adelaide, The Student Association of Flinders University, 2003, p. 183; Angie Mitropoulos, 'The Left and Student Critique', *Arena*, no. 84, 1988, p. 148; Will Wroth, *Free Education, NUS and the Left*, Sydney, New Course Publication, 1989, p. 23.

the debates among left-wing students about the movement's strategy and tactics, including its relations with ALP aligned students and the government, mattered. Despite an apparent campus conservatism in the years before the movement emerged, left political activism remained an organised presence among students. The initiative for the mobilisation of students that occurred came primarily from the actions of existing networks of the student left. Moreover, that presence grew in the middle of the campaign. For example, Resistance was one group among a number in the student left. It had been consistently organising on campuses only since 1985. By 1988 it had activists on 27 campuses and had held office-bearer positions in student organisations at the University of Queensland in 1987 and at Flinders University in SA in 1988. Even without Resistance's involvement, the organised student left was the largest faction at the founding conference of the National Union of Students (NUS) in December 1987, holding 39 per cent of the vote.²⁷

The focus of ALP students during these years was the reformation of a peak-body national student organisation, following the collapse of the Australian Union of Students at the end of 1983. Some ALP students tried to form peak state bodies (this was carried out in Victoria, WA, Tasmania, and, less successfully, Queensland) with a plan to then federate these. By May 1987, enough ALP and other students agreed on this project for them to propose founding NUS. Through the NUS project, ALP students focused on tactics they favoured for the movement: parliamentary lobbying, consultation with government departments and debating policy. NUS also demanded exemptions and concessions from HEAC and HECS, rather than their total withdrawal. At the same time, support from other parts of the ALP not only organisationally assisted the project, but also set up NUS to dominate the movement.²⁸ For example, in a May 1988 press conference the education minister John Dawkins called for:

Fair-minded students ... to get behind NUS ... there should be a national voice for students, and NUS, in turn, should take charge of this issue. And when they can guarantee a civilised environment, I'm perfectly happy to engage them in a reasoned debate.²⁹

At the beginning of the free education movement, left student activists generally believed the ALP students' project for a national student organisation was an obstacle

²⁷ *Direct Action*, 1987-1988; Carman, *Cooption or Consolidation*, p. 41; Stephen Gray, 'Conservatism on Campus', *Australian Society*, June 1986, p. 30.

²⁸ *Direct Action*, 1987-1988; Carman, *Cooption or Consolidation*, pp. 30-31; Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, pp. 179-82; Wroth, *Free Education*, pp. 9-10, 14-15. Graham Hastings pointed out that the idea that the formation of NUS was a conspiracy hatched by the ALP against the free education movement is nonsense.

²⁹ Wroth, *Free Education*, p. 18.

to the movement's development. Adrian Flood, the chairperson of the Macquarie University student council, stated that because:

The fees campaign is a direct threat to the government ... What the [ALP students] want to do is set up a federation, claim to represent all Australian students, and then push a more moderate line than the student activists around the place are pushing.³⁰

The student Left Alliance re-formed in January 1987. LA comprised student members of: the CPA Tertiary Collective (TC) of party members and supporters, which was centred in Sydney; Resistance, which was now leading the UQ boycott; some other socialist groups; and a number of independent leftists. In the first half of 1987, LA supported NFEC and focused its activity on the anti-fees campaign.³¹

LA bitterly debated the May 1987 NUS proposal. The TC argued that a national student organisation could strengthen the free education movement. For example, some student unions had withheld funds from NFEC and other free education groups, supporting that action with claims that the groups were unrepresentative and unaccountable. The TC also argued the movement was waning. Therefore, the ALP students should not now be left alone to shape the national student organisation's structure. This view was adopted by the majority in LA.

For the LA majority, the issue with NUS became what the minimum conditions would be for LA to join in. Supporters in LA of participation in the NUS project claimed that a price paid by the project's ALP supporters for LA participation was removal of a planned restriction on the new organisation to education policy alone.

Left opponents of NUS pointed out that the ALP students had not accepted autonomy for the international students' and women's departments of NUS, as LA had demanded. The Network of Overseas Students Collectives Australia (NOSCA) opposed the formation of NUS. The organisation and holding of Network of Women Students Australia (NOWSA) conferences each year from 1987 also became an opportunity to air opposition to NUS. However, when the ALP students conceded in October 1987 that each student organisation affiliated to NUS would elect its national conference delegates directly rather than delegates coming from the state federations, the majority of LA accepted this as sufficient to take part in NUS.

LA might have gone to the founding NUS conference as the largest faction, but it came away with its office-bearers and national executive members marginalised in the new national NUS structure. What the LA majority now hoped was that its leadership of

³⁰ Matthew O'Halloran, 'ALP Sets Up "Bodgey" Student Unions', *Direct Action*, no. 592, 19 November 1986, p. 22.

³¹ Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, pp. 181, 257; Wroth, *Free Education*, p. 19.

the newly-formed NUS SA branch would offer a strategically influential example of how NUS could be a step forward for education activism. The education rallies in 1988 in Adelaide were the best attended in the country. For the TC and the majority in LA, the experience of the movement in 1987 and 1988, such as that in Sydney and Adelaide, showed the difference that could be made by the left winning leadership within NUS.³²

Resistance and some others in LA considered instead that experience confirmed their view that NUS was a 'worse than useless' diversion from the student movement. They rejected the TC claim that students could radicalise only if they had an ideological basis for their anti-government anger. According to Resistance, the UQ boycott had shown that campaigning could start from the free education demands of the movement and be politically effective and radicalising for the students involved, whereas once LA had decided to devote most of its resources to the NUS project in the latter half of 1987 no large movement rallies were attempted. In 1988, the national bodies of NUS spent little money on or time thinking about education campaigning, and sought to limit the pace and persistence of movement action. For the NUS branches, even in SA, the formation of education committees was not a priority (and when these committees were formed they were often representative bodies which excluded the activists carrying out the work). The movement waned where ALP influence was carried into the movement through NUS. In turn, because NUS was unable to claim credit for movement campaigning, many of its affiliation campaigns were lacklustre and often failed.

Resistance also observed that free education activists and groups, the student left and campus student unions did most movement organising. When their activity came into direct conflict with NUS-related efforts, as occurred several times, in Melbourne and Brisbane, when supporters of the NUS project split away from inclusive organising meetings, the latter's actions were called off or failed to attract more than a handful of supporters. Resistance counterposed activist networking in campus activist groups, cross-campus groups and NFEC, NOWSA and NOSCA to the NUS project. Resistance argued the student movement's campaigning and structures were the basis on which a national student organisation could be built. The student movement's approach and what student organisations did with their resources should, therefore, be oriented to campaigning and mass action.³³

³² Direct Action, 1987-1988; Carman, *Cooption or Consolidation*, pp. 40-41; Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, pp. 183-185, 257-261; Wroth, *Free Education*, pp. 12, 15-16.

³³ Direct Action, 1986, 1988; Carman, *Cooption or Consolidation*, pp. 19, 31-33, 39, 41-46, 51-53, 60; Hastings, *It Can't Happen Here*, pp. pp. 183, 255-64, 323; Russel Norman, 'The 1987 Anti-fees Campaign at the University of Queensland', Resistance Discussion Bulletin, no. 3, June 1988, p. 5; Jonathan Strauss, 'Building the Student Movement Today', Direct Action, no. 656, 22 June 1988, p. 15; Wroth, *Free Education*, pp. 13, 19, 21.

The student left agreed enough about what was desirable for the future of education to unite initially in the student movement for free education. It was also strong enough to challenge the ALP students for leadership of that movement. However, it was not able to make a common assimilation of the movement's experience, which varied across the country. A barrier to such an outcome was created by the remaining divisions among the student left, which were not just differences about how to assess events politically, but also involved various organisations with generally separate networks of activists. Disagreements among the student left about what the student movement could achieve grew. A context for that was the government demand for NUS to be the student voice, with an implicit threat of backing the students who supported the ALP in the event of a split in the movement, regardless of who students in the movement supported. The majority in LA decided to accept what was immediately feasible, thus isolating the more radical activists. Having largely agreed with what the ALP students would allow for NUS, LA took part in the practice of NUS, which incorporated the student movement.

Environment Movement

The environment movement is subject, perhaps more than any other social movement, to the claims that social movements express the outlook of a 'new class' or of young, affluent and well-educated people who are not working class. Yet many environmental campaigns have been described as those of 'working class' communities and the 'solid citizenry of beachside suburbia'; union activists and delegates; and workers who start with confidence in the response of regulatory bodies and end up as activists who feel that, for the purpose of generating profits and capital, their class is expendable.³⁴

Perhaps the 'working class' environmental campaigns were one form of environmentalism in the environment movement. According to this understanding, alongside a longer-standing, urbanised and highly educated 'green' focus on nature conservation and wilderness values, a broader public concern emerged in 1989-90, largely because of media coverage of environmental disasters and issues. This concern was a 'brown' environmentalism that concentrated on the health and lifestyle implications of environmental degradation.³⁵ Yet if the movement undoubtedly did

³⁴ Green Left Weekly, 22 July 1992; Cohen, *Green Fire*, pp. 219-31; Darley, 'But the Working Class Don't Care', pp. 37-41; Doyle and Kellow, *Environmental Politics and Policy Making*, ch. 8; Colleen Hartland, 'The Coode Island Disaster and HAZMAG', in Kathleen McPhillips (ed.), *Local Heroes: Australian Crusades from the Environmental Frontline*, Sydney, Pluto Press Australia, 2002, p. 173; Kathleen McPhillips, 'Introduction', in Kathleen McPhillips (ed.), *Local Heroes: Australian Crusades from the Frontline*, NSW, Pluto Press Australia, 2002, pp. xii-xxii; Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment*, p. 153.

³⁵ Jan Pakulski and Bruce Tranter, 'Environmentalism and Social Differentiation: A Paper in Memory of Steve Crook', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 40, no. 3, September 2004, pp. 223-25.

broaden at that time, the drawing of a distinction between 'green' and 'brown' environmentalism within the movement is too sharp:

- Earlier in the 1980s, environmental organisations, such as Friends of the Earth (FOE), and workers' groups were already trying to raise issues such as toxic waste and transport. In fact, 'brown' environmentalism has existed for a long time, including through union 'green bans'.³⁶
- Many environmental groups that might be considered green continued to campaign on brown issues. In particular, Greenpeace supported campaigners against lead and chemical pollution in workers' communities. Meanwhile, Greenpeace's trade union liaison officer took up workers' health issues in relation to pesticide in sewerage and uranium mining.³⁷
- The reason for less well-off workers concentrating on such concerns is probably much more prosaic than holding a distinct environmentalist philosophy. Toxic waste and similar phenomena tend to affect the areas where these workers live and work, because these are where chemical plants and factories are based. The workers can also develop solutions to the problems posed.³⁸ The degree to which the mass communication media were significant for or influential upon the movement is also disputed.³⁹
- Green campaigning was also on the rise from 1989. Support for conservation included large city demonstrations against the proposed Wesley Vale pulp mill and logging in old-growth forests in south-east NSW. By 1991, forest blockades were bringing together groups of experienced and novice radical activists in well-organised campaigns.⁴⁰
- The memberships of many green environmental organisations also grew dramatically. Some examples include: the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which had 12,000 members in 1988 and 28000 in 1990; Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), 11888 in 1987 and 22185 in 1990; The Wilderness Society (TWS: formerly the Tasmanian Wilderness Society), 7-8000 in 1985-87 and

³⁶ Direct Action, 1985; Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 220.

³⁷ Direct Action, 11 September 1985; Peter Colley, 'Paul Gilding', Australian Left Review, no. 145, November 1992, p. 5; Theresa Gordon, 'Dust Storm: Lead Concentration in Lake Macquarie', in Kathleen McPhillips (ed.), *Local Heroes: Australian Crusades from the Environmental Frontline*, Sydney, Pluto Press Australia, 2002, pp. 44-45; Elizabeth O'Brien, 'The LEAD Group: Responding to the Problem of Lead Contamination', in Kathleen McPhillips (ed.), *Local Heroes: Australian Crusades for the Environmental Frontline*, Sydney, Pluto Press Australia, 2002, p. 10; James Whelan, 'Smogbusters in Queensland', in Kathleen McPhillips (ed.), *Local Heroes: Australian Crusades from the Environmental Frontline*, Sydney, Pluto Press Australia, 2002, pp. 20-30.

³⁸ Green Left Weekly, 4 December 1991; McPhillips, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

³⁹ Peter Christoff, 'Thoroughly Modern Greens', Australian Left Review, no. 135, December 1991, p. 46.

⁴⁰ Direct Action, 1989; Green Left Weekly, 28 August 1991; Cohen, *Green Fire*, pp. 172-82, 209.

16000 in 1991; Greenpeace, 6000 associate members in 1988 and up to 130,000 in 1991, following intense canvassing for subscriptions (the organisation had as few as 50 voting members); and Friends of the Earth, 1500 members in its local groups in 1985 and 3500 in these groups in 1990.⁴¹

The campaigning and membership growth of the environment movement from 1989 to 1991, and the movement's larger protest events from 1994, shed some light on another view about the dynamics of the environment movement. According to this view, in the 1980s movement campaigning showed a substantial capacity for mobilisation either on a large scale or intensively, and also a growing professionalism. The 1990s, however, were a difficult period for the movement, in which the federal government resisted environmental claims. Yet TWS, for example, lost half of its branches and a third of its membership between its 1982 peak, during its campaign to stop the Franklin River dam, and its trough in the mid-1980s. Nor were government decisions in the 1980s consistently friendly to the environment. For example, in 1989, ACF leader Phillip Toyne pointed out that construction of the Wesley Vale pulp mill had been prevented, but that this was just an escape for the movement because the federal government still supported the mill. In 1986, Peter Christoff claimed the political and economic climate was unsympathetic to the forest campaigns, such as that in East Gippsland. Finally, according to Doyle, many considered the Wet Tropics campaign in Queensland was lost after the failure of the second blockade of a road construction project in the Daintree rainforest in August 1984.⁴²

TWS, after winning the declaration of south-west Tasmania as a World Heritage area, had become involved in the Wet Tropics campaign. The downturn in that campaign was followed by a period in which, according to Doyle, the movement became dominated by its professionals. They constituted an elite that had a particular outlook about how to win campaigns and what was acceptable in campaigning. For several years, TWS leaders sought consultative relations for the environment movement with the Hawke-Keating government and the ALP, as did the ACF's leading figure, Phillip Toyne, while ALP figures sought to become part of that elite network. The organisations' leaders had some success, with a federal environment minister who was willing to court their electoral support, and their involvement in 'round table' discussions

⁴¹ *Chain Reaction*, no. 60, April 1990, pp. 14-15; *Direct Action*, 1985, 1990; Colley, 'Paul Gilding', p. 4; Doyle, *Green Power*, p. 81; Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment*, pp. 150-51.

⁴² Peter Christoff, 'Timber, Parks and Jobs', *Australian Society*, June 1986, pp. 37-38; Doyle, 'The Green Elite', p. 32; Doyle, *Green Power*, p. 140; Hutton and Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, p. 169, chapter on 1990s; Ariel Kay Salleh, 'Whither the Green Machine', *Australian Society*, vol. 3, no. 5, May 1984, p. 15; Phillip Toyne, 'No Cause for Celebration', *Arena*, no. 87, 1989, pp. 102-06.

about proposed developments at places such as Wesley Vale and Coronation Hill. On the other hand, Doyle maintains that informal groups were also still significant and resisted formalisation. These had their weaknesses, however: for example, the role of non-violent action in campaigning became a sharply debated issue in the Rainforest Action Group in Melbourne and in the south-east NSW forests campaign.⁴³

Yet some environment movement organisations had a philosophy and values that ultimately could not cohabit with the ALP's approach and policies. Many movement leaders and activists continued to try to find one part or another of the ALP that would be the movement's champion. However, the Hawke-Keating government's decisions to open up new areas of old-growth forests for woodchipping tended to drive TWS and other forest campaigners away from supporting the ALP. In 1990, when the ACF, Greenpeace, TWS and the WWF were invited to take part in the Resource Assessment Commission's ecologically sustainable development inquiry, TWS refused because of the government's logging and sandmining approvals and plans, while Greenpeace quickly withdrew from the discussions because resource access for the forestry and mining industries was presumed.⁴⁴

For several more years, the environment movement's protest events were still largely driven by groups other than its large organisations: more or less localised campaigns in urban areas against development projects, toxic chemicals, pollution, poorly treated sewerage and cuts in public transport services; forest blockades groups; and the Environmental Youth Alliance, which began with ACF support but came under the influence of Resistance; and then Resistance itself, organising youth actions on World Environment Day and at other times.

TWS only formally acknowledged that direct action campaigning depended on members and supporters, and sought to define a campaigning structure driven by branches and working groups at a June 1993 national meeting. It continued nonetheless to pursue and support tactics of lobbying and other forms of consultation with governments. So the capacity of TWS to mobilise people for protest about environmental concerns, that remained much greater than the smaller environmental

⁴³ Chain Reaction, no. 65, March 1992; Sharon Beder, 'Activism versus Negotiation: Strategies for the Environment Movement', Social Alternatives, vol. 10, no. 4, December 1991, pp. 53-56; Rob Burrowes and Tom Weber, 'The Strength of Nonviolence', Arena, no. 90, 1990, pp. 164-68; Cohen, Green Fire, pp. 179-80; Doyle, 'The Green Elite', pp. 26-31; Tim Doyle, 'Dissent within the Environment Movement', Social Alternatives, vol. 13, no. 2, July 1994, p. 24; Tim Doyle, 'Guest Editor's Introduction: Radical Environmentalism Repopulating the Environment', Social Alternatives, vol. 13, no. 2, July 1994, p. 5; Doyle, Green Power, pp. 34-44, 84-85, 89, 94-96, 150; Ian Wilson et al., 'Rainforest Action', Arena, no. 92, 1990, pp. 139-145.

⁴⁴ Direct Action, 1988-1990; Green Left Weekly, 1991-1993; Doyle, Green Power, pp. 152-154; Joseph, 'Sit Down', p. 32.

organisations and groups, did not begin to be used immediately. When conflict broke out in 1994-95 about the government granting new export licences for woodchips from old-growth forests, TWS was not the first group organising demonstrations, but the largest protests occurred when it did take part in their organisation.⁴⁵

Conclusion

In the long Labor decade, except for the period 1989 to 1993, social movement mobilisations offered substantial opportunities for the creation and maintenance of networks of activists that, if realised, would have built up the core for organising collective action among workers. Incorporation did not fundamentally affect the upsurging social movements of the time considered above: indeed, if these movements' experiences are typical, incorporation can only be effected upon an insurgent movement once it has suffered defeats and begun to decline.

Yet networks of activists were for the most part not created or sustained in these social movement mobilisations. Instead, in the earlier years of the decade, the opportunist political trend, primarily represented by the ALP, responded to the insurgent movements by isolating the movements' more radical activists. As the threat to opportunist leadership of the movement emerged, the opportunists in effect divided each movement, keeping the greater part of the movement under their direction, and then demobilised that. The social movement mobilisation that was left in the hands of the radical activists proved to be too limited to sustain the movement.

Relative to the dynamic within the peace and student movements of isolation of the radicals, division of the movement and demobilisation of the larger part of the movement, the influence of governmental demands for a single movement voice was secondary. To the peace movement that call was never made. It might have been the case that the ALP recognised the swing of the peace movement away from the political control of the opportunists meant that the result of such a call's success was unpredictable. The government did demand that the student movement have a single, 'civilised', voice, but this call did no more than reinforce the pressure on radicals to take part in NUS that already existed.

The environment movement involved the unusual circumstance that the opportunists were unable to retain support within many of its activist networks, while the few socialists and others from radical political backgrounds who intervened won support from only small sections of the movement. Thus, liberal-democratic notions of

⁴⁵ Direct Action, 1990; Green Left Weekly, 1991-1995; Ben Courtice, 'Renewal in the Green Movement?', Resistance Discussion Bulletin, no. 8, June 1995, pp. 5-7; Doyle, *Green Power*, pp. 96-97.

politics dominated among the movement's activists, only to be brought, slowly and partially, into question through the movement's experience. A context for that change was the development of new party projects, to which this discussion now turns its attention.

The Electoral Reaction against ALP Neo-liberalism

In the latter years of the Howard government, the Greens began to consolidate their position as an electoral alternative to the left of the ALP, but among workers this shift in partisanship away from the ALP began nearly two decades before. From 1984 until about 1990, the trends in workers' party identification and voting emphasised emerging support for other parties and independent candidates. Then some years elapsed before the Greens began to achieve the party's present position. That variation in the pace of workers' shift away from the ALP suggests its complexities. One part of that has been discussed in previous chapters: a contradictory context of greater restriction in the ideational, industrial and 'new' social movements forming the working class. Also, in the 1990s, both soaring party non-identification and electoral polarisation around social democratic and conservative parties were trends among workers.

Workers' increasing political engagement outside the framework of the ALP might indicate a weakening tendency towards the opportunistic sacrificing of the general working-class interest for the immediate interests of one or another section of workers, which starts among labour aristocrats and extends out to the mass of workers. Yet opportunism in working class politics might instead only have been replicated in workers' support for other parties.

This chapter examines trends in workers' political alignment. It reviews existing literature about the ALP's loss of support before presenting evidence, primarily from social surveys,¹ about the character of workers' part in this. It then considers, on the basis of social survey and federal election results, workers' adherence to the Australian Democrats, the NDP and the Greens. It differentiates this support with regard to whether it was a protest vote or expressed seeking a 'new party' as an alternative to opportunism. The following chapters examine the experiences of attempts to form a new party as a working class alternative to opportunism.

Dealignment?

Suggestions that the neo-liberalism of the Hawke-Keating government was threatening parts of the ALP's support arose within months of the 1983 election. For example, four Latrobe University economists, in an open letter to the ALP Caucus, declared:

¹ See ch. 2, fn. 63 for further details.

Many active members of the ALP and many economists who sympathised with your platform from outside the Labor Party have come to the bitter conclusion that ... the Labor government has already abandoned the direction of the ALP platform.²

Within a decade the discussion about this was how broadly and deeply the shift away from the ALP ran. For example, Lindsay Tanner, also an ALP activist, questioned the viability of the ALP as a major political party in the face of a threat from political forces outside the framework of the ALP and Coalition. He warned that the 1992 election of the independent Phil Cleary in Wills was 'a rejection of almost everything the ALP now seems to stand for ... a general sense of what Labor has become'.³

These perceptions of political participants are confirmed⁴ in various ways. ALP identification registered in social surveys declined. So did the 'major party' vote in the Senate. That continued a long term trend that began with the introduction of election by proportional representation in 1949. The lower house vote for 'minor parties' and independents also grew. It was relatively stable in 1980s, but doubled at the 1990 election, increasing from 9 per cent to 17 per cent, although this vote then ebbed.⁵

Two basic arguments have emerged with regard to these trends. One of these arguments appears to be underpinned by a view that the major parties' support altogether is normally stable, with a party which is the incumbent losing support and a party that is out of office gaining it. Murray Goot, for example, has shown very and fairly strong party identification with the Liberals fell largely before 1983 and the same strengths in ALP identification declined largely after 1983. However, that not only the ALP but also the Liberals could not respond effectively to major economic crises had become clear, so the Liberals identification did not recover to its former level. Instead, a general decline in party identification began from the mid-1980s.⁶

The other argument is that attachment to major parties instead began to weaken as early as the 1960s, in relation to processes of political mobilisation, social polarisation

² L. Csapo et al., 'Dear ALP Caucus', *Australian Society*, vol. 2, no. 7, 1 August 1983, p. 3.

³ Lindsay Tanner, 'Where there's a Wills', *Australian Left Review*, no. 139, May 1992, p. 2.

⁴ Some commentators are more equivocal. Jack Vowles and Ian McAllister stated the ALP 'retained—to the extent that [it] did' its supporters' loyalty. Their account has an unresolved tension. According to them, the ALP was seeking 'middle class' support, in the first instance by extending egalitarian and solidaristic principles to new issues to appeal to a social democratic constituency there, but at the same time by facilitating economic policies which 'should have been anathema' to social democratic supporters: Jack Vowles and Ian McAllister, 'Electoral Foundation and Electoral Consequences: from Convergence to Divergence', in Francis G. Castles, et al. (eds), *The Great Experiment: Labour Parties and Public Policy Transformation in Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1996, p. 192.

⁵ Ernie Chaples, 'Independents in decline?', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, vol. 68, no. 10, March 1992, pp. 27-28; Murray Goot, 'Distrustful, Disenchanted and Disengaged? Public Opinion on Politics, Politicians and the Parties: An Historical Perspective', in David Burchell and Andrew Leigh (eds), *The Prince's New Clothes: Why Do Australians Dislike their Politicians?*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2002, pp. 41-43.

⁶ Murray Goot, 'Keeping the Bastards Honest, by the People', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 71, no. 5, September-October 1999, p. 22.

and globalisation, although the impact of this on the formal political system emerged only in the late 1980s.⁷ The question this has posed is whether or not what was happening was a political realignment. The direction of this realignment would be away from the major parties, which relied on support based on, for example, class and religion, and towards parties linked in particular to a new politics of environmentalism and other post-materialist (that is, non-economic) values, considered to be 'fairly strongly correlated' with a left political stance. This argument usually maintains, however, that the main effect of post-materialism had been to create a 'dealignment', which is temporary absence of partisan direction and a shift from voting based upon occupation to voting based on issues. It considers many voting changes had occurred despite continuing party identification based on long-term political socialisation. These voting changes, then, were either calculated efforts to limit major party power or reactions to apparent major party cynicism.⁸

Some interventions in the debates between these two views have sought to distinguish between the effects of post-materialist values and economic evaluations within overall voting behaviour. Post-materialist values have been identified as the source of the more consistent support for parties such as the Democrats and the Greens. Electoral outcomes, however, have continued to be dominated by the economic evaluations through which most voters chose between the ALP and the Liberals and Nationals.⁹

Nonetheless, the distinct timing of the two declines in party identification observed by Goot contradicts arguments about a general decline in party identification. Each decline occurred when the party that was losing support was in government. The declines can, therefore, be presumed to relate to the popular experience of those governments' practice of neo-liberalism (and since the Coalition in the long Labor decade advocated a still harsher neo-liberalism, its support did not recover).

⁷ Ian Marsh, 'Australia's Political Cartel? The Major Parties and the Party System in an Era of Globalisation', in Ian Marsh (ed.), *Political Parties in Transition*, Sydney, The Federation Press, 2006, pp. 5-7. See also: Ian McAllister and Clive Bean, 'Explaining Labor's Victory', in Clive Bean, et al. (eds), *The Greening of Australian Politics: The 1990 Federal Election*, Sydney, Cheshire Longman, 1990, p. 177.

⁸ David Charnock, 'Can the Australian Greens Replace the Australian Democrats as a "Third Party" in the Senate?', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 2, June 2009, p. 247; McAllister and Bean, 'Explaining Labor's Victory', pp. 176-77; Elim Papadakis, 'Minor Parties, the Environment and the New Politics', in Clive Bean, et al. (eds), *The Greening of Australian Politics: The 1990 Federal Election*, Sydney, Longman Cheshire, 1990, p. 34; Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment*, p. 174.

⁹ Simon Blount, 'Postmaterialism and the Vote for the Senate in Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 33, no. 3, November 1998; David Gow, 'Economic Voting and Postmaterialist Values', in Clive Bean, et al. (eds), *The Greening of Australian Politics: The 1990 Federal Election*, Sydney, Longman Cheshire, 1990; David J. McCraw, 'Third Party Protest: A Note on the Australian and New Zealand elections of 1990', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 27, no. 3, November 1992, p. 521; Mark Western and Bruce Tranter, 'Postmaterialist and Economic Voting in Australia, 1990-98', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 36, no. 3, November 2001, pp. 456-57.

