

Editorial Hegemony, Theory and Programme	1
Revolt in New Guinea?	Rex Mortimer 4
Integrating the Farmers	Nonie Sharp 8
Street Theatre	John Romeril 14
Labor Versus the Unions	Humphrey McQueen 22
English Studies in Australia	Ian Lennie 41
T. S. Eliot and Modern Criticism	John Docker 50
Document	
The End of the Free U?	Ann Curthoys 35
Comment	
Student Power Yet Again	Humphrey McQueen 57
"A Race Apart" — A Comment	T. G. Parsons 58
Yet Again!	Humphrey McQueen 59
"International" Misunderstood	Denis Freney 59
A Comment	D.W. & G.S. 61
Marxists and the Changing Communist Party	Warren Osmond 62
A Comment	D.W. & G.S. 64
Reviews of <i>The New Industrial State</i>	John Playford 65
Review Articles	
Nakedness in Apes and Authors	Doug White 67
Max Weber and the Philosophy of Action	Raimond Gaita 72
Books in Review	
Kolakowski's Marxism	Doug Kirsner 80

Editorial Board: Geoff Sharp, Doug White. **Review Editor:** Nonie Sharp.
Editorial Advisers: Jack Blake, Lloyd Churchward, Janet Hase, David Hudson,
 Doug Kirsner, Warren Osmond, John Playford, Kelvin Rowley, Ian Turner.
Business Committee: Elizabeth Rouch, Kenn Turnbull, Murray Winter.
 Arena is a marxist journal of criticism and discussion.
 Box 36, Greensborough P.O., Vic., 3088.
 Subscription: \$2.00 for four issues. (\$1.50 for students.)

Hegemony, Theory and Programme

In class societies power is always some sort of amalgam between the directly coercive repression of subjects and a control of the terms of their conscious existence.

This last — hegemony — is a subtle thing. It is not simply a matter of ideas or of stronger resources in argument. Dominant ideas take on substance in voluntarily constructed social forms — in universities, in schools, or in workplaces essential functions are overlaid by relations of status, of authority: by social arrangements which tie in with the ends of ruling groupings. In these settings power, to a large extent, is embedded rather than explicit; people experience a natural order of existence which they have grown up to accept and which therefore does not appear to involve power at all.

In modern societies the fabric of social life increasingly falls within the reach of the will. Power and influence reach out through the media to penetrate social relationships which previously were relatively inaccessible to dominant groupings; planning reorganizes the physical context of life separating work from home, dividing the generations from one another and generally frag-

Labor Versus the Unions

Imagine a shoe maker who had a tiny workshop but could not stand the competition of big business. That shoe maker closed his workshop and hired himself out to a Tiflis shoe factory. He came to this factory not to remain a worker but to save enough money to lay aside a small capital and then to reopen his own shop. As you see, the position of that shoe maker is already that of a proletarian, but his consciousness is not yet proletarian, but petty-bourgeois through and through.

— Joseph Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 317.

The history of the Australian Labor Movement has been described as a fight between "revolutionaries and reformers, 'ideologues' and machine men, politicians and trade unionists, and leaders and rank and file". Such an analysis is little more than a restatement of Michels' iron law of oligarchy, and consequently falls victim to Gramsci's criticism that it is not enough to examine the internal dynamics of a movement; these must be viewed in their historical context. In particular it is necessary to examine the class of which a party is a part and its highest expression.¹

It is not the purpose of this article to trace out the relationship between the Labor Party and its class base. But it will be necessary to *state* this relationship if the battle between some of the unions and the Labor Party is to be seen for what it is. In reality it is part of a class struggle between a peculiarly Australian petit-bourgeoisie and proletariat.²

Often the immediate interests of the petit-bourgeoisie and the proletariat coincide and it is this which has enabled the Labor Party to continue as the electoral representative of the two classes, though the numerous splits show how troubled an alliance it is. But often the classes have different interests. The petit-bourgeoisie tie themselves to capitalism and seek a solution not simply within capitalism but in alliance with it; they hope to make it work for them. The proletariat, on the other hand, are forced to take steps which challenge capitalism's functioning. It is as a conflict of responses to capitalism that the class conflict between the petit-bourgeoisie and the proletariat occurs, and not as a direct conflict the purpose of this article to describe some of the manifestations of this conflict. This will tell us something of the nature of the Labor Party and should serve an immediate purpose in as much as it will provide a catalogue of evidence for the unionists who are struggling against the Penal Clauses and who did not trust the Labor Party to abolish these. It will also lead into a rejection of the policy of "electing a Labor Government so that it can expose itself".

