

In November 1898 the Victorian Labor paper *Tocsin* had argued that

a minimum wage cannot continue to exist in a practical form unless in industries and forms of work which are protected either naturally or artificially against the competition of people who have not a minimum wage system. The doctrine of the Minimum Wage in all Protected Industries is practically of Australian invention, and, since it has begun to operate, places Protection in Australia in an altogether different footing from Protection in other countries.

The wellsprings of Labor support for compulsory arbitration were indicative of the non-class view of society that the Labor Party represented. The effects of arbitration reinforced this position. Mr Justice Piddington reported on 'the mental change wrought in [trade union officials] by constantly seeing and taking part in the judicial methods of investigation and consequent decree'. Some rank-and-file workers were won over by the seeming generosity of the Harvester Award in 1907 which, on paper, amounted to an almost 30 per cent pay rise in some cases.

These experiences 'engendered (or perhaps increased) a distaste and distrust of the methods of trial by force and a willingness to abandon them and abide by the methods of trial by reason and law'. For the unions as organisations, compulsory arbitration meant 'a general lowering of the fighting spirit of the membership', because more and more unionists were free-loaders. Eventually, compulsory arbitration became associated with the compulsory unionism that sustained the corrupt empires of the AWU.

PART THREE

SEVENTEEN Laborites

The idea of the Government getting into power, as is sometimes said, and then taking advantage of the fact that they are in power to do all sorts of revolutionary and impossible things never occurs to the Labour man in Australia.

John Storey, New South Wales premier, 1920

Numerous comments on the Labor Party have been made already; it is now time to carry this examination through in greater detail and with more coherence. Almost of what has gone before leads up to the Labor Party, since to discuss a political party it is necessary to examine far more than the internal dynamics of its organisation. As Gramsci said:

the history of a party, in other words, must be the history of a particular social group. But this group is not isolated; it has friends, allies, opponents and enemies. Only from the complex picture of social and State life (often even with international ramifications) will emerge the history of a certain party.

Earlier chapters have defined the environment from which the Labor Party emerged and of which it was little more than the logical conclusion in organisational form. The social phenomenon of Laborism is precisely the product of the peculiar position that Australasia occupied in British capitalism. In the field of international relations, Labor was in the forefront of the clamour for white supremacy, which in turn led the ALP into

militarism. Part One of this book showed the extent and specific character of Labor's active subservience to the outlook of imperialism. Part Two, by revealing the contours of the economic, political and social forces operating *within* Australia, revealed how these open and prosperous circumstances contributed to the further ideological integration of the workforce into the consensus of capitalism. On all these questions, Labor's stance was of necessity conditioned by its Australian origins. Concepts such as capitalism and imperialism must be understood in terms of the environment characterised above, and not in their strictly European sense.

The appearance of Laborism as a distinctive political form in the 1890s was by no means a break with the past. In every respect it was a fulfilment of what had gone before. The Labor parties carried these social forces through into programs in both foreign and domestic policy. Labor was by no means a passive vehicle for these forces: it proved their active protagonist. Evidence in relation to land settlement, racism and militarism has already been given.

Social forces, no matter how important or how detailed the exposition of them has been, do not equal and cannot be substituted for the particulars of an organisation's growth. Attention has to be paid to the procession of events that led up to the formation of the Labor parties before moving on to consider their behaviour.

If it is true that the Labor Party did not represent a rupture with the prevailing social environment, it should be possible to show that its organisational roots were grounded in the preceding period — in other words, that it was not the result of some shock such as the 1890 maritime strike.

ORIGINS

One popular explanation for the foundation of the Labor

Party followed the account given by one of the participants, George Black, in the *History of the NSW Labor Party*:

The New South Wales Labor Party in 1891 was the creation of the maritime strike. The workers then discovered that the strike was an expensive and largely futile method of obtaining reforms.

This passage was not a comment on the birth of the Labor Party at all. Rather it was another example of the rejection of strikes by the people who formed the Labor Party. It confirms our view of their attitudes without telling us anything about the causal order of events.