Also, to consider parties other than the ALP and the Coalition as 'minor parties' is problematic. That approach is not suggestive of their diverse political approaches and socio-political bases, from which arise substantial differences in their experiences. Nor does it immediately indicate their element of commonality in their reaction against neo-liberalism. For example, a study of the Australian Election Studies surveys found that the Greens ever since 1990 have been, according to the party's supporters' views of their politics and of the party, the most left-wing of the parties to win parliamentary seats, although in that year Democrats voters on average also expressed a political stance slightly to the left of ALP voters.¹⁰

Consideration of workers' changes in political alignment to the ALP might also clarify aspects of what the literature has raised.¹¹ The theory of the labour aristocracy suggests that some workers, first among the labour aristocrats but then also other workers because of the influence of those labour aristocrats, will always identify with the party or parties representing the opportunist trend. The theory also suggests that shifts or potential shifts of workers out of the stratum can initiate political realignments if these workers react by seeking a broader solidarity among workers. In order to study such developments in the stratum, in the research for the analysis which follows, in each survey used a group of worker respondents was identified as belonging to the labour aristocratic stratum. This identification is problematic. The survey data lacks consistent information for respondents about the criteria that define that stratum of workers, such as their conditions of work (especially their permanency and/or stability of employment), of private consumption and/or social provision of goods and services and of union recognition of respondents (see Table 10.1). Occupation is used as a proxy for those conditions. Administrators and managers, professional and para-professional workers, except for the female-dominated nurses, and workers in the historically well-organised metal, electrical, building and printing trades are included in the category.¹²

¹⁰ Charnock, 'Can the Australian Greens Replace the Australian Democrats?', pp. 249-53; also Marsh, 'Australia's Political Cartel?', p. 7.

¹¹ See also: Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, p. 178.

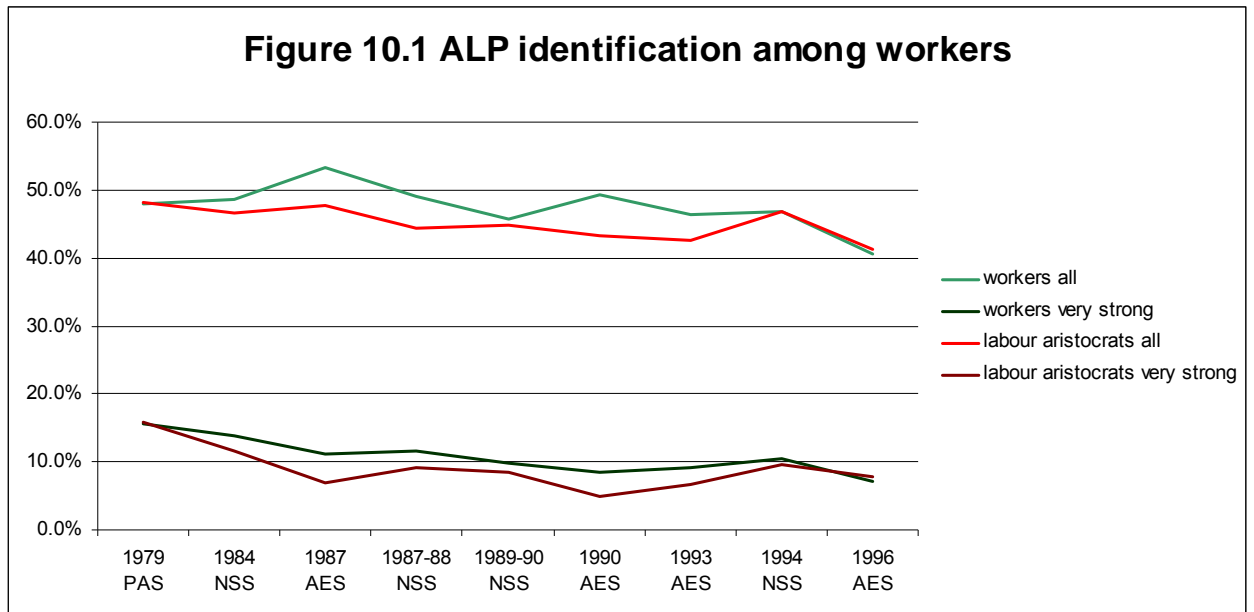
¹² The social surveys' occupational codes do not allow the labour aristocracy to be differentiated as sharply as would otherwise be possible. Most of the surveys used the four-digit Australian Standard for Classification of Occupations code, but the 1979 PAS and the 1993 AES and 1996 AES used two different two-digit major occupational group code systems, and the 1994 NSS is restricted to major occupational categories. Therefore, consideration of whether or not certain professional, para-professional and trades occupations should not be in the labour aristocracy category, while some other occupations which can be identified in other coding systems (such as the marine construction trades, locomotive drivers or power generation plant operators) should be, has not been pursued. For the 1994 NSS, nurses and all tradespeople are included in the labour aristocracy. Vehicle tradespersons in the 1979 PAS have been included among the labour aristocrats in that survey.

Table 10.1 Labour aristocracy criteria in social science surveys

Survey	Job permanency	Work history (1 year only)	Income	Location	Union organisation
1979 PAS	No	No	Yes	electorate only	No
1984 NSS	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
1986 CSA	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
1987 AES	No	No	No	Yes	No
1987-88 NSS	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
1989-90 NSS	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
1990 AES	No	No	No	Yes	No
1993 AES	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
1994 NSS	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
1996 AES	No	No	Yes	electorate only	Yes

The ALP

Overall identification with the ALP among workers was stable in the 1980s—that is, the decline in ALP identification at that time was concentrated among those who were not workers. Workers' ALP identification then declined slightly in the first half of the 1990s, before falling sharply around the time of the 1996 election (see Figure 10.1¹³). In this sense, then, Australian politics for most of the period was fought as much along class lines as before.¹⁴



A trend of steady decline in ALP identification among labour aristocrats was at first largely balanced by some increase in ALP identification among other workers. The reduction of the latter's ALP identification in the early 1990s to a level similar to that

¹³ The AES and the NSS show certain differences. All ALP identification among workers other than labour aristocrats in the AES from 1987 to 1993 is higher than for the NSS conducted in 1987-88, 1989-90 and 1994. Meanwhile, very strong ALP identification among the labour aristocracy is in a lower range, below 7 per cent, in the same AES than in those NSS, in which it is never found at less than 8.5%. In the 1996 AES, however, the labour aristocratic very strong ALP identification rises to 7.7%, against the trend among workers as a whole, while the survey's fall in overall identification largely came from the workers other than labour aristocrats, taking this well below any previous figure. These variations between the two survey series do not fundamentally alter the finding of different trends in party identification between the two strata discussed below.

¹⁴ Whether or not the ALP at that time fought for the class interests of the mass of its supporters is a different question, but also one that has arisen throughout its existence: see discussions of this in chapter 4 above. Cf.: James Jupp and Marian Sawer, 'Building Coalitions: The Australian Labor Party and the 1993 General Election', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 29, Special, 1994, p. 11.

before the government's initial election was followed by a 'general revolt against the ALP among low income earning voters'¹⁵ in the middle of that decade.

'Very strong' identification with the ALP among workers, however, started dropping in the 1980s.¹⁶ The surveys found that this was more than 15 per cent at the end of the 1970s, but had settled at 10 per cent or less in the first half of the 1990s, before diving to seven per cent in 1996. This fall occurred a little more quickly among men than women. It also tended to occur first among younger people, before becoming focused on the middle-aged during the 1990s.

The pace of decline in such intense ALP identification among workers was, however, slower than that for non-workers until about 1989. Thereafter it was faster, driven by sharp falls among the 'lower' stratum of workers in the late 1980s and after 1994.

The fall in very strong ALP identification among labour aristocrats came earlier, during the 1980s. The level of this identification was thereafter relatively unchanged, or, in the 1990s, even increasing. This was in part because the drop in support in the latter decade stopped among female and younger labour aristocrats, and instead was concentrated among the stratum's oldest generation.

Also, the nadir of such identification among professionals and para-professionals, such as school teachers, was in the mid-1980s. This then stabilised and, specifically among teachers, partly recovered.

¹⁵ Jeff Singleton et al., 'Did the 1996 Federal Election See a Tactical Revolt against Labor? A Queensland Case-Study', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 33, no. 1, March 1998, p. 122-23. These authors confine the 'general revolt' to voting patterns. Their overall framework is a shift of blue-collar workers away from Labor (pp. 123-24, 129). Yet their initial estimate of a concentration of the ALP's losses among the lower stratum of the working class is more accurate overall with regard to the findings of the 1993 AES and the 1996 AES. In particular, while the revolt extended to ALP identification among labour aristocratic tradespersons, which fell a little more quickly than among the lower stratum of the class, although from a higher base (57 per cent to 46 per cent, compared with 48 per cent to 40 per cent), these tradespersons' ALP vote only slid from 61 per cent to 52 per cent, half the rate of decline of the lower stratum's vote, which fell from 53 per cent to 38 per cent.

¹⁶ While 'fairly strong' identification at first increased during the decade. This is how Goot obtained his result, discussed above, of a fall in all strong identification starting only from the middle of the decade. However, the distinction in strength of partisanship was important, especially from the point of view of political participation, as discussed below.

The decline of very strong ALP identification among labour aristocratic tradespeople followed. Then, however, it was very quick, and moreover settled at an apparent rock bottom by 1990.¹⁷

The decline in the intensity of workers' ALP identification was associated with their voting for minor parties and independents, as votes for the party among ALP identifying workers became less certain.¹⁸ However, this was just one aspect of the diminished ALP orientation of workers' political engagement, which was linked to changes in workers' identification with the ALP.

With regard to party membership, for example, that of the ALP fell throughout the 1980s, with precipitate drops in areas such as Leichhardt in inner-city Sydney. From a 1983 peak of about 50,000, it was only around 35,000 by 1991. Subsequent growth did not restore it to even its previous position. According to the responses to the 1996 AES, professionals and para-professionals have retained the membership predominance they reached during the 1970s, while from that time the presence of skilled workers among ALP members had declined.¹⁹

Three surveys—the 1984 NSS, the 1993 AES and the 1996 AES—asked respondents about their participation in the most recent election campaign through persuading others to vote for a political party or candidate, attending a political meeting, rally or fundraising function, or working for a party or candidate. Among ALP-identifying workers, the proportion involved in such ways was similar throughout the period. Indeed, in 1993, when the Liberals proposed their 'Fightback', that proportion was higher than it had been in 1984. However, the balance among these activities had changed in favour of persuasion, generally the most private of these acts, while the proportion of ALP-identifying workers who became involved in rallies and party campaign work fell. Moreover, the frequency of instances of all types of election campaigning by ALP-identifying workers was most likely less in the 1990s. The 1984

¹⁷ The rise in very strong ALP identification among professionals and para-professionals after 1987, while such identification among 'routine workers' fell, may appear to justify Thompson's claim of the capture of the ALP by 'middle class values' (see ch. 1). However, the rise in 'middle class' very strong identification was from a very low level (2 per cent in the case of school teachers) and did not restore this identification to its previous level, as found, for example, in the 1979 PAS. Also, overall ALP identification among respondents to the 1987 AES and 1996 AES in this occupational stratum fell, if by a lesser amount than for other workers. This 'middle class' did not particularly consider the ALP attuned with its views after 1987.

¹⁸ Thus the ALP could lose votes, but win government. Compare with 'at the 1990 election ... with a primary vote of less than 40 per cent, the ALP suffered its worst result since 1931': Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, p. 123.

¹⁹ David Burchell, 'Parties under Siege', *Australian Society*, June 1987, p. 22; Clare Curran, 'Faith No More', *Australian Left Review*, no. 127, April 1991, p. 15; Tony Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers: Making and Unmaking the Labor Left in Leichhardt Municipality, 1970-1991*, Sydney, Leftbank Publishing, 2007, pp. 170-73; Dick Nichols, 'DSP interventions in Australian politics', *The Activist*, vol. 4, no. 10, November 1994, p. 13; Scott, *Fading Loyalties*, pp. 36-42; Ward, 'The Middle-Classing of the ALP'.

NSS shows that very strong ALP identifiers and, to a lesser extent, labour aristocrats made a disproportionate contribution among ALP identifiers to the frequency of election campaign activities (see Table 10.2).²⁰ The 1990 AES findings that very strong ALP identification, all labour aristocratic ALP identification, and ALP votes generally were at their lowest points before the defeat of the Hawke-Keating government suggest a relatively low level of participation by ALP identifiers in the 1990 federal election as well.

Table 10.2 Participation in election campaign activities by ALP identifiers

		Working class							
		All activities		Persuasion		Attendance		Campaign work	
		of very strong	of others	of very strong	of others	of very strong	of others	of very strong	of others
1996	AES	50%	36%	47%	34%	5%	2%	4%	2%
1993	AES	58%	51%	55%	53%	5%	3%	8%	2%
1984	NSS	41%	27%	36%	22%	16%	8%	10%	5%
<i>Frequency (1984 NSS)</i>									
	4+	*	*	21%	9%	6%	1%	5%	1%
	1-3	*	*	15%	13%	10%	7%	5%	4%
		Labour aristocracy							
		All activities		Persuasion		Attendance		Campaign work	
		of very strong	of others	of very strong	of others	of very strong	of others	of very strong	of others
1996	AES	49%	36%	47%	36%	2%	3%	4%	2%
1993	AES	71%	56%	67%	59%	8%	3%	3%	2%
1984	NSS	50%	35%	45%	28%	22%	14%	12%	9%
<i>Frequency (1984 NSS)</i>									
	4+	*	*	30%	14%	8%	2%	10%	2%
	1-3	*	*	15%	14%	14%	12%	3%	7%

* Data not available

At the start of the period, the unions' and social movements' participants who were workers were largely ALP partisans. ALP Senator Bruce Childs spoke truly when he told a 1985 public meeting that the NDP was 'a challenge to the leadership of the ALP

²⁰ Cf.: Clive Bean, 'Orthodox Political Participation in Australia', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 25, no. 3, November 1989, pp. 463-64. Bean's finding is that strength of partisanship is one of the more significant determinants of campaign activity. However, he combined all three activities and all frequencies of these into a single dependent variable. The higher correlation among ALP identifiers of very strong identification with a frequency of 4 or more instances of any one campaign activity than for lower frequencies of activity shown here suggests the higher frequency of activity is more dependent on stronger partisanship than Bean discusses.

and particularly to us, as custodians of the peace movement'.²¹ For example, more than two-thirds of the 1986 CSA worker respondents who belonged to nuclear disarmament groups stated they were ALP supporters (see Table 10.3). The same study found that among those workers who had ever demonstrated and supported a party, a large majority were ALP supporters. Among working class respondents to the 1979 PAS and the 1987 AES with the same experience there were large majorities of ALP identifiers, and even in 1994, a majority of those workers who had attended environmental demonstrations in the previous five years were ALP identifiers. Similar results emerge from the 1979 PAS about workers choosing to be union members and from the 1986 CSA about having been involved in union action about social and political concerns.

Even in the 1980s, however, the proportion of very strong ALP identifiers among those workers who had demonstrated fell from one in four of the latter's numbers (in the 1979 PAS) to as little as one in ten (from the 1987 AES). Two factors appear to have contributed to that result: a reduction in the proportion of very strong ALP identifiers among workers, in particular, among labour aristocrats, who were more likely than other workers to have demonstrated; and a shift away from such strong identification with the ALP of those who had the experience of demonstrating. Indeed, in the 1987 AES, the ALP's very strong identifiers were less likely than other workers to have been involved in this kind of protest action. In the 1994 NSS, very strong ALP identifiers were better represented among environmental demonstrators of the last five year, but only by one-third.

In the looser ranks of environmental groups in the 1990s, ALP partisanship lost ground, falling to less than half of group members in the early 1990s and to one in five according to the 1996 AES. Partly this was because environment group members who were workers instead identified with Democrats or the Greens (or the Coalition parties), or rejected party identification altogether. Growing, albeit less strongly, levels of party identification with the Democrats or the Greens were also found by the 1994 NSS among environmental demonstrators and in the 1996 AES of those who wanted to be union members.

²¹ Brian Jones, 'Labor Ranks Support NZ Nuclear Stand', *Direct Action*, no. 512, 20 February 1985, p. 2.

Table 10.3 Party identification (support: 1986 CSA) of union and social movement worker participants

Survey title	PAS	CSA	AES	AES	AES	NSS	AES
Survey year(s)	1979	1986	1987	1990	1993	1994	1996
<i>membership of group (type)</i>	<i>civil liberties, etc</i>	<i>nuclear disarmament</i>		<i>environment</i>	<i>environment</i>	<i>environment</i>	<i>environment</i>
ALP	90%	68%		47%	42%	40%	21%
Democrat	0%	0%		13%	5%	5%	25%
NDP or Green	*	0%		9%	*	5%	4%
<i>attended demonstration</i>	<i>ever (or in protest movement)</i>	<i>ever</i>	<i>ever (lawful)</i>			<i>in last five years (environment)</i>	
ALP	57%	35%	59%			52%	
Democrat	6%	0%	3%			6%	
NDP or Green	*	4%	*			6%	
<i>unionist (employees only)</i>	<i>voluntary</i>	<i>social and political action</i>					<i>agree want to be</i>
ALP	66%	35%					61%
Democrat	4%	2%					5%
NDP or Green	*	1%					1%

* Data not available

Also, the 1996 AES found no ALP members who were members of environment groups among its respondents. More generally, in 1995, socialist solidarity activist Max Lane claimed that, compared with the 1970s and early 1980s, 'the number of activists involved in real fights against austerity policies, environmental destruction or imperialist foreign policy who are *inside* the ALP is very small'.²² However, Lane's group also noted that the ALP retained a far-reaching network of support in the unions and social movements and 'draws towards it[self] people who want to advance certain causes and see work inside the ALP as the most practical way of carrying out politics'.²³ The ALP, according to Carol Johnson, 'sought to provide ... a vision in which people of all types were offered something to identify with'.²⁴ ALP hegemony in the labour and social movements was loosened, but not lost.

Thus, during the long Labor decade, workers' party identification, election participation, and social movement involvement shifted away from the framework provided by the ALP. This shift occurred first among labour aristocrats. One result was that labour aristocratic support for the ALP no longer mobilised so significantly in election campaigns, the ALP vote fell and the party eventually lost government.

²² Max Lane, 'Australian Politics Today', *The Activist*, vol. 5, no. 4, February 1995, pp. 10-11.

²³ Nichols, 'DSP interventions in Australian politics', pp. 8-9.

²⁴ Johnson, 'Broadening the Political Agenda: Towards Socialist Democracy in Australia', p. 181.

The Australian Democrats

Much of the vote the ALP lost as workers reacted against the party's neo-liberalism went to the Australian Democrats. Various authors have identified the volatility, weak partisanship, and Senate focus of the Democrats vote as signs it was a 'protest' vote (see Table 10.4a).²⁵ Also, in a survey conducted in the middle of the 1980s, professionals and para-professionals were found to more often consider the Democrats an established part of the political system,²⁶ a characteristic which Cheryl Kernot, party leader after the 1993 election, again emphasised. At those times, Democrats identifiers and voters who were workers tended to be professionals and para-professionals. Moreover, in the earlier period, stronger ALP identifiers among professionals and para-professionals disproportionately voted for the Democrats in the Senate. These three points together suggest that a part of the Democrats' vote came from workers who were more confident in their capacity to exert influence through existing political structures and constructed a protest message to the major parties through that vote. Because this vote had these two characteristics, it was a continuation of opportunist politics in a new way, as relatively privileged workers defended the concessions they had previously won against the ALP's neo-liberalism, without moving towards a solidarity of workers in action.

²⁵ Cf.: Clive Bean and Elim Papadakis, 'Minor Parties and Independents: Electoral Bases and Future Prospects', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 30, Special, 1995; James Forrest, 'Sources of Electoral Support for the Australian Democrats in the House of Representatives and Senate elections of 1990 and 1993: A Comparative Analysis', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 30, no. 3, November 1995; Ian McAllister, 'The Australian Democrats: Protest Vote or Portent of Realignment?', *Politics*, vol. 17, no. 1, May 1982.

²⁶ Waters and Volpato, 'Political Preference in the New Middle Class', p. 24.

Table 10.4a: Democrats support from workers

<i>National vote</i> ¹		1983	1984	1987		1990	1993		1996
House of Representatives		5.0%	5.4%	6.0%		11.3%	3.8%		6.8%
Senate		9.6%	7.6%	8.5%		12.6%	5.3%		10.8%
Survey title	PAS		NSS	AES	NSS	NSS	AES	AES	NSS
Survey year	1979		1984	1987	1987-88	1989-90	1990	1993	1994
<i>Identification</i>									
very strong	0.4%		0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%
fairly strong	1.7%		1.3%	1.0%	1.5%	2.2%	2.0%	0.3%	1.8%
not very strong	1.2%		0.9%	1.2%	2.2%	1.9%	3.0%	0.9%	2.0%
total	3.3%		2.5%	2.5%	3.8%	4.4%	5.3%	1.3%	4.1%
<i>Senate vote</i>									
labour aristocracy			11.1%	10.9%	14.0%	11.4%	16.9%	11.0%	11.7%
- professionals and para-professionals			14.2%	13.4%	13.9%	13.5%	21.5%	13.7%	*
- tradespersons			5.5%	7.8%	15.4%	8.3%	8.5%	8.6%	*
other working class			6.0%	8.1%	11.4%	7.7%	15.4%	5.8%	6.9%
<i>Proportion of Senate vote from</i>									
Democrat identifiers			18.2%	6.8%	19.6%	28.7%	28.5%	12.1%	30.7%
NDP/Greens identifiers			0.0%	*	0.0%	1.5%	1.2%	*	0.0%
not party identifiers			20.2%	14.4%	9.5%	11.8%	9.9%	24.9%	11.4%
other ALP identifiers			11.1%	20.5%	14.3%	14.5%	15.0%	16.8%	11.4%
very and fairly strong ALP identifiers			20.7%	22.7%	21.4%	17.5%	22.9%	21.4%	30.7%
<i>labour aristocracy</i> ²									
- professionals and para-professionals ²			22.0%	24.5%	19.7%	19.3%	19.8%	17.7%	26.8%
- tradespersons ²			26.8%	28.1%	26.3%	20.7%	20.9%	17.3%	*
other working class ²			30.0%	10.0%	18.8%	10.7%	30.0%	12.5%	*
			19.4%	21.5%	22.5%	16.4%	24.7%	24.5%	34.5%

¹ Source: see References, election data

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 Democrats Senate vote from very or fairly strong ALP identifiers was ... "

* Data not available

In the latter half of the 1980s, however, workers support for the Democrats had started to change in character. Among workers, Democrats partisanship rose very quickly and was expressed more broadly across occupations. The party's vote also reached a peak in the 1990 federal election. A new group of stronger ALP identifiers, primarily workers who were not labour aristocrats, were drawn to vote for the Democrats in 1990. As well, the gap between Democrats votes in House of Representatives and Senate largely dissipated. This was combined with the Democrats being pushed towards the left of the Australian political spectrum by both the ALP's rightward policy shift and some support in the party for that change in its political approach. These developments suggest Democrats voters now did not regard the party as so closely integrated into the established political system or their vote for the Democrats so much as a protest to the major parties.²⁷

By 1989, Democrat member Catherine Goonan marked how the party had 'become significantly more radical' since 1986, when the party's first parliamentary leader, Don Chipp, left the Senate, and the former party president, John Siddons, left the party.²⁸ She said the party's new emphasis on social justice and environmentalism, and its decision, at least in Victoria, to direct preferences to the ALP, had led to an attrition of previous supporters, but attracted younger people including conservationists and those who would otherwise be oriented to the ALP.

After the 1990 election, Janet Powell became the Democrats leader. She 'had great sympathy for the green movement in its incarnation as an alternative to mainstream, oligarchic politics'.²⁹ In 1991, the party continued to attract some oriented to a politics leftward of the ALP, including prominent anti-nuclear campaigner Helen Caldicott, who was the most successful green independent candidate in 1990, the Environment Independents Victorian Senate candidate Gordon McQuilten and a group of Rainbow Alliance (RA)³⁰ members in the ACT. Tasmanian Greens parliamentarian Bob Brown discussed a future merger of a national Greens party with the Democrats.³¹

²⁷ Hiroya Sugita, 'Ideology, Internal Politics and Policy Formulation', in John Warhurst (ed.), *Keeping the Bastards Honest: The Australian Democrats First Twenty Years*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1997, p. 135; Ian Ward, 'Party Organisation and Membership Participation', in John Warhurst (ed.), *Keeping the Bastards Honest: The Australian Democrats First Twenty Years*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1997, p. 113; John Warhurst, 'The Nationals and the Democrats: Cracks and Chips in the Cartel', in Ian Marsh (ed.), *Political Parties in Transition?*, Sydney, The Federation Press, 2006, p. 155.

²⁸ Catherine Goonan, 'Left in the Centre', *Australian Left Review*, no. 111, July-August 1989, p. 22.

²⁹ Nicholas Economou, 'Cooperation and Competition: The Two Faces of Democrat-Environmental Movement Relations', in John Warhurst (ed.), *Keeping the Bastards Honest: The Australian Democrats First Twenty Years*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1997, pp. 262-63.

³⁰ See next chapter.

³¹ *Green Left Weekly*, 1991.

The Democrats, however, did not readily assume the viewpoints of anti-systemic politics, including that of labour being in conflict with capital. Goonan wrote: 'the Accord and Australia Reconstructed are favourably viewed by the Democrats largely because of the values of consensus inherent in each'.³² The party maintained what Hiroya Sugita called its 'populist inconsistency'.³³ Powell was not able to secure support for her outlook in the Democrats national leadership bodies. In 1992, she and about 200 other Victorian members left the party. Several of the ex-RA members formed the ACT Greens in 1993.³⁴

The Greens

Although a green party, the United Tasmania Group, had emerged in that state in the 1970s, the Greens formed as a party only during the long Labor decade. The first Greens federal candidate was nominated for Sydney in 1984. Substantial numbers of Greens lower house candidates ran in the ACT, NSW and WA from 1990 and in Queensland and Tasmania from 1993, but in SA and Victoria not until 1996. Greens Senate tickets (with a variety of names) stood in NSW and SA from 1987 and in all other states and territories from 1990 except Queensland, where the first Greens Senate ticket was in 1993.

Alongside these Greens candidates in the period were others who were critics of the ALP from the left: nominees of socialist parties (most of which existed before 1983), the Nuclear Disarmament Party, the Vallentine Peace Group, the Industrial Labour Party, the Environmental Independents, the Australian Indigenous Party and the Australian Women's Party, as well as independent leftist, green, drug law reform and indigenous activists. Often they were much less successful electorally than Greens candidates, but their campaigns and votes were not inconsequential in the overall development of a left vote, given the relatively small Greens vote at this time.

At first, however, there was a miniscule left vote. In the 1983 federal elections, more than 50 candidates in 40 House of Representative electorates from various socialist parties collected little more than half a per cent of the national vote. Eight

³² Goonan, 'Left in the Centre', pp. 25. In 1992, however, when Powell was an independent Senator, she joined an attempt to abolish sections 45D and 45E of the Trade Practices Act, which were anti-union secondary boycott laws.

³³ Sugita, 'Ideology, Internal Politics and Policy Formulation', pp. 135-139.

³⁴ Tim Battin, 'The Extremism of the Middle Ground: The Australian Democrats and Social Justice', in John Warhurst (ed.), *Keeping the Bastards Honest: The Australian Democrats First Twenty Years*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1997, pp. 275-78; Economou, 'Cooperation and Competition', pp. 263-64; Elizabeth Eddy, *The Green Movement in Southeast Queensland: The Environment, Institutional Failure and Social Conflict*, PhD Thesis, Department of Government, University of Queensland, 1996, p. 310; Ward, 'Party Organisation and Membership Participation', p. 122.

Senate tickets, in all states except Tasmania, won less than one-quarter of one per cent of the total vote.

The 1984 national NDP Senate vote of 7.2 per cent therefore stands out as a dramatic break from established voting patterns. This vote was largely drawn from those who had or still identified with the ALP, with that party's stronger partisans well represented, particularly outside the labour aristocracy (see Table 10.4b). While support for the NDP was greater among labour aristocrats than among other workers, the better-off workers were not predominant, as they were in the Democrats vote. This was in spite of the stronger vote, as a proportion of the party's vote, from the stratum's tradespersons for the NDP than for the Democrats. This pattern persisted in the much smaller NDP vote in the 1987 elections.

A measure of the partisanship for the NDP is its recruitment of up to 10,000 members from its foundation in June 1984 until its first conference in April 1985. Also, thousands of people staffed polling booths for the party at the December 1984 election, including many younger workers, and ALP and even National Party members.³⁵

Broader identification with the party is hard to gauge. Of the surveys available, one was conducted largely during 1984, while the party was forming: it found just two worker respondents who identified with the NDP. The subsequent surveys came at least a year after the party lost its only successful candidate, Jo Vallentine, and its leading public figure, Peter Garrett, in a split at the party conference. The 1987-88 NSS and 1989-90 NSS again found NDP identification was only 0.1 per cent (although in the latter survey there were a larger number of Greens identifiers). However, the 1986 CSA found 1.8 per cent of its worker respondents supported the NDP. That result is similar to the reported House of Representative votes of worker respondents of between one and 1.6 per cent in the three NSS, whereas in fact the party contested only a few lower house electorates in each of the 1984 and 1987 elections and secured only 0.1 per cent of the national vote. Therefore, a stated lower house vote for the NDP in these surveys might be an approximate for NDP identification. In all these surveys, support for the NDP came at similar rates from the different strata of workers.