Much of the discussion will centre round arbitration and it is important to realize that it was some of the unions and the Labor Party that fought tooth and nail for compulsory arbitration. This reinforces the point that it is not a fight between corrupt politicians and pure unionists, but a struggle between classes, with unions ranged on both sides.³

I

The popular explanation of the foundation of the Labor Party follows the account given by one of the participants. "The New South Wales Labor Party of 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." With this view of the origins of the Labor Party it has seemed axiomatic to many Labor politicians that their job is not to make strikes superfluous but to prevent or smash them. The examples of strikebreaking which follow are restricted to the three eastern mainland states, but extend from 1890 to 1964. Since they are so widespread it should be obvious that they are not incidental to the Labor Party but rather are symptomatic of its purpose and functioning. The preponderance of examples from the inter-

¹ I. A. H. Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics* (Canberra, 1965) p. xx; Robert Michels, *Political Parties* (New York, 1962); Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince* (London, 1957) pp. 148-9.

² This bald statement is clearly unsatisfactory. There will be no improvement in this situation until February next year when I sketch the development of the Australian working classes, both petit-bourgeois and proletarian, in a chapter 'Laborism and Socialism' in a book on the Australian New Left edited by Richard Gordon and published by Heinemann.

³ P. G. MacCarthy, 'Labor and the Living Wage 1890-1910', *A.J.P.H.*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, April 1967, pp. 67-89.

war years is not indicative of a change in the nature of the Labor Party, but rather of the absence of Labor Governments in recent times. Moreover it should be noted that as recently as 1965 the New South Wales Labor Party was acting true to form.

1. William Lane versus the Shearers

Queensland acquired a reputation for radicalism from the very beginnings of the Labor Party. As early as 1909 W. G. Spence wrote that the "Labor Movement in Queensland differed from that of the other colonies, in that it was decidedly and definitely socialistic from the jump." Most of the credit for the advanced state of the Queensland movement has gone to that authoritarian racist, William Lane. Despite a tendency to picture Lane as a marxist, there is no evidence that he ever accepted Marx's primary tenet—class struggle. Lane recognized that such a struggle existed and that it often took the form of strikes, but he was concerned to find "the best way to prevent" them. (*Worker*, 1 March 1890). In order to achieve this end, Lane was prepared to

enter an arrangement which will secure society against any disastrous industrial war by limiting effectively the competition that is manifestly unworkable and establish instead a 'state' system which will prevent all strikes and give the tendencies of the age a chance to work themselves out in a peaceful and painless manner. (*Worker*, 12 June 1890.)

The explanation of Lane's preference for arbitration is not to be found simply in ideological weakness, but rests in an organizational conflict in which he was involved.⁴ Lane was endeavouring to establish the Australian Labour Federation as the central controlling body over all union activity on the grounds that unity meant strength. However, as this unity was recent and its constituents often fragile, the resultant strength could not be dissipated in small disputes such as the one surrounding Jondaryan Station. As the strikes of 1891 were to show, the degree to which Queensland pastoralists had accepted the principle of union labour was very slight. It was however in inverse proportion to the determination of the rank-and-file shearer to establish all-union sheds. Rejecting a tentative Queensland Shearers' Union—Pastoralist agreement for the 1890 season the shearers declared wool shipped from Jondaryan 'black'. Although the A.L.F. moved behind the shearers' demand in order to preserve unity it also moved towards the establishment of machinery designed to keep constituent unions in their place. The details were adopted by the Brisbane Council of the A.L.F. on 7 July 1890, and

required every union to forward to its District Council conditions under which it would be ready to work for two years... In the event of agreement, the A.L.F. and the employers'

associations were to police its provisions and proceed by joint action against any infringement. Most of all the A.L.F. was anxious to avoid any conflict with the employers for fear of what might happen to their artfully constructed citadel. At the A.L.F. General Council meeting on August 1, 1890, the following directive to the Shearers' Union was agreed upon:

That the General Council of the A.L.F. deemed it unwise and impolitic for them (the Q.S.U.) to interfere with the Darling Downs agreement for the present year and request them to notify the squatters of the Darling Downs that while such an agreement was in direct contravention of the rules of the Union they were agreeable to allow members to remain as they were for the present season and urge for another conference before the commencement of the next shearing.

Before the establishment of the Labor Party an important glimpse of its development was thus provided: an organization which was conceived of as a means to an end became an end in itself and attempted to use its organizational strength to squash any attempts to obtain the original end by alternate means.

(The militancy of the Queensland shearers who refused to accept agreements negotiated by their executive to postpone the establishment of all union sheds casts doubt upon N. B. Nairn's account of the 1890 Maritime Strike.⁵ Nairn says that Spence was entirely responsible for the strike spreading because he was not prepared to wait until 1891 for all-union sheds. It seems as likely that it was some of the shearers who were not prepared to wait and that Spence was bluffing the pastoralists so that the pressure from below could be headed off.)

2. New South Wales, 1892-1922

No sooner had Labor members been returned to the N.S.W. Parliament than four of them accepted the opportunity to support a Government which had arrested strike leaders at Broken Hill and reduced the majority of the workers there to complete destitution. The politicians' defence was that the Opposition was even worse. But what did they expect? Had they not come into Parliament for this very reason? Had they forgotten the conclusion of the N.S.W. Labor Defence Committee that "Whilst we have no cause for gratitude to the government for their attitude during the strike, we have no reason for believing that the Opposition, had it been in office, would have acted more fairly."

Eight years later W. A. Holman stated Labor's attitude precisely when he told the N.S.W. Assembly

I am and always have been an opponent of strikes, and I feel

⁴ R. Harney, 'Organisational Conflicts in the Queensland Labour Movement, 1888-1893', *Labour History*, Number 4, pp. 19-35.

⁵ N. B. Nairn, 'The 1890 Maritime Strike in New South Wales', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 37, pp. 1-18.

that the men have taken a wrong method in order to enforce a good cause.⁶

The correct method according to Holman was Arbitration, which he described as substituting "the force of law, which in its ultimate analysis, is the regulated brute force of the community, for unregulated brute force". Despite a superficial similarity this is not Marx, but Hobbes. Holman was making the all too easy error of identifying the brute force of the capitalists with the brute force of that mythical entity, the community. However, he saw difficulties in the path of arbitration in Australia. Having perverted the excellent maxim

It is not sufficient that justice be done, it must also be seen to be done.

into

It is very much more important that the decisions of a court should be believed to be just than that they should be just,

Holman went on to lament the absence of a leisure class in Australia. It would be possible, he reasoned, to draw from such a class an arbitrator who would have the confidence of both workers and employers. But if these independent spirits were not available to guide the workers into accepting the appearance of justice in place of its substance, then brute force would be needed. Consequently in 1911, Holman (now 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. 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. Where ever a man is, his wages can be impounded to pay it.

This attitude had been confirmed by Holman's interpretation of the strikes of the preceding two or three years. In 1909, for example, B.H.P.'s proposal for a 12½ per cent. wage-cut led to a lock-out. In spite of the company's obvious culpability Holman decided that "the whole of the trouble is due to two or three men belonging to the I.W.W."⁷ This could have been true only if they had wormed their way into B.H.P.'s Board of Directors and used their position to provoke the lock-out. In his

⁶ H. V. Evatt, *Australian Labour Leader* (Sydney, 1940); Robin Gollan, "The Trade Unions and Labour Parties, 1890-1894", *Historical Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 17.

⁷ Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 41. Seven years later Holman said that the Victorian Labor Party was "in a most unfortunate position, having, apparently, succumbed almost unanimously to the pressure brought to bear by the workers", *ibid.*, p. 106.