Instead of seeing the Labor parties as the result of the unions' expulsion from the mainstream of Australian life, the parliamentary organisations should be viewed as the upshot of the unions' growing confidence within the social system and acceptance by society at large.

Unions sponsored their own parliamentary candidates as early as 1859, when Charles Jardine Don was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly. New South Wales followed in 1874 with the return of Angus Cameron. These early experiences are not relevant as indicators of an overwhelming desire by the unions to enter parliament as a separate force; their importance rests in the lessons that the unions derived from them. Don drifted away from his trade union colleagues and after his defeat in 1864 became licensee of a Fitzroy hotel where he died a virtual alcoholic two years later. Cameron sank into the comfortable embrace of his parliamentary career and finally broke with his Labor origins. The lesson for the unions was obvious: only a party, disciplined and united, could operate successfully. Individual representation was purposeless and dispiriting for both the represented and the representative.

Another difficulty facing the unions in securing direct parliamentary representation was that the MPs needed to be supported financially. Demands for 'payment of members' were

made at the Inter-Colonial Trades Union Congress from 1884 onwards. Payment was introduced in Queensland in 1886 and in New South Wales applied from 1891, although its enabling legislation had been passed in 1889. The NSW Trades and Labour Council's report to the Inter-Colonial Trades Union Congress in February 1889 argued that all political efforts should be directed towards the attainment of this measure, without which representation was an impossible burden for the unions to carry.

Payment of members was necessary for the advent of a sizeable trade union party. Payment was not sufficient. In Victoria, members had been paid throughout the 1880s without creating a separate party. Agitation for payment illustrates that parliamentary aspirations were widespread before 1890.

Victoria's advances in this respect remind us that differences between the various colonies were at least as important as the similarities. The similarities were on questions of policy (e.g. White Australia, closer settlement); the differences were pronounced in the methods of organisation.

Outside Tasmania and Western Australia, the stage was set by early 1890 for the appearance of Labor parties of some kind. South Australian delegates to the Inter-Colonial Trades Union Congress in Hobart in 1889 expressed their pleasure at the election of G. W. Cotton 'in the labour interest' to the Upper House. Brisbane's Trades and Labour Council had sponsored its first president, Galloway, in a by-election in 1886. Queensland made another attempt in the following year to fashion a political organisation from the Village Settlement Committee, the Australian Labor League, the Anti-Chinese Committee, the Local Option League and the Temperance Association. Strange as such an alliance would have been, it was precisely these interests that shortly afterwards sustained the Labor Party. At Queensland's 1888 election, four candidates sponsored by the Trades and Labour Council polled a creditable 1200 votes between them. In addition, Tom Glassey was

returned as an independent Griffith supporter but proclaimed himself to be a 'Labor' man; he later became the party's parliamentary leader. On the Darling Downs, yet another unofficial 'Labor' candidate stood and received almost 40 per cent of the votes. Of all the problems Labor faced in its early years, shortage of willing candidates was not among them.

The year 1889 was crucial for New South Wales. In February the Inter-Colonial Trades Union Congress unanimously agreed that:

the various Trades and Labour Councils of Australia should formulate an electoral programme in accordance with the resolutions come to at this and preceding congresses, for the support of all interested in Labor, and for the acceptance of Parliamentary candidates. Further, that no candidate who does not adhere to the Labor Programme should receive the support of the Labor Party.

In September, 'payment of members' was adopted. Less than a week later, the Trades and Labour Council was given notice of a motion 'that the Parliamentary Committee be instructed to consider at the next meeting the advisability of bringing forward Labor candidates at the next general elections, and the said committee draw up a Labor platform and submit same to Council'. Debate continued over several weeks with the fiscal issue as the main point of contention. Almost unanimous approval was given in January 1890. The maritime strike did not commence until August, seven months later.

Within three months the parliamentary committee had prepared a fourteen-point platform which was accepted on 3 April 1890. By June there was a motion for the institution of electoral machinery to support Labor candidates and in July a motion to organise meetings throughout the state to promote Labor's parliamentary ambitions. Well before the strikes commenced, there was in existence a well-laid plan for the entry of the New South Wales unions into parliament. This strategy was the natural culmination of their increasingly 'responsible' role in the public life of that colony.