³⁵ Michael Denborough, Interview, 1994; Margo Condoleon, 'Youth and the Nuclear Disarmament Party', *Direct Action*, no. 508, 23 January 1985, pp. 20-21; Gillian Fisher, *Half-Life: The NDP: Peace, Protest and Party Politics*, Sydney, State Library of New South Wales Press, 1995, pp. 10, 18; Sian Prior, 'The Rise and Fall of the Nuclear Disarmament Party', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 6, no. 4, November 1987, p. 5; Marian Quigley, 'The Rise and Fall(?) of the Nuclear Disarmament Party', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, vol. 62, no. 11, April 1986, p. 14.

Table 10.4b: NDP and Greens support from workers

	1984	1987		1990	1993	1996			
<i>National vote</i> ¹									
House of Representatives	0.1%	0.1%							
Senate	7.2%				3.0%	3.3%			
Survey title	NSS	NSS	NSS	AES	NSS	AES			
Survey year	1984	1987-88	1989-90	1990	1994	1996			
<i>Identification</i>									
very strong	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%			
fairly strong	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%			
other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%			
total	0.1%	0.1%	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%			
<i>Senate vote</i>	3.4%	2.0%	2.6%	2.0%	3.5%	2.8%			
labour aristocracy	4.3%	2.3%	3.1%	2.6%	4.4%	2.9%			
- professionals and para-professionals	5.1%	2.6%	3.8%	2.9%	*	2.8%			
- tradespersons	4.4%	2.9%	2.1%	2.5%	*	3.8%			
other working class	2.9%	1.8%	2.3%	1.6%	3.0%	2.7%			
<i>Proportion of Senate vote from</i>		<i>NDP House vote</i> ²	<i>NDP House vote</i> ²	<i>NDP House vote</i> ²					
NDP and Green identifiers	1.2%	34.9%	3.7%	29.6%	14.4%	47.0%	22.6%	19.6%	13.2%
Democrats identifiers	5.8%	5.8%	0.0%	0.0%	15.2%	6.8%	3.2%	10.9%	5.3%
not party identifiers	17.4%	10.5%	11.1%	11.1%	12.9%	5.3%	25.8%	6.5%	28.9%
other ALP identifiers	22.1%	15.1%	18.5%	11.1%	12.1%	7.6%	12.9%	17.4%	15.8%
very and fairly strong ALP identifiers	39.5%	26.7%	40.7%	37.0%	30.3%	25.8%	19.4%	15.2%	15.8%
<i>labour aristocracy</i> ³	30.8%	23.1%	27.3%	27.3%	33.3%	29.4%	28.6%	19.0%	5.9%
- professionals and para-professionals ³	40.0%	35.0%	42.9%	42.9%	41.7%	36.1%	11.1%	*	9.1%
- tradespersons ³	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	14.3%	33.3%	*	0.0%
<i>other working class</i> ³	46.8%	29.8%	50.0%	43.8%	28.4%	23.5%	11.8%	12.0%	23.8%

¹ Source: see References, election data

² The proportion of the Senate vote for the NDP from different party identifications, assuming a stated lower house NDP vote to be identification with the party, thereby changing any other identification.

³ 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 ... "

* Data not available

Although the Greens emerged in 1989 with fewer identifiers than the NDP's supporters in the 1986 CSA, identification with the Greens was, like that with the NDP, stronger than that with the Democrats relative to the parties' votes. As well, the intensity of Greens partisanship relative to that of the Democrats was high. Also, the Greens lower house votes tended to equal or exceed its Senate votes in those electorates where the party had candidates, unlike the Democrats. Yet by 1996 Greens identification was weakening. The proportion of Greens identifiers among the party's voters also declined. Very and fairly strong ALP identifiers also became less important for the Greens vote, in particular in the labour aristocracy. The Greens only gained a vote of any significance from strong ALP identifiers among workers of the 'lower strata' in 1996. Many Greens voters were not party identifiers.

The national Greens vote was smaller but more stable than that of the Democrats. In 1993, the Greens vote did not dive like the Democrats. However, that stability was produced partly by the organisational development of the party, which can be traced through the increasing number of its lower house candidates and Senate tickets. The 1996 elections, which restored the level of the left vote of 1990 (see Table 10.5), was somewhat of a false dawn for the Greens during the party's 'dry years' in the latter half of the 1990s.³⁶

Nonetheless, during the 1990s, the Greens increasingly carried the development of the left-of-ALP vote. In particular, the Greens began to challenge the predominance of the Democrats in inner city and sea-change seats, as well as around Newcastle and Wollongong, in the lower house, while the Democrats retreated towards safe Liberal urban electorates. Greens identifiers also were generally more prominent in social movement campaigning, relative to their numbers, than either the ALP or the Democrats, in the 1990s. However, the Democrats identifiers' presence among the fewer members of environment organisations in the 1996 AES survey results stands out, as, to a lesser extent, do the findings on the same topic in the 1990 AES.

³⁶ The term is Amanda Lohrey's: Amanda Lohrey, 'Groundswell: The Rise of the Greens', Quarterly Essay, no. 8, 2002. Yet she presents Senate voting figures for 1996 and 1998 that show an increase for the Greens, excluding WA, from 180,404 votes (1.66 per cent) to 244,165 (2.18 per cent): Lohrey, 'Groundswell', p. 60. In fact the Greens group votes in 1996 totalled 288,507 (2.65 per cent): in NSW, the Greens gained 97,928 votes; in Victoria, 81,273; in Queensland, 46,285; in SA, 19,441; in Tasmania, 26,830; in the ACT, 11,297; and in the Northern Territory, 5,453. The party's vote fell in the 1998 election, confirming her broader view.

Table 10.5 Democrats and left votes by electorate (mean)¹

<i>Senate</i>		1983	1984	1987	1990	1993	1996
Democrats	<i>electorate</i> all	9.8%	7.7%	8.8%	12.6%	5.3%	11.1%
	inner city	9.9%	8.2%	9.6%	12.9%	6.0%	12.5%
	provincial ALP	9.6%	7.8%	10.2%	13.1%	5.6%	9.2%
	sea-change	10.0%	7.9%	9.5%	12.5%	5.7%	9.9%
left	all	*	7.3%	2.5%	3.7%	3.4%	3.9%
	inner city	*	8.7%	3.7%	4.7%	4.8%	5.4%
	provincial ALP	*	10.9%	2.6%	3.5%	3.2%	4.6%
	sea-change	*	8.9%	3.1%	5.5%	4.3%	5.0%
<i>House of Representatives</i>							
Democrats	all	4.8%	5.4%	6.2%	11.4%	3.7%	6.7%
	inner city	4.9%	5.7%	6.7%	12.0%	4.1%	6.5%
	Liberal city	4.7%	6.3%	6.6%	12.9%	5.2%	8.3%
	provincial ALP	6.5%	7.5%	9.2%	13.1%	4.1%	7.6%
	sea-change	6.5%	4.3%	6.0%	9.2%	3.3%	5.8%
left	all	0.7%	0.4%	0.4%	2.4%	2.5%	3.6%
	inner city	1.1%	0.9%	1.2%	4.7%	5.7%	6.4%
	Liberal city	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	1.9%	3.2%
	provincial ALP	2.5%	0.5%	0.0%	4.3%	5.6%	6.2%
	sea-change	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%	8.4%	4.8%	5.2%

Source: see References, election data

¹ For definitions of the left vote and of the categories of electorates, see Appendix D

Conclusion

In the long Labor decade, the trend in party identification was primarily that of a decline in support for the ALP, the governing party conducting its form of a neo-liberal regime. Until about 1990, in particular, this trend in ALP identification among workers was principally a fall in its intensity, especially among labour aristocrats. Furthermore, the minor party vote from that stratum changed. Previously it had been a protest directed to the major parties through the Democrats. Now it was directed towards efforts to create an alternative party to the ALP. With that, workers who were not labour aristocrats became relatively more likely, compared with labour aristocrats, to engage in that sort of political action.

The initial earthquake, breaking up the existing party structure, was the NDP. That was followed by the tremors and aftershocks of the many efforts at new parties and alternative electoral campaigning, as well as a temporary change in workers' identification with the Democrats and that party's direction. Finally, the Greens, bringing together some of the elements previously involved, emerged as a new part of the political landscape.

The trends discussed in this chapter do not conform to the pattern that the literature argues existed for party identification. 'Dealignment' and disillusion with politics was not

the most significant feature about what was going among workers as their identification with the ALP declined.

Instead the conditions were created in which a move might be made away from the dynamic in which labour aristocrats lead other workers towards opportunism. For thousands of people who, in the long Labor decade, thought the ALP did not express their vision for Australia and the world, the reaction of many workers against the ALP's neo-liberal policy positions was an opportunity to create a new party of the left. For example, Chris Lloyd, a former Communist Party member and metalworkers' union national research officer, stated in 1990 that:

The traditional base of criticism for the union movement Left and the academic Left, the social welfare Left and other related interest groups is alternative political parties. It used to be the Communist Party ... the objective conditions for a new organisation are excellent. The Labor Party's membership is declining or fundamentally changing its nature. 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.³⁷

The picture of how those people came together and, usually, fell out with each other, through discussions, meetings and conferences, mergers, involvement in common activities such as electoral alliances, and forming and dissolving organisations, is complex (see Appendix E). The remaining chapters of this thesis consider this movement for a new party of the left.

³⁷ Lloyd, 'Accord in Discord', p. 13.

New Party Efforts in the 1980s

The reaction of erstwhile ALP supporters against the Hawke-Keating government's neo-liberalism began to have an impact on voting and party activity after only a year of the new government. Among the efforts to create new parties that arose, the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP) in 1984 had the greatest immediate effect. In the same year, the first green parties were established on the Australian mainland. At the end of that year, another attempt to create a political organisation began that resulted, in 1987, in the formation of the Rainbow Alliance (RA). From 1986, socialist parties began practical attempts to regroup their forces. The greatest number of independent left candidates in a federal election in the period ran in 1987, although their electoral victories came only in subsequent elections.

Much of the chance each new party project had for success depended on whether or not it could first bring in enough supporters to make it effective and then hold them together. This process of creating new networks of activists could build the core for organising collective action among workers, like the emergence and growth of a social movement. A new party might also itself intervene in the social movements, however, to counter the influence of opportunism on the movements' policy.

Aiming for broad support in the new party projects required dealing with the varying perspectives that supporters started with about why they wanted that political organisation and how it should be created. Such differences could be avoided, but only by narrowing a project's support through excluding some supporters, potentially to the point where it could no longer make much impact. Both the achievements and failures in this regard helped determine on what basis efforts to form new parties would continue, in particular in the Greens.

The NDP Forms and Splits

Of all the policy positions within the neo-liberalism of the Hawke-Keating government, the ones that first faced the opposition of an insurgent social movement were its stances on nuclear disarmament and uranium mining.¹ The government adhered strictly to ALP federal policy, which supported an Australian alliance with the United States that already involved, among other things, three US bases in Australia, US warship visits and the landing of US military aircraft at Australian bases. The ALP had

¹ On the peace movement, see ch. 9.

abandoned its policy opposing uranium mining at its 1982 national conference, replacing that with one that allowed the two existing uranium mines and a planned third, Roxby Downs,² which would be the largest in the world.³

Many people involved in or supportive of the peace and nuclear disarmament movement felt that they had been betrayed by the ALP. The NDP, which was founded with the expectation that the July 1984 ALP national conference would ignore movement demands, offered them a chance to act. The NDP adopted three movement demands as its platform:

- To close all foreign (that is, United States) military bases in Australia.
- To prohibit the passage of nuclear weapons through Australian waters or airspace.
- To terminate immediately all mining and export of Australian uranium.

In the ranks of the movement the NDP had strong support. The resources of many local groups were mobilised in the party's campaign. This can be compared with most of the leaderships of the movement's organisations, which strategically oriented to the ALP and could not organise any effective electoral intervention.⁴

The support for the NDP, registered by the membership and the election result the party achieved in 1984,⁵ should not obscure observations of some difficulties in its formation. First the party's founding figure, Michael Denborough, rejected both a request to join the ALP and the idea of standing as an independent candidate for the Senate. He favoured forming a new party. This was discussed and agreed to, he has explained, at 'house meetings' in Canberra. Then he sought further support, first of all in Perth, but 'came back in disarray'.

Then a Canberra public meeting of about 80 in June 1984 adopted a constitution and launched the party. However, a week later, at a meeting in Sydney, the project encountered 'tremendous opposition' from established peace groups, the Democrats and proponents of a national green party. Then, Denborough explained:

² Also known as Olympic Dam.

³ Compare with Tom Bramble and Rick Kuhn, who, in discussing the February 1985 defeat of the government's plan to aid US missile testing off the Australian coast, claimed the testing was "in clear defiance of the Party's anti-nuclear policy": Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, p. 121. Also, Bramble and Kuhn also attributed the defeat to the ALP Left with cross-factional support. In this, they at first fail to mention the NDP and its 1984 election campaigns, and when they do, they downplay the influence of the NDP by stating it "fell apart ... quickly" after the elections: Bramble and Kuhn, *Labor's Conflict*, pp. 121-22. The NDP did split relatively quickly, certainly, but in February 1985 the NDP had not split and was in fact still growing.

⁴ Peter Christoff, 'The Nuclear Disarmament Party', *Arena*, no. 70, 1985, p. 14; Strauss, *Orientations and Orientational Struggle*, pp. 80-85; Jo Vallentine, 'A Green Peace: Beyond Disarmament', in Drew Hutton (ed.), *Green Politics in Australia*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1987, pp. 55-56; Patrick White, 'In This World of Hypocrisy and Cynicism', *Arena*, no. 68, 1984, p. 13.

⁵ See ch. 10

A rather large peculiar friend we had stood up and said: 'Well, we've had enough talk. Now, why don't we just get on with it?' Something like that. And then three other people stood up and they agreed to do that. And so we then formed a NSW branch.⁶

The NDP started recruiting members quickly, starting in the hotel foyer at the ALP conference among those demonstrating. Branches were established in other states between August and October, the first in Victoria and the last in SA just two weeks before federal election nominations closed. According to Denborough, the NSW branch developed relatively slowly. Eventually, it decided to make him its lead Senate candidate, against his own inclination. However, at what he considers a 'stacked' general meeting of 150 people in October, the rock musician Peter Garrett was preselected with support from many state committee members, members of the Socialist Workers Party (which in July had decided to support the NDP), and NDP supporters attracted by publicity for the meeting on the ABC radio station 2JJJ. Garrett's candidacy raised the prominence of the party and inspired many to support the party and its campaign.⁷

In 1985, the NDP kept growing. The largest branch, 2000-strong, was in traditionally industrial Newcastle: half of all the party's members were in NSW. The ACT branch had 900 members. Branch structures were developed, and a state-wide Inter-Regional Council was established in NSW. The party also organised large public meetings and began to get involved in other forms of campaigning.⁸

At the NDP's first national conference in April 1985, however, the party split. The group which left (the 'split group') included Garrett, its popular figurehead, and its only successful Senate candidate, Jo Vallentine. The debate which occurred in the lead-up to the split might appear somewhat confused. It did not usually take the form of a discussion of strategy. Instead, what was mostly debated was what the split group sought organisationally in the party: centralisation of power in the NSW branch in Sydney,⁹ proscription of members of other parties, membership decision-making by postal ballots rather than meetings, automatic appointment of former candidates to

⁶ Denborough, Interview.

⁷ Denborough, Interview; *Direct Action*, July-October 1984; Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. x-xi, 3-18. Brendan Carins's essay suggests the subsequent split in the NDP was a product of its over-hasty establishment: Carins, 'Stop the Drop', p. 252. Perhaps the effort to form it could have started earlier, but further delay in its formation would only have put this off until after the ALP conference and, as it turned out, probably after the federal election as well.

⁸ Denborough, Interview; *Direct Action*, January-April 1985; Carins, 'Stop the Drop', pp. 251-52; Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 4, 56.

⁹ Meanwhile, in Victoria, the split group's supporters complained the SWP sought more influence through a de facto centralisation in meetings in Melbourne, which, they wrote, was caused by inaction by a NDP organisation committee dominated by "the [SWP] or their supporters": Ian Cameron, "The NDP: What Went Wrong", May 1985, cited in Fisher, *Half-Life*, p. 63.). This categorisation allowed the complainant to include within it anyone with whom he had disagreements.

decision-making bodies and action by parliamentary members independent of the party.¹⁰ Indeed, Denborough thought the other issues discussed in the NDP in 1985 were 'really a front for these issues of control of the decision-making'.¹¹ Yet Denborough's claim is true only in the sense that arguments about issues which affected people's involvement in the party were the form in which party members' strategic views largely appeared. The culmination of differences that emerged among party members in the months after the election reflected their views about strategy for the NDP.

Perspectives in the NDP

NDP members did not dispute their party was 'fundamentally radical'.¹²

Denborough, for example, believed:

The nuclear issue ...affects the whole of society. It really is the epitome of everything that's wrong in society today. So [the NDP] was a revolt against all the forces of darkness in general, and the inequalities between the rich and the poor.¹³

Also, on either side of the split, many thought the party must tend to be incorporated into some broader politics. Vallentine and others, such as a small number of TWS activists who played a significant role in the NDP, principally through the Sydney office, envisaged a future 'green party'. Garrett also foresaw a new political party with policies on a wide range of issues. According to them, therefore, the NDP had a more limited role as a new method of public education about the nuclear disarmament issue. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), most members of which had become involved in the NDP, looked forward to NDP members needing 'to consider many more aspects of society and how we can change them'.¹⁴

What NDP members disagreed on was what to do about their party's radical character. From that they drew different conclusions about the kind of party they wanted the NDP to be.

The split group thought radical politics threatened the NDP. According to Vallentine, that would have marginalised the party and made it unsustainable.¹⁵ On that basis, the

¹⁰ Peter Annear, 'The NDP Split: What Really Happened?', *Direct Action*, no. 521, 8 May 1985, p. 10; Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 34, 58-62, 68-71.

¹¹ Denborough, Interview.

¹² Jo Vallentine, 'The Greening of the Peace Movement in Australia', *National Outlook*, September-October 1989, p. 9.

¹³ Denborough, Interview.

¹⁴ Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. xii, 5-7, 10, 43, 85-86; James Norman, *Bob Brown: Gentle Revolutionary*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2004, p. 164; Jim Percy, *The ALP, the Nuclear Disarmament Party and the Elections*, Sydney, Pathfinder Press (Australia), 1984, p. 25; Prior, 'The Rise and Fall', p. 7; Quigley, 'The Rise and Fall(?)', p. 15; Vallentine, 'The Greening of the Peace Movement', p. 8.

¹⁵ Vallentine, 'The Greening of the Peace Movement', p. 9.

group involved a number of NDP members who wanted the party to remain focused on nuclear disarmament issues, such as NSW Senate candidate, Gillian Fisher, who claimed:

The new party was based on a moral issue and designed for one purpose—to change the Government’s defence policy by raising public awareness and demonstrating the strength of anti-nuclear sentiment.¹⁶

In response to the split group, NDP members who supported the party as it had been constituted argued that proposals to change either the party’s platform or the sole requirement (other than a payment of a membership fee) on members being support for that platform reflected the impact of pressure on the NDP to be ‘respectable’. They believed the party’s nuclear disarmament specific membership provision and policies brought it widespread support, including from disillusioned Labor Party members. A broader platform and stricter membership provisions would threaten that breadth of support. These views were held whether these NDP members thought that party should ‘test the single issue of nuclear disarmament’, put pressure on the government, or threaten politicians’ power base in order to force them to ‘start to take notice of people’, or considered that the NDP was an aspect of a developing leftward break from the ALP.¹⁷

For these NDP members, the independent nature of the NDP and its operation in a way that included them was important. Denborough wanted the party to ‘use the political arena as a means ... to unite all Australians behind the issue’.¹⁸ Jenny Cotterell, a conference organiser, ‘saw the NDP as a means of achieving a tangible result’ and wanted the NDP to be ‘a whole different way of being together, to organise ourselves politically’.¹⁹ Democratic functioning within the NDP was a live issue for many NDP members, such as those who came from an ALP background who had experienced and rejected the policy reversals by ALP parliamentary leaders not only on

¹⁶ Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. xii, 95-96. The NDP’s demands were for unilateral Australian government action. Some commentators have argued that the split in the NDP could have been avoided if the split group had concentrated discussion in the NDP on the party also opposing Soviet nuclear weaponry. They thought this approach would have politically isolated ,within the NDP, the SWP and others whom they supposed supported the Soviet Union possessing a nuclear arsenal: Jonathan Goodfield, ‘Pandas Leave the Swamp’, *Chain Reaction*, no. 42-43, August 1985, p. 26; Bill Kerr, ‘The Politics of the NDP Split’, *Arena*, no. 72, 1985, p. 51. A move away from the unilateralist stance of the NDP, however, would have been a move away from the opinion of a much broader range of NDP members.

¹⁷ Denborough, Interview; Frances Collins, ‘We’re Going out and Getting Branches Established’, *Direct Action*, no. 521, 8 May 1985, pp. 14-15; Ramani De Silva, ‘NDP Prepares for the Future’, *Direct Action*, no. 515, 13 March 1985, p. 9; [NDP] National Constitution (June 1984), reprinted as Appendix A in Fisher, *Half-Life*, p. 137; M. Hockings et al., ‘What Next for the Nuclear Disarmament Party’, *The Newsletter*, no. 1, May 1985, p. 17; Percy, *The ALP*, pp. 24, 28; Prior, ‘The Rise and Fall’, p. 7.

¹⁸ Denborough, Interview; Prior, ‘The Rise and Fall’, p. 6.

¹⁹ Prior, ‘The Rise and Fall’, pp. 7, 9. See also: De Silva, ‘NDP Prepares for the Future’, p. 9.

uranium mining but other matters.²⁰ Marie-Anne Hockings, a NSW Senate candidate from Newcastle, stated:

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. Our representative [that is, Vallentine] decided not to do this.²¹

Robert Wood, subsequently elected a NDP Senator in NSW in 1987, considered that in the split 'the issue at stake was whether the party would be a party led from the top ... [or] a party based on rank-and-file, grassroots, democratic decision making'.²² So the split group's efforts to use its leadership authority to exert control in the NDP reinforced opposition to the split group.

The split group had a different understanding of the problems of organisation within the NDP. Its members do not seem to have considered that NDP members would be committed to their party: Garrett could ask 'how can you hold so firmly and so hard to a structure like a party?' and answer 'I mean, it's not worthy of it'.²³ Because of that they perhaps ignored the possibility that their mobilisation to control the NDP was 'quite foreign to most members', which is what they had thought the SWP's actions would be.²⁴ Garrett, Vallentine, and others who wanted the party to present itself differently before and at 1987 elections drove this mobilisation, while those like Fisher followed in their wake.²⁵

Fisher asked: 'Why did so many in the NDP decide proscription was necessary?'²⁶ Given Australia's history of anti-communism and the long-standing opposition of much of the Australian left to 'Trots' such as the SWP, what was more extraordinary was that the split group could not even win majority support for its proposal for proscription, let alone its split. At the conference, a motion for a postal ballot to ratify conference proposals, put together with a proscription recommendation, was lost narrowly: this

²⁰ For an example, see: Per Dineson, 'Candidates in Local Council Elections', *Direct Action*, no. 517, 27 March 1985, p. 25.

²¹ Ramani De Silva, 'Nuclear Disarmament Party Walkout', *Direct Action*, no. 520, 1 May 1985, p. 3.

²² Denborough, Interview; *Direct Action*, 1984; Annear, 'The NDP Split: What Really Happened?', pp. 10-11; Frances Collins, "'I think the NDP Will Carry on'", *Direct Action*, no. 521, 8 May 1985, p. 14; Frances Collins, "'Not the Great Manipulators'", *Direct Action*, no. 521, 8 May 1985, p. 16; Ramani De Silva, 'Preparations of the NDP's First National Conference Well under Way', *Direct Action*, no. 517, 27 March 1985, p. 25; Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp.71, 81n; Goodfield, 'Pandas Leave the Swamp', pp. 26-27.

²³ Prior, 'The Rise and Fall', p. 9.

²⁴ Ted St John, the NSW election campaign coordinator, quoted in: Quigley, 'The Rise and Fall(?)', p. 17.

²⁵ Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 58-63, 73, 76-77, 90-95; Goodfield, 'Pandas Leave the Swamp', p. 26. Cf.: Jim Percy, *What Politics for a New Party*, Sydney, New Course, 1987, p. 6.

²⁶ Fisher, *Half-Life*, p. 90.

was when the walkout occurred.²⁷ A majority in each of the branches, except in Perth, Hobart, and some in Sydney, opposed proscription.²⁸

The majority in the NDP against proscription and for rank and file control of the party might have been underpinned by the support and involvement that had grown up for the party among a diversity of workers, including less well-off ones. Fisher noted the party had begun with middle-class professionals 'who were fairly comfortable with the machinery of elections and party politics and for whom nuclear disarmament was a goal in itself', and 'people with a primary commitment to a range of ideological and ethical positions ... from across the social spectrum'.²⁹ She believed proscription 'from the point of view of the middle-class professionals who were trying to establish the party's credibility in the wider community ... mattered a great deal'.³⁰ However, the party had since broken down traditional boundaries of political engagement.³¹ Perhaps the new element coming into the party felt that the party was gaining credibility more broadly among workers and supported how this had been done.

Therefore, the NDP did not collapse after the split. Yet the wind was knocked from the party's sails. Those who had left had brought much to the party, particularly in broader networks and outreach. Party support declined and membership fell even more quickly.³²

Among the split group, some were ready to react to what lay beyond their walkout. Tasmanian Wilderness Society members who had been involved in the NDP organised a meeting at which the leading TWS figure, independent Tasmanian parliamentarian Bob Brown, unsuccessfully proposed that energies be directed towards a green party. Within Peace and Nuclear Disarmament Action, which was formed by the split group, Garrett, Vallentine and others discussed forming a party based on a wider range of

²⁷ *Direct Action*, May 1985; Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 71-75. The split group claimed the conference was dominated by the SWP. On the basis of the conference attendance figures, a conference vote on proscription after the walkout, and the recollection of the author, who attended the conference, was an SWP member and at the time counted the SWP members there, the split group and SWP members at the conference both numbered about 35, out of a total conference attendance of 190. Therefore, either group needed the support of many of the other NDP members attending to win a vote. Also, while the split group and the SWP both organised for supporters to attend the conference, generally the conference was attended by those who were actively involved in the NDP, including from the SWP (only about one in eight of its members attended). As well, SWP members' presence at the non-delegated conference could hardly be unexpected, since their membership status was a subject of discussion.

²⁸ *Direct Action*, May-July 1985; Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 4, 66, 71-75, 90, 94; Goodfield, 'Pandas Leave the Swamp', p. 27. In Victoria, about 60 per cent favoured proscription in a state-wide postal ballot, but the Inner Melbourne, Geelong and Gippsland branches had refused to participate: the NDP subsequently claimed to have lost just 30 members in Victoria through the split: *Peace Talk*, 1985.

²⁹ Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 82, 84-85.

³⁰ Fisher, *Half-Life*, p. 96.

³¹ See previous chapter.

³² *Direct Action*, May-July 1985; Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 78-80; *Peace Talk*, 1985; Quigley, 'Rise and Fall(?)', p. 19.

policies. Others favoured the immediate formation of a new single-issue party: the Nuclear Free Australia Party was formed in late 1985 and lasted for about a year.³³

The Greens Begin

In the middle of the 1980s, environmental activists held many views about how to organise politically. The disillusionment with the ALP that emerged during the Hawke-Keating government's first term extended to many environmental activists: one study found most of these activists wanted a 'green' party.³⁴

Other environmentalists, however, discounted the possibility of successful electoral activity of any kind without their movement becoming stronger. Thus, the prospect of forming a green party did not generate the enthusiasm that accompanied the formation of the NDP. A meeting of environmentalists in July 1984 decided not to proceed to form a national Green party: they stated they felt the NDP had appropriated the support a green party would seek.³⁵

Nonetheless, two green parties started at about this time. In July 1984, the Green Party began to be formed in Brisbane. A month later, Tony Harris, who in 1983 had unsuccessfully proposed to his libertarian socialist network in the ALP in Sydney's inner-city Leichhardt to support a Labor Greens group in local elections and had then been expelled from the ALP for backing independent candidates, and others initiated the meetings in Sydney of what became the Greens. A few wanted the party to pursue only a community-based activist politics. Most, however, of the 150 or more people involved, including more ALP members and some SWP members, favoured the party having an electoral intervention as well. The group registered the name 'The Greens' with the Australian Electoral Commission to get its candidate identified as such on the ballot paper.³⁶ It also supported the NDP's Senate campaign.