Industrial History of Broken Hill George Dale rightly accuses the N.S.W. and South Australian Labor Parties of doing everything in their power to defeat the workers at Broken Hill and Port Pirie. This anti-strike activity came to a head in 1913 when the Premier, McGowen, himself called for "volunteer labour" to replace striking gas workers.⁸ The resulting revision in Labor's ranks forced the Premier's retirement and his replacement by Holman who differed from his predecessor only by his efficiency.

By 1917 Holman was out of the Labor Party and it might be argued that it is unfair to blame the Labor Party for the sins of its apostates. If this were taken seriously it would make the writing of Labor history virtually an impossible task as there would hardly be anyone left to write about. The activities of the remaining leaders would validate the present argument nonetheless. (The voice of Holman as an anti-Labor politician was heard in 1931 when he proposed to disfranchise strikers for four years, thereby making them "incapable of entering practical politics". No Labor politician would advocate so drastic a measure as it would finally deprive him of the votes which his actions so richly entitled him to lose.)

The next N.S.W. Labor Government, that of Storey in 1920, was no more sympathetic to strikers, even though the party had supposedly just rid itself of its treacherous elements. Despite Storey's amendments to the Arbitration Act, the £1,000 penalty on officials who called members "to refuse to offer for, or accept, employment" was unaltered. "Unions also continued to protest against the Act's clauses withdrawing preference to unionists where a union took part in, or aided, an illegal strike." Moreover if Jack Brookfield (Independent M.L.A. from Broken Hill) had not made the holding of an inquiry into the I.W.W. convictions a precondition of his support for the A.L.P. in a House that was otherwise evenly divided, the I.W.W. "Twelve" would have received no more consideration from Storey than they had had from the Nationalists. But the greatest disappointment amongst Labor supporters came from the Government's refusal to re-instate railway employees who had been victimized after the 1917 general strike. The effect of this on one of the strikers, J. B. Chiffley, has been well documented in Crisp's biography. His grievance went unremedied until Jack Lang's first Ministry in 1925. All of which

⁸ Other examples are to be found in *The Strikebreakers*, a pamphlet by Mick Considine. When men working on the Moree-Mungindi railway threatened to strike for a rise in wages, the Secretary of Public Works in the Labor Government said "It will be their funeral. . . . I am prepared to close down the works or get other men but the strikers will lose their jobs", cited in A. A. Morrison, "The Brisbane General Strike of 1912" *Historical Studies*, vol. 4, No. 14, p. 141. Gordon Childe relates that "George Bass, whose business Labour Minister Hall bought to be a State bakery, had always employed exclusively non-union labour, and continued to do so when he managed the bakery as a socialistic undertaking under a Labour Government—he told me so himself!" *How Labour Governs*, (Melbourne, 1964) p. 138; L. F. Fitzhardinge, *William Morris Hughes* (Sydney, 1964) Chapter XIII.

makes Chifley's twenty-year fight against Lang and his own strike-breaking in 1949 the more intriguing.⁹

3. Theodore and McCormack versus the A.R.U.

Mention has already been made of Labor's alleged radicalism in Queensland. However, the revolutionary reputation of 'Red Ted' Theodore is even less firmly founded than that of William Lane. The early years of the Ryan Government (1915-1919) were shrouded in the aura of the anti-conscription campaigns and State Butcher Shops. This apparent militancy misled even Gordon Childe who praised T. J. Ryan as a "truly great Labor leader". For once Childe overlooked a Labor Premier's attempted strike-breaking since during the 1917 railway strike Ryan threatened Townsville railwaymen with dire consequences if they did not accept a settlement. The first major clash between the Government and the Queensland unions occurred in September 1919. In the course of the Townsville meatworkers' strike, two union officials were gaoled and the police fired on a protesting crowd. Police reinforcements were sent north on a train manned by a volunteer crew. The cause of the strike was a decision by an Arbitration Judge to remove preference from North Queensland meatworkers. This made Theodore's statement of the previous week all the more incongruous. In his days as a unionist, Theodore said, striking was necessary, "but now under advanced arbitration laws workers could obtain redress by peaceful means". However, when it was suggested that the Government legislate for a statutory forty-hour week Theodore ran a different line:

This was not a matter for the political but for the industrial movement... If it were left to the Unions they would probably accomplish it far more quickly than it could be done by political action.¹⁰

These were mere skirmishes compared to the great battles of the twenties. The change occurred when the London Stock Market refused to finance further Queensland borrowing unless curbs were placed on spending. This meant wage cuts and in 1920 Public Service salaries were reduced by ten per cent. Lacking any intention of exceeding the bounds of capitalism Theodore could do nothing else. But even within these confines he revealed a pettiness in administrative decisions that indicates he was more than an unwilling servant of the London bondholders. In December 1920, for example, he rejected a Public Service request for

⁹ M. Dixon, 'Reformists and Revolutionaries in New South Wales, 1920-1922', *Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 135-151; I. A. H. Turner, *Sydney's Burning* (Melbourne, 1967) pp. 220-1.

¹⁰ This account is based on three unpublished theses: P. J. Bray, *E. G. Theodore and the Queensland Labour Movement* (B.A. (Hons), Univ. of Qld.) M. Critch, *Some Manifestations of Ideological Conflict within the Labour Movement in Queensland (1924-1929)* (B.A., U. of Q., 1964); and E. M. Higgins, *The Queensland Labor Government, 1915-1929* (M.A., Melb., 1954). See also article by Higgins "Queensland Labor: Trade Unionists versus Premiers", *Historical Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 34, pp. 140-155.

a holiday on Monday 3rd January 1921 in lieu of New Year's Day with the remark "public servants have enough holidays". This was in the days of unpaid overtime. Theodore's actions were not forgotten by Queensland unionists. When he stood for the North Queensland Federal seat of Herbert in 1925 he was defeated in an election marked by an exceedingly high percentage of informal votes. Two years later when he successfully contested the Sydney seat of Dalley a meeting of Brisbane building workers urged the workers of Dalley not to vote for Theodore "who bitterly opposed the reduction of hours from 48 to 44 in Queensland".

Theodore left Queensland with few friends in the union movement. The Railway *Advocate* wished him "the devil's farewell". Its only regret was that "the Prince Wage Reducer McCormack is not accompanying him". Two years later the bitter truth of these words came home to the A.R.U. in full when McCormack dismissed its entire membership from noon of Saturday, 3 September 1927. In order to explain how this extraordinary event came about it is necessary to remember the consistent militancy of the Railways Union. This was by no means confined to Queensland but the Queensland branch became identified with militant unionism and a life-and-death struggle ensued.¹¹ This bald statement can provide little appreciation of the all pervading bitterness that served as a background to some of the most remarkable events in Australia's political history. Before taking up the narrative of the 1927 strike it will be useful to recount an incident from the 1926 State elections which will illustrate this ill-feeling. Fred Patterson, later Communist M.L.A. for Bowen, attempted to contest the Port Curtis seat as a 'local A.L.P.' candidate with A.R.U. support. The central Executive of the A.L.P. thereupon had itself registered as a trade union so that it could apply to the Arbitration Court for an injunction against Patterson. McCormack's cabinet openly used the full machinery of the state in their battle against the union. The rail strike followed less than a year later.

The strike centred round the South Johnstone sugar mill which had been governmentally controlled but passed to local farmers as a co-operative in 1927. The new management proposed to reduce the staff by fifty-five by eliminating "trouble makers". Not surprisingly this provoked a strike which spread during the next three months to the railways and the wharves. McCormack had

¹¹ Much more needs to be known about the reasons for A.R.U. militancy although the following contributed heavily:

- a. largely unskilled labour;
- b. deep penetration by I.W.W.;
- c. no craft divisions;
- d. one employer;
- e. employer was the state which was short of funds and tried to cut wages etc.;
- f. state often controlled by Labor Party which meant that the conflict between unions and government was rich in ideological lessons;
- g. men assembled in large workshops and yards and connected to others by the interchange necessary in a transport system.

been overseas for most of these proceedings but on his return he took personal control of the Railway Department, announcing that "with the help of some businessmen" he was organizing a state-wide transport service. Then came the mass sackings. The Labor Movement was stunned. Even McCormack's A.W.U. supporters were shocked. A *Worker* editorial entitled "Has Cabinet Gone Mad?" concluded that

the government has deliberately forfeited its right to represent the working-class movement.