Nor was the situation very different in Queensland. The first annual session of the general council of the Australian Labour Federation was held in Brisbane on 1 August 1890, a fortnight before the start of the maritime strike. Efforts by the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council to secure parliamentary representation in 1888 had been interrupted by the Council's collapse in 1889. Its place was taken by the Australian Labour Federation, the primary aim of which was to establish a political party. Revolution was no part of its program. Striking was frowned upon.

Although Labor parties would have appeared without the maritime strike, it would be idle to ignore the effect that the strikes had on the development of Labor as a parliamentary force. The behaviour of the existing parties in sending in the troops proved a useful propaganda weapon. The relative intensity of the strikes and of the government's responses to them also helped to determine the future role of the Labor parties in parliament: whether they had to be wholly independent (Queensland), or could join coalitions (Victoria), or trade support for services rendered (New South Wales). Yet nowhere were the strikes the sole determinant. In Queensland, where the strikes were most severe, the older parties joined in a grand coalition (the 'Griffithwaith') so that Labor had no option but to sit in splendid isolation for a decade. Moreover, the decision 'to occupy seats on opposition cross benches no matter what party is in power' had been taken by the ALF before any of the strikes had occurred.

One lasting effect of the strikes was on propaganda within the labour movement. Politicians reminded the unions that strikes fail, while unions claimed the right of parental control over the ALP. Historically speaking, the politicians were in the right, since the unions that usually made the criticisms were in no sense the heirs to the unionists who founded the Labor Party.

QUEST FOR LEGITIMACY

While no single year, such as 1890, can be identified as a turning point for the labour movement in Australia, the Labor parties were not merely the organised expression of a set of previous demands for better wages, shorter hours, a state bank and the break-up of the big estates. In the act of their coagulation, the forces calling for these policies began to undergo the metamorphosis from protest groups into a political party which sought what it perceived as power within Australian society. Each colony-state proceeded at its own pace, though after 1901 all were accelerated by the fortunes of the federal Caucus.

As outgrowths of the old liberalism, the Labor parties retained much of its ideological architecture and were consequently influenced by the belief that the British constitution abhors classes. Conservatives used this argument against any form of overt class representation, opposing Labor parties *per se*. By the 1880s this view held little sway over the Australian labouring classes who were becoming certain that 'class interests needed class sympathies to fight for them'. In this belief they had the support of most liberals: labour should return its own members who, with the wisdom that comes from experience, could be taken into Liberal ministries. Direct class representation did not justify direct class rule.

Totally devoid of any appreciation of the Marxist theory of the state, the Australian labour movement found this problem difficult to solve. As one of a number of great interests in society, did labour have any right to rule by, of and for itself? It is customary enough today to hear anti-Labor spokespeople claim that the ALP should not be allowed to rule because it is divided, or because its policies are dangerous. It is less common to hear the charge that Labor should not be allowed to rule because it is sectional and consequently does not have the interests of society at heart. Yet in the years 1890-1910 this

claim was the primary theoretical obstacle in Labor's path. How the ALP overcame this problem to become accepted as a valid constitutional alternative is a prime element in the story of the ALP as an integrating force over the working class within capitalism.

The inheritance of class passivity that dominated the Australian labour movement before 1890 meant that, even when it was directly and openly assaulted by the state during the strikes of 1890-94, its overwhelming response was to recapture this past. The state had been temporarily seized by capitalists. What was required was a return to neutrality. This outlook was made clear in the telegrams that the secretary of the Australian Labor Federation, Albert Hinchcliffe, sent to Queensland's Treasurer, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, in September 1890 at the height of the maritime strike. Hinchcliffe appealed to McIlwraith to forget that he was a member of the Employers' Association and claimed that everything would be all right if the state officials (the police) were left to do their job instead of being replaced by volunteers.