³³ Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 77-78, 110-113.

³⁴ Tom Jagtenberg, 'Thinking Green', *Australian Society*, vol. 4, no. 5, May 1985, p. 11.

³⁵ Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 5-6.

³⁶ Harris, the Registered Officer for "The Greens", stated the decision to register the name was not thought out: Tony Harris, 'Regulating the Greens: Federal Electoral Laws and the Emergence of Green Parties in the 1980s and 1990s', *Labour History*, no. 99, November 2010, pp. 71-72. In 1984, the federal system of party registration had just been set up. Funding was to be given to parties for a vote of four per cent or more in a lower house electorate or for a state in the Senate, according to the number of votes in each instance. For smaller parties, the party being named on ballot paper was the main benefit. A party could choose to distribute the use of the name to "related parties", including state branches. Registration requirements included financial disclosures and having parliamentary representation or 500 members. However, 10 members could state the party met the membership requirement and would only need to prove that if their application for registration was challenged. Requirements for registration have increased over the years: some parties abandoned their registration because they felt unable or were unwilling to meet the more onerous requirements.

In 1985, the Greens proposed to the Green Party that the two co-sponsor a national meeting. The latter did not agree.³⁷ Drew Hutton, a leading figure in the Green Party, later explained he had opposed this because there was a:

Division between those who wanted small, local, fairly fringe Green parties and who saw that the mainstream conservation movement was hostile ... [and] those [like him—author] who wanted 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.³⁸

Hutton took his advocacy for a national green party to the Getting Together Conference, held at Easter 1986 in Sydney. That conference had been initiated by the Liffey group of green activists in Tasmania in an effort to develop an alliance of different groups. At the conference, Peter Garrett and other NSW Peace and Nuclear Disarmament Action members also argued that a party was needed to involve people in parliamentary processes. The Greens, on the other hand, argued their case for a network of autonomous Green parties. The national party idea elicited little support, and the alliance did not extend much beyond the conference.³⁹ Little wonder, then, that at least one Getting Together conference participant left with the impression that there 'will need to be a lot more discussion and reflection before an effective Green alternative emerges in Australia'.⁴⁰

After the Getting Together Conference, the Greens in Sydney offered 'related party' electoral registration to the Liffey group, the Green Party, a 'coalition of greens' in WA and the Green Electoral Movement (GEM) in SA. Only the last accepted that immediately. The Green Party petered out in 1986. Bob Brown, Garrett, and Hutton subsequently took part in the discussions which led to the formation of the Rainbow Alliance. When it became clear that many among those involved in RA would not accept a 'Greens' party, all but Hutton dropped out.⁴¹

In 1987, however, the Greens, which had suffered from low participation in between election campaigns, enthusiastically pursued a NSW Senate campaign. GEM also ran

³⁷ Eddy, *The Green Movement in Southeast Queensland*, p. 167; Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, pp. 174-75, 204-05; Harris, 'Regulating the Greens', p. 74; Drew Hutton, 'What Is Green Politics?', in Drew Hutton (ed.), *Green Politics in Australia*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1987, p. 15; Ariel Salleh, 'A Green Party: Can the Boys Do without One?', in Drew Hutton (ed.), *Green Politics in Australia*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1987, p. 74.

³⁸ Drew Hutton, Interview, 1994.

³⁹ Hutton, Interview; Peter Christoff, 'A Long Drought Ahead? The Environment Movement and Strategies for Change in the 1980s', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 6, no. 4, November 1987, pp. 25, 27; Eddy, *The Green Movement in Southeast Queensland*, p. 273; Fisher, *Half-Life*, pp. 114-15; Stephen Robson, 'Important New Party Discussion in Canberra', *Direct Action*, no. 595, 10 December 1986, p. 14.

⁴⁰ John Wiseman, 'Getting Together on the Left', *Arena*, no. 75, 1986.

⁴¹ Hutton, Interview; Eddy, *The Green Movement in Southeast Queensland*, p. 204; Harris, 'Regulating the Greens'.

a Senate ticket.⁴² In the NT, two peace and environment movement activists ran in an independent Senate ticket: candidate Catherine Paul told *Direct Action* that she wanted 'a new political party ... formed along green lines and I think now is the time to do it'.⁴³ The independent parliamentarians in Tasmania, Brown and Gerry Bates, started using the name Green Independents. Support for forming a green party was rising again.

In the late 1980s, however, the formation of a green party⁴⁴ continued to face a general opposition from the peak environmental organisations. Professional activists from some of these organisations had closely aligned the environment movement nationally with the ALP in the 1987 election. In April 1989 in NSW, the Green Electoral Network, which planned to endorse environmental candidates for the forthcoming election, was formed by leaders from several of the peak organisations. They proceeded, according to one GEN leaflet, 'regardless of our members' recommendations'.⁴⁵

In September 1989, Jeff Angel, from the Total Environment Centre, and Haydn Washington, of the Nature Conservation Council, accused the developing Green Alliance in NSW of pre-empting movement decisions about the elections and driving a wasteful and confusing proliferation of green campaigns. Before the election, TWS director Alastair Graham commented:

There are a few people who make a lot of noise but who don't have a lot of support who jump up and down and say 'I'm a green independent', 'I'm a green candidate'. They have yet to demonstrate any significant level of electoral support.⁴⁶

For the 1990 election, the ACF and TWS endorsed Greens campaigns in only Tasmania and Western Australia. The peak organisations claimed the Green campaigns elsewhere were fragmented and inexperienced. The peak organisations also seem to have been unwilling to accept the objectives of those campaigns—rejection of the major parties as 'manifestly inadequate', commitment to democracy in decision-making—and the range of groups and people involved.⁴⁷

⁴² *Direct Action*, 1986-1987; Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, p. 205.

⁴³ John Garcia, 'Top Enders Organise for Peace', *Direct Action*, no. 630, 14 October 1987, p. 7.

⁴⁴ See next chapter.

⁴⁵ Peter Boyle, 'NSW Greens Debate Electoral Strategy', *Direct Action*, no. 714, October 3, 1989, p. 14; Ian Cohen, *Green Fire*, Sydney, Harper Collins, 1996, p. 166; Tim Doyle, 'The Green Elite and the 1987 election', *Chain Reaction*, no. 63/64, April 1991, pp. 26-30.

⁴⁶ Suzanne Houweling, 'The Green Tide Rises', *Australian Rural Times*, January 25, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Sue Arnold, 'Grass-roots Rebellion', *The Bulletin*, 31 October 1989, p. 56; Peter Boyle, 'NSW Greens Debate Electoral Strategy', *Direct Action*, no. 714, 3 October 1989, p. 14; Burgmann, *Power and Protest*, p. 222; Green Alliance, 'Declaration of the Founding Conference of the Green Alliance', *Party Forum*, no. 2, October 1989, p. 8; Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment*, p. 182; Mike Ticher, 'How Green Was My Ballot', *Australian Left Review*, no. 116, April 1990, pp. 5-6.

The Rainbow Alliance

In December 1984, while the NDP and the Greens contested the federal election, anti-nuclear campaigner Jim Falk presented his 'Proposal for a new movement' to 'a small, informal group of people gathered in Melbourne'. His motivation was 'a growing concern about the lack of an alternative political vision in Australian politics'.⁴⁸ In the next two years, he started the Alternative Political Movement in NSW and discussed his idea with prominent labour and social movement activists. Falk also presented his views in a speech to the opening session of the Broad Left Conference at Easter 1986 in Sydney. He told the conference that what was needed was a 'coalition of social movements' with a strategy which included electoral participation, rather than a new left party.⁴⁹

Later in 1986, the Melbourne peace movement leader, Jo Camilleri, left the ALP and increased his agitation for this new movement. He had concluded that social democracy now had no reformist potential. The ALP Left, with which he had been involved, was 'too firmly entrenched in the Party's structures, electoralist objectives and ... patronage'. He was also concerned that the progressive social movements had lost confidence and were increasingly defensive and reactive to attacks on them. He called 'for the emergence of a *political movement* which builds on the finest traditions of the labour movement and the experience of the social movements' to reverse those trends. This political movement would not try to regroup the left: he thought the smaller Left parties 'mere remnants', unable to communicate with the Australian public. The approaches of the CPA, in particular, were rebuffed—only partly because of the latter's pro-Accord position.⁵⁰

A national conference in May 1987 established RA largely along the lines Camilleri sought. In particular, he was opposed to a green party and instead wanted the party based in the labour movement. RA's Charter stated the movement's aim were 'the far-reaching transformation of Australian society ... the abolition of all forms of domination and exploitation', an end to technological coercion and an ecologically sustainable society. However, neither the charter nor, for example, the comments presented to the

⁴⁸ Jim Falk, 'A New Alliance for Australia', in Robert Leach (ed.), *The Alliance Alternative in Australia: beyond Labor and Liberal*, Sydney, Catalyst Press, 1995, p. 114.

⁴⁹ Fisher, *Half-Life*, p. 114; Boris Frankel, 'Radical Politics: The Faltering of a Third Way', *Arena Magazine*, no. 35, June-July 1998, p. 39; Wiseman, 'Getting Together', p. 53.

⁵⁰ Camilleri, 'After Social Democracy'; Joseph Camilleri, 'Reshaping Australian Politics', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 6, no. 4, November 1987, pp. 29-31; Michael Petersen, 'The Left and the Greens', *Direct Action*, no. 563, 16 April 1986, p. 17. In 1988, another leading figure in Rainbow Alliance, Belinda Probert, called parties 'bloodsuckers on the movement': John Percy and Steve Painter, 'No Gold at Rainbow Conference', *Direct Action*, no. 646, 23 March 1988, p. 11.

launch by Belinda Probert, directly expressed the critique of the ALP Camilleri had made.

Despite the desires of many in RA for a cohesive formation, policy conflicts continued within it. The priority of economic policy, compared with ecological and feminist politics, remained a live question. More generally, RA was co-habited by 'many shades of opinion', as its letterhead put it, from the liberal left to socialist.

The organisation's membership peaked at something less than 1000. Nearly two-thirds of members were in Melbourne. Other branches were in Brisbane, Sydney and Wollongong, and Canberra. As many as 1000 people attended RA's conferences and public meetings.

Despite RA's mobilisations and its proclaimed aims of participation, democracy and equality, the observation of outside critics—at the 1988 national conference, for example, where no votes were taken—was that a small organising circle dominated it. The development strategy RA pursued from 1987 was drawn-out, which, according to Drew Hutton, made a clear program of action difficult to work out. There was a pre-public activist stage of two years, the public launch of RA in 1989 and a further delay with regard to election participation for at least another two years. Electoral activity was generally subordinated to political education and movement campaign work. In Victoria in 1991, an in-principle decision of the annual general meeting to take part in the forthcoming state election was rejected in a membership vote. The fielding of federal election candidates in 1993 was also contentious at first. Nonetheless, Hutton was a regular candidate in Brisbane seats in state and local elections.⁵¹

In the early 1990s, Camilleri began to discuss coalition work more. RA brought together some parties, unions and community groups in social justice campaigning, and after Democrats senator Janet Powell and her supporters resigned their Democrats membership, RA took part in her Independents Senate ticket in the 1993 elections. These efforts masked RA's stagnation. The Queensland and ACT groups had already split away in 1991, to join the Greens and the Democrats respectively. The

⁵¹ Belinda Probert, *The Rainbow Alliance: Reshaping the Political Agenda*, Reason in Revolt, 1987, www.reasoninrevolt.net.au/pdf/c0000020.pdf, accessed on 29 September 2009; Rainbow Alliance, *The Charter of the Rainbow Alliance*, Reason in Revolt, 1987, www.reasoninrevolt.net.au/pdf/d0622.pdf, accessed on 29 September 2009; Helen Van Den Berg and Joseph Camilleri, [letter], Reason in Revolt, 14 December 1990, www.reasoninrevolt.net.au/pdf/c0000018.pdf, accessed on 29 September 2009; *Direct Action*, 1988-90; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991-1993; Marian Aveling, 'Politics for the Caring Middle Classes', *Arena*, no. 87, 1989; Alison Caddick and Maryanne Lynch, 'Rainbow Politics: A Real Alternative?', *Arena*, no. 83, 1988, pp. 41-44; Camilleri, 'Reshaping Australian Politics', pp. 31-32; Fisher, *Half-Life*, p. 115; Frankel, 'Social movements', p. 13; Frankel, 'Radical Politics', pp. 38-40; Percy and Painter, 'No Gold at Rainbow Conference', pp. 10-11; Alan Roberts, 'Spanning Difference, Seeking Vision', *Arena*, no. 83, 1988, pp. 37-39.

results of the 1993 election campaign were unspectacular. Powell did not retain her seat. The two RA lower house candidates won only about 2-3 per cent of the vote. An RA annual report a year later shows that the organisation's local groups in Victoria were largely no longer functioning, only four people were consistently involved in the state's working group, the national working group was not meeting and there was 'no prospect of another National Conference'.⁵²

Old Left to New Left?

In the early 1980s, the Communist Party of Australia was the largest party of the 'old'—that is, socialist—left. Even after groups of leading members in Victoria and Queensland left in 1984, its ranks still numbered more than 1200. The party considered 'socialist renewal' would incorporate into a new party or movement the lessons of feminist and other struggles. The party debated the 'prospects for socialism' with some 'non-aligned' activists—in particular, a group in Sydney including Ken McLeod—and progressive migrant political organisations. The CPA supported the Hawke-Keating government overall. It called for the 'full implementation ... and further development' of the Accord. It worked with similar supporters of the Accord, especially those in the ALP left, but also in the Association for Communist Unity (ACU). The CPA's 1984 congress welcomed the NDP, but it did not propose to support the anti-nuclear party more actively, despite criticism of this stance and alternative proposals from some members.⁵³

The CPA was a major organiser of the Broad Left Conference at Easter 1986 in Sydney. The conference was attended by more than 1600 people. Through it, the party pursued two aims.

First, the CPA hoped the conference would contribute to its project for a new political formation. However, ALP speakers pleaded for support for the government and for socialists to join the ALP. Subsequent assessments of the conference's outcomes in this respect varied from an opinion that 'continuing activity inside and outside the Labor Party and reluctance to consider seriously the establishment of a new party' had

⁵² *Green Left Weekly*, 1991-1993; Joseph Camilleri, 'The Federal Election: Options and Prospects', *Arena Magazine*, no. 3, February-March 1993, p. 19; Frankel, 'Radical Politics', p. 37, 40; Rachel Hardie, '1994 RA Annual Report', reprint of report (original publication not indicated), *The Activist*, vol. 4, no. 4, September 1994, pp. 38-39 [reprint].

⁵³ Communist Party of Australia, Congress correspondence from National; Communist Party of Australia, Delegates lists, Communist Party of Australia, Series MSS 5021, Box 11 (155), Mitchell Library, Sydney, 1984, various documents; *Direct Action*, 1984; Scott Poynting, 'A New Left Party?', *Arena*, no. 88, 1989, pp. 42-43.

been overwhelmingly endorsed to a claim that the need for the 'formation of a new party to the left of the ALP ... but not what it should be' had been widely recognised.⁵⁴

Second, the CPA implicitly wanted the conference to mute criticism of the ALP and garner support for the Accord and the BLF deregistration. To this end, the conference's organisers sought a 'balanced' conference attendance by tending to exclude those who, being opposed to the CPA's perspectives, were considered a dogmatic and disruptive 'narrow left'. However, limits on conference attendance could not be implemented. These would have called into question the breadth of the conference and required an inquisition about the views of those attending. More importantly, the issues the Accord and other government policies increasingly raised for progressive politics worked against the exclusion of anti-Accord views. A written response to the conference's focus on the New Right stated:

Victory of the Right in Australia will begin with our surrender to the forces of conservatism within our own ranks ... includ[ing] our failure to confront these forces openly and publicly.⁵⁵

Groups and individuals, including some CPA members, who opposed the Accord contributed to the 'Socialist Policy Statement' presented to the conference and together organised a 400-strong public meeting. Within the conference, the statement's positions—in particular, its support for the BLF—were widely endorsed.⁵⁶

In the months after the Broad Left Conference, the CPA became more critical of government policy. It began to talk with some anti-Accord parties—the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA), and the Socialist Workers Party—but found that with regard to projects for left unity, only the SWP wanted to involve individuals as well as parties.⁵⁷ In turn, the SWP sought, with only some success, CPA participation in its January 1987 conference, where it discussed how a successful party could be built from among those who had differences. The SWP also decided to support the process in which the CPA and non-aligned activists were drafting a statement of intent to forming a new party. The

⁵⁴ David Burchell, 'After the Event: Broad Left Viewpoint', *Australian Left Review*, no. 96, Winter 1986, pp. 16-17; Tricia Caswell, 'Strength in Diversity', *Australian Left Review*, no. 96, Winter 1986, p. 31; Mike Donaldson, 'The Shape of Things to Come', *Australian Left Review*, no. 96, Winter 1986, p. 32; Poynting, 'A New Left Party?', pp. 42-43; Wiseman, 'Getting Together', p. 52.

⁵⁵ Cited by: Wiseman, 'Getting Together', p. 54.

⁵⁶ *Direct Action*, 4 September 1985; John Baker, 'When Opportunities Went Begging', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 221, 28 February 1996, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1996/221/14959>, accessed on 10 August 2009; Burchell, 'After the Event', pp. 15, 18; Poynting, 'A New Left Party?', pp. 42-44; Wiseman, 'Getting Together', p. 52.

⁵⁷ Communist Party of Australia, Minutes of National Executive Meeting held in Sydney, 17 & 18 October, 1986, Communist Party of Australia, Series MSS 5021 add on 1936, Box 14 (76), NO Correspondence 1986, Mitchell Library, Sydney, October 1986; Communist Party of Australia, National Executive, 22 & 23 August, 1986; *Tribune*, 1986.

statement, which became known as 'the Charter', was issued in April 1987. It couched the new party project's objectives in social-democratic terms such as 'the expansion of democratic rights ... a commitment to social justice ... and equitable access' to housing, social services and cultural activities. It also characterised 'the rightward tilt in Australian politics ... of Labor in government' as a product of 'the ALP Right's dominance'. As well, its initiators resisted using the term 'socialism'. Nonetheless, the SWP accepted this as a beginning because it believed a new party formed on the basis of the Charter would necessarily find a socialist approach central.⁵⁸

Through 1987, CPA and SWP members and others formed groups and held meetings in support of the Charter. Although the CPA leadership felt it had 'contentious and difficult issues' to take up with the SWP, the CPA Rank and File Group, which had worked with the SWP at the Broad Left Conference and found the SWP's vigour and relative youthfulness attractive, urged acceptance of involvement of the SWP in the new left party project. The prospect of socialist unity was attractive to many other activists. For example, George Georges, who, as an ALP senator, was suspended from party activity for three months in 1986 after voting against BLF de-registration laws, and had then stood as an independent for the Senate in 1987, stated that the presentation of 'a united front on issues as they emerge and in particular at election time' was needed and that a new party should be formed quickly.⁵⁹

Three weeks before the Charter's first national conference, which was held at the end of November 1987, an open Charter drafting committee produced a draft statement for consideration that proposed a new party of the left be formed in 1988. Two weeks before the conference, however, the CPA National Committee decided to support a list of prerequisites, rather than a timetable, for the new left party's formation. It did not advise the SWP of this. CPA and non-aligned members withdrew from the drafting committee. The points discussed by the CPA NC were incorporated into an

⁵⁸ n.a., *Towards a New Party of the Left, Reason in Revolt*, 1987, www.reasoninrevolt.net.au/pdf/c0000066.pdf, accessed on 29 September 2009; *Direct Action*, 1986; Percy, *What Politics for a New Party*, Poynting, 'A New Left Party?', p. 44.

⁵⁹ Sue Bolton, 'After the Elections: Alternative Activists Look Ahead', *Direct Action*, no. 620, 29 July 1987, p. 15; Ross, *Dare to Struggle*, p. 149.

alternative statement, which was presented at the conference by McLeod and supported by the CPA.⁶⁰

The CPA leadership's action brought the distrust among the various organisations and individuals involved in the Charter process back to the surface again. The CPA NC reiterated its concerns about the SWP's 'methods of work'.⁶¹ According to *Tribune* journalist Denis Freney, the socialist youth organisation, Resistance, which collaborated politically with the SWP, 'would have to be treated as the SWP in the open'.⁶²

According to left CPA member John Baker, SWP national secretary Jim Percy told him later that, in turn, that party felt betrayed by what had occurred and that this sense prevented it accepting the alternative statement.⁶³ Thus, SWP members continued to argue that 'it would be a mistake to predicate the formation of a new party on complete fulfilment of [preparatory] steps',⁶⁴ even though the alternative statement did not literally propose this and amendments at the conference to the two statements had brought them 'much closer', according to Brian Carey, a CPA member critical of the alternative statement.⁶⁵ When the two statements were then put to a vote, the draft statement was supported by only a minority of delegates, but the vote by delegates who were SWP members and a few others against the alternative statement prevented its adoption as well, because the CPA and its supporters had required that conference decisions be made by a two-thirds majority vote.

Supporters of the alternative statement accused the SWP of acting as a bloc. Yet they had also operated as a bloc. The CPA leadership declared to its members, who held varying views about the new party, that support for the alternative statement was

⁶⁰ Brian [Aarons], To Executive Members, Communist Party of Australia, Series MSS 5021 add on 1936, Box 14 (76), NO Correspondence 1986, Mitchell Library, Sydney, 4 December 1986; Communist Party of Australia, Minutes of National Committee meeting held 13-15 Nov. 1987 in Sydney, Communist Party of Australia, Series MSS 5021 add on 1936, 14 (76), National Committee Minutes Reports 1987, Mitchell Library, Sydney, November 1987; *Direct Action*, 1986-1987; Baker, 'When Opportunities Went Begging'; Adam Farrar et al., 'Draft Statement of Intent Document: For a New Party of the Left', *Socialist Workers Party Discussion Bulletin: Twelfth National Conference January 1988*, no. 2, n.d., pp. 5-6; Ken McLeod, 'Draft Statement of Intent', *Socialist Workers Party Discussion Bulletin: Twelfth National Conference January 1988*, no. 2, n.d., pp. 1-2; n.a., 'Documents from the New Left Party Charter Conference, Melbourne, November 28-29, 1987: Introduction and Explanatory Notes', *Socialist Workers Party Discussion Bulletin: Twelfth National Conference January 1988*, no. 2, n.d, p. ii.

⁶¹ Communist Party of Australia, National Committee 13-15 Nov. 1987.

⁶² Denis Freney, 'Problems in the Charter Process', *Socialist Workers Party Discussion Bulletin: Twelfth National Conference January 1988*, no. 2, n.d, p. 31. In 1972 Resistance was called the Socialist Youth Alliance.

⁶³ Baker, 'When Opportunities Went Begging'.

⁶⁴ Pip Hinman and Paul Petit, 'Challenges for the Charter Process', *Socialist Workers Party Discussion Bulletin: Twelfth National Conference January 1988*, no. 2, n.d., p. 34.

⁶⁵ Brian Carey, 'Positive and Negative Aspects of New Party Conference', *Socialist Workers Party Discussion Bulletin: Twelfth National Conference January 1988*, no. 2, n.d., p. 36.

party policy. Moreover, the two-thirds vote rule ostensibly called on Charter participants to seek consensus, but became, for supporters of the alternative statement, a demand that the minority in the Charter process should abandon their views although the alternative statement had not won a vote according to the rules its supporters wanted.⁶⁶ The then secretary of the CPA's Canberra branch, when he later resigned, stated the party's 'leading representatives engage[d] in gross dishonesty, sectarianism and attempted sabotage ... at the new party conference'.⁶⁷

Only a few CPA members would now work with the SWP. The SWP remained involved in some Charter groups for a few months, but its attention turned increasingly towards an attempt to merge with the SPA. The two parties had worked in joint campaigns against the Accord since the 1983-84 Social Rights campaign. In 1988 and 1989, they held events together, set up common election tickets and worked on a program under which the organisations could merge, but their counterposed responses to the June 1989 suppression of the Chinese pro-democracy movement brought this effort to a halt.⁶⁸

The CPA, meanwhile, discussed proposals for its own dissolution. Some CPA members were opposed to this, some wanted to establish a new political formation including the ALP left and the Rainbow Alliance, and others focused their efforts on a regroupment with the ACU. When the last approach won out, the ACU insisted the party should be 'Marxist-Leninist'. This was not acceptable to McLeod's group, which parted ways with the CPA. The CPA did not accept the demand either. So the ACU decided not to take part in the regroupment.

In 1989, some CPA members, with party leadership support, and a group of former ACU members launched the New Left Party. The NLP founding conference was held in 1990, while the CPA dissolved itself in 1991. The NLP proclaimed an 'open Marxism', although its social justice platform called for equitable distribution rather than changes in the sphere of production.

⁶⁶ n.a., 'Report on the National Left Charter Conference', Socialist Workers Party Discussion Bulletin: Twelfth National Conference January 1988, no. 2, n.d., p. 33; John Wishart, 'Why the Melbourne Conference Failed', Socialist Workers Party Discussion Bulletin: Twelfth National Conference January 1988, no. 2, n.d, p. 34.

⁶⁷ Cited in Baker, 'When Opportunities Went Begging'.

⁶⁸ Communist Party of Australia, National Committee and Executive Minutes and Decisions, Communist Party of Australia, Series MSS 5021 add on 1936, Box 15 (76), Mitchell Library, Sydney, 1988, various documents; Direct Action, 1987-1989; n.a., 'Documents from the New Left Party Charter Conference', p. 4. The SPA supported the Chinese government's actions, while the SWP opposed this. The two parties still presented their candidates together in the December 1989 SA elections, as the Socialist Alliance.

Even some advocates for the new party described its work from the start as 'something of a disaster'. Its membership declined quickly and in 1993 it too dissolved itself, with some members forming a group called Left Connections.⁶⁹

Independentism?

In the 1988 NSW election, a number of independent candidates were elected in the lower house, in particular from previously safe ALP seats in Newcastle. In the 1990 federal elections, votes for minor parties and independent candidates surged.⁷⁰ To some commentators, events such as these, together with attitude survey results, signalled the rise of an independentist ideology, the supporters of which gave a low priority to party discipline.⁷¹

With regard to left independent candidates, however, more contested the 1987 federal election than any other election during the long decade. Their campaign themes included: peace, social justice and the environment; Aboriginal rights; free tertiary education; an activist Paul Keating against Treasurer Keating in the latter's Blaxland electorate; and a 'People's Candidate', decided at a 150-strong public meeting, against Hawke in Wills. Jack Munday, a Communist Party member, environmentalist and former union leader, won the highest left independent lower house vote - 13 per cent - in the inner-city Sydney electorate, while several other lower house candidates won votes of four or five per cent. Jo Vallentine was re-elected at the head of a self-titled peace ticket. In Queensland, about 1000 people, including members of various organisations, mobilised in a re-election campaign for George Georges, a former ALP Senator, who won close to two per cent of the vote. No left party candidates reached similar votes. Those of the Industrial Labour Party, which was led by Bill Hartley, a Socialist Left leader expelled from the ALP in 1986, and comprised mainly of union activists, in particular from the Builders Labourers Federation, failed to reach even one per cent of the vote. The Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP) did a little better than that

⁶⁹ Communist Party of Australia, CPA NC and Executive Minutes and Decisions 1988, various documents; Communist Party of Australia, CPA 30th (Special) Congress, Communist Party of Australia, Series CY 3381 [microfilm], Mitchell Library, Sydney, 1990, various documents; David Burchell, 'Party Games', *Australian Left Review*, no. 104, April-May 1988, pp. 6-7; Adam Farrar, 'Life beyond the Fragments', *Australian Left Review*, no. 106, August-September 1988, pp. 21-23; Adam Farrar, 'Left in the Limelight', *Australian Left Review*, no. 112, September-October 1989, p. 3; McDonald and McDonald, *Intimate Union*, pp. 324-28, 357-58; Julia Perkins, 'Defending Leninism-Lessons from the NLP Experience!', *The Activist*, vol. 4, no. 9, November 1994, pp. 37-39; Poynting, 'A New Left Party?', pp. 44-45.