The non-labour 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". The final effect was the defeat of the Labor Government in 1929 when Labor's share of the vote declined by almost eight per cent. These results continued the drift of working-class support away from the A.L.P. that had been apparent in Theodore's defeat four years earlier.

Conflict between the A.R.U. and the Labor Party continued in Queensland until the defeat of the Gair Government in 1957. Most unionists are aware of the 1965 Amendments to the Queensland Industrial Law made during the Mt. Isa dispute. These were rightly condemned by the Trade Union movement as vicious and provocative. What is less well known is that the 1965 Amending Act (14 Eliz II No. 1) was copied almost word for word from the Hanlon Labor Government's 1948 Legislation (12 Geo VI No. 9) which was used to break yet another rail strike. Doubtless this imitation was deliberate on the part of the Country-Liberal Party Government in order to circumvent Labor criticism. But it also shows that when a Tory Government sets out to break a strike it can find no better example than that set by the workers' supposed representatives.

4. The Hogan Governments in Victoria, 1928-1932

It must be conceded that legislative action on behalf of the workers is difficult to achieve when a Labor Government is dependent for its existence on the votes of four Country Party members and is faced by an implacably hostile Upper House.¹² No comment will be made therefore on the Legislative record of the Hogan Governments. However, there can be no excuse for anti-union actions when these are purely administrative matters. It particularly does not excuse using police to shoot at pickets and to evict the unemployed. Yet this is precisely what the Hogan Government presided over. The first Hogan minority Government had given a clear indication of its attitudes when it assisted the Bruce-Page Government's attack on the Waterside Workers in 1928 by providing protection for volunteer labourers. During this police fired on demonstrators, killing one and wounding three

¹² This alliance with radical farmers is not fortuitous but is symptomatic of Labor's petit-bourgeois make-up.

others. Hogan's second government continued to provide police protection and to run special trains for the volunteers. By May 1930 union dissatisfaction with this behaviour crystallized in a Trades Hall Council resolution which declared

the Hogan Government no longer possesses the confidence of our people and calls upon the Premier to immediately tender the resignation of the Government.

Although this was an unprecedented censure the Premier was unmoved. He rejected a request to attend a T.H.C. meeting and instead attended the annual dinner of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce.

The traditional argument that the worst Labor Government is better than the best Tory Government did not apply in the case of Hogan's Cabinet as the T.H.C. recognized, and Hogan's administration of the law was every bit as repressive as that of the Tories. In addition to its use of police to protect volunteer labourers¹³ on the wharves, the Government used them to suppress free speech and assembly on Melbourne's Yarra Bank. It provided for relief work at less than Award Wages and evicted from the Broadmeadows Unemployed Camp all those who refused to work against their unions' instructions condemning these wages. The Cabinet also refused a request from the T.H.C. not to use police to evict unemployed workers from their homes seeing that sustenance payments were expressly forbidden to be used for rent. The Cabinet's entire lack of sympathy with the unemployed was summed up by the Premier when he told the House in December 1931 that it was no inconvenience to sleep in the open on nights like these. (Unless, of course, the police arrested you for vagrancy.)¹⁴

5. Curtin and Chifley, 1941-1949

The war years were complicated by the Communist Party's ultra-patriotic stance and by the legitimate claim that in wartime certain restraints are necessary. So once more we must concentrate on administrative acts. Perhaps all we need say is that Curtin chose none other than E. G. Theodore as Director of Manpower. Theodore's handling of the unions provoked Clarrie Fallon, Federal A.W.U. President, to resign his Presidency of the Federal A.L.P. in protest.¹⁵

In Don Whittington's book *The Rulers* there is a photograph of Chifley confronting pickets in his own electorate during the 1949 coal strike. One of the placards reads

CHIFLEY THE 1917 STRIKER
CHIFLEY THE 1949 STRIKEBREAKER

¹³ The expression 'volunteer labourer' is used because I agree with Henry Lawson that 'scab' is such a filthy word that it should never be applied to another human being.