As repression continued, the labour movement grew more adamant in its demand that the state be restored to its role of arbitrator. Such appeals left the Labor Party with its sectional nature confirmed. Labor as a party had to break through this self-image. It did so by transforming its view of the state from a neutral arbitrator to a neutral instrument. In the words of Arthur Calwell, Labor's great achievements 'were based upon this central doctrine: that the state belonged to the people and should be used freely and consciously by the people as the instrument for their own betterment and progress'. Labor's confidence in its right to rule depended on its ability to surpass, but still encompass, its specifically labour constituency. At the very heart of the Labor Party rested a suppression of class identity. If the ALP were not to lose its working-class supporters, it had to convince them that they too were the 'people', and not a class.

Given the experience of the Australian labouring classes in the nineteenth century that redirection was not too difficult. By the time proletarian consciousness gained strength in the early years of this century, the Labor Party had secured its organisational tribunate with which it repelled or absorbed militant protest. Moreover, there were certain demands which, while dear to the hearts of the labourers, were concerned with the fate of Australian society in general. Foremost among these was 'White Australia'.

Other labour demands were amenable to this transition: the plea to cure unemployment through public works could become a call for national development; appeals for the break-up of the big estates attracted small farmers as well as being 'developmental'; pressures for protection could unite employers and employees against foreign products. 'White Australia' needed an armed Australia and Labor's defence program undelined its community concerns. That national development and defence could combine is demonstrated by E. J. G. Prince's study of Commonwealth railway policy. Writing of Fisher's 1910-13 attempts to alter the Constitution, Prince showed these moves to be part of an overall plan 'to implement a scheme of national railway planning for defence reasons'. (Since this defence was directed at Asia, specifically Japan, some Senate critics considered that the commencement of the transcontinental line from Darwin southwards was, to say the least, dysfunctional.)

An important factor in Labor's assumption of its 'national' role was the experience of being in office. This learning initially took place in some form of coalition, so that the electorate and the party could have time to adjust to the altered position. The precise method of acclimatisation varied from colony to colony, and then state to state. Dawson headed a minority ministry for six days in Queensland in 1899, and his party entered a kind of coalition with both the Morgan-Browne and Kidston governments of 1903-07. Dag-

lish headed a minority government in Western Australia in 1904-05. In Victoria in 1900, Labor leader W. A. Trenwith accepted a portfolio in a Liberal administration with the acquiescence of his party. Tom Price headed a Labor-Liberal Coalition in South Australia from 1905 to 1909.

A breakthrough took place in Commonwealth affairs with the formation of Watson's minority government in 1904. Yet, as if to reassure himself as much as his opponents, Watson appointed the Victorian liberal, H. B. Higgins, as his Attorney-General. As L. F. Fitzhardinge put it: 'The importance, in the long run, of Watson's Government lay not in anything it did, but in the fact that it accustomed people's minds to the conception of a Labor Government'.

These early attempts at governing were significant for the comfort that they gave to the wavering Labor sympathiser. Their effect on the Labor parties was to heighten their expectations and increase their confidence. It was to take longer periods in office in their own right to complete Labor's transformation from a pressure group to an ark of the national covenant. Of course, the Labor Party had been convinced of this role long before the electorate. In November 1903 the Victorian Labor weekly, *Tocsin*, proclaimed that 'the word "Labor" is synonymous with "Australian" ... without a Labor Party nationality is practically impossible'. It went on to present the consequences:

The Labor Party is the National Party; therefore it cannot be the representative of any coterie or clique. The Labor Party stands for all Australians. Its ideas and aspirations are as wide and expansive as the seas that wash the Australian shores.

This view was confirmed by the report of the 1905 Federal Conference which said that 'every interest in Australia was represented except the interest of the parasitic classes'. Over thirty years later, John Curtin affirmed that 'Labor is not a Class movement; the Party belongs to the whole people'. Thus

Labor overcame its sectional inhibitions by realising a populist reality.