⁷⁰ See ch. 8.

⁷¹ See, for example: Ernie Chaples, 'Independents in Decline?', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, vol. 68, no. 10, March 1992, p. 28.

in its Senate campaigns and, in NSW, with favourable preference flows, in particular from the Greens, Robert Wood was elected.⁷²

In the 1990s, on the other hand, relatively few left 'independent' federal candidates were independent other than in the sense of standing outside the two-party structure of the ALP and Coalition parties. Some represented organisations, such as the Democratic Socialist Electoral League, the New Left Party, or Rainbow Alliance, which did not have parliamentarians and otherwise failed, or chose not to be, electorally registered. The leading Environment Independents, a group which ran Senate tickets in 1990, included: Irina Dunn, a 1987 NSW NDP Senate candidate who, against party opposition, assumed the NSW Senate seat when Wood was disqualified under constitutional provisions related to citizenship, and Gordon McQuilten, who was reported in January 1990 to belong to the unregistered Australian Conservation Party. The Janet Powell Independents was a 1993 Senate ticket in Victoria headed by the former Democrats leader. In terms of votes, none of these candidates performed as well as the Green parties that had now emerged.⁷³

Among greens, the Green Independents in Tasmania had pushed for the formation of a national green party during the 1980s, were involved in setting up Greens parties in the state in 1990-91 and became part of the national Greens in the following year. Some green candidates ran as independents in 1990 in the context of the peak environment organisations stance against the Green Alliance campaigns. In the event, these organisations only endorsed Jim Collins, in Eden-Monaro. In Queensland, the organisations contributed to a decision by a February 1990 conference of the Queensland Green Network not to run a Senate ticket in the state. Instead, the conference supported two candidates running as independents in lower house electorates, Craig Hardy, in Capricornia, and Coral Wynter, in Forde.⁷⁴

The remaining independent left candidates in federal general elections were:

- In 1990: Ted Mack, in North Sydney; Jack Culpin, who had support from some of the left unions, in Calwell; and the socialist Ian Bolas, in Fremantle.
- In 1993: Mack; Phil Cleary, in Wills, who had won the 1992 by-election there; Elvie Sievers, a leading figure in a campaign against the closure of a public secondary school, in Melbourne; and Norm Sanders, formerly a Democrat senator from Tasmania, in Eden-Monaro;.

⁷² Direct Action, 1987.

⁷³ Direct Action, 1990; Green Left Weekly, 1991-93, 1996. About McQuilten, see: Houweling, 'The Green Tide Rises', p. 6.

⁷⁴ Sibelle, Interview; Direct Action, 1989-90; Green Left Weekly, 1991; Pat Brewer, 'Results of the 1990 federal election', Party Forum, no. 9, 2 June 1990, pp. 8-12.

- In 1996: Cleary; Irene Bolger, the former nurses' union leader, in Batman; and also Bob Leach, a proponent of the politics of an alliance of the left, in Brisbane.

Of these, Mack, in 1990 and 1993, and Cleary, in 1993, were elected. Mack, a former mayor of North Sydney, claimed 'he would represent ... *'majority* electorate opinion on broad issues *irrespective* of his personal views'.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, many considered him relevant to the left because of his rejection of many of the perks of office, his promotion of forms of participatory democracy and his favouring of government spending on social services over military expenditures and tax cuts.⁷⁶

Cleary, unlike Mack, was self-consciously politically of the left. However, he avoided being called 'socialist' or 'left'. He also denied mass media claims that the hard or far left was 'responsible for me running and indeed winning'. His impression was that the union movement was reluctant to break with its orthodoxy of ALP support. Union leaders and many rank-and-file unionists who were hostile to the economic rationalism of the ALP offered him only 'cloak and dagger' support, mainly in kind and insignificant in financial terms.⁷⁷

Cleary instead found support among 'people that I'd known for a period of time, friends [and] acquaintances'. Some were from particular groups, such as Louise Connor, then convenor of the New Left Party, and Doug White, an editor of the journal *Arena*. There were also 'trade unionists ... the teaching profession, professionals, government workers, health workers [and communication workers] ... who were affected by the government's privatisation'. Others were 'ordinary working people', 'the manufacturing sector, those ... who were opposed to the free trade policies of the government', and 'local community people ... [for example,] a local accountant who had a connection to the Labor Party and actually believed it was time to do something different.' Cleary in 1996 claimed that he had grouped together about 2000 supporters.⁷⁸

Cleary thought his supporters were motivated 'by the bigger issues':

I was arguing some really obvious things which haven't gone away ... about the free trade position, the level playing field. People understood that. They saw industries declining. People who'd been around a long time used to point to where we use to have factories and say: 'there used to be factories here, but they're gone now. What's the reason for this? Why don't we have jobs?'

⁷⁵ Sally Francis, 'Enter the Anti-politician', *Direct Action*, no. 736, 24 April 1990, p. 4.

⁷⁶ *Green Left Weekly*, 1992; Francis, 'Enter the Anti-politician'.

⁷⁷ Phil Cleary, Interview, 1994; Phil Cleary, *Cleary: Independent*, Sydney, Harper Collins, 1998, pp. 81-82.

⁷⁸ Cleary, Interview; Cleary, *Cleary*, pp. 77, 259, 285..

... The Labor Party wasn't doing what people would have expected a Labor Party to do, to look after their own.⁷⁹

However, he was also 'the right person'. His football playing, coaching and commentary had made him a public figure. In the 1992 by-election, the mass media gave him a platform to publicise his policies. A general election, he noted, was 'a lot harder: you were a subplot in the major theme'.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, in 1993, preferences were enough to carry him over the line.

After Cleary's election he received many approaches from people who were considering running as an independent. He believed, however, that for people to think 'that simply by being an independent ... you have the same attitude as someone else who's an independent' was wrong. With a 'right-wing independent', he stated, 'you'd have nothing in common'.⁸¹

Cleary nonetheless raised the prospect of 'an Alliance of independents'. He did allow the Greens might be incorporated into a broader alliance. However, Cleary and his supporters emphasised candidates' community comprehension and identity, media profile and footslogging enthusiasm to the exclusion of working with the Greens. Also, for some of his supporters, the concept of 'independent' politics seems to have blurred the issue of opposition to the ALP, which a new party might have posed more sharply. This helps explain Cleary's failure to support the 1994 Greens by-election campaign in Coburg—a state seat in the heart of Cleary's electorate—which gained 21 per cent of the vote.⁸² In practice, the alliance of independents was confined to Cleary's collaborators and a few election campaigns in some safe ALP seats in northern and western Melbourne.

Conclusion

This discussion of the new party projects in the 1980s shows that a critical mass of activists was required for a project to form a new party. The project needed to provide the interest, confidence and connectedness that together could build the core for organising collective action among workers in that way. The threat to each project's

⁷⁹ Cleary, Interview..

⁸⁰ Cleary, Interview.

⁸¹ Cleary, Interview.

⁸² Cleary, *Cleary*, pp. 256-257; Philip Cleary, 'Independents and an Alliance', in Robert Leach (ed.), *The Alliance Alternative in Australia: Beyond Labor and Liberal*, Sydney, Catalyst Press, 1995, pp. 148-153; Chris McConville, 'On the Left', *Arena Magazine*, no. 14, December 1994 - January 1995, p. 13. Leach's book and associated book launches were an effort to start an Alliance in Australia which emulated that in New Zealand. His premise seems to have been bringing together the forces the CPA had previously wanted to unite – the Rainbow Alliance, the remnants of the CPA in Left Connections, independent socialists and elements of the ALP Socialist Left. See: Robert Leach, 'Australia and the Changing World: The Background to a New Alliance of Political Parties', in Robert Leach (ed.), *The Alliance Alternative in Australia: Beyond Labor and Liberal*, Sydney, Catalyst Press, 1995, p. 33.

success was the desire of groups and individuals within the project to control the project, rather than relinquish control to it.

Independents such as Cleary were articulate and locally successful voices of opposition to the ALP. His call for an alliance of independents, however, reflected the desire of each independent to retain individual control of their political activity. It did not resolve but instead reinforced the separateness of the independents. Beyond what Cleary could achieve from his initial network, the independents were too diffuse to hold the focus of opposition and sustain that new party project.

The Charter process involved a substantial group of people who were active in the labour and other social movements. More than that, the Charter had cut through some of the divisions among socialists about the Accord. It was also the new party on offer at that moment. These two factors made the Charter attractive to others. Yet neither the Communist Party and its supporters, nor, in response to their actions, the Socialist Workers Party, proved willing to carry that project through. For the CPA, the New Left Party had the apparent advantage of like-mindedness. Yet for a new party it was in fact not broad enough. As well, its formation was delayed until after that of the Greens.

In a different way, Rainbow Alliance also lacked the confidence to act according to the opportunities that were available to it. Boris Frankel argued that in the early 1990s the prominent and well-organised social movements upon which RA's strategy relied no longer existed, but by then the die was already cast against it.⁸³ RA's unifying potential was reduced by its initial refusal to collaborate with existing parties and inability to incorporate green political currents, as well as by some of its organisational practices. Also, it largely—certainly until it was too late—rejected electoral activity, yet this was a major way the opposition to the ALP's neo-liberalism among workers was expressed. When it did emerge into the public political arena, between 1989 and 1991, this happened in competition with the Greens: RA was effectively confined to Victoria.

Competition with another party was also important with regard to the formation of a green party, according to Timothy Doyle and Aynsley Kellow. They wrote 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'.⁸⁴ However, the NDP was not directly counterposed to the formation of a green party beyond the 1984 Senate election. The first decision against forming a green party occurred just a month after the NDP had been founded, when its impact

⁸³ Cf.: Frankel, 'Social movements', pp. 11, 14.

⁸⁴ Doyle and Kellow, *Environmental Politics and Policy Making*, p. 130.

was as yet unproven. Also, some Greens showed they could operate alongside the NDP. Finally, the NDP lost its overwhelming electoral presence after 1985, while green party advocates continued to debate what way they should move forward in the following years. The divisions among greens played more of a role than the NDP in hindering the development of a national Green Party in the middle of the 1980s.

Alternatively, the NDP might have adversely affected the broader conditions for successfully forming a Greens party, as Elim Papadakis suggested. He claimed that the experience of the NDP 'made environmentalists wary of ... the problems of transforming a social movement into a vehicle for parliamentary politics'.⁸⁵ In fact, the NDP would appear to have inspired the later new party projects more than it had made them wary. The success of the NDP in its first months stood as an example of what a new party could achieve and established as an ambition the formation of an electoral alternative to the left of the ALP. The NDP was first of all an opportunity seized. When inaction would have created the chance that many would have fallen back under the sway of the ALP, those who questioned their adherence to the ALP in the first years of the long Labor decade created a new party.

The issue was rather whether or not those who wanted a green party were sufficiently cognisant of how the opportunity the NDP presented had been squandered. The NDP emerged from the one insurgent social movement of that time. On that basis, its proponents, unlike the green party advocates then, were able to overwhelm the opposition of most of the movement's organisational leaders, involve a substantial number of activists nationally, reinforce their interest in this collective action through their ability to work together and reach a large audience, and harness their confidence to use the electoral system to further their goals.⁸⁶ The split group then undermined this. According to Baker, the NDP was the first example where:

A willingness to bury past differences and to debate existing differences and to put them to the test of a vote amongst all those willing to take part was just not to be found. There was always a fear of stacking, never a preparedness to accept a political defeat as a normal part of the political process.⁸⁷

For example, Fisher wrote of the NDP conference postal ballot vote that 'to lose so much by such a small margin was *intolerable*'.⁸⁸ Thereupon the split group, unable to ensure its sole leadership of the NDP, left. With that split, 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 and Vallentine, was sundered.

⁸⁵ Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment*, p. 180. See also: Harris, 'Regulating the Greens', p. 72.

⁸⁶ Denborough, Interview..

⁸⁷ Baker, 'When Opportunities Went Begging'.

⁸⁸ Fisher, *Half-Life*, p. 71. Emphasis added.

The Greens chief opportunity emerged in the late 1980s. How the Green parties developed and the efforts made in the 1990s to establish a national Greens party are discussed in the next chapter.

The Formation of the Greens

In 1989, efforts to form Greens parties revived. Harris, the national registered officer for the name, found he was now being called on frequently to distribute the right to use it.¹ This became the newest and, as it would eventuate, the last substantial attempt during the long Labor decade to bring together the critical mass of activists that a project to form a new party needed to succeed.

The taking of the 'Greens' name by various groups across the country did not mean, however, that the groups, and the individuals within them, held one view about what Green politics should involve. In particular, a conflict arose about what structure and membership would achieve the Greens' aims. Some felt the Greens' structure should be based on various formations, including regional parties, working in alliances to increasingly find agreement and carry out joint activity. Others believed an immediate greater organisational centralisation of the party, with the aim of being more effective within the existing electoral system and in parliaments, would develop the political and social movement they felt was needed.

A national Greens emerged from this conflict in the first half of the 1990s. However, because of how this happened, the existing momentum among workers for a new party was temporarily largely exhausted. Little progress was made in improving the numbers of members, the overall vote, and the organisational reach of the Greens between the years in which the Greens parties had first arisen together across the country and when the Hawke-Keating government fell in early 1996.

Why the Greens Rose

The continuing reaction against the experience of the ALP in the guise of the Hawke-Keating government appears to have provided a basis for the Greens' upsurge. In 1990, Kim Herbert from the Greens WA stated:

There seems to be a very strong vote against both major parties around Australia. People are showing they have had enough of the way they behave, the way they treat the public, and we are hoping to say 'look there is a different way you can achieve your ends politically'.²

¹ Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, pp. 205-06. Harris has recently deposited his papers related to the early history of the Greens in the Mitchell Library, but these were not available there during the research for this thesis: Harris, 'Regulating the Greens', p. 71.

² Houweling, 'The Green Tide Rises', p. 6.

The South Sydney Greens activist Bruce Welch thought most people who worked with the Greens did so 'because they want something *different* from the major parties'.³

Those who wanted to form a Greens party in Australia were also inspired by the experience of the West German and other European Greens parties.⁴ The September 1989 founding conference of the NSW Green Alliance (GA), for example, declared:

This alliance is open to all groups and individuals who subscribe to the four basic principles of the German Greens: a sustainable economy, grassroots democracy, social and economic equality, and disarmament and non-violence.⁵

In 1990, the Tasmanian Green, Robyn Eckersley, stated these principles as 'ecology, grass roots democracy, social responsibility and non-violence'. She wrote that an 'ecology first' interpretation of these 'pillars' of Green politics predominated over an 'anthropocentric' approach 'defended by many eco-socialists' which considered ecological concerns should not be privileged over the concerns of human emancipatory movements.⁶

As well, a refusal to bargain about and thus abandon policy was an element among Greens' thinking and practice. The Greens WA senators exemplified this by sticking to stated positions in negotiations, such as those about the 1993 Budget. A 1996 Greens WA election newsletter stated:

The Greens would not, for example, have traded forest protection for the passage of native title legislation in 1993. While deal-making is the norm of modern government, the Greens believe that governments and parliaments must make decisions based on community values and beliefs. The Greens do not believe that one issue, or one section of the community, should be traded off for another.⁷

Some Greens were sometimes willing to make deals. In May 1989, after the Green Independents won five seats and the parliamentary balance of power, they struck 'The Tasmanian Parliamentary Accord', which secured government for the ALP, in exchange for promises focused on environmental concerns. However, these Tasmanian Greens also denied that 'politics is only about compromise'.⁸ They broke off

³ Pat Brewer, 'Two Camps in the Greens', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 25, 28 August 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1991/25/725>, accessed on 22 May 2009.

⁴ Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, pp. 204-05.

⁵ Green Alliance, 'Declaration of the Founding Conference of the Green Alliance', p. 8.

⁶ Robyn Eckersley, 'The Ecocentric Perspective', in Cassandra Pybus and Richard Flanagan (eds), *The Rest of the World Is Watching*, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 1990. In 1996 "The Charter of the Greens" listed the first five of its subheadings in this order: "ecology", "democracy", "social justice", "peace" and "an ecologically sustainable economy": Brown and Singer, *The Greens*, pp. 194-195.

⁷ Cited in: Jorge Jorquera, 'Where to Now for the WA Greens?', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 233, 13 March 1996, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1996/223/14832>, accessed on 9 August 2009.

⁸ Clare Curran, 'Christine Milne', *Australian Left Review*, no. 113, November-December 1989, p. 36.

this arrangement in 1990 because of the Tasmanian government's support for 'resource security'.⁹

Finally, the Greens organisations began in at least some way as alliances that brought together groups of activists formed from distinct networks:

- In Tasmania, this was implicit in the grouping together of Independent candidates and parliamentarians in the 1980s.
- In Western Australia, the Alternative Coalition, the Green Development Network and Vallentine's group amalgamated in 1989 into the Green Earth Alliance, before that united with the Western Australian Greens Party at the start of 1990. This process brought a variety of backgrounds and concerns into the one organisation. The new Greens WA then grew from an initial 400 members and supporters to more than 650 in a few months. Vallentine was elected as a Senator again as the party's candidate in the March 1990 election.¹⁰
- The Victorian Green Party was quickly superseded when, in November 1989, it held a 60-strong seminar which was addressed by urban and rural environmental activists, Democratic Socialist Party members, and tramways union official Monica Harte. There it was decided to run a Senate ticket as the Victorian Green Alliance. The VGA preselected indigenous activist Alf Bamblett, rural environmentalist Ken McGregor and DSP member Pauline Scott.
- When the Green Party (SA), formed in 1989, chose not to stand in the federal election, a February 1990 public meeting initiated the SA Green Alliance. The SAGA contested the Senate and the seat of Adelaide, where Ken Oehme, a local councillor who had recently resigned from the ALP, was the candidate.
- In the ACT, the 100-strong Green Democratic Alliance nominated Hedley Rowe, who as an anti-Accord union branch secretary had earlier supported the NDP, for the Senate, and Gina Jeffreys, who had gained public prominence as a campaigner against high interest rates, and Sue Bolton, who was a DSP activist, for the territory's lower house seats.¹¹ Jeffreys told a journalist:

⁹ Direct Action, 1989-90; Burgmann, *Power and Protest*, pp. 217-19; Michael Field and Bob Brown, 'The Green/ALP Accord', in Cassandra Pybus and Richard Flanagan (eds), *The Rest of the World is Watching*, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 1989, pp. 258-66; Richard Flanagan, 'Masters of History', in Cassandra Pybus and Richard Flanagan (eds), *The Rest of the World Is Watching*, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 1990, p. 130. Elim Papadakis discussed an unwillingness of environmentalists to compromise about environmental protection: Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment*, p. 194. With regard to the Greens, that understanding would be too limited.

¹⁰ Green Issue, 1989-1990; Dhanu River, 'Doing Politics Differently—the WA Greens', Chain Reaction, no. 70, January 1994.

¹¹ Direct Action, 1989-90; Houweling, 'The Green Tide Rises'.

I haven't had anything to do with the green movement before but I've been a concerned citizen at home ... with normal aspirations to keep wilderness areas because I know we need it for our environment.¹²

The GDA stated it was 'part of the nation-wide efforts by a range of alternative electoral coalitions to meet the demand for genuine representation of ordinary people's concerns'.¹³

Creating Greens parties as alliances of a variety of political outlooks and regional organisations was the explicit approach in NSW. All those who were interested were invited to participate in the state-wide GA and to form or join a local Green group: Irina Dunn, the NDP's Robert Wood, and Democrats representatives all participated in the early GA meetings, but dropped out to contest the elections independently; the DSP abandoned its proposed Senate ticket and instead nominated a member to be among the five GA candidates. The Green Alliance was founded through a conference and two meetings, with attendances between 150 and 300. The founding conference of the GA 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.¹⁴

The conference initiated the formation of local Green parties: eventually, there were six in Sydney and others on the Central Coast, in the Hunter and the Illawarra, and, in the state's northeast, one around Grafton and one in the Rainbow region, which claimed to have 700 members. Finally, the GA conference stated 'the choosing of Green candidates should be the result of an open process involving as many people as possible'. In the end, a proposed 'primary' vote by all electors who wanted to take part in selecting the GA Senate ticket was not held, but more than 400 members of the Greens parties in NSW voted in the pre-selection.¹⁵

In Queensland, the Greens alliance largely developed after the 1990 federal election. About a dozen people from the Queensland Green Network organised a policy seminar series, followed by a conference about Greens in local government in November 1990. From this, the Green Alliance campaign in southeast Queensland for the council elections was established. Under its banner, various parties—the Democrats, the DSP, Rainbow Alliance, and also the Socialist Party of Australia—and

¹² Houweling, 'The Green Tide Rises', p. 6.

¹³ Ian Collier, "'Green' Option for ACT Voters', reprint from *Canberra Times*, 17 November 1989, *Party Forum*, no. 6, 29 November 1989, p. 29.

¹⁴ Green Alliance, 'Declaration of the Founding Conference of the Green Alliance', p. 8.

¹⁵ Pat Brewer, Interview, 1994; *Direct Action*, 1989-1990; Arnold, 'Grass-roots Rebellion', p. 56; Green Alliance, 'Declaration of the Founding Conference of the Green Alliance', p. 8; Hall Greenland, 'The Greens and the next Senate Election: Let's Have a Primary', reprint of leaflet, *Party Forum*, no. 1, Sep 1989, pp. 8-9; Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, p. 206; Houweling, 'The Green Tide Rises', p. 6.

independent activists nominated for different wards. Eventually there were 16 candidates for the Brisbane and three other councils. Drew Hutton was the Brisbane mayoral candidate. Maurice Sibelle from the DSP was elected campaign coordinator. Supporters came from the respective parties and candidates, local and peak environment organisations, People for Nuclear Disarmament, and the New Left Party. The campaign was organised through weekly central meetings and by each candidate in their ward. Altogether up to three hundred people were involved. Sibelle stated 'there did develop a certain solidarity 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.¹⁶

A National Greens Party is Proposed and Opposed

Meanwhile, in 1990, the Hawke-Keating government introduced laws that provided 'resource security' for the forestry industry. The relationship between the peak environment groups and the ALP began to break down. The groups—TWS, in particular—become more open to backing a Greens party.

In July 1990, Hutton met with Bob Brown in Tasmania. They discussed the establishment of a national Greens party. Brown felt the Greens' achievements in Tasmania, the unacceptability to Greens of the growing separation of rich and poor, and the failed promise of the ALP on land rights and the environment made 'clear ... that we should have a national Greens'.¹⁷ They contacted various people. In the following months, Brown, Jo Vallentine, leaders of the Democrats and the Rainbow Alliance, and leading peak environment group figures met together at least once, in Melbourne, to discuss the formation of a national Green party.¹⁸

In April 1991, Brown told the Ecopolitics V conference session 'Whither Green Politics?': '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.'¹⁹ His green party would be a complementary electoral apparatus and reforming 'voice in parliament' for community groups²⁰ and would be organised so that it could compete with the

¹⁶ Hutton, Interview; Sibelle, Interview; Eddy, *The Green Movement in Southeast Queensland*, p. 298.

¹⁷ Bob Brown, Interview, 1994; Hutton, Interview.

¹⁸ *Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Norman, *Bob Brown*, p. 161; Phillip Toyne, 'The Green Rollercoaster', *Australian Left Review*, no. 125, February 1991, p. 48. Also: Hutton, Interview..

¹⁹ Dick Nichols, 'Brown Urges National Green Party, Unity with Democrats', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 7, 10 April 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1991/7/1598>, accessed on 17 May 2007.

²⁰ Brown, Interview.. In August 1993, at the first national conference of the Australian Greens, Brown stated the Greens were "the political arm of a social and environmental movement that is destined to become as reformist as the labour movement was a century ago": James Basle, 'Australian Greens Hold

established major parties and the still more powerful press and 'multinational organisations' in order to 'give the electorate the alternative'.²¹

Brown's proposal for a national Greens party involved a particular interpretation of the Green principle of participatory democracy. First, Brown foresaw a 'big danger':

The trap of 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.

We can't, unfortunately, ultimately have full consensus, with everybody fully informed on every matter before the major decisions, although we must maintain that principle wherever we can throughout our political process.²²

The Greens, Brown argued, should 'highlight trust in the people that represent us'.²³

Second, the Greens would be directed by broader populations over and above party members. According to supporters of this concept, the electorate as a whole was one reference point. After Brown's Ecopolitics V conference speech, Eckersley commented that while the movement might take an uncompromising stance, the Greens' role was to put together a coherent program that would appeal to everyone. In the Greens parties which supported the project, constitutional provisions were often adopted in which parliamentarians' 'duty to the electorate' overrode adherence to Greens policy. An early example of this was Brown's own Denison Greens.²⁴

For this concept, however, the green movement, constituted as community groups, was more important for Green parliamentarians to be responsive to.²⁵ Helen Stannard wrote the Greens practiced participatory democracy because the party was 'constantly liaising, meeting and working with, representing and in dialogue with a spectrum of grassroots groups'.²⁶ According to Brown, 'the strength of the Greens has been the

First Conference', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 112, 25 August 1993, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1993/112/5604>, accessed on 13 May 2008.

²¹ Steve Painter, 'Varied Views on National Green Party', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 8, 17 April 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1991/8/1533>, accessed on 18 May 2007.

²² Painter, 'Varied Views on National Green Party'.

²³ Painter, 'Varied Views on National Green Party'. This view had some support among the Greens. For example, in the 1990 Senate election campaign in NSW, the lead candidate, Ian Cohen, and Andrew Garton, the office coordinator, pursued a campaign strategy that concentrated on the development of the individual candidate's relationships with media and the public. They believed that that strategy had been successful electorally, but that it was opposed by those who believed activities should be rotated among the Greens to broaden activist experience: Cohen, *Green Fire*, pp. 165-66.

²⁴ *Direct Action*, 1989-90; Painter, 'Varied Views on National Green Party'.

²⁵ This idea was widespread and persistent in the discourse and practice of the Greens. Christabel Chamarette, who had replaced Jo Vallentine as a Greens WA senator in 1992, Christine Milne, a leading figure in the campaign against the Wesley Vale pulp mill subsequently elected as a Green to the Tasmanian parliament, Ian Cohen, the party's first NSW parliamentarian, and Stephen Spence, the first convenor of the SA branch, all raised it. The Greens WA senators guided their approach to the 1993 Budget and to native title legislation through intensive consultation with relevant community groups. *Green Left Weekly*, 1992-95.

²⁶ Helen Stannard, 'Greens Defamed', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 14, 29 May 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1991/14/1228>, accessed on 19 May 2007.

connection with community groups, both social justice and environment groups in the formulation of policy and as a basis of membership'. A parliamentarian was subject to replacement if 'going [in] the wrong direction as far as the green movement feels'. Then the Greens membership, 'the tip of the iceberg' of the groups and the wider Greens electorate and the groups, would have its say by choosing another representative who aligned with their aspirations.²⁷

Opposition to Brown's proposal for a national Greens party came from three sources: Hutton identified these as from within the Greens WA, the 'Green parties controlled by the DSP [Democratic Socialist Party]', and the proponents of autonomous local Green parties.²⁸ For each of these three, the national Greens project challenged their perspective that Greens politics, including in its organisational forms, should pursue a restructuring of society.²⁹

Within the Greens WA were members who supported a radical politics. In 1992, Christabel Chamarette, who had 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 ... turning the political arena upside down, so what ordinary people are saying has more value than what parliamentarians are saying.³⁰

Thus, the frequent attribution of the 1992 decision of the Greens WA to remain independent of, but collaborative with, the national Greens to Western Australian parochialism appears to be false. In fact, the WA party participated strongly in the discussions leading to the formation of a national Greens, with some of its representatives arguing for and some against the project. Also, in its membership vote on joining the Australian Greens, only a minority expressed opposition in principle to participation in a national Greens. Nonetheless, a two-thirds majority backed the Greens WA remaining independent. This suggests that many Greens WA members continued to feel uneasy about the national party that was then being formed.³¹

The alternative proposal to Brown's national Greens project 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'. Whereas Brown stressed that the

²⁷ Brown, Interview; Painter, 'Varied Views on National Green Party'.

²⁸ Hutton, Interview; Lohrey, 'Groundswell', p. 35.