¹⁴ Based on L. J. Louis, *Trade Unions and the Depression* (Canberra, 1968).

¹⁵ L. F. Crisp, *Ben Chifley* (Melbourne, 1961).

It is significant that even an anti-communist union official, Lloyd Ross, has referred to the decision to send troops down the mines as "an Australian nightmare, to be mentioned with downcast eyes". But in order to avoid raising a host of extraneous issues in regard to this strike only one observation will be made. It is illustrative to compare the treatment received by the Banks and the B.M.A. on the one hand, with that of the Miners' Union on the other. All three had challenged the Labor Government's right to rule in at least one area of national life. The Government could have responded by treating all its opponents equally in which case it would have conscripted all the doctors into the Army, sent troops down the mines and into the banks. But it chose to discriminate. It employed the machinery of the state against its erstwhile supporters but not against its fulltime opponents.

6. N.S.W. Penal Clauses, 1955-1964

One of the few detailed case studies of the operations of the A.L.P. machine has been an undergraduate thesis by W. J. Waters of Sydney.¹⁶ This excellent work traces the attempts to remove the Penal Clauses from the N.S.W. Arbitration Act by pressuring the Labor Government through the official channels, particularly the Annual Conference. The battle was joined when the A.L.P. executive in N.S.W. sought an assurance from Premier Cahill that future legislation would be submitted for its prior approval. Cahill's response was that "the views of little men do not worry me". The little men were the elected representatives of the Labor Movement and according to the A.L.P. Rule Book constituted the controlling body of the A.L.P. in N.S.W. between conferences. Cahill simply rejected the A.L.P. rules. His position as Premier enabled him to do so. Cahill's attitude was reaffirmed after his death by the A.L.P. State President, Charlie Oliver:

The Parliamentary Party could not under any circumstances be in the position of having to act upon instruction of the executive, the party conference or any other body . . . The resolutions at Conference instructing the Parliamentary Labor Party, are to be taken only as expressions of opinion.

This certainly proved to be the case. In spite of an ever increasing majority at Conferences instructing the State Parliamentary Party to abolish Penal Clauses, the only observable effect was a stiffening of Cabinet's resolve to maintain them. The Clauses remained in force when the Renshaw Government was defeated in 1965.

In the middle of this dispute, Dr. Lloyd Ross noted, somewhat despairingly, that

Despite all the unity which theoretically prevails between the industrial wing and the political wing in New South Wales, I cannot convince the State Government that it is essential that this problem of automation and technical change be dealt with in a labour way.

¹⁶ W. J. Waters, *A Study of Policy Making in the N.S.W. Labor Party* (Unpublished Honours Thesis, University of Sydney, 1965)

Whether at a legislative level in the case of the Penal Clauses, or at an administrative level in the problems of automation it was impossible for even moderate union officials to make their voices felt in the N.S.W. Cabinet room. This surely indicates a deep malaise.

II

Gordon Childe has pointed out that Labor Ministers "undergo a mental transformation" when "faced with the actual responsibilities of governing". Nowhere is this more evident than in their relations with unions. In 1915, Theodore amended a law in order to assist striking A.W.U. members. This provoked the Leader of the Opposition into claiming that Theodore had forgotten that he was a Minister and was approaching the problem from the standpoint of a worker. The shaft struck home and Theodore immediately resigned as President of the A.W.U. Eleven years later when McCormack was justifying his attack on the A.R.U., the burden of his defence was

When I took my 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 as sheer hypocrisy. It is not. Rather it is an acute expression of the hegemony which the ruling class exert over the minds of those they oppress. A primary manifestation of this domination 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 civilization itself. It is this domination, rather than the cruder techniques of large salaries and imperial honours that ensures the subordination of the Labor Party. This applies with equal force to many union officials who must not be seen as the 'goodies' doing battle against corrupt politicians. Indeed, both Michels and Childe believe that trade unionists who go into politics are more likely to 'rat' than men from other walks of life.

Michels' 'iron law' has validity and we have seen ample evidence for it in the workings of the Australian Labor Party. It is not possible to reduce Theodore's occasional pettinesses to nothing more than class struggle. But the pettinesses acquire significance within a framework of class struggle. The Labor Party is the highest expression of a peculiarly Australian petit-bourgeoisie. The unionists who have found it necessary to oppose the Labor Party are indicative of a different class, of a proletariat.)

The political implications of this analysis are best illustrated by examining the classic statement of "electing Labor Governments so that they might expose themselves" made by Denis Freney at the Conference of Left Action:

I think we must recognize that the A.L.P. is not simply another capitalist party like the Liberal Party.

That the A.L.P. is not "like the Liberal Party" does not mean that it is not a capitalist party, any more than it means that the Country Party is not a capitalist party.

Any dialectician will surely understand that history is important, and there is no doubt that the A.L.P. originally was formed as a workers' party, which immediately reflected the liberal-imperialist nature of the Australian working class at that time.

Freney is so near yet so far. It is indeed necessary to understand history. The crucial point is not that the A.L.P. was founded as a workers' party (which is not entirely true anyway) but that the workers involved were of a particular type.

It has remained, in the minds of the mass of the Australian workers, as their party.

Freney fails to distinguish between the two working classes that have been formed in Australia and consequently fails to realize that the industrial working class that has been formed this century does not have the same political outlook as the older working class that continues to dominate the A.L.P. The danger arises from the conclusions Freney draws from his analysis:

That represents a certain higher level of consciousness than for example trade union consciousness which does not recognize the need for political expression as a class (this is the situation in the U.S.A. for example).

Support for the Labor Party represents a higher level of consciousness only if you compare the position of the craft unions in the 1870's with the consciousness of those who supported an independent political force thirty years later. But history has not stood still. Working-class consciousness has increased considerably in the past eighty years. When a unionist refuses to trust a Labor politician he is not going back to the position of 'No politics', but is rejecting a certain style of politics. He is rejecting parliamentary politics, bourgeois politics. He may not be at the point where he demands a new political party but he has rejected the notion that capitalism can be destroyed by taking over the state apparatus. He recognises that only by action outside the state is it possible to achieve socialism, or even a minimum share under capitalism. He is certainly in advance of the unionist who pins his hopes on Arbitration and a Labor Government. To some extent the success of communist union officials must be attributed to this recognition by the proletariat that their interests are not served by the A.L.P.

If the activities of the A.L.P. outlined above have not convinced the proletariat that the A.L.P. is not *their* party, nothing will. Indeed there would be no hope for socialism. But the twenty per cent. or so of the Australian people who constitute the proletariat have no illusions about the Labor Party. Attempts to drive them back into it are, at best, a waste of time. What we must prepare for is an independent proletarian party.

document

The End of the Free U?

At the moment, the Free University of Sydney is practically dead. One or two courses persist, but The Free University (known as *Free U*) premises have been vacated and the activists have gone back to their ordinary university studies. This doesn't mean that the Free U won't re-establish itself next summer vacation; it has tended, after all, to be a sporadic vocational venture for its two years of existence. But the present pause (or collapse?) makes this a good time to discuss the achievements and failures of the Free U, and to decide on the standards by which it could be judged.

The writer's involvement in the Free U was partial — in abstinence from the organizing side of the venture, and in fluctuating commitment to the courses attended. But this experience of the Free U would be all the more typical for that; and the Free U, generally, must be considered in terms of the community it failed to build, at least as much as of the one it did.

Who set up The Free U in Sydney, and why? In October, 1967 *Honi Soit* published two articles attacking the 'mass universities' and gauging support for the idea of a Free U in Sydney. One, by Terry Irving, argued that the mass University had ceased to consider the *purpose* of the professional training it offered. The alternative he saw as The Free University consisting of a group of staff and students drawn from existing universities, who set out to study in small groups, preferably in the context of community living, and who did not pay teachers, examine students or offer degrees. Only in these conditions could the questioning of purpose continue.