FRUITS OF OFFICE

Attachment to the parliamentary system can never be a fixure in the collective consciousness of Labor Party supporters. That mentality must exert its influence afresh with each new member, just as its genius will be revealed more fully the further up the Labor hierarchy the member proceeds. The vision of truth offered by the parliamentary system is quantitatively different for its various participants, although all must subscribe to the formula 'Being in office equals being in power'. Those who achieve Cabinet rank experienced a leap in consciousness, as Gordon Childe reported as private secretary to the New South Wales Labor premier:

The Minister faced with the actual responsibilities of governing, administering the details of his department, surrounded by outwardly obsequious Civil Servants, courted by men of wealth and influence, an honoured guest at public functions, riding in his own State motor car, is prone to undergo a mental transformation.

Confronted with these new and fascinating activities, is it any wonder that a minister mistakes his ritual for decision-making, his speeches for social forces, his minuted documents for transmogrified reality? This higher experience intensifies the paralysis of his critical faculties by opening onto the complexity of administrative procedures.

Complete revelation comes only to the handful who become prime minister. Scullin explained his 1935 resignation as Leader of the Opposition thus:

I have come to believe that a man who has been Prime Minister suffers a handicap as Leader of the Opposition. He is expected to press the Government in every possible way; to insist upon statements on sensitive international matters; to call loudly for the ta-

bling of international communications. But I know how delicate such matters can be, and how obliged a government may have to be, for some time at least, silent. Another leader would feel more free.

While this degree of enlightenment is a special preserve, its character is common at every level of parliamentarism. The burden of Scullin's argument is indisputable — once the premises of parliamentarism have been accepted. Seen in this light, the hesitancy and vacillation associated with Labor leaders are not personal quirks but rather the logic of their entire political praxis.

When Robert Michels published *Political Parties* in 1911, he took the German Social Democratic Party as his model for the growth of an 'iron law of oligarchy' in democratic organisations. 'It is organisation which gives birth to the domination of the elected over the electors, of the mandates over the mandatories, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organisation says oligarchy.' He could just as well have taken the Australian Labor Party as his model. Every feature he identified in the European parties has been present in Australia.

The expense involved in travel and loss of work meant that conferences, especially those in the federal sphere and the larger states, were dominated by politicians. D. W. Rawson has shown that in the years 1932-40 about 10 per cent of the electorate delegates to the Victorian party conferences were in no way connected with the districts they represented. The same applied to the unions. A. A. Calwell regularly represented the Wire Pullers' Union.

Attempts by Labor leaders to personalise their power have not always met with success. J. C. Watson in 1905 complained:

The Leader is supposed, or should have, the most matured judgment amongst the members of the Party; yet according to the Conference decision he is to be given no greater voice in the selection of his colleagues than the rawest recruits in the Party.

This situation was not a triumph for the rank-and-file of the

party; it merely meant that a group of professionals, in this case federal parliamentarians, was not going to be subordinated to one man. Caucus election of Cabinet in no way invalidated Michels' argument.

For many Labor politicians, a political career offered perhaps the only chance they had of escaping from a situation which was well below their capabilities and which only the lack of formal education bound them to. Upward social mobility for the self-educated became possible in trade union and Labor Party affairs. Some Labor politicians who ended up in the Liberal Party were not 'rats' so much as they were men who finally found the position in society that they had sought all their lives. Others have retained nominal Labor membership, content with their personal fortunes. By 1914 Hughes owned a two-storeyed house at Lane Cove and a farm in Windsor. He was the member for West Sydney. It was unkind of him to present Fisher with a compass when he paid his first visit to the prime minister's newly acquired and rambling house on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Money was not the only method by which a Labor politician could be enveloped into the system. The use of titles has been far more extensive in the British than in the Australian Labor Party. Gordon Childe suggested that the colonials could be bought for a smaller price: appointment to the Legislative Council with its title of 'Honorable' and a gold pass for life seemed quite sufficient for many nominees to abandon any ideas they might have had of abolishing the Upper House.

Attachment to parliamentary place prevented a double dissolution of the Commonwealth Parliament in 1930. Canberra journalist Warren Denning observed developments at first hand: 'Those who became Ministers were so fascinated, so infatuated with their unfamiliar roles that they held to their places in a desperate determination... They overlooked in their almost childish joy, certain deep and vital political considerations'.