²⁹ See, for example: Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, p. 203.

³⁰ Frank Noakes, 'The Senator Has a Different Agenda', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 58, 3 June 1992, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1992/58/3094>, accessed on 12 February 2008.

³¹ *Green Issue*, 1992; Brown and Singer, *The Greens*, p. 85; Lohrey, 'Groundswell', p. 35.

urgency in responding to the environmental crisis should override concerns about how the Greens formed as a party, the DSP suggested time should be taken to avoid domination of the process by any group.³² This meant, as Harris pointed out, that the DSP 'adopt[ed] the rhetoric of decentralist politics' while it did not defend autonomous organisation in principle and it worked as a unified group within Greens parties across the country.³³ Nonetheless, the DSP's arguments related to the transformative politics of 'decentralism'. It opposed what it understood to be violations of the rights of existing parties through the establishment of a national Greens that might attempt 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'.³⁴ Among the Greens parties and electoral alliances the DSP was involved in, some of them subsequently supported the DSP's views about forming a national Greens party, while others did not. To claim that the DSP had 'controlled' or 'colonised'³⁵ those Green parties that agreed with its view in any sense other than by DSP's members' powers of persuasion does not allow that other members of these Greens parties simply might have agreed with the DSP's view.

In NSW, opposition to the national Greens project also came from Greens who supported ongoing autonomy of the regional parties, which according to them would be auxiliaries for a community-based, direct action politics.³⁶ The Lismore-based Richmond Green Alliance wrote: 'our group does not support any sort of centralised party structure or ... any betrayal of grassroots democracy'.³⁷ Bruce Welch upheld the 'genuine local autonomy that is attractive in green politics' and the conduct of state and federal campaigns 'on a basis of real collaboration among autonomous local organisations'.³⁸ Harris countered Brown in the same conference session at which Brown called for a national Greens party:

I'm quite happy about whatever other structures are on top of that if they are democratic.

Provided we have a basic sense of democracy, a basic commitment to democracy, to accountability of all delegates, to autonomous, vibrant local

³² Maurice Sibelle, 'Green Party Debate', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 28, 18 September 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1991/28/574>, accessed on 23 May 2009.

³³ Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, p. 203.

³⁴ n.a., 'DSP Replies to Jo Vallentine', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 20, 10 July 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1991/20/944>, accessed on 20 May 2007.

³⁵ Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, p. 206.

³⁶ See, for example: Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, p. 203.

³⁷ Steve Painter, 'National Green Party Meeting Cancelled', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 18, 26 June 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1991/18/1055>, accessed on 20 May 2007.

³⁸ Brewer, 'Two Camps in the Greens'.

parties and a celebration of our diversity ... I think that is the essential thing that is needed.³⁹

Harris, however, had become frustrated in Green politics. On the one hand, he felt that the grass roots activists were divorced from the debates about forming national structures. On the other, he could sense a new lull in membership and participation had already developed in Green politics in 1991.⁴⁰ The Greens had not been able to create the 'anti-party party' he had wanted. Instead, Green politics as a fundamental social-ecological critique appeared to have been marginalised. Now:

Those of us from the Annandale branch of the ALP who had taken the initiative in 1984 and hoped for a more federative and libertarian party form, had seen the *realpolitik* writing on the wall and were prepared, to a degree, to lower our expectations.⁴¹

Founding the Greens Nationally

After Bob Brown's Ecopolitics V speech, reports quickly emerged of a planned meeting in May which would discuss the formation of a national Greens, but then a NSW state election was called and the Greens there proposed a delay in any such meeting until August 1991. During April, too, Tony Harris withdrew from active involvement in the national discussions about the future of the Greens. Acting on his authority alone, he 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 the Green Alliance (GA), Brown, Drew Hutton and Jo Vallentine circulated a letter that proposed an August conference of registered Green parties, the Tasmanian Greens (but not other unregistered Greens parties) and the 'Melbourne Group'.⁴²

In June, another issue became prominent: proscription of members of other parties from the Greens. Typically parties in Australia, most significantly the ALP, proscribed members of parties that had contested elections against them. The Green parties in Tasmania and WA had already introduced a proscription that prevented members of other parties having full voting rights: in the Greens WA 'associates', who could be members of other parties, could still take part in most decision-making, which was done

³⁹ Painter, 'Varied Views on National Green Party'.

⁴⁰ Harris was not alone in his view about the state of the Greens: Brewer, Interview; Hutton, Interview; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991.

⁴¹ Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, pp. 200, 206-07.

⁴² *Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, pp. 200-01.

by consensus at meetings.⁴³ Harris had also apparently had this issue in mind when speaking 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 ...

We may have to settle for less than that, perhaps considerably less than that.⁴⁴

Supporters of the national Greens project now moved decisively around the idea that the broader alliances that had existed in the Green parties were not 'the correct basis for a new political party'.⁴⁵ According to them, proscription was needed. In Brisbane, Hutton, who was the Greens registered officer in Queensland, and other RA members were among those who called on the Queensland Green Network to support the national Greens project with proscription: the QGN agreed, but because the network was constituted with an open membership, the project's supporters then established the Australian Greens Working Group (AGWG) in Queensland. In the Illawarra Greens, a meeting was convened to discuss on and vote for proscription without informing the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) members who were involved.⁴⁶

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'. Teleconferences in July 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.⁴⁷

The teleconferences had decided on invitations, delegation sizes and agenda for the August conference. All Green parties were invited: in 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 rather than there being a United Tasmania Group delegation. The

⁴³ Sue Hall and Nadine Lapthorne, *Merger of the Green Earth Alliance and WA Green Party: An Invitation to Join the Greens WA*, Material Relating to the Greens (WA), Ephemera, Battye Library, Perth, 1989; *Green Issue*, 1990; Lisa Macdonald, *Green Politics at an Impasse*, manuscript provided to author, 1996.

⁴⁴ Painter, 'Varied Views on National Green Party'.

⁴⁵ Marit Hegge, 'In Defence of a Green Party', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 27, 11 September 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1991/27/603>, accessed on 22 May 2007.

⁴⁶ *Green Left Weekly*, June-July 1991.

⁴⁷ Brewer, Interview; Brown, Interview; Hutton, Interview; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991.

delegation sizes emphasised the groups which had taken part in the conference organising process: GA and its autonomous parties; the Lismore and Richmond, and Byron parties in the Rainbow Region; the AGWG; the Tasmanians; and the Greens WA.⁴⁸

Proscription was the first item on the conference agenda. It was debated for the first day of what was a two day conference. It was quickly applied to the meeting itself: the Green Democratic Alliance and Western Suburbs Greens delegates, who were DSP members, were compelled to leave. The North Shore delegate, Tony Jas, walked out. He stated:

There were some who were not interested in any other position but their own ... It was condescending of the meeting for them to pretend that this was valid. The meeting was not a decision-making one, so how could it define what the green movement is? That has to be a collective decision, not what a small group may want.⁴⁹

The resolution on a 'sunset clause' was that:

At the national level and as the basis of participation in the next national meeting, that there be proscription of members of other parties by February 18, 1992, in each of the categories—office bearers, delegates, voting, and membership; that groups do not admit as new members, members of other political parties from now on; and that delegates at that next national meeting are proscribed.⁵⁰

The second day of the conference 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. At first, many of those who had supported autonomous organisation, such as David Nerlich and Paul Fitzgerald, the GA and Sydney Greens delegates to the August 1991 conference, dropped out of the debate altogether or shifted to supporting the national Greens project, while DSP members argued for the rights of the existing parties and members.⁵¹ 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.⁵² Eventually, an agreement on party structures was negotiated and the foundation of the Australian Greens was announced.

Green politics, meanwhile, had continued to decline in Australia. The national party began with branches in only New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania.⁵³ In

⁴⁸ Green Left Weekly, 1991.

⁴⁹ Pat Brewer, 'National Green Meeting in Sydney', Green Left Weekly, no. 24, 21 August 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/830>, accessed on 21 May 2007; Brewer, 'Two Camps in the Greens'.

⁵⁰ Brewer, 'National Green Meeting in Sydney'.

⁵¹ Brewer, Interview; Green Left Weekly, 1991; Harris, *Basketweavers and True Believers*, p. 207.

⁵² Brown, Interview..

⁵³ Brown and Singer, *The Greens*, pp. 84-85.

Victoria, according to Hutton, there were 'very few' supporters of the prospective Australian Greens in 1991. In the following year they set up the Green Political Network and then the Green Party, before joining the national party in 1993. The party's development in the state was marked by the Coburg state by-election campaign⁵⁴ and the 28% vote for Peter Singer in a 1994 by-election in the federal seat of Kooyong. It could still, however, field candidates in only half the state's lower house seats in the 1996 federal election. The ACT branch was formed in 1993 by a group of Democrats members who had previously been in Rainbow Alliance. The SA and NT branches were formed in 1995.⁵⁵

In NSW, the Greens experienced considerable growth in the lead-up to the 1995 state elections. Groups were established in many rural areas for the first time. Ian Cohen was elected to the upper house after the Greens vote increased to four per cent. However, the party also temporarily had a rival, the No Aircraft Noise party, in inner-city Sydney.⁵⁶

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. In 1994, the party in WA had 700 members and 40-50 activists. Nonetheless, a recovery of the Democrats vote in the state combined with a relatively static Greens WA vote—which in 1993 had been high enough to elect Dee Margetts—was to cost Christabel 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.⁵⁷

Authenticity, Democracy and Exclusivity in Forming the Greens

A decade after the formation of the national Greens, Amanda Lohrey argued the Greens had 'emerged as the authentic representatives of ... the new progressive constituency' into which, in a 'steady drift ... by default', 'the progressive supporters of both major parties' had come. This was because the party 'is an organic leadership that has evolved over a lengthy period of time and out of several community campaigns ... clear on their bottom-line accounting ... and belong to an international movement'.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ See ch. 10.

⁵⁵ Hutton, Interview; Brown and Singer, *The Greens*, p. 85, 87..

⁵⁶ *Green Left Weekly*, 1995; Brown and Singer, *The Greens*, p. 88; Eddy, *The Green Movement in Southeast Queensland*, p. 310n.

⁵⁷ Lane, 'Australian Politics Today', p. 13; Stephen Robson, 'The Greens (WA)', *The Activist*, vol. 4, no. 13, November 1994, p. 15.

⁵⁸ Lohrey, 'Groundswell', pp. 68-69. Also: Ariadne Vromen and Nick Turnbull, 'The Australian Greens: Challengers to the Cartel', in Ian Marsh (ed.), *Political Parties in Transition?*, Sydney, The Federation Press, 2006, p. 166.

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 political and organisational decisions made to that stagnation.⁵⁹

If the national Greens leading party members had had 'authenticity' in 1991 or 1992, that would have enabled the party to operate well without a more complete set of democratic forms. 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 Bob 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'.⁶⁰ This schema of a possible relationship between the leaders and supporters for a party is a particular expression of what generally applies in a social movement, where the means to apply formal mechanisms of democratic control are much less than within a specific organisation.

In 1989 in Tasmania, after the Green Independents had won the parliamentary balance of power, they muddled through in this way. In the following years, they faced not just opposition to Greens policies, which was to be expected, but also tensions in their relationships with their supporters and with various communities, such as the geographically and socially isolated towns of the state's West Coast. At the time, Richard Flanagan noted that 'the Greens have not developed an internal party practice that is democratic ... The absence of formal organisation disguises ... structures of power'.⁶¹ The tensions arose especially from perceptions of lack of consultation and recognition of concerns.⁶² The Green parliamentarians, in the months after their win, held public meetings to explain the agreement they had signed with the ALP government and answer questions about it. They also began to develop party publications and structures at a state level. At that time, Brown stated:

We are taking a middle course between being absolute Independents and being a party, we are taking a middle course between having a really finally worked out structure and having none at all.

It is evolving as we go along, and so far that's been the best way to go. But there are always worries with the fact that you don't have an easily

⁵⁹ Lohrey, 'Groundswell', pp. 35-38.

⁶⁰ Brown, Interview..

⁶¹ Flanagan, 'Masters of History', p. 130.

⁶² Direct Action, 1989-90; Flanagan, 'Masters of History', p. 129; Marion Wescombe, 'From World's End the Greening Starts?', in Cassandra Pybus and Richard Flanagan (eds), *The Rest of the World Is Watching*, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 1990, pp. 177-93.

recognisable structure so that people know how to take part. But conventional political parties don't necessarily mean that at all.

You also have to take into account that some people want to be really involved and some want to be just occasionally.⁶³

Perhaps Brown's experience of successes in Tasmania helps explain the relative lack of priority Brown gave to democratic control in the formation of the national Greens.

In 1991 and 1992, the leadership of the national Greens project had sufficient grounding in the social movements for authenticity only in Tasmania, and also WA, where a broad range of participants, including from the peace movement, had been gathered together in the Greens through its amalgamations.⁶⁴ In much of the country—Victoria, South Australia, the ACT and western Sydney—the party initially had little or no formal existence. In most states, including NSW and Queensland, the Greens then struggled to form effective branches or raise its vote to more than three per cent. Moreover, the mobilisations in the environment and anti-war movements in 1994-95⁶⁵ do not seem to have enabled an upswing in the party's fortunes.

That such weaknesses for the Greens would be the result of the way in which the national Greens project was pursued was indicated in the votes for proscription at the August 1991 Greens conference. These were 21-8, with one abstention, to exclude the conference delegates who were members of other parties and 15 for, six against and six abstentions (with 3 anti-proscription delegates excluded or absent) to proscribe members of other parties from the Greens nationally in the six months before another conference. Despite the ostensible majority support among Greens for proscription, these votes confirm John Baker's argument that the supporters of the national Greens project were among those who were not committed to democratic principles and afraid of 'open voting on issues' in the new party projects they were involved in.⁶⁶ In particular, only half of the conference delegates voted for the course proposed for forming a national Greens. A quarter of the delegates were still opposed after the exclusion of proscribed delegates.

Thus, support for constituting the membership of the Greens nationally on this basis was hardly overwhelming. This was in spite of the pro-proscription position being favoured by both the allocation of delegation sizes and the way the conference had been organised. The delegation sizes did generally reflect the strengths of the various

⁶³ Ian Hopkins, 'Bob Brown: "The People Want More Choice"', *Direct Action*, no. 709, 29 August 1989, p. 8.

⁶⁴ Eddy, *The Green Movement in Southeast Queensland*, p. 302; Macdonald, *Green Politics at an Impasse*.

⁶⁵ See ch. 9.

⁶⁶ Baker, 'When Opportunities Went Begging'.

Green parties. If, however, past campaigning and the potential for growth of the parties had been additional criteria for determining the delegation sizes,⁶⁷ then the delegations from the Victoria and South Australian Green Alliances, which had voted against proscription before the conference, and also WA, which had its associate members and some opposition to the national project, would have gained delegates at the expense of the NSW parties and, especially, the pro-proscription Australian Green Working Group from Queensland. Also, a number of groups had pre-emptively introduced proscription, while others had suggested they would not attend the conference unless support for proscription 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.

During the discussion in 1991 about the national Greens project, many asserted the right of those Greens who wanted to form a national organisation which proscribed members of other parties to do that. What was proposed, however, was not just that those Greens could choose who they were associated with as fellow members of an organisation, but the exclusion of Greens who were members of other parties from the Greens as a political movement of affiliated and/or related parties. As well, the registrations of Green parties that did not conform to proscription was challenged.

Notes written after the conference by David Nerlich stated:

Steve Brigham said we might have to look at sharing the rego if a split couldn't be avoided. This was not resolved however. There did appear to be a school of thought that the new organisation should have every intention of gaining exclusive use of the name Green.⁶⁸

By 1992, at least some registrations of Green parties that had not adopted proscription were being challenged, although 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,

⁶⁷ Marit Hegge stated that these criteria had been used, with the number for each delegation determined by the party's history of electoral activism and the number of electorates in each party's state or region, as well as the party's involvement in preparing the conference: Hegge, 'In Defence of a Green Party'.

⁶⁸ Brewer, 'Two Camps in the Greens'. See also: Hegge, 'In Defence of a Green Party'.

as were many members, both DSP and non-DSP, who opposed proscription and/or the more centralised structures proposed for the national Greens party.⁶⁹

The discussion about the formation of a national Greens was, however, not only about membership provisions and decision-making structures. At its roots it concerned the kind of Greens party those involved wanted. Echoing the concerns Brown raised about avoiding a 'structure trap' when considering the organisation of the Greens, political scientists Haydon Manning and Christopher Rootes argued in an analysis of the Greens election campaign of 2004 that the requirements for a successful election campaign are efficiency, effectiveness and central coordination rather than participatory democracy and autonomy. They suggest those attributes for success will not be achieved in the Greens while 'in internal politicking socialists determinedly seek to spirit the party away from its original environmental focus'.⁷⁰ Drew Hutton and Libby Connors argued that policy conflicts in the Greens can be expected between the 'green' Greens' moral commitment to social justice and the socialist ideological commitment to redistribution:

Around the trade-offs that are available within the parliamentary systems between environmental and social goals or those policy items where there are different levels of commitment ... to state ownership or control.⁷¹

Contradicting such arguments, David Charnock has recently commented that for electoral purposes the Greens 'appear to have little practical alternative to working within the 'left bloc' framework'. His conclusion is based on the recognition that the Greens support depends on voters with 'left' attitudes, something he shows has been the case throughout the party's history.⁷² Moreover, 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.⁷³

The Greens' growing success might be seen to confirm the value of the national Greens project that Brown proposed. This presumes, however, that the Greens as the

⁶⁹ Eddy, *The Green Movement in Southeast Queensland*, p. 310; Macdonald, *Green Politics at an Impasse*. This process continued to some extent until at least 1995, when the acting Secretary of the Territory Greens resigned when that group choose to seek affiliation with the Australian Greens, citing as reasons the national party's proscription and perceived policy inadequacies: C.M. Friel, 'Australian Greens', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 176, 22 February 1995, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/9833>, accessed on 22 July 2007.

⁷⁰ Haydon Manning and Christopher Rootes, 'The Tainted Triumph of the Greens: The Australian National Election of 9 October 2004', *Environmental Politics*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2005.

⁷¹ Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, 'The Left Dilemma for the Greens', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 23, no. 1, First Quarter, 2004, p. 36.

⁷² Charnock, 'Can the Australian Greens Replace the Australian Democrats?', pp. 246-56.

⁷³ For example: Brown, Interview.

party has developed was the party envisaged in the 1991 project for a national Greens. It has not been that party.

First, even in 1992 when the Australian Greens was formed, it was not structurally what had been proposed in April 1991. Rather than a strong national organisation and weaker state organisations, the state structures were strong and the national one was minimal. Also, the party acquired the formal right to mandate the policies of its parliamentarians.⁷⁴ This reinforced the influence party members could exert on the party's leadership, such as it later did when Brown briefly considered support for money raised from the privatisation of Telstra being used for funding environmental work and then withdrew from any such thought in the face of opposition from within the Greens.⁷⁵

Secondly, Hutton and others, such as Lohrey, envisaged the Greens as having a 'core ecology vote'.⁷⁶ In 2002, Hutton told Lohrey:

I'm not super-confident of building a constituency beyond the 5-7 per cent ...
We've got a core constituency of probably 3 per cent. But that could and will go on for quite a long time. This is ... the ecological imperative.

He argued this despite his then recent experience that 'a lot of the people who came over to the Greens on refugees haven't gone back'.⁷⁷ Lohrey's own analysis avoided the pitfall of specifying the proportions, within her 'progressive constituency' authentically represented by the Greens, of its core vote 'enlarging at a rapid rate' due to environmental concerns as opposed to its 'broad-based protest vote'. Nonetheless, the latter again presumably included what she accepted was a 'soft' and 'middle-class' Greens vote that the ALP could recover through policy changes, however unlikely those might be.⁷⁸

Such analyses show a lack of prescience and, indeed, some confusion. A source for this is the analyses' failure to consider the Greens as a left bloc party of workers. The party was a form of the politics of workers that undeniably was ecologically informed as that politics had not been before but also was informed by those workers' reaction against social democracy conducting a neo-liberal regime and the disintegration and absorption of much of the 'old' left, in the Communist Party and the unions, into that. In that context, the centralisation proposed in 1991 threatened the nature of the Greens as an organisation for collective action through its potential to

⁷⁴ Norman, *Bob Brown*, pp. 163-64.

⁷⁵ Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy*, p. 72.

⁷⁶ Lohrey, 'Groundswell', p. 64.

⁷⁷ Lohrey, 'Groundswell', p. 64.

⁷⁸ Lohrey, 'Groundswell', pp. 66-68.

exclude activists from decision-making. Proscription's direct exclusion was narrower. It chiefly targeted DSP members in the Greens. Yet proscription also created rivalry for the national Greens party project. This rivalry's effects were not directly felt electorally: the continuation of the Green Alliances was ephemeral and any socialist vote was also based within the same left bloc, but was much smaller. The contest effectively was for the adherence of activists and in the movement media. This rivalry prevented a greater concentration of forces in the Greens that might have more quickly increased the party's weight as against the Democrats.

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.⁷⁹

While Hutton accepted that the DSP had decided 'in the late 80s to ... be green' and that the 'left humanism' of its socialist orientation was 'okay' ideologically within the Greens, he considered that when that orientation was combined with an insistence on 'maintaining their own organisation, autonomous organisation, inside the Green party', DSP members 'became ineligible to be involved in the Green party'. That, he stated, 'would have just cemented the deep division' between them and those Greens like Hutton who wanted a party that would have close connections with the environment movement and could perhaps be in the political mainstream.⁸⁰

A key claim by supporters of the project for a national Greens party against DSP members was that their ultimate loyalty was to the DSP and, therefore, they were not loyal to promoting the Greens organisationally, specifically in the form of a successful

⁷⁹ By, for example, Ben Oquist, personal assistant to Bob Brown from 1996: see Norman, *Bob Brown*, p. 163.

⁸⁰ Hutton, Interview..

national party.⁸¹ From the DSP members' point of view, on the other hand, they had been committed to the Green Alliances, had celebrated their electoral successes and believed these had also impressed Brown and Hutton.⁸² The DSP suspected the push for a national Greens party was 'a grab ... for domination and control'.⁸³

DSP suspicions only intensified when proscription was raised. The DSP particularly objected—with support from some other activists—to the suggestion that members of parties other than the Greens parties, in order to join in the newly nationally-organised party, would need to dissolve their existing parties before the national Greens was formed and they had some experience of what would result. To DSP members, the five sponsors' pursuit of immediate proscription also appeared to involve a vitriolic campaign against it.⁸⁴

The DSP responded in kind. In particular, it made much of Brown's assessment that the Democrats had undergone 'a monumental change' making it already 'a green party' and his plan that, once the Greens party had developed in the next year or two 'in parallel with the Democrats', the two could then merge 'into a united green alternative for Australia'.⁸⁵ The DSP suggested that this indicated Brown was pursuing an agenda for a right-wing Green party similar to the Democrats. Yet at the same time, the DSP included some Democrats in its discussions about the left—in fact, the same

⁸¹ Norman, *Bob Brown*, pp. 162-63. This evidence for this argument consisted of a number of elements:

- Reference to the DSP constitution, which demanded members reject conflicting political loyalties and place their political activity under the DSP's direction. This was countered by reference to the DSP program, which required DSP members representing electoral alliances to be loyal and accountable to those alliances. (Green Left Weekly, 1991.)
- Accusations of supposed DSP disloyalty in other groups. These cases were described vaguely or were (right or wrong) from the years before the DSP (then the SWP) disavowed Trotskyism in 1984-85, except for the case of the NDP (see previous chapter). Harris points out that with regard to the NDP, the accusation against the DSP was made "perhaps unjustly, certainly prematurely". (Green Left Weekly, 1991; Harris, 'Regulating the Greens', p. 72; Norman, *Bob Brown*, p. 163.)
- Claims of DSP bloc voting, in the NSW Senate pre-selection, or more generally, whereas "participatory grassroots democracy" was posed as meaning decisions being "made by a range of free-thinking individuals". The DSP did nominate members for Greens pre-selections. DSP members were likely to have generally supported those nominations, given their relative like-mindedness with and knowledge of the candidates, whether or not they were organised to do so. On the other hand, even in the supposedly DSP-controlled Greens parties, DSP members did not take leading Senate ticket positions, limiting the significance of any bloc voting to claiming their inclusion in Green party activities. With regard to the more general claim, no individual thinks without reference to their social context and networks. A party is only a more defined, and also public, form of that. In the debate on the national Greens party, DSP members were not the only grouping of people who consistently argued and voted along similar lines. (Direct Action, 1989-90; Green Left Weekly, 1991.)

⁸² Sibelle, Interview; Michael Bell, 'Greens Poll Well in Brisbane', Green Left Weekly, no. 6, 27 March 1991, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/1703>, accessed on 16 May 2007.

⁸³ n.a., 'DSP Replies to Jo Vallentine'.

⁸⁴ Sibelle, Interview; Green Left Weekly, 1991; Baker, 'When Opportunities Went Begging'.

⁸⁵ Nichols, 'Brown Urges National Green Party'.

Democrats to whom Brown was talking through the Democrats' then leader, Janet Powell.⁸⁶

Nonetheless, Brown and Hutton had initiated the project for 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. Success for the Greens rather appears to have come from its policy responses to both ecological and social justice 'imperatives'. It has rejected compromises outside that framework, including trade-offs between goals in the two areas. For example, the party has supported refugee rights regardless of the concerns of some Greens about the effects of population growth in Australia on the environment. Under the Rudd and Gillard governments, the party's advocacy of carbon pricing measures has demanded that at least the minimum reductions in greenhouse gas emissions called for by the environment movement be met and full compensation for the measures' effects on living standards, but not their effect on the profits of corporations emitting greenhouse gases or trading fossil fuels. The combination of policy responses in the Greens has been expressed in the internal life of the party, with the involvement of people from a range of political backgrounds and views, although that has not usually taken any organised form. With regard to how the Greens formed across Australia at the end of the 1980s with the involvement of a number of groupings interested in socially transformative politics, the 1991 proposal for a national Greens party failed to allow that organisational expression of policy combination.

Conclusion

The development of the Greens on a national basis came at the end of the 1980s, as the ALP continued to lose support in reaction to the Hawke-Keating government, in particular from workers who were relatively better-off but whose conditions were worsening. While not involving the number of members and supporters that the Nuclear Disarmament Party did,⁸⁷ the Greens again brought together a relatively broad range of activists, in the various Green parties, who were inspired by the willingness of the Greens to act, including international examples of this.

Then a national Greens party project was proposed which limited the scope for the party's policy framework and organising of collective action. The project's plans for the

⁸⁶ Brewer, Interview; Brown, Interview; *Green Left Weekly*, 1991; Brown and Singer, *The Greens*, pp. 71, 80.

⁸⁷ Greens membership first exceeded 10,000 in 2009-10, while in 1998-99, for example, it was only about 1500 (presumably excluding WA): Richard Willingham, 'Greens Membership Tops 10,000 as Labor Feels the Heat', *The Age*, 22 February 2011, <http://www.theage.com.au/national/greens-membership-tops-10000-as-labor-feels-the-heat-20110221-1b2i3.html>, accessed on 3 March 2011.

centralisation of and proscription within the party faced substantial opposition among Greens, which was only partly accommodated within the project. Many people, even if they were not proscribed from the Greens, were 'whittled away' through frustration and feelings that their experiences and campaigning networks were being ignored. They might otherwise have built Greens branches or autonomous parties, but were excluded by the way the national Greens party was formed.⁸⁸

The confidence and loyalty that the proponents of the project for a national Green party sought across the Greens networks of activists needed the activists to have sufficient experience of their responsibility for the party.⁸⁹ The prospect of Greens parliamentarians' integrity in responding to party policy and social movement perspectives was insufficient because it did not provide reciprocal relations within the networks. For the activists, what Greens policy would be and the effect that would have on the party's intervention in the development of social movements was also at stake. In order to resolve the differences among Greens activists without the party suffering substantial injury, a substitution could have been made for the not yet existing confidence within the party through greater democratic controls for party members in the party's formation. The proscription discussion worked in the opposite direction to that by seeking to exclude from the Greens some of those who were engaged in the debate. Greens activists, in order to press for their various views, were organised. Those activists who considered that the organisations to which they belonged fitted within the political framework of the Greens—the members of the DSP, for example, but not those of the Rainbow Alliance—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.⁹⁰

The Greens were only one of the new party projects that began during the Hawke-Keating government. Unlike the rest, it survived as a project to be pursued. This was in spite of the party not quickly pulling together a critical mass of activists to make an electoral breakthrough, as the early NDP had. Also, the new party projects discussed in the previous chapter all had at least the intent of developing an organic relationship with the social movements, and at first the Greens generally were no more successful than those other projects in this respect. The Greens, however, combined sufficient interest, confidence and connectedness to contribute to building the core for organising collective action. By organising the electoral opposition from the left to the ALP's neo-

⁸⁸ Brewer, Interview; Macdonald, *Green Politics at an Impasse*.

⁸⁹ See: Lenin, 'What Is to Be Done?', p. 480.

⁹⁰ Baker, 'When Opportunities Went Begging'.

liberalism in the 1990s, the Greens laid the basis for a possible future break in the existing structures of party politics.

In the latter years of the long Labor decade, however, the conception of the national Greens party was too narrow for the ‘vacuum’ its proponents had identified—or, in fact, had misidentified by ignoring the question of agency.⁹¹ The vacuum was not just an electoral space left unoccupied by a rightward-moving ALP, which could then be filled by a new left social-democratic party. It was also not just in the politics, as a set of policies, of social justice such that a new party of reform would then spring into being. The vacuum was the chance not yet taken by networks of activists for the environment and social justice to draw together political support, such as, for example, between the better-off workers already moving into action because of the neo-liberal turn of capitalism and other workers experiencing that. If and when the activist networks began that politics among workers, they would then start to recreate workers’ class political consciousness.

⁹¹ See ch. 1.

Conclusion

Workers' class political consciousness is the basis of workers' historical agency in the formation of their class. According to the prevailing view, this consciousness collapsed in the long Labor decade. This thesis has examined whether or not evidence about the period provides support for that view or a basis on which to challenge it, in order to consider the ways in which the working class was unmade or remade.

The networks for mobilisation and the social learning of the core for organising collective action among workers embody workers' class political consciousness. To capture the development of that core in the period, the thesis' inquiries ranged across workers' experiences in union activity, social movement mobilisation and party identification and participation, especially in the formation of new parties.

Workers, however, do not make history under conditions of their choosing. For example, the hegemony of advanced capitalist societies such as Australia by domestic monopolising capitals creates a specific complex of social relations. The responses of workers to that complex can be conflicting. On the basis of the capacity of the monopolising capitals to sustain concessions in the conditions of class struggle to sections of workers, these relatively privileged workers can perceive that their interests are tied to the fortunes of the monopolising capitals and engage in an opportunist politics of class collaboration.

Also, when a conjunctural crisis in advanced capitalism emerges, some relatively privileged workers react by deepening that collaboration with 'their' bloc of monopolising capital, in an effort to ensure their concessions. Yet the reaction to a crisis of monopolising capitals and their class collaborators changes the 'bribe': from that unsettling of social relations, other better-off workers begin to abandon their support for opportunism.

In the long Labor decade, many workers did not just support the demands of a social movement or even several social movements, nor did they just protest against an ALP government that was implementing a neo-liberal regime. The better-off workers who were the first to withdraw their support from the ALP, leading to the sharp drop in the 1980s in that party's stronger identification among labour aristocrats, were also generally the workers who were better positioned and more experienced in working class mobilisation. Their reaction became the starting point for the attempts to form a new political party among workers.

The Greens survived in a way which meant the party could become an effective political force, unlike most new party projects. This can be largely attributed to the positing of the party as a potential replacement for the ALP¹ and the party acting on the main opportunities that were available to it, which were electoral and parliamentary activity.

The formation of the Greens, however, came at the end of the attempts to form a new party. The process of the party's formation temporarily exhausted the momentum for a new party. The Greens, at least at the national level, lost an opportunity to pull together a critical mass for organising collective action in a substantial network of activists. The early NDP had shown this could be done. The NDP was first an opportunity seized. Only historical hindsight makes the NDP appear as an opportunity that was squandered.

For a political force breaking to the left of the ALP to succeed, the integration of the diverse agendas of possible supporters was needed. That brought with it differences old and new, sometimes in the form of personality clashes, that were real enough. Also, every group had its particular strengths, the experience of which tended to confirm to that group the value of its ideas and practices. Perhaps greater patience, political insight and co-operation than has been observed among those involved in the new party projects could have surmounted this source of internal division.²

Another problem for a new left party was that in all the social movements, including the labour movement, building the core for organising collective action among workers was more difficult. The absence of a more influential political left had removed a ready-made network for activists. Meanwhile, opportunism, to defend its neo-liberalism, had become more divisive in the social movements, in order to prevent the emergence of political challenges to it.

Implementation of the Accord, especially, relied on the overall support for it of many unions that had traditions of militancy. That was the real 'new right'. The incapacity of those who opposed the Accord to come together to mount a serious challenge was an expression of the weakening of the political left in the labour movement, from which the new political mobilisation of workers was isolated.

Within a few years of the Accord beginning, many workers considered that unions were failing to support their interests. This happened even before the introduction of

¹ Brown and Singer, *The Greens*, p. 2. Cf.: Drew Hutton, 'The Greens and Electoral Politics', *Arena Magazine*, no. 22, April-May 1996, p. 14-16.

² Frankel, 'Radical Politics', pp. 41-42.

enterprise bargaining bound workers' fortunes more closely to their particular employers, as some have claimed.³

The Accord: systematically pitted groups of production, skilled and professional workers against each other; opposed workers in disputes, even when those workers had popular support; and, as a novel feature of union action, supported the breaking of other unions. Through its policies, relative privileges within the working class were recreated. The realm of job security narrowed. The suppression of working conditions and organising rights broadened.

Relations among those who would have been the more active elements in the unions broke down. The lack of solidarity among and incapacity for independent action of unions was exposed, so workers were less likely to think that participation in the unions was important. By the early 1990s, delegates and shop committees were a largely spent force.

Many workers who in their class would otherwise have constituted the critical mass for organising collective action in its previously existing forms of mobilisation were instead alienated from those. The losses of the labour movement's networks for organising collective action, incurred because workers had not challenged the power of capital when it was in crisis, brought union organisation to the point where an unprecedented decline began. However, there were new forms of mobilisations of workers, in particular through electoral politics.

With these changes in workers' class political consciousness in the long Labor decade, the Australian working class was remade. First, the class lost much of its networks of activists and the militant syndicalist tradition in the labour movement. Second, other social movements stopped building up more networks of activists in the core for organising collective action among workers. Third, new forms of workers' mobilisations, in particular through electoral politics, appeared. The possibility was posed of a challenge to the ALP, the existing political form of opportunism. However, the efforts made to organise new political parties had temporarily exhausted the momentum of that development.

Thus, the conditions under which workers' struggles might at some time become antagonistic and hegemonic class struggle had not been eliminated. The development of that tendency, however, was limited. The core for organising collective action among

³ In 1990, John Halfpenny already thought unions had become "less popular among workers": cited in Thompson, 'Enterprise Bargaining and the Accord', p. 45. Compare with the citation of a later Halfpenny comment in: Bramble, *Trade Unionism in Australia*, p. 160.

workers had declined overall in its numbers and its networks. Moreover, the core, now largely comprised of workers who had had sustained relative privileges, but no longer did as a consequence of the effects of the Hawke-Keating government's neo-liberal regime on the 'middle' sections of workers, was relatively inexperienced in and largely disagreed with that socially emancipatory workers' politics. This was reflected in, for example, the environment movement.

The Thesis Overall

This thesis has shown that the view that workers' class political consciousness collapsed in the long Labor decade is a one-sided perspective. This view has not included in its account of the period how workers began to recreate that consciousness and, thus, to remake their class, as has been done here. This view was surprised once by the consequences of the Accord and the Hawke-Keating government in a weakening of the working class. This view is being surprised again when a threat to the capitalist polity's two-party system has arisen from workers in a progressive political voice that has its origins in the same period.

Initially, this thesis offers an understanding in terms of class of the new political parties of the long Labor decade, including the Greens. These parties had not been 'middle-class' protests. They were movements of workers, especially those workers whose conditions of struggle had been better but had come under attack, towards—partially, groping more or less blindly—a party that expressed their concerns and interests as part of the working class.

The counterpart to that analytical step is a clarification and explanation of the class nature of the ALP. Before and during the long Labor decade it was a 'bourgeois labour party'. Such a party was based on the support for opportunism that came from among a stratum of better-off workers who felt secure in that status or were defending their privileges. The party exerted a pro-capitalist influence among workers. In particular, that influence was felt in the workers' social movements and political activity that formed the working class. This was not class 'treachery': it arose out of the interaction in the class struggle between the effects of the conditions of the capital-wage labour relation and the conditions of monopolies of capital.

The thesis also grounds the notion that 'class happens' across history and sociology. The thesis establishes that a core for organising collective action—that is, the networks of worker activists who, as movement intellectuals, produce social learning—was the material form in which workers' class political consciousness rose and declined. The development of this social leadership of the working class is shown

to have depended on the interactions of the labour and other social movements and political parties.

These results are rooted in an interdisciplinary approach that only emerged in the course of the conduct of the research upon which the thesis was written. The historical concept of 'class' and arguments from the sociology of social movements were used to resolve a problem apparently posed for political science.

The research for this thesis uncovered deficiencies in the survey data available about the core for organising collective action among workers. To provide for the study of the dynamics of class formation and workers' class political consciousness, future social science surveys should consistently pose questions about labour and other social movement activism. Also, a program to systematically collect data about social movement activists and mobilisations should be developed. Only relatively small numbers of people are involved in such activities, but what they are doing is a key to class formation.

The thesis establishes that through the concept of class we might better understand our political life. Class helps us know how and why people and a party interact as they do. It tells us, for example, why the ALP is linked to unions and governs as it does, and why social justice issues have been important for the successes so far of the Greens. As political analysts, we will continue to need to research, to teach and to learn about class. As political actors, we will again find we need to take account of the working class and its potential to be 'the real movement which abolishes the present state of things'.

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Appendix A

Survey population sizes

Survey title	Political Attitudes	Social Science	Class Structure of Australia	Australian Electoral Study	Social Science
Survey year(s)	1979	1984	1986	1987	1987-88
survey population	2016	3012	1195	1830	1664
<i>working class</i>					
working class	1612	2548		1460	1367
labour aristocracy	560	904		485	471
other working class	1052	1644		975	896
school teachers, public sector	86	99		48	52
metals, electrical, building and printing trades	178	182		129	104
registered nurses	50	48		33	22
public sector	484	776		490	452
private sector	1128	1772		970	915
<i>employed</i>					
employed	928	1368	1009	838	863
labour aristocracy	369	580	380	325	344
other working class	559	788	629	513	519
school teachers, public sector	59	67	64	37	41
metals, electrical, building and printing trades	109	120	75	75	69
registered nurses	34	33	53	25	17
public sector	337	486	440	349	340
private sector	591	882	569	489	523

Survey population sizes (continued)

Survey title	Social Science	Australian Electoral Study	Australian Electoral Study	Social Science	Australian Electoral Study
Survey year(s)	1989-90	1990	1993	1994	1996
survey population	6136	2037	3023	1503	1797
<i>working class</i>					
working class	5141	1588	2330	1314	1364
labour aristocracy	1636	539	719	478	582
other working class	3505	1049	1611	836	782
school teachers, public sector	174	54	72		70
metals, electrical, building and printing trades	339	118	186		79
registered nurses	129	44	68		26
public sector	1522	503	806	385	381
private sector	3619	1085	1524	929	983
<i>employed</i>					
employed	3200	867	1146	782	755
labour aristocracy	1237	362	453	382	377
other working class	1963	505	693	400	378
school teachers, public sector	134	45	49		50
metals, electrical, building and printing trades	229	64	102		44
registered nurses	109	30	44		15
public sector	1177	313	479	300	238
private sector	2023	554	667	482	517

Appendix B

Mardi Gras attendance

Year	Estimated Attendance	Floats (participants)
1983	20,000	40
1984	40,000	46
1985	30,000	44
1986	50,000	50 or so
1987	100,000	More than 50
1988	120,000	More than 60
1989	200,000	65 official
1990	115,000	68
1991	230,000	67
1992	400,000	75
1993	500,000	118, (3000)
1994	600,000	135, (3500)
1995	150,000 (bad weather)	190, (4000 participants, and 2500 in Bobby Goldsmith Foundation stand)

Source: Carbery, Graham, *A History of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras*, pp. 51, 63, 74, 80, 89, 100, 110, 125, 143, 158, 173, 191, 217, 242

Appendix C

Social movement survey counting methods: further details

Issue of action

- If the text of a report is contradicted by the image, the text determined the issue of the action.
- Public transport services and costs actions were considered environmental. Disability access for public transport actions were categorised as general. So were actions about privatisation of public transport (when not excluded because pursuing an industrial demand).
- Actions about primary schools were assumed to be by parents and are counted under general.
- A number of actions were performed by different groups of people together. In such cases, those assumed to be engaged in industrial actions were excluded. Parents' actions were categorised according to the topic of the action. Students' action, if independent, were categorised as such.

Location of action

- An action was considered to have occurred in 'other' unless it occurred in one of Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Geelong, Hobart, Melbourne, Newcastle, Perth, Sydney or Wollongong.
- If the location of an action is not stated, it is considered to have occurred in 'other'.
- In 1994, a series of 11 public meeting about disability access occurred throughout NSW. One each was considered to have occurred in Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong, the rest being categorised under 'other'.

Number of actions

- Banner drops, soup kitchens and similar activities that a social movement group or organisation would organise solely within its own ranks were excluded.
- A student fee boycott was counted as one action per campus per year of boycotts.
- If an activity was reported as 'rallies', in one location on one day with one attendance figure, it was considered to be one action.
- Reports of, for example, 'protests' or 'public meetings', without further specification, were recorded as two actions.

- An action reported as ongoing (typically, a blockade or a tent city) was considered one action in each month in which it was reported to be occurring.
- Where actions were reported as having occurred weekly, these were considered to have occurred twice for each month they were reported. If an action within a month was reported more specifically, one or two actions for the report of 'weekly' would be recorded if the date of better-specified action allowed that (for example, a weekly action could have occurred twice in a month before a further weekly protest on the 21st of that month).
- Activities (on the topic of education) independently supported by teachers (as an industrial matter), parents and students was considered to be two actions, one by parents under general and another by students as students. If students were not acting independently, only an action under general was coded.

Attendance at actions

- The numbers in an international delegation when known were excluded.
- In a spread of attendance estimates, excluding those by police, the lowest estimate was used.
- Among the actions involving parents and/or students, and workers engaged in action on industrial matters:
 - a. If the students were acting independently, 25 per cent of the attendance was considered to be by parents, if any, and 25 per cent by students.
 - b. If the students were not acting independently, or no students were involved, 50 per cent of the attendance was considered to be by parents.
- For actions reported with no attendance figure, attendances are estimated according to the following table:

<i>text</i>	<i>coding</i>	Sydney, Melbourne	Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth	other
Protest, picket, public meeting, rally, function or similar	protest	50	20	10
Hunger strike	hunger strike	10	5	2
Large protest, 'hundreds' or 'several hundred' attending, major conference, big public meeting, 'several schools' involved or similar	large protest	750	300	150

- A 'few hundred' is counted as 200.
- 'Several hundred' or 'hundreds' is counted as 200, if that gave a larger attendance than 'large protest' (that is, in the smaller cities and other localities).
- 'Several thousand' or 'thousands' is counted as 2000.

- In 1983 a series of public meetings on Central America addressed by Peter Camejo is reported to have been attended by 'several thousands' in nine cities. Excluding the two cities in which he addressed Karl Marx centenary conferences and the attendances at these, the remainder (from 2000) of 1040 attending was divided according to the ratios in the table above between the next seven largest cities.
- Two cross-city totals for attendances at actions in October 1983 about Grenada were allocated according to the ratios in the table.
- '50-300' were reported to have attended Tasmanian forests actions in Launceston, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra. Launceston was allocated the 300 figure, the rest 50 each.
- June 1993 World Environment Day actions nationally were reported to have a total attendance of 3000. City-specific figures were given only for Adelaide and Sydney. The allocation of a 'large protest' to each other capital, Newcastle and Wollongong resulted in a total of 3050 attending being coded.

Appendix D

Election analysis calculations and electorate categorisations.

Calculation of the left vote

This study calculates two votes. One is the Australian Democrats first preference vote. The other is the first preference votes for all other parties and independent candidates that were in some way part of the new party process, as indicated in appendix E, put together. This is reported as the 'left' vote.

An alternative would be to calculate a preference vote, which would consider the degree to which vote preference flows indicate a vote for the left. This eliminates the problem that a party candidate whose party was not registered and therefore appeared on the ballot paper as an independent or without any party identification could receive an 'independent', rather than a left-of-ALP, vote. On the other hand, this might exclude certain consciously left votes. It also poses the problem of interpreting left votes with ALP preferences. As well, the published results pose a number of problems for such a calculation: up until 1984, the data on preference distribution in the lower house elections is very limited; from 1987, while exhaustive preference counts for all lower house electorates become available, a small number of non-left votes distributed early in a count are included in the preference flows from a left candidate when the latter is then excluded from the count; comprehensive data is also not available on preference flows in the Senate, although from 1984, the 'above-the-line' ticket voting system ensured relatively 'tight' preference flows.

The study does discount these votes for 'donkey votes', because these would make a significant difference to votes that often were only a few percent. A donkey vote is a ballot paper with preferences for candidates numbered from top to bottom, or a vote for the first ticket 'above-the-line' in Senate voting from 1984, without regard for the political alignments of the candidates. Calculation of the donkey vote is complicated by: lack of knowledge of the motivation for particular votes; the variation of this vote among electorates; the reduction of this vote from 1984, after party nominations appeared on the ballot paper; the variation according to party or non-party nomination that appears to have occurred once that was identified, with higher donkey votes for independent candidates and lower donkey votes for those identified as indigenous, for example; and the few examples available in Senate voting.

Peetz calculated a donkey vote in the 1987 House of Representatives elections of 0.65 percent, comparing this with calculations from less than one percent to as much

as four percent for previous elections.¹ However, even in the 1983 House elections, when party nominations were still not published, votes for candidates listed first on lower house ballot papers were as low as 1.6 percent; in 1984, the lowest such vote was 1.2 percent, and from 1987, some such votes were as small as 0.6 percent. Peetz's figure of 0.65 percent is used for the 1987 and all subsequent elections in this study, while higher figures are assumed for earlier elections: one percent in 1984 and 1.35 per cent in 1983.

In the Senate the clearest examples of donkey votes are the 0.7 percent vote for the first-placed SWP ticket in WA in 1983, compared with no more votes of less than 0.1 percent for the party's tickets elsewhere, and votes of more than 1.5 percent for the DSP in Queensland and Tasmania in 1990, compared with the party's 0.5 percent vote in WA). This study assumes a Senate donkey vote of 0.5 percent throughout.

Electorate categorisation

Electorates have been categorised as:

- 'Inner-city', which are the capital cities' city centre seat, adjacent seats (when classified as inner metropolitan by the AEC), and port seats: Sydney, Grayndler, Kingsford-Smith, Wentworth, North Sydney, Warringah, Phillip, Maribyrnong, Gellibrand, Wills, Melbourne, Melbourne Ports, Batman, Kooyong, Higgins, Brisbane, Lilley, Griffith, Moreton, Petrie, Ryan, Port Adelaide, Adelaide, Hawker, Hindmarsh, Sturt, Fraser, Canberra, Perth, Fremantle, Curtin, Swan, and Denison.
- 'Liberal city', which are other metropolitan seats in which the mean ALP two-party preferred vote was less than 45 percent: Bennelong, Mitchell, Bradfield, Berowra, Mackellar, Dundas, Cook, Balaclava, Goldstein, Menzies, Fadden, Fairfax, Longman, Moncrieff, McPherson, Boothby, Mayo, Moore, and Tangney.
- 'ALP city', which are other metropolitan seats in which the mean ALP two-party preferred vote was greater than 55%: Lindsay, Greenway, Dobell, Chifley, Prospect, Werriwa, Fowler, Parramatta, Reid, Blaxland, Banks, Watson, St George, Burke, Calwell, Lalor, Corio, Scullin, Holt, Hotham, Henty, Oxley, Bonython, Fraser, Brand
- 'Other city', which are the remaining metropolitan seats: Lowe, Barton, Hughes (from 1984), Robertson, Macarthur, Casey, La Trobe, Streeton, Corinella, Diamond Valley, Jagajaga, Chisholm, Deakin, Aston, Bruce, Isaacs, Dunkley,

¹ David Peetz, 'Donkeys, Deserters, and Targets: Causes of Swing in Electorates in the 1987 Federal Election', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 4, Summer 1989, pp. 468-71.

Rankin, Dickson, Forde, Bowman, Kingston, Makin, Namadji, Canning, Stirling, Cowan, Franklin, Northern Territory.

- 'Provincial ALP', which are seats around Newcastle and Wollongong, all of which had relatively high ALP and left-of-ALP votes: Newcastle, Shortland, Hunter (in 1983), Charlton, Cunningham, Throsby, Hughes (in 1983).
- 'Alternative lifestyle', which are provincial or rural seats with unusually high left-of-ALP votes in at least parts of the seat, associated with groups of alternative lifestyle inhabitants: Richmond, Page, Cowper, Eden-Monaro, Macquarie, Fisher, Pearce, and Forrest (from 1990).²
- 'Rural and regional', which are other rural seats: New England, Lyne, Paterson, Hunter (from 1984), Calare, Hume, Gilmore, Wannon, Ballarat, Bendigo, McEwen, Flinders, Gippsland, Corangamite, McMillan, Groom, Leichhardt, Herbert, Dawson, Hinkler, Wide Bay, Capricornia, McPherson, Barker, Lyons, Bass, Braddon, Wilmot.

The remaining seats, which are inland rural and/or those with large pastoral and mining sectors—Gwydir, Parkes, Riverina, Farrer, Mallee, Murray, Indi, Kennedy, Maranoa, Wakefield, Grey, Kalgoorlie, and O'Connor—in which the left-of-ALP vote was consistently poorest, are excluded from further analysis in this study.

Calculation of ALP two-party preferred votes

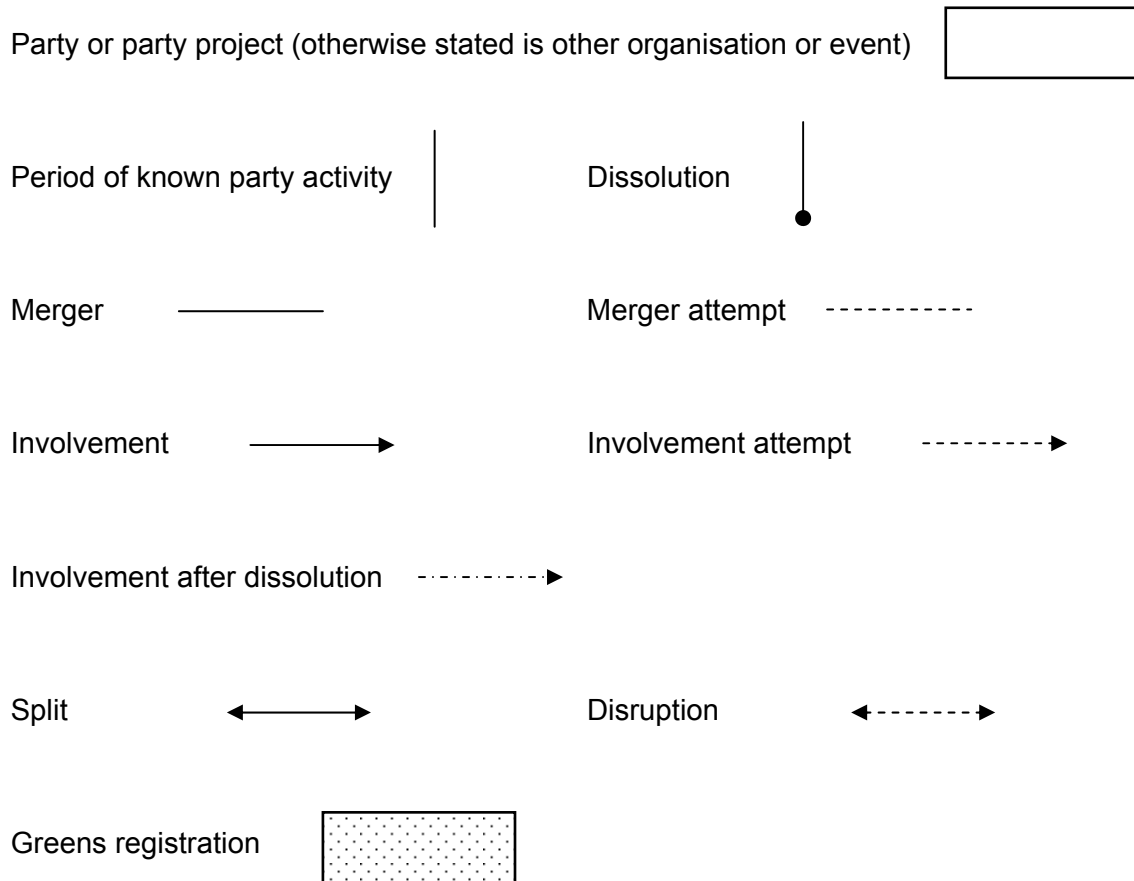
Most lower house seats did not have exhaustive counts conducted before 1987. To calculate the period's mean ALP two-party preferred votes for these electorates, an estimation of this vote is needed for the 1983 and 1984 elections. The study assumes, where an exhaustive count is not available, that the ALP received, besides its own first preference votes and any applicable donkey vote preferences, the preferences of: two-thirds of the votes for communist and socialist candidates, one-half of those for M. Dunphy in Bennelong in 1983, and 50 percent of the preferences of Democrats votes. The last, however, is further adjusted, to most closely 'fit' the known preference flows (where seats went to preference counts), in this way: an additional seven percent of preferences for seats in Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory; five percent more for sea change seats and the NT donkey vote; one percent more in 1983, except in Queensland; and a reduction of five percent in rural and regional seats, and in Queensland in 1984.

² William Metcalf, 'Anarchy and Bureaucracy within the Alternative Lifestyle Movement or Weber versus Kropotkin at Nimbin', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 6, no. 4, November, pp. 48-50; Jonathan Strauss, 'Making Sense of the WA Elections Results', *Green Left Weekly*, no. 203, 17 February 1993, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1993/88/4590>, accessed on 20 April 2008.