Honest advancement was not to everyone's taste or training. Corruption in one form or another emerged, especially in state politics. Throughout many of these allegations stalked the figure of John Wren. Although the scope of Wren's influence is difficult to establish with certainty, there is some material that at least indicates the range of his ambitions. In 1906 the Queensland *Worker* admitted that one of the members of the Party's Senate team had been dropped because of his connection 'with a notorious tote business, and constituting his Senatorship, as it were, a sort of advertising agency for one Jack Wren, who has grown rich by exploiting what was left to the workers after the sweating capitalist had done with them'.

To be a recipient of some rich man's favour it was necessary to hold a position of some importance in the Party, either in the machine or in parliament. Consequently there was a good deal of spirited competition among hopeful candidates. D. R. Hall, Minister for Justice in the New South Wales Labor government from 1912 to 1916, summed up his experience:

The Labor party was never divided in the old days in NSW, when we were fighting to get power. As long as we had to fight to get there, believe me, all hands were solidly behind us. But when we got the jobs, we used to devote 30 per cent of our time fighting the Liberals opposed to us, and 70 per cent to fighting the 'gang' behind us, who wanted to take our jobs from us. Even then we made a fairly faulty division. We should have devoted only 20 per cent against Wade and 80 per cent against the other crowd.

In one instance, a candidate's collar and tie was found inside a ballot box. Other ballot boxes were fitted with sliding panels.

Labor is not inherently corrupt. What the evidence shows is that a Labor party which has no perspective beyond gaining power is susceptible to corrupt practices. The case against the ALP as a promoter of working-class interests would be no less secure if corruption had been entirely absent. Yet for significant periods corrupt practices were the norm. To ignore them,

as L. F. Crisp did, is to pass over an important manifestation of Laborism's immanent weaknesses. Moreover, Australia, like all developing countries where the state plays an important role, is particularly susceptible to corruption. Theodore, for instance, had a firm faith in northern development which extended to his dealings in the Mungana affair. He did not draw a distinction between developments that he initiated as premier and those he organised as a private investor.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

It is not always possible to understand the nature of something until we have seen how it develops. The investigation of the Labor Party must be pursued beyond the social environment and the particular circumstances attendant at its birth. Comment needs to be made on the social composition of Labor candidates and representatives, on Labor's politics and practices, and on its organisational style.

The first crop of Labor candidates was as diverse as the social interests that Labor proclaimed. In Queensland, the endorsed Labor candidate for Toowoomba in 1893 had contested the previous election as a 'McIlwraith Independent' but had come bottom of the poll. As a Labor man, he fared much better, but once in parliament he sat with the government. In nearby Carnarvon, the official candidate was editor of the *Border Herald* and shortly afterwards became manager of a huge station property. Like most of the Darling Downs candidates, he was closer to the agrarian alliance than to the Labor Party. Successful candidates included two farmers, a journalist, a bookseller and a publican.

Two years earlier, New South Wales had produced an even odder assortment of Labor men. At Goulburn, Dr Hollis was first selected by the Single-Tax League and then endorsed by the Local Labor League; at Lithgow the process worked in re-

verse. In West Sydney, the Labor candidate sought and obtained endorsement from the protectionist movement. So diverse were the thirty-five Labor members elected in 1891 that a good half-dozen of them never participated in Labor politics from the day they occupied their seats. Many others were more interested in fiscal questions than in social reform. Several who had stood for parliament in the 1880s now adopted the Labor banner for the sake of variety.

Victoria's Labor candidates were more solidly middle-class than those in New South Wales or Queensland. Of the thirty-two who offered themselves on 20 April 1892, six had been members of the previous parliament. Only twelve were artisans. The remainder included a mine manager, a mining investor, an auctioneer, a surveyor, a chemist, and two agents — one estate and one unspecified. Not surprisingly, these Laborites had little difficulty in forming a United Labor and Liberal Party to contest the 1894 elections.