Appendix E

New party formation and activity

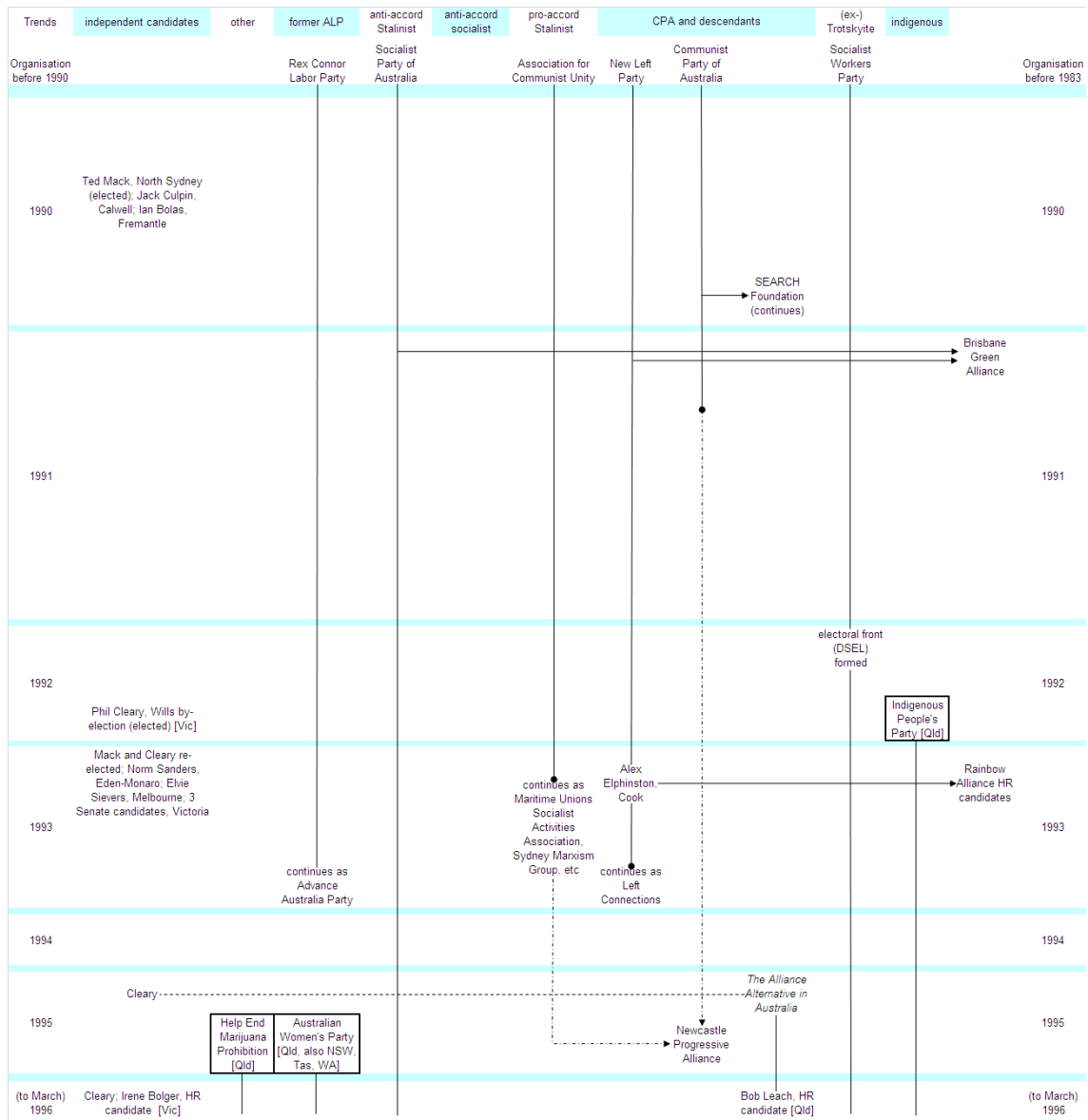
Legend for the following figures



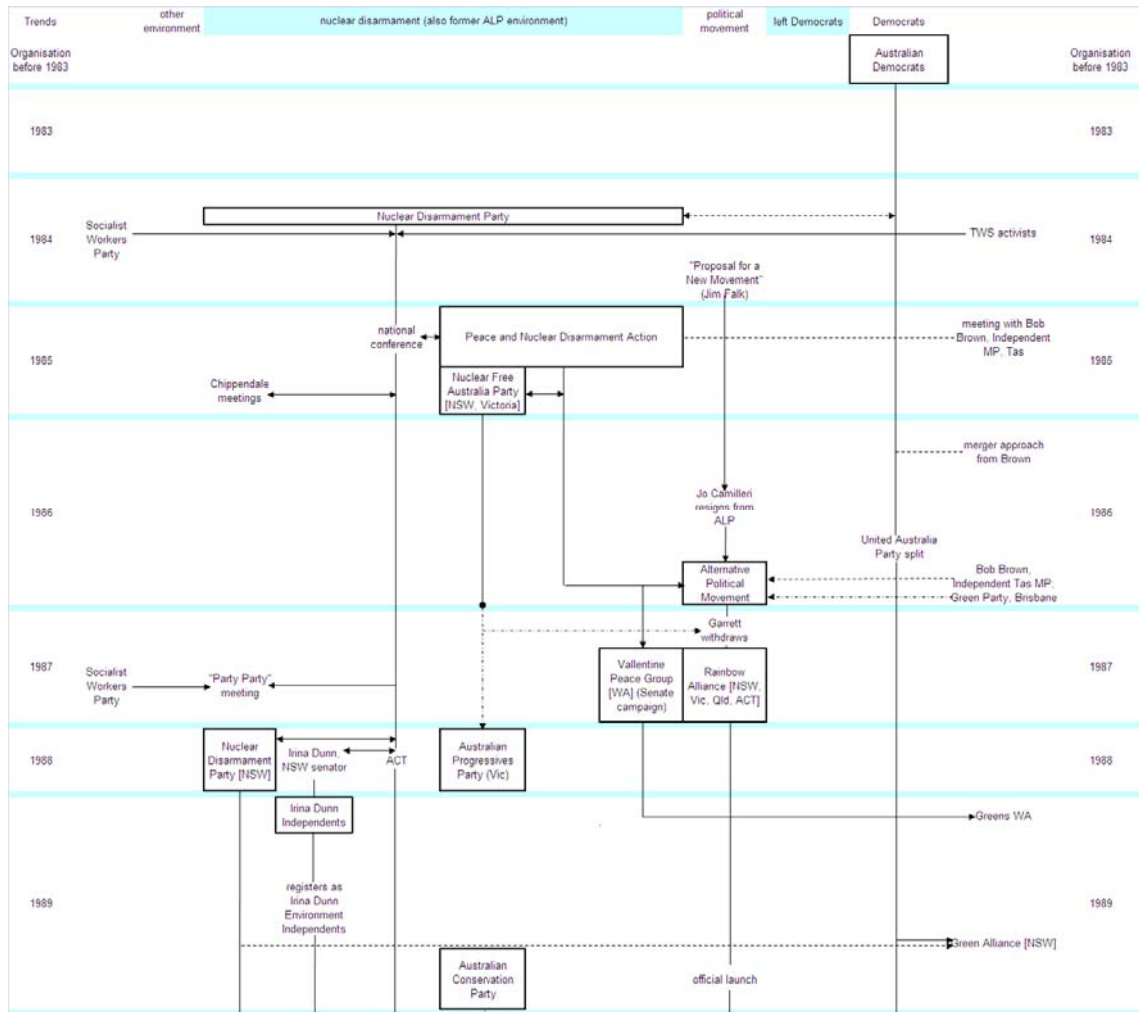
Note on abbreviations for the figures in this Appendix

House of Representatives is abbreviated to HR

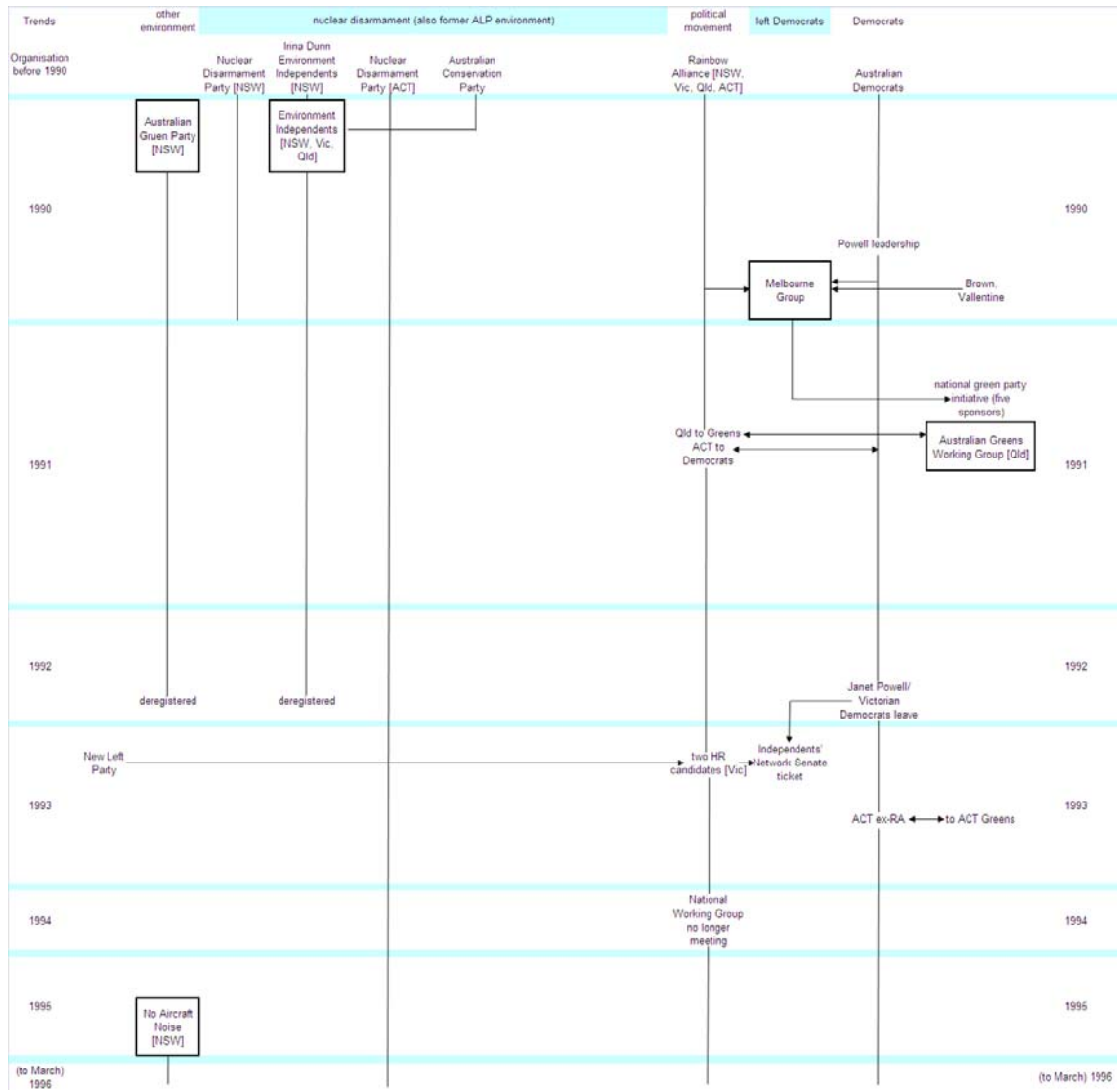
Independents and socialists (from 1990)



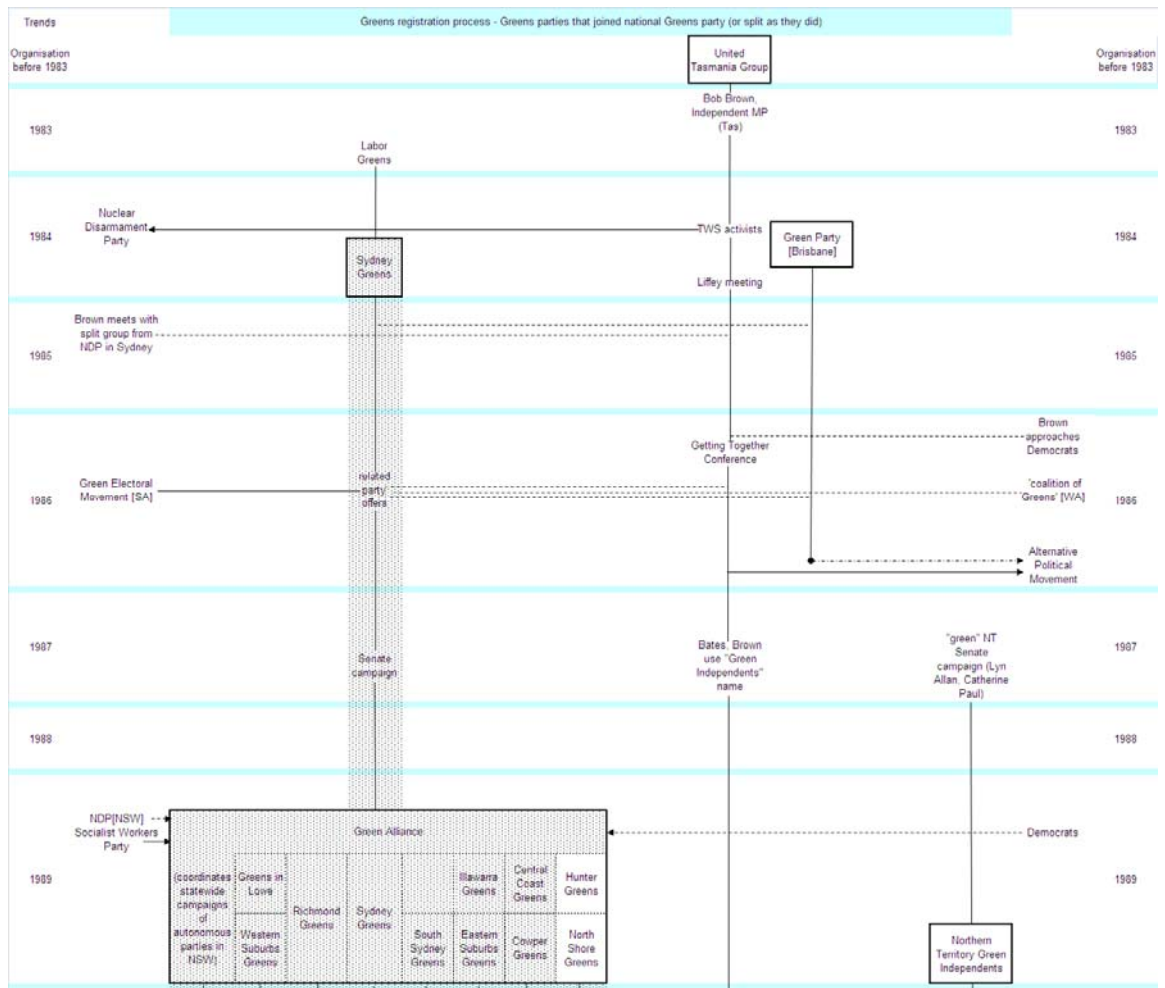
Australian Democrats, Nuclear Disarmament Party and Rainbow Alliance (to 1989)



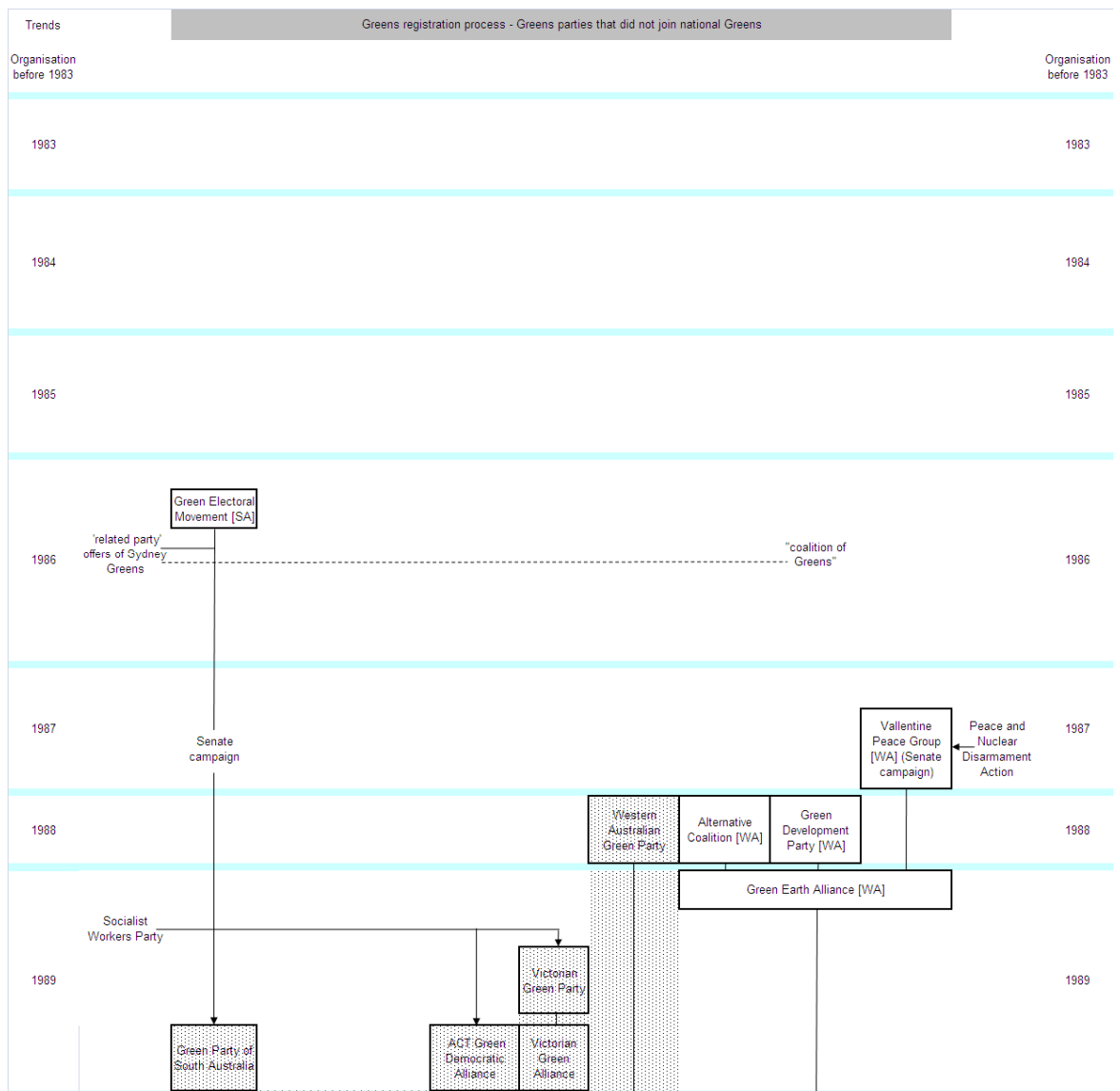
Australian Democrats, Nuclear Disarmament Party and Rainbow Alliance (from 1990)



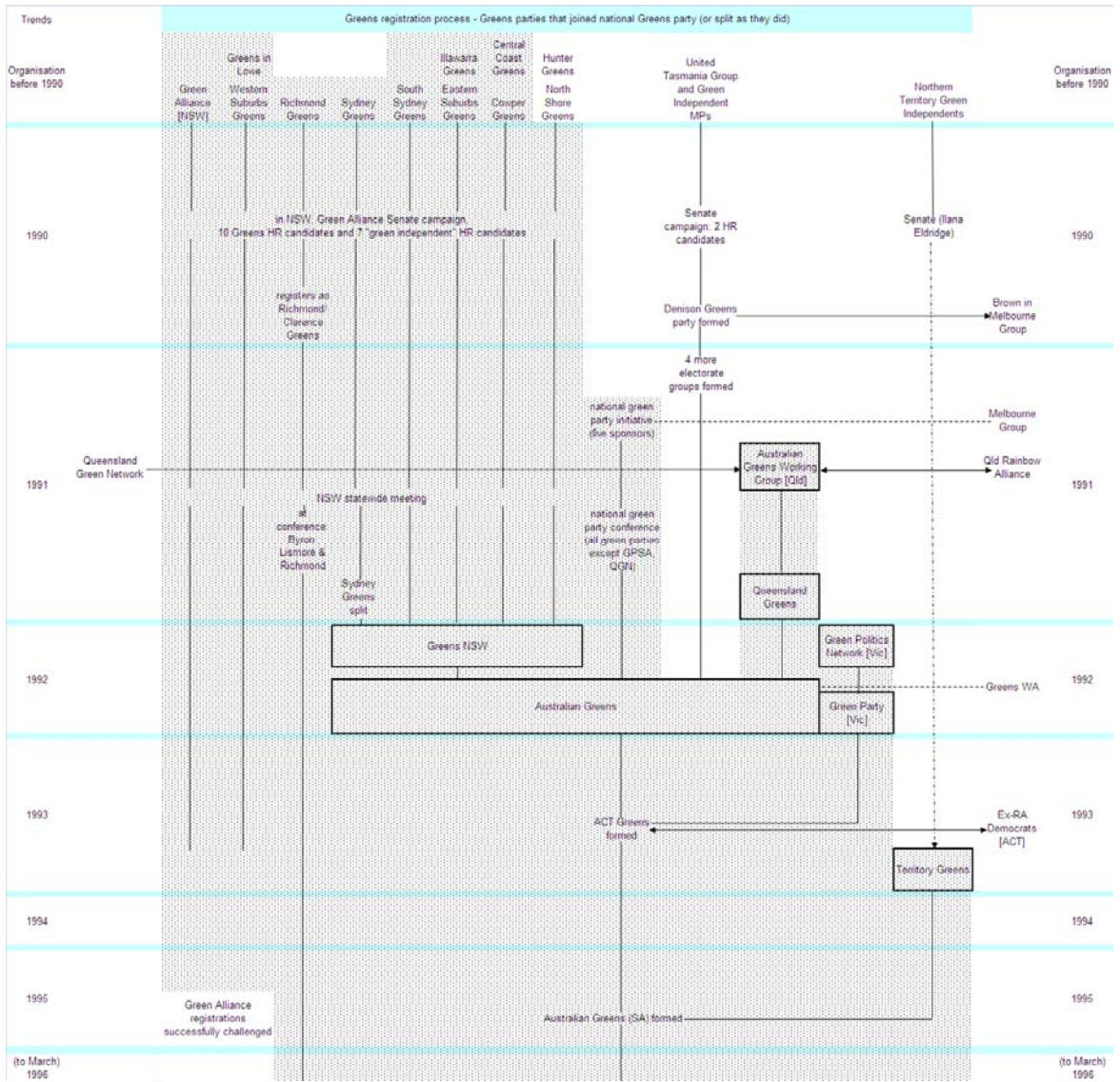
Greens (to 1989)



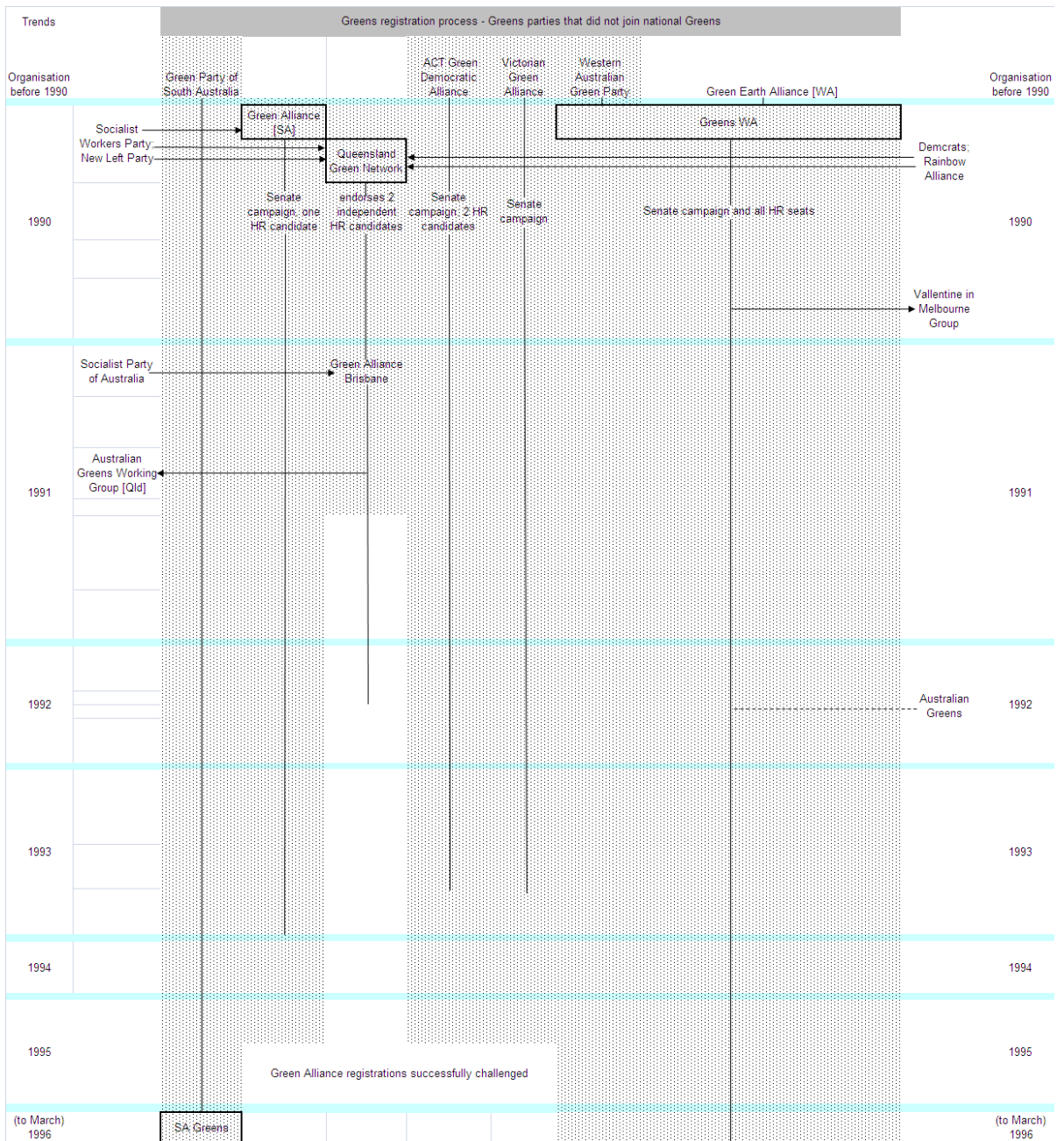
Greens (to 1989) (continued)



Greens (from 1990)



Greens (from 1990) (continued)



Appendix F

Corrections to *A Plague on Both Your Houses*

The data on minor parties provided by Dean Jaensch and David Mathieson is a starting point of any study of minor parties in the long Labor decade. However, their book has some errors and missing data in relation to both Green and socialist parties during the period. The book also does not indicate some relationships between the various parties.

The relationships of descent and the years of the formation of these parties are shown in the figures in Appendix E. Otherwise, corrections are as follows, using the coding of Jaensch and Mathieson.

Chapter on Greens

- ACTG. In 1990, this party had two House of Representative (HR) candidates, who received 6069 votes, and two Senate candidates, who received 5288 votes (this vote is listed by Jaensch and Mathieson under GRES).
- ACTR. This was the ACT branch of AUGP, as noted in discussion of the latter.
- AUGP. In 1993, the Australian Greens had 45 HR candidates (13 from NSW, rather than the 12 indicated under GRES, 25 from Qld under listed under QUEG, five from Tasmania listed under TASG and one in Victoria, which is not accounted for), who received 130,985 votes (44,935 in NSW, 58,412 in Qld, 24,321 in Tasmania and 3317 in Victoria), and 12 Senate candidates (four in NSW rather than the six under GRES, only three in Qld under QUEG and also just three in Tasmania under TASG, and two in the ACT, unaccounted for), who received 166,178 votes (including 74,620 in NSW and 11,168 in the ACT, which appears as a sum under GRAM); for 1996, the HR results for the party's Victorian branch are included here by Jaensch and Mathies as well as being listed under GRNV, and the same is done for both the NSW and Victorian branch's Senate tickets, under GRNN and GRNV, while the Tasmanian HR and Senate results are only under TASG.
- CCGP. This was the Central Coast Green Party
- EAGR. In 1990, two HR candidates, who received 8214 votes. By 1993, this had become part of the Greens branch in NSW
- GREE. In 1993, only one HR candidate and only two Senate candidates.
- GRAL. This is described as being based in WA (probably a reference to the Green Earth Alliance), but the results refer to the NSW Green Alliance (GA) and

SA Green Alliance. For 1990, the one HR candidate referred to was in SA. The three Senate candidates were also from SA: they received 19,499 votes. For the 1990 GA vote, see below re GRES. In 1993, only GA had Senate candidates.

- GRAM. The NSW GA is covered under GRAL; the vote under GRAM is the total for AUGP in NSW and ACT.
- GRAN. This is the same as ACTG.
- GRAO. In 1987, 2 Senate candidates, who received 6456 votes.
- GREA. The party formed in 1992 was the AUGP. The 1992 QASS candidates would be from QUEG.
- GRES. This is the original Greens party, formed in 1984. It subsequently became the SYDG. The SYDG also operated within the GRAL. Later it joined the GRNN, which itself joined the AUGP. In 1984, one HR candidate who received 3117 votes. In 1990, no separate HR candidates, since the only Green party candidates otherwise unaccounted are those of the ACTG and EAGR, and in the Senate, 5 candidates, who received 64,583 votes.
- GRNN. This is the NSW branch of the AUGP.
- GRNV. This is the Victorian branch of the AUGP.
- GRWA. The 1989 WA election results should appear under WEGP. In 1990, 14 HR candidates received 66,624 votes.
- QUEG. The Queensland branch of the AUGP.
- TASG. The Tasmanian branch of the AUGP.
- WEGP. This should have the 1989 WA election results (from GRWA). It should not have the 1990 federal election result (to GRWA)

Chapter on socialist parties

- COMM. In 1984, 2 Senate candidates, who received 4725 votes. In 1987, 2 Senate candidates, who received 2456 votes.
- DEMO. Before the 1998 federal election this party existed but was not registered. In 1993, 13 HR candidates, who received 11,447 votes. In 1996, 12 candidates who received 11,082 votes
- SOIC. In 1987, 5 Senate candidates, who received 4187 votes.