Tasmanian Labor did not succeed in entering parliament until 1900. By 1903 its members included a miner and a mine manager. At the Party's annual conferences, farmers and orchardists were the largest single group, accounting for more than a quarter of the delegates in 1913. A survey of Labor members of the Tasmanian House of Assembly between 1909 and 1959 revealed that a third were merchants, managers, clerks or shop assistants.

Important figures joined the Labor Party after starting their political careers in some other cause. This privilege was by no means reserved for the great. In 1911 two members of the West Australian Legislative Council joined the Cabinet and the Labor Party in the same move. At least two South Australian protectionists did not leave the Liberal Party until after 1903; a Victorian, Colonel Crouch, did not make the break until the 1920s. A. R. Outtrim, a former radical Liberal in Victoria, joined the Labor Party in 1904. When King O'Malley arrived in Melbourne to take his seat in the first Commonwealth par-

liament he announced his readiness to join any party prepared to support his idea 'for a Commonwealth bank'. Thus did he become a member of the 1910 Labor government.

As for the temper of Labor representatives, Reeves's comment that 'Nothing could have been less theatrical than the entry of Labor into the New Parliament' applies equally to Australia. 'To all appearances', Reeves continued, 'it merely meant that half-a-dozen quiet, attentive, businesslike, well-mannered mechanics took their seats in the House of Representatives.'

In every colony and from the first moments, Labor members conformed to this picture, except that far from all of them were mechanics. McGowen, Labor leader in New South Wales, described his party's relations with the government as being based on 'judicious tact and diplomacy'. This timidity was confirmed by the New South Wales free-trader George Reid, who told the visiting Beatrice Webb in 1898 that

the Labor Party have never asked me for anything: once they sent a deputation to beg me most respectfully to take up some measure they were interested in ... We don't oppose them in their seats and they don't oppose us in ours: we live very amicably together.

Arthur Rae stood firm on his republicanism in 1891 by voting against the motion of condolence for the Duke of Clarence. However, he could not bring himself to vote against a ministry containing strike-breakers such as 'shoot-'em-down' Smith, although he had pledged to do so.

During the 1896 elections in Queensland, the *Worker* expressed concern at the 'suspicion' that had been engendered in 'the peaceful relationship that should exist between citizen and citizen'. A Labor government would promote social peace. Labor's entry into Western Australian politics was accompanied by an assurance from George Pearce that

the Labor platform was similar to that of other politicians ... the difference lay in the fact that the labour men knew the need of

whatever reforms and legislation they advocated by their familiarity with the conditions they wished to better.

Everything about Labor's so-called 'fighting platforms' supported the claim by the Victorians that 'Our programme contains nothing more than has been advocated for years past by economists and liberals'.

When the parliamentary committee of the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council brought forward its political platform in April 1890, all but four of the fourteen proposals were limited to trade union demands such as 'Amendment of the Masters and Apprentices Act'. Three of the four broader demands called for electoral reform and the fourth expressed support for free and compulsory education. Here was nothing to terrify the bourgeoisie: a year later these fourteen points were boiled down to the five that comprised the Labor Leagues' platform for the 1891 election:

- 1 electoral reform
- 2 education
- 3 factory legislation
- 4 eight-hour day
- 5 mining Act.

Despite the strike that had taken place in the interim, there was no shift in Labor's political program.

STRIKE-BREAKING

In his discussion of the British Labour Party, Ralph Miliband pointed out that it 'has not only been a parliamentary party; it has been a party deeply imbued by parliamentarism'. This situation applied to the ALP but with a vital addition: not only has the ALP rigorously confined itself to parliamentary activity and opposed industrial action to gain political ends, it has also attempted to prevent industrial action to gain industrial

ends. At every level, and for every demand, it has sought to keep mass pressures within the organisational structures of the state. This integration it has called socialism.

No aspect of the Labor Party's practice is more illustrative of its orientation than its relations with militant unions. Some mention has already been made of Lane and Holman's anti-union ideas and actions. With the advent of Labor governments around 1910 these notions were given further scope.

In 1911 Holman (then Labor Attorney-General) proposed penal provisions for the arbitration system. Adherence to the system was to be voluntary, but once a union joined, the penalties for striking were as vicious as any devised by Tories:

[Ordinary strikers would] not be liable to imprisonment, but to a fine only. We believe this is a more effective deterrent, provided that the fine is enforceable as the first lien on any wages that may be earned after its imposition. Such a fine could never be got rid of or taken out in gaol. Wherever a man is, his wages can be impounded to pay it.

This anti-strike activity came to a head in 1913 in New South Wales when Premier McGowen himself called for 'volunteer labour' to replace striking gas workers. The resulting revulsion in Labor's ranks forced the premier's retirement and his replacement by Holman, who differed from his predecessor in his efficiency as a strike-breaker. Western Australia had similar experiences. In 1904 a minority Labor government headed by Daglish outraged the unions by reappointing Mr Justice Parker as president of the Court of Arbitration after he had shown a strong anti-union bias. Tasmanian Labor divided in 1915 over the government's refusal to establish preference for unionists; the ministry claimed that this would give an advantage to one section of the community.

The most important piece of strike-breaking in the inter-war period occurred in Queensland in 1927. The strike centred round the South Johnstone sugar mill that had been government-controlled but passed to local farmers as a coop-

erative. The new management proposed to reduce the staff by fifty-five, eliminating 'trouble makers'. Not surprisingly, this action provoked a strike which spread during the next three months to the railways and the wharves. The Labor premier, McCormack, had been overseas for most of these proceedings but on his return took personal control of the Railway Department, announcing that, 'with the help of some businessmen, he was organising a statewide transport service. Then came the mass sackings. The Labor movement was stunned. Even McCormack's AWU supporters were shocked. A *Worker* editorial of 31 August 1927 entitled 'Has Cabinet Gone Mad?' concluded that 'the government had deliberately forfeited its right to represent the working-class movement'. The non-Labor parties were delighted. The *Courier* called McCormack 'our Commander-in-Chief', while the *Daily Mail* assured him that 'his political opponents will be among his strongest supporters'.

In 1915 Theodore had amended a law in order to assist striking AWU members. This step provoked the Leader of the Opposition to chide Theodore for forgetting that he was a minister since he was approaching the problem from the standpoint of a worker. The shaft struck home and Theodore immediately resigned as president of the AWU. Eleven years later, when McCormack was justifying his attack on the ARU, the burden of his defence was:

When I took oath of office I undertook to be loyal to constitutional government ... It is a difficult problem. Torn one way with the desire to remain faithful to an allegiance that they probably love and have worked for all their lives, on the other hand faced with the dislocation of constitutional government if they evade their higher responsibility.

It would be too easy to dismiss this argument as hypocrisy. It is an acute expression of the ideological dominance that the ruling class exerts over society. A primary manifestation of this hegemony is the belief that the interests of society as a

whole are identical with the interests of the rulers of that society, who, by preserving law and order, are accepted as the preservers of civilisation itself.

It is this domination, rather than the crudeness of salaries and honours, that ensured the subordination of the Labor Party. This power applies with equal force to many union officials, who must not be seen as the 'goodies' doing battle against lickspittle politicians. Both Michels and Childe believed that trade unionists who went into politics were more likely to rat than men from other walks of life. 'Whenever the marshall's baton has rested in the workers' horny hand, the army of workers has had a leadership less sure and less satisfactory for its purposes than when the leadership has been in the hands of men from other classes of society.' If so, this exception has been because 'men from other classes' have adopted a Marxist standpoint as protection against the siren entreaties of bourgeois culture.

Michels' 'iron law' has its validity. We have seen ample evidence for its workings in the ALP. It is not possible to reduce Theodore's occasional pettinesses to nothing more than class struggle. His behaviour acquired its significance within a framework of class struggle. The ALP was the highest expression of a peculiarly Australian petit-bourgeoisie whose origins have been traced above. The unionists and others who found it necessary to oppose the Labor Party were indicative of a different class, of a proletariat. That class could have no solution to its problems other than the establishment of a communist society.